

Interfacing ArtiSynth to MATLAB

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Last update: Aug 9, 2016

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1 Introduction

ArtiSynth can be interfaced to MATLAB, providing the ability to create scripts for running simulations, and to interactively query and perform method calls on ArtiSynth objects.

Since current versions of MATLAB support the execution of Java programs, it is possible to run ArtiSynth from within MATLAB. This allows simulations to be run under the control of MATLAB, either interactively or through MATLAB scripts. Internal ArtiSynth structures and data can be examined and processed by MATLAB, either after a simulation completes or while it is in progress. It is also possible to connect ArtiSynth to an external MATLAB process, which can then be used for preparing simulation input or analyzing output.

2 Interfacing to MATLAB

2.1 Requirements and configuration

The current version of ArtiSynth has been tested to run with MATLAB 2021a.

To interface with MATLAB, you should run ArtiSynth under Java 8, because that is the Java version currently used by MATLAB. Verify that you do in fact have Java 8 installed, and, if you are using an integrated development environment (IDE), that the IDE is also using Java 8. Details on installing Java 8 can be found in the installation guides for [Windows](#), [MacOS](#), and [Linux](#).

In the following, assume that `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>` denotes the path to the ArtiSynth installation folder.

1. If you have not done so already, set the environment variable `ARTISYNTH_HOME` to `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>`. This can be done externally to MATLAB (see the Section *Environment variables* in the ArtiSynth Installation Guide for your system), or it can also be done within a MATLAB startup script using the `setenv()` command; see the MATLAB documentation regarding startup scripts.
2. Make sure that the folder `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>/matlab` is included in the search path for MATLAB functions; consult MATLAB documentation on how to do this.
3. Ensure that classes required by ArtiSynth are added to the MATLAB Java classpath, as described in Section 2.6.
4. If you have not done so already, add the ArtiSynth native library folder to the environment variable that specifies the dynamic library search path.
 - (a) On Windows (64 bit), make sure `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>\lib\Windows64` is included in the `PATH` environment variable.
 - (b) On Linux (64 bit), make sure `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>/lib/Linux64` is included in the `LD_LIBRARY_PATH` environment variable.
 - (c) On MacOS, make sure `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>/lib/MacOS64` is included in the `DYLD_LIBRARY_PATH` environment variable.

For more information on setting these variables, see the Section *Environment variables* in the ArtiSynth Installation Guide appropriate to your system.

5. Depending on how much memory your ArtiSynth application requires, you may need to adjust the MATLAB Java virtual memory limit (Section 2.5).
6. As necessary, add the classpath(s) for your ArtiSynth models to the MATLAB Java classpath, so that they will be visible to Java from within MATLAB. See Section 2.7 for details.

2.2 Starting ArtiSynth

Once your environment is set up, you should be able to start MATLAB and then run ArtiSynth by executing the MATLAB command

```
>> ah = artisynth()
```

