

WebFX Documentation

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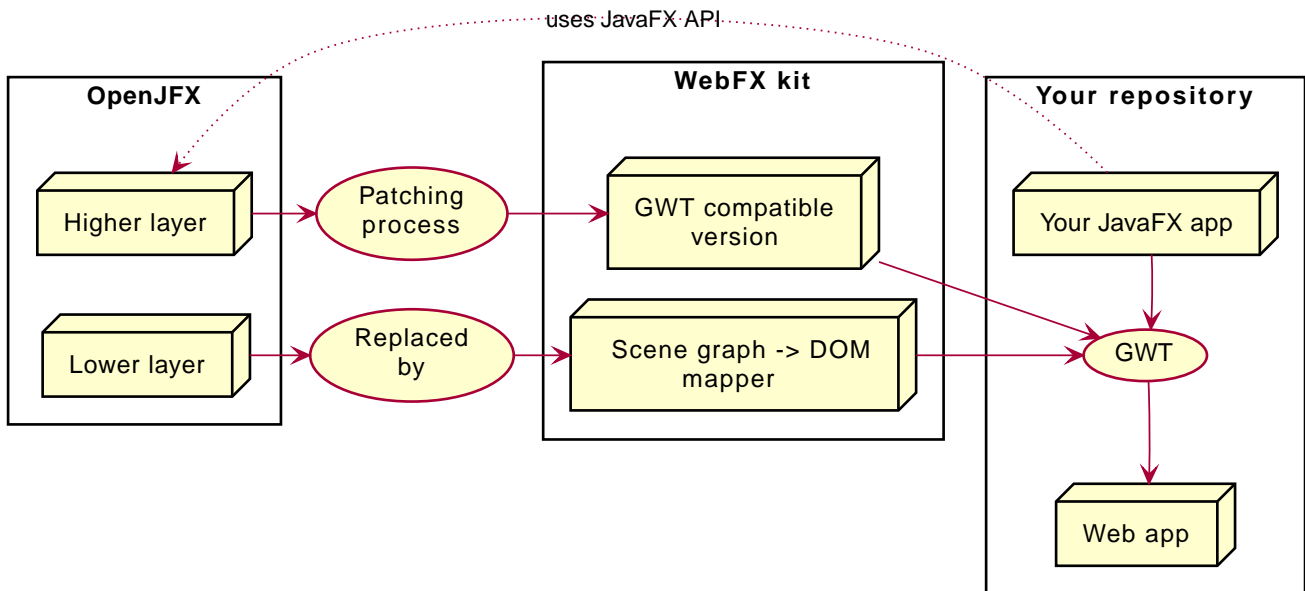
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Introduction

What is WebFX?

WebFX is a JavaFX application transpiler powered by [GWT](#). It can transpile a JavaFX application into a traditional self-contained pure JavaScript web app (with no plugin or server required for its execution in the browser).

How it works



The [WebFX kit](#) is the heart of WebFX. It's a modified version of OpenJFX that can be transpiled. This is achieved by patching the higher layer of OpenJFX (which contains the main JavaFX features and API) to make it GWT compatible, and by replacing the lower layer (the graphic rendering pipeline) by a scene graph → DOM mapper (the DOM being finally rendered by the browser).

Limitations

The WebFX kit coverage is for now limited to the essential features of JavaFX. So to successfully compile to the web, your JavaFX code needs to meet these 2 requirements:

- use only the features covered by the WebFX kit (you can check out the [JavaDoc](#) to get an idea of this coverage)
- be compatible with GWT (no reflection, no multi-threading, no blocking code, etc...)

When a JavaFX application meets these 2 requirements, we will call it a *WebFX application*, and it can be transpiled to the web simply by running a GWT compilation of it together with the WebFX kit.



Note for the impatient: OpenJFX is a huge library (about 10MB) compared to standard JS frameworks (typically 100KB). It will take time to complete its coverage (some parts may not be possible). Thanks for your understanding. But compared to some frameworks, you can already do a lot with the current coverage.

