MITPlayer documentation and improvements (Aug 2024 release)

This color indicates new stuff. And this color indicates newish items you may have missed last time

We're delighted to offer this newest update of the MITPlayer. Neil first started this project in 1992. That there are now *several dozen* groups using it is a testament to his design skill.

Our original update was the first in 9 years. Lots of bugs were fixed, crashes prevented, plus a lot of new features, some simply making the program easier to use. This newest version is another large update, with many bug fixes and exciting features some of you have been waiting years for! (No exaggeration.) NOTE: *If you use XP/Vista and some versions of Win7, you'll get "unexpected error 50003" with the standard update. Get the older-OS version from us.*

We all owe a profound debt to Charlie Kluepfel, who, starting with the pandemic, was looking for a challenging project to work on. He brought both professionalism and creativity to the effort, often sending a fix or new feature one day after I described it. Some days he sent 3 updates.   **NOTE: This document is mostly aimed at EXPERIENCED USERS.**

I apologize for this length: I get a little chatty in some places. If you're new to the Player, read the first few sections – up to bug fixes – before you start. Later, peruse the bug fixes and new stuff to see if there are features you want to try out. Finally, see Appendix IV (Limitations) to see our wishlist. If you're not new, just check out new additions in this color.

Document organization: Setting up, How to update your version, Wise things to do (backups, checking your dance files), New features, and Overlooked features. Even if you're not currently running a group, I urge you to play around with all the new stuff! It's the only way to a) gain familiarity with them and b) check you're using them correctly.

- Setting up:

In doing this project, I've seen some of your laptops, and not everyone sets up recommended directories. As a result, the Player's previously played files all pile into the same directory. (That's fine, if you're comfortable with it.) But these recommended directories should be in the Player's main directory: favorites, tabs, pictures, program_logs.
(Doesn't matter – uppercase, lowercase). The Player's files will automatically go there.

- For Windows 10/11: READ THIS SECTION even *BEFORE* downloading:

Because we are not a software house with an "Extended Validation Code Signing Certificate" – whatever that means – when you start the program, or even download to your computer, Windows may emit an unfortunately scary warning:

>   'Running this app might put your PC at risk'

Trust us, this is Microsoft Defender being unnecessarily defensive. Hit "More Info", then select the option "Run anyway." You will see this only once for each release.

If you *don't* see "Run anyway", there is an additional step to tell Defender to allow the software.   See SmartScreen instructions in *Appendix Ia*.

 - "Search for app in the Store?" You were sent version compiled on our VM. Get a re-compiled version from the site. Doesn't matter if you say Yes or No, the program will start. This happens *each* time you run the program. Instructions to disable: Disable 'Look for app' msg

- BUT: As soon as you try to download, your VIRUS PROTECTION SOFTWARE MAY STILL IMMEDIATELY REMOVE IT:

You may not even get to the prior stage; your virus software may say "Uh oh, this executable looks like dangerous trojan software". Again, the virus definitions are overly aggressive. See full instructions for handling in the *Appendix Ib*.

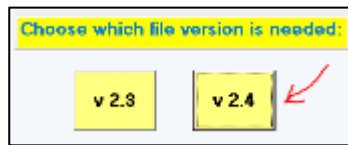## - How do I update to this new version?

Do these steps: 1) Copy this new version into your main directory, renaming as MITPlayer.exe (& optionally rename your prior copy as MITPlayer-prior.exe) 2) Move all the dll files to your main directory. 3) Modify any desktop shortcuts to point to the new release. 4) Keep making backup copies of your databases (dance_data_*.txt) and init file (mit_player.ini) using the Player's backup facility [Cntl-B].

> **- Hey, I'm starting out, never ran this before!**
>
> Put executable and all the key files in a main directory under C:\   (we recommend 'fd' or 'MIT')
>
> Best **not** to use the Windows folders: 'Music' or 'Documents' or 'My Documents' or 'Program Files'.   If you used them, see *Appendix II* now.

- First step for this new version:

This version uses updated routines for handling sound (those bass.dll files). You *must* do this first: After moving all the dll files[1] to your main directory, run DLLChooser.exe, then click the v2.4 button. *You only need do this once.* But if you want to run an older version of the MITPlayer, choose v2.3 before running that older Player.

These dll's enable two of the most useful features in this new release: proper tempo control (without changing pitch) and sensible behavior when changing system audio devices. (Features explained below.)

- Database (db) cleaning:

Users once had db's with blank lines at the top. And sometimes there's a display name, but no mp3 listed. This Player will autoclean them from your database. If your db had unmatching quotes because you hand-edited it, the Player will find them, report what the line was, save the old corrupted db for you, and you'll be able to carry on without the problem line.

The Player handles Country and Choreographer differing only by case: Bulgaria and bulgaria, Yves and yves. Dups do not show in the menu.

- Second, back up your db:

File/Options has two important options: 'Backup database (_bu)' or 'Read from Backup (_bu)'.   Highly recommend: Frequently backup your database after making changes. It's easy to do: Cntl-B is a handy shortcut. (If your initialization file (.ini) got messed up, the last option listed reads in the backup for this setup file.)

- How do we contact you?

Google "MITPlayer" to find the MITPlayer's site. Our contact info will always be there.

- Hey, I've moved to a different computer!

Contact Murray to get a new registration code. Some features will be disabled until you get it. ALWAYS get a new registration code. It's free!

- Third, check your db:

This you must NOT do: move a music file to a different location or rename a file – outside of the Player. The Player can't know you've done this, the db will be out of sync with your files, and won't find them. [The Search for Lost Music utility attempts to find the exact same filename somewhere in your directories. That's useful but it's not perfect.]

- Hey, things aren't working!

Send Murray your .ini file, the db file(s) [dance_data*txt]. A screenshot of files in your main directory, setup screen and anything else you think is relevant will help.

But many of us did those file moves/renames. If you have thousands of files, it's likely some do not play simply because the db is out of step. How to find which ones are missing? We recommend Utilities/Recheck Database [Cntl-R]. The Player will check and sort the entire db. (If you have a large database and slow computer, the Player will show a "Thinking" box – just be patient, it will complete.) Missing dances and suggested solutions will be written to the end of 'db_probs.txt,' and they will be labeled in your database with '-FileMoved?', notated so you won't accidentally attempt to play them. Those dance files have to be located and re-entered into the db. (Remove the "FileMoved" entries!)

As time permits, go through the list and fix the entries. Rename them to coordinate with the db, or vice versa, move them to the right location, etc. The file might be spelled subtly different; look carefully – it might have an accent the Player doesn't support. Use Accent screen [Utilities/Available Accented Characters] for copy/pasting within the Player and the File Explorer. Respell and add dance again. This will take a while, but it's worthwhile. Obviously, focus first on dances you recognize and do frequently. When done, you should (all together now): "Back up your db". Remember, Cntl-B.

In the db_probs file, "No file given" means there was no pathname associated with the file.

The database check will also order your dances alphabetically. (If your database was out of order, you'll be offered the option to alpha sort on startup also.

