Grouping objects
Part 1

Introduction to collections

suggested reading:

Textbook, Ch. 4

Main concepts to be covered

- Collections
  (especially **`ArrayList`**)
- Builds on the *abstraction* theme from the last chapter.

The requirement to group objects

- Many applications involve collections of objects:
  - Personal organizers. (Notes)
  - Library catalogs. (Books)
  - Student-record system. (records)
- The number of items to be stored varies.
  - Items added.
  - Items deleted.

An organizer for music files

- Track files may be added.
- There is no pre-defined limit to the number of files.
- It will tell how many file names are stored in the collection.
- It will list individual file names.
- Explore the *music-organizer-v1* project.

Class libraries

- Collections of useful classes.
- We don't have to write everything from scratch.
- Java calls its libraries, *packages*.
- Grouping objects is a recurring requirement.
  - The `java.util` package contains classes for doing this.

```
import java.util.ArrayList;

/**
 * ...
 */
public class MusicOrganizer
{
    // Storage for an arbitrary number of file names.
    private ArrayList<String> files;

    /**
     * Perform any initialization required for the
     * organizer.
     */
    public MusicOrganizer()
    {
        files = new ArrayList<String>();
    }

    ...
}
```

Import: from a library!
(to be placed before class defs.)

Once imported, `ArrayList` can be used as usual.

Constructor: initialize!

Collections

- We specify:
  - the type of collection: **`ArrayList`**
  - the type of objects it will contain: **`<String>`**
  - **`private ArrayList<String> files;`**
- We say, “ArrayList of String”.

Generic classes

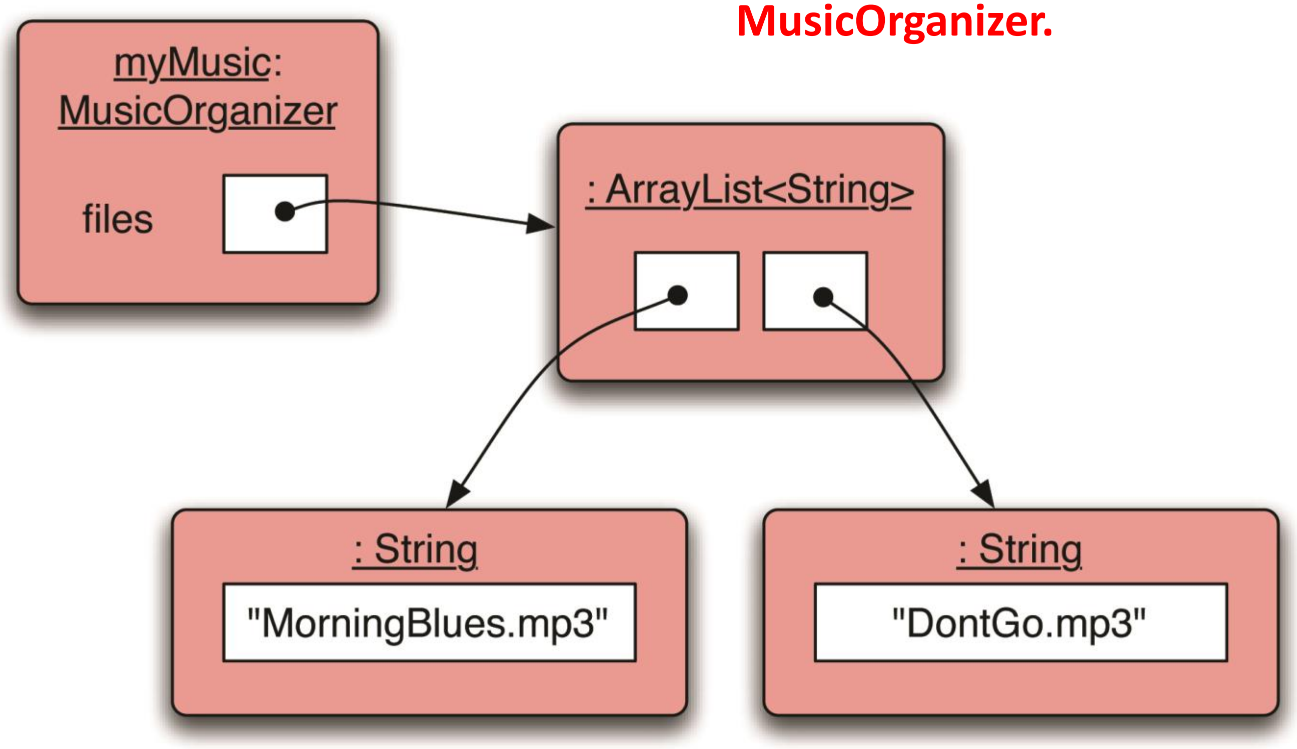
- Collections are known as *parameterized* or *generic* types.
- **`ArrayList`** implements list functionality:
  - **`add`**, **`remove`**, **`get`**, **`size`**, etc.
- The type parameter says what we want a list of:
  - **`ArrayList<Person>`**
  - **`ArrayList<TicketMachine>`**
  - etc.