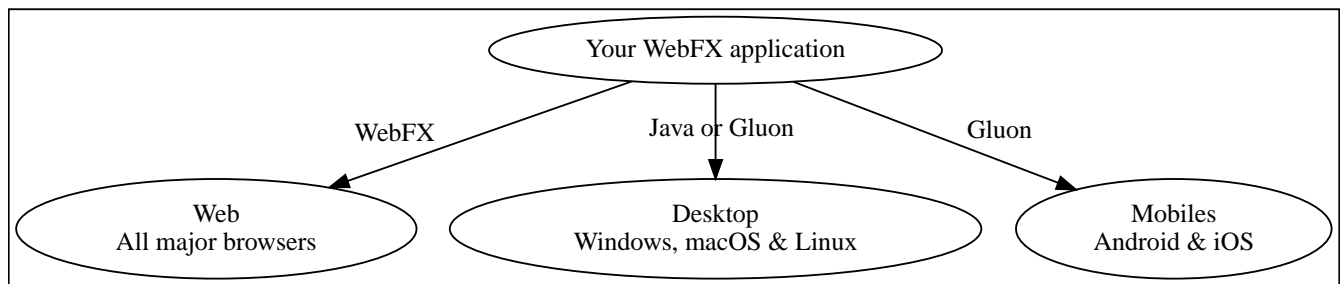
Benefits

No server

There are already great solutions to run Swing or JavaFX applications in the browser without plugins by actually running them on a server. And these solutions don't have the limitations WebFX currently has. However, a standard self-contained JS packaging is a much more simple, scalable and reliable execution model. This is precisely that benefit that WebFX is offering, and probably the

main reason why you would prefer it over the other existing solutions.

Cross-platform



In addition to the web platform, a WebFX application can also run on desktops & mobiles. WebFX will invoke the standard Java toolchain to produce desktop executables (embedding an optimized JRE), and the Gluon toolchains to produce native executables for the desktop and mobiles.

Some alternative technologies, or JVM language, allow you to do the same but only for the application logic, because they don't offer a cross-platform UI toolkit. With WebFX, you can do a full cross-platform development of your entire application from a single source code base.

Java full-stack

Writing your whole stack in Java is a big advantage, keeping your environment simple and homogenous from a single Java IDE. Not only you don't need to master other complex ecosystems such as JavaScript or TypeScript, but you can also share the common code between your backend and frontends with the Java module system, a great advantage compared to heterogeneous systems.

Performance

Despite the big size of OpenJFX, WebFX can produce lightweight web apps, as demonstrated by the demos and the website:

WebFX application	JS size *
Colorful circles demo	90.6 kB
Particles demo	90.3 kB
Tally counter demo	101 kB
Modern gauge demo	139 kB
Medusa clock demo	180 kB
Enzo clocks demo	253 kB
FX2048 demo	178 kB
SpaceFX demo	139 kB
Ray tracer demo	135 kB
Mandelbrot demo	142 kB
Website	218 kB

* compressed JS size transiting over the network, without eventual images or other resources

The secret? Here are the 3 main ingredients for this magic:

- The scene graph → DOM mapper is much thinner than the original OpenJFX lower layer which has to reimplement many features a browser already has.
- GWT runs a dead code elimination, which removes the JavaFX classes not used by the WebFX application.
- GWT produces an amazingly compaq and optimized JS code.

The later point also confers an excellent execution speed to your web app.

Low learning curve

WebFX is not yet another UI toolkit to learn, but nothing else than the already well known and documented JavaFX API. All the powerful features you love like JavaFX bindings available for your web app. You will just feel at home with WebFX!

Fast development cycles

You don't need to run regular GWT compilations like you would do with a traditional GWT development, because you can already run and debug your WebFX application directly in your Java IDE with the OpenJFX runtime. You typically transpile your app only at the end of a development cycle to check the web version, after you have finished developing a feature using the standard JavaFX development model.

Free and open source

WebFX is an open source initiative under Apache 2.0 license.

