

## **Boxing the Compass, by Perri Lynch and David Stutz**

"Boxing the Compass" is an asynchronous, non-deterministic, automaton to be performed in any circular space, by any number of people. The participants should be recruited from passers-by at the site.

One person, who is selected in advance, stands at the center and acts as the dispatcher for people arriving at the site. This person is designated as the "master of the automaton." The master of the automaton should have a compass with which to take bearings. The master should also have the three scripts that describe how to perform the piece.

Before the performance begins, the master marks the points of the compass at the edge of the circle, or places a compass rose at its center. These are optional actions, as the master of the automaton can give directions from his or her compass during the performance.

The master of the automaton begins the piece by taking a bearing and facing North, referencing script #1.

Each script ends with the instruction to either rotate right or to rotate left. In a small performance, the rotation should be 90 degrees, to a major point of the compass. In a huge performance, the rotation could be as fine as 11.25 degrees (1/32 of a circle) to the very finest compass points.

As people arrive at the site, they should be invited to participate. If they agree, they should be told to go to the center and wait for instructions. Alternatively, the master can beckon passers-by to the center of the circle, where they will be given instructions. People may choose to act as individuals, or to act as a group. For example, a mother and child might decide to act as a single participant.

As participants arrive at the center of the circle, the master of the automaton dispatches each person in turn, following the instructions given by the current script.

The scripts will cause the participants to "box the compass" (recite the points of the compass) intermittently, from various locations.

The piece continues until the termination state is reached, or until there are no participants. It can be repeated immediately any number of times, if desired.

### *Notes:*

*The piece will scale by the number of points of the compass used for dispatching and by the number of participants. 10-20 participants over a half-hour seems to be a good number per 4 points of the compass. So, for example, a group of 80 participants taken over an hour might do well on a compass with 8 points.*

*(Standard version)*

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North

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North by east  
North-northeast  
Northeast by north  
Northeast  
Northeast by east  
East-northeast  
East by north

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East

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East by south  
East-southeast  
Southeast by east  
Southeast  
Southeast by south  
South-southeast  
South by east

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South

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South by west  
South-southwest  
Southwest by south  
Southwest  
Southwest by west  
West-southwest  
West by south

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West

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West by north  
West-northwest  
Northwest by west  
Northwest  
Northwest by north  
North-northwest  
North by west

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North

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*(Beth's variation)*

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South

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South by east  
South-southeast  
Southeast by south  
Southeast  
Southeast by east  
East-southeast  
East by south

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East

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East by north  
East-northeast  
Northeast by east  
Northeast  
Northeast by north  
North-northeast  
North by east  
North

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North by west  
North-northwest  
Northwest by north  
Northwest  
Northwest by west  
West-northwest  
West by north

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West

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West by south  
West-southwest  
Southwest by west  
Southwest  
Southwest by south  
South-southwest  
South by west

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South

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### Script #1 (instructions are given in italics, variables in braces)

*(Wait for a participant at the center of the circle. The direction that you are facing will be referred to as the "current direction" below.)*

1 "Choose a number between 3 and 7." *(This will be referred to as the "chosen number" below.)*

2 "Follow the instructions I give you."

3 "Go [current direction] to the edge of the circle."

4 "Stop there, listen and wait a bit."

5 *(Give the participant a printed list of the points of the compass.)* "When you feel that it is time, recite the words on this page so that we can all hear them. You don't need to shout. You may choose to speak when others are speaking, or to wait."

6 *(At this point, observe whether any participant is boxing the compass at the point of the compass that you are currently facing.)*

7 **Only if** *no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, say: "After you have finished reciting, walk counterclockwise around the circle, slowly, listening carefully, for [chosen number] silent revolutions."*

8 **Only if** *someone was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, say: "After you have finished reciting, walk clockwise around the circle, slowly, listening carefully, for [chosen number] silent revolutions."*

9 "Your rotations may be inside the circle, or immediately outside the circle, or a combination of inside and outside."

10 "When you have finished your rotations, stop and listen. When you feel that it is time, recite the words on the page again."

11 "After you have recited the words, you may then repeat your actions any number of times, walking in a circle and then boxing the compass, or else you may return your page to me."

12 *(If no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, take a bearing and rotate RIGHT to face the next point of the compass. If someone was observed boxing the compass in step 6, rotate LEFT to face the next point of the compass.)*

13 *(If no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, go to script number 2. If someone was observed boxing the compass in step 6, go to script number 3.)*

## Script #2 (instructions are given in italics, variables in braces)

*(Wait for a participant at the center of the circle. The direction that you are facing will be referred to as the "current direction" below.)*

1 "Choose a number between 1 and 5." *(This will be referred to as the "chosen number" below.)*

2 "Follow the instructions I give you."

3 "Go [current direction] to the edge of the circle."

4 "Stop there, listen and wait a bit."

5 *(Give the participant a printed list of the points of the compass.)* "When you feel that it is time, recite the words on this page so that we can all hear them. You don't need to shout. You may choose to speak when others are speaking, or to wait."

6 *(At this point, observe whether any participant is boxing the compass at the point of the compass that you are currently facing.)*

7 **Only if** *no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, say: "After you have finished reciting, walk clockwise around the circle, slowly, listening carefully, for [chosen number] silent revolutions."*

8 **Only if** *someone was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, say: "After you have finished reciting, walk counterclockwise around the circle, slowly, listening carefully, for [chosen number] silent revolutions."*

9 "Your rotations may be inside the circle, or immediately outside the circle, or a combination of inside and outside."

10 "When you have finished your rotations, stop and listen. When you feel that it is time, recite the words on the page again."

11 "After you have recited the words, you may then repeat your actions any number of times, walking in a circle and then boxing the compass, or else you may return your page to me."

12 *(If no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, take a bearing and rotate LEFT to face the next point of the compass. If someone was observed boxing the compass in step 6, rotate RIGHT to face the next point of the compass.)*

13 *(If no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 6, go to script number 1. If someone was observed boxing the compass in step 6, repeat this script.)*

### Script #3 (instructions are given in italics, variables in braces)

*(Wait for a participant at the center of the circle. The direction that you are facing will be referred to as the "current direction" below.)*

- 1 "Follow the instructions I give you."
- 2 "Go [current direction] to the edge of the circle."
- 3 "Stop there, listen and wait a bit."
- 4 *(Give the participant a printed list of the points of the compass.)* "When you feel that it is time, recite the words on this page so that we can all hear them. You don't need to shout. You may choose to speak when others are speaking, or to wait."
- 5 *(At this point, observe whether any participant is boxing the compass at the point of the compass that you are currently facing.)*
- 6 **Only if** *no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 5, say:* "After you have finished reciting, walk counterclockwise around the circle, slowly, listening carefully, for a single silent revolution of the circle."
- 7 **Only if** *someone was observed boxing the compass in step number 5, say:* "After you have finished reciting, walk clockwise around the circle, slowly, listening carefully, for a single silent revolution of the circle."
- 8 "Your rotations may be inside the circle, or immediately outside the circle, or a combination of inside and outside."
- 9 "When you have finished your rotation, stop and listen. When you feel that it is time, recite the words on the page again."
- 10 "After you have recited the words, you may then repeat your actions any number of times, walking in a circle and then boxing the compass, or else you may return your page to me."
- 11 *(If no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 5, take a bearing and rotate LEFT to face the next point of the compass. If someone was observed boxing the compass in step 5, the piece has terminated. In this case, take a bearing and face NORTH.)*
- 12 *(If no-one was observed boxing the compass in step number 5, go to script number 2. If someone was observed boxing the compass in step 5, the piece has terminated.)*

