

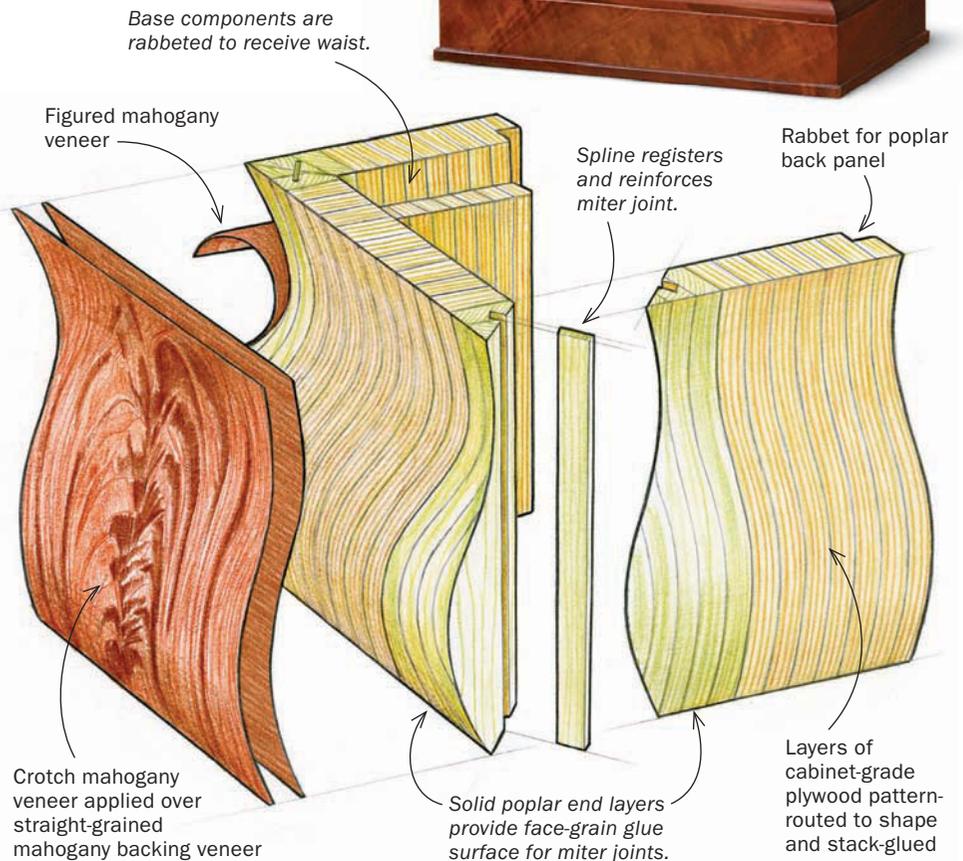
A clock as master class

BY JONATHAN BINZEN

From a technical point of view, building this tall clock was quite a tall order. It combined complex shaping with vacuum veneering, turning, inlay, circular bent lamination, and carving. Yet Dan Strout (see the back cover) describes the build as “well within the ability of the serious amateur furniture maker.” To make the project more approachable, Strout thought of it in four main parts: the bombé base, which conceals two secret compartments; the central section, or waist, with its turned columns and crotch-mahogany veneered door; the neck, shaped from poplar, veneered with mahogany, and inlaid with holly stringing; and the drumhead, with its bent-laminated case and circular glass door.

The base, he says, “required the most finesse.” Once he had shaped and veneered the parts for its three sides, he was faced with mitering the two front corners. The curves had to match exactly at the points of the miters, or he would have gone through the mahogany veneer in fitting them. He began the miter cuts

The bombé base



Stacked and shaped. Strout shaped the bombé base by bandsawing pieces of plywood to rough shape, face-gluing them, and then pattern-routing one from the next.

