

The `fretplot` package

Author and maintainer: Soumendra Ganguly
soumendraganguly.com

Copyright 2025– Soumendra Ganguly

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	L^AT_EX macros	3
2.1	<code>\fptotikz</code>	3
2.2	<code>\fpstemplate</code>	3
2.3	<code>\fpstemplate</code>	3
2.4	<code>\fpscale</code>	3
2.5	Examples	4
2.6	Tables	5
3	The <code>fretplot</code> file format	8
3.1	Syntax	8
3.2	Parameters	8
3.3	Examples	10
4	The <code>fretplot</code> scale style file format	12
4.1	Syntax	12
4.2	An example	12

1 Introduction

The *fretplot* LuaTeX package provides batch generation of scale and chord diagrams for plucked string instruments, such as the guitar.

It is designed for high flexibility, automation, and customization via simple yet powerful custom file formats for describing fretboard diagrams, which allow for easy batch generation of diagrams. To complement the high customizability, the package also comes with sensible yet attractive default settings for the diagrams.

The package also provides some easy-to-use L^AT_EX macros that understand the underlying music theory, allowing one to render, for example, a guitar scale diagram by specifying the musical scale or scale type via built-in macros, or even more directly via degree, pitch class, or interval formulae.

2 L^AT_EX macros

This package defines the following user-facing macros:

- `\fptotikz`
- `\fptemplate`
- `\fpstemplate`
- `\fpscale`

2.1 `\fptotikz`

Syntax: `\fptotikz[OUTPUT_TIKZ_FILE]{INPUT_FP_FILE}`

Description: compile an input fretplot file to TikZ.

Arguments:

- `INPUT_FP_FILE`: path to input fretplot file.
- `OUTPUT_TIKZ_FILE` (optional): path to output file to which generated TikZ will be written. If `OUTPUT_TIKZ_FILE` is not specified, then the output TikZ code will be included inline at the location of the `\fptotikz` invocation.

2.2 `\fptemplate`

Syntax: `\fptemplate{OUTPUT_FP_FILE}`

Description: generate a template fretplot file.

Arguments: `OUTPUT_FP_FILE`: path to output fretplot file.

2.3 `\fpstemplate`

Syntax: `\fpstemplate{OUTPUT_FPS_FILE}`

Description: generate a template fretplot scale style file.

Arguments: `OUTPUT_FPS_FILE`: path to output fretplot scale style file.

2.4 `\fpscale`

Syntax: `\fpscale{ARGS}`

Description: render diagram of (mode of) scale based on input scale formula (degree, pitch class, or interval) or generate corresponding fretplot file or TikZ code.

Arguments: `ARGS`: | and/or |`\n`-delimited list (possibly empty) of named argument assignments of the form `key=value` (with no surrounding spaces) in any order. Some of the subsequent pages of this section contain 2 tables:

- A complete table of keys for `ARGS` and their respective default and possible values. If a key does not have a default value, then the corresponding entry in the table is empty.
 - * In the table, a *pitch class* refers to any element of the set $\{C, C\#, D, Eb, E, F, F\#, G, Ab, A, Bb, B\}$.
 - * In the table, a *degree* is any element of the set $\{1, b2, 2, b3, 3, 4, b5, 5, b6, 6, b7, 7\}$.
 - * In the table, an *interval* is a positive integer representing the number of semitones in a musical interval.
- A table containing a list of macros that expand to interval formulas for popular scale types.