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[1] Yes, the reference files must be named *-dll (with a dash). You will also have files named *.dll in the main directory. Both sets are needed.

- Bug fixes

Lots – too numerous to explain. Some led to crashes. If you find another crash, send me the relevant db (dance_data_*.txt), your mit_player.ini file, and tell me exactly what you did. We can't fix a problem we can't replicate.

- The 2nd screen / Dance Hall Display

On program exit, the Player stores the location of the 2nd screen, and uses that location when the Player begins again.

If you have a 2nd monitor, use this specific sequence of steps:
These instructions are easier than our prior guidance: Before finishing your session, press F11 (turns off 2nd screen). Exit Player, disconnect your monitor. Next dance session, connect monitor, then start Player, and press F11 (turns on 2nd screen, which will located at the prior position of last session). The key is the 2nd monitor is never disconnected while the Player is on.

On the Setup screen, what's the difference between 'screen saver (single monitor)' vs '2nd monitor (not screen saver)'? For groups using a single monitor, the 2nd screen acts like a screen saver: after 45 seconds of inactivity, the 2nd screen pops to the front. If you had moved the 2nd screen to a different monitor, setting 'screen saver' would cause it to act like a screen saver and grab focus. (Don't know what this means? Fret not.) Advice: IF you have a 2nd physical monitor, use the "2nd monitor" option; that screen will never take focus.

Previously it was possible to lose the 2nd screen, with coordinates in "outer space". Many cases auto-fix; if not, use the function: Option/Reset 2nd Screen Location+Params. This will also set the size of Upcoming/Previous (described below) to the default.

- Moving the Dance Hall Display

Previously, the main programming screen took focus immediately, making it difficult to grab the 2nd monitor to position it. Now, on startup, the 2nd monitor remains available for repositioning for a few seconds.
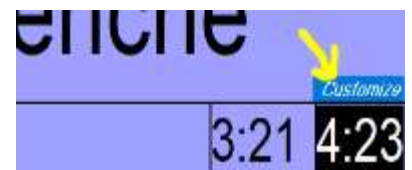
- Adjusting the Dance Hall Display

Until now, the area on the Dance Hall Display for Previous and Upcoming dances was fixed, with line size determined by the height of the monitor. This often resulted in the dance Now Playing to be visible from far away, and nothing else. Now, the top (Previous dances) and bottom (Upcoming) areas are adjustable. Just grab and move the Now Playing bar up or down to give priority to the prior or upcoming dance names. Your positions will be remembered for next time.

- Changing the Number of Dances Shown

If you want fewer dances to show (resulting in LARGER SIZES), click the customize box. A popup will tell you to enter a value, and the Prev and Upcoming dances areas will now show your chosen number of dances. This selection is saved and used when restarting.

- More customizations for the Dance Hall Display (Hide Legend | High Contrast)

The Dance Hall Display usually shows a legend color key for your dance types. Sometimes it blocks a portion of the country name, especially when the adjustments described above yields larger text. On the setup screen (Utilities/Setup [Cntl-I]), you may hide the legend, leaving more room for the countries.
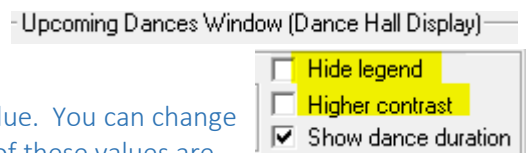
By default, the Now Playing bar shows the current dance in black, on a light blue. You can change the bar's colors by choosing clicking high contrast on the setup screen. Both of these values are saved and used when restarting.

- True adjustments of tempo

Neil's goal for his first program was to change the speed of an mp3. (See Help/About this program for the full story.)
We've all been living with the consequences ever since: sped up/slowed down dances sounded like Tweety Bird or King
Kong. The new dll's fix that – speed is adjusted without changing the pitch.
Your cue: the adjustment bar is now called TrueTempo. Previous speed
adjustments in the db will automatically be interpreted as tempo changes.
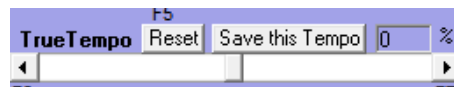
- External speakers now handled properly

Many groups use a BlueTooth or a USB/HDMI connection for external speakers. The new dll's recognize when the system
audio device has changed, so you now can attach, pair, unpair, unplug, disconnect, reconnect any speaker device while
the Player is operating.

- I've got a big music collection with ID3 tags. Can't I use it for the dance database?

A new routine now extracts ID3 tags/MP3 tags and converts it to the Player's dance database. Find on **MITPlayer site**.

- Dance can't be added to Player, but plays when I click on it in the File Explorer

Does the file name contain a foreign letter or accent? File Explorer shows filenames using Unicode, and can display any
language. See discussion below about dances with accents. Fix: respell the filename in the File Explorer, then add it.

- Is the new database backwards compatible?

Yes, that was our key design goal. With the exception for a workaround for embedded double quotes - these show up as
an unprintable hex character - all's the same, only better.

- Those #02 files

There are two dances with the exact same name. With its flat-file organization, the db needs to distinguish the names.[2]

If they're the same dance, make it easy on yourself and delete the duplicates. If they're not the same rendition, add
something to the display name (alt1, slower, Fred's) if you want to list them differently.

Tech tip: In the search bar, type *#0 to locate them all. Right click the first one to bring up the Update Dance screen,
then use the ⬆ & ⬇ arrows next to 'Selected' to move through all the '#0' files. You can delete or rename as you want.
(Use the Listen button if you need to hear the dance.)

- More new stuff: [Blue +'s are Murray fav's. I'm sure you'll have your own.]

A note about the new features. Some things are confusing even if explained clearly [I can't even say we've done that].
My advice is try each one out.   Actions speak louder than words, but they'll also make features understandable.

+ When starting up, the 2nd screen now stays in front of the main programming screen, to give you time to reposition it.
The 2nd screen is auto-sized if largely blocked by the main screen.

+ You can put the * character in the middle of the search string, like most File Explorer searches. hor*sor will find Hora
Soroca, ho*gat will find Hora Agadati, etc. (Sorry, only one asterisk wildcard per customer.)

+ Simplified accent matching: The Player automatically matches accented versions of the letters you type. Typing "Kazi"
will directly match Kaži Suto; "Proset" will match Prošetah Se, "Mariee" will match Mariée; etc. Applies for all accented
characters in the Player's character set.

+ Pause can be pressed after Stop. That means after stopping play in the middle of a dance, the Pause button will start
(eg unpause) from that point in dance. (Pressing Play always starts from the beginning of the dance.)

+ Your keyboard left and right arrows ⬅ ➡ jump 15 seconds forward/backward in a dance. The Player can skip too!
Arrows also work when using the Listen button on the update/add dance screen.

+ For users for whom the font is too small: we enable a call to the Windows magnifying glass. The [Mag] button is
above the Exit button, or Utilities/Magnifying Glass [Cntl-G]. YOU MUST READ Appendix III – Settings for Magnifier
so you can change its options to something useful.

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[2] A library-based organization, which a few music players use, involves a more extensive redesign than we have resources for; it also
complicates Neil's easier-to-use interface.

