

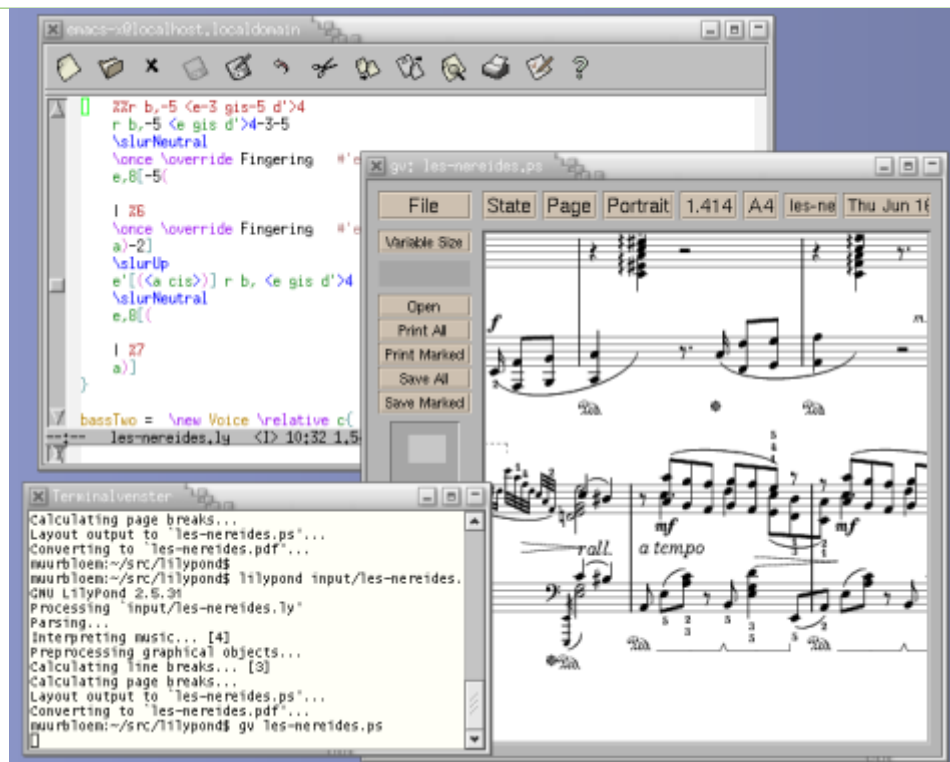
“Compiling” Music

LilyPond is a *compiled* system: it is run on a text file describing the music. The resulting output is viewed on-screen or printed. In some ways, LilyPond is more similar to a programming language than graphical score editing software.

You do not write music by dragging notes from a graphical toolbar and placing them on a dynamically refreshing score; you write music by typing text. This text is interpreted (or

“compiled”) by LilyPond, which produces beautifully engraved sheet music.

People accustomed to graphical user interfaces might need to learn a new way of working, but the results are definitely worth it!



(click to enlarge)

Note: We present a quick overview of our text input – it’s not as complicated as it sounds! Don’t worry about understanding every detail in these examples; our beginner documentation covers everything at a much more gradual pace.

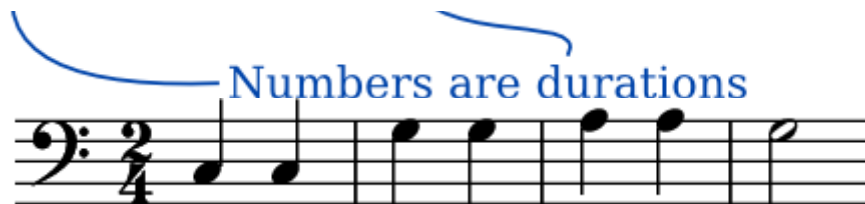
It’s as simple as A B C

Notes are encoded with letters and numbers. Special commands are entered with backslashes.

