

# Phrasebox

v1.2.7



Phrasebox is a phrase arpeggiator that gives you control over playback like never before. With its DAW-like piano roll you can create expressive, layered melodies from simple MIDI chords, which aren't limited in timing and length like traditional step arpeggiators.

The notes of the piano roll correspond to the pitch order of notes, with "special" notes (like the loudest or quietest notes played), which let you control exactly which notes you want to play. It also features a lock to key option so your transposed notes are never out of key, and the included controller window lets you also send MIDI CC data out to your instruments.

Phrasebox also features generation options, so you can generate unlimited unique phrases at the click of a button.

## venomode

# Installing Phrasebox

To install Phrasebox on Mac or Windows, simply run the installer and follow the instructions. Once installed, Phrasebox will be ready to use the next time you open your DAW.

To install the plugin on Linux, simply extract the files and run the install.sh script. In your Terminal app, run the following commands:

```
cd ~/Downloads Change to your Downloads folder
mkdir tempinstaller Create a temporary folder to extract to
tar -C tempinstaller -zxvf PLUGIN.tar.gz Extract the bundle
bash tempinstaller/install.sh Run the installer script
rm -R tempinstaller/ Clean up the temp folder
```

Phrasebox requires the following system specifications. Please note, Ubuntu and Mac versions are 64-bit only, and due to MIDI routing limitation, Phrasebox is not compatible with Reason, Maschine, or VST3

## Windows

- Windows 7/8/10
- 32/64-bit VST/AAX Compatible DAW

## Mac OSX

- OSX 10.9+
- 64-bit VST/VST3/AAX/AU Compatible DAW

## Ubuntu

- 18.04+
- 64-bit VST Compatible DAW

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## Registering Phrasebox

The plugin will run in demo mode until a licence is entered and the software is restarted. In demo mode the plugin will not recall the state from a saved track, it will timeout after 30 minutes, and the saving of presets is unavailable. After you have purchased a licence, you will need to register the plugin, which will unlock the full, unrestricted version of the software. Any tracks you have saved with the demo version will now recall correctly.

Click the padlock icon in the top bar area of the plugin window. A window will display where you can enter your licence from the Venomode website user area. After you have entered your licence, the full version will unlock the next time you open your DAW. Ensure your licence exactly matches what is shown in the website. For convenience, you can click your licence in the website to copy it to your clipboard, and then paste it into the plugin. Your licence is the long string of text containing your name, email, and unique code, separated by three colons (:::).

# Using Phrasebox

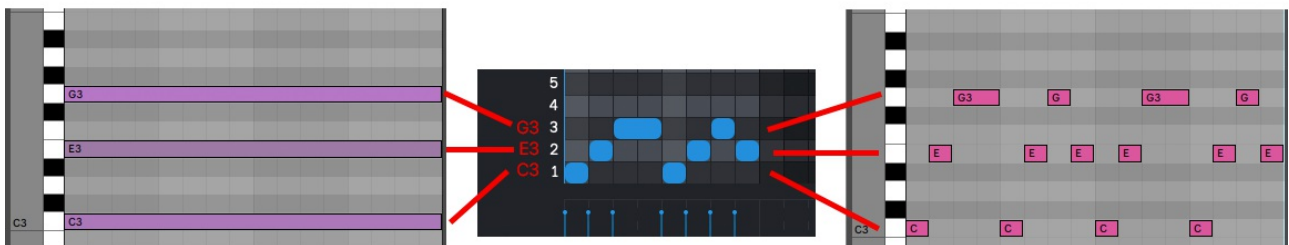
## Setting Up Phrasebox

Phrasebox is a MIDI processor, which takes a stream of MIDI notes from your DAW, and creates a stream of MIDI data as an output. As such, you need to route the output of the Phrasebox plugin to the input of your choice of instrument.

MIDI routing is different dependent on the DAW. For example, In Reaper and Bitwig you can add Phrasebox and a VST instrument on the same track (in that order), and the notes will automatically pipe through. In other DAWs such as Ableton and Cubase, you need to load your instrument and Phrasebox on separate channels, and route the MIDI from one to the other.

