Seasons of Singapore

Members:

Soh Xun Joshua (1i1 22)
Sua Dai Wei, Darwin (1i1 23)
Toh Zheng Rong (1i1 26)

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Ideation and Objectives

The objective of this project is to encourage Singaporeans to not take Singapore's unique weather for granted. Much of our intended audience, Singaporeans themselves, tend to complain about the weather here. Sometimes, it is too hot and sometimes, it is too cold. This also leads many to realise the uniqueness of Singapore's weather. The main idea that inspired this project was how Singapore is near the epicentre of the effects of La Nina and El Nino, making some of Singapore's weather very extreme as compared to other tropical countries. We also thought making a parody of the four seasons of non-tropical countries would be interesting.

For the composers, this project allowed us some exposure in making music. The rest of the group also learned to take inspiration from others' ideas and make our own craft.

Research

For inspiration, we looked to Royston Tan's "36 Ways to Say Good Morning". This short film of two minutes shows the familiar scenes many Singaporeans wake up to and portrays the natural sights and sounds of Singapore in the morning. From this film, we learned how to make sounds that portray something which many people go through often and can relate to. In the film, there are many instances of the sights and sounds when Singaporeans wake up. Sounds of birds commonly heard in Singapore were also added to "rain" as birds are normally heard when a typical storm starts and ends.

Creative Decisions Part 1: "summer"

Introduction

"summer" is a fully electronically produced track, created on Soundtrap by Spotify. It starts with a soft synth melody before more layers are added. These layers consist of a guitar, percussion, bass, and a synth organ. The melody gives the feeling of having fun, with a lively instrumental aside from the main melody. There is some percussion as well as a bass and guitar to provide harmony from the sidelines. The melody at the start is then repeated and develops later on into a variation of itself as the piece progresses. The track then ends with the same instrument as the intro, but this time the variation of the original melody is used.

Structure
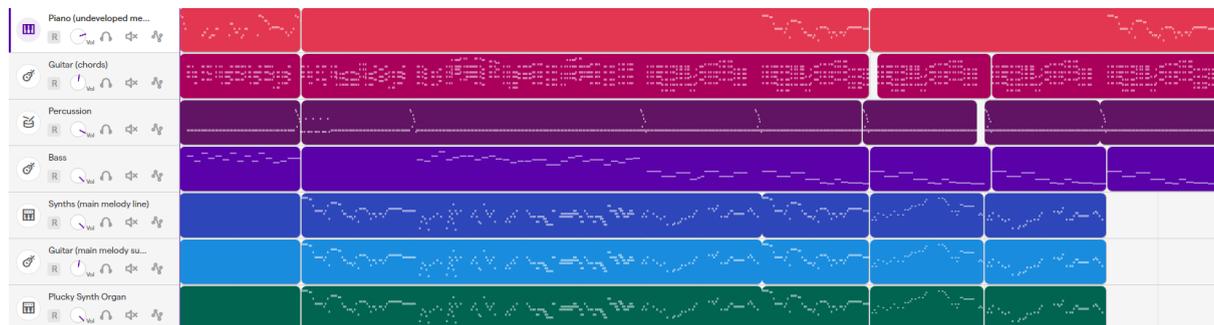
The structure of this piece is A-A'-B-C-A-A''-C-A''', which can be simplified into A-A-B-C-A-A-C-A ignoring the very slight structural changes in the piece. The piece was made to be simple, with a catchy melody that sticks in the ears of the audience along with a playful guitar accompaniment and some percussion.

**Decision on three instrunments playing in unison**

We decided to make these three instruments share the exact same track. These instruments complement each other. The synths give some form of reverb and without these, the main melody would sound too sharp and staccato. The guitar provides a sense of bounciness that can be heard in the main melody, while the synth organ provides the main tone of the main melody.

Creative Decisions Part 2: "rain"

Introduction

"rain" is also a fully electronically produced track, created on Soundtrap by Spotify. This time, the instrumentals used are more orchestral, with rain sounds, thunder sounds that act as percussion, bird sounds, a piano, a marimba-like bass, and a string section. The piece starts with some birds calling to reflect the typical birdcalls before a storm. A solo piano intro then begins, with the string section accompanying it, then completing its unfinished phrase.