Creating an ArrayList object

- In versions of Java prior to version 7:
  - `files = new ArrayList<String>();`
- Java 7 introduced 'diamond notation'
  - `files = new ArrayList<>();`
- The type parameter can be inferred from the variable being assigned to.
  - A convenience.

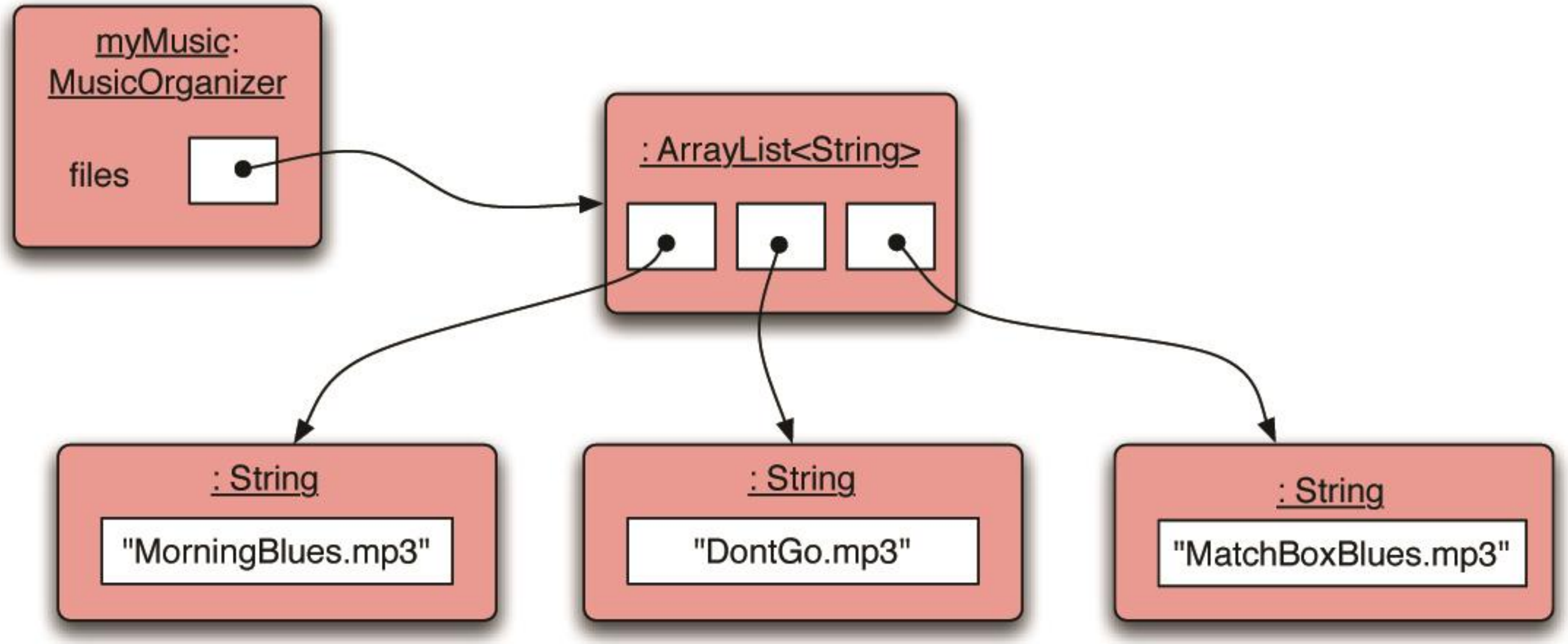
Object structures with collections

At present, two files in the MusicOrganizer.