2.5 Examples

Create directories `include` and `figures` in the same directory as your main document.

```

1 \documentclass[12pt,letterpaper]{article}
2 \usepackage{fretplot}
3
4 \begin{document}
5
6 \begin{figure}[H]
7 \fpscale{parentroot=C\#|formulatype=d|formula=1 2 b3 4 5 b6 7}
8 \caption{C\sharp harmonic minor scale}
9 \end{figure}
10
11 % Create a fretplot file include/sclinclude.fp
12 % and a fretplot scale style file include/styles.fps.
13 % Comment these 2 lines out after the first run if
14 % you do not want to overwrite them in subsequent runs.
15 \fptemplate{include/sclinclude.fp}
16 \fpstemplate{include/styles.fps}
17
18 % Use fptotikz to test include/sclinclude.fp
19 % generated by \fptemplate.
20 \begin{figure}[H]
21 \fptotikz{include/sclinclude.fp}
22 \caption[Test \texttt{include/sclinclude.fp} generated by \texttt{\textbackslash
  fptemplate}]
23 \end{figure}
24
25 % Also test the TikZ file generation capability of
26 % \fptotikz, although the rest of the code does not
27 % depend on this. Note that this will merely create
28 % the file figures/sclinclude.tex containing the
29 % TikZ code, but not include it in the document.
30 \fptotikz[figures/sclinclude.tex]{include/sclinclude.fp}
31
32 \begin{figure}[H]
33 \fpscale{parentroot=A|formulatype=i|formula=\fpmaj|mode=2|
34 tuning=E B G D A E|numfrets=12|styletype=d|
35 labeltype=p|scalestylefile=include/styles.fps|
36 includefpfile=include/sclinclude.fp}
37 \caption{2\textsuperscript{nd} mode of A major scale (B Dorian)}
38 \end{figure}
39
40 \end{document}

```

Compile the above code with

`lualatex my_document.tex`

to get the following output:

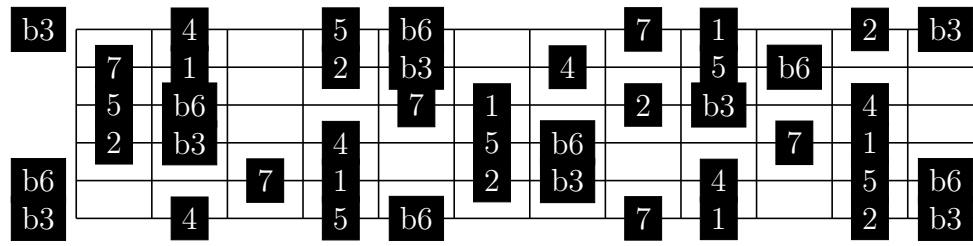


Figure 1: C \sharp harmonic minor scale

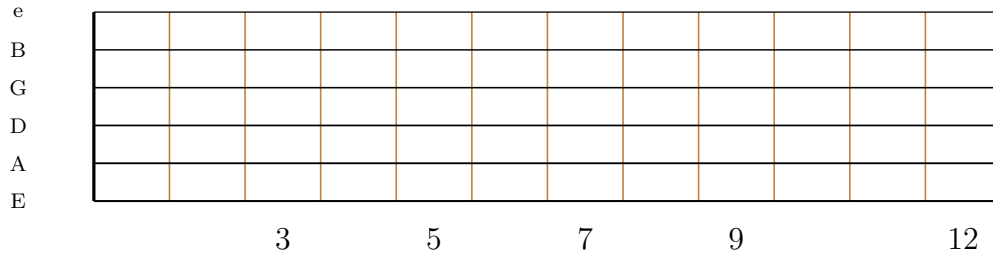


Figure 2: Test `include/sclinclude.fp` generated by `\fptemplate`

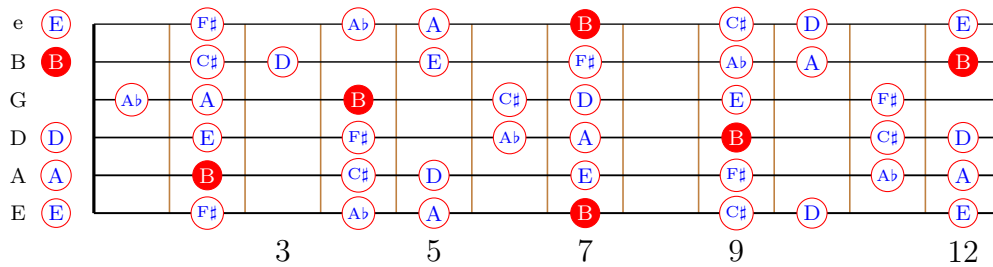


Figure 3: 2nd mode of A major scale (B Dorian)

Play around with the generated files `include/sclinclude.fp` and `include/styles.fps` to customize the B Dorian figure. You can also edit the generated TikZ code `figures/sclinclude.tex` directly.