Getting started

Prerequisite

To develop WebFX applications, you will need the following software already installed on your development machine:

- JDK 13 or above
- Maven
- Git
- Your preferred Java IDE

Introducing the WebFX CLI

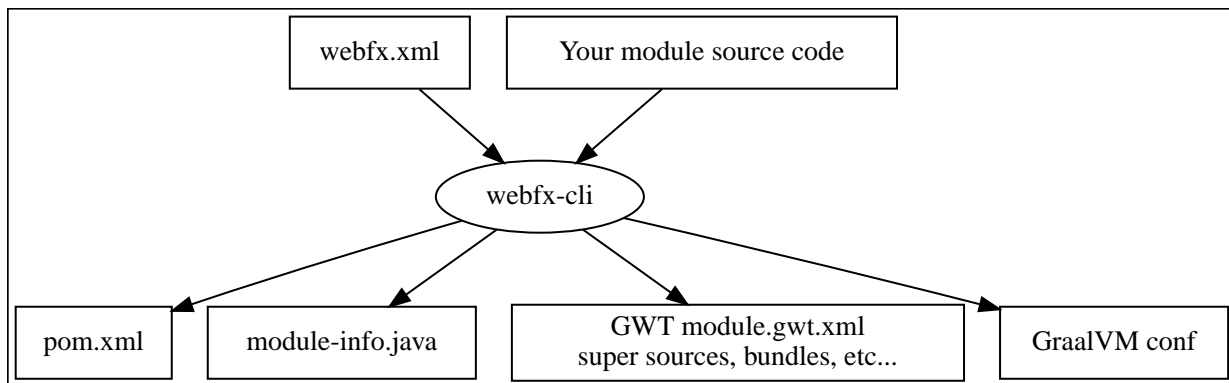
The WebFX CLI is a Command Line Interface tool that will assist you developing WebFX applications. It will create your application modules as follows:

Your repository

- └ xxx-application (1)
- └ xxx-application-gluon (2)
- └ xxx-application-gwt (3)
- └ xxx-application-openjfx (4)

- ① This module contains the JavaFX code of your application. It is cross-platform (not yet bound to a specific platform) and therefore not executable.
- ② This module targets the native desktop & mobile platforms. It binds your application with the OpenJFX runtime, and can call the Gluon toolchain to produce the Windows, macOS, Linux, Android & iOS native executables (depending on your OS).
- ③ This module targets the web platform. It binds your application with the WebFX kit, and can call GWT to produce the web app.
- ④ This module targets the standard desktop platform. It binds your application with the OpenJFX runtime, and is directly executable in your IDE. It can also call the standard JavaFX toolchain to produce the desktop executables (Windows, macOS or Linux) with an embed JVM.

You can create several WebFX applications in the same repository. If your application code grows, you can split your code into more modules. The CLI will help you to create and maintain all your modules. For each module, it will create and maintain your build chain as follows (when applicable to the module):



Your inputs will be centralized in the WebFX module files named `webfx.xml` (same location as `pom.xml`), and the CLI will generate the rest of the build chain from them. For example, a typical directive in `webfx.xml` will be:

```
<dependencies>
  <used-by-source-modules/>
</dependencies>
```

This directive is asking the CLI to identify the list of your dependencies from an analysis of your source code, and automatically populate the dependencies in `pom.xml`, `module-info.java`, `module.gwt.xml`, etc...

During that process, the CLI takes care of the cross-platform aspects: when a feature is platform-

dependent (a different implementation exists for different platforms), it will pick up the right modules (those whose implementation matches the target platform). This is at this point for example that it will replace the OpenJFX modules with the WebFX kit ones in your GWT application module.

Installing the WebFX CLI

Since we haven't published any release at this stage yet, the way to install the CLI for now is to clone the [webfx-cli](#) repository, and build it with Maven.



We will distribute the CLI in a better way with the first WebFX official release.

Cloning the webfx-cli repository

SSH

```
git clone git@github.com:webfx-project/webfx-cli.git
```

HTTPS

```
git clone https://github.com/webfx-project/webfx-cli.git
```

Building webfx-cli with Maven

This is achieved by running the Maven *package* goal under the webfx-cli directory:

```
cd webfx-cli  
mvn package
```



As previously mentioned, WebFX CLI requires JDK 13 or above to successfully compile.