Adding a third file

Then, a third one is added.



Features of the collection

- It increases its capacity as necessary.
- It keeps a private count:
  - `size()` accessor.
- It keeps the objects in order.
- Details of how all this is done are hidden.
  - Does that matter? Does not knowing how prevent us from using it?

Using the collection

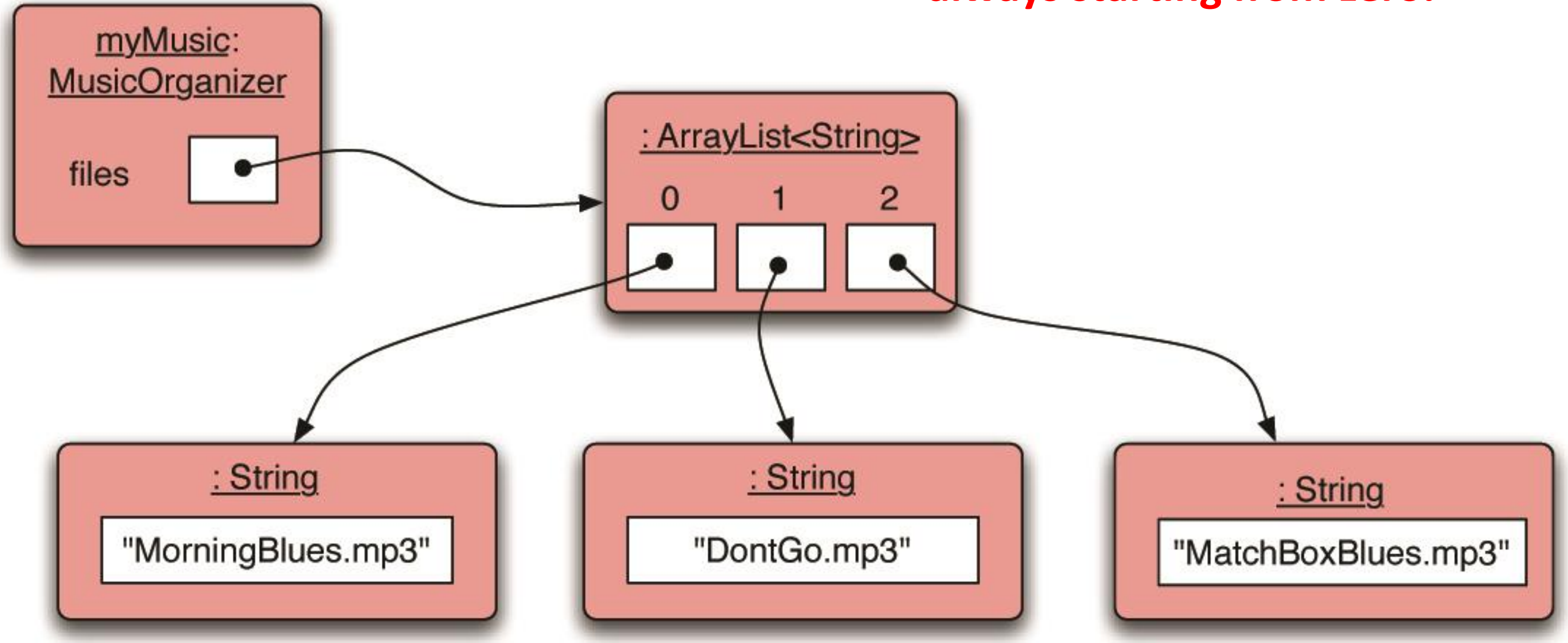
```
public class MusicOrganizer
{
    private ArrayList<String> files;

    ...

    public void addFile(String filename)
    {
        files.add(filename);
    }

    public int getNumberOfFiles()
    {
        return files.size();
    }

    ...
}
```

Adding a new file

Returning the number of files (*delegation*)

Index numbering

Implicit numbering (index), always starting from zero.