You can see up-to-date examples of routing different DAWs in our [FAQs \(https://venomode.com/faqs#phraseboxroute\)](https://venomode.com/faqs#phraseboxroute).

## How It Works

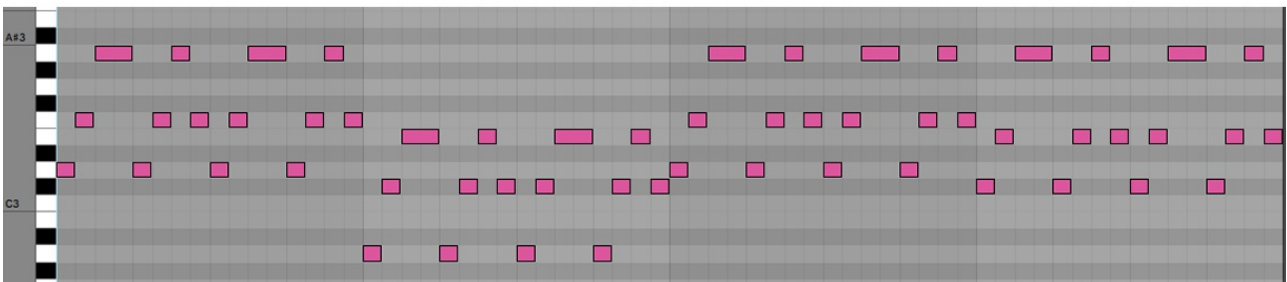
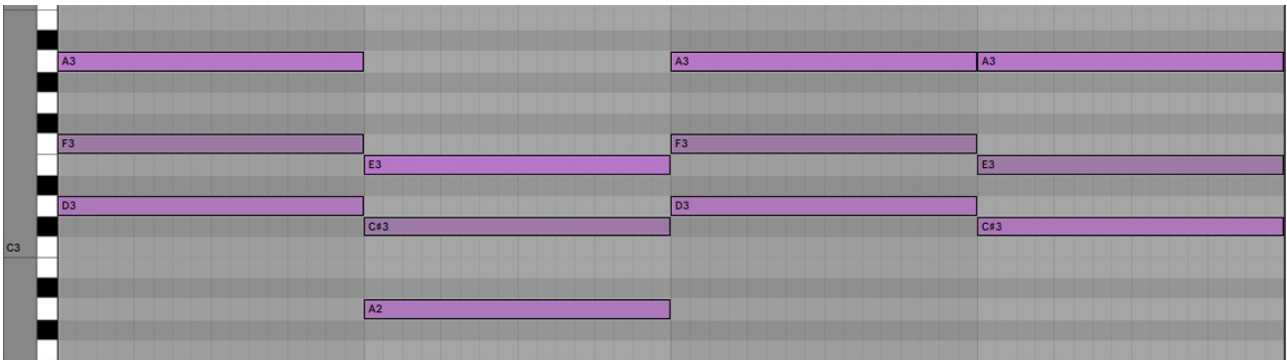


You can view a full-size copy of the above image [here \(https://venomode.com/images/Phrasebox/helpers/Mappings.png\)](https://venomode.com/images/Phrasebox/helpers/Mappings.png).

Phrasebox takes your MIDI chords, and maps each note onto a row in the piano roll. The rows marked 1-8 are the notes of your chord, from lowest to highest in pitch. In the example image above, we are playing a 3 note chord of C major, with the notes C, E, and G. These 3 notes will be mapped to rows 1-3, with row 1 being C, row 2 being E, and row 3 being G. Phrasebox then plays back the phrase in the piano roll, using your notes for each row. As we are playing a 3 note chord, rows 4-8 will not produce any output.