First half and transition
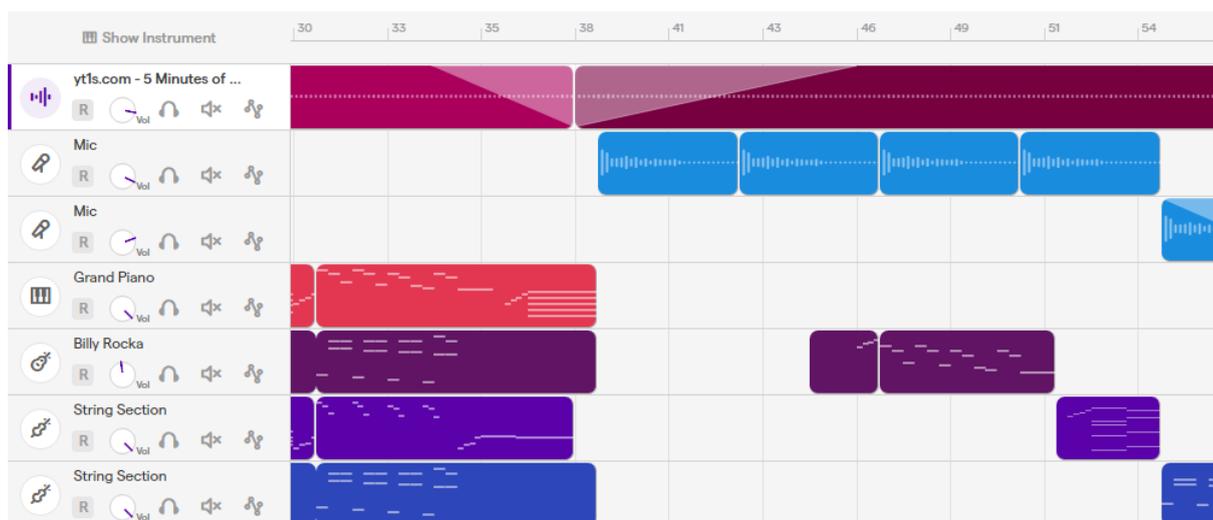
The beginning phrase is then repeated in variations before the music suddenly stops on an imperfect cadence. There is then nothing except for rhythmic claps of thunder. This is to show how quickly a simple shower can turn into a horrible thunderstorm, especially in Singapore's tropical weather. This thunder effect has been autotuned to E, as the piece is in E minor, and the audio has been tweaked to make it sound like a drum. This does not only provide the instruments with some percussion but also

some deeper harmony. For a short moment, there is only the soft sound of the bass playing the original motif.

Second half
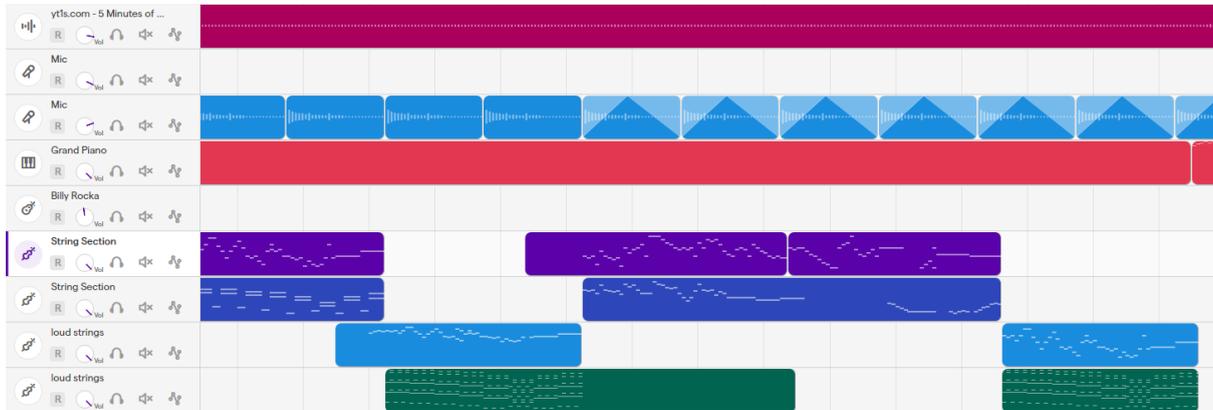
We then enter a portion where a new motif, based loosely on the original at the beginning of the piece, is formed. Along with the thunder, it intensifies and forms a portion where the strings are playing quickly along with the thunder, to create a thunderstorm-like effect. A portion of the string section is also inspired by J.S.Bach's Concerto for Two Violins.

