



GNU LilyPond

<http://lilypond.org/>



TEXT INPUT

LilyPond is a text based system; the input is a text file describing the music, as opposed to a “What You See Is What You Get” graphical application where you might drag notes from a toolbar onto your on-screen score. In this way, LilyPond shares many similarities with programming and script languages: The text input is interpreted (or “compiled”) by LilyPond which produces typeset music.

This might seem old-fashioned, or even clumsy, but it is in fact surprisingly easy to start using LilyPond and the results you will get are both predictable and beautiful. People accustomed to graphical user interfaces will need to learn a new way of working, but the results are definitely worth it!

CHORD ENTRY

It is easy to write out chords.

```
\chordmode
{ d4:m7 g c2:maj7 }
```

First, specify the root note, then add the duration. Any modifiers can be added by appending ‘:’, followed by a list of the modifiers.

Dm⁷ G C^Δ

BASIC NOTE ENTRY

Note entry is as easy as typing the note name and the duration.

```
{ bes'4 a'4. c''8 b' }
```

Append **i**s for sharp and **e**s for flat tones. Duration is specified with 4 for fourths, 8 for eighths, and so on. Create dotted notes by appending dots to the duration digit. Pitch is specified using a variant of the Helmholtz pitch notation.

FIGURED BASS ENTRY

It is easy to add a figured bass.

```
<7\+ 4 2>8 <8> <7!>
```

+7 8 7 6 —
4 2

A group of bass figures is delimited by ‘<’ and ‘>’, with the duration immediately appended. Accidentals are entered by appending ‘+’ for sharps, ‘-’ for flats, or ‘!’ for naturals, immediately after each number.

VARIABLES

A powerful feature of LilyPond, is variables. Write once, then choose how you want to display the music! For example, here’s a short polyphonic sequence:

```
myMusic = { <c' e' g'> }
```

Then, we’ll display this as chord names, as notes, as guitar tablature, and as a fretboard diagram, simply by referencing the variable:

```
\new ChordNames \myMusic
\new FretBoards \myMusic
\new Staff \myMusic
\new Tablature \myMusic
```

C

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Excerpt from the Markus Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach (BWV 247)

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Excerpt from “All Things Rush On” by Kieren MacMillan

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Excerpt from Hermann Keller’s composition for speaking cellist “Thr sollt die Wahrheit erben”

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