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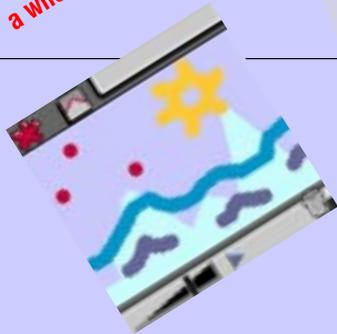
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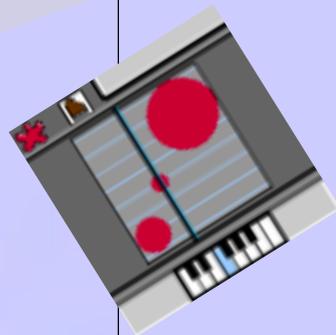
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE  
OF TECHNOLOGY

When Media Lab sponsor Fisher-Price,  
a subsidiary of Mattel, Inc., unveils  
*Symphony Painter*  
this spring, everyone will see  
just how the Media Lab and a toy company  
have joined together to bring young kids  
a whole new way to create music.



**Symphony Painter** is a music composition tool that will be sold as a simple “add-on” cartridge to Pixter Color™, Fisher-Price’s popular, hand-held, digital drawing platform, which comes complete with a touch-sensitive, color screen and drawing stylus. Using **Symphony Painter**, kids can “magically” convert their Pixter drawings into music. Different colors and different strokes create musical elements, such as melody, rhythm, and timbre; “hidden” technology smooths out clashing notes to create more harmonic pieces.

If this seems a bit familiar to those who have experienced Professor Tod Machover’s *Toy Symphony* (<http://www.toysymphony.net>), that’s because **Symphony Painter** is a direct descendant of **Hyperscore**, the principal digital composition tool created for the *Toy Symphony* by Opera of the Future group member Mary Farbood and recent graduate Egon Pasztor.



In designing **Hyperscore**, Farbood and Pasztor have created a software tool that introduces children to musical composition in an intuitive and dynamic way, and which requires no previous music knowledge. The system interprets the gestures of a child’s drawing, mapping them to structural elements in music. Using only a selection of colors and strokes, the child creates original musical motives, which are assigned to orchestral timbres, and then annotated along the piece’s narrative, harmonic line, converting visual information into music.

**Symphony Painter**, which is targeted for children four years old and up, will be available to the public in late spring 2004, and will cost about \$15. To help keep the price low, Farbood and Pasztor worked closely with Fisher-Price to redesign code for the Pixter platform. The first prototype took about a year to develop.

“The idea,” says Jeff Miller, manager of product design at Fisher-Price, “was to keep the essence of **Hyperscore**, but adapt it to a much simpler chip set, keeping the technology invisible so that the kids would never feel intimidated.”



David Ciganko, Fisher-Price’s vice president for product development, sees **Symphony Painter** as the culmination of years of working closely with the Media Lab. Ciganko, who shares Machover’s conviction that we can do a lot better than “canned” music for preschoolers, says he “convinced Tod that many of his team’s ideas could easily work for very young children, and was a thorn in Tod’s side to make this technology—starting with **Hyperscore**—available to them.”

“We both believe that igniting the spark of musical composition in very young children will have a wonderful impact on music,” says Machover. “The challenge came in figuring out how to do it. **Hyperscore** broke ground, and now **Symphony Painter** will make it widely accessible.”

So roll over Beethoven, here come the kids . . .