Making Music with Scratch

a workshop presented at

Scratch@MIT 2012
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www.performamatics.org
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Workshop Description

“There is nothing like making music and messing with sound to inspire people to learn how to program.”

— Prof. Dan Trueman, co-founder of the Princeton Laptop Orchestra

We couldn't agree more. However, the cost of “getting into the digital music game” can be prohibitive on many fronts. Our work strives to make the excitement of music technology accessible to students of all levels.

This workshop presents a subset of the techniques we’ve developed to allow students to explore the intersection of computing and music using the sound capabilities built into Scratch. In addition, it gives participants the opportunity to create music-generating programs themselves using a variety of Scratch constructs. The workshop will conclude with a mini concert in which some participants will play the music they created using these techniques.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the workshop is that it is presented in true interdisciplinary fashion: by a CS and a Music professor working together. This is a hallmark of our work. Participants will be exposed to a
Workshop Description (cont’d)

fresh approach to teaching that they may be able to implement to a greater or lesser degree in their own schools and institutions.

Background

Music applications are incredibly powerful and engaging tools for getting students interested in learning about technology. They can range from music cataloging applications such as the popular musicbrainz.org site, to music playing applications such as the ubiquitous Apple and Adobe products, to music transcribing and composing applications such as Finale, Sibelius, and Noteflight.

We are interested in harnessing the engaging power of music to stimulate student interest in computing in general and computational thinking in particular. Toward that end we have designed an interdisciplinary, general education course that teaches computing *and* music to undergraduates in novel ways and that is open to all students in all majors. Our project is called “Performamatics,” and it has been funded by two grants from the National Science
Workshop Description (cont’d)

Foundation. (Please see www.performamatics.org for further information on this project.)

The centerpiece of Performamatics is “Sound Thinking,” an interdisciplinary course taught with a music and a computer science professor in the room for all class meetings. (Please see soundthinking.uml.edu for the course website.) This approach models the interdisciplinary environments that students will encounter when they graduate and provides valuable lessons for life in the world of work.

The computational thinking component of our approach not only helps arts majors learn to think analytically, but also helps technical majors understand computing concepts at a deeper level through applications that employ the engaging power of music. We take advantage of the “low floor and high ceiling” of Scratch to appeal to students at both ends of the curricular spectrum. We believe that this is one of the real powers of this media-rich visual programming system. We have seen that harnessing its music capabilities is a tremendous “hook” for making programming appealing to a wide range of students, from those in middle school to those in undergraduate programs.
Workshop Topics

1. Demonstration of Scratch music capabilities

2. Playing MP3 files from Scratch
   - Synching music to animations
   - Manipulation of MP3 files using Audacity

3. Playing MIDI notes from Scratch
   - Creating and playing simple melodies
   - Using loops and broadcasts to structure music

4. Playing MIDI notes using lists
   - Creating and populating lists
   - Working with rhythm and note lists

5. Synchronizing multiple parts
   - Techniques that do not work, and those that do

6. Introduction to external sensor devices
   - The Scratch Board and PicoBoard
   - The IchiBoard

7. Sharing what you’ve created
   - Live performances by participants 😊
Additional Workshop Info and URLs

Participants should download and install:

- **Scratch 1.4**
  
  scratch.mit.edu/download

- **Audacity 2.0.1**
  
  audacity.sourceforge.net/download

Participants should also download and install the appropriate sensor board drivers for their systems.

- for **PicoBoards**
  
  www.picocricket.com/whichpicoboard.html

- for **IchiBoards**
  
  www.cs.uml.edu/ecg/index.php/IchiBoard

**Important Note:** Scratch does not have access to a MIDI synthesizer on systems running Linux, Ubuntu, etc. Scratch does synthesize notes on these systems, but you only get one instrument.
About the Workshop Leaders

**Jesse Heines** is a Professor of Computer Science at UMass Lowell. He has a keen interest in CS education and computer applications in the arts, particularly those in music. He teaches courses in object-oriented and graphical user interface programming. Jesse grew up in a musical household and currently enjoys singing in a barbershop chorus.

**Gena Greher** spent 20 years as a music producer/director in advertising before moving to UMass Lowell. She has published on the influence of multimedia technology in the general music classroom, middle school music curricula, and music teacher education curricula. Gena teaches courses in music methods, world music for the classroom, technology in music ed., and socio-cultural impacts on teaching music.