+ Your mouse scrollwheel is usable for all panels with scrollbars. On the setup screen Utilities/Setup [Cntl-I], you can set the *scroll amount* (number of lines) for the Selector panel.   The "2-999" indicates the allowable range. (Groups with very large db's may want a larger amount.) Amounts for other panels are pre-determined. Mouse scrolling is adaptive – smaller amounts when close to top or bottom of lists. (We're not certain scrolling will work for everyone/every mouse, but try it.)

+ Scrolling within **holder panel**: Holder won't scroll until mostly full. To take up less room, scrollbar is only visible when you hover over it. Since the scrollbar isn't always visible, we've added the equivalent of ellipses *[this → "..." is an ellipsis]* to indicate more dances are above or below.

On the principle that hidden features shouldn't bite you, hitting delete will only remove holder dances that are visible; those that are 'scrolled off' will stick around. Hitting delete a 2nd time when they're visible *will* delete them.

+ The volume adjustments are now triggered by function keys (shift F6/F7), corresponding to the tempo adjustments (F6/F7) so they can be accessed by remote control. Also, volume and tempo micro-adjustments are larger.

+ Playing a snippet of a dance

Ever want to listen to a dance before programming it? **Right clicking** the little boxes next to the dance name will play a sample snippet. The snippet continues as long you hold down the right mouse key. (It will not interrupt a dance that's already playing.)

+ The selector panel is wider, and shows a larger proportion of extra-long dance names. The Holder and Program panels are the same as before, with the display stopping at the last visible space character. In all panels, left-clicking pops up the complete name.

+ When moving a dance across the screen, the name is quasi-centered <u>above</u> the cursor. (Some users focused on name rather than the cursor icon, dropping it in the wrong panel.) Drag icons (selected on Utilities/Setup) were redesigned: check them out – you'll find a few more to choose from. [3]

+ On initialization screen [Options/Setup or Cntl-I], some options to take note of: "Use traditional verification popups" – will require confirmation before deleting dances, exiting program, etc. "Duplicate warning" – after a dance is played, this option will show a crossout through its name in all panels.

+ Cntl-C clears most of the selectors, while Cntl-S is a "superclear", clearing all selections (as does Shift-Cntl-C). These buttons are mid-right bottom.

+ On the main screen, hovering over Program or Holder enables a clear-all feature for each panel.

+ A popup Trash Can at the bottom of the Selector panel, for people who didn't realize just dragging a dance from the Holder or Program into the Selector was the (hidden) way of removing a dance from the queue.

+ An inter-dance pause of 0 seconds is possible [well, 1 millisecond, but who's counting?]. Maximum is 50 seconds.

+ Playlist editor can insert STOP/ANNOUNCEMENTS/TEASER items. Playlist panel contains a Clear button for starting over. Program prevents wiping out an existing playlist if you hit Clear then Save. The tooltip over "Name of playlist" box shows its full pathname (if you selected "Selector Path Tooltips" on the Setup screen).

+ Quick adds to Playlist: In addition to drag'n'drop from the Selector panel, all you have to do is begin typing a dance name in search box; when your dance shows up first, hitting Enter will move it to bottom of Playlist. (Spelling must match: typing Ch may bring up Cimpoi, but will not select it.) Accented letters now match their regular counterparts. The Playlist can access the boxes next to dance names in the Selector. Clicking them adds to the Playlist.

+ After pressing Autoplay for a playlist, program now lists missing files in an external file for convenient error fixing.

+ Player prevents accidentally added multiple dances to Queue, caused by a repeating Enter key. (It does allow two.)

+ Quickly adding dances to db from File Explorer – Using Drag'n'drop

You can drag'n'drop music files from the File Explorer into <u>any</u> panel: Program, Holder, Selector or Playlist. The Player pops up an Import Multiple screen. (The default country will be 'Mars,' as they arrived from outer space, ha ha.)

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[3] Due to compatibility issues, drag icons on very old Windows OS's (Vista, XP) are inside a gray square; transparency wasn't supported.

Categorize your dance(s) then click Add Dances; processing may take a several seconds for a large db. Up to 200 dances can be added at a time. If the dances had different categories, say Romanian and Israeli, Line and Couple, we suggest applying a temp classification (a style or repertoire of "Uncateg"). Then search that group later and re-categorize your new dances.

+ You can display just your preferred dances via the 'Show preferred' checkbox above the search bar. (Preferred dances, shown in bold, are determined on the Update Dance screen: 'Mark as Preferred'.)

+ You can present any announcement or message on the 2nd monitor. In the search bar, type a message preceded by an equal sign, eg =Fred's request or =Mary's Birthday. A "SHOW:" message will be added to the program queue and display in the Now Playing box on the 2nd monitor. The Player will halt to keep the message on the 2nd monitor. These messages can also be stored in playlists. (Appendix IV explains small peculiarities with the "SHOW:" message.)

+ The F12 function key: Tabs are useful for teaching: skipping the intro or focusing on that difficult third figure. As you all know :), F9 adds a tab at the current position. When you add the tab, the content of the search bar becomes the 'name' of that tab: hovering over the tab shows its name ("Fig 3", "transition", etc). The option, F12, starts play at the next tab, wherever you are within the dance. Shift F12 always restarts play at the first tab.

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- Got a database without countries or just "Mars"?

Charlie's "MIT Database Updater" is a stand-alone utility program. The Updater finds matching dance names in your db and assigns the country found in a reference database. Doc is in its own distribution zip file.

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+ While a dance with tabs is playing, Right clicking the area of the tabs along the Progress Bar brings up the Tab Editor, where you can rename or change the time position of the tabs.

+ Playlist has the option to move dances, en masse and/or between screens. Right click any number of dances in Playlist Editor: they will turn bold. Shift+Right click (or Cntl+Right click) a location; they will move above that spot. To move to the bottom, Shift+Right click the blank area on the bottom. (You can drag'n'drop, but not beyond the visible, unscrolled list.) As in other panels, hitting delete after bolding the dances will remove the dance. How remove bolding? Hit escape.

+ Playlist editor can delete a playlist file. Type name in top box, or click in file list; Right click in the top box shows the option. Deleted files go into the system trashbin (and can be retrieved from there).

+ Playlist editor shows accumulated time. This answer "When should announcements be?", or how long is the program.

+ The Playlist shortcut [Cntl-L] is a toggle; it opens and closes the Playlist editor.

+ Most functions can be accessed via Alt key keyboard shortcuts. By usual Windows convention, the underlined letter indicates the shortcut.

+ Update Dance screen shows duration of dance. (Useful for comparing entries to help prune duplicates.)

+ Keyboard shortcuts on Update Dance screen: **Page Up/Down** are shortcuts for the 'Selected' arrows, **Shift-keyboard up/down arrows** are shortcuts for the 'Database' arrows.

+ After deleting a dance on Update Dance screen, the next 'Selected' dance is shown. Convenient if you're removing all dances with #0 in their name, for example.

