

Palindromic Variations

Anthony Etherin, 2015

Experiments in Backmasking

'The Neon Falls' [*The_Neon_Falls.mp3*] is an autobackmasked palindrome (it plays the same backwards as forwards) composed and recorded using digital backmasking techniques. In 'The Nickel Void' [*The_Nickel_Void.mp3*], the bass part alone is palindromic via backmasking. Its accompaniments are an improvised lead guitar part and a quite deliberate string section.

'Ruodabuort' [*Ruodabuort.mp3*] is a backmasked section from an instrumental version of the song 'Troubadour' [*Troubadour.mp3*]. Going further, 'Song of Inversions' [*Song_Of_Inversions.mp3*] is composed of backmasked fragments from 'Symphonic Fragment in A minor' [*Symphonic_Fragment.mp3*] and 'Piano and Cello Duet in D minor' [*Piano_Cello.mp3*].

'The Carbon Shift' [*The_Carbon_Shift.mp3*] contains an autobackmasked palindromic section as well as brief backmasked inversions.

Note and Beat Palindromes

'The Copper Dice' [*The_Copper_Dice.mp3*] contains a section that is palindromic by note. That is, rather than by backmasking, a musical palindrome was created by reversing the sheet music. The rest of the piece was based on and written around this section.

The remaining palindromic experiments employ palindromes by beat (i.e. using each beat of the composition as letters are used in literary palindromes). The 'Root 2' compositions [*Root_2_I_(With_Prologue).mp3* and *Root_2_II_(Interlude).mp3*] present heterogeneous palindromes in the decimal expansion of the square root of two. (For a description of heterogeneous palindromes, please read 'Edges: Notes on the Constraints', accessible via the writing archive on <http://www.songsofinversion.com>) The first piece includes a prologue, which ends, approximately one minute 20 seconds in, with a guitar solo. Once the solo is finished, a modified version of this prologue is used as the basis for a heterogeneous palindrome *by beat* in all instruments, according to the sequence 1-4-1-4-2-1-3-5-6-2-3-7-3-0-9-5-0-4-8-[8]-8-4-0-5-9-0-3-7-3-2-6-5-3-1-2-4-1-4-1. The second piece, 'Root 2 II (Interlude)', obeys this same structure.

'The Clockwork Bee' [*The_Clockwork_Bee.mp3*] comprises variations (including a single-beat palindrome, a double-beat palindrome, a single-note palindrome, and a heterogeneous palindrome) on a melody instructed by the nonsense lipogram in h to z, 'A BEE FED AGED BEEF BEDDED A GAFF'.

{For those who care, the full, tedious details of 'The Clockwork Bee's' composition are as follows:

1. The above lipogram was used to generate the melody heard in bars 1-4 (and repeated with accompanying lower-register notes in bars 5-8 and again with cello in bars 9-12 and 13-16). The rhythm of the abeefedagedbeebeddedagaff melody, its lower-register support, and the cello's melody were not subject to any special restriction.
2. The 'bee' melody (with its lower-register piano and cello accompaniments) was turned into a palindrome by beat (the reverse incarnation is performed first).
3. The 'bee' melody (without cello and piano accompaniments) was played backwards by beat, its pitch lowered by seven semitones and its tempo halved (for purely aesthetic reasons).
4. The 'bee' melody, with piano accompaniment but without cello, was performed as a palindrome by every two beats, again starting with the reverse incarnation.
5. As 2. but without the cello.
6. The 'bee' melody, with lower register accompaniment and cello, was performed with the cello part reversed, such that the cello's notes retained their original length but the pitch of the final note became that of the first, the pitch of the second to last note the second, etc. The pitch of the piano part was shifted throughout to accommodate these changes.
7. The new melody played in part six was then reversed (by beat), creating in steps 6. and 7. combined a new palindrome by beat.
8. The original 'bee' melody, piano and cello accompaniments included, was performed as an heterogeneous palindrome based on the notes of the cello part; that is, the cello part was played as a palindrome by *note* and the piano part as an heterogeneous palindrome with respect to beats, whose units of reversal obeyed the note lengths of the cello part. Once again, the reverse incarnation begins the palindrome.
9. The second and first parts (respectively) of the two preceding palindromes (i.e. the part created in step 7 and the first half of the palindrome described in part 8) were played on piano only.
10. The first four bars of the composition were repeated.}

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