2.6 Tables

This continues on the next page.

KEY	DEFAULT VALUE	VALUE
parentroot	C	Root of parent scale. This can be any pitch class. This is ignored if <code>formulatyp=p</code> or if <code>moderoot</code> is specified. Please see the description of <code>mode</code> for more details.
formulatyp	d	Type of the formula specified in the key named <code>formula</code> . Possible values are {d, p, i}. Here d stands for <i>degree</i> , p stands for <i>pitch class</i> , and i stands for <i>interval</i> .
formula	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Formula of parent scale. This should be a list of degrees or pitch classes or intervals delimited by single ordinary space characters (ASCII 32). The type of this formula is indicated by specifying <code>formulatyp</code> .
mode	1	Mode index of scale. This is specified as a positive integer. This mode will be rendered by <code>\fpscale</code> . Examples: if <code>formulatyp=p</code> , <code>formula=C D E F G A B</code> , and <code>mode=3</code> , then the 3rd mode of the C major scale (E Phrygian) will be rendered. If <code>formulatyp=d</code> , <code>formula=1 2 3 4 5 6 7</code> , <code>mode=2</code> , <code>parentroot=A</code> , and <code>moderoot</code> is not specified, then the 2nd mode of the A major scale (which is B Dorian) will be rendered. In the above scenario, if <code>moderoot=A</code> , then A Dorian will be rendered instead.
moderoot		Optional root of mode of scale. This can be any pitch class. This is ignored if <code>formulatyp=p</code> . Please see the description of <code>mode</code> for more details.
tuning	E B G D A E	Tuning of strings of the instrument. This is specified as a list of pitch classes delimited by single ordinary space characters (ASCII 32).
numfrets	12	Number of frets on the fingerboard. If the instrument does not have frets, then one can style them to be transparent in the render.
styletype	d	Specify if the styling of notes should be degree-indexed or pitch class-indexed. Possible values are {d, p}. Here d stands for <i>degree</i> and p stands for <i>pitch class</i> . The user can customize the actual styles by specifying the key <code>scalestylefile</code> .
labeltype	d	Specify if the labelling of notes should be degree-indexed or pitch class-indexed. Possible values are {d, p}. Here d stands for <i>degree</i> and p stands for <i>pitch class</i> . The user can customize the actual labels by specifying the key <code>scalestylefile</code> .
outfpfile		Optional path to output fretplot file describing (mode of) scale. If this is specified, then no TikZ code will be generated by <code>\fpscale</code> (neither inline nor to <code>outtikzfile</code>). One can then make modifications to the output fretplot file and then generate TikZ code (inline or external file) from the fretplot file using <code>\fptotikz</code> . The keys <code>includefpfile</code> and <code>scalestylefile</code> are used to further customize the rendering. In particular, <code>includefpfile</code> is included at the end of <code>outfpfile</code> . Even if <code>outfpfile</code> is not specified, <code>\fpscale</code> still internally creates a temporary fretplot file which is then converted to TikZ. This temporary fretplot file also includes <code>includefpfile</code> at its end, which allows one to customize their render via <code>includefpfile</code> without specifying <code>outfpfile</code> . The same fretplot file can serve as the <code>includefpfile</code> for multiple <code>\fpscale</code> invocations, which allows for batch manipulation of scale plots. Temporary fretplot files created by <code>\fpscale</code> internally are deleted later automatically.
outtikzfile		Optional path to output file containing TikZ code describing (mode of) scale. This will be ignored if <code>outfpfile</code> is specified. If <code>outfpfile</code> is not specified and <code>outtikzfile</code> is specified, then <code>\fpscale</code> will not generate inline TikZ code. One can then make modifications to the output TikZ code and use <code>\input</code> to use it in their document.
includefpfile		Optional path to input fretplot file to be included at the end of <code>outfpfile</code> or an equivalent temporary fretplot file created by <code>\fpscale</code> for internal use. If there does not exist a file at the path specified by <code>includefpfile</code> , then a new empty file will be created at that path; one can then edit this new file for use in subsequent compilations. For more details, please see <code>outfpfile</code> .
scalestylefile		Optional path to input fretplot scale style file. This can be used to customize degree and/or pitch class-based styling and labelling for scale notes. Please see <code>styletype</code> and <code>labeltype</code> for additional details.