+ On the Add Dance screen, the Player gives better feedback when the database has been updated, as well as clearer instructions and help messages.

+ On the Add Dance and Update Dance screens, the listen button plays the dance with the volume and speed shown on the screen; the volume and speed instantly applies when new values are typed in. While listening, you can skip to any portion of the new/updated dance by clicking along the progress bar on the main screen, behind the Add/Update screen. And your keyboard arrow keys will make the music jump forward or backward 15 seconds.

+ When adding a dance, its duration is displayed on the Add Dance screen.

+ Add Dance and Playlist screens have a 'Show Recent' button and Playlist has 'Show wide' buttons. Show Recent will order the files (dance or playlist files) by date, handy if you want to add the dances most recently placed in a directory. Show Wide expands window so you can see long names.

+ 2nd monitor can show duration of currently playing dance (option set on Setup screen) as well as the current time.

+ Previously played and upcoming dance lists on 2nd monitor use the color coding for dance types.

+ The Player prevents starting multiple copies of the program, when run from the same directory. (This could severely mess up your db.)

+ Irregular casing for Country/Teacher: if you want UsA or buLGariA, it'll be there in the underlying db. But duplicates that differ only with casing will no longer annoyingly show as duplicates in the drop-down menus.

+ Unsupported filenames are checked during Add Dances. No longer will a dance not play because it can't be accessed. NOTE: Dances previously added to the db will still have a problem. See advice above: Recheck your db.

+ Double quotes and '&' are correctly handled in dance names, Country, Choreographer, and within comments.

+ Databases 1 and 2 are shown in the proper order on the Setup screen.

+ Improved searches for dances with apostrophes and hyphens: Typing "V'david" and "Vdavid" will both find the dance. Similarly, "Zuenzuh" and "Zu-en-zuh" or "Tanko" and "Tan-ko Bushi."

+ Last line in Past Programs list was often unreachable. Final line has zzz-dummy-file to "push up" program list.

+ By default, Past Programs are now sorted by date. Click option on screen to return to alphabetic sorting.

+ Dance name tooltip. You may have several versions of the same dance – how to know which to choose? Hover over the dance name: the tooltip will display the path to the file. This option is set on the Setup Screen.

+ It's now easy to see the file name associated with a dance. On the Update screen, the tooltip for the display name shows the actual file name.

+ Prevent bogus entries: The action that caused those generates the message "Re-select a file to add from the file selection box." (This indicates that you've changed the parameters for an added dance *without* selecting a new mp3.)

+ If you select the option to read in the backup database (_bu) by mistake, the previous db is saved as --backout_bu. (In other words, I want to "back out" of the backup.) Previously, you lost your "good" db. Should you wish to use this version, you will have to manually move the --backout_bu file to the standard db. Also, if your backup db is empty, it will not overwrite the current db.

+ Synonyms can be added. On Add Individual screen, click an already-added dance and add with new display name. (To prevent accidental inclusion of duplicate dances, there's a warning when clicking a dance already in the database. The warning shows the filename and its display name.)

+ Most buttons have a tooltip to explain their function. Hovering the mouse over the button shows the tip.

+ For long operations, the Player shows a "Thinking …" notice.

+ Minor notification messages appear in a Notice box. These Notices let the program continue; they stay up until dismissed.

+ Add Multiple Dances includes an option to add dances in <u>all</u> subdirectories. It's a quick way to get started with the Player. All new dances will be categorized the same (Country, Type, Difficulty, etc), based on the selector settings on the Add Dances screen. You won't get duplicate entries for dances already in the db (same name, same path); also skipped are music files that look like duplicate copies of the same dance (eg, the same file name and exact duration). You can override skipping of duplicates by checking the Retain Exact Duplicates box.

You will want to correct the db data after the 'Add Multiple' process. The '?' button (on Add Dance screen) shows hints for easily locate new entries after they've been added. We recommend following those steps.

You will get a # tag (eg #02, #03) when <u>different</u> dance versions have the same file name as an existing display name, or different versions with the same name are in different directories (eg, Alunelul.mp3 in *RomanianRealm* and a different file, also called Alunelul.mp3 was in *DancesFromFred*. (See prior comment about the flat-file format.)

+ Player's initial dialogs (Which Programmer, Which db?) display in alt-tab tasklist.

+ Color of text for Type listings changes to white for dark background colors.

+ The Cntl-D option: (Option/Change Database) will let you switch databases (between the *_int and *_isr files) in case you selected the wrong one when you started up. The title on the main screen (MITPlayer version … Programmer is …) also shows the name of the selected database.

+ Tooltips on setup and Add Dance screens show full directory name of selected directory.[4]

+ We've changed the handling of 'bad format' files to be less obtrusive. Beta testers found previously playable files were labeled with an illegal duration by the embedded play routines. As those indicators are not trustworthy, we try to play certain bad format files; if they're good, you'll only get a popup but the file will play. If they *are* bad format, after the popup they'll just get skipped and will be logged in the db_probs.txt file. Use the Recheck Database function often [Utilities/Recheck Database].

- View prior programs: The list is now sorted by date, with most recent programs shown at the top. An option gives the old alphabet sorting.

+ Infinite crashes: We've fixed the original program's problem with infinite loops of crashes, caused by trying to replay a music file with a database problem. Nevertheless, **if this happens to you: remove the temp.txt file** in your main directory. Restart will be clean. (Rarely, you might also need to delete MITPlayer process via the Task Manager.)

- The db_probs file

All file problems, whether found via Recheck the db function or in trying to play a file that no longer exists or has unsupported letters, are added to the end of the db_probs.txt file. All messages contain a timestamp. The log file might get long: after you fix all db issues, remove the file so that only new problems show.

- Adding dances with accents

If they're supported, no problem. They display on the main screen, 2nd monitor, past program files, and playlists.

If you add a filename with unsupported accents or foreign letters, the Player will notify you and give you an opportunity to change the name. Use the Accent screen [Add Accents or Utility/Available Accented Characters]. (Notice the square selected is where she's *pointing*. Get it?) Hit the refresh button on the Add Dance screen to redisplay the directory with your new change. Then, add the dance after the respelling.

Improvements: The original Player didn't show Š and Ž properly, as in Šumovsko, Vlaško, and Ženska Za Raka. They either showed as ▯ or not at all. Now fixed.

The following section has detail on our attempts to support more accents.

- Fonts, accents and foreign letters

One of the most requested features: "Why can't the Player display files with their original accents?" Mostly, it can.

Did you know the Player can show a dance with accents like this: `Øámåšâçãæёën Ükű Žaž.mp3`. However, it cannot show č (c with a hacek).

What you have to do: Respell music files containing č as either c or ch (Čočec as Cocek). Sorry, no way around this (*read Appendix V if interested in the full story.*) However, we created a tool to provide sensible respellings for accented filenames. Click here for our accent-respelling tool.

How to type accents in the Player: We added support to type accented characters within the Player. On the Add Individual, Add Group and Update Dance screens, there's an Add Accents screen (also Utilities/Available Accented Characters). Use the copy and paste buttons to assemble the name with the proper accents, or just to copy a single accented letter to the clipboard. Change the displayed name, or also change the file's name in the music directory.

