

METISSE: METhod of Interpolation for Single Star Evolution

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Summary

METISSE is an open-source stellar evolution tool specifically designed to be integrated with binary evolution and population synthesis codes. Unlike traditional rapid stellar evolution schemes based on fitting formulae (e.g. SSE; ([Hurley et al., 2000](#))), METISSE interpolates between pre-computed stellar models to quickly derive stellar parameters for population synthesis codes. This approach makes it straightforward to incorporate the latest stellar models and explore the effects of different input physics. METISSE can be easily integrated with any population synthesis code that currently uses the popular Fortran code SSE to calculate stellar parameters. While METISSE can also be used in standalone mode to evolve single stellar populations, its primary purpose is to act as an interpolation engine within existing population synthesis codes for modelling binary stars and star clusters. Written in Modern Fortran, METISSE is both fast and robust, making it well-suited for large-scale population studies that require realistic stellar evolution input. The full documentation for METISSE is available at metisse.readthedocs.io.

Statement of need

Stars, especially those with masses greater than eight solar masses (massive stars), play a pivotal role in shaping stellar populations. The best way of computing stellar evolution involves solving equations of stellar structure and evolution through detailed stellar evolution codes such as MESA ([Jermyn et al., 2023](#)). One drawback is that the inherent uncertainties in stellar evolution cause stellar codes to adopt different physical inputs, leading to significant differences in the predictions for the evolution of stars and stellar populations ([Agrawal et al., 2022](#)). Moreover, computational requirements and robustness issues render these codes impractical for direct use in large population synthesis simulations.

Rapid stellar-evolution codes such as SSE ([Hurley et al., 2000](#)), that rely on fitting formulae manually calibrated to specific stellar models, have long provided a fast and efficient way to calculate stellar population properties. However, because the formulae must be recalculated manually for each new set of stellar models, they cannot be easily updated to incorporate advances in stellar evolution, limiting their flexibility and applicability to modern studies.

In recent years, interpolation-based rapid stellar-evolution codes such as TRILEGAL ([Girardi et](#)

al., 2005), ComBinE (Kruckow et al., 2018), SEVN (Iorio et al., 2023), and MINT (Rees et al., 2025), along with machine-learning-based frameworks like POSYDON (Fragos et al., 2023), have become increasingly common as alternatives to SSE. However, these tools can not be easily incorporated into existing frameworks: binary population codes such as BSE (Hurley et al., 2002) and COSMIC (Breivik et al., 2020), or star cluster codes such as CMC (Rodriguez et al., 2022) and NBODY6 (Aarseth, 2003), that continue to rely on standard SSE routines.

METISSE matches other interpolation-based codes in performance and includes SSE-style subroutines for easy integration into existing binary and population-synthesis frameworks, with full Fortran 77 compatibility. It comes with an example set of [MESA stellar models](#) and can also use other published grids, such as MIST (Choi et al., 2016) and BoOST (Szécsi et al., 2022). Its interpolation framework allows stellar model grids to be swapped easily and explore how stellar parameters affect population outcomes. METISSE thus provides a flexible and efficient framework for stellar-evolution calculations in population synthesis, offering greater flexibility than fitting formulae without the computational cost of full stellar-structure models.

METISSE has already been employed in several scientific publications. For instance, it has been used to demonstrate the impact of core overshooting — one of the major uncertainties in stellar evolution — on the evolutionary outcomes of binary systems (Agrawal et al., 2023). Additionally, it has been used with stellar models from MESA as well as models from the Bonn Code (via the BoOST project (Szécsi et al., 2022)) to conduct a systematic study of how different physical parameters affect the evolutionary properties of massive single stars (Agrawal et al., 2020).

Multiple ongoing projects use METISSE alongside the binary population synthesis code COSMIC (Breivik et al., 2020) to investigate the population properties of black hole-X-ray binaries, LISA white dwarf binaries, and GAIA black hole-star systems. In the era of big-data astronomy, driven by high-quality observational data from both ground-based and space-based telescopes, as well as gravitational wave and multi-messenger detectors, METISSE facilitates the seamless incorporation of updates in stellar evolution into simulations that model stellar populations and their interactions.

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