

Songwrite 2 version 0.2 – user guide

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Contents

1 Introduction	2
1.1 Requirements for Songwrite 2	2
1.2 Mailing list	2
1.3 History	2
2 Editing a song	2
2.1 Song mode	3
2.2 Instrument mode	3
2.2.1 Tablature tuning	4
2.2.2 Tin whistle tonality	4
2.3 Note mode	4
2.3.1 Copy and paste	4
2.3.2 Special effects	5
2.3.3 Rearranging notes	5
2.3.4 Keyboard shortcuts	5
2.4 Time mode	5
2.5 Lyrics	6
2.6 Playing, printing, exporting and importing	6
2.6.1 Command line	7
3 Editing a songbook	7
4 Configuration	8

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1 Introduction

Songwrite 2 is a music score and songbook editor. This software is especially designed for musicians who do not master solfege (like me!) and to Linuxian musicians. Songwrite 2 can edit staves, but also tablatures (for guitar, bass, banjo,...) and flute fingerings (for tin whistle, recorder,...); it also manages lyrics. Songwrite 2 can play and print the partitions.

Songwrite 2 is a free software (libre software) written in Python. It is available under GNU GPL (including this documentation). Make pleasure to the author: do not confound "Free Software" and "Freeware"! In addition to being "Freeware", a Free Software is available as source code; it is allowed to modify and redistribute freely these sources.

1.1 Requirements for Songwrite 2

Python, Gtk, Cairo, PyGtk and PyCairo are required for running Songwrite 2, as well as the dialog box generator EditObj 2.

LaTeX and GhostScript are required for printing.

Evince is required for viewing PDF files before printing; any other PDF viewer can be used too.

Timidity is required for playing partitions; any other midi player can be used too (*e.g.* playmidi).

All these pieces of software should normally included in any "good" Linux distribution, but EditObj 2. See section 4 for using other programs than the default ones.

1.2 Mailing list

To subscribe to the Songwrite mailing, send a mail at Songwrite-subscribe@oomadness.tuxfamily.org . To unsubscribe, send a mail to Songwrite-unsubscribe@oomadness.tuxfamily.org .

1.3 History

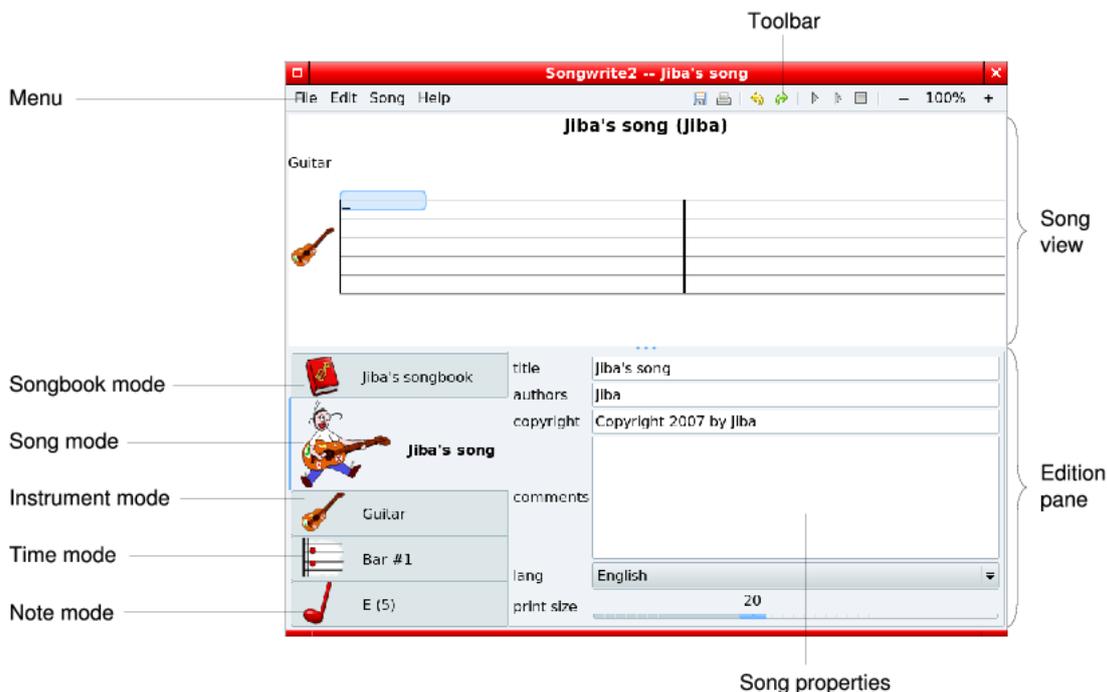
Long ago, Songwrite 2 was called Songwrite 1 and even GTablature. Here are the various versions in a chronological order:

1. GTablature was the first version of a tablature editor, written with Python and Gtk.
2. Songwrite 1 was a rewrite of GTablature using Tk instead of Gtk. In fact, switching from Gtk to Gtk 2 was a pain, and the Python Gtk API was instable. This version also introduced the use of EditObj 1 for generating dialog boxes.
3. Songwrite 2 is a full rewrite of Songwrite 1, still in Python but with a new interface based on Gtk 2 and Cairo. It seems that Python Gtk2 API has improved in the while! Songwrite 2 uses now EditObj 2, my new dialog box automatic generator, and it also has a new plugin systems.

2 Editing a song

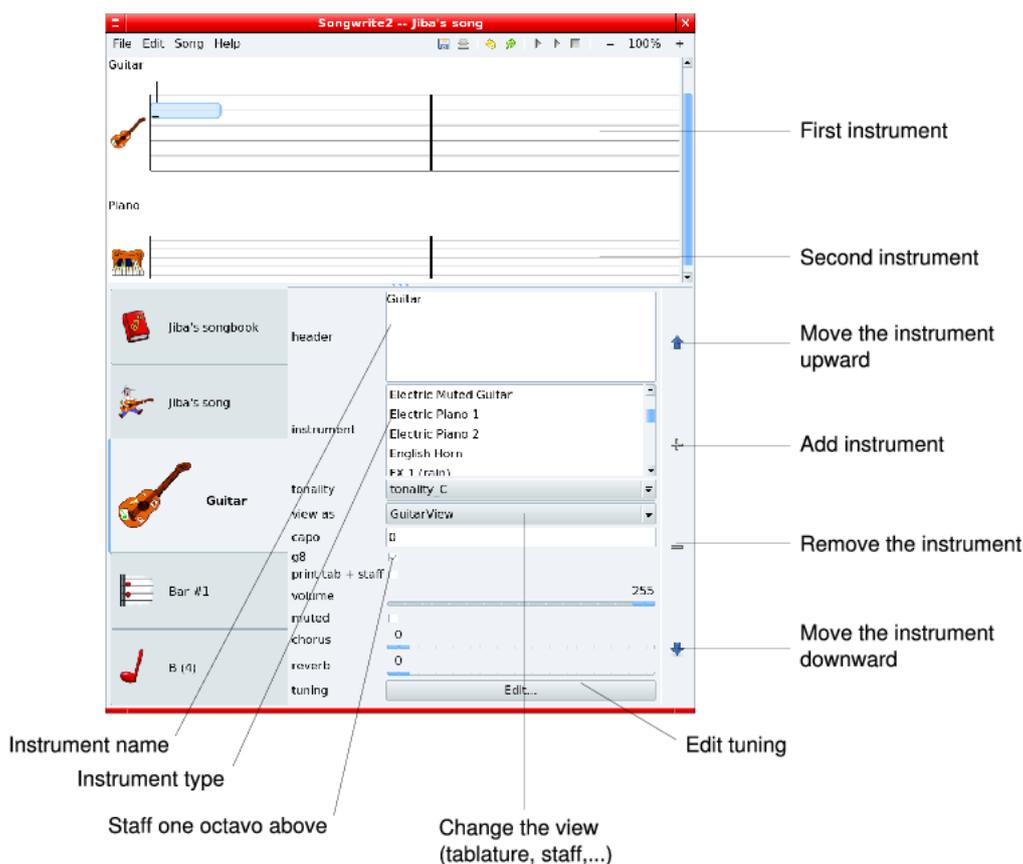
Songwrite 2 is designed to edit "songs" (sorry for those guitarists that play guitar without singing :-). When it starts, a new song is created and edited. The top part of the Songwrite 2 window shows the song, and the bottom part includes the edition pane. This pane includes 5 edition modes corresponding to the various tabs on the left (the 5th mode is not present by default and corresponds to the songbook mode; see section 3 for activating it).

2.1 Song mode



The song mode (see screenshot) allows to modify the song properties: title, author,... The language property is used when exporting the lyrics to L^AT_EX.