Warning: For *previously entered* dances, **never change the filename using the File Explorer** outside of the MITPlayer: the Player will not be able to access the file. Only change within the Player: use the 'Change file name of dance on disk' button on the Update Dance screen.

Searching accented filenames: If you can't type an accented letter in the search bar, how can you search for it? The Player seeks directly to the accented-letter dances: `Prosetah` will match `Prošetah Se`, `Mariee` will match `Mariée`. Partial matches (substring search) match also work.

- Using a text editor to edit the db or ini file

Do this at your own peril. (Make a backup before doing it.) Because of a VB bug, double quotes within strings weren't supported. We instituted a workaround that replaced embedded quotes with a hex character. Do not hand-edit it out;

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[4] Might be misleading: we can only show the click-selected directory, not directory that the mouse is hovering over.

they'll show properly in the Player. You can use [supported] accents, but don't set your editor to Unicode: you will royally mess up your db – don't come crying to me, we warned you. Don't hand-edit the database; instead use the Accent screen [Utilities/Available Accented Characters] for copy/pasting within the Player. Don't hand-edit the setup file. There are setup file inconsistencies that can mess you up. Only use the Setup Defaults screen [Cntl-I]. If you hand-edit the db, don't edit <u>while</u> Player is running. Upon exiting, the program writes out its internal copy and will wipe out your edits.

- Not well-known (but highly useful!) features of the Player

+ Searches using ? vs *

In main screen's search bar, * allows partial match searches. Typing `*hor` will bring up `Hora Mare`, `Shoror`, `Oi Na Hori`. [This search behavior is also toggled by the checkbox above the search bar, which is labeled more clearly.]

In main screen's search bar, ? searches the comments field. In the comments, you can store choreographer, the teacher, who in your group leads it, who likes it, the dance steps. In our session, when I see "Fred" enter, I type `?Fred` and find all the dances that he likes to lead. (Search must <u>start</u> with ?)

Starting with `*?` or `?*` (in either order) will search *both* the comments field and partial string matches of your dances.

+ Add "Announcements" label to program – use the Announcements button.

+ Deleting multiple dances from Program Queue, Holder, or Playlist Editor.

Right click to embolden dance names, hitting delete will remove them.

+ Play, or draw from past programs

The View/Play Past Programs function (under Utilities, Cntl-A, or button on upper right of main screen) allows you replay a past program. What many people don't know is you can select just one dance. "What was the wonderful dance that Samantha programmed last month?" Find the date when she was on – scrolling over the dates shows the programmer's name in the slot over the dates – double click on the date to show the dances that were played. If you then click on a dance name, it'll be added to the program queue.

+ Quickly adding dances to Program Queue or Playlist

Everyone knows about drag'n'drop from the Selector to the Queue, but there are two other not well-known shortcuts. As you begin typing in the search box, if your dance shows up first in the Selector in the selector, just hitting Enter will move it to the queue. (The spelling must match: typing Ch may show Cimpoi first, but enter will not select it.)

Those little boxes to the left of the dance names aren't decoration: clicking them adds the dance immediately to the bottom of the Queue. I find this the fastest method. When the Playlist editor is open, clicking that box conveniently adds the dance to the Playlist instead.

+ Click-add-to-Queue no longer gets "Program queue is full" message

Previously, the click-the-box method for adding dances was blocked. Now, the click dance is added to bottom of the <u>visible</u> queue, similar to dragging a dance there. Dances further below are pushed down.

+ The clock next to the play button, convenient keyboard shortcut

How can you start leading a dance if you're next to your computer? Clicking the tiny clock next to the play button will start the dance after the inter-dance pause. This is available via keyboard shortcuts: Cntl+F1 or Shift+F1.

+ You can drag a dance into the Now Playing box (top of main screen), and it will play immediately.

+ Adding favorites

Neil's (and Linux's) mascot, the Penguin, denotes the function to store your favorite dances. Drag'n'drop dance names onto the penguin. When pressed for time – "What shall I put on now?" – the favorites are great to have. Clicking the penguin brings them into the Selector panel. (Neil has 3 funny Easter Eggs associated with this function: his messages and the cursor.)   To edit your favorites: while you are listed as programmer, R click the penguin to bring up a panel where you can edit your favorites list.

+ Those database buttons when you sign in

If you don't use the Israeli db, on the Setup screen [Cntl-I] blank out the name for Database 2. When you sign in, the Player will not ask which db to use – it will go directly to your Int'l db. (And vice versa.)

+ Deleting a range of dances from Program Queue or Holder.

Right click first dance you want to delete, hold shift down, right click the last of the range: the entire set will become bold; hitting delete will remove them. (The Playlist Editor utilizes this key combination differently: Shift-Right click means "move selected dances here".)

+ The difference between 'Teaching Stop' and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stop is intended for pauses before teaching and shows a "Prepare for Teaching" message on the 2nd monitor. Announcements shows ANNOUNCEMENTS on the 2nd monitor.

+ Dance Data

Right clicking the name in the Now Playing box pops up the data stored for that dance. Same for right clicking the little box next to a dance name.

+ Exporting a list of dances

Choosing Utilities/Export Selected Dance List [Cntl-E] outputs a text file of all dances set by the Selector settings: Line dances from Romania of medium complexity, all dances by Shmulik, etc. The output file includes each dance's country and choreographer settings.

+ Frequency Counts

Display names that differ only via parenthesized text – eg Zborenka (Yves) / Zborenka (Jaap) or Adama / Adama (superfast) – will be accumulated together in the Frequency count. Dups, multiple plays in the same day, aren't counted.

+ Restarts after crashes / Starting a playlist in the middle of an existing program

When the Player restarts after a crash, the dance you were playing is cued to restart at the beginning. The reason is the Program doesn't know how much of the dance was played before the crash. Similarly, when a playlist is auto-played and there was a previously playing dance, that too is restarted for the same reason.

+ The "Edit" checkbox above the Played Earlier panel on the main screen

Accidentally play a dance you don't want stored in the evening's Program Log? Clicking the edit box allows adding or removing the text stored there, which gets saved in the program log. Careful! You can easily leave a partial name, which will alter your year-end frequency count. (There's no need to delete duplicates though: those are not double-counted in the frequency count calculations.)

+ Using tabular view to access/edit the db

Bottom right of main screen, tabular view. Click top of column to sort, will easily show entries with missing or misspelled data. The first columns after Name are repertoire settings. Click edit button, then right click any item to select and change. The purple slots that pop up show, in order: dance name, category, its current data, then all the options (or a menu will display). It takes a little getting used to. Click to change an entry, or to move on without a change, select the current data again. Click Lock to stop editing, and Normal View to return back. This has no UNDO function, so run a backup before starting. Always backup!!

