Bob L. T. Sturm (foikrnn)

**Chicken Bits and Bits and Bobs**

flute (piccolo)
clarinet in A (Bb bass clarinet)
piano
violin
double bass
percussion (trap set)

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Background:

“Chicken Bits and Bits and Bobs” is composed around material generated by a music AI (folk.rnn) trained on textual transcriptions of traditional dance music from Ireland and the UK. At right is the verbatim output generated by the AI: a tune the AI has titled “Chicken”. The first seven phrases (lettered A–G) are notated below.

This appears at first an unruly mess, but it shows some consistency in a liberal use of grace notes (a characteristic of piping tunes), a modal character, and repetition and variation. I can’t help but feel that the AI is imitating chicken clucks, and that this tune reflects a sense of humor it has somehow developed.

My challenge in this work was to make sense of the AI-generated material, and to engage with it to see where it leads me. I treat the material as a point of

1 https://github.com/IraKorshunova/folk-rnn
departure. I build the first half of the work ("Chicken Bits") as an arrangement of all but one of the seven lettered phrases above: AABBCCD AABBCCDFDFG. In the second half ("Bits and Bobs"), I revisit and develop each of the ideas in A, B, C, D, F and G.

Performance notes:

The entire piece should be played with good humor, and not taken too seriously. Or maybe the first bit (m. 1-110) should be very, very serious, and the remainder a laugh at how so very serious the first bit was.

Percussion:
The work features a 5-piece trap set, with at least one hi-hat, one crash cymbal, and one drummer wielding two drumsticks.\(^2\) The low tom part up to m.55 could instead be played by a bodhran (Irish frame drum). Notation is defined at its first use.

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\(^2\) Not the chicken-drumstick-kind you silly goose!