Jesse’s and Gena’s work has been supported by two **National Science Foundation** awards: “Performamatics: Connecting Computer Science to the Performing, Fine, and Design Arts” and “Computational Thinking through Computing and Music.” Please see [www.performamatics.org](http://www.performamatics.org) for more information on these projects and the opportunity to attend one of our two-day, NSF-sponsored interdisciplinary workshops.
Important Note on Turbo Speed

The timing of virtually all music scripts can be improved by setting Turbo Speed. To do this, select:

Edit ➔ Set Single Stepping... ➔ Turbo Speed

Acknowledgements

Additional contributors to this work include UMass Lowell Profs. Gena Greher, S. Alex Ruthmann, and Fred Martin, graduate student Mark Sherman, recent undergraduates Paul Laidler and Charles Saulters, and current undergraduates Brendan Reilly, Angelo Gamarra, Matt Vaughan, and Nathan Goss.

The materials presented in this workshop are based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Award Nos. 0722161 and 1118435. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed or implied in these materials or the workshop discussion are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.
Scratch is developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at the MIT Media Lab. See http://scratch.mit.edu. Performamatics is an interdisciplinary project at UMass Lowell funded by the National Science Foundation. See http://performamatics.org.
Performamatics is an interdisciplinary project at UMass Lowell funded by the National Science Foundation. See http://performamatics.org.
Performamatics Workshop Info

Computational Thinking through Computing and Music
an interdisciplinary NSF TUES project

The UMass Lowell Depts. of Music and Computer Science are pleased to offer a series of Interdisciplinary Performamatics workshops on Computational Thinking through Computing and Music. The purpose of this workshop is to share our techniques and materials and to provide an environment in which other pairs of professors can work together to develop interdisciplinary relationships and materials of their own to use in courses at their "home" institutions.

Sound Thinking

The workshop will demonstrate assignments and activities that we use in our Sound Thinking course, soundthinking.uml.edu. This is a "General Education" course listed in both the Dept. of Computer Science and the Dept. of Music. Students in the Arts earn Technology credit, while those in the Sciences earn Arts & Humanities credit.

Content and Activities

In addition to exploring our work, you will develop assignments and course materials targeted to your own courses at your own institutions. Other participants will try out and review materials that you develop, and you will likewise try out and review theirs.

Sample activities include:
- creating compositions from digitized sounds,
- arranging chords of songs,
- sequencing sounds algorithmically,
- coding songs as labs in such a way that they can be easily transposed, and
- prototyping physical interfaces for music making.

Who Should Attend

Workshop participants are required to attend in interdisciplinary pairs, preferably from the same institution. This will ensure that the workshop itself models interdisciplinary collaboration and produces outcomes that connect directly to participants' own situations. We welcome professors and instructors from 2-year and 4-year colleges. High school teachers should contact the instructors to attend by special arrangement.
**Performamatics Workshop Info (cont'd)**

**Venue**
Univ. of Massachusetts Lowell
IRL & Conference Center
50 Warren Street
Lowell, MA 01852
1-978-934-8920

**Upcoming Dates**
**Thursday-Friday, January 17-18, 2013**
Full two-day workshop
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM both days

**Thursday-Friday, June 20-21, 2013**
Full two-day workshop — dates tentative
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM both days

**Cost**
Thanks to support for the National Science Foundation, there is no charge to participants to attend the workshop. In addition, our project funds cover two nights’ lodging and meals on both days of the workshop. Limited funds are also available to help support participant travel to and from the workshop. Prospective participants requiring travel support should contact the instructor for further information.

**How to Apply**
Please fill out our Workshop Application form.

**Instructors**
- **Jesse Heines** is a Professor of Computer Science with a strong interest in the power of music to engage students and help them learn computing concepts as they explore music applications. He teaches courses on graphical user interfaces, web programming, and C++.

- **Gena Greher** is a Professor of Music Education. Her research focuses on creativity and listening skill development in children and examining the influence of integrating multimedia technology into urban music classrooms and in the music teacher education curriculum.

- **S. Alex Ruthmann** is an Assistant Professor of Music Education. His research explores social/digital media musicianship and creativity and the development of technologies for music learning, teaching, and engagement in schools and community-based arts-computing programs.

