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Gesture Controlled Multi Instrument For Motor Impaired Users

[1]Mrs Sangeetha V, [2]Rachana Jagannath, [3]Sowjanya Rai,[4]Tejaswini R,[5]Umme Sara
[1]Assistant Professor, [2]Student, [3]Student, [4]Student, [5]Student
[1]Electronics And Communication,
[1]KS Institute Of Technology, Bangalore, India

Abstract : This project presents a gesture-controlled virtual musical instrument system designed to help motor-impaired individuals play and enjoy music with ease. Using a Raspberry Pi 4 and a webcam, the system captures hand gestures in real time to simulate instruments such as piano, guitar, drums, and trumpet. Gesture recognition is achieved through computer vision techniques using OpenCV and MediaPipe, without any machine learning models. Pygame is used to play locally stored audio files, with each gesture mapped to specific notes, actions, or instrument selections. The system enables seamless switching between instruments and provides an accessible, low-cost, and open-source platform suitable for music therapy, special education, and inclusive performances.

IndexTerms - Gesture recognition, Virtual musical instruments, Accessibility, Raspberry Pi, Computer vision, MediaPipe, OpenCV, Assistive technology, Pygame.

I. INTRODUCTION

Music serves as a profound tool for expressing oneself, communicating ideas, and fostering emotional well-being. Unfortunately, many conventional musical instruments demand precise motor control and coordinated physical actions, which can be challenging for individuals with physical disabilities. To address this issue, assistive technology is continually advancing to make musical expression more inclusive. This project presents a gesture-based virtual instrument system that allows individuals with limited physical mobility to create and enjoy music using simple hand gestures..

The system is built using a Raspberry Pi 4 and a webcam, which together capture and process real-time hand movements. Through computer vision techniques and gesture-recognition tools such as MediaPipe, the system maps specific gestures to musical notes and instrument actions. Using Pygame to play locally stored audio files, the project supports multiple instrument sounds, including piano, guitar, drums, and trumpet, without requiring physical contact or traditional input devices. Designed to be cost-effective, easy to use, and inclusive, this system provides motor-impaired individuals with new ways to interact with music. It also demonstrates the potential of human–computer interaction to enhance accessibility and expand creative opportunities.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Analysis of Accessible Digital Musical Instruments Through the Lens of Disability Models

This paper explores how Accessible Digital Musical Instruments (ADMIs) are designed in relation to different models of disability—medical, social, and cultural. The authors critique the dominance of the medical model in most ADMI projects, where disabilities are treated as limitations to be fixed. Through evaluating eleven ADMIs created for d/Deaf users, the study finds limited user involvement and a lack of inclusive design approaches.

The paper emphasizes the importance of adopting social and cultural perspectives in designing musical tools. It suggests a framework that prioritizes user participation, inclusive practices, and representation. The study encourages a shift from compensatory solutions to empowering, user-centered innovations that reflect the diverse ways disabled individuals experience and create music.

The Development of a Modular Accessible Musical Instrument Technology Toolkit

Ward (2023) presents the Modular Accessible Musical Instrument Technology (MAMI Tech) Toolkit, a result of five years of development guided by an action research approach. This toolkit includes four adaptable tools specifically created to support active music-making for people with disabilities. The design process prioritized participatory methods, engaging stakeholders at four different research locations to ensure the tools addressed a wide range of user needs. Notably, the toolkit features tangible and wireless interfaces, intentionally moving away from traditional screen-based systems to offer physical, customizable, and user-friendly options. Rooted in third-wave human–computer interaction concepts, the toolkit emphasizes users' social and embodied experiences. By tackling limitations in current music technologies, this work advances more inclusive and accessible musical opportunities for a diverse range of users.

Gesture Controlled Device with Vocalizer for Physically Challenged

Nithin M A et al. (2023) present a gesture-controlled system designed to assist individuals with speech and hearing impairments by translating hand gestures into audible speech. The system employs a glove equipped with flex sensors to capture finger movements, which are analyzed by a microcontroller. The recognized gestures are then wirelessly transmitted through Bluetooth to a paired device, where they are translated into speech, enabling effective communication for the user. Additionally, the system incorporates an accelerometer to enable gesture-based control of a robotic vehicle, allowing for directional movements such as forward, backward, left, and right. This dual functionality aims to enhance both communication and mobility for physically challenged individuals.

Hands-Free Accessible Digital Musical Instruments: Conceptual Framework, Challenges, and Perspectives

The paper by Davanzo and Avanzini (2023) explores the development of hands-free accessible digital musical instruments aimed at individuals with motor impairments. The authors discuss the growing potential of computational resources and sensors in creating musical instruments that utilize non-conventional interaction methods, such as head, mouth, eyes, and brain movements, These modes are especially beneficial for individuals who are unable to use their limbs to create music.

