

Jethro Libutan - Artist Statement

I wanted to pursue a creative SHP project so I could focus on playing and expressing myself through music during my final year at ECU. I also wanted to challenge myself both technically and creatively through this experience. For those who don't know, music has always been a passion of mine growing up—I originally planned to major in music education and performance when I started college. However, after some personal reflection, I realized that I want to keep performing music as a hobby rather than make it my career. Maybe that will change in the future, but right now, I just want to enjoy performing on the side. Choosing a creative SHP has allowed me to follow one of my passions while pushing myself as both a musician and an artist.

The focus of this SHP project was learning and then performing a classical piece on piano. I specifically chose to play Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 25 in G Major, alternatively titled "Cuckoo." This piece consists of three movements.

The first movement is a fast-paced piece that opens with a three-note motif, which recurs throughout. It's fun, energetic, and very technically challenging to play, developing nicely through various modulations and shifts between major and minor chord progressions. I also find this movement vibrant and playful in nature.

Artistically, when I play this piece, I imagine it as the feeling of hitting it off with someone special—like meeting your best friend for the first time—and gradually getting to know them over time. To me, the movement captures that experience: the opening feels like the excitement of enjoying their company, when being around them just feels right. As the piece progresses, it mirrors the moments when you begin to share the little things and become vulnerable—your dreams, favorite music, major life events that keep you up at night, or your insecurities. The modulations and transitions between major and minor chords reflect those ups and downs, the good and bad times shared together. Finally, the resolution at the end of the movement symbolizes the point where you fully trust this new friend and feel a deep connection.

The second movement stands in stark contrast to the first—it's a slower piece with a somber, nostalgic atmosphere. While not fast-paced, it's technically challenging in a different way: it requires the performer to develop a deeply expressive, melancholy sound at a slow tempo. Personally, I find playing lyrically at a slower tempo to be even more difficult than performing fast, energetic movements like the first. This movement demands careful control and sensitivity to bring out the distinct voices and emotional nuances within the music.

From an artistic standpoint, playing this movement reminds me of the experience of drifting apart from someone close—maybe a best friend or someone special. It feels like the beginning of the end of that relationship. Maybe there were unresolved arguments or hurtful things said that couldn't be taken back. Maybe your values clashed, and those differences couldn't be reconciled. As the movement progresses, it sounds like there's an attempt to mend things, to find common ground—but ultimately, it remains unresolved.

The second movement ends on a minor chord, which to me symbolizes the finality of that separation. It's as if you've grown apart—your paths have diverged, and perhaps you no longer speak, or they've moved far away. Yet, despite the ending, there's still a lingering sense of missing the times you shared, and a small hope that maybe, someday, you'll reconnect.

The third movement reminds me of the first in its playful, vibrant nature. It's technically challenging due to the presence of polyrhythms—at times, eighth notes are played over triplets, and later, triplets are layered over sixteenth notes. This was difficult to grasp at first, but once I got the feel for it, it became a lot of fun to put together.

This movement is the shortest of the sonata and comes to a swift, decisive end. It feels like a resolution, wrapping up the entire piece in a clean and satisfying way. From a creative perspective, it captures what “going with the flow” might sound like if expressed through music. Maybe you'll reconnect with that best friend or special someone someday, or maybe you won't—you're just going with the flow.

Personally, I believe life has a way of bringing people into your life exactly when you need them, and sometimes taking them away when it's time to grow. Whether you call it fate or coincidence, this movement reflects that feeling: the sense that maybe, just maybe, you'll cross paths again at a different point in life—or maybe not. Either way, this movement suggests that what matters most is accepting what comes, letting go of what doesn't, and continuing to move forward.

Music has and always will be an outlet for me—a way to express emotions that words alone can't capture. Whether I'm composing, improvising, or performing, my playing is a direct reflection of what I'm feeling at that moment. Each note and phrase carries a part of my experience—sometimes lighthearted and playful, sometimes tense and disheartening, sometimes filled with longing.

Choosing this piano sonata has allowed me to channel those emotions, especially as I've recently lost people who were very special to me. I lost my grandpa recently, and I like to think he's reading these words and listening to my music from heaven. I'm also no longer in contact with one of my best friends, but I still hope that, in some way, they've heard my interpretation of this piece and understand what it means to me—and that they might come across these words one day and know how much they've meant to me.

Through the music I create—and will continue to create—I hope to share my feelings and experiences with others. Whether it's heartbreak, playfulness, or nostalgia, I want people to hear something in my playing that resonates with them. Maybe they'll recognize an emotion they couldn't put into words, or learn something about themselves. For me, music is therapy, and I hope it can be that for others too.