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Programming Mixed Music in ReactiveML

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Abstract

Mixed music is about live musicians interacting with electronic parts which are controlled by a computer during the performance. It allows composers to use and combine traditional instruments with complex synthesized sounds and other electronic devices. There are several languages dedicated to the writing of mixed music scores. Among them, the Antescofo language coupled with an advanced score follower allows a composer to manage the reactive aspects of musical performances: how electronic parts interact with a musician. However these domain specific languages do not offer the expressiveness of functional programming.

We embed the Antescofo language in a reactive functional programming language, ReactiveML. This approach offers to the composer recursion, higher order, inductive types, as well as a simple way to program complex reactive behaviors thanks to the synchronous model of concurrency on which ReactiveML is built. This article presents how to program mixed music in ReactiveML through several examples.

Categories and Subject Descriptors  
D.3.2 [Language Classification]: Concurrent, distributed, parallel languages; H.5.5 [Information Interfaces and Presentation]: Sound and Music Computing.

Keywords  
Synchronous Programming; Language Embedding; Mixed Music; Live Coding.

1. Introduction

Technical progresses since the 1950’s have led composers to write music mixing live performers with electronic parts. At first, performers simply followed a pre-registered magnetic band. But the advances in computing rapidly allowed real interaction between musicians and electronic parts.

Developed at IRCAM, Antescofo [5] is a state-of-the-art score following system dedicated to mixed music. Since 2008, Antescofo has been used in the creation of more than 40 original mixed electronic pieces by world renowned artists and ensembles, including Pierre Boulez, Philippe Manoury, Marco Stroppa, New York Philharmonics, Berlin Philharmonics, and the Radio France Orchestra.

The sequencer of Antescofo is a synchronous reactive system: it continuously reads inputs from the listening machine, produces outputs to the musical environment and is subject to the strong timing requirement related to ear tolerance (typically 30 ms). Synchronous languages [2] have been invented and are used widely for programming a wide range of critical control software: on board control of trains and track interlocking, fly-by-wire and cockpit displays for planes, etc. Therefore, they would have been well suited for programming the sequencer. But, to ensure statically that programs execute in bounded time and memory, synchronous lan-

http://repmus.ircam.fr/antescofo

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Figure 1. Architecture of the Antescofo system. Continuous arrow represent pre-treatment, and dotted ones real-time communications

1 http://repmus.ircam.fr/antescofo

2 http://cycling74.com/

3 http://www.esterel-technologies.com
guages like Lustre and Esterel intentionally forbid the dynamic cre-
ration of processes which is a feature of the Antescofo language. To
overcome this limitation, we have implemented an Antescofo se-
quencer in ReactiveML [1], an extension of the functional language
OCaml\(^4\) with synchronous parallelism. Note that we are interested
in the language and the sequencer, the link with live musicians still
relies on the actual Antescofo listening machine.

**Contribution of the Paper** The main contribution of this paper is
to show, through a collection of examples, the benefit of the
embedding of Antescofo in ReactiveML for programming mixed
music. This embedding combines the expressiveness of the two. It
facilitates the creation process for the composer by using higher-
order combinators. It can be used to prototype new programming
constructs for Antescofo. In all our experiments, response times
were less than the reaction time of human ear, using the current
version of the ReactiveML compiler and run-time.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents Reactive-
ML through a simple library for electronic music. In Section 3,
we introduce the main features of the Antescofo language. Then,
Section 4 illustrates our approach on a complete example. In Sec-
tion 5, we show how this work can be used to design new kinds of
interactions between a live performer and electronic parts. Related
work is discussed in Section 6 and we conclude on Section 7.

The code presented in the article is available on a companion
web site: [http://reactiveml.org/farm13](http://reactiveml.org/farm13). Links to music or
video demos are indicated with the symbol \(\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\).

## 2. Music in ReactiveML

ReactiveML [17] is a synchronous reactive language built as an
extension of the functional programming language OCaml. There-
fore, following the work of Hudak [12] we can easily define musi-
cal structures, in a functional programming style.

This section presents the language ReactiveML and its concurre-
cy model through a simple music library.

### 2.1 Music data types

Traditionally, in western music, a melody is a sequence of notes,
where a note is a sound event characterized by a pitch and a
duration. Notes can be defined with the following types.

```ocaml
type pitch_class =
  | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
  | A$\flat$ | B$\flat$ | C$\flat$ |

let jacques =
  [ 1.0, (F,4); 1.0, (G,4); 1.0, (A,4); 1.0, (F,4);
    1.0, (A,4); 1.0, (Bf,4); 2.0, (C,5); ]
```

Figure 2. The traditional French musical round *Frère Jacques* and
the beginning of its representation in our data structures.