A modular framework is presented for designing such instruments, highlighting physical interaction channels above the neck as viable options for musical control. The paper systematically surveys existing accessible instruments, focusing on their design choices, physical interaction channels, and sensor technologies used for controlling musical expression. Additionally, the authors review mapping strategies and feedback systems that assist performers in engaging with these instruments.

The study identifies key research gaps and suggests areas for future exploration, including unconventional interaction channels, multisensory feedback, and enhanced evaluation and adaptation strategies. The paper serves as a foundation for advancing inclusive music technologies that can empower individuals with motor impairments.

Innovative Touchless Interaction in Everyday Music Engagement

The paper explores the integration of touchless interaction technologies into everyday musical experiences. It examines how advancements in sensor technologies, such as accelerometers and motion sensors, enable users to engage with music without physical contact. The study highlights various applications, including gesture-controlled music interfaces and wearable devices that facilitate musical expression through movement. The paper highlights the value of intuitive and accessible interaction techniques in increasing user involvement and expanding participation in musical activities. It stresses the need for designing systems that are both easy to use and flexible enough to accommodate a variety of user requirements, with the goal of making music more inclusive and enjoyable for a broader range of individuals.

MuGeVI:A Multi-Functional Gesture-Controlled Virtual Instrument:

This paper introduces *MuGeVI*, a novel interactive musical instrument powered by computer vision. Unlike traditional systems, MuGeVI eliminates the need for external hardware or sensors, relying solely on hand gestures and their positions to enable music creation and performance. The system leverages deep learning models to detect key points of the hand, interprets this data based on the selected mode, and converts it into musical elements such as pitches or chords. This information is transmitted to Max/MSP via the OSC protocol, which then handles MIDI or audio signal generation and manipulation. MuGeVI supports four main operational modes: performance, accompaniment, control, and audio effects. It operates seamlessly on a standard computer equipped with a camera, emphasizing ease of use, affordability, adaptability, and user-focused design. As a result, MuGeVI stands out as a cost-effective yet powerful tool for interactive music experiences. MuGeVI, as presented in this work, is a gesture-based, multi-functional virtual musical instrument that operates without any specialized hardware. By integrating artificial intelligence with digital music technologies, MuGeVI handles tasks like gesture detection, data communication, MIDI composition and editing, sound generation, and audio effect processing. It has been effectively evaluated in each of its four operational modes. The system offers notable benefits in terms of user accessibility, cost-effectiveness, feature diversity, and expandability.

Designing Accessible Musical Instruments for Special Educational Needs Schools:

This research offers two key contributions to the development of digital musical instruments (DMIs) within special educational needs (SEN) school environments. Firstly, it sheds light on the often-overlooked complexities of SEN educational systems. Through a participatory design approach, the study demonstrates how DMIs can be meaningfully integrated into music education by addressing not only technological accessibility, but also the emotional and learning-related needs of students. Secondly, the paper presents detailed descriptions of the designed instruments, providing a foundation for future adaptation and use in other educational contexts. From the research, several important takeaways for participatory design in SEN settings emerged:

- Focus on individual capabilities and preferences instead of relying solely on diagnostic labels.
- Understand that common goals (such as "playing guitar") may carry unique interpretations and motivations depending on the person involved.
- Ensure perspectives from children, educators, and researchers are compared and aligned to minimize bias and acknowledge potential imbalances in authority.
- Keep the design of instruments centered around their core educational and musical purposes.
- Create diverse instructional resources to cater to a wide range of learning styles and abilities.
- Be mindful of emotional support requirements, allowing ample time to build trust and provide individualized attention through one-on-one interactions.

Accesssible Guitar Playing: Exploring Participatory Design The study focuses on making guitar playing more inclusive for individuals with physical disabilities by developing digital musical instruments (DMIs). Using a participatory design approach, the researchers worked closely with users to co-create and refine instrument prototypes. These designs were built using open-source platforms, allowing for customization based on individual needs. The paper emphasizes that actively involving users in the design process helps create more practical and accessible tools that cater to their specific physical capabilities and preferences.

The findings show that engaging users in the design of assistive musical technologies leads to more effective and inclusive solutions. When people with physical impairments contribute directly to the development of DMIs, the final products tend to be better aligned with their functional needs and personal experiences. This research supports the idea that participatory design, paired with flexible open-source tools, can open up new opportunities for creative expression among disabled musicians.