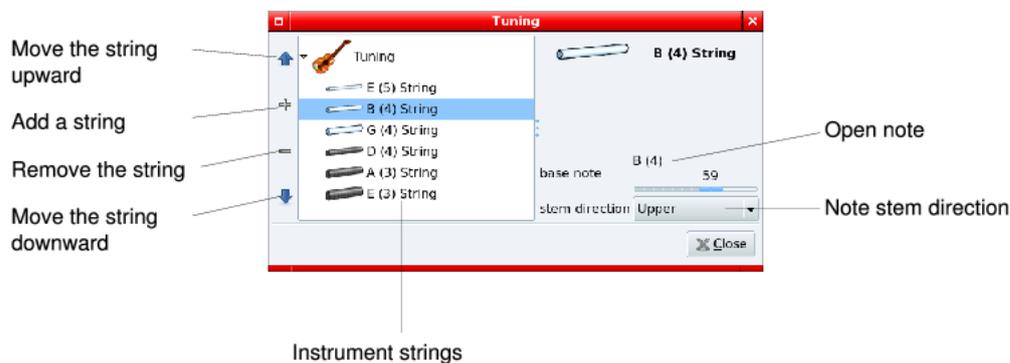
2.2 Instrument mode



The instrument mode allows to add or to remove instruments in the song (using the button on the right), and to modify their properties. Many pre-defined instruments are proposed in the add instrument dialog box: guitar, bass, banjo, piano,... Notice that the same dialog box is used for adding lyrics blocs (see section 2.5), which are considered as “pseudo-instruments”.

To select an instrument, simply click on the corresponding tablature or staff in the song. Each instrument is associated to a “view”, *i.e.* a mode of representation; there are 4 categories of view: tablatures, staves, flute fingering and drums. It is possible to switch from the current view to an other using the “view type” combobox, *e.g.* you can turn a tablature into a staff. Some instruments properties are view-dependent, *e.g.* the capo is available only for tablatures.

2.2.1 Tablature tuning



The tuning dialog box allows to modify the tuning of an instrument. It is possible to add, remove or reorder the strings, and to modify the strings open note and the direction of the stems (upward or downward).

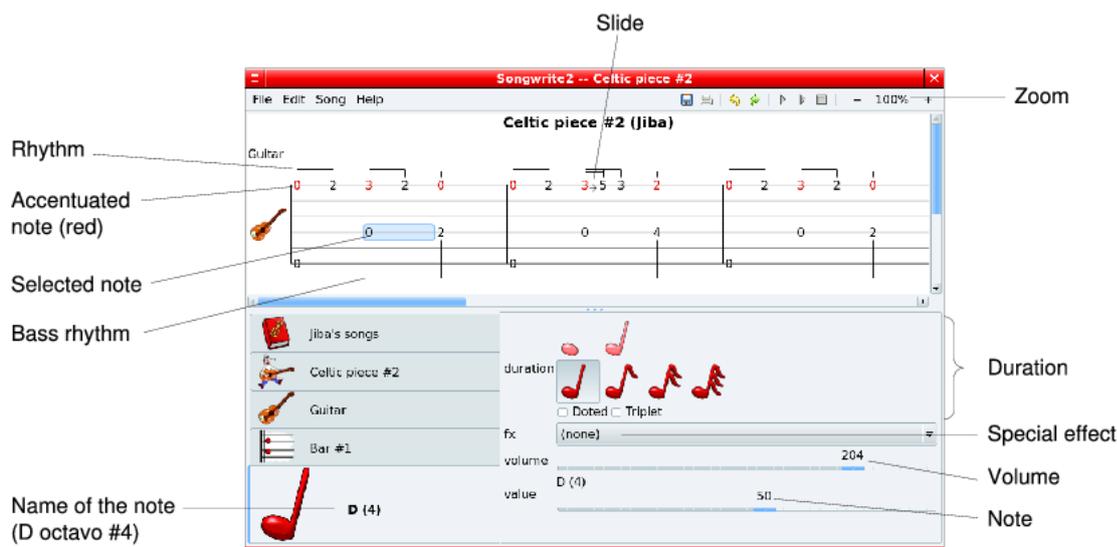
For drum instrument, the tuning is similar, each “string” corresponding to a drum patch.

If your favorite instrument is missing in the add instrument dialog box, do not hesitate to mail me its tuning, so as I can add it in the next release! It is also possible to implement “special” tuning such as the first string of the Banjo 5G, with a little Python code (see the `additional_instruments` plugin, in file `songwrite2/plugins/additional_instruments/__init__.py`).

2.2.2 Tin whistle tonality

In the instrument mode, the “instrument tonality” property can be used to choose the tin whistle tonality; it defaults to D.