**Further Information**
Please contact:
- Jesse Heines — Jesse_Heines@uml.edu — 978-934-3634
- Gena Greher — Gena_Greher@uml.edu — 978-934-3893
- Alex Ruthmann — Alex_Ruthmann@uml.edu — 978-934-3879
Scratch is developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at the MIT Media Lab. See http://scratch.mit.edu. Performamatics is an interdisciplinary project at UMass Lowell funded by the National Science Foundation. See http://performamatics.org.
Playing and Synchronizing MIDI Files

Volume and Synchronization Concepts

- use of variables when setting the volume
- local vs. global attributes, specifically volume
- use of a control script and broadcasts
- use of the Scratch timer for synchronization
Playing and Synching MIDI Files (cont’d)

MP3 Player Scripts

Script in Sprite “Got”

Script in Sprite “Sing”

Each script must be in its own sprite to allow volume to be controlled independently.
Playing and Synching MIDI Files (cont’d)

Control Script

Script in Sprite “Main”

Note the order of the blocks and the critical position of the \texttt{change} blocks. Changing the volume parameter before the \texttt{wait until} block will cause the volume to be changed while the MP3 is playing. Such behavior may be desirable in other programs, but not this one.
Scratch is developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at the MIT Media Lab. See http://scratch.mit.edu. Performamatics is an interdisciplinary project at UMass Lowell funded by the National Science Foundation. See http://performamatics.org.
Frère Jacques

Version 1: Playing Notes

Remember Turbo Speed!

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Frère Jacques

Version 2: Using Loops

Remember to set Turbo Speed to improve performance.

Acknowledgement: The scores on this and the previous page were adapted from www.csdvaveurs.qc.ca/musique/flutalors/images/frere.gif and www.mamalisa.com/images/scores/frerejacques.jpg, respectively, but as of July 12, 2012, these URLs no longer appear to be valid.
Frère Jacques
Version 3: Separating Phrases

Main Script

```
when [green flag] clicked
set instrument to 20

broadcast play phrase 1 and wait
broadcast play phrase 2 and wait
broadcast play phrase 3 and wait
broadcast play phrase 4 and wait
```

Note: The MIDI instrument is local to each sprite. Therefore, setting “church organ” here does not affect the other four scripts.

Phrases Scripts (4, cont’d on next page)

#1

```
when I receive play phrase 1
repeat 2
play note $5$ for 0.5 beats
play note $7$ for 0.5 beats
play note $9$ for 0.5 beats
play note $5$ for 0.5 beats
```

Thought: We could set the instrument in each script, but that would contradict the **DRY** programming principle: “Don’t Repeat Yourself.”
Frère Jacques

Version 3: Separating Phrases (cont’d)

Phrases Scripts (cont’d)

#2

```
when I receive play phrase 2
repeat 2
  play note 59 for 0.5 beats
  play note 60 for 0.5 beats
  play note 62 for 1 beats
```

#3

```
when I receive play phrase 3
repeat 2
  play note 62 for 0.25 beats
  play note 64 for 0.25 beats
  play note 62 for 0.25 beats
  play note 60 for 0.25 beats
  play note 59 for 0.5 beats
  play note 55 for 0.5 beats
```

#4

```
when I receive play phrase 4
repeat 2
  play note 55 for 0.5 beats
  play note 50 for 0.5 beats
  play note 55 for 1 beats
```

Challenge: How can we set the instrument JUST ONCE and have that setting apply to all scripts?
Frère Jacques

Version 4: Playing a Round

Main Script

```
when [green flag] clicked
set instrument to 41
hide
broadcast play version G
```

Phrases Scripts

```
when I receive play phrase 1
set instrument to instrument
repeat 2
play note 55 for 0.5 beats
play note 57 for 0.5 beats
play note 59 for 0.5 beats
play note 55 for 0.5 beats
```

Note the addition of the **set instrument** block and the use of the **instrument** variable (set in the Main script) as the value to set. Other phrase scripts similarly contain this one revision.

*continued on next page*
Frère Jacques
Version 4: Playing a Round (cont’d)

Scripts A-1 through A-4

Others scripts are similar, differing only in when I receive.