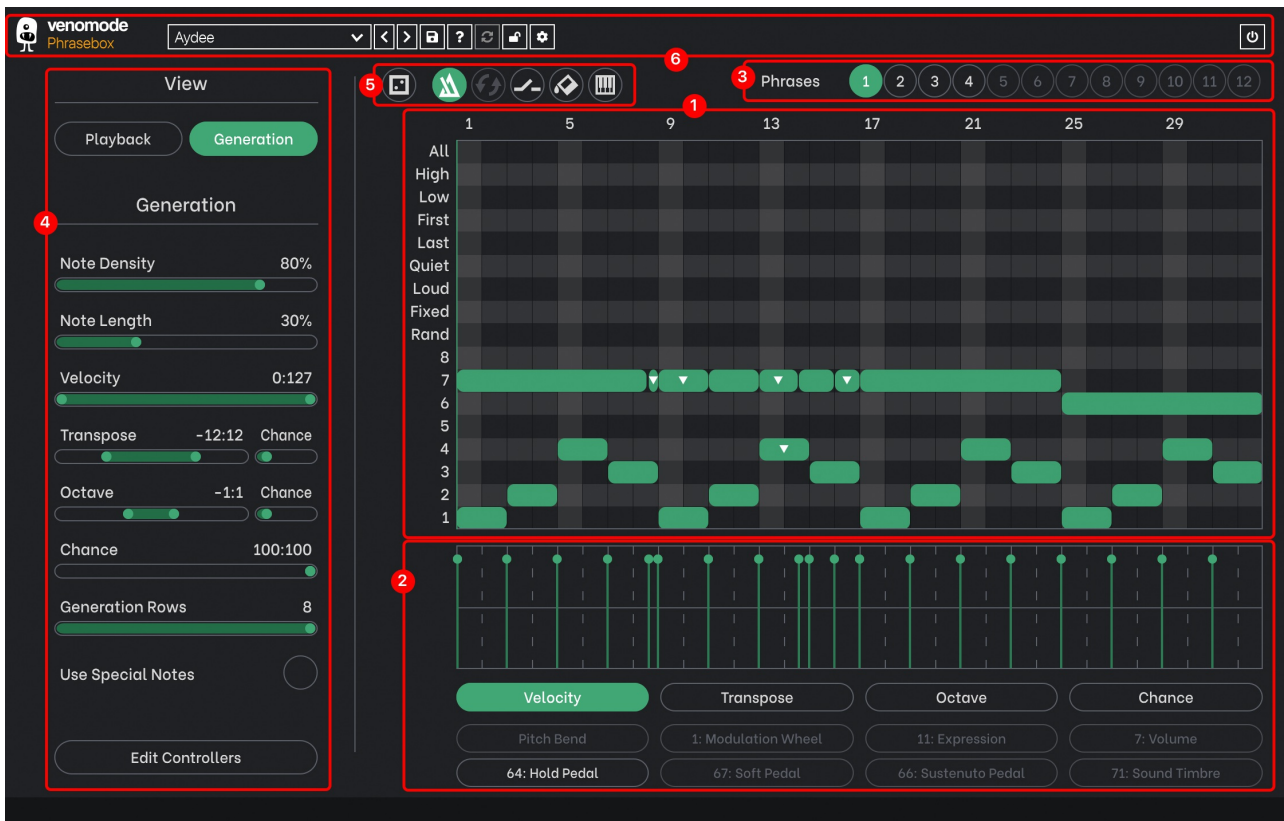
In the example image above, we have set our phrase length to 8 steps, with a playback speed of 1/16. This means that each step will play a 1/16th note, and the phrase lasts only half a bar. Phrasebox will loop the phrase in time with your DAW, and as can be seen in the output, the phrase will play twice per bar.

Below is an example of a more complex chord sequence using the same phrase pattern in Phrasebox. As you can see, Phrasebox detects the changes in chords, and adjusts the playback to match.



You can view a full-size copy of the above image [here](https://venomode.com/images/Phrasebox/helpers/Mappings2.png) (<https://venomode.com/images/Phrasebox/helpers/Mappings2.png>).

You can also read a more in-depth guide at the [Venomode website](https://venomode.com/news/how-to-use-phrasebox) (<https://venomode.com/news/how-to-use-phrasebox>).



## 1. Piano Roll

The piano roll is where you control the pattern the arpeggiator is playing. Notes can be added by clicking and dragging to the desired length. You can move notes by dragging them, and resize by dragging the left and right edges of the note. If you hold shift while dragging, you can disable snapping. Holding ctrl/cmd and clicking will delete the note. If you hold shift and click a note, you can add that note to the selection. If you hold shift and drag in an empty area, you can drag a box selection over multiple notes.