+ Finally, changing background colors for the panels

Most of us use the default black for the various panels. But you can change the color scheme. On the Setup screen [Options/Setup or Cntl-I], when you click inside the color change box (the one intro'd with "Click a type caption …"), you can change the background color using the color sliders. The same background colors are used for the 2nd monitor.
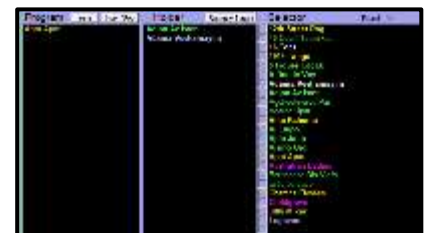
You'll obviously need to make coordinated changes in colors for the dance Types. Enjoy!

PS: A clever algorithm prevents you from selecting colors that are too close to the background color (dance names would be illegible).

- My favorite tricks

+ Changing the color scheme for holiday programs (Red for Valentine's Day, Orange+Black for Halloween, Blue+White for Chanukah, Red+Green for Xmas …) The Type selectors will have to be changed to avoid legibility problems. [Remember to save your prior .ini file to manually reinstall it after the holiday.]
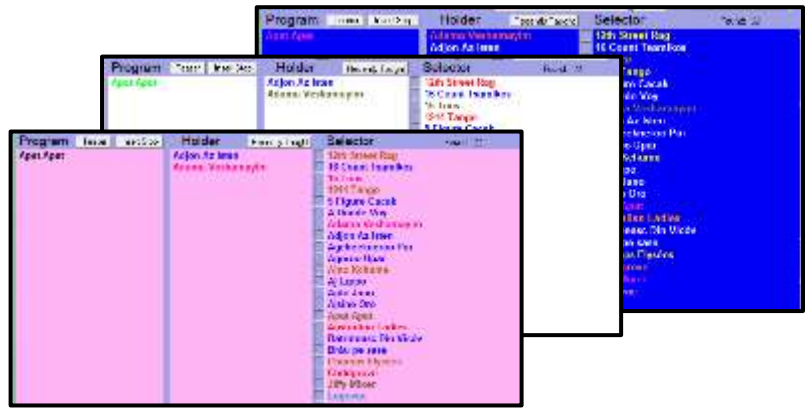
- Remote control of function Keys

Function Keys acts as keyboard shortcuts for the most-used actions. Function keys can be triggered by a remote control.[5]

- Screen resolution, scale settings

- *"I can't see the bottom of the programming window"*
- *"The Player isn't using the full height of my screen"*

These are different, though related, issues that are solved by Windows settings.

The primary issue may be your taskbar setting. Click here to follow instructions to auto-hide the taskbar. Sometimes the taskbar stops hiding. Quick fix: Press the Windows key, type a couple letters (enable search), then hit escape.

Both problems can be fixed via the Display settings.

Note: **If you recently upgraded to a new, high resolution laptop**, you might find the MITPlayer doesn't fully fill the height of your screen – *example shown here:* This too is fixed via Display settings.

In Settings, search for Display.

1) Change the Display resolution and/or Size of text. Try different resolutions, like 1366 x 768 or 1280 x 800.
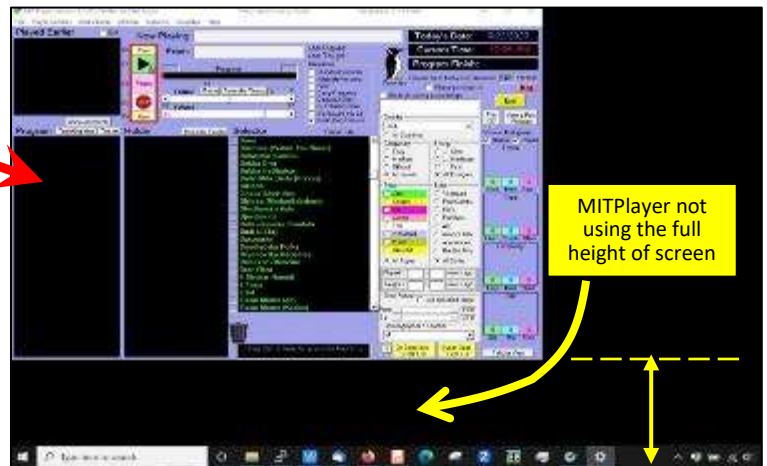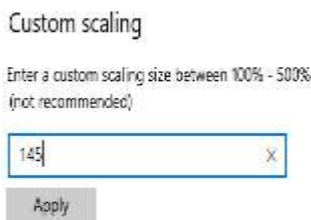
2) Also try Custom scaling. The defaults are 100 and 125% (some machines come set with 150% as their default!). First try 100 or 125%. Our own group uses 145% in combination with an atypical resolution. To try an odd magnification like that, first click 'Advanced scaling options', and test other values. (Painfully, Windows requires relogin for each change.)

- Keyboard shortcuts

There are two reasons when keyboard shortcuts don't work. The MITPlayer window might not have "focus" or another program might be responding to the shortcut (eg, using Zoom and alt-A).

As with any software project, we were disappointed we couldn't improve everything. See Appendix IV for things we wished we could do.

Have fun, and let us know what you think!

Murray and Charlie (NJ)

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[5] We use the USB RF remote from Keith Rubow. Contact Murray for installation details & macros to work with the MITPlayer

- You may not see the "Run anyway" button

Based on other Windows security settings, after you click More Info, you may not be given the opportunity to click "Run anyway".


In that case, here's what you need to do:

1) Click the Windows button⊞ and type Settings.
Search for "reputation", click Reputation-based protection.
Under Check apps and files, turn that off.

(Or search for Windows Security, select App & Browser Control, then Reputation-based protection, then Reputation-based protection settings).

2) When you click on the MITPlayer executable, you will now get a "Do you want to run this file?" security warning.

Uncheck "Always ask," then click "Run"

You will only have to do this once per release. You can go back and reset the reputation-based protection if you want.
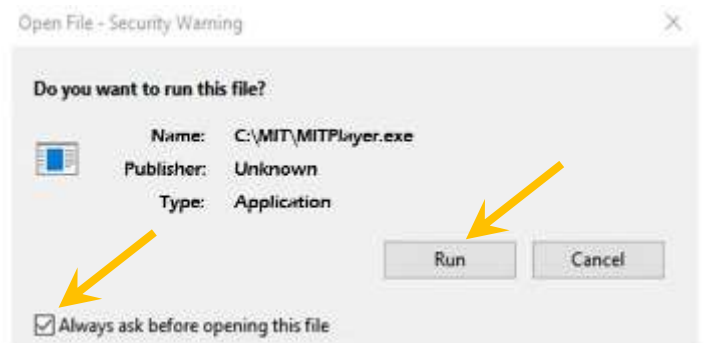
To avoid this hassle entirely, Google: Group Policy Editor settings to set Defender to 'warn'.