Unlogical Instrument: Material -Driven Gesture -Controlled Sound Interface
This study explores how individuals with physical disabilities can engage in guitar playing through the development of adaptive digital musical instruments (DMIs). Using a participatory design strategy, the authors partnered with users who have physical impairments to co-design systems tailored to their needs. By leveraging open-source tools and collaborative input, the team created flexible instruments that emulate aspects of guitar performance. The study highlights the value of designing through lived experiences, allowing for more relevant and empowering musical tools.
The work concludes that involving users directly in the design of assistive instruments results in more personalized, accessible, and meaningful tools for musical expression. Participatory methods not only ensure functional usability but also enhance emotional and creative engagement. The findings indicate that integrating user-centered design with open-source technologies provides an effective approach to making music more accessible, particularly for individuals with restricted mobility..

Accessible Digital Music Instruments for Motor Disability:
The study focuses on making guitar playing more inclusive for individuals with physical disabilities by developing digital musical instruments (DMIs). Using a participatory design approach, the researchers worked closely with users to co-create and refine instrument prototypes. These designs were built using open-source platforms, allowing for customization based on individual needs. The paper emphasizes that actively involving users in the design process helps create more practical and accessible tools that cater to their specific physical capabilities and preferences.

The results indicate that involving users in the creation of assistive musical technologies results in more inclusive and effective outcomes. When individuals with physical disabilities actively participate in the design of digital musical instruments (DMIs), the resulting tools are more closely tailored to their specific needs and lived experiences. This study reinforces the value of participatory design and highlights how adaptable, open-source solutions can expand creative possibilities for musicians with disabilities.

III. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Individuals with motor impairments often face significant challenges in engaging with traditional musical instruments, which require fine motor skills, coordinated movement, and physical dexterity. Existing adaptive musical technologies are either limited in instrument options, lack intuitive control, or are prohibitively expensive. This creates a barrier to musical expression and participation. There is a clear need for an affordable, accessible, and user-friendly system that enables users to create and control multiple instruments using simple gestures, enhancing their ability to express creativity through music.

IV. OBJECTIVES

- To develop a gesture-based interface that allows users with limited mobility to play and switch between multiple musical instruments.
- To ensure high accessibility and ease of use, requiring minimal physical effort or fine motor skills.
- To integrate real-time sound generation to provide immediate audio feedback for each gesture.
- To create a customizable and affordable system adaptable to different user needs and preferences.
- To promote musical creativity and participation among motor-impaired individuals through an inclusive technology solution.

V. METHODOLOGY

- **Hardware Setup**
  Utilize a Raspberry Pi as the central processing unit, paired with a Webcam to continuously monitor hand movements.
- **Video Capture & Processing**
  Capture real-time video frames and apply grayscale conversion and filtering using OpenCV to enhance gesture visibility.
- **Hand Gesture Detection**
  Implement techniques like contour tracking and background subtraction to identify hand shapes, fingertips, and positions.
- **Gesture Recognition**
  Assign unique gestures—such as an open palm, a fist, or raised fingers—to specific musical actions or instruments.
- **Sound Generation**
  Integrate audio libraries like PyAudio or Pygame to play instrument sounds instantly when a gesture is recognized.
- **User Interface (Optional)**
  Display gesture and instrument information on-screen and include simple controls such as play, pause, and volume.

- **Testing & Fine-Tuning**
  Evaluate system performance under different conditions and with various users; refine detection thresholds and gesture mappings for better reliability.

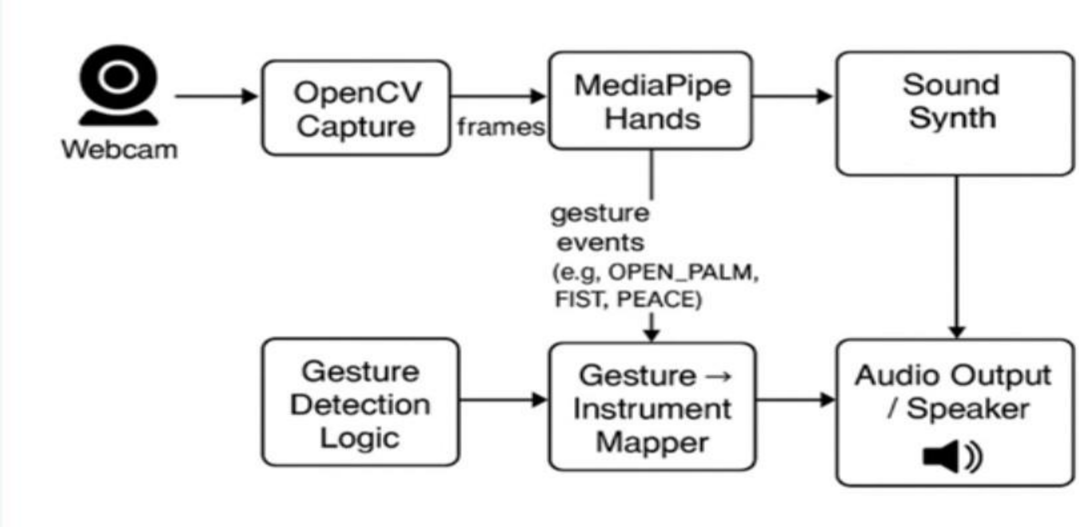

Figure 1: Block Diagram of Gesture Controlled Virtual Instrument For Motor Impaired Users

The block diagram illustrates the workflow of the Gesture-Controlled Multi-Instrument System, showing how hand gestures are captured, processed, recognized, and converted into musical sounds. Each block performs a specific function in the signal flow from video input to audio output. The integration of computer vision and sound synthesis allows users to create and control music through intuitive hand movements.

