

Beethoven Game Jam 29.03. – 31.03.2019

Cologne Game Lab & WDR3

- Von Elise -

Project Overview

Scope

Platform: Windows PC & MacOS // potential mobile port
Engine: UE4 or Unity
Genre: Detective // Puzzle // Noir // Narrative
Target: Teens // no traditional gamers // interested in Beethoven Year

Team

Henri Knutsen Conception // Systems & Level Design
Kilian Schmitt UX & UI // Systems & Narrative Design
Kurt Rexrodt Concept Art // 3D Art

Elevator Pitch // USP

Von Elise is a narrative detective game about the mysterious vanishing of old and ill composer, Ludwig van Beethoven. With only a few initial hints provided by his acquaintance called Elise, an investigator visits historic locations the artist frequented, and learns about Beethoven's life.

- ° Historic, educational setting
- ° Interactive narrative
- ° Information about the great musician gamified with a unique story

High Level

The player takes on the role of a Viennan detective, who is investigating the case of the disappearance of famous, old and ill composer Ludwig van Beethoven, which had been reported by Beethoven's Secretary Anton Schindler a day prior to the game's events.

As the game starts, a woman waits in the detective's office.

Her face is veiled, but she introduces herself as Elise. She claims to be an acquaintance of Beethoven; however the only information she can provide is a key to Beethoven's residence, and a scrap of sheet music that she found in his empty bed.

She assumes that he was working on writing his last, great symphony – the 10th symphony.

The game will offer several locations filled with objects which may contain clues or background information on Beethoven's life. The player will have to

use all information gathered to unlock access to subsequent locations, thus finding out Beethoven's whereabouts.

Throughout the game, via clues and via the different environments, players will gain insight about Beethoven's life and surroundings in his last period in Vienna.

While all information is based on historical records, the game will take a twist to present Beethoven's life in a fantastical, dark and engaging fashion – his engagement with the enlightenment movement and ideals of a new Europe opposing the views and power of the reigning nobility.

Inspirations

- Valiant Hearts (storytelling)
- Assassin's Creed (historical basis)

Features

Camera

1st Person perspective as the detective provides the benefit of involving the player deeper in the interactions of the game.

This perspective also discards the need to visualize and animate a player character – which also deflects the risks of players not being able to identify with that character

Progression

There is no death or combat in this game.

As a simple, narrative experience, the focus lies on experiencing a virtual slice of life of Beethoven by exploring the different location, and learn about different aspects of his life.

Through exploration, puzzles are unlocked which offer access to further game content.

All locations and all information can be accessed at all times once unlocked/found via the detective map and the almanac.

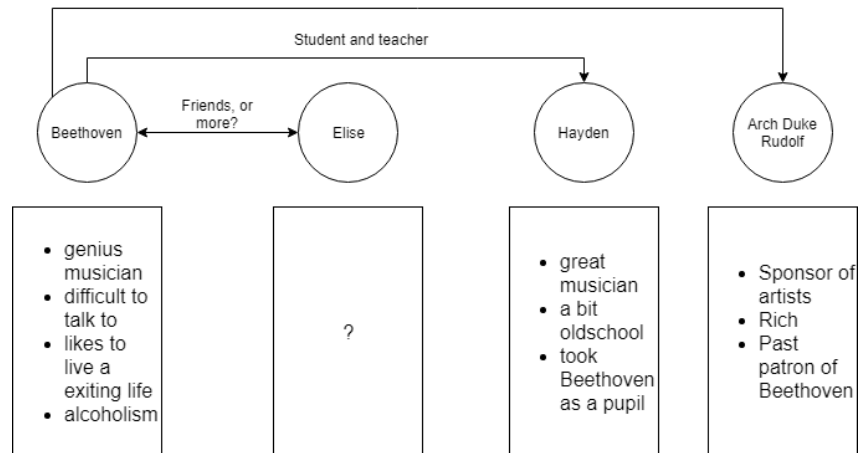
Atmosphere

Normal to supernatural and fantastic elements.

