

3 Inventive Songs

Michael Bemmels
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How often do you encounter a popular song comprised entirely of a single diatonic chord progression, repeated without variation a banal number of times? If you're like me, perhaps you enjoy the energetic mood of the song, or the lyrical content, but are seriously prompted to wonder, "couldn't the music have at least *a little* more compositional ingenuity or complexity?"

In response to this dire dilemma which we too often experience, I have composed 3 *Inventive Songs* for solo guitar. They are "song-like" by (generally) adhering to the most familiar formal structure of popular songs:

Verse - Chorus - Verse - Chorus - Bridge - Chorus

They are "inventive" in their persistent use of highly chromatic harmonies, modulations, and developmental techniques.

With these songs, I was extremely curious about the possibilities of unifying theoretical sophistication with fun, light, emotionally accessible sounds. The compositional premise was to create pieces that resembled modern popular songs, yet employed a rich harmonic vocabulary and motivic developments usually found in classical music. It was an exciting experiment for me to pursue, and in the end I feel glad to have made the effort to follow through with it.

As always, all I can really claim, is that I have created a musical work that is enjoyable and interesting to me, personally, at this point in my life. It's not possible for me to know how others will experience the work. My hope is that it will be at least somewhat meaningful and enjoyable for others, or that it will generate some kind of positive influence. It's unfeasible to observe or measure the intangible value of an artistic experience, yet I am optimistic that striving to create art is indeed worthwhile, even if the work's impact is minimal or short-lived.

From another perspective, this compositional project is strangely unearthing an issue of personal identity, as I'm not quite sure to which artistic tradition I properly belong. The music was composed and notated formally like a classical piece; at the same time, the influence from popular music is strongly apparent. My wishful response is to ask, "why not both?" or perhaps, "why even worry about adhering to a pre-conceived label?" After all, musical sounds are musical sounds, personal subjective experiences are personal subjective experiences, and conceptual thoughts are just temporary fabrications we have invented, which shape and colour our perceptions of reality.

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No. 1 - Remember When...?

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Moderato $\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \overset{3}{\curvearrowright}$

mp

4

8

11

15

17

f

mp

20 $\frac{6}{6}$ II

23

26 $\frac{6}{6}$ I piv. $\frac{6}{6}$ IV

29 $\frac{6}{6}$ IV

32 $\frac{2}{2}$ II $\frac{5}{5}$ II $\frac{2}{2}$ V

35 $\frac{6}{6}$ IV piv. $\frac{2}{2}$ V

37

③ ③ ③

$\frac{5}{5}$ IV

1 4 -4 0 2 1 2 3 5 0 4 2 1

40

③ ③ ③

$\frac{6}{6}$ VII $\frac{5}{2}$ IV

3 4 1 4 2 2 4 1 4 3 1 3 3 4 -4 3 -3 -1

mp

43

③ ② ②

46

② ② ②

$\frac{6}{6}$ III $\frac{6}{6}$ I

-4 2 3 -4 3 4 3 4 2 0 2 3 4

49

② ② ②

$\frac{2}{2}$ V $\frac{5}{5}$ VII $\frac{5}{5}$ IV

0 4 1 4 3 -3 3 3 3 0 3 2

p

No. 2 - Soliloquy

Andante

Musical score for "No. 2 - Soliloquy" in G major, 4/4 time, Andante tempo. The score is written in treble clef and consists of six systems of music. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The dynamics range from *pp* (pianissimo) to *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and fingerings. There are also some unusual markings like circled numbers and symbols like "III", "IV", "II", "I" above the notes.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): *pp*. Fingerings: 6, 1, 3, 0, 2, 1, 6.

System 2 (Measures 5-7): *p*. Fingerings: 2, 0, 3, 1, -1, 4, 2.

System 3 (Measures 8-10): *mp*. Fingerings: 1, 2, 1, 3, 0, 6, 6, 4, 3, 2.

System 4 (Measures 11-13): *mf*. Fingerings: 6, 5, 6, 4.

System 5 (Measures 14-16): *mf*. Fingerings: 3, 4, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3.

System 6 (Measures 17-19): *mf*. Fingerings: 5, 5, 6, 4, 3, 1, 3, 1.

20 $\frac{6}{6}$ VII $\frac{5}{5}$ VII $\frac{6}{6}$ VII $\frac{6}{6}$ VII $\frac{5}{5}$ VII

23 $\frac{6}{6}$ VII $\frac{5}{5}$ III $\frac{3}{3}$ V $\frac{3}{3}$ IV $\frac{3}{3}$ V

26 $\frac{3}{3}$ VII $\frac{3}{3}$ VI

29

32 $\frac{6}{6}$ III $\frac{6}{6}$ I

34 $\frac{5}{5}$ III $\frac{6}{6}$ I

36

6/6 IV

38

5/5 IV

6/6 II

mf

⑤

40

5/5 IV

6/6 II

42

6/6 II

6/6 VII

f

45

48

50

p

52

p

54

p

56

p

58

pp

61

mp

64

mp

66

mp

68

mp

70

rall. *p*

13 *ord.* $\frac{6}{6}$ III $\frac{4}{2}$ II -2

15 *rasg.* *cresc.* *p*

17 $\frac{2}{2}$ X $\frac{6}{6}$ VIII $\frac{5}{5}$ VIII *f*

19 $\frac{6}{6}$ VI piv. $\frac{6}{6}$ IV *p*

21 $\frac{6}{6}$ IX $\frac{6}{6}$ VII $\frac{5}{5}$ VII

23 $\frac{6}{6}$ V $\frac{6}{6}$ VI $\textcircled{1}$ 1 0 4 *p*

*Slap the 6th string with the right-hand thumb.

37 *f*

39

41

43

45 *mf*

47

61

63

66

Tempo I

68

70

72

*Play a natural harmonic with the right hand.

74

f

Musical notation for measures 74 and 75. Measure 74 starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The music features a melody of eighth and quarter notes with slurs and ties, and a bass line with chords and eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *f* is present at the beginning.

76

Musical notation for measures 76 and 77. The notation continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns as the previous measures, including slurs and ties.

78

ff

Musical notation for measures 78, 79, 80, and 81. Measure 78 includes a circled 2 above a double bar line. Measures 79 and 80 feature fingerings such as 4, 4, -4, 0, -4, and -4. Measure 81 includes a circled 2 above a double bar line and fingerings 3, 1, and 2. The music concludes with a dynamic marking of *ff* and a *p* marking above a final chord.