The darker a note is, the lower the velocity, and they will appear more transparent as the chance is lowered. An up or down arrow indicates the transposition applied to the note, and its direction relative to the base note. Right-clicking in an empty area brings up an additional menu with options such as copy, paste, and delete (more explained below).

Each row specifies which of the input notes are to be played. The numbers 1-8 represent the 8 lowest notes, with 1 being the lowest. The special note rows above them select from the incoming MIDI based on certain rules:

- **All** plays all the notes as a chord
- **High & Low** play the highest and lowest notes in pitch

- **First & Last** play the earliest and latest notes
- **Quiet/Loud** play the quietest and loudest velocity-wise
- **Fixed** plays a predefined note, set via a slider in the playback section
- **Random** plays a random note from the incoming MIDI

Each column defines a 'step' based on the playback speed, for example, at 1/16 playback speed, each step will be 1/16th in length (a semiquaver).

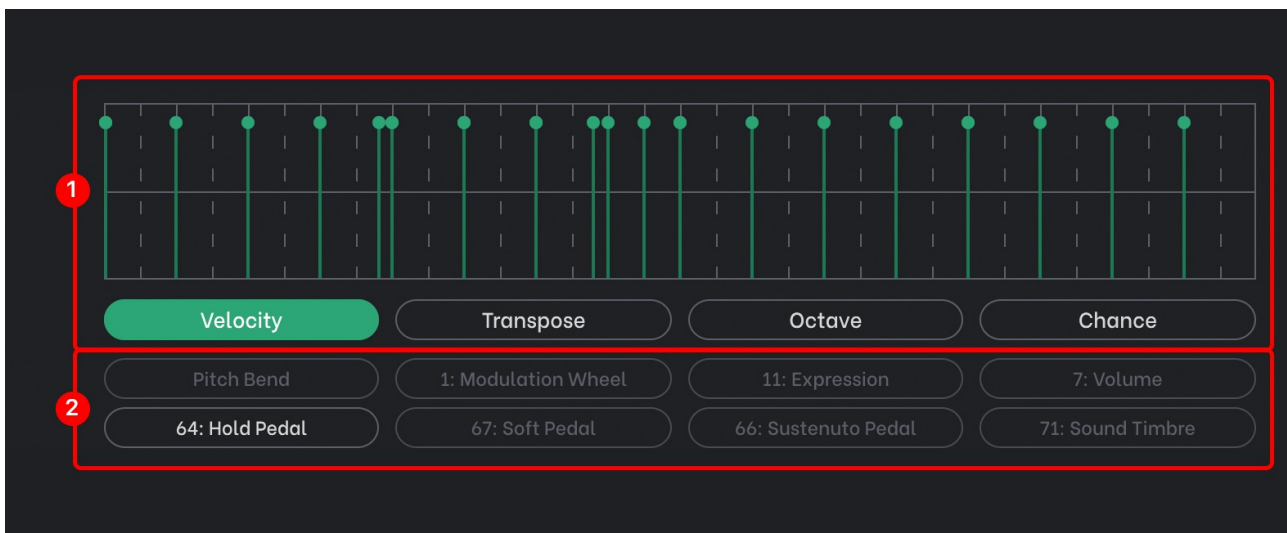
In the right-click popup menu is an option called "Fill Row Pattern", featuring a selection of different values. Each option features two numbers separated by a slash. The first number is how many steps a note should be in length, and the second is how many steps there should be of silence. For example, the "1/0" option will fill each step with notes, the "4/0" option will fill a row with notes that are 4 steps long, and "4/4" will create notes that are 4 steps long, with 4 steps of silence between them.

Each phrase can also have its own colour assigned from in the right-click menu.

The piano roll features a couple of keyboard shortcuts - pressing the "a" key will select all notes, and the "backspace" or "delete" key will remove any selected notes. You can also move selected notes around with the arrows keys.