Control Script A - single threaded

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Frère Jacques

Version 4: Playing a Round (cont’d)

Control Script B – multi-threaded

Control Script C – multi-threaded repeat

end of Version 4
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Row, Row, Row Your Boat
Version 1: Playing Notes

Single Script

Output Window

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Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 2: Playing Notes Using Variables

Single Script

```
when clicked
set G to 55
set A to 57
set B to 59
set instrument to 72
set tempo to 120 bpm
play note G for 1 beats
play note G for 1 beats
play note G for 0.67 beats
play note A for 0.33 beats
play note B for 1 beats

initialize note values

instrument: clarinet, speed: twice normal (60 bpm)

"Row,"
"row,"
"your"
"boat"
```
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 3: Separating Initialization

Two Scripts

(3a) Main Script

continued on next page
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 3: Separating Initialization
(cont’d)

(3b) Initialization (“Init”) Script

end of Version 3
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 4: Separating Phrases

Three Scripts

(4a) Main Script

```
when green flag clicked
broadcast "Initialize Note Values" and wait
broadcast "Initialize Phrases" and wait
set MyInstrument to clarinet
set tempo to 120 bpm
broadcast "Row" and wait
broadcast "Gently" and wait
broadcast "Merrily" and wait
broadcast "Life" and wait
```

note the importance of using the "broadcast and wait" pieces here

The Scratch instrument setting is local to each sprite. Thus, we set our own variable here and then use that variable to set the Scratch instrument in the Phrases script.

play each phrase in turn, waiting until each is done before playing the next

continued on next page
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 4: Separating Phrases (cont’d)

(4b) Initialization (“Init”) Script

continued on next page
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 4: Separating Phrases (cont’d)

(4c) Phrases Script

Note that the instrument value is local to a sprite, so it must be set (or reset) here.

when I receive Initialize Phrases
set instrument to myInstrument
hide

when I receive Row
play note G for 0.33 beats
play note G for 0.33 beats
play note A for 0.67 beats
play note B for 0.33 beats
play note B for 0.34 beats

"Row," "row," "your," "boat"

when I receive Gently
play note B for 0.67 beats
play note A for 0.33 beats
play note B for 0.67 beats
play note G for 0.33 beats
play note D for 0.67 beats

"Gent-" "ly" "down" "the" "stream"

when I receive Life
play note D for 0.67 beats
play note C for 0.33 beats
play note B for 0.67 beats
play note A for 0.33 beats
play note G for 0.33 beats

"Life" "is" "but" "a" "dream."

when I receive Merrily
play note G' for 0.33 beats
play note G' for 0.34 beats
play note D for 0.33 beats
play note D for 0.34 beats
play note G' for 0.33 beats

"Mer-" "ly"

end of Version 4
Row, Row, Row Your Boat
Version 5: Looping and Fading

Three Scripts

(5a) Main Script

(5b) Initialization (“Init”) Script

(same as on page 34)
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 5: Looping and Fading (cont’d)

(5c) Phrases Script

Note that the instrument value is local to a sprite, so it must be set (or reset) here.

When I receive Initialize Phrases:
- set instrument to MyInstrument
- hide

When I receive Row:
- set volume to MyVolume
- play note G for 1 beat
- play note G for 1 beat
- play note G for 0.67 beat
- play note A for 0.33 beat
- play note B for 1 beat

When I receive Gently:
- play note B for 0.67 beat
- play note A for 0.33 beat
- play note B for 0.67 beat
- play note C for 0.33 beat
- play note D for 2 beat

When I receive Merly:
- play note G for 0.33 beat
- "Mer-"
- "n"
- "ly"
- "Row-
- "row-
- "row"
- "your"
- "boat"

When I receive Life:
- play note D for 0.67 beat
- "Life"
- "is"
- "but"
- "a"
- "dream.

end of Version 5
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 6: Playing a Round with One Instrument

Three Scripts

(6a) **Main Script**

```
when <click> clicked
  broadcast [Initialize Note Values] and wait
  broadcast [Initialize Phrases] and wait
  set [MyInstrument] to [Clarinet]
  set [MyVolume] to [100]
  set [NoOfTimesToPlay] to [2]
  set [tempo] to [120] bpm
  broadcast [Part1]

when I receive [Part1]
  set [Counter] to [1]
  repeat until [Counter] > [NoOfTimesToPlay]
    broadcast [Row] and wait
    if [Counter] = [1]
      broadcast [Part2]
    broadcast [Gently] and wait
    broadcast [Merrily] and wait
    broadcast [Life] and wait
    change [Counter] by [1]

when I receive [Part2]
  repeat [NoOfTimesToPlay]
    broadcast [Row] and wait
    broadcast [Gently] and wait
    broadcast [Merrily] and wait
    broadcast [Life] and wait
```

Like the Scratch instrument setting, the Scratch volume setting is also local to each sprite. So again we set our own variable here and then use that variable to set the Scratch volume in the Phrases script.