Ending
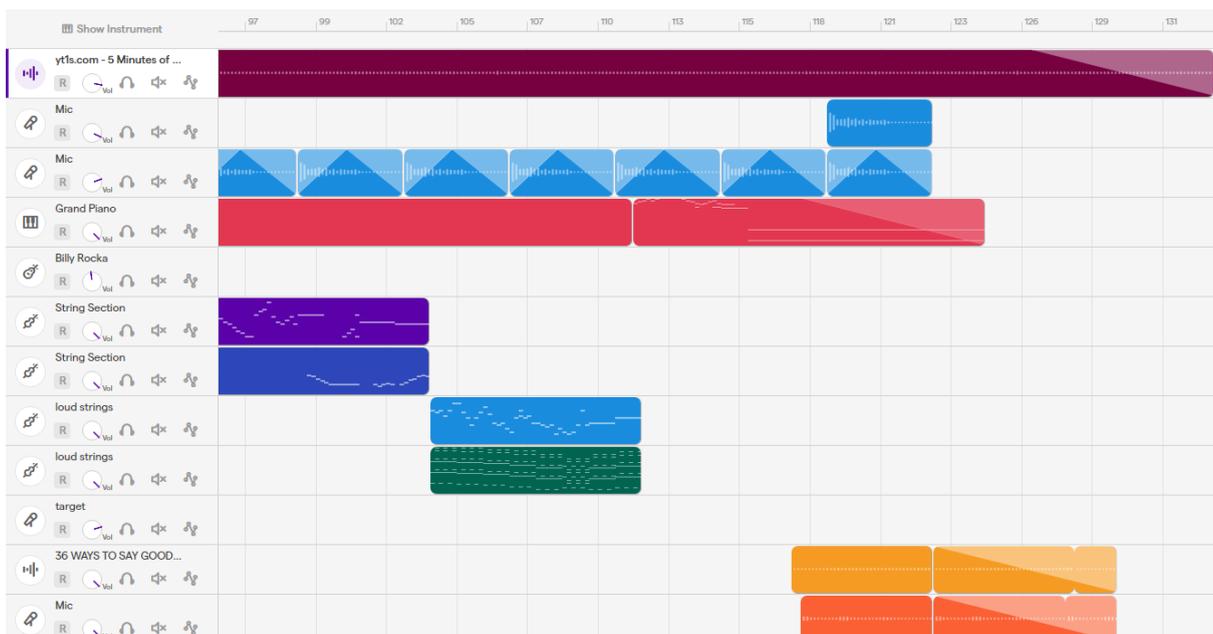
In the picture above, it is shown that after the heavier portion of the piece, the piece comes abruptly to a close, signifying the end of the storm, ending with an octave on the piano and the return of birds singing. This shows how storms can end as abruptly as they start.

Reflections

One of our group members managed to make a website for the first time, but it was extremely time-consuming and required much planning and agreement with the team members. This led to a prolonged time working on the website only and not enough time spared to spend on other portions of the project. As it was the first time, he had difficulty with some parts. He asked a friend for help and was taught. From this, he learned that learning a new skill is fun but requires much work.

For the main composing group member, he had many ideas to put into the composition but did not know how to put them into a digital audio workstation like Soundtrap. Eventually, after watching a few online tutorials and seeking help from his mentor, he managed to put together a piece suitable for the theme he intended. From this, he learned that sometimes, turning to other people for help and to learn from them is the best way to resolve a problem.

Finally, for the group member doing the arrangement as well as the art, he struggled with mental health due to various reasons that led to him not being able to complete the tasks as efficiently as desired. He also faced difficulties in the drawing as digital art was relatively new to him, despite being an interest. By trial and error over many hours and experimenting with many different techniques, he was able to produce a satisfactory piece of art to pair with the song composed by his fellow group mate. From this, it can be realised that lots of problems can be solved and skill in various departments increased just by lots of practice and trial and error. He will continue to arrange songs in his free time and hone his skill with digital art.