Now that we can represent musical structures, we write func-
tions to manipulate them. For instance, the following defines func-
tions to transpose a sequence.\(^5\)

```ocaml
let move_pitch inter p =
  pitch_of_int ((int_of_pitch p) + inter)
val move_pitch : int * pitch_class * octave

let transpose inter sequence =
  List.map
    (fun (d, p) -> d, (move_pitch inter p))
  sequence
val transpose : int * note list -> note list
```

The function move_pitch transposes a symbolic pitch by an inter-
val `inter` in semi-tones. To transpose an entire melody, we use the
higher-order function List.map from the standard OCaml library
that applies move_pitch to every note in a sequence.

### 2.2 Time in ReactiveML

ReactiveML is a synchronous language based on the reactive model
introduced by Boussinot [4]. It relies on the notion of a global
logical time. Time is viewed as a sequence of logical instants.
Regular OCaml functions are considered to be instantaneous, i.e.,
when called it returns its result in the very same instant. In addition,
we can define processes that may last over several logical instants.
It is introduced by the keyword process.

To start with, consider the programming of a simple countdown.
The following program awaits a given amount of time value given
in seconds.

```ocaml
let process countdown value =
  let deadline = Unix.gettimeofday () +. value in
  while Unix.gettimeofday () < deadline do
    pause
  done
val countdown : float -> unit process
```

First, the date of the deadline is computed using the function
gettimeofday of the Unix module\(^6\). Then, while the current date
is less than the deadline, the process countdown awaits the next
logical instant (pause).

Communications between processes are made through signals
that are values characterized by a status defined at every logical
instant: present or absent. For instance, the following process im-
plement a standard timer similar to the Unix timer. It awaits a first

\(^4\)http://caml.inria.fr

\(^5\)The type of the functions given in italic can be less general than the
one inferred by the compiler.

\(^6\)+...*.../... are floating-point addition, multiplication and division opera-
tors.
duration value, and then periodically emits the signal alarm with a period interval.\(^7\)

\[
\text{let rec process timer value interval alarm =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{run (countdown value);} \\
\text{emit alarm ();} \\
\text{run (timer interval interval alarm)} \\
\text{val timer: float \to float \to (unit, unit) event \to unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

The process timer is the interface between physical time and synchronous logical time. This process is non-deterministic: the number of logical instants between two emissions of the signal alarm is not necessarily constant. Yet, if the duration of every logical instant is much smaller than interval, the error between two emission of the signal alarm will be negligible with respect to the reaction time of the human ear, i.e., 30 ms [10]. The important point is that we have isolated the source of non-determinism in the program. Now, it is possible to express delays with respect to a signal which is supposed to be periodic.

In the following, alarm denotes a global signal. It will be generated by the process timer described above, with period period defined as a global constant. Using this signal, one can write a process that does nothing but wait for a duration dur. For simplicity, we assume in this section that all durations are expressed in seconds:

\[
\text{let process wait dur =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{let d = int_of_float (dur / period) in} \\
\text{for i = 1 to d do} \\
\text{emit alarm ()} \\
\text{done} \\
\text{val wait: dur \to unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

This process waits for \(d\) occurrences of the signal alarm where \(d\) is the duration dur expressed as a number of instants.

In ReactiveML, signals can also carry values. Different values can be emitted during an instant, which is termed multi-emission. In this case, when the signal is declared, a function defining how to combine the multiple emissions must be provided. Here, we declare a signal perf which accumulates in a list the multiple simultaneous emissions.

\[
\text{signal perf default [] gather (fun x y \to x::y)}
\]

\[
\text{val perf: (note, note list) event \to (note, note list) event \to (note, note list) event \to unit process}
\]

The default value is set to the empty list, [], and the gathering function (\(\text{fun } x \text{ y } \to x::y\)) appends the value \(x\) to the head of the list \(y\). This function is used to fold all the values emitted during an instant into a list, starting from the default value.

Now, we write a process play which iteratively emits the notes from a sequence on the signal perf.

\[
\text{let rec process play sequence perf =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{match sequence with} \\
\text{[] \to ()} \\
\text{[(dur, pitch) as note] :: s \to} \\
\text{emit perf note;} \\
\text{run (wait dur);} \\
\text{run (play s)} \\
\text{val play: note list \to (note, note list) event \to unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

To play a note, the program sends it on the signal perf. Then, it waits for the delay corresponding to the note duration before sending the next note.

To produce sound, notes emitted on signal perf are sent to the audio environment.

\[
\text{let process sender perf =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{loop} \\
\text{await perf (notes) in} \\
\text{List.iter (fun n \to send_to_audio n) notes} \\
\text{end} \\
\text{val sender: (note, note list) event \to unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

This process loops infinitely: it waits for an emission on signal perf and sends all received notes to the audio environment, by calling the function send_to_audio.

A musical performance is the parallel composition of the two previous processes.\(^2\)

### 2.3 Parallel and Sequential Execution

Thanks to the notion of global logical time inherited from the synchronous model, it is easy to combine processes. Two expressions can be evaluated in sequence (\(e_1; e_2\)) or in parallel (\(e_1 || e_2\)). In the latter case, they execute synchronously (or lockstep). Therefore, they remain synchronous during an execution.