Note the importance of using the "broadcast and wait" pieces here.
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 6: Playing a Round with One Instrument (cont’d)

(6b) Initialization (“Init”) Script

(6c) Phrases Script

(same as on page 37)

end of Version 6
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 7: Playing a Round with Two Instruments

Five Scripts

(7a) Main Script

```
when green flag clicked
broadcast "Initialize Note Values" and wait
broadcast "Initialize Phrases" and wait
broadcast "Initialize Phrases 2" and wait
set MyInstrument to Clarinet
set MyInstrument2 to Trumpet
set MyVolume to 100
set NoOfTimesToPlay to 2
set tempo to 120 bpm
broadcast Part1

when I receive Part1
set Counter to 1
repeat until <Counter > NoOfTimesToPlay
broadcast Row and wait
if <Counter = 1
broadcast Part2
broadcast Gently and wait
broadcast Gently and wait
broadcast Life and wait
change Counter by 1
```

note the importance of using the "broadcast and wait" pieces here

Like the Scratch instrument setting, the Scratch volume setting is also local to each sprite. So again we set our own variable here and then use that variable to set the Scratch volume in the Phrases script.

Part 2 had to be moved to another sprite so that it could be played with another instrument.
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 7: Playing a Round with Two Instruments (cont’d)

(7b) Initialization (“Init”) Script

(7c) Phrases Script
(same as on page 37)

(7d) Part2 Script ➡

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Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 7: Playing a Round with Two Instruments (cont’d)

(7e) Instrument2 (“Instru2”) Script

end of Version 7
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 8: Storing Notes and Rhythms in Lists

Output Window

continued on next page
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 8: Storing Notes and Rhythms in Lists (cont’d)

Single Script

```
when green旗 clicked
   broadcast "Initialize" and wait
   set ListIndex to 1

repeat until ListIndex > length of Notes
   play note item ListIndex of Notes for item ListIndex of Rhythms beats
   change ListIndex by 1

when I receive "Initialize"
   set Clarinet to 72
   set instrument to Clarinet
   set tempo to 120 bpm
```

we must use a "repeat until" loop with our own loop index (as opposed to a "repeat n" loop) so that we have access to the loop index to use to access individual items in the list.

end of Version 8
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 9: Playing a Round Using Lists

Three Scripts

(9a) Main Script

```
when [clicked] [ ]
broadcast [Initialize] [ ] and wait
set instrument to [Clarinet]
set [PlayCounter] to [1]
repeat until [PlayCounter > NoOfTimesToDelete]
  set [ListIndex] to [1]
  repeat until [ListIndex > length of [Notes]]
    if [PlayCounter = 1] and [ListIndex = 6]
      broadcast [Play Part 2]
    play note [item ListIndex of [Notes]] for [item ListIndex of [Rhythms]] beats
    change [ListIndex] by [1]
    change [PlayCounter] by [1]
```

continued on next page
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 9: Playing a Round Using Lists (cont’d)

(9b) Initialization ("Init") Script

(9c) Part2 Script

end of Version 9
Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 10: Synchronizing Play from Lists

Four Scripts

(10a) Main Script

(10b) Initialization ("Init") Script

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Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 10: Synchronizing Play from Lists (cont’d)

(10c) Part 1 Script

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Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Version 10: Synchronizing Play from Lists (cont’d)

(10d) Part 2 Script

end of Version 10
Scratch is developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at the MIT Media Lab. See http://scratch.mit.edu. Performamatics is an interdisciplinary project at UMass Lowell funded by the National Science Foundation. See http://performamatics.org.
Extending the Examples

1. **Use a variable to set the tempo.**
   - Add a slider to the variable so that you can change the tempo in real time.
   - Find all the places you need to use the variable to reset the tempo when you change it in real time.
   - Which version of playing the round best stays synchronized when you change the tempo?

2. **Transpose the melody to another key.**
   - Create a variable to hold a pitch offset.
   - Find all the places you need to use that variable to play the melody in the new key.

3. **Increase the number of times that the round repeats.**
   - Do the parts stay in synch?