- As soon as you try to download, your virus protection software may immediately remove the Player   * READ FOOTNOTE

[Instructions for Windows10]
Your virus software may say 'Uh oh, this executable contains dangerous Trojan software'. If the file "disappears" after attempting a download, here's how to correct that.
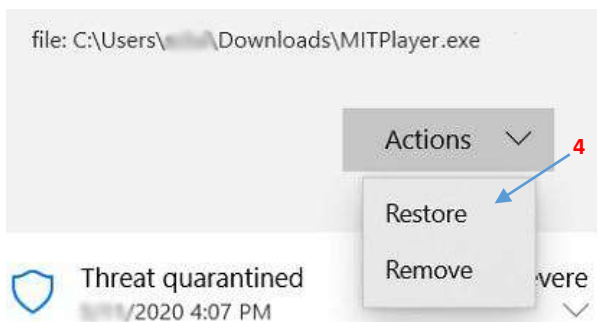
+ 1) & 2) Click the Windows button▦, and type Defender. Open <u>Windows Defender</u>, click <u>Virus & threat protection</u>, then <u>Protection history</u>.

+ 3) Click the arrow (under Severe) associated with your last download
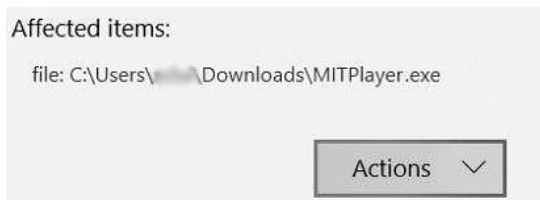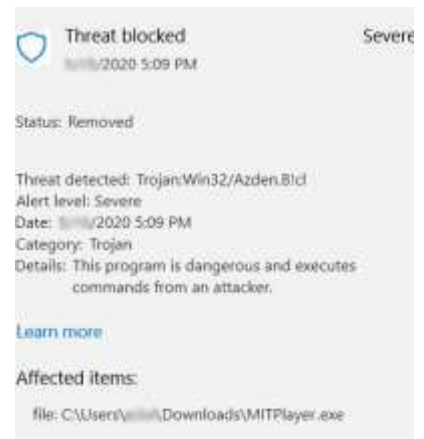
+ 4) Click 'Actions', choose <u>Allow</u> and then <u>Restore.</u>

The file will then be restored. Look in the location selected for your other downloads.

When you run it, you may get one more 'Running this app might put your PC at risk' message that I described at the beginning of these instructions. You'll only have to click 'Run anyway' once. Until our next update :(

BUT: Windows Defender may remove the file after using it a few weeks. You should add the Player to Defender's exclusion list, using the following steps. (Also save a copy of the executable on a thumbdrive.)

Click Windows button▦, type Defender, hit Enter. Go to <u>Settings</u> tab, select <u>Excluded Files & Locations</u>.

OR Click <u>Virus & threat protection</u> / Click <u>Virus & threat protection settings</u> / <u>Exclusions</u> / <u>Add or remove exclusions</u> / <u>Add an exclusion</u>.   Browse to location of the Player's executable. Add to list of Excluded Files & Locations; do same for Excluded file types and Excluded processes. Click Save.

OR Google how to add exceptions to Windows Defender.

* We've done virus and trojan checks on the Player's executable. Your computer's virus checking, to be fast, looks for code-segment definitions in files; sometime a spurious match marks an innocent file, as happens here.

I (Murray) work for a successor to Bell Labs that does cybersecurity research for the government, specifically DARPA. Our security team once notified me: one of my files had failed an extensive virus check, it was quarantined, please remove it. [Nothing to do with this Player.] I notified them that the file had been on my computer benignly for <u>9</u> years and was not a threat. So this happens all the time.

There are other instructions for Symantec protection. Contact us

I put all my music under the 'Music' folder in Windows. I can't find that folder/directory in the MITPlayer!

I put all my music under a 'My Documents' folder that's on my Desktop. I can't find that folder in the MITPlayer!

The Music and My Documents folders, even the Desktop, are special Windows folders located in a quirky virtual place on your hard disk. This Appendix explains how to find them. Before I do, let me say it may cause fewer headaches if you move your music to a folder under your primary (C:) hard drive, especially if it's a laptop with multiple users. I can explain more, but for now, we recommend moving your music files to something similar to C:\fdmusic, C:\music, C:\Mx, etc.

But if you can't (you also use Winamp or MediaPlayer playlists or such), or don't want to, follow these instructions exactly.

Right click on the folder icon or file [1] that contains your music. Select Properties [2].   The next line after Type, you will see Location [3]. It will be of the form C:\Users\[login]\[something]. Take note of this exact path.

Now, open the Player's Setup screen [Options/Setup Screen or Cntl-I], and for "Click Here/Initial path for MP3 files", click through the C:\User folders until you set this precise path to your music files.

* We still highly recommend putting the Player's directories (Program_Logs, Favorites, Tabs, Pictures) and Program executable in C:\fd, C:\MIT, or similar location. When you have done so, then set "Path for played today files" on the Setup Screen to point to the Program_Logs folder.

Once you save the setup file, the Add Dance Individual/Add Dance Group screens will automatically open to the top-level directory where your music files are stored.
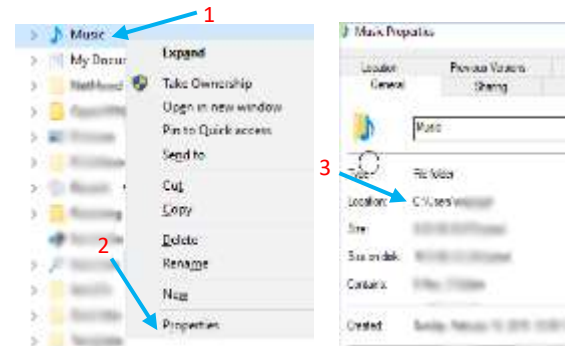
I put the Player executable in 'Program Files' – that's a standard place, isn't it?

Yes, it is a standard. But some users had occasional problems – I don't know why in each case, but I suspect it's due to Program Files requiring admin/elevated permissions to write files. (The actual files might end up in hidden virtualized folder locations called the VirtualStore.)

Instead, it's never been a problem when the main directory is a separate, new folder in your C: hard drive, which you will own and have full permissions. That's why we recommend that.

To fix, all you need to do is move the executable, and the Player's directories as described in the ***** paragraph above, to a directory you create on your C: drive. Again, use something like C:\fd or C:\MIT.   Be sure to set "Path for played today files" on the Setup Screen as described also. If you have Player's program logs (files of the form Friday_2020_2_14.txt) left in Window's Program Files directory, move those to your Program_Logs directory under the main Player directory. If you have a shortcut on your desktop for the Player, make sure to point it to your new main directory.
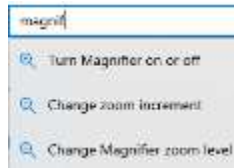
Finally, if your newest files are in some virtualized location, like the VirtualStore, copy those files over.