Each row can be sent to a separate MIDI channel. If you click the row's name, you will get a popup that lets you choose a channel between 1 and 16. The default is to just send all notes out of channel 1. This could be useful for multi-timbral phrases, or for controlling individual strings of a guitar instrument for example. **Please Note:** not all DAWs support this feature. Some DAWs such as Ableton Live will amalgamate all data to channel 1.

You can drag and drop a MIDI chord sequence onto the piano roll, and it will apply the current phrase to your notes. A new MIDI clip will be created that can be dragged out of Phrasebox into your DAW. **Please Note:** not all DAWs can drag and drop directly into Phrasebox. You may need to first export a MIDI file to your computer, and drag the newly created file into Phrasebox.



## 2. Note Modifiers & Controller Envelopes

Below the piano roll are the note modifier and controller envelopes. Selecting a button here will show the corresponding window.

**(1)** For the velocity, transpose, octave, and chance windows, you will see a vertical marker for each note. You can drag the point of these to adjust the corresponding value. Velocity has a range between 1 and 127, transpose can go up or down 24 semitones (2 octaves), and the octave can range between -4 and 4. The chance value determines how likely the note is to be played back. Set at full (100%), every note will play back as expected, while at minimum (1%), that note will play 1 in 100 times on average. The chance value is calculated during playback, so with values other than 100%, playback will be different every time.

**(2)** The 8 lower buttons show the controller envelopes. The first button is locked to Pitch Bend, but the other 7 are freely assignable. Right click the button to select an alternate controller number. If you double click a button while playback is stopped, Phrasebox will send a MIDI CC value to the output. This is so you can use MIDI Learn in your instrument. During playback, Phrasebox plays back all 8 of these envelopes in sync with the DAW. Envelopes with no points will have a faded colour.

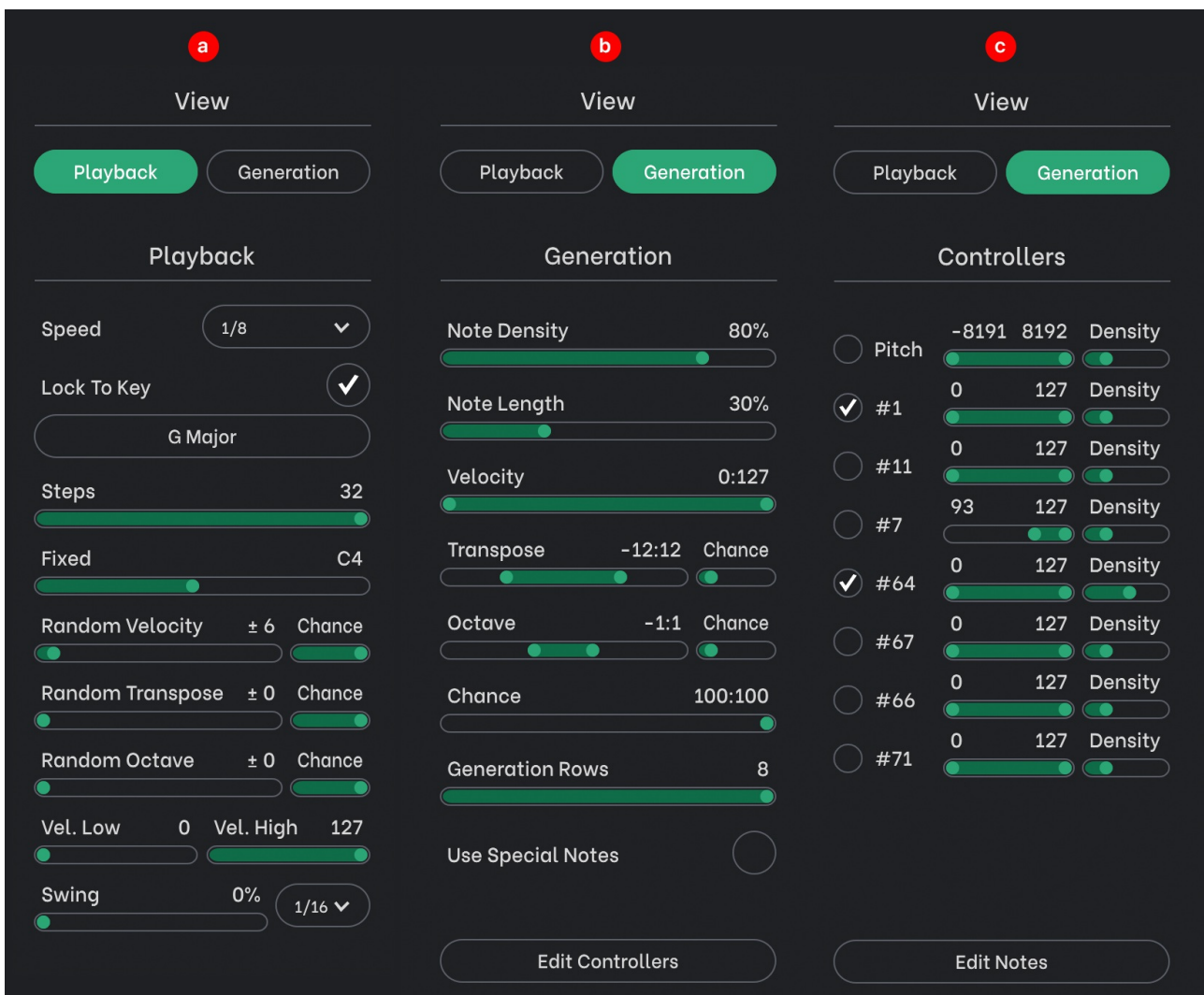
Envelopes can be drawn by creating points. Points are created by clicking, and dragging to move. Any number of points can be created, and you can delete them with a right click. Holding shift disables snapping.