4. **Increase the number of parts that play simultaneously.** (Be sure to set Turbo Speed to do this!)
   - When should each part “come in“?
   - How much should the first beat of each part be offset?
Extending the Examples (cont’d)

5. Play the melody backwards.
   • Can you play multiple parts backwards, too?

6. Increase the number of times that the round repeats.
   • Do the parts stay in synch?

7. Increase the number of parts that play simultaneously. (Be sure to set Turbo Speed before you try this!)
   • When should each part “come in”?
   • How much should the first beat of each part be offset?

8. Make a round using the G-major scale.
   • Put the note values for a G-major scale into a list. See page 32 for code that initializes and plays a G-major scale, but remember that you must use the integer values, not the variable names, to play notes from a list.
   • Start Part 2 when Part 1 plays its third note (B, MIDI note #59).
   • Add Part 3, starting when Part 1 plays its fifth note (D, #62).
Extending the Examples (cont’d)

   - Start with the list created for the previous exercise.
   - Use the “pick random” piece in the Operators group to pick a random note from the list.
   - Play each note for 0.25, 0.50, 0.75, or 1.00 beats, also selected randomly.
   - Does the result sound musical?

10. Create a program that can play any major scale given any starting note.
    - Store the starting note in a variable.
    - For a major scale, the number of half-tones between each note is:
      \[2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1\]
    - Another way to think about this is:
      \[
      \text{Do} + 2 \rightarrow \text{Re} + 2 \rightarrow \text{Mi} + 1 \rightarrow \text{Fa} + 2 \rightarrow \\
      \text{Sol} + 2 \rightarrow \text{La} + 2 \rightarrow \text{Ti} + 1 \rightarrow \text{Do}
      \]
    - Create a list containing the changes between the notes, and then use a loop to process the list and play the scale.
Extending the Examples (cont’d)

11. Create a program that can play any **harmonic minor** scale given any starting note.
   - For a harmonic minor scale, the number of half-tones between each note is:
     2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 3, 1
   - Create a new list containing these changes, but use the same loop that you created for the previous exercise to play this scale.

12. Create a program to play a major chord.
   - A major chord is the 1st, 3rd, and 5th notes of the scale, usually complemented by the octave above the 1st note. Thus, a G-major scale has notes G (#55), B (#59), D (#62), and G’ (#67).
   - Another way to think about this is to compute the half-tone difference from the starting note: 0, 4, 7, 12.
   - Set a starting note and then use a “broadcast” to play the four notes simultaneously.
The IchiBoard

Board Layout
(courtesy of Mark Sherman, UMass Lowell Computer Science Engaging Computing Group)

Scratch Code for an IchiBoard Musical Instrument
(courtesy of Alex Ruthmann)
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The PicoBoard

With PicoCrickets, you can create musical sculptures, interactive jewelry, dancing creatures, and other playful inventions.

**PICOBOARD SET UP**

Which version of the PicoBoard do you have?

- **Serial**
  - Does your PicoBoard connect to your computer using a Serial to USB Cable?
  - All PicoBoards purchased before June 2009 are Serial PicoBoards.

- **USB**
  - Does your PicoBoard connect to your computer using a USB to USB Cable?
  - All PicoBoards purchased after June 2009 are USB PicoBoards.
PicoBoard Serial to USB Setup

Windows Instructions 🍀

Windows XP (and older) users: Download the PicoBoard [Windows Driver (1471 KB)]

Windows Vista/7 users should just plug the USB to Serial cable in their computer and let the operating system choose the correct driver. Then skip to step #3 below. If you do not have internet access on your computer, download the PicoBoard [Windows Driver (1471 KB)].

Mac Instructions 🍉

Mac OS X Driver (61 KB)

First, open the file that you just downloaded. Click the link that says "Extract all files".

First, open the file that you just downloaded by clicking the magnifying glass in the Download panel.

1 Then double-click on the file that you just extracted, and follow the on-screen instructions.

2 Then double-click on the file that you just extracted, and follow the on-screen instructions.

Both Operating Systems:

3 Connect the USB part of your USB-Serial Cable to a USB port on your computer.

4 Connect the serial part of your USB-Serial Cable to the serial port on the PicoBoard.

Read [Getting Started with PicoBoards](#) to start making projects in [Scratch](#) with your PicoBoard.

