

# The Titanic Tragedy Illustrated by Music

LMC 6310

Prof. Brian Magerko

Biqing (Lisa) Li

Project 1 Artist Statement

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## ARTIST STATEMENT

I see this project as an opportunity to create a narrative journey for the listener to experience a historical event through music. Music, like movie, literature, story-telling and other forms of communication, presents facts and conveys emotions to the audience. Typing codes in EarSketch provides me a way to communicate my thoughts and emotion in a similar expression as playing music notes on the piano. I aspire to create a connection between the Titanic, music, and the listener on both intellectual and emotional levels. I want to adapt the events on the Titanic's voyage to music, metaphorically and literally. I hope to produce a final track that resonates with the audience based on their understanding of the Titanic tragedy.

Before I settled on the Titanic idea, I viewed the project more as a music composition project so I tried to experiment with different genres and instruments. I used existing songs as my musical inspiration as I tried to come up with beats, melodies, and rhythms that resonate with those songs. I quickly came to the realization that I was setting boundaries for myself when I used other people's music as my inspiration. I was cherry-picking the music before I had a concrete idea, let alone music structure. As a result, I made multiple pieces, or "sections" of music that I invested so much time and effort in, but did not go well together in one song. I decided that I needed to settle on a concrete structure before I collect my music samples. The idea of mapping Titanic's voyage timeline to music came into my mind when I scoured my mind for inspirations that had a lot of inherent structure.

Aesthetically, I based the structure of my song to the structure of significant events that took place aboard the Titanic. I found several Titanic's voyage timelines on the web and translated it to music structure. Although there were many important events on each day of

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the voyage, I couldn't capture them all and therefore only highlighted the major events that made would make the most sense translated into music structure. For example, the Titanic leaving Southampton would mark the beginning/intro of the song. The fairly uneventful period of time when the Titanic was sailing on the Atlantic ocean before it hit the iceberg would be mapped as the verse. From the time the iceberg was detected to the time it hit the iceberg and made an abrupt left turn is the bridge. The outdo is the sinking of the ship. To better illustrate the aesthetic decisions I made in the music, below is the pseudo code that explains why I put certain music decisions where they are.

### Intro

<b>Time (Wednesday, April 10, 1912)</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Algorithmic Choices</b>
<i>12:00 Noon</i>	The Titanic Leaves Southampton, England on its maiden voyage.	<code>fitMedia(YG_RNB_FUNK_TRUMPET_1,1,8,16);</code> <code>setEffect(1, VOLUME, GAIN, -10,1,10,8);</code> <code>setEffect(1, VOLUME, GAIN, 10,15,-20,16);</code>
<i>09:00 pm</i>	The Titanic leaves Cherbourg and sets sail to Queenstown, Ireland.	<code>fitMedia(RD_CINEMATIC_SCORE_DRUMPART_13,2,1,16);</code> <code>fitMedia(YG_RNB_TAMBOURINE_1,3,5,16);</code>
<i>12:30 pm</i>	The Titanic arrives in Queenstown, Ireland.	<code>fitMedia(LISALI_OCEANLINERWHISTLE,45,16);</code> <code>fitMedia(LISALI_OCEAN_WAVE,5,1,16);</code>
<i>02:00 pm</i>	The Titanic leaves Queenstown and sets sail to New York.	

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In the introductory section, I chose trumpet, drum, tambourine to represent the jubilant, festive scene of passengers boarding the Titanic and the ship leaving the dock for its voyage. I also added two piece of sound sample (ocean liner whistle and ocean wave) to give this section an acoustic environment. I extracted the **real-world audio** from a video I recorded during a trip where the bus tour guide was talking to the tourists about the city and its history. It was very windy when the video was recorded. I thought the audio captured the tour guide’s enthusiasm and the wind sound in the background, both of which would go really well in the introductory part of the music.

## Part A - Initial Peaceful Start of the Titanic Voyage

Time (Friday, April 12, 1912 -- Saturday, April 13, 1912)	Event	Algorithmic Choices
	Fairly uneventful. The weather is good and the sea is calm. The temperature is getting colder. The Titanic receives several wireless messages from other ships reporting ice.	<pre>function Verse(){     //if you are a passenger from     third class, comment out the line below;     leave it if you are a first class passenger.     fitMedia(First_Class);      //if you are a passenger from     third class un-comment the line below      //fitMedia(Third_Class);</pre>

In the verse section, I wanted to musically portray the passengers enjoying their time on the Titanic before the tragic happened. Like in the movie *The Titanic*, first-class passengers and third-class passengers have their own entertainment preferences and hence different music

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styles. I did some background research into the exact instruments people used on the Titanic, and incorporated my findings into the project. In the third class, the music played was cruder, high-spirited, Bohemian style. In the first class, the music was more orchestra-style, slower, and classy. I also found an music sample from an organ built for the Titanic but did not finish on time. I chose to include this sample vividly because it reflects the music taste and lifestyle of Titanic's time.

Therefore in the **Verse()** function, I gave the listener the **freedom to choose** which class he wants to experience by comment/un-commenting the corresponding lines to switch up the music.