Table 1: Key-value pairs for `\fpscale`

MACRO	INTERVAL FORMULA IN SEMITONES	DESCRIPTION
<code>\fmpent</code> <code>\fpblues</code>	3 2 2 3 2 3 2 1 1 3 2	Minor pentatonic scale Blues scale
<code>\fpmaj</code> <code>\fpjmin</code> <code>\fphmin</code>	2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 1 2 2 2 2 1 2 1 2 2 1 3 1	Major scale Jazz minor scale (ascending melodic minor scale) Harmonic minor scale
<code>\fphmaj</code> <code>\fpdhmaj</code> <code>\fpmaj</code> <code>\fpmin</code> <code>\fphunmaj</code>	2 2 1 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 1 2 2 2 2 2 1 1 2 2 2 1 3 1 3 1 2 1 2 1 2	Harmonic major scale Double harmonic major scale Neapolitan major scale Neapolitan minor scale Hungarian major scale
<code>\fpbmaj</code> <code>\fpbmin</code> <code>\fpbdm</code> <code>\fpdbeb</code> <code>\fpdbeb</code>	2 2 1 2 1 1 2 1 2 1 2 2 2 1 1 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 1 1 2 2 2 1 2 1 1 1 1 3 1 2 1 2 1 1	Bebop major scale Bebop minor scale Bebop dominant scale Lydian dominant bebop scale Phrygian dominant bebop scale
<code>\fpchr</code> <code>\fpwt</code> <code>\fptwot</code> <code>\fpthreewt</code> <code>\fpmon</code>	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 6 6 12	Chromatic scale Whole tone scale Two whole tones scale Three whole tones scale Monotonic scale
<code>\fpaug</code> <code>\fptrit</code> <code>\fpwhdim</code>	3 1 3 1 3 1 1 3 2 1 3 2 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1	Augmented scale Tritone scale Whole half diminished scale
<code>\fpmajsevenarp</code> <code>\fpdomsevenarp</code> <code>\fpminsevenarp</code> <code>\fphdimsevenarp</code> <code>\fpdimsevenarp</code> <code>\fpminmajsevenarp</code>	4 3 4 1 4 3 3 2 3 4 3 2 3 3 4 2 3 3 3 3 3 4 4 1	Major seventh arpeggio Dominant seventh arpeggio Minor seventh arpeggio Half diminished seventh arpeggio Diminished seventh arpeggio Minor major seventh arpeggio

Table 2: Macros for interval formulae of popular scale types

3 The fretplot file format

A *fretplot file*, *fp file*, or *.fp* file describes the layout and appearance of a fretboard diagram.

