

LilyPond

The music typesetter

The LilyPond development team

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(For LilyPond version 2.8.8)

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Preface

It must have been during a rehearsal of the EJE (Eindhoven Youth Orchestra), somewhere in 1995 that Jan, one of the cranked violists told Han-Wen, one of the distorted French horn players, about the grand new project he was working on. It was an automated system for printing music (to be precise, it was MPP, a preprocessor for MusiXTeX). As it happened, Han-Wen accidentally wanted to print out some parts from a score, so he started looking at the software, and he quickly got hooked. It was decided that MPP was a dead end. After lots of philosophizing and heated email exchanges, Han-Wen started LilyPond in 1996. This time, Jan got sucked into Han-Wen's new project.

In some ways, developing a computer program is like learning to play an instrument. In the beginning, discovering how it works is fun, and the things you cannot do are challenging. After the initial excitement, you have to practice and practice. Scales and studies can be dull, and if you are not motivated by others—teachers, conductors or audience—it is very tempting to give up. You continue, and gradually playing becomes a part of your life. Some days it comes naturally, and it is wonderful, and on some days it just does not work, but you keep playing, day after day.

Like making music, working on LilyPond can be dull work, and on some days it feels like plodding through a morass of bugs. Nevertheless, it has become a part of our life, and we keep doing it. Probably the most important motivation is that our program actually does something useful for people. When we browse around the net we find many people who use LilyPond, and produce impressive pieces of sheet music. Seeing that feels unreal, but in a very pleasant way.

Our users not only give us good vibes by using our program, many of them also help us by giving suggestions and sending bug reports, so we would like to thank all users that sent us bug reports, gave suggestions or contributed in any other way to LilyPond.

Playing and printing music is more than a nice analogy. Programming together is a lot of fun, and helping people is deeply satisfying, but ultimately, working on LilyPond is a way to express our deep love for music. May it help you create lots of beautiful music!

Han-Wen and Jan

Utrecht/Eindhoven, The Netherlands, July 2002.