### 3. Phrase Buttons

The 12 phrase buttons are different saved variations of your sequence. You can toggle between phrases by clicking the buttons, or automating in your DAW. To automate phrase changes, Phrasebox exposes a parameter called "Phrase" which can be directly controlled from your DAW. Alternatively, you can use keyswitching (see keyswitching section). When you select a phrase, a new set of notes and controller envelopes are used. Other values such as the controller numbers, number of steps, and playback speed stay constant. You can drag and drop one phrase on to another to duplicate it. Phrases with no notes will have a faded colour.

### 4. Main Controls



The sidebar contains the various controls to modify playback and generation. The two buttons at the top labeled "Playback" and "Generation" switch the display between the playback and generation controls.

## a. Playback Section

The playback section is where you control how Phrasebox plays back the phrase.

The **Speed** value selects how fast the sequence is played back relative to the host tempo. For example, at 1/16 playback speed, each step in the piano roll will be 1/16th in length (a semiquaver).

The **Lock To Key** option allows you to make sure any notes are played back in the correct key. When enabled, any output will be transposed to match the key selected from the menu, by clicking the key box. This means you can not only mash your keyboard and get great results, but your transposed note patterns will always work.

For example, if you use the transpose option on a note, you may find some MIDI input is out of key. For example, your phrase plays a trill with a succession of notes, where every other note is transposed up by 1. If your song is in C major, and you play an E note, the trill will work (as 1 semitone above E is F), however, if you play in a C note, the trill will be out of key (as a semitone above C is C#, which is not on the key of C). The lock to key option will then round the C# **up** to a D to fit the scale.

**By design, the lock to key function attempts to scale up before down, so you have certainty of how it works.** Using the trill example above, if we were to transpose down instead of up, we would want to go down 2 semitones instead of 1. If you play an E note, then transposing down by 1 would be D#, which would attempt to round back up to E, resulting in the same note being played for every note. Going down by 2 guarantees we will drop down a note in the scale.

If you have lock to key enabled when loading a preset, it will stay enabled with your chosen key so the new phrase always matches your song. If you have lock to key disabled when loading a preset, it will load whatever key and enablement are stored in the preset. **If you want to create your own preset, it's best to turn off the lock to key function before saving for this reason.** The factory presets all have the lock disabled, so you can set a key and freely browse presets without the key changing.

**Steps** - The number of steps of the piano roll to play. For example, 16 steps at 1/16 playback speed would be a full bar in 4/4.