1. Webcam

The webcam serves as the primary input device of the system. It continuously captures live video of the user's hand gestures in real time. The video stream provides a sequence of frames that represent the dynamic movement of the hand. The webcam must offer sufficient frame rate (e.g., 30 fps) and resolution for smooth gesture recognition. The captured frames are transferred to the Raspberry Pi for further processing. Proper lighting and background contrast are essential to ensure reliable hand detection.

2. OpenCV Capture

The OpenCV Capture block manages video frame acquisition and initial image processing. Using the OpenCV library, the Raspberry Pi extracts frames from the camera feed and converts them into a usable digital format. During this stage, the frames are often resized to reduce computational load and converted from RGB to grayscale to simplify processing. Basic filtering, such as Gaussian or median blur, is applied to reduce image noise and improve feature clarity. This preprocessing ensures that subsequent gesture detection operates efficiently and accurately.

3. MediaPipe Hands

The MediaPipe Hands module is a machine learning-based framework developed by Google that provides real-time hand and finger tracking. It detects the presence of a hand and identifies 21 landmark points, including fingertips, joints, and the wrist. These landmarks describe the hand's orientation and posture in three-dimensional space. The accuracy and low-latency performance of MediaPipe make it suitable for real-time applications like gesture-controlled systems. The module outputs coordinate values for each landmark, which are then analyzed by the gesture detection logic to identify specific gestures.

4. Gesture Detection Logic

The Gesture Detection Logic block interprets the landmark data generated by **MediaPipe**. Using mathematical relationships such as the distance between landmarks, angle between fingers, and relative hand orientation, the system determines which gesture the user is making. Predefined rules are applied to identify gestures like open palm, fist, peace sign, or one finger up. This logic serves as the decision-making layer of the system. In some advanced implementations, machine learning classifiers such as SVM or KNN could be used, but in this project, a rule-based approach ensures low latency and simplicity.

5. Gesture → Instrument Mapper

Once a gesture is recognized, it is sent to the Gesture-to-Instrument Mapper. This block acts as a lookup table or mapping mechanism that links each gesture to a corresponding musical note, sound effect, or instrument type. For example, an open palm may trigger a piano sound, index fingers on both hands may correspond to a drum beat, and a index and pinky finger on both hands may represent a guitar tone. This mapping can be customized, allowing flexibility for different sound sets or musical applications. It essentially converts gesture-based commands into meaningful sound-control signals.

6. Sound System (Pygame)

The Sound System block is responsible for generating and playing audio. It utilizes the Pygame library to handle the real-time playback of pre-recorded instrument sound files. Pygame provides a lightweight and efficient audio mixer, enabling smooth and responsive sound output based on detected gestures. Each gesture triggers the corresponding audio file, allowing for accurate and immediate musical feedback. The audio output is then delivered through the Raspberry Pi's built-in audio interface or connected speakers.

7. Audio Output (Speaker)

The Audio Output stage converts the generated digital sound into audible signals. The Raspberry Pi's audio output is connected to a speaker or headphone, which plays the musical note corresponding to the detected gesture. This provides real-time auditory feedback to the user, completing the interaction loop. The latency between gesture recognition and sound playback is minimized to ensure a responsive musical experience. The system thereby enables users, including motor-impaired individuals, to control and perform music intuitively through gestures.