Imagine we want to double a voice one third higher (i.e., four semi-tones). Of course, it is possible to write a function that takes a list of notes and returns a new list of notes containing the two voices. But, we can also use the deterministic parallel execution provided by ReactiveML to play in parallel the voice and its transposition. This construct will be very useful to combine the musical performance with other processes (see for instance Section 5.2).

\[
\text{let process double sequence =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{run (play sequence) ||} \\
\text{run (play (transpose 4 sequence))} \\
\text{val double: note list \to unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

In ReactiveML, processes are first class citizens. Thus, it is possible to write higher order processes. For instance, the following code delays the execution of a process \(p\) by a duration in seconds.

\[
\text{let process delayed p dur =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{run (wait dur);} \\
\text{run p} \\
\text{val delayed: unit process \to dur \to unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

Finally processes can be iterated with the classical constructs: \(loop\) for an infinite loop, \(for/do/done\) for a finite sequential loop and \(for/dopar/done\) for a finite parallel loop.

With these constructs, we are able to execute the round presented in Figure 2.\(^2\) Four different voices play the theme in loop. Each voice starts two measures, i.e., 8s after the previous one.

\[
\text{let process theme =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{loop} \\
\text{run (play jacques)} \\
\text{end} \\
\text{val theme: unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{let process round =}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{run theme ||} \\
\text{run (delayed theme 8.0) ||} \\
\text{run (delayed theme 16.0) ||} \\
\text{run (delayed theme 24.0)} \\
\text{val round: unit process}
\end{align*}
\]

---

\(^7\) In order to avoid time shifting and floating point errors, the actual implementation is slightly different.
3. Toward Mixed Music

Mixed music is about interaction between a live musician and electronic parts. The Antescofo language [9] allows a composer to specify electronic parts and how they interact with musicians during a performance. This language is the result of a close collaboration between composers and computer scientists. Figure 3 shows a graphical representation of a very simple Antescofo score.

![Figure 3. Representation of an Antescofo score. Musical notes correspond to the musician’s part and the rest to electronic actions.](image)

This process can also be written with a parallel loop:

```ml
let rec process round nb_voices =
  if nb_voices <= 0 then ()
  else begin
    run theme ||
    run (delayed (round (nb_voices - 1)) 8.0)
  end

val round: int -> unit process
```

or, using a recursive process taking the number of voices as an argument.

```ml
let process round =
  if round <= 0 then ()
  else begin
    run theme ||
    run (delayed (round (nb_voices - 1)) 8.0)
  end

val round: unit process
```

We are now able to describe and execute electronic music in ReactiveML. But what about mixed music?

3.1 Relative Time in Music

In most classical western scores, durations and delays are expressed relative to the tempo i.e., the execution speed is expressed in beats per minute (bpm). On the example of Figure 3, the duration of the first two notes is set to 1.0 beat, i.e., a quarter note. If the current tempo is 60 bpm it means 1s, but 0.5s if the tempo is 120 bpm. Musicians are free to interpret a score with a moving tempo. Indeed, in classical western music, tempo is one of the most prominent degrees of freedom for interpretation. It partially explains the huge difference between a real interpretation by a live musician and an automatic execution of the same score by a computer.

During a performance, the listening machine decodes both the position in the score and the execution speed. The tempo is not estimated from the last duration alone but rather from all durations detected since the beginning of the performance. In this way, the listening machine adds some inertia to tempo changes which corresponds to the real behavior of musicians playing together [5, 15].

3.2 The Antescofo language

In this framework, the most basic electronic actions, called atomic actions are simple control messages destined for the audio environment. Unlike traditional musical notes, atomic actions are instantaneous; they are not characterized by a duration but by the delay needed before their activation. Moreover, delays between electronic actions, like note durations, can be specified in relative time. Thus, electronic parts can follow the speed of the live performer as a trained musicians would.

Sequences of electronic actions are linked to an instrumental event, the triggering event. For instance, in Figure 3, action a0 is bound to the first note with a delay of 0.0. When the first note is detected, action a0 is sent immediately.

Actions can be regrouped into structures called groups. Groups are treated as atomic actions and are bound to an instrumental event and characterized by a delay. On the example of Figure 3, a group containing a sequence of three actions is bound to event e2.

Furthermore, groups can be arbitrarily nested. It allows to faithfully capture the hierarchical structure of a musical piece. Actions contained in a nested group are executed in parallel with the actions following them in the embedding group, not in sequence.

A score can be described with the following types:

```ml
type score_event =
  { event : instr_event_label;
    seq : sequence; }

and sequence = delay * asco_event list

and asco_event =
  | Signal of (unit, unit list) event
  | Group of group

and action =
  | Message of audio_message
  | Signal of (unit, unit list) event

and group =
  { group_synchro: sync;
    group_error: err;
    group_seq: sequence }

and sync = Tight | Loose

and err = Local | Global | Causal | Partial
```

The type `score_event` represents a sequence of electronic actions seq bound to an instrumental event event. A sequence is just a list of electronic actions characterized by a delay relative to the tempo (see Section 3.1).