**Fixed** - A fixed MIDI note that is used for the "Fixed" row of the piano roll.

**Random Velocity & Chance** - A random velocity value that is added or subtracted from every note during playback. For example, at  $\pm 10$ , a note with an original velocity of 100 would play back somewhere in the range 90-110. This is great for

adding a bit of dynamic variation to playback. The chance slider affects the probability of the velocity being modified.

**Random Transpose & Chance** - A random transpose value that is added or subtracted from every note during playback. For example, at  $\pm 12$ , a note with an original pitch of C4 would play back somewhere in the range C3-C5. The chance slider affects the probability of the transpose being modified.

**Random Octave & Chance** - A random octave value that is added or subtracted from every note during playback. The chance slider affects the probability of the octave being modified.

**Velocity Low & Velocity High** - These are used to remap the range of velocities, from 1-127, to whatever low and high are set. The values are scaled within this range, and you can even have low higher than high. This will have the effect of reversing velocities, with quieter notes now being loud.

**Swing** - Adds a swing to the playback.

## b. Note Generation

The generation window shows options for how the randomiser works.

**Note Density** - The amount of notes being generated. Higher values will result in more notes.

**Note Length** - The length of notes, with higher values resulting in longer notes.

**Velocity** - A Range of velocity values. You can drag from either end of the blue bar to adjust the start and end range.

**Transpose** - A range of transpose value. You can drag from either end of the blue bar to adjust the start and end range. The chance slider adjusts how likely a note will be transposed. At full, every note will be transposed, and at minimum, a note has about a 1/100 chance of being transposed.

**Octave** - A range of octave value. You can drag from either end of the blue bar to adjust the start and end range. The chance slider adjusts how likely a note will be transposed an octave. At full, every note will be transposed an octave, and at minimum, a note has about a 1/100 chance of being transposed.

**Chance** - A range of chance values. You can drag from either end of the blue bar to adjust the start and end range.

**Generation Rows** - The number for rows to generate. For example, if you are only playing in triads, you can select 3 rows to only have notes that will be played.

**Use Special Notes** - When selected, notes in the piano roll will use all notes, including the special notes (Loud, Quiet etc.). When disabled, only the notes 1-8 are created.

The edit controllers button shows the generation options for the controllers.

### c. Controller Generation

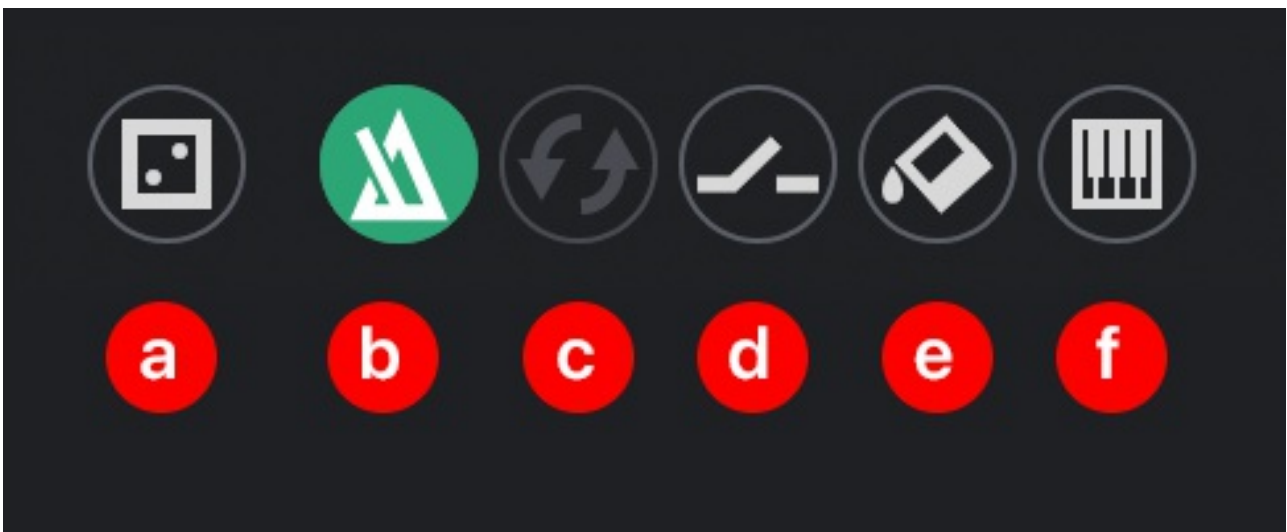
The controller generation window shows options for how the controller randomiser works. There are 8 rows, with each row corresponding to which controller it controls. The label will show the actual CC number.