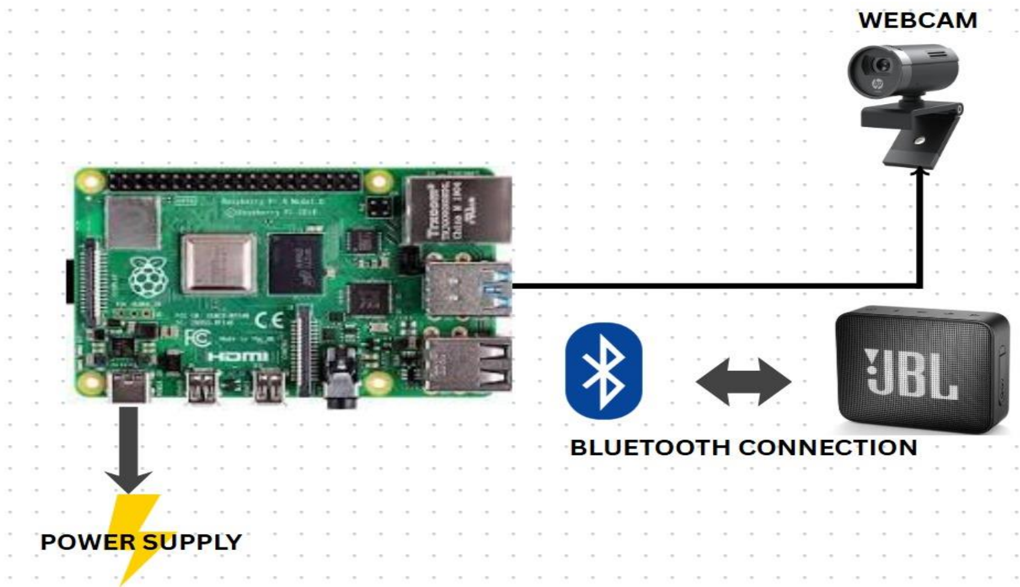

Figure 2: Circuit Diagram of Gesture Controlled Virtual Instrument For Motor Impaired Users

1. Raspberry Pi (Central Processing Unit)

The Raspberry Pi acts as the core controller of the system.
Its main functions include:

- Receiving image/video data from the webcam
- Running the gesture-recognition algorithm
- Mapping detected gestures to specific musical instrument sounds
- Transmitting audio output to the Bluetooth speaker

The Pi is powered through a dedicated power supply, ensuring stable operation.

2. Webcam (Gesture Input Device)

A USB webcam is connected to the Raspberry Pi.
Its role is to:

- Capture real-time hand gestures from the user
- Provide continuous video frames to the processing unit

The gesture-recognition software analyzes this video stream and interprets meaningful gesture commands.

3. Bluetooth Speaker (Audio Output Device)

A portable Bluetooth speaker (JBL in the diagram) is paired with the Raspberry Pi.
Its purpose is to:

- Play the musical notes or instrument sounds generated by the system
- Provide clear, amplified audio feedback to the user

4. Bluetooth Communication

The audio output generated by the gesture-recognition system is transmitted wirelessly from the Raspberry Pi to the speaker using Bluetooth.
This wireless connection:

- Eliminates the need for wired audio connections
- Gives users freedom of movement
- Helps maintain a clean and accessible setup, which is crucial for motor-impaired users.

