

Farbood, Morwaread M., Egon Pasztor and Kevin Jennings. "Hyperscore: A Graphical Sketchpad for Novice Composers."

Hyperscore is a graphical environment that facilitates the composition process through intelligently mapping musical features to graphical abstractions. It provides a visual analogue for what is happening structurally in the music. With it, non-musically trained people can compose short melodies and describe the large-scale shape of a piece. It uses riffs, or thematic fragments, as musical building blocks and high-level modifiers to edit and refine the music. Hyperscore is a Windows application written in C++ (DirectX) and consists of an expansive, zoomable canvas where users can create any number of musical fragments and whole pieces. In the motive window, the vertical axis represents pitch and the horizontal axis represents time. The start and end points of the line determine how many times a motive repeats.

Hyperscore addresses issues of harmony in a couple of different ways. It lets the users describe harmonic progressions by shaping a central line and depending on the curves in the line, the line direction and shape, the computer chooses relevant chords. The user can choose from between four harmonic styles: none, diatonic, major/minor, and fourths. Drawing a contour line provides a simple and intuitive solution to depict areas of harmonic tension and resolution.

From my personal experience with playing with Hyperscore, I find the program quite challenging at first. The controls are not clear, there are no popup directions to help you, and the user is not sure what functions are available. Hyperscore is addicting and intuitive. The different colors provide a playful environment that is fun and educating. As with most addicting programs, Hyperscore consumes a lot of the users time. Practice, patients, and creativity are required in order to produce a respectable product. Having the different harmonic styles to choose from conveniently simplifies the harmonizing process. After about 2 hours of playing around with the different buttons and listening to what magic the provided samples can accomplish, I was able to create a small little "round." Too bad I could not find the save button to save my masterpiece. I look forward to the improvement where Hyperscore can take the input of a piece of music and display the piece's output Hyperscore sketch. It will be amusing to see exactly how colorful some pieces are.