The first time you call the Windows Magnifying Glass, it sometimes comes up with, In Our Humble Opinion, <u>utterly useless</u> defaults. Our instructions to change that:

1) Bring up Settings [Settings icon]   or press Windows key [Windows key icon] and type Settings

2) Type <u>magnify</u> and choose *any* of the options

> magnif|
> 🔍 Turn Magnifier on or off
> 🔍 Change zoom increment
> 🔍 Change Magnifier zoom level

3 Choose the <u>Lens</u> view (on most systems, the default will be Full Screen, which is *not* what we need)

Choose a view

> Lens (Ctrl + Alt + L)   ∨
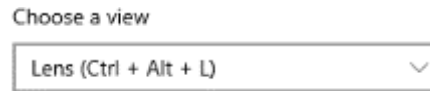
4) For Zoom <u>increments</u>, we suggest trying 5% or 10%. And try setting your initial zoom level to 120%

Change zoom increments

> 5%   ∨
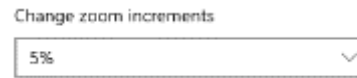
5) For lens <u>size</u>, try the minimum for horizontal (10) and one step higher for vertical (20). We think this will work well given the layout of objects on the MITPlayer *(This setting may not be available on Win 11.)*

Change lens size

> 10   20
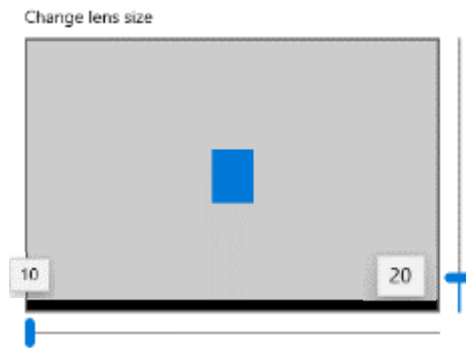
After doing these settings, these new defaults will apply each time you bring up the magnifier using MITPlayer's Mag button: **Mag**   [Our keyboard shortcut for magnifying glass: Cntl-G.]

What we wanted to improve, but couldn't. We listened to you and tried, but fell short.

+ Allow resizing of main screen. Or a fixed layout – wider, squatter – to match aspect ratio of modern laptop screens.
+ Larger fonts for aging eyes

Resizing/adjustability is not possible. There are too many objects (literally, *thousands*) on the main screen to reposition. To increase the font size, you can select Windows Display Settings/Scaling of 125%, but that may hide the bottom of main screen. You can choose any arbitrary magnification using Custom scaling. Experiment with these in addition to other selections of Display Resolutions. Or use the Magnifier Lens.

+ Search peculiarities: Typing 'a' in the search bar seeks dances named with a leading number (if you have them)

A quirk of the search algorithm. Type more than one letter in the dance name or use partial/substring search. (Hitting Enter to pop the dance into the Queue or Playlist will still work, even though the dance isn't listed first)

+ The SHOW: message feature doesn't refer to a dance

After it has been shown, hitting Prev will not redisplay a message; exactly the same as STOPs or ANNOUNCEMENTS

+ SHOW/ANNOUNCEMENTS/STOP isn't allowed as first entry in Queue / Playlist

STOP at beginning is a logical contradiction. As the first item, SHOW and ANNOUNCEMENTS don't work properly (internal timers were devilishly hard to debug). Workarounds: put a non-essential file first, or install a silence file into the db with desired display (WELCOME, SUE's BIRTHDAY, etc).

+ Prev doesn't skip past a bad, unplayable file
We're working to fix this

+ Some keyboard shortcuts (alt-A and alt-S) don't work
We're working to fix this

+ We couldn't enable Unicode, which would permit every accent and characters for any language

+ A small fraction of sound 'bleeds' thru from the dance queued up after a STOP or ANNOUNCEMENT

A bug with the libraries used for playing music files. Make sure your music files have a ¼ second of initial silence

+ During Recheck Dance Database, Player stops incrementing the dance counts and the advancing red bar

The program has more important things to do. You are warned it'll take a while and you get the "Thinking" message.

+ Carriage returns [CR] in Comments. Part of a larger db integrity check, these are unsupported

+ The error handling for bad files and bad speaker connections can be confusing

We can't tell the difference between an unplayable file and when an external speaker is disconnected (or lost power); the return codes we see are the same. The logic used to untangle the cause will sometimes be wrong Mostly fixed!

+ Speed control that changes only Tempo and not Pitch

Cannot be done with play routines (dll's) compatible with current code. [For realtime changes, use Amazing Slow Downer, or create slowed versions via freebie sound editors like Audition or Goldwave] Fixed!

+ Can't re-initialize audio connections after you're paired BlueTooth devices or external speakers

The simple solution: sync your speakers to your computer before starting the Player Fixed!

+ On very rare occasions, the Prev/Next sequence misses a dance Fixed!

+ On rare occasions, the HOLDER panel gets a blank line

If it annoys you, "drag" the blank line to the bottom of the panel Fixed!

+ Infrequently, scrollbar is missing from the Playlist editor   Fixed!

+ Enable the scroll wheel on my mouse in all panels   Fixed!

+ Hitting Prev multiple times will cause second dance listed in Played Earlier to disappear

Cause depends on internal timers, which turn out to be devilishly hard to debug May be fixed

+ Occasionally, the Prev/Next sequence duplicates a dance listing

As yet, we haven't been able to replicate the required action sequence and timings.   Likely depends on exact location of the countdown timer, and is hard to replicate May be fixed

Appendix V – Unsolicited testimonials

Peter Sohn, Brooklyn: We've been using the MITPlayer for well over 20 years. Of course, we've stuck with it both because we're very comfortable with it <u>and</u> it does a variety of things that let us focus on dancing, knowing that "playing music" is now easy, trouble-free, etc. But there have been occasions where things have gone awry. Murray long ago got to know the software every bit as well as its original author, so he said things like, "Just do this," and we were back on track. <u>But now</u>, because Charlie & Murray have done a software makeover, we feel like "the boiler has just been replaced." We've used it for months as we danced through the pandemic, and now we look forward to - God willing - another 20 years of dancing with the software as re-packaged both improved and just about bullet-proof.

Appendix VI – Fonts, accents and foreign letters: The Full Story

One of the most requested features: "Why can't the Player display files with their original accents?" Mostly, it now can. But one important character it cannot show is č (c with a hacek). This Appendix gives an overview why.

<u>Limitations</u>: The Player is based on a particular set of ASCII letters. It can represent a lot of accents. You could even have a dance called ©¥†‰®¾®÷¬€.mp3 (Go ahead, I dare you.) Although the standard includes a lot of useful accents – you can display the names for Vlaško, Csángó, Ženska Rekâ, Incâlcita – for some dang reason, the standards committee in charge of designing this character set left out Č and č.

And of course, ASCII doesn't show Greek, or Cyrillic, or Chinese, or Hebrew, or (name your favorite non-Latin script).

<u>Our software explorations</u>: Without going into details, we seriously considered several ways to display Č:
a) Generate a new font to include them, b) Draw a hacek on the screen, c) Use a different character set or d) font,
e) Use Unicode, the modern format that's now used to display the scripts around the world, as well as f), g), and h).

<u>Why the Player can't do more</u>: (a-d) might fix how characters display, but the Player still wouldn't be able to access the file to play it. Dead end. (e) The Player is written in a language that doesn't support Unicode. Rewriting the Player in another computer language is literally years of work that we cannot do. Any volunteers? Furthermore, we like a plain-ASCII database.