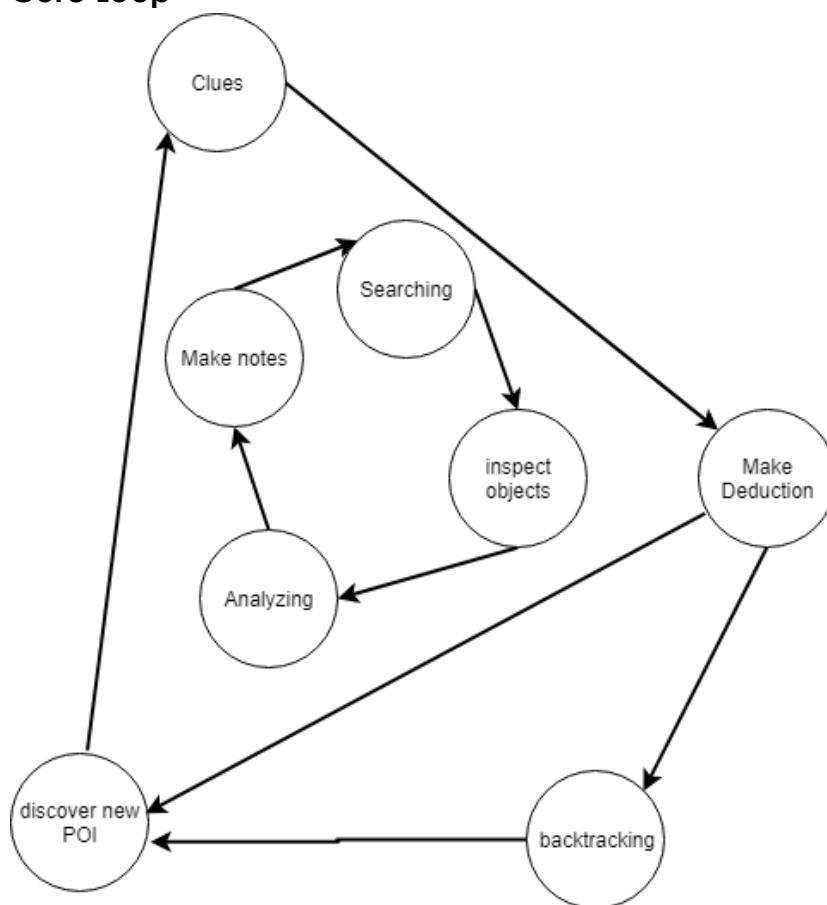
Office as intermission hub changes in tone, first it's sunny outside, then it gradually darkens, it becomes cloudy and it starts raining. Light changes from warm to cold in the office representing the turn the events have taken.

Characters

Several character of this time period that were connected to Beethoven in his last phase of life will be present or referenced in the game to teach about his social circle and dynamics.



Core Loop



Collecting Clues

The game offers several locations; or levels; which can be accessed and unlocked after collecting enough information to be able to define them. In every location, clues can be found either freely lying around, or have to be unlocked by playing a short sequence of notes on a piano that can be found in the respective location.

These clues, once found, will be saved in the detective's **Almanac**, where they can be checked again.

Each clue enables one or more words for the location texts, of which only one is correct

Finding them will also unlock new input on the detective **Map** back in the office location.

On this map, clue unlocks have to be inserted correctly, which if successful will make follow up locations accessible.

Piano Clues

The first clue the player ever gains in the game is a scrap with a few notes that Elise hands to them after their conversation.

In every location, obvious or revealed, a piano keyboard can be found. The player will have to play the sequence on the piano, which will then reveal access to additional clues or locations.

Additional clues on how to read notes or play the piano are also hidden in the first location, teaching basic knowledge of the instrument.

Piano Clues are crucial to progress to other POIs, and the tune scraps are of course from Beethoven's work "Für Elise"

Piano keys can be played by interacting with them via mouse click. Tempo and rhythm matter, but allow grace periods.

Piano input is reset automatically after entering a wrong note or waiting too long without input.

Unlocking Points of Interest

Once the player has collected clues in their Almanac, certain input options for a case formulation are unlocked.

On the map, POIs are not visible unless unlocked. Each unlocked POI or location has two options to interact – entering the location and **revisiting location clues**.

Here, the player can formulate a sentence with the words unlocked by finding the clues. This sentence will reveal the location of the next POI, and subsequently unlock access to it on the detective map.

While basic input might be available from the start, players will have to actively explore and unlock clue words by foraging through the locations before being able to formulate the correct sentences.

Clue words can be added by drag & dropping or directly entering text input.

Game Progress // Narrative

Scene 1 - Detective Office

The detective office is the base of the main character. It is a homely office with wide windows that let in lots of light. A sturdy desk with a big chair is

located under one of the windows, perfect for reviewing case files or listening to reports.

On a wall, next to a closet shelf containing uncountable files, a pin board takes up almost all free space. On this wall, the detective collects and connects clues from investigations.

A chair for visitors stands on the other wall. It is currently used by Beethoven's concerned friend Elise, who has come to the detective to ask them to find the composer. She is wearing a headscarf and faces the window, so her face cannot be seen.