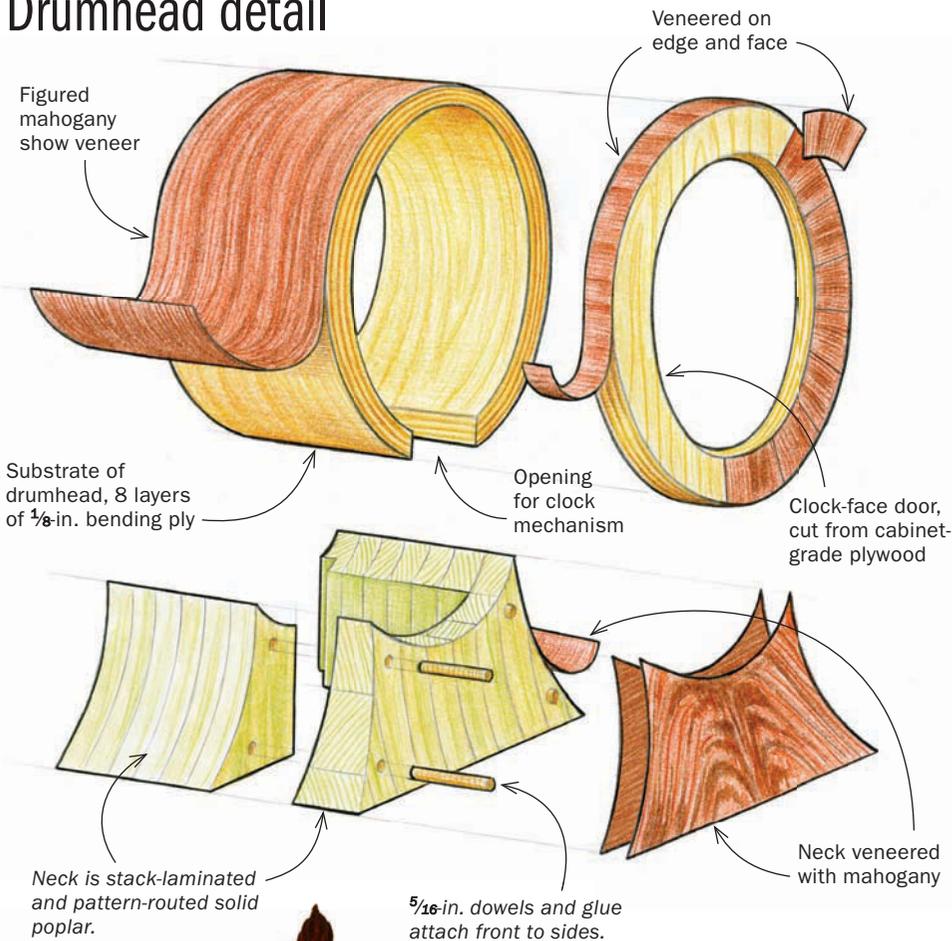


Tight squeeze. After veneering the curves and cutting the miters, Strout glued up using hand-screw clamps and clamping blocks to close the joints, then added band clamps.



String clamp. With the base miters glued up, Strout used painter's tape as a clamp while he inlaid holly stringing into the crotch mahogany veneer.

Drumhead detail



Circular assembly. To create the drumhead, Strout built a cylindrical form and laminated eight sheets of $\frac{1}{8}$ -in.-thick bending ply around it, gluing them one at a time.



Veneer on the drumhead. With the substrate cured, Strout applied mahogany veneer to the exterior. Later, he cut the drumhead to width and cut out the bottom segment of the circle.



Decorating the door frame. Having already veneered the back of the drumhead door frame, Strout wraps veneer around the perimeter. Last, he'll veneer the face of the frame, using wedge-shaped pieces to create radiating grain.

at the tablesaw, but didn't have enough blade height to cut them completely, so he finished the cuts with a handsaw and then cleaned up the miters with a block plane.

Strout veneered the front surfaces of the clock with crotch mahogany, which he first de-wrinkled by spraying the sheets with a veneer softener and clamping them between pieces of melamine.

After all the work he put into the clock, he did not skimp on the finish. He began by darkening the mahogany with potassium dichromate, or pot ash, and followed that with a coat of Danish oil "to pop the grain." He did some grain filling with thinned shellac and pumice, and then applied 10 coats of clear shellac. He rubbed out the final coat of shellac with Danish oil and 0000 steel wool, and then polished the piece with amber furniture wax. □



Period Imperfect

Dan Strout discovered his passion for woodworking in the early 1990s when he was laid off from a job in engineering and scrambled to make money by building cabinets, millwork, and furniture. He's long since returned to the corporate world, which he says can sometimes feel a bit "plain vanilla." But he's remained immersed in woodworking as a hobby, and

in the garage shop behind his house in Milton, Mass., things get pretty interesting. Strout has an eye for period furniture, but he doesn't build fastidious reproductions. He based his recent tall clock primarily on traditional 19th-century Scottish clocks, adopting their circular "drumhead" on a curved neck, full-round columns at the waist, and figured mahogany veneer. But in place of a rectilinear Scottish base, Strout grafted on a bombé base like those in French and Dutch tall clocks. And

as a nod to American furniture, he added some Federal-flavored string inlay in holly, and crowned the piece with a Philadelphia-style flame finial. In the realm of period furniture, Strout acknowledges, such heresies are not taken lightly. "Why would I blend period characteristics that would make a clock purist cringe? Simple. It's what I wanted to build."

—Jonathan Binzen



How They Did It Turn to p. 84 to see how Strout constructed the top and base of his clock.