



On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind

By Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis

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Winner of the Wallace Berry Award, Society for Music Theory

Winner of the Deems Taylor/Virgil Thomson Award, ASCAP

What is it about the music you love that makes you want to hear it again?

Why do we crave a "hook" that returns, again and again, within the same piece?

And how does a song end up getting stuck in your head?

Whether it's a motif repeated throughout a composition, a sample looped under an electronic dance beat, a passage replayed incessantly by a musician in a practice room—or an "earworm" burrowing through your mind like a broken record—repetition is nearly as integral to music as the notes themselves. Its centrality has been acknowledged by everyone from evolutionary biologist W. Tecumseh Fitch, who has called it a "design feature" of music, to the composer Arnold Schoenberg who admitted that "intelligibility in music seems to be impossible without repetition." And yet, stunningly little is actually understood about repetition and its role in music.

On Repeat offers the first in-depth inquiry into music's repetitive nature, focusing not on a particular style, or body of work, but on repertoire from across time periods and cultures. Author Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis draws on a diverse array of fields including music theory, psycholinguistics, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology, to look head-on at the underlying perceptual mechanisms associated with repetition. Her work sheds light on a range of issues from repetition's use as a compositional tool to its role in characterizing our behavior as listeners, and then moves beyond music to consider related implications for repetition in language, learning, and communication.

Written in engaging prose, and enlivening otherwise complex concepts for the specialist and non-specialist alike, *On Repeat* will captivate scholars and students across numerous disciplines from music theory and history, to psychology and neuroscience—and anyone fascinated by the puzzle of repetition in music.

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Editorial Review

Review

One of the top 10 science and tech books for December, 2013 - The Guardian

A signal musical and intellectual achievement. - *Music & Letters*

"Most music repeats itself a lot—an awful lot, actually. In *On Repeat*, Elizabeth Margulis takes a firm grasp of this obvious fact and moves it out from under our musical noses, giving it the thoughtful consideration it deserves. With knowledge and illustrations ranging from neuroscience to music analysis, and leavened with her personal experiences as a listener and pianist, Margulis shows that music's repetitiveness, far from being a flaw or lapse, is essential for us to hear, remember, move, feel, and delight in music, especially the music we know and love the best." -Justin London, Professor of Music, *Carleton College*, and author of *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*

"Cognitive music theorist Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis addresses one of the great puzzles about music: why does it repeat so much? This simple question provides a wedge into a range of issues underlying musical understanding and appreciation. *On Repeat* is a consequential book written in engaging and non-technical language." -Fred Lerdahl, Fritz Reiner Professor of Music, *Columbia University*

"[H]ighly stimulating, if controversial. Recommended." --*CHOICE*

"[A] signal musical and intellectual achievement." -- *Music and Letters*

"A foundational study...The author has contributed a volume of overwhelming significance, originality, and rigor." --Society for Music Theory, in awarding the Wallace Berry Award

"The engaging, entertaining style of *On Repeat* makes it a pleasure to read... an important contribution to the field of music cognition, and should be of interest to scholars throughout the field." - *Music Perception*

"[A]n exciting new examination of a very old subject... eminently readable and intriguing, having much to offer the academic musician, the experimental psychologist, or the interested lay reader. The book represents a significant advance in our understanding of the deep questions behind the variegated phenomena of musical repetition." - Music Theory Online

"Margulis's *On Repeat* goes a long way toward explaining the sea change between two [repeated performances], as well as the earworm I had on the drive home." --*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*

About the Author

Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis directs the Music Cognition Lab at the University of Arkansas. Her research uses theoretical, behavioral, and neuroimaging methodologies to investigate the dynamic, moment-to-moment experience of listeners without special musical training. She was also trained as a concert pianist.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rafael Runyan:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for all of us. The book *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* seemed to be making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The publication *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* is not only giving you a lot more new information but also for being your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship using the book *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*. You never experience lose out for everything should you read some books.

Yadira Singh:

In this period of time globalization it is important to someone to find information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information quicker to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, paper, book, and soon. You will observe that now, a lot of publisher this print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended for your requirements is *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* this e-book consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This kind of book was represented so why is the world has grown up. The terminology styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some exploration when he makes this book. This is why this book suitable all of you.

James Smith:

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John Bergeron:

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