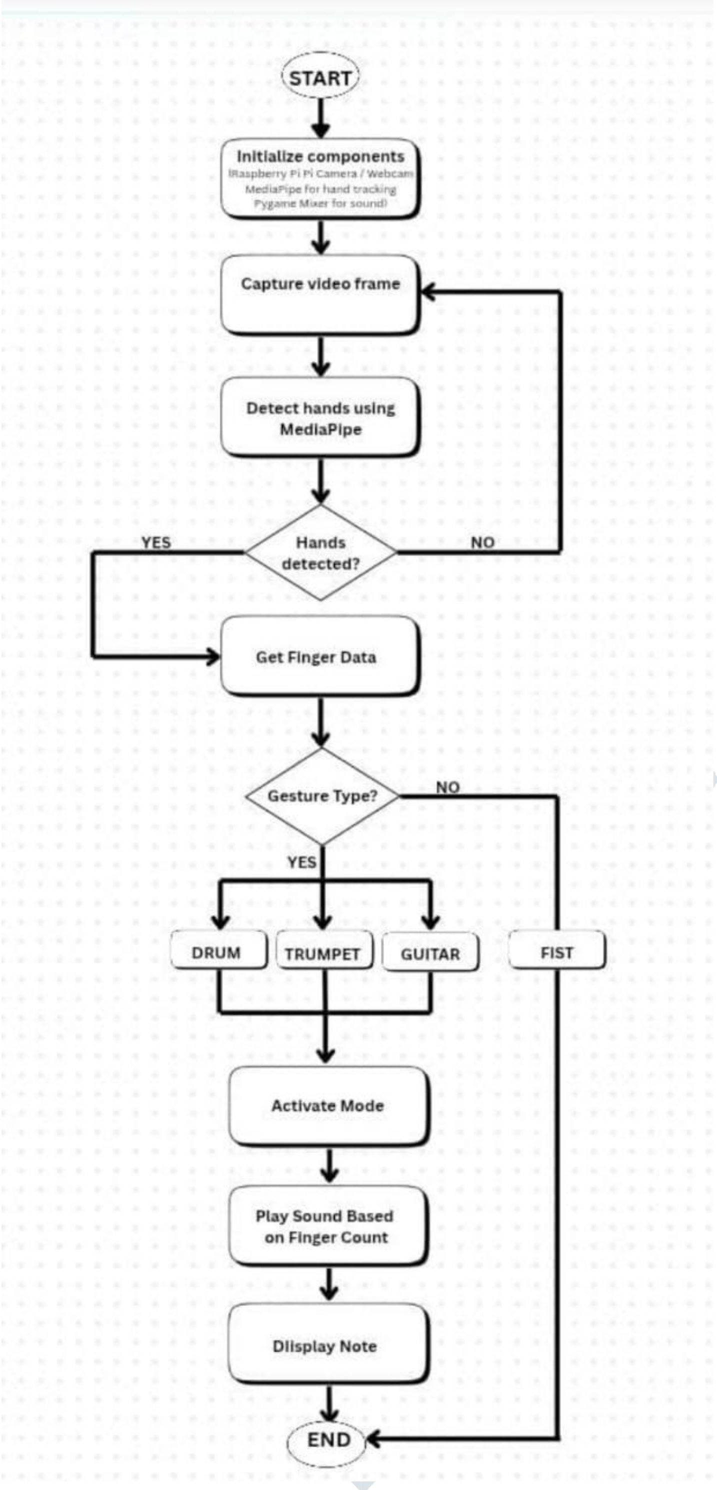

Figure 3: Flowchart of Gesture Controlled Virtual Instrument For Motor Impaired Users

The flowchart illustrates the operational workflow of the Gesture-Controlled Multi-Instrument System, showing how live video input is processed to detect hand gestures and generate corresponding musical sounds in real time. Each step in the flowchart represents a crucial stage in the system's logic, ensuring smooth operation from initialization to sound output. The detailed explanation of each step is given below:

1. Start

This marks the beginning of the program execution. When the system is powered on, the Raspberry Pi initializes its operating environment and prepares to run the main control script. All necessary software modules, libraries, and configuration settings are loaded into memory to ensure smooth functioning.

2. Initialize Raspberry Pi, WebCam, Pygame Mixer, and MediaPipe

In this step, the system initializes all essential hardware and software components:

- Raspberry Pi 4 Model B acts as the central processing unit, handling data flow and computation.
- The Pi Camera/Webcam is activated to start capturing live video frames.
- The Pygame Mixer library initializes the audio playback system, ensuring that sound files can be played instantly when a gesture is detected.

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This initialization ensures all modules are synchronized and ready for continuous real-time processing.

3. Capture Frame

Once initialization is complete, the camera begins to capture live video frames continuously. Each frame is a snapshot of the current scene and serves as the input to the image processing pipeline. Frames are resized and converted into an appropriate format (usually grayscale or RGB) for faster and more efficient processing by OpenCV.

4. Hand Detected?

In this decision block, the system checks whether a hand is present in the captured frame:

- If no hand is detected, the system loops back to capture the next frame, continuously monitoring the input stream.
- If a hand is detected, the program proceeds to the next step for gesture analysis.

This decision-making process ensures that system resources are used efficiently and that sound output only occurs when an intentional hand gesture is present.

5. Get Finger Data

Once a hand is detected, **MediaPipe Hands** analyzes the frame to locate 21 specific hand landmarks (fingertips, joints, and wrist position). The coordinates of these landmarks are used to determine:

- Which fingers are raised or folded
- The orientation and rotation of the hand
- The relative distances between fingers

This step converts visual data into numerical values, forming the foundation for accurate gesture recognition.

6. Gesture Type?

Here, the system classifies the detected hand configuration into predefined gesture categories such as:

- **Trumpet Gesture** → Thumb and pinky raised
- **Drum Gesture** → Both index fingers raised
- **Guitar Gesture** → Index and pinky of both hands raised
- **Fist Gesture** → All fingers folded (used to deactivate sound output)

This classification uses geometric analysis of the landmarks (like the distance between fingertips and angles between joints). Once a gesture is identified, the system proceeds to activate the corresponding instrument mode.

7. Activate Mode

When a valid gesture is recognized, the corresponding instrument mode (Trumpet, Drum, or Guitar) is activated, and all other modes are deactivated to prevent multiple instruments from.

Each active mode changes the behavior of subsequent gestures — for example:

- In **Drum Mode**, varying the number of fingers produce different beats.
- In **Guitar Mode**, varying the number of fingers trigger different chord sounds.
- In **Trumpet Mode**, varying the number of raised fingers changes the pitch.

This modular structure makes the system flexible and expandable to include more instruments in the future.

8. Play Sound

Once the instrument mode is active, the system uses the detected gesture or finger count to trigger the corresponding musical sound:

- The **Pygame** Mixer plays preloaded .mp3files
- The audio is output through the connected JBL speaker or headphones in real time.