3.1 Syntax

- Comment lines start with `#`. Comment lines and empty lines are ignored.
- Every other line of a fretplot file will have lines of form `firstword lots of data`, where `firstword` and `lots of data` must be separated by a single ordinary space character (ASCII 32), `lots of data` cannot be empty, and the first character of `lots of data` cannot be a whitespace character (space, tab, newline, or anything that matches `%s` in Lua).
- - Note notation: `<STRINGINDEX,FRETINDEX>`
Example: `<6,5>`
 - Barre notation: `<STARTSTRINGINDEX-ENDSTRINGINDEX,FRETINDEX>`
Example: `<1-6,5>`
- Barres never have labels. Frets, strings, and notes by default have no labels, but can be specified as follows:
 - Frets: `f1FRETINDEX LABEL`
Example: `f13 3`
 - Strings: `s1STRINGINDEX LABEL`
Example: `s11 {\Large e}`
 - Notes: `n1<STRINGINDEX,FRETINDEX> LABEL`
Example: `n1<6,5> {\Large A}`
- To include another fretplot file at the current location of a fretplot file, use `include FILEPATH`.

3.2 Parameters

All available parameters that can be used in a fretplot file are listed in the table on the next page. Operations are case-sensitive and must be written exactly as shown.

TYPE	POSSIBLE VALUES	OPERATIONS	OP DESCRIPTION	PARAMETERS	PARAM DESC	DEFAULT PARAM VALUE
Boolean	True, False	flip PARAMETER	negate Boolean parameter named PARAMETER	onf0	draw notes directly on top of fret 0 (nut of guitar) if True and not if False	False
				sovf	draw strings over frets if True and frets over strings if False	True
Numerical	Any numerical value	+ PARAMETER VALUE	add literal numerical value VALUE to numerical parameter named PARAMETER	zoom	Factor by which the diagram will be scaled	1.0
		- PARAMETER VALUE	subtract literal numerical value VALUE from numerical parameter named PARAMETER			
		* PARAMETER VALUE	multiply numerical parameter named PARAMETER by literal numerical value VALUE	rotn	Angle (in degrees) by which the diagram will be rotated	0
		/ PARAMETER VALUE	divide numerical parameter named PARAMETER by literal numerical value VALUE	numfrt	Number of frets	12
		% PARAMETER VALUE	mod numerical parameter named PARAMETER by literal numerical value VALUE	numstr	Number of strings	6
		^ PARAMETER VALUE	raise numerical parameter named PARAMETER to the power of literal numerical value VALUE			
List	List of items delimited by single ordinary space characters (ASCII 32), or the <i>empty list</i>	void PARAMETER	empty the list parameter named PARAMETER	frets	List of fret indices	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
		> PARAMETER VALUE	extend list parameter named PARAMETER by literal list value VALUE	strings	List of string indices	1 2 3 4 5 6
				notes	List of notes	empty list
		< PARAMETER VALUE	remove values in literal list value VALUE from list parameter named PARAMETER	barres	List of barres	empty list
Style	List of PGF/TikZ styles delimited by single , (comma) characters	& PARAMETER VALUE	extend style parameter named PARAMETER by literal comma-delimited collection of styles VALUE	fx	Fret style	solid,line width=0.6,color=black
				sx	String style	solid,line width=0.6,color=black
				bx	Barre style	fill=black,draw=black
				nx	Note style	shape=rectangle,draw=black,text=white,fill=black

Table 3: Parameters for fretplot files

3.3 Examples

The following is an example fretplot file that demonstrates the use of some parameters and operations.

```
1  # Example comment line
2  zoom 1.0
3  rotn 0
4  onf0 False
5  sovf True
6  numfret 12
7  frets 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
8  numstr 6
9  strings 1 2 3 4 5 6
10
11  fx0 solid,line width=1.2,color=black
12  fx1 solid,line width=0.6,color=brown
13
14  fl3 3
15  fl5 5
16
17  sx1 solid,line width=0.5,color=black
18
19  sl1 {\scriptsize e}
20
21  # Another comment line
22  notes <6,5> <3,6> <4,7> <5,7> <2,5> <1,5>
23  nx<6,5> shape=circle,draw=red,text=white,fill=red,inner sep=1.5
24  nl<6,5> {\scriptsize A}
25
26  nl<6,5> 1
27  nx<6,5> shape=rectangle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,fill opacity=0.5,inner sep=1.0
28
29  >notes <1,0> <1,1>
30  <notes <5,5> <1,5> <2,2>
31
32  nl<1,1> 1
33  nx<1,1> shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=1.0
34
35  &nx<2,5> draw=red,shape=circle
36
37  flip onf0
38
39  +rotn 90
40  /rotn 2
41  %numstr 4
42  -rotn 45
```