2.3 Note mode



The note mode allows to modify the properties of the selected notes. To select a note, just click on it. It is possible to select several notes by moving the mouse while keeping the left button pressed. Notice that, when selecting notes, Songwrite 2 takes into account the current note duration selected in the edition pane: *e.g.* if the “black” duration is selected, it is possible to select only notes starting on a “black” position (usually black notes or half that start on the first half of a beat).

The buttons in the top right corner of the window can be used for zooming.

To add a new note in a tablature, select the desired location and type the corresponding figure. Use the “delete” key for deleting the selected note(s).

For staff, type any figure. Songwrite 2 add automatically additional line above or below the five initial ones; if they are not yet visible, you can add a note anywhere else and increase or decrease it using the “+” or “-” keys.

For drum, Songwrite 2 does not use the official notations (I don’t know them :-), but rather a system inspired by tablatures. Songwrite 2 represents one line for each patch; just click on the right line and press any figure to add a sound.

2.3.1 Copy and paste

Songwrite 2 uses a Linux-like copy-paste system: to copy a group of notes, select them. To move the selection, perform a drag-drop on one of the selected notes. Press Escape to cancel the drag drop.

To paste the notes selected previously, click the mouse middle button (usually the mouse roll). It is possible to adjust the exact pasting location by moving the mouse while keeping the middle button pressed.

Here again, Songwrite 2 uses the selected duration for aligning horizontally the pasted notes.

2.3.2 Special effects

Songwrite supports most of the special effects that can be played on a guitar: hammer/pull/legato, slide, dead notes, bend, tremolo, roll. For effects that link two notes (hammers/pull/legato and slides), the effect must be set on the first note. For rolls, the effect should be set on the lower note of a chord (although it is still allowed to apply it to all the note of the chord, as needed in Songwrite 1).

Notes can gain new properties depending on their special effect, *e.g.* the bend pitch property for bends.

Restriction It is not possible to put more than one special effect on a single note.

Bug Slide and hammer combination of more than 5 semi-tons cannot be played with Midi.

2.3.3 Rearranging notes

The `note▷arrange notes at fret` menu can be used to organize the selected notes on the strings so as they are played after the chosen fret. Usefull after Midi importation!

2.3.4 Keyboard shortcuts

up, down, left, right move the current position

origin, end go to the beginning or the end of the song

0 to 9 add note (tablatures: fret number, tin whistle fingering: number of covered holes)

+, - increase or decrease the note pitch

/, * increase or decrease the note duration

. toggle dotted duration

return toggle accentuation

del delete all selected notes

n normal (remove special effect)