Atomic actions can be either simple control messages destined to the audio environment, `Message`, or classic ReactiveML signals to control other processes, `Signal`. ReactiveML signals are useful to couple the electronic accompaniment with other reactive processes (see Section 5).

The problem is that during a performance, the computer is supposed to act as a trained musician, following the other performers. Thus, the specification of mixed music scores faces two major challenges:

- During a live performance a musician can make a mistake, or worse, the listening machine may fail to recognize an event. In both cases, an expected event is missing. But what happens to actions bound to this event?
- Sometimes, a sequence of actions bound to an instrumental event may last longer than the duration of the triggering event. For instance, on our example, actions a2 and a3 should occur after event e3 although they are triggered by event e2. In this case, the question is: how should an electronic part synchronize with instrumental event that occur during its execution?
Partial handling attribute is set to Causal to carded. On the other hand, if the error handling-attribute is set past errors could be useful if some actions are used to initialize an external group are completely ignored. Local groups are launched with a zero delay, whereas Global groups are launched with a zero delay, whereas Partial a performer may accelerate or decelerate between two events. This strategy is used to preserve temporal relations between actions contained in the group. For instance, it can be very useful when the electronic part is treated as an independent background sound.

Error-handling and synchronization strategies depend very much on the musical context. The Antescofo language proposes solutions to reflect different musical behaviors. Groups are characterized by two attributes [6], a synchronization attribute (see Section 3.4) and an error handling attribute (see Section 3.3).

3.3 Error handling

The error-handling attribute defines the behavior of the group when the expected triggering event is absent. There are several ways to deal with errors depending on the musical context. We present here four exclusive error handling strategies: Partial, Causal, Local and Global. Figure 4 illustrates the four different behaviors.

The most basic accompaniment is perhaps a simple harmonization of the musician’s voice. In this case, if a triggering event is missed, electronic part must keep on going as if the error never occurred. This is, for instance, the behavior of a pianist accompanying a beginner. Thus, attributes Partial and Causal aim to preserve a simple property: the future of a performance does not depend on past errors.

Now, the question is: what about actions that should already have been launched when the error was detected? If the error-handling attribute is set to Partial, these actions are simply discarded. On the other hand, if the error handling-attribute is set to Causal, these actions are immediately launched. This strategy could be useful if some actions are used to initialize an external process, e.g., turn on the light.

Moreover, a group can be used to define a complex control unit, e.g., parameters needed to synthesized the sound of a gong. Then, the integrity of the group must be preserved. Thus, when an error is detected, Global groups are launched with a zero delay, whereas Local groups are completely ignored.

4. A First Example: The house of the rising sun

As a first example, let us take a classical folk song, The house of the rising sun. The score is presented in Figure 5. In this example, we want to define an electronic accompaniment which follows the main theme played by a real musician.

First, we need to create and initialize the asco environment that contains the instrumental score. This environment allows us to manage inputs from the listening machine and the outputs destined for the audio environment.

```plaintext
let asco = create_asco "rising_sun.asco" 120.
val asco: Ascolib.asco
```

To create the environment, we need the instrumental score of the future performance, here "rising_sun.asco" and an initial tempo, typically 120 bpm.

4.1 The basics

The accompaniment is roughly described in the score by a sequence of chords: Am, C, D... bound to instrumental events. For instance, the first chord is related to the second instrumental event, the second to the fourth one and so on.

First, we need a symbolic description of chords. Like pitch describe in Section 2.1, a chord is characterized by a pitch class: A, C, D... and a color: major or minor.

```plaintext
type color = Maj | Min
type chord = pitch_class * color
```

We can define the bass line of our example as a sequence of chords characterized by a delay:

```plaintext
let bass = [0.0, (A, Min); 2.0, (C, Maj); ...]
val bass: (delay * chord) list
```

Then, we need to turn this sequence of chords into a sequence of electronic actions. Perhaps the most simple accompaniment is to play only the roots of the bass line.

```plaintext
let root_of_chord chord octave =
  let (pitch_class, color) = chord in
  (pitch_class, octave)
val root_of_chord: chord -> octave -> pitch
```
Am C D F Am E Am

Figure 5. Score of the house of the rising sun (classical folk song)

let only_roots chords octave dur =
List.map
(fun (delay, chord) ->
  let root = root_of_chord chord octave in
  (delay, action_note (dur, root)))
chords
val only_roots: (delay * chord) list -> octave -> dur -> sequence

Given an octave, the function root_of_chord returns the pitch corresponding to the root of a chord. Then, the function only_roots defines the sequence of electronic actions corresponding to the roots of a sequence of chords, chords. Function action_note converts a note into an atomic action destined for the audio environment (a value Action message where the message contains the characteristics of the note).