The following fretplot file describes the A major triad barre chord, but strings and frets are not labelled for simplicity:

```
1  rotn -90
2
3  # A major triad barre chord
4
5  barres <1-6,5>
6  bx<1-6,5> fill=black, draw=black
7
8  notes <6,5> <3,6> <4,7> <5,7> <2,5> <1,5>
9
10 nx<6,5> shape=circle,draw=red,text=white,fill=red,inner sep=1.5
11 nl<6,5> {\scriptsize A}
12
13 nx<5,7> shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=1.7
14 nl<5,7> {\scriptsize E}
15
16 nx<4,7> shape=circle,draw=red,text=white,fill=red,inner sep=1.5
17 nl<4,7> {\scriptsize A}
18
19 nx<3,6> shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=0.3
20 nl<3,6> {\scriptsize C$\sharp$}
21
22 nx<2,5> shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=1.7
23 nl<2,5> {\scriptsize E}
```

```

24
25 nx<1,5> shape=circle,draw=red,text=white,fill=red,inner sep=1.5
26 nl<1,5> {\scriptsize A}

```

Save the above fretplot file as `amaj.fp`. Include it in a \LaTeX document as follows:

```

1  \documentclass[12pt,letterpaper]{article}
2  \usepackage{fretplot}
3
4  \begin{document}
5
6  \begin{figure}[H]
7  \centering
8    \fptotikz{amaj.fp}
9    \caption{A major triad barre chord}
10 \end{figure}
11
12 \end{document}

```

Compile the above code with

`lualatex my_document.tex`

to get the following output:

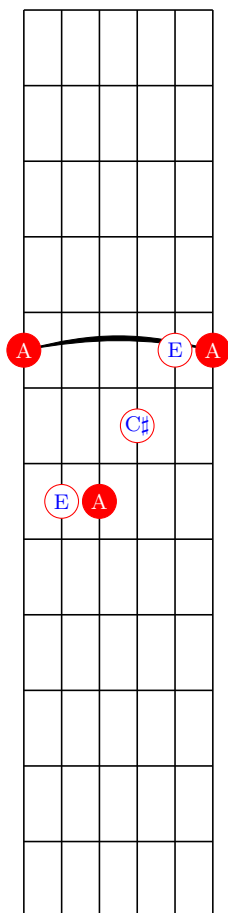


Figure 4: A major triad barre chord

4 The fretplot scale style file format

A *fretplot scale style file*, *fps file*, or *.fps* file customizes the appearance and labels of notes in a scale, based on pitch class or degree.

4.1 Syntax

- A *pitch class* is any element of the set

{C, C#, D, Eb, E, F, F#, G, Ab, A, Bb, B}.

- A *degree* is any element of the set

{1, b2, 2, b3, 3, 4, b5, 5, b6, 6, b7, 7}.

- Each line assigns a style or label to a pitch class or degree:
 - Label based on pitch class: 1PITCHCLASS LABEL.
 - Label based on degree: 1DEGREE LABEL.
 - PGF/TikZ style based on pitch class: xPITCHCLASS STYLE.
 - PGF/TikZ style based on degree: xDEGREE STYLE.

4.2 An example

```
1 1C {\scriptsize C}
2 1C# {\tiny C$\sharp$}
3 1D {\scriptsize D}
4 1Eb {\tiny E$\flat$}
5
6 xC shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=1.0
7 xC# shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=1.0
8
9 11 {\scriptsize 1}
10 1b2 {\tiny $\flat$2}
11
12 x1 shape=circle,draw=red,text=white,fill=red,inner sep=1.0
13 xb2 shape=circle,draw=red,text=blue,fill=white,inner sep=1.0
```