Clues:

- Tune Scrap #1 for Pol 2 (Atelier). Has masonry compass symbol on its back side

Interactions:

- Elise: talking about Beethoven missing, giving first Piano Scrap
- Clue map: first POI unlocked

Scene 2 - Beethoven's Atelier

The atelier is a homely, old and suburban house, cosy, and it shows signs of wear that were suffered over the years of Beethoven living there. The window is open, and the wind blowing in has spread many sheets on the floor that have probably been on the big desk, or near the impressive piano before. The bed in the corner of the room is unmade, and the signs of the composer's illness are impossible to ignore. On a nightstand next to the bed, uncountable flasks are stacked tightly, assumingly containing tinctures and other remedies intended to ease Beethoven's suffering.

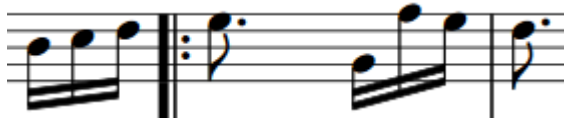
In a corner, behind the piano, a violin has its place, with some more orderly sheets stacked next to it.

Clues and Info:

- Hearing trumpet: **deaf**, orchestra trumpet
- Strewn sheets: **still composing**, messy
- **Tune Scrap #2** with masonry compass on it
- Violin + Stacked sheets: **Final work**, replacement of Große Fuge on 13th quartet
- Secret Diary with abstract symbol: mention of **Opera House**
- Medicine: pharmacy
- Books/Patronage: used to be sponsored by Duke Rudolph, connected to nobility
- Drank a lot: Tavern
- Letters to many friends, including **Mozart and Haydn**, discussing their friendships

Interactions:

- Piano: Play Tune Scrap #1 from Elise (1 Office)



Scene 3 – Detective Office

The same place as in Scene 1. The sky outside has become cloudy, the light that comes through the windows looks less bright.

Clues:

- None

Interactions:

- Elise: new dialogue after solving clue map for next POI
- Clue map: find next POI

Scene 4 - Vienna Opera House // Main Hall (Theater an der Wien)

The impressive main hall is empty except for the detective, and only dimly lit by some lamps and candles. On the stage, a piano stands, opened. Behind, where the room for the actors behind the curtain is, several instruments are stored away, with tons of note sheets stacked loosely around them. There is a door, but it appears to be locked.

Clues:

- Mason square unlocked through **piano play interaction** in wall of theatre
- Info on several musical pieces and instruments used
- Piano strip #3 among notes, again with masonry compass
- Diary/Deaf notes “at least he doesn’t have to hear the insufferable “noble” audience talking anymore”
- More mason details: he is a **freemason**, involved with enlightenment

Interactions:

- Piano: Play Tune Scrap #2 from Atelier



Scene 5 - Detective Office

Same place as in scene 1 and 3. The sky outside has become even more cloudy, and it started to rain slightly

Clues:

- None

Interactions:

- Elise: new dialogue after solving clue map for next POI
- Clue map: find next POI

Scene 6 - Haydn's last residence

Small, dark room in Haydn's last residence house.

While the house was still in use, the room Haydn used in his final days is now dusty, and many notes are strewn around. There is no piano in this atelier, only shelves full of letters and books; and a sturdy desk with some pieces of paper, and a dried ink flask.

Clues:

- Mason square: fits into an empty space in a shelf, which causes a book to fall out where a **mason compass** was hidden behind

- Some notes about the lodge: revelation that all three composer were **freemasons**

- General information on enlightenment: they are partially in Beethoven's handwriting and contain lots of progressive ideas

- Letter from Lodge: warning that powerful courtiers aim to silence the enlightenment movement by all means – their artistic expression is endangered

Interactions:

- Adding mason square

Scene 7 - Vienna Opera House // Secret cellar

Following a short sequence of stone steps down, after which follows a short corridor the detective ends up in front of an almost smooth wall. There is a small notch in the wall that becomes apparent after closer inspection.

Placing the mason compass and drawing it out there unlocks a small stone piano keyboard that slides out the wall to the right side.

Playing Tune Scrap #3 here opens up the wall, which leads into a very warmly candle lit underground corridor, almost like a cellar.

The walls are plastered with shelves filled with books, and a few meters in there is a chair, with its back turned to the entrance, in front of a big desk.

Someone, with their back turned to the detective, sits in the chair; only the bushy untidy hair is visible over the backrest of the chair.

Upon moving closer to the figure, it gasps, and whispers "Pity, pity – too late!", then turns around with a shocked expression.