s slide to the following note

h hammer, pull or legato

b bend

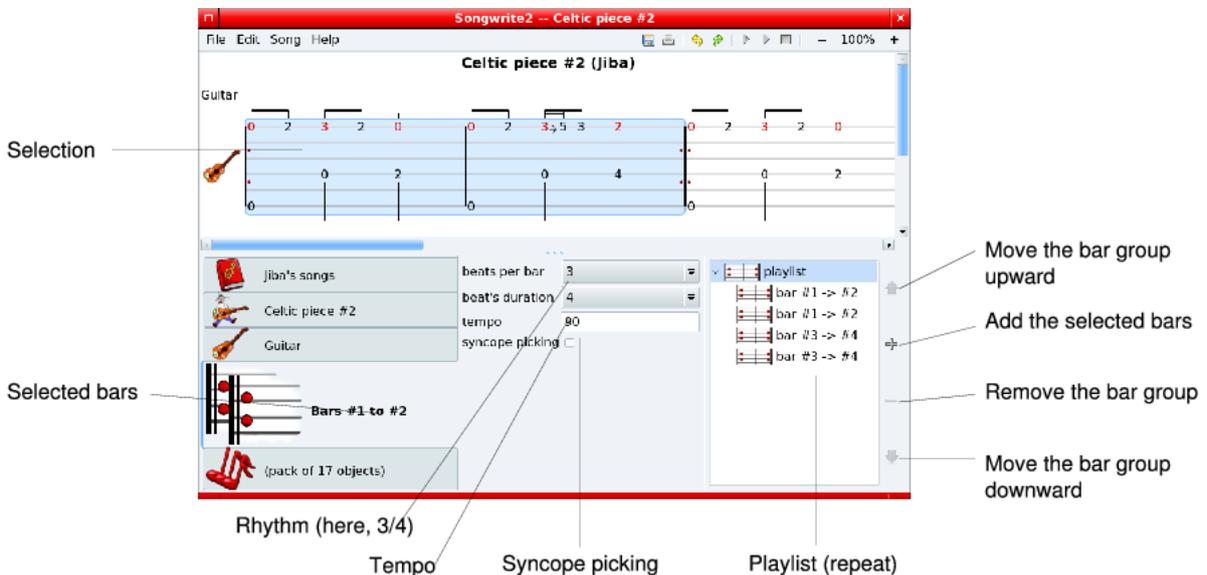
t tremolo

d dead note

r roll

space plays from the current position

2.4 Time mode



The time mode allows to modify bar properties, and to manage the playlist (which corresponds to repeats). To select one or several bars, you need to select at least one note in the corresponding bars. It is then possible to change the rhythm or the tempo for these bars.

It is also possible to activate syncope picking; for 6/8 rhythm, it corresponds to a “jig” rhythm.

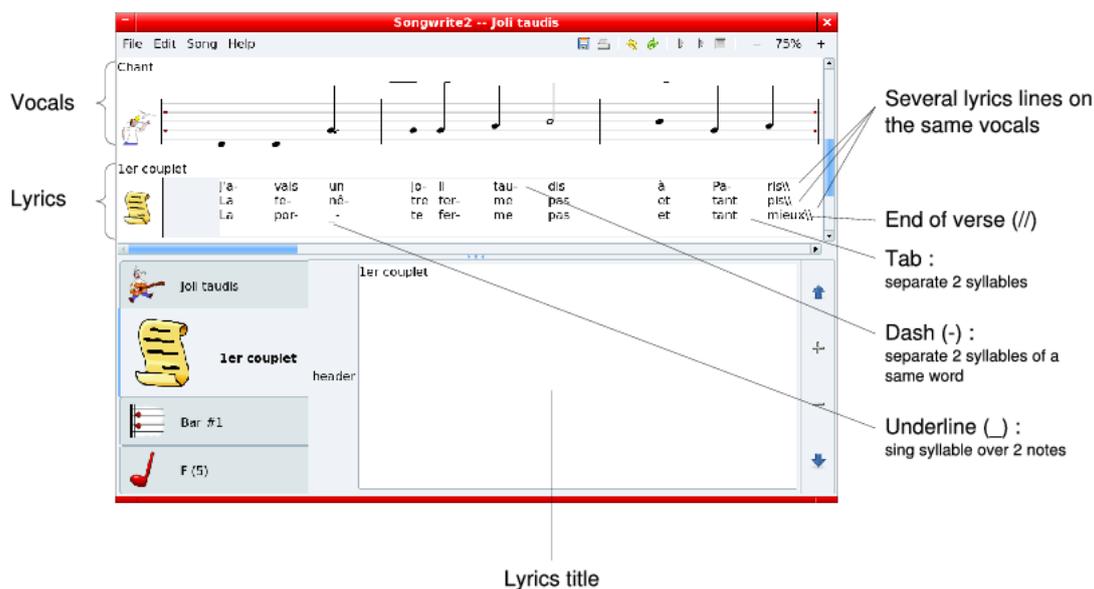
Restriction Only $x/4$ (whatever x is) and $y/8$ (where $y = 3, 6, 9, 12, \dots$) rhythms are currently supported.

When no playlist is defined, Songwrite 2 plays the song from the beginning to the end. This default behaviour can be modified by adding bar groups in the playlist. For doing so, select the desired bars and click the “+” button on the right of the edition pane. To repeat several time given bars, add them several times.

Warning Only playlist which can be translated into musical symbols (“.” with symbol “1”, “2”,...) are correctly shown and printed.

Finally, the **Edit** > **Insert/remove beats** and **Edit** > **Insert/remove bars** allow to insert or remove a given number of beats or bars at the current location.

2.5 Lyrics



In Songwrite 2, lyrics are managed as instruments, and they are added using the add instrument dialog box. Lyrics blocs must be placed just below the corresponding vocals instrument (however, it is possible to have several lyrics blocs below the same vocals, when these lyrics share the same vocal melody). Typically, one uses a lyrics blocs for each strophe, and one for the chorus.

Then, click in the lyrics rectangle and type the text. Songwrite 2 automatically aligns the syllables on the vocals, and reduce the font size if needed. The following keys have a special meaning:

space, tab next syllable

- next syllable in the same word

- sing the previous syllable over two notes (warning, it works ONLY if the two notes are linked, with a hammer / pull / legato special effect)

\\ (two backslashes) end of the verse (breakline when printing)

entrée new lyrics on the same vocals

Finally, as the final print out is done with Lilypond and L^AT_EX, you can use L^AT_EX code in the lyrics!