Retrieving an object

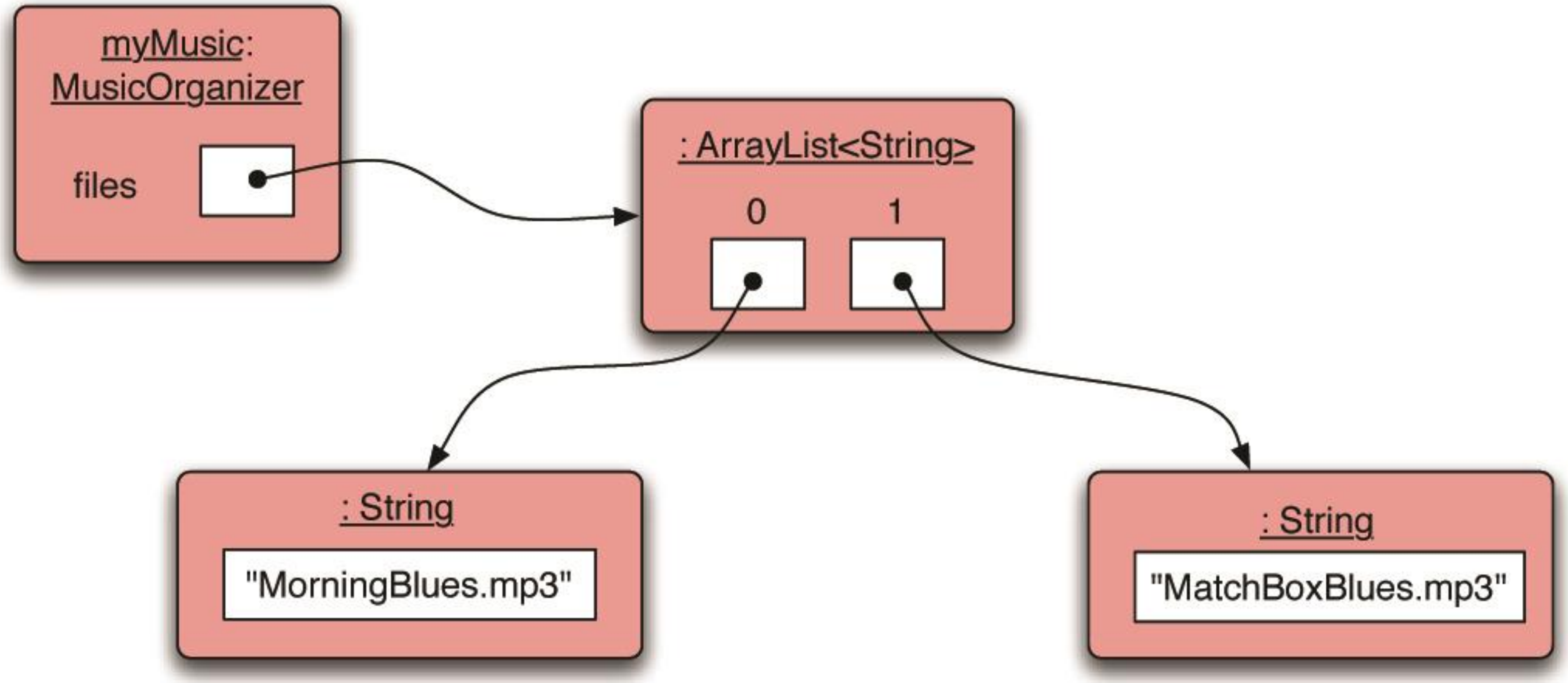
```
public void listFile(int index)
{
    if(index >= 0 &&
            index < files.size()) {
        String filename = files.get(index);
        System.out.println(filename);
    }
    else {
        // This is not a valid index.
    }
}
```

Index validity checks

Retrieve and print the file name

Needed? (Error message?)

Removal may affect numbering



Review

- Collections allow an arbitrary number of objects to be stored.
- Class libraries usually contain tried-and-tested collection classes.
- Java's class libraries are called *packages*.
- We have used the **`ArrayList`** class from the **`java.util`** package.

Review

- Items may be added and removed.
- Each item has an index.
- Index values may change if items are removed (or further items added).
- The main **`ArrayList`** methods are **`add`**, **`get`**, **`remove`** and **`size`**.
- **`ArrayList`** is a parameterized or generic type.