Remark that in Figure 5, no octave is specified on the score for the bass. We choose to instantiate the bass with the octave set to 3 (i.e., the first root of the bass is set to A₃ = 220 Hz) and the duration to 2.0 beats which corresponds to the delay between two chords.

let roots = only_roots bass 3 2.0
val roots: sequence

The next thing to do is to build the link between the instrumental part and the electronic accompaniment. The process link asco evt seq links a sequence of actions seq to an instrumental event evt, in the environment asco. This process waits for the event to be detected or missed and it triggers the sequence. For instance, on the example of Figure 5, the first chord is bound to the second instrumental event. We can link the sequence roots to this event to obtain a basic accompaniment.

let process basic_accomp =
run (link asco 2 roots)
val basic_accomp: unit process

If the performer does not play at constant speed, the accompaniment part may become desynchronized at some point. We can easily avoid this behavior if we put the bass line inside a Tight group (see Section 3.4). Moreover, it allows us to specify an error-handling strategy for the accompaniment. In our case, if an instrumental event is missed we do not want to hear the associated chord. Therefore we use the Partial strategy (see Section 3.3).

let process tight_accomp =
  let g = group Tight Partial roots in
  run (link asco 2 [(0.0, g)])
val tight_accomp: unit process

Here, the function group sync err seq is a simple constructor for a group with attributes sync and err containing the sequence of actions seq.

Note that the sequence bound to the second instrumental event contains only one zero delay electronic action: the group that defines the entire accompaniment. When this instrumental event is detected, each chord of the accompaniment is linked to its closest preceding instrumental event.

The last thing to do is to launch the listening machine and the reactive accompaniment.

let process main =
  run (init_asco asco);
begin
  run (listener asco) ||
  run (tight_accomp) ||
  run (sender asco)
end
val main: unit process

It first initializes the environment. Then, the process listener links the listening machine of Antescofo to the environment. In parallel, it executes the accompaniment part, and sends it to the audio environment sender asco.

4.2 Hierarchical structure

The harmonization defined above is a bit minimalist. One solution could be to add several other voices following the previous method. But we can do better.

In the original song, the accompaniment is made with arpeggio over the bass line. Thanks to functional composition, such an accompaniment is very easy to define.

First, we define the arpeggio style we want to apply:

let arpeggio chord octave =
  let fond = root_of_chord chord octave in
  let third =
    match color with
    | Min -> move_pitch 3 fond
    | Maj -> move_pitch 4 fond
  in
  let fifth = move_pitch 7 fond in
  let dur = 0.125 in
  group Loose Local
  [0.0, action_note (dur, fond);
   0.625, action_note (dur, third);
   0.125, action_note (dur, fifth);
   0.125, action_note (dur, move_octave 1 fond);
   0.125, action_note (dur, move_octave 1 third);
   0.333, action_note (dur, move_octave 1 fond);
   0.333, action_note (dur, fifth)];
val arpeggio : chord -> octave -> asco_event

An arpeggio corresponds to a Loose Local group. Thus, an arpeggio related to a missing event is entirely dismissed (Local). Besides, the synchronization strategy preserves the rhythm of the arpeggio (Loose). The function move_octave is similar to move_pitch and shift the pitch a given number of octaves.
Then, we can define the accompaniment by applying the function `arpeggio` to the bass line.

```plaintext
let arpeggio_bass chords octave = List.map
  (fun (delay, chord) ->
   (delay, arpeggio chord octave))
  chords
val arpeggio_bass: (delay * chord) list -> octave -> sequence
```

As for the basic accompaniment, we encompass the resulting sequence inside a `Tight Partial` group.

```plaintext
let process arpeggio_accomp = let chords = arpeggio_bass bass 3 in
  let g = group Tight Partial chords in
  run (link asco 2 [0.0, g])
val arpeggio_accomp: unit process
```

This accompaniments illustrates the possibility of defining hierarchical structures in the score. Indeed, a global `Tight` group contains a succession of arpeggios also defined as groups.

Finally we can replace the process `tight_accomp` in the main process by `arpeggio_accomp`.

### 4.3 Live Coding

A benefit of the embedding of Antescofo in ReactiveML is the ability to use its read–eval–print loop, called toplevel [16]. For example, if we execute the example of the rising sun in the toplevel, while it is playing, we can define a percussion part (we assume here that the environment `asco` has been properly initialized and that processes `listener` and `sender` are already running):

```plaintext
let process drums_accomp = let rhythm = [0.0; 0.625; 0.5; 0.5; ...] in
  let drums = List.map (fun d -> d, action_beat) rhythm
  in
  let accomp = group Tight Partial drums in
  run (link asco 2 [0.0, accomp])
val drums_accomp: unit process
```

First, we define a sequence of delays, rhythm, to represent the rhythm of the drum part. Then, we turn this rhythm into a sequence of electronic actions, drums. Here, `action_beat` is a value `Action` message such that whenever the audio environment receives one of these messages, it plays a drum beat. Finally the result is a `Tight Partial` group containing the entire percussion part bound to the second instrumental event.