This generates an executable fat jar in the target folder that we can execute with java:

```
java -jar target/webfx-cli-0.1.0-SNAPSHOT-fat.jar
```

The `webfx.sh` and `webfx.bat` script files (located under the webfx-cli directory) are simply doing this call. We will use them in the next step.

Creating a permanent webfx alias

To easily invoke the CLI from a terminal, we need to create a permanent *webfx* alias. This is done with the following commands (to run under the webfx-cli directory):

Linux

```
echo "alias webfx='sh \"$(cd \"$(dirname \"$1\")\" && pwd -P)/$(basename \"$1\")/webfx.sh\"'" >> ~/.bashrc ①  
  
source ~/.bashrc ②
```

① Adding the alias to the shell profile

② Applying it to the current session

macOS >= Catalina

```
echo "alias webfx='sh \"$(cd \"$(dirname \"$1\")\" && pwd -P)/$(basename \"$1\")/webfx.sh\"'" >> ~/.zshrc ①  
  
source ~/.zshrc ②
```

① Adding the alias to the shell profile

② Applying it to the current session

macOS < Catalina

```
echo "alias webfx='sh \"$(cd \"$(dirname \"$1\")\" && pwd -P)/$(basename \"$1\")/webfx.sh\"'" >> ~/.bash_profile ①  
  
source ~/.bash_profile ②
```

① Adding the alias to the shell profile

② Applying it to the current session

Windows (PowerShell)

```
If (!(Test-Path $profile)) { New-Item -Path $profile -Force } ①  
  
"r`nfunction webfx([String[]] [Parameter(ValueFromRemainingArguments)] `$params) { .  
'$((Get-Item .).fullName)\webfx.bat' `$params }r`n" >> $profile ②  
  
If ($(Get-ExecutionPolicy) -eq "Restricted") { Start-Process powershell -Verb runAs  
"Set-ExecutionPolicy -ExecutionPolicy RemoteSigned" -Wait } ③  
  
. $profile ④
```

① Creating a PowerShell profile if it doesn't exist

② Adding the alias (implemented as a function) to it

③ Lowering the execution policy if necessary to execute the profile

④ Applying it to the current session

You can just add the webfx-cli repository to your environment path, so webfx.bat will be directly executed when typing the webfx command.

Then you should be able to invoke the CLI from the terminal:

```
webfx --help
```

Updating the WebFX CLI to the latest version

You can check for update at anytime by running:

```
webfx bump cli
```

If a new version is available, it will download it and build it for you.



This is the only command that uses **git**, and it's just a **git pull** of the webfx-cli repository. The CLI will not call **git** on your own repositories.

Creating your first WebFX app

Creating and initializing your repository

Let's create our first WebFX application. We need to create the repository directory and ask the CLI to initialize it, passing it the groupId, artifactId and version of our application.

```
mkdir webfx-example  
cd webfx-example  
webfx init org.example:webfx-example:1.0.0-SNAPSHOT
```



webfx init org.example:1.0.0-SNAPSHOT will also work as the CLI takes the repository directory name as the artifactId when omitted in the command.

The init command creates only 2 files: webfx.xml and pom.xml. If this is the first time you use the CLI, it will download some other files through Maven to get the essential information about the WebFX modules, before completing this job.

Creating your application modules

When we create an application, we pass the fully qualified name of the JavaFX class we want to create, and the prefix to use for the application modules:


```
webfx create application --prefix webfx-example  
org.example.webfxexample.WebFxExampleApplication --helloWorld
```



we could omit the prefix here, because the CLI takes the parent module name in that case.