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PicoBoard USB to USB Setup

Windows Instructions 🍃

**Windows XP users:** Download the PicoBoard **Windows Driver (1.71 MB)**

**Windows Vista/Windows 7 users** should just plug the USB cable in their computer and let the operating system choose the correct driver. Then skip to step 3 below.

If you do not have internet access on your computer, download the PicoBoard **Windows Driver (1.71 MB)**.

1. First, open the file that you just downloaded. Click the link that says "Extract all files".

2. Then double-click on the file that you just extracted, and follow the on-screen instructions.

**Mac Instructions 🍃**

**Mac OS X Driver (419 KB)**

1. First, open the file that you just downloaded by clicking the magnifying glass in the Download panel.

2. Then double-click on the file that you just extracted, and follow the on-screen instructions.

**Both Operating Systems:**

3. Connect the USB Cable to a USB port on your computer.

4. Connect the other part of the USB Cable to the USB port of the PicoBoard.

5. Read **Getting Started with PicoBoards** to start making projects in **Scratch** with your PicoBoard.
Computing and Music:
What Do They Have in Common?

Computing and music share deep structural similarities. For starters, both rely on notational symbol systems. Programming loops are typically delineated with opening and closing curly brackets { }, parentheses, or levels of indentation. Music loops are delineated with begin and end repeat signs {} or initiated by “D.S.” (Italian: dal segno), which instructs musicians to “repeat back to the sign,” typically designated as %. As in programming, musical iteration can also make use of loop control variables. For example, Figure 1 shows a loop in which the music changes the second time through.

![Figure 1. Musical iteration with a loop control variable.][6]

Both computing and music have logic and flow. Figure 2 shows the logic one student saw in The Beatles’ All You Need Is Love. If one were to turn this flowchart into a computer program, it would not only contain loops, but if and switch statements as well.

One can also go the other way, converting musical concepts into computer programs. For example, the Scratch [2, 3] program in Figure 3a plays Jimmy Page’s famous guitar riff from Led Zeppelin’s Kashmir. This code works properly, but consider the many computational thinking (CT) concepts learned by transforming the code in Figure 3a to 3b, which plays exactly the same riff.
Computing and Music (cont’d)

Figure 2. A song flowchart. [1]
Computing and Music (cont’d)

Figure 3. Two versions of Jimmy Page’s *Kashmir* riff programmed in Scratch. [4]
List and array data structures can be used to represent pitches and durations. Figure 4 shows an array (or indexed list) of MIDI note values paired with an array of note durations (in fractions of beats) that plays part of Row, Row, Row Your Boat. Using such structures, one can explore synchronization when the values are read by multiple threads with entrances staggered in time, resulting in the performance of a canon (or round).

References Cited

Computer Science, Math, and Music: Concepts Covered in Scratch

Computer Science
- statements
- sequential control flow
- iteration
- conditional execution
- arithmetic operators
- Boolean operators
- objects
- concurrency
- variables
- lists
- event handling
- user interaction
- optimization

Math
- positive and negative numbers
- real numbers
- decimal notation
- built-in functions with inputs
- angles
- Cartesian coordinates
- trigonometric operators
- random numbers

Music
- pitch
- rhythm (as duration)
- melodic fragments
- modes and scales
- polyphony
- synchronization
- harmony
- composing
- performing
- transposition
- balance and dynamics
- digital audio (as sound files)
- MIDI notes and timbres
- tempo
- form and structural analysis
Scratch is developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at the MIT Media Lab. See http://scratch.mit.edu. Performamatics is an interdisciplinary project at UMass Lowell funded by the National Science Foundation. See http://performamatics.org.
Additional Readings


The intersection of computing and music can enrich pedagogy in numerous ways, from low-level courses that use music to illustrate practical applications of computing concepts to high-level ones that use sophisticated computer algorithms to process audio signals. This paper explores the ground between these extremes by describing our experiences with two types of interdisciplinary courses. In the first, arts and computing students worked together to tackle a joint project even though they were taking independent courses. In the second, all students enrolled in the same course, but every class was taught by two professors: one from music and the other from computer science. This course was designed to teach computing and music together, rather than one in service to the other. This paper presents the philosophy and motivation behind these courses, describes some of the assignments students do in them, and shows examples of student work.