Dynamically during the performance, we can ask that this part be played:

```plaintext
#run drums_accomp
```

This new voice will synchronize automatically with the others, even if the triggering event already passed, thanks to the error-handling strategy.

The expressiveness of the language and this dynamic aspect allows us to build more complex interactions with musicians during a performance.

Let us start with a simple example: a higher order process `killable` that allows a process given as argument to be stopped whenever a signal `k` is emitted. This process can be used to control the execution of an accompaniment.

```plaintext
let process killable k p =
  do
    run p
  until k done
val killable: ('a, 'b) event -> unit process -> unit process
```

The construction `do/until` is not a looping structure. It stops the execution of its body when the signal is emitted.

Now, we can define a signal `kill_drum` in the toplevel:

```plaintext
signal kill_drum default () gather (fun x y -> ()
val kill_drum: (unit, unit) event
```

Instead of simply executing the percussion part, we execute it under the supervision of the `killable` combinator.

```plaintext
#run (killable kill_drum drum_accomp)
```

Then, we can stop the drum part during the performance whenever we want.

```plaintext
emit kill_drum ()
```

A more interesting example is to dynamically replace an accompaniment. First, let us define a signal `replace` on which we can send the processes.

```plaintext
signal replace default (process ()
  gather (fun x y -> process (run x || run y))
val replace: (unit process, unit process) event
```

Note that if several emissions occur during the same instant, the result will be the parallel composition of all the emitted processes.

Using the previous signal, we can define another higher order process `replaceable` which executes processes emitted on the signal `replace`.

```plaintext
let rec process replaceable replace p =
  do
    run p
  until replace (q) ->
    run (replaceable replace q)
  done
val replaceable:
  (unit process, unit process) event ->
  unit process
```

First, the process `replaceable` launches the process `p`. Then, whenever a process `q` is emitted on signal `replace`, the execution of `p` stops and the process `q` is launched in turn.

For instance, we can use this feature to dynamically switch between the different styles of accompaniment: basic, arpeggio or drums.

```plaintext
#run (replaceable replace tight_accomp)
emit replace arpeggio_accomp
emit replace drums_accomp
```

The first instruction launches the basic accompaniment (see Section 4.1). After a while, we can evaluate the second or the third instruction to stop the electronic part and start the complete accompaniment, `arpeggio_accomp` or the percussion part, `drums_accomp`.

Thus, it is possible to compose, correct and interact with the score during the performance.

---

8 The `#Run` is a toplevel directive which executes the process given as argument in background.
first_note introduced with the function action_signal. First, we define a simple Tight Partial link_and_loop evt n period seq links a sequence of electrical actions to an instrumental event evt in the environment and loops n times over the sequence seq where each iteration is separated by a delay period. If the period is shorter than the duration of the pattern, the execution of the loop leads to overlapping executions of the pattern.

The electronic part resynchronizes when Bob plays the k-th note of the sequence as the electronic part is playing the first note. Thus, we need to track the k-th note of Bob’s part.

$$\text{let process} \ \text{stamp} \ s \ r \ asco = \\text{loop}$$
$$\ \text{await} \ ie \ (evt) \ \text{when} \ (evt.index \ mod \ 12 = k) \ \text{in}$$
$$\ \text{emit} \ kth\_note ()$$

The function instr_event returns the signal carrying the output of the listening machine. Whenever an instrumental event is detected the index of the event in the score and the estimated tempo is sent on this signal. The construct await ie (evt) when ... binds the value received on ie to evt when the signal is emitted.

The execution can then continue only if the condition of the when is satisfied. Here, if the detected position evt.index corresponds to the k-th note of the sequence, the signal kth_note is emitted.

The last thing to do is to compare the emissions of the two signals first_note and kth_note. If two emissions are close enough it emits a signal sync. We can split this process into three steps.

The process stamp s r asco associates a date to each emission of signal s and emits the result on a signal r.

$$\text{let process} \ \text{stamp} \ s \ r =$$
$$\text{loop}$$
$$\ \text{await} \ s;$$
$$\ \text{emit} \ r \ (date \ asco)$$
$$\text{end}$$

The function date returns a date relative to the tempo. It corresponds to the elapsed delay since the beginning of the performance. Therefore the process stamp is responsive to the execution speed.