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## Part B - Discovering and Striking the Iceberg

<b>Time (Sunday, April 14, 1912)</b>	<b>Event</b>
<i>01:42 pm</i>	The Baltic reports ice.
<i>01:35 pm</i>	The Amerika reports 2 large icebergs
<i>10:50 pm</i>	<p>The Californian sends a wireless message directly to the Titanic telling them that they were stopped and surrounded by ice.</p> <p>The Californian's wireless operator, Cyril Furmstone Evans, waited patiently and then finally gave up, turned off his equipment and went to bed.</p>
<i>11:30 pm</i>	<p>Lookouts Fleet and Lee notice a low-lying mist ahead, but do not see an iceberg.</p> <p>They probably would have sighted the iceberg if they had been issued binoculars.</p>
<i>11:39 pm</i>	<p>"Iceberg Right Ahead!". The bridge immediately sends a "Stop" signal to the engine room. This is followed by "Full Astern".</p> <p>The Titanic turns to the left.....</p>
<i>11:40 pm</i>	<p>Titanic strikes iceberg! The Titanic begins to flood.</p>

Many events took place after the Titanic hit the iceberg, but I have decided not to include all of the specific details in the music. Overall I want to portray the following events acoustically:

- The crew come to an acknowledgment of the approaching danger
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- The ship turning an abrupt left as its last resort to avoid the iceberg
  - The actual collision
  - Glass and metal breaking due to the turn and collision

I achieve so by manipulating the underlying mood of the music samples. For example, `fitMedia(Y05_PIANO_1,1,24,32)` marks the start of the section, which gives the section a worrying, unsettling mood. I gradually increase the volume to signify the iceberg approaching. I then added two tracks (`fitMedia(RD_EDM_SFX_RISER_2,2, 26, 30)` and `fitMedia(RD_EDM_SFX_RISER_SQUAREWAVE_1,3, 28, 32)`) to intensify the nerve-racking atmosphere even more. Additionally, I dropped some white noises, boat engine sound, and ocean wave sound here to represent the ambient background sound of the time. When the Titanic hits the iceberg, I made the music gradually pan to the right to represent the ship turning left. I also applied **Math.random()** in this section on two samples (`icebergImpact[0]` and `icebergImpact[1]`) to represent the jarring, incongruous sound of plates and ice chunks falling and clashing onto the ground.

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## Part C - Chaotic Escape and Rescue

<b>Time (Monday, April 15, 1912)</b>	<b>Event</b>
<i>12:00 Midnight</i>	first 6 watertight compartments had been breached and predicts that Titanic will stay afloat at most 2 hours
<i>12:05 am</i>	The Amerika reports 2 large icebergs
<i>10:50 pm</i>	Captain Smith orders his crew to prepare the lifeboats and requests that wireless operators Harold Bride and Jack Phillips send the "CQD" distress signal. The message "CQD" is a general call to all vessels, which indicates the vessel sending is in distress and requires immediate assistance.
<i>12:25 am</i>	Captain Smith realizes the ship is lost and gives order to start filling lifeboats.
<i>12:45 am - 02:05 am</i>	Launch all lifeboats on board Titanic continues to submerge
<i>02:18 am</i>	The lights blink once and then go out.
<i>02:19 am</i>	The Titanic breaks into 2 pieces and sinks to the ocean floor.

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Again, many events took place during the sinking process of the Titanic. I decided not to translate the events into music too literally. For example, I was going to find a sample similar to the lifeboat launching sound, as well as getting the crew shouting the line “women and children first” from the Titanic movie. However, I did not want this section to sound exactly like a replica of the movie audio. I had to give up on a lot of ideas I had come up with, and chose to adopt a more metaphorical approach in this section.

I wrote a **recursive function** named **jump()** in this section to represent desperate passengers jumping off the ship into the water, voluntarily and involuntarily. In the **jump()** function I also used **Math.random()** because the jumping happened unpredictably in the moment of life and death. In the movie as well as in reality, many passengers jumped off the ship following other passengers assuming that they would have a better chance to survive. The recursive function sheds light on this tragic mentality.

In addition, I intentionally used a `makeBeat` in this section with string `CQD='0+00+00+0+0+00'`. CQD, transmitted in Morse code as “- . - . - - . - - . .” is a distress signal adopted for radio use, including the rescue of the Titanic. I translated the CQD Morse code into a beat string that represents the Titanic sending the last distress signals during the final hour of its voyage.

## Outdo - Titanic Sinking

This section is straightforward as it plays out Titanic’s catastrophic fate and the lingering emotional outbursts. This section also echoes with the historical event when the ship’s orchestra musicians played music to soothe the desperate crowd as the ship settled quietly lower and lower in the water. I chose violin as it is the most relevant instrument they used and to pay homage to the musicians’ bravery. The music fades out as the sound of the

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water takes over, just as the Atlantic Ocean reclaims its dominance as it fully swallowed the ship. From measure 66 and on, the beating of the drum gradually disappears like the diminishing sound of the heartbeat, symbolizing the loss of all lives on the ship. The music comes to an abrupt halt as the Titanic descends into its final and forever resting place for all the souls once onboard.

Link to project on EarSketch:

<http://ears sketch.gatech.edu/ears sketch2/#?sharing=dRtz16nXuoHOa1IRBHltog>

Link to project on my Portfolio:

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