This command created the following modules:

```
webfx-example  
├─ webfx-example-application  
├─ webfx-example-application-gluon  
├─ webfx-example-application-gwt  
└─ webfx-example-application-openjfx
```

The JavaFX class is located in the first module. Normally its `start()` method is empty at this stage, but because we specified the `--helloWorld` option, it has been populated with this simple template:

```
public class WebFxExampleApplication extends Application {  
  
    @Override  
    public void start(Stage primaryStage) {  
        primaryStage.setScene(new Scene(new StackPane(new Text("Hello world!")), 800,  
600));  
        primaryStage.show();  
    }  
  
}
```

Building your application

The following command will do a simple build of your application (without generating any final executable):

```
webfx build
```

To generate the executables for the different platforms, you need to pass some extra build options. You can discover them in the build help:

```
webfx build --help
```



Some builds require additional third-party software to work. We will cover this in detail in the next sections as well with the different build options.

Web platform

You can use the following commands to target the Web platform:

Long syntax

```
webfx build --gwt ①  
webfx build --gwt --locate ②  
webfx build --gwt --reveal ③  
webfx run --gwt ④
```

- ① Build the html executable file with the GWT Maven plugin
- ② Locate the generated executable file
- ③ Reveal the generated executable file in the file explorer
- ④ Execute the generated executable in the browser

Short syntax

```
webfx build -g ①  
webfx build -gl ②  
webfx build -gr ③  
webfx run -g ④
```

- ① Build the html executable file with the GWT Maven plugin
- ② Locate the generated executable file
- ③ Reveal the generated executable file in the file explorer
- ④ Execute the generated executable in the browser



As opposed to `--reveal`, `--locate` works even before the build, as it prints the expected location, whether the executable file is present or not.

Desktop platform (JAR)

You can use the following commands to target the Desktop platform with a fat JAR (requires Java installed on the target machine):

Long syntax

```
webfx build --openjfx-fatjar ①  
webfx build --openjfx-fatjar --locate ②  
webfx build --openjfx-fatjar --reveal ③  
webfx run --openjfx-fatjar ④
```

- ① Build the fat jar executable file with Maven
- ② Locate the generated executable file

- ③ Reveal the generated executable file in the file explorer
- ④ Run the generated executable file

Short syntax

```
webfx build -f ①  
webfx build -fl ②  
webfx build -fr ③  
webfx run -f ④
```

- ① Build the fat jar executable file with Maven
- ② Locate the generated executable file
- ③ Reveal the generated executable file in the file explorer
- ④ Run the generated executable file



You can combine the build options. For example `webfx build --gwt --openjfx -fatjar` (short syntax: `webfx build -gf`) will build both the GWT html and OpenJFX fat jar executables.

Desktop platform (embed JRE)

As opposed to the JAR, the embed JRE will be specific to the target platform. Therefore, a Linux machine will build a Linux executable, a Mac a macOS executable, and a Windows machine a Windows executable.

Pre-requisite: you can install the following tools if you wish to also generate the installers:

Linux

```
webfx install ubuntu-devtools ①
```

- ① Optional. These tools are used to generate the .deb and .rpm installers.

Windows

```
webfx install wix ①  
webfx install inno ②
```

- ① Optional. The WiX Toolset is used to create a simple .msi installer.
- ② Optional. Inno Setup is used to create a more elaborate .exe installer.



The CLI will help you to customize these installers in a next version. For now, we just use the default settings.

Then, you can use the following commands to target the Desktop platform (embed JRE):

Long syntax

```
webfx build --openjfx-desktop  
webfx build --openjfx-desktop --locate  
webfx build --openjfx-desktop --reveal  
webfx run --openjfx-desktop
```

Short syntax

```
webfx build -k  
webfx build -kl  
webfx build -kr  
webfx run -k
```

```
macos: sudo spctl --master-disable
```

Desktop platform (native)

Like for the embed JRE, 3 different machines are required to target the Linux, macOS, and Windows executables.

Pre-requisite: you must install the following tools for a successful build:

Linux

```
webfx install graalvm ①  
webfx install ubuntu-devtools ①
```

① Required for the Gluon toolchain

macOS

```
webfx install graalvm ①
```

① Required for the Gluon toolchain

Windows

```
webfx install graalvm ①  
webfx install vstools ①  
webfx install wix ②
```

① Required for the Gluon toolchain

② Optional. WiX Toolset is used to create a simple .msi installer.