The sound playback is nearly instantaneous (delay < 0.5 seconds), giving users the experience of playing a real instrument through gestures.

9. Display Status

The system provides visual feedback on the screen using OpenCV GUI windows. It displays:

- The active instrument mode (e.g., "Guitar Mode Active")
- The recognized gesture type (e.g., "Open Palm Detected")
- Additional information like FPS (Frames Per Second) or processing time

This helps users understand which gesture is being recognized and ensures a more interactive experience. It also aids in debugging and monitoring during testing.

10. End

When the user terminates the program or a specific exit gesture (like a closed fist) is detected, the system releases all hardware and software resources:

- The camera feed is stopped and closed properly.
- Audio resources (Pygame Mixer) are uninitialized.
- The MediaPipe and OpenCV windows are destroyed.

This ensures a clean shutdown without memory leaks or hardware errors. The program execution then ends safely.

VI. APPLICATIONS

1. Music Therapy Support
Provides an expressive outlet for individuals with motor challenges, enhancing emotional well-being through musical interaction. Ideal for use in therapy centers and specialized educational settings.

2. Accessible Music Education
Enables students with physical limitations to actively engage in music classes, promoting creativity and boosting self-esteem in inclusive learning environments.

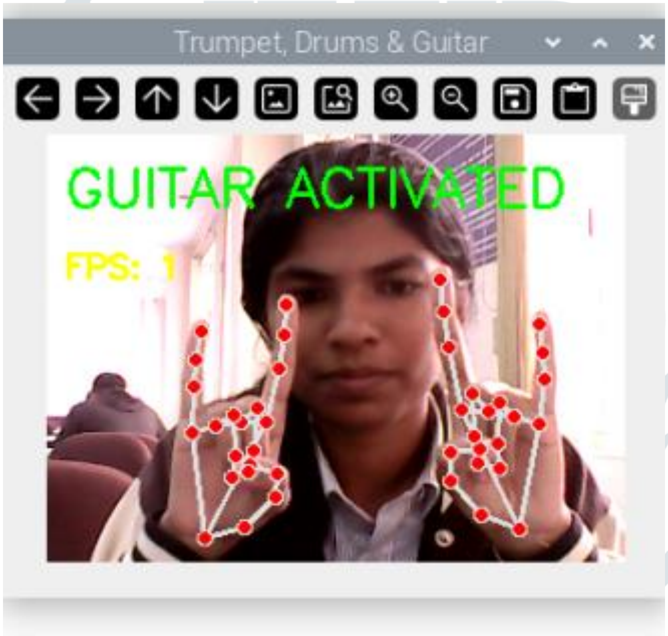
3. Independent Music Creation at Home
Offers a fun and empowering way for users to make music on their own, turning their home into an interactive and accessible musical space.

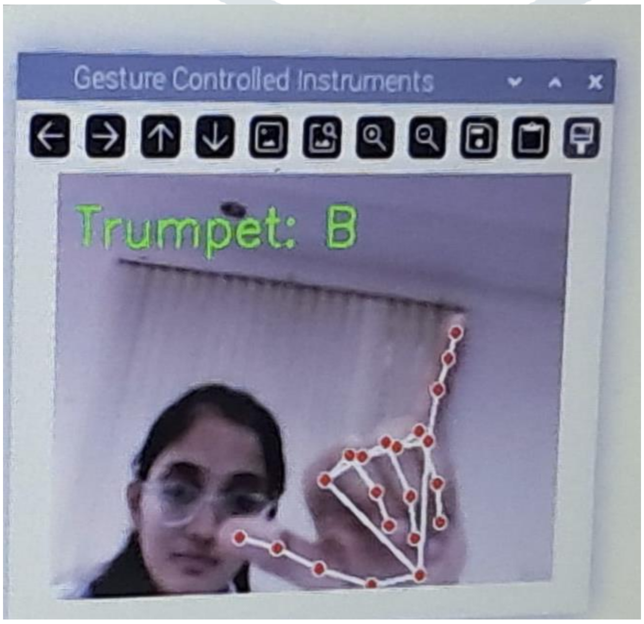
4. Inclusive Live Performances
Allows individuals with disabilities to showcase their musical talents in public events or concerts using gesture control, promoting visibility and inclusion.