It is, in fact, Beethoven, looking very ill. When he realizes the detective stands before him, he visibly relaxes.

Feebly, he tell the detective that he came here to hide, to finish his last work in safety. He came here to spend his last days carrying on the ideas of progress he championed, channelling them into his music that his enemies among the nobility opposed so strongly that he feared for his safety.

But now, he admits, he is too weak to finish it. He asks the detective to bring him home so he could die in his bed, and implores him to leave the unfinished

10th symphony down in the secret chambers, so that it'd be hidden from sight and would one day fall into the right hands.

The detective agrees, and helps the old composer to get up. A last look onto the papers on the desk reveal one line of dedication over the symphony's notes: "Für Elise".

Then the screen fades to black.

Before credits, the most distinct information of his life is laid out for the player once more, honouring his memory and accomplishments and celebrating the Beethoven Year of 2020.

Clues:

- None

Interactions:

- Beethoven: Dialogue and end

- Mason compass on wall

- Piano: Tune Scrap #3



Visuals

Artstyle

As a 3D game with a potential mobile port targeting a non-gamer audience, a minimalist low poly style is helpful to create an accessible atmosphere.

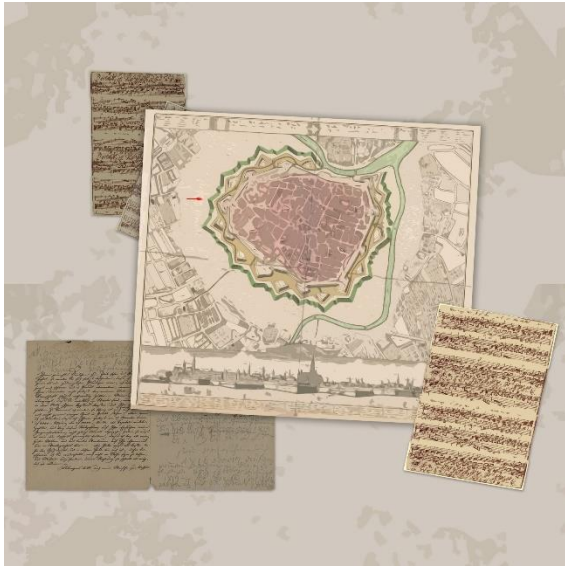
Using shaders, it's easy to set a mood in a level containing assets of this kind.

Concept Assets

Beethoven's desk & chair



A piano & the Clue Map

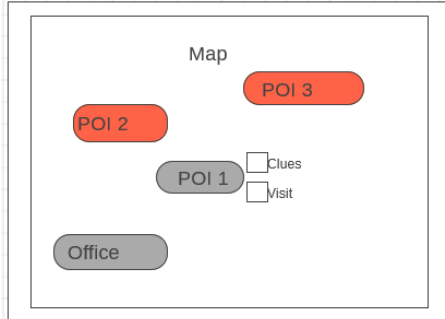


Interface Mockups

Functionality of the Clue Map feature.

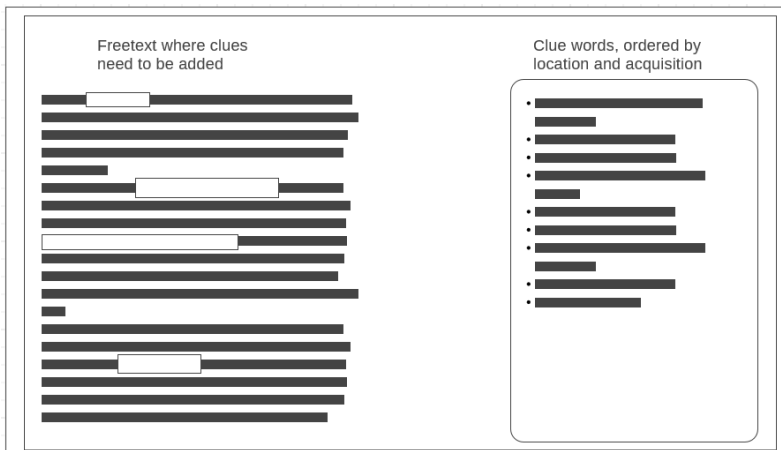
Red marked POIS are locked, grey ones are unlocked and can be visited and their respective clues can be checked.

To try finding out which location is the next one, clues from other locations need to be combined properly.



Mockup of the clue assembly minigame.

The correct clues have to be sorted into a text from Elise's dialogue, which will then describe the correct location.



Mockup of the detective's almanac or an alternative menu in which clues and information can be collected and accessed.