Then, you can use the following commands to target the Desktop platform (native):

Long syntax

```
webfx build --gluon-desktop
webfx build --gluon-desktop --locate
webfx build --gluon-desktop --reveal
webfx run --gluon-desktop
```

Short syntax

```
webfx build -t
webfx build -tl
webfx build -tr
webfx run -t
```

Android platform

A Linux machine is required to build the Android executable.

Pre-requisite: you must install the following tools for a successful build:

```
webfx install graalvm
webfx install ubuntu-devtools
```

Then, you can use the following commands to target the Android platform (native):

Long syntax

```
webfx build --gluon-mobile
webfx build --gluon-mobile --locate
webfx build --gluon-mobile --reveal
webfx run --gluon-mobile ①
```

- ① Will invoke the Gluon Maven plugin to install and run the executable on your Android device connected to your Linux machine via USB.

Short syntax

```
webfx build -b
webfx build -bl
webfx build -br
webfx run -b ①
```

- ① Will invoke the Gluon Maven plugin to install and run the executable on your Android device connected to your Linux machine via USB.

Alternatively, you can use the more explicit `--gluon-android` or `-a` options.

iOS platform

A Mac is required to build the iOS executable.

Pre-requisite: you must install the following tools for a successful build:

```
webfx install graalvm
```

Then, you can use the following commands to target the Android platform (native):

Long syntax

```
webfx build --gluon-mobile
webfx build --gluon-mobile --locate
webfx build --gluon-mobile --reveal
webfx run --gluon-mobile ①
```

① Will invoke the Gluon Maven plugin to install and run the executable on your iOS device connected to your Mac via USB.

Short syntax

```
webfx build -b
webfx build -bl
webfx build -br
webfx run -b ①
```

① Will invoke the Gluon Maven plugin to install and run the executable on your iOS device connected to your Mac via USB.

Alternatively, you can use the more explicit `--gluon-ios` or `-i` options.

Platform summary table

Build platform	Build option	Target platform	Install command	Executable file(s)
Linux, macOS or Windows	--gwt	Web		html
Linux, macOS or Windows	--openjfx-fatjar	Any desktop with Java		fat jar
Linux	--openjfx-desktop	Linux (embed JRE)	ubuntu-devtools*	executable, .rpm, .deb
macOS	--openjfx-desktop	macOS (embed JRE)		executable, .dmg, .pkg
Windows	--openjfx-desktop	Windows (embed JRE)	wix*, inno*	executable, .msi, .exe

Build platform	Build option	Target platform	Install command	Executable file(s)
Linux	--gluon-desktop	Linux (native)	graalvm, ubuntu-devtools	executable
macOS	--gluon-desktop	macOS (native)	graalvm	executable, .dmg, .pkg
Windows	--gluon-desktop	Windows (native)	graalvm, wix*	executable, .msi
Linux	--gluon-mobile	Android (native)	graalvm, ubuntu-devtools	.apk
macOS	--gluon-mobile	iOS (native)	graalvm	.ipa

* these tools are optional, they are used to create installers (.rpm, .deb, .dmg, .pkg, .msi or .exe)