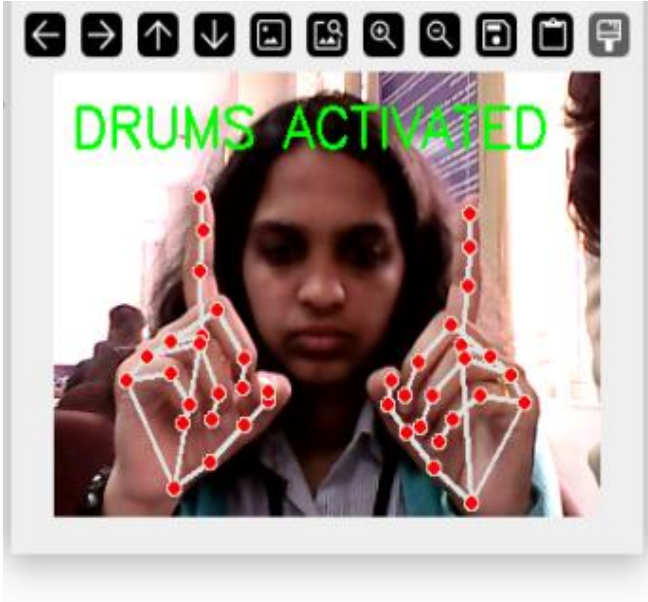
5. Assistive Learning Tool
Introduces basic gesture-based interaction, helping users enhance concentration, coordination, and cognitive skills through engaging music-based activities.

6. Hands-On Art and Music Exhibits
Ideal for museums and public installations, letting visitors create music through hand movements, making the experience both interactive and inclusive.

VII. RESULTS



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Gesture Controlled Piano
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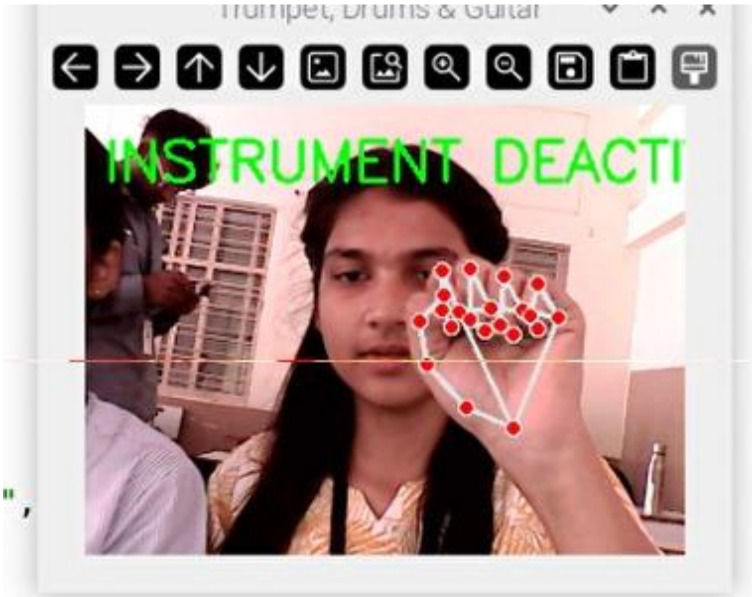

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The development of a gesture-controlled multi-instrument system represents a meaningful step toward inclusivity in the world of music and technology. By using simple hand gestures, individuals with limited motor abilities can actively participate in creating and performing music—something that is often difficult with traditional instruments. This system not only empowers users by enhancing their ability to express themselves but also improves their emotional and cognitive engagement.

The project demonstrates how low-cost hardware like the Raspberry Pi, combined with accessible programming tools such as OpenCV and Mediapipe, can be used to build assistive technologies that are both functional and enjoyable. The real-time responsiveness of gesture recognition and sound feedback creates an interactive experience, encouraging users to explore music in a new and intuitive way. The system can serve as a valuable asset in music therapy sessions, special education settings, inclusive performances, and even as a recreational tool at home.

- **Machine Learning for Gesture Recognition:**
  Implementing machine learning models could significantly improve the accuracy and flexibility of gesture detection, allowing the system to adapt to various hand shapes, sizes, and movement styles unique to each user.
- **Voice and Facial Expression Integration:**
  Combining gesture control with voice commands or facial expressions could offer multi-modal interaction, further reducing dependency on hand movement alone and making the system more accessible.
- **Customizable Gesture Sets:**
  Users could be given the ability to define their own gestures and map them to specific instruments or musical actions, making the system highly personalized.
- **Wireless and Wearable Options:**
  Future versions could utilize wearable sensors like accelerometers or smart gloves to enhance mobility and allow gesture control without needing to stay in front of a camera.
- **Integration with AR/VR Platforms:**
  Expanding the system into augmented or virtual reality environments could offer immersive music-making experiences, especially useful in educational or therapeutic settings.
- **Online Collaboration and Sharing:**
  Cloud connectivity could enable users to save, share, and collaborate on music compositions with others, helping build a virtual community of creators.
- **Expansion of Sound Library:**
  Including more instruments, sound effects, and even looping or recording functionalities would greatly enrich the musical experience and creativity.

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