**Commands start with **

Letters are notes

```
{
  \time 2/4
  \clef bass
  c4 c g g a a g2
}
```



Alterations are made with different names: add -is for sharp, and -es for flat (these are Dutch note names, other languages are available). LilyPond figures out where to put accidentals.

```
\relative c'' {
  \key c \minor
  g(
    <ees c'>)
    <d f gis b>-
    <ees g bes>-
  }
```

Add articulations

Add -es for flat, -is for sharp

Enclose pitches in < > for chords



Pop music

Put chords and lyrics together to get a lead sheet:

```
<<
\chords {
  c1:m7 f2:7 c2
}
\relative c'' {
  g2 es8( c4) es8
  f8 es d c~ c2
}
\addlyrics {
  You are
  the sky and my rain,
}
>>
```

Enter chord names

Enter melody

Enter lyrics

Combine melody and lyrics



You are the sky and my rain,

Orchestral parts

The input file contains the notes of piece of music. Score and parts can be made from a single input file, so that changing a note always affects the score and parts. To be able to include the same music in multiple places, the music is assigned to a “variable” (a name).

hornNotes =

`\relative c {`

`\time 2/4`

R2*3

Enter multi-rest

`r4 f8 a cis4 f e d`

`}`

Store notes in variable

bassoonNotes =

`\relative c {`

`\clef bass`

`r4 d,8 f gis4 g b bes`

`a8 e f4 g d gis f`

`}`

This variable is then used in a single part (here transposed, with condensed rests spanning several measures):

`{`

Condense multi-rests

\set Score.skipBars = ##t

\transpose f c' \hornNotes

`}`

Reuse variable

Transpose for F instrument

3





The same variable is used in the full score (here in concert pitch):

Create staff

`<< \new Staff \hornNotes`
`>> \new Staff \bassoonNotes`

Combine staves in parallel

Beginner Documentation

We realize that many users find this way of entering music a bit odd. For this reason, we have written extensive documentation to help new users, beginning with [Learning](#). The Learning Manual is the best place to start, as many questions are answered before they come up!

Occasionally new users are unnecessarily confused by some aspects of LilyPond's behavior. Please read this manual before doubting whether LilyPond is working correctly.

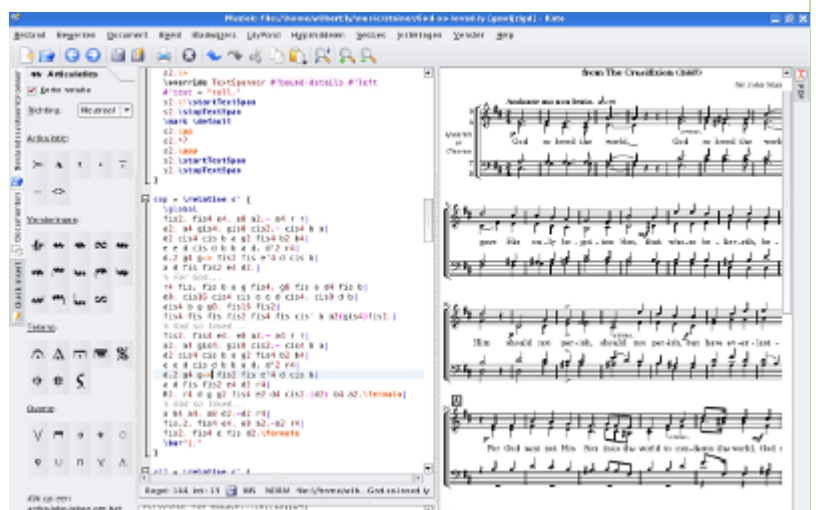
More in-depth information is available in [Manuals](#).

Ben Lemon, a LilyPond user, has created a range of [video tutorials](#) on his blog and which are aimed at new users.

Easier editing environments

LilyPond is primarily concerned with producing top-quality engraved sheet music; creating a Graphical User Interface (GUI) would distract us from this goal. However, there are other projects aimed at making it easier to create LilyPond input files.

Some editing environments include syntax highlighting, automatic command completion, and pre-



made templates. Other programs actually provide a GUI which allows direct manipulation of a graphical score. For more information, see

[Easier editing](#).



(click to enlarge)

Where now?

You are now ready to [Download LilyPond](#). Still not convinced? Read about [Easier editing](#).

Other languages: [Català](#), [Deutsch](#), [Español](#), [Français](#), [Italiano](#), [日本語](#), [Türkçe](#), [中文](#).
About [automatic language selection](#).