**Toggle** - The toggle button before the controller name enables generation for this CC. By default they are all turned off, and need enabling before generation occurs.

**Range Slider** - Sets the range of controller values that will be generated. You can drag from either end of the blue bar to adjust the start and end range.

**Density** - How many events are created. At full, it will create a random event for each step.

The edit notes button shows the generation options for the notes.



### 5. Options

#### Randomise Button (Dice Icon) - Icon "a"

The randomise button will generate a new phrase based on your settings when clicked. If you right click, you can select what will be generated.

**Everything** - Everything is generated - notes, velocities, transposition, chances, and controllers

**Notes and Modifiers Only** - A new set of notes will be generated, along with new velocities, transposition, and chances

**Modifiers Only** - Only velocities, transposition, and chances will be generated for existing notes

**Velocities Only** - Only velocities will be generated for existing notes

**Octaves Only** - Only octaves will be generated for existing notes

**Chances Only** - Only velocities will be generated for existing notes

**Controllers Only** - Only controllers will be generated

### **Sync To DAW (Metronome Icon) - Icon "b"**

When enabled, the phrase will play back in sync with the DAW, and is the default behaviour. When disabled, the phrase will only start playing back when input is received. Releasing all the notes will stop the phrase playing and reset back to the beginning.

### **Loop Freeform (Loop Icon) - Icon "c"**

Only applicable when not synced to DAW (see above). When enabled, the phrase will repeat indefinitely. When disabled, it will play in one-shot mode.

### **Latch (Switch Icon) - Icon "d"**

When enabled, notes will continue to play even after you release them. Playing a new chord will note-off the old notes, and hold the new notes.

### **Fill Missing Notes - Icon "e"**

As Phrasebox maps incoming notes to the piano roll rows, if you don't play in 8 notes, you can't use all 8 rows. Selecting this option will intelligently fill up to all 8 rows with notes above what you play in, allowing all rows to be used. If you right click the button, you can select the maximum number of notes to be filled.

### **Phrase Keyswitching - Icon "f"**

Enabling this allows you to use a keyswitch to change phrase numbers instead of the parameter. Phrases are mapped from C upward, so Phrase number 1 is C, phrase number 2 is C# etc. You can right click the the button to select which octave to respond to.

## 6. Top Bar

The top bar is where you can manage the plugin. The middle section shows the currently selected preset, and if you open this list you can choose from all the factory and user presets. Clicking on the left and right arrow icons manually cycles to the previous or next preset. The save icon will open a window where you can save the current state of the plugin as a custom preset. Enter your preset name in this window and click save.

You can view this manual at any time by clicking the question mark button.

The padlock icon will open the registration window. Enter your name, email and serial number exactly as shown in your confirmation email and click "Register", or copy they keyfile to your clipboard from the user area of the Venomode website and click "Paste Keyfile". See the registering Phrasebox section for more info.

The cog icon will open a settings window where you can alter the GPU acceleration settings, and GUI scale. The update icon is two arrows in a circle. This button will activate when a new version is available for download.

The included factory presets showcase a variety of different ways of using Phrasebox. Each preset contains multiple phrases, usually variations or more complex versions of the first phrase.

**Bass** - Basslines designed from the lowest note of the incoming MIDI

**Chords** - Patterns designed around playing full chords

**Melodies** - Melody lines designed to work with either a scale as input, or a chord sequence

**Mono** - Phrases designed for only playing with 1 input note

**Oneshot** - Phrases that are only played once

**Patterns** - Patterns that are similar to traditional step-sequence arpeggiators

**Piano** - Full expressive piano parts, often using the hold pedal

**Special** - Patterns that use the special note modifiers, controllers, or plain weird patterns

**Triads** - Patterns designed for three note chords

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