Then, the following process emits a signal sync each time the last values emitted on signals r1 and r2 are approximately equal, i.e., whenever the difference between the two values is less than a constant eps.

$$\text{let process} \ \text{spy} \ r1 \ r2 \ \text{sync} \ \text{eps} =$$
$$\text{loop}$$
$$\ \text{await} \ (r1 \ m r2);$$
$$\ \text{let} \ t1 = \text{last} \ ?r1$$
$$\ \text{and} \ t2 = \text{last} \ ?r2 \ \text{in}$$
$$\ \text{if} \ \text{abs} \ (t1 - t2) < \text{eps} \ \text{then}$$
$$\ \text{emit} \ \text{sync} ()$$
$$\text{end}$$

The construct await x1 m x2 awaits for one of the two signals x1 or x2 to be emitted. The expression last ?r1 evaluates to the last value emitted on signal r1.
Finally we can combine the previous processes to achieve the desired behavior.

```ml
let process compare s1 s2 sync eps =
  signal r1 default -.eps gather (fun x y -> x) in
  signal r2 default -.eps gather (fun x y -> x) in
  run (stamp s1 r1) ||
  run (stamp s2 r2) ||
  run (spy r1 r2 sync eps)
val compare: (unit, unit) event -> (unit, unit) event ->
  (unit, unit) event -> float -> unit process
```

This process, associates a date to each emission of signals \(s_1\) and \(s_2\) taken as arguments. Results are emitted on signals \(s_1\) and \(s_2\) respectively. Then, in parallel, we launch the process \(\text{spy}\) on \(s_1\) and \(s_2\), which emits the signal \(\text{sync}\) whenever an emission of \(s_1\) is close enough to an emission of \(s_2\). Since the process \(\text{stamp}\) is responsive to the tempo, the tolerance represented by the constant \(\text{eps}\) increases when the tempo decelerates and decreases when it accelerates. It corresponds to the behavior of actual musicians playing together.

Signals \(s_1\) and \(s_2\) are initialized in order to avoid initialization conflicts. Indeed, if a signal has never been emitted, the last value is the default value. Besides, multiple emissions are in this context very unlikely since the entire sequence is played between two signals. Therefore, the combination function chooses arbitrarily one of the values emitted during the same instant.

Finally the entire piece is described by the following code.

```ml
let piano_phase sync desync first_note kth_note =
  let rec process piano_phase k =
    let ev = last_event asco in
    run (melody ev 4 0.25 first_note);
    emit desync ();
    do
      let ev = last_event asco in
      run (melody (ev+1) 16 0.246 first_note) ||
      run (track k kth_note) ||
      run (compare first_note kth_note sync 0.05)
    until sync done;
    run (piano_phase ((k + 1) mod 12)) in
  piano_phase 1
val piano_phase: (unit, unit) event -> (unit, unit) event ->
  (unit, unit) event -> (unit, unit) event ->
  unit process
```

First, we play the sequence four times with the duration of the notes set to 0.25 (a sixteenth note) i.e., synchronously with the pianist. During this phase, the loop is linked to the last detected instrumental event: \(\text{last_event}\) asco. Then we emit the signal \(\text{desync}\) and start to play the sequence slightly faster with the next instrumental event (the duration of the notes is set to 0.246). In parallel, we compare emissions of signals \(\text{first_note}\) and \(\text{kth_note}\). When they are close enough (here \(\text{eps}\) is set to 0.05), the signal \(\text{sync}\) is emitted. Then we increment \(k\) and restart the whole process. The number of iterations in the desynchronized mode is set to 16. After that, if the two pianists have not resynchronized, the electronic part stops.

### 5.2 Synchronous Observer

In ReactiveML, signals are broadcast communication channels. Therefore, one can easily write synchronous observers [11], i.e., processes that listen to the inputs and outputs of a process without altering its behavior. For instance, it is relatively easy to program a graphical interface for the previous example. This section is simply a proof of concept. We do not claim that this interface is especially aesthetic.

Let us start with a very simple process that draws a rectangle at a given position. Left, Right or Full, each time a signal \(s\) is emitted.

```ml
let process draw_sig s pos color =
  loop
    await s;
    draw_rect pos color;
  end
val draw_sig:
  (unit, unit) event -> position -> color ->
  unit process
```

The process \(\text{wait}\) waits for a duration specified relative to the tempo of the environment. Thus, the interface is responsive to the speed of the performance. Then, we can write a graphic observer that reacts to the emission of two signals \(s_1\) and \(s_2\) by alternating between two modes triggered by the signals \(m_1\) and \(m_2\).

```ml
let process graphic_observer s1 s2 m1 m2 =
  loop
    do
      run (draw_sig s1 Full Graphics.green);
      until m1 done;
    do
      run (draw_sig s1 Left Graphics.blue) ||
      run (draw_sig s2 Right Graphics.red);
      until m2 done
    end
val graphic_observer:
  (unit, unit) event -> (unit, unit) event ->
  (unit, unit) event ->
  (unit, unit) event ->
  unit process
```

In the first mode, we draw a green rectangle on the entire graphic window each time the signal \(s_1\) is emitted. When an emission of signal \(m_1\) occurs, we switch to the second mode. Then, we draw a blue rectangle on the left side of the window each time the signal \(s_1\) is emitted, and a red rectangle on the right side if the signal \(s_2\) is emitted. Then, we restart the whole process when the signal \(m_2\) is emitted.