This paper discusses our ongoing experiences in developing an interdisciplinary general education course called Sound Thinking that is offered jointly by our Dept. of Computer Science and Dept. of Music. It focuses on the student outcomes we are trying to achieve and the projects we are using to help students realize those outcomes. It explains why we are moving from a web-based environment using HTML and JavaScript to Scratch and discusses the potential for Scratch's "musical live coding" capability to reinforce those concepts even more strongly.
Additional Readings (cont’d)


Scratch is a visual programming environment that allows users (primarily ages 8 to 16) to learn computer programming while working on personally meaningful projects such as animated stories and games. A key design goal of Scratch is to support self-directed learning through tinkering and collaboration with peers. This article explores how the Scratch programming language and environment support this goal.


This paper describes two NSF-funded collaborations among faculty members in the Computer Science, Art, Music, and English departments at a public university in the Northeast USA. Our goal has been to create undergraduate learning opportunities across the university, focusing on connecting computer science to creative and expressive domains. In past publications, we have focused on student learning outcomes. This paper reports on the motivations, opportunities, and challenges for the faculty members involved.


“Digital fluency” should mean designing, creating, and remixing, not just browsing, chatting, and interacting. In this article we discuss the design principles that guided our development of Scratch and our strategies for making programming accessible and engaging for everyone.
Additional Readings (cont’d)


This paper describes how a graphical user interface (GUI) programming course offered by the Dept. of Computer Science (CS) was paired with a general teaching methods course offered by the Dept. of Music in an attempt to revitalize undergraduate CS education and to enrich the experiences of both sets of students. The paper provides details on the joint project done in these classes and the evaluation that assessed its effect on the curriculum, students, and professors.


There is an imbalance in the supply and demand for computing professionals that has generated shortages in meeting personnel needs within industry. A major program was developed by the U.S. National Science Foundation to encourage innovations in undergraduate computing education. There are a variety of new projects that are revitalizing undergraduate computing education. One approach to such revitalization is the introduction of interdisciplinary courses to expand the scope of computing education. The basic idea is to have students from various disciplines work together on computing projects to expand their educational horizons and make computing courses more appealing. This panel brings together research managers with educators who have developed and taught interdisciplinary courses with these goals in mind.
Additional Readings (cont’d)


http://teaching.cs.uml.edu/~heines/academic/papers/2008learning/AsPublished-IntlJrnlLearning.pdf

This paper describes our efforts to stem the tide of declining CS enrollments by introducing innovations into our curriculum to give students more flexibility in course selection, especially in the freshman and sophomore years. Our approach is based on a partnership between the CS and Art, Music, and English departments in the area of exhibition and performance technologies.

In addition to describing our work, this paper provides the results of an evaluation conducted by an independent research. It reports on the impact this work has had on the CS and Art students and their respective projects, as well as on the professors and the way they teach their courses. It also describes steps that are being taken to improve the courses in the future.
Related Websites

Performamatics Website and Scratch Gallery and YouTube Channel
http://www.youtube.com/performamatics

Scratch Projects by Performamatics People
http://scratch.mit.edu/users/alexruthmann (Music Prof. Alex Ruthmann)
http://scratch.mit.edu/users/drjay (CS Prof. Jesse Heines)
http://scratch.mit.edu/users/performamatics (additional collections)

Scratch Software
http://scratch.mit.edu (home page)
http://scratch.mit.edu/download (download page)
http://scratch.mit.edu(forums (discussion forums)

Scratch Resources for Teaching and Teachers
http://scratched.media.mit.edu (learn - share - connect for educators)

Scratch Project Galleries
http://scratch.mit.edu/channel/featured (featured projects)
http://scratch.mit.edu/galleries/browse/newest (members' personal galleries)

Scratch Information and Support
http://info.scratch.mit.edu/Support/Get_STARTED (getting started instructions)
http://info.scratch.mit.edu/sites/infoscratch.media.mit.edu/files/file/
  ScratchGettingStartedv14.pdf (Getting Started Guide)
http://info.scratch.mit.edu/Support (support page)
http://info.scratch.mit.edu/Video_Tutorials (video tutorials)
http://info.scratch.mit.edu/Support/Scratch_Cards (single-topic lessons)

Lifelong Kindergarten Group and Collaborators’ Websites
http://llk.media.mit.edu (John Maloney and Mitchel Resnick)
http://teaching.cs.uml.edu (Jesse Heines)
http://www.alexruthmann.com (Alex Ruthmann)