2.6 Playing, printing, exporting and importing

When your song is ready, you can play it with the **Song** > **Play** menu and its friends.

The **File** > **(Preview) print** menu starts exporting the song to PDF and display the result (by default with Evince). For printing, use the print command in Evince.

Finally, the **File** > **Import** and **File** > **Export** menus allows import and export with the following formats:

Format	Import	Export	comments
Songwrite format	X	X	XML format (Songwrite 1 and 2)
Midi	X	X	
Rich Midi Tablature	X	X	Midi with meta event for string numbers
Ascii tablature	(X)	X	Import works with Songwrite 2 Ascii tab, but may not work with other...
Lilypond		X	No lyrics
PostScript		X	
PDF		X	
Guitar Pro	(X)		Experimental Guitar Pro 3 / 4 import
ABC	X		Used for traditionnal music (<i>e.g.</i> http://thesession.org)

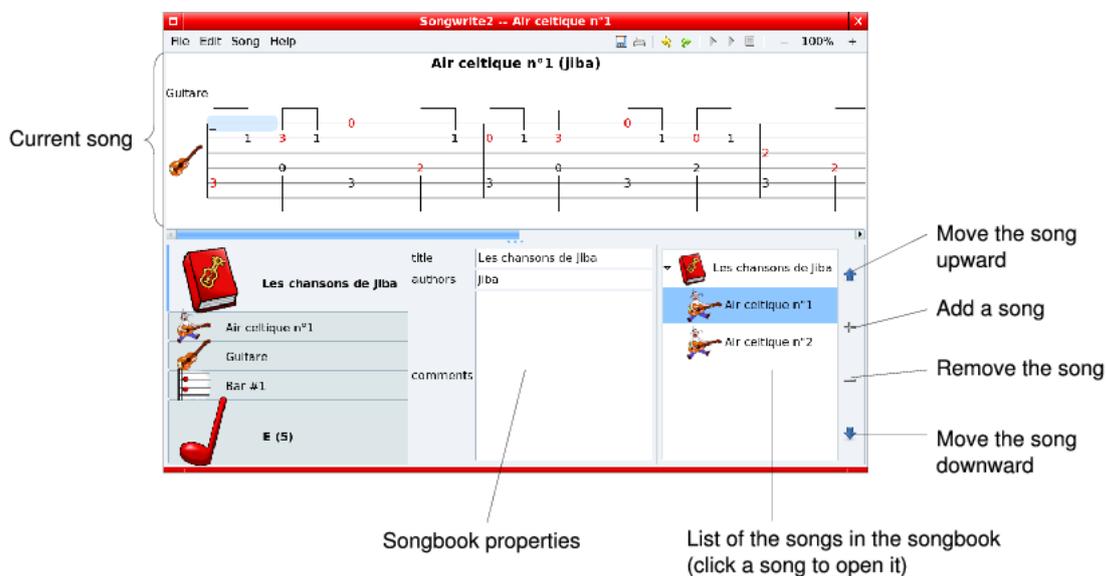
2.6.1 Command line

In command line, `-import` and `-export` options are used to import and export files.

For example, the following command line imports a file in ABC format, changes the view type to tin whistle fingering, and exports it in PDF:

```
songwrite2 --import abc fichier.abc --script "from songwrite2.plugins.fingering \
import TinWhistleView ; song.partitions[0].set_view_type(TinWhistleView)" \
--export pdf fichier.pdf
```

3 Editing a songbook



A songbook allows to regroup several songs together. To activate the songbook mode, either click the `File` `>` `New songbook` menu, or open an already saved songbook (using the normal open command). The songbook mode allows to modify the songbook properties, and to add or to remove songs. It also allows to quickly open the songs in the songbook.

Warning Songwrite 2 does not save the songs inside the songbook, but only their (relative) filename, so you must keep your song files!

When a songbook is opened, the `File` `>` `Save` menu saves *both* the current song *and* the songbook. The `File` `>` `Save as` menu saves only the current song, while the `File` `>` `Save songbook as` menu saves only the songbook.

Finally, use the `File` `>` `(Preview) print songbook` menu for printing the songbook.

4 Configuration



To edit the Songwrite 2 configuration, click the **Edit** > **Preferences** menu. The default configuration should fit for almost all Linux distribution.