GitHub workflow

Developing in your IDE

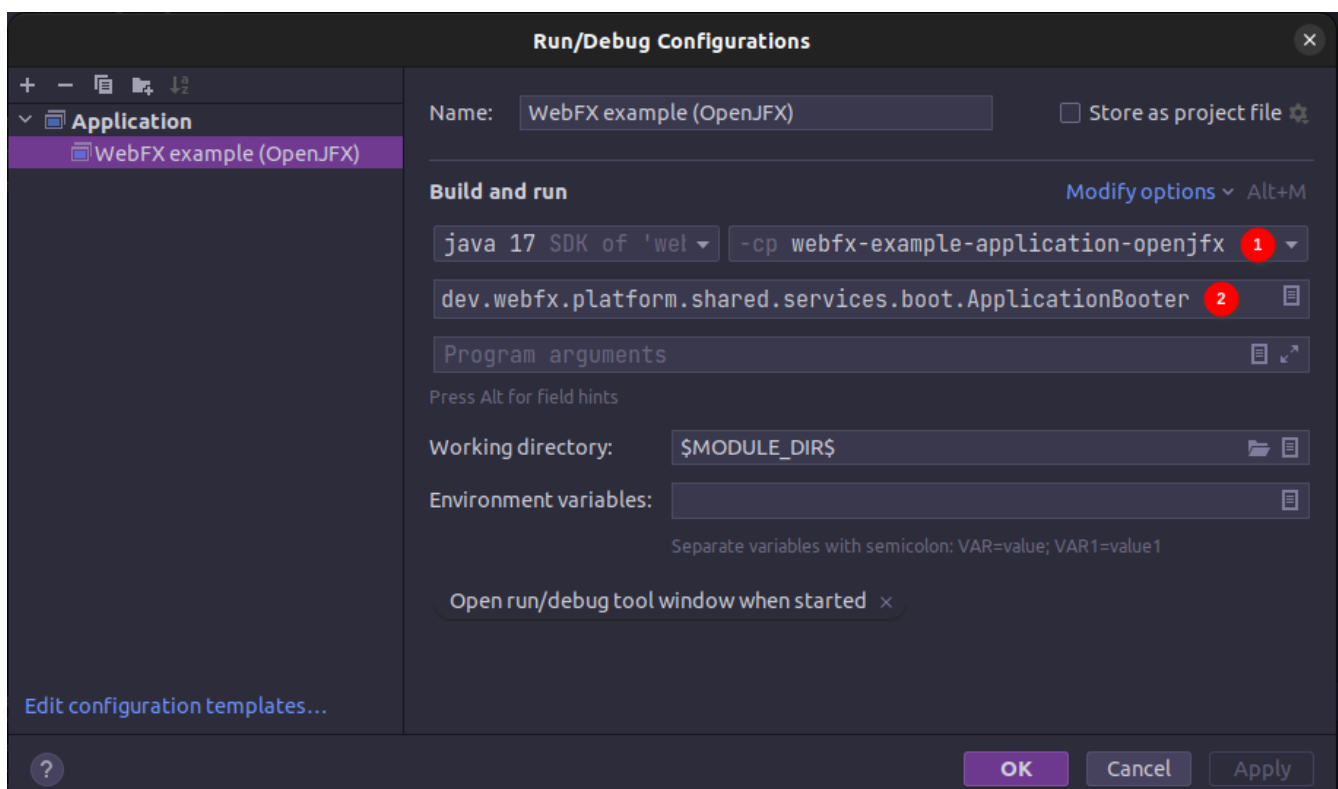
We will give the instructions for IntelliJ IDEA, but you can easily transpose them to other Java IDEs.

Opening the project

Open the webfx-example directory from your Java IDE. It will recognize it as a Maven project, and import it.

Building and running the OpenJFX application

Create an application configuration as follows:



- ① select the OpenJFX application module
- ② enter `dev.webfx.platform.shared.services.boot.ApplicationBooter` for the main class



You can just type `AB` for the main class, and your IDE should quickly find and suggest the WebFX ApplicationBooter class.

The way to boot GWT and OpenJFX applications are different, but WebFX offers a cross-platform way to do it. For this reason, the main class of a WebFX application is always `dev.webfx.platform.shared.services.boot.ApplicationBooter`. It will find your JavaFX application because it has been automatically declared as a Java service by the CLI.



GWT normally doesn't support the Java service API, but WebFX does, because the CLI emulates it by generating a GWT super source. You can rely on this feature to declare and implement your own services. Your services can even have platform-dependent implementations. A service can be a cross-platform UI API for example, with an OpenJFX implementation, and a different GWT implementation using a JS library you want for your web app.

If you run this configuration, it will build and run your WebFX application in your IDE with the OpenJFX runtime. This is this configuration that you will use to develop and debug your application.

Building and running the GWT application

Making changes

```
webfx update
```