We can run the process \(\text{graphic}\_observer\) with signals \(\text{first_note, kth_note, desync}\) and \(\text{sync}\) in parallel with the process \(\text{piano}\_phase\) to obtain a simple graphical visualization of \(\text{Piano Phase}\). During the synchronous phase, green flashes indicate that Alice, i.e., the electronic part, is playing the first note of the sequence. During the desynchronization, we can see red flashes on the right each time Bob, i.e., the actual pianist, is playing the \(k\)-th note, and blue ones on the left each time the accompaniment part is playing the first note.

### 6. Related Work

**Comparison with the actual Antescofo language** We focused here on a subset of the actual language of Antescofo. However, constructs that we left aside can be easily encoded using our library. For instance, an original control structure was added to the
language recently [8]. The construct whenever pred seq triggers the sequence seq whenever the predicate pred is true. The predicate may depend on variables, in this case, its value is re-evaluated each time one of the variables is updated. Adding this feature to our library was relatively easy as we now show.

First, variables become ReactiveML signals. Thus, it is possible to react when a variable is updated.

```ocaml
let make_var value = signal x default value gather (fun x y -> x)
```

The function make_var value creates a variable initialized with the value value. Then, we can easily define classic functions to set and access the value of a variable.

```ocaml
let set x v = emit x v
let get x = last ?x
```

To set the value of a variable x, one need only to emit the desired value v on the corresponding signal. We can access the current value of a variable thanks to the function last ?x (see Section 5.1).

Then, the following process waits for one of the variables contained in the list vars to be updated.

```ocaml
let await_vars vars = signal moved default () gather (fun x y -> ()) in
let rec await_par vars = match l with
| [] -> ()
| x :: l ->
  run (await_par l) ||
  (await x; emit moved ())
in
  do run (await_par vars) until moved done
```

The recursive process await_par waits in parallel for an update of any variable. Whenever, an update occurs, the signal moved is emitted. Thanks to the preemptive construct do/until, this emission stops the execution of the process await_par.

Finally the whenever construct can be implemented as follows.

```ocaml
let rec process whenever pred vars p = run (await_vars vars);

begin
  if pred (List.map get vars) then run p ||
  run (whenever pred vars p)
end
```

Whenever a variable contained in vars is updated, we re-evaluate the predicate pred with the new values of the variables. If the predicate is true we launch the process p, meanwhile we start another instance of the process whenever. Thus, if the predicate is true again while p is still running, we execute another process p in parallel. Here a predicate is a function applied to a list of variables.

Thus, our approach shows that ReactiveML is well suited for prototyping new features of the language.

**Functional music** The idea of composing music in a functional framework is not new. One can cite the Haskore library [14], for instance, which allows the expression and combination of musical structures in Haskell. More recently, Haskore and HasSound (a library for audio processing in Haskell) merged into a single embedded language: Euterpea [13]. Thus, this language handles both high-level music representation and low-level audio processing.

We took a similar approach: embedding a domain-specific language inside a functional language. Yet, our approach is not the same as we embed a reactive language in a more expressive reactive language. The major advantage, with respect to the embedding in a general purpose functional language is that we can rely on the temporal expressiveness, static analysis and runtime of ReactiveML.

Note that, we focused here on the control of a musical performance. Audio synthesis is left to an audio environment such as Max/MSP9 [20] or its open source counterpart PureData [21]. An interesting development would be to couple our work with a functional language dedicated to audio synthesis like the language Faust [19] or Euterpea.

**Live coding** There are several languages dedicated to musical live coding. One can for instance cite Chuck [22] and SuperCollider [18]. These languages allow live interactions with an audio environment.

Our approach is completely different. Instead of creating an entire domain specific language, we chose to embed it in a general purpose one that already offers most of the features we need: higher order, recursion, inductive data types... This choice enabled us to implement our library in only a few hundred lines of code. Yet we can already use it to specify relatively complex behavior.

**Composing Mixed Music** The Iscore project [7] proposes a tool to compose interactive scores by specifying temporal constraints between musical objects. Musical structures can be bound to external events such as those occurring during a live performance. In this approach, relations are computed statically before the performance.

Besides, there exist programming languages dedicated to electronic music. For instance, Max/MSP and PureData are graphical languages that handle both the control treatment and signal processing.

However, in both cases it is relatively difficult to program dynamically changing behavior which evolves with parameters instantiated at performance time. For instance, the whenever construct described above would be difficult to simulate. Moreover, these languages are not functional.

### 7. Conclusion

In this paper we showed that a reactive functional language like ReactiveML is well suited to the specification of reactive processes such as a performance of mixed music. We believe that this embedding is a powerful tool for programming mixed music scores as well as prototyping new features for the Antescofo language.

Here, the link with a live performance is realized through the listening machine of the Antescofo system. However, this is not a real limitation. It could be interesting to adapt our framework to other sensors like a gesture follower [3], a speech recognition system or even combine these different input systems. Such an application with multiple sensors and actuators fits into the kind of systems for which synchronous languages like ReactiveML have been designed.

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### References