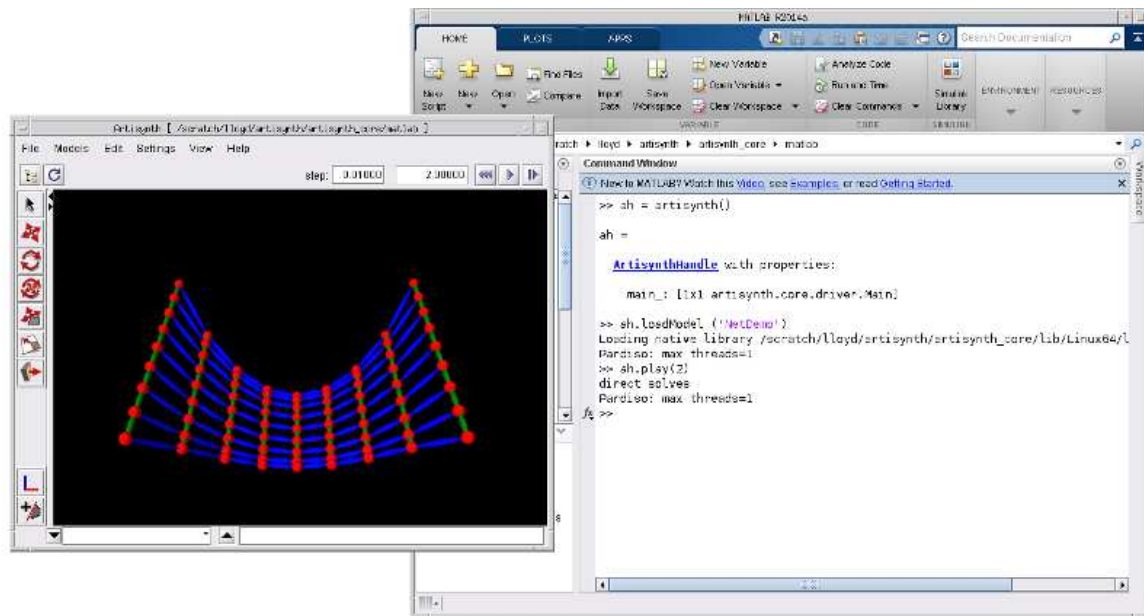


Figure 1: ArtiSynth being run from MATLAB.

This will start ArtiSynth (Figure 1) and return an `ArtisyntHandle` object, which can be used to access ArtiSynth structures and data and also provides a number of methods, as described below.

If desired, the `artisynt()` command can also accept a variable length set of strings as arguments, corresponding to the options available to the `artisynt` terminal command. For example,

```
>> ah = artisynt('-model', 'SpringMeshDemo')
```

is equivalent to the terminal command

```
> artisynt -model SpringMeshDemo
```

and causes ArtiSynth to look for and load the model named `SpringMeshDemo`. However, most of what can be achieved using command options can also be achieved by directly accessing ArtiSynth structures or calling handle methods.

Note: at present, if the ArtiSynth GUI is suppressed using the `-noGui` option, then models must be specified using their fully qualified class names. For `SpringMeshDemo`, this is `artisynt.demos.mech.SpringMeshDemo`, and so with the `-noGui` option the above example would have to be invoked as follows:

```
>>> ah = artisynt('-noGui', '-model', 'artisynt.demos.mech.SpringMeshDemo')
```

This is because abbreviated model names are recognized only if ArtiSynth creates the Model menu, which it does not do if the GUI is not invoked. This restriction may change in future versions of ArtiSynth.

To exit ArtiSynth, you can either select `File > Quit` in the ArtiSynth GUI, or use the `quit()` method supplied by the handle, as in

```
>> ah.quit()
```

After quitting, you can use the `artisynt()` command to start another ArtiSynth session if desired.

At present, it is not possible to start multiple simultaneous ArtiSynth instances within MATLAB, although that may change in the future.

2.3 Querying ArtiSynth structures and models

Through the ArtiSynth handle, it is possible to access most of the Java objects associated with ArtiSynth and its loaded models. Public methods for these objects can be called directly from MATLAB. Java objects can be created by calling their constructors directly, without the need for the keyword `new`. For example,

```
>> vec = maspack.matrix.Vector3d (1, 2, 3);
```

creates a new instance of `maspack.matrix.Vector3d` and initializes it to (1, 2, 3). As in Java, import statements can be used to allow classes to be specified without using their full package names:

```
>> import maspack.matrix.*
>>
>> vec = Vector3d (1, 2, 3);
```

For more details on working with Java objects inside MATLAB, see [Call Java Libraries](#) in the MATLAB documentation.

To easily access particular components of a model, the handle method `getsel()` provides access to the ArtiSynth selection list. That means you can select items in the ArtiSynth GUI (using either the viewer or navigation panel) and then retrieve these into MATLAB using `getsel()`. If called with no arguments, `getsel()` returns the entire selection list as a cell array. If called with an integer argument `i`, `getsel(i)` returns the `i`-th entry in the selection list (where the index `i` is 1-based).

For example, if two particles are currently selected in ArtiSynth, then `getsel()` can be used as follows:

```
>> ah.getsel()           % get entire selection list

ans =

    [1x1 artisynth.core.mechmodels.Particle]
    [1x1 artisynth.core.mechmodels.Particle]

>> ah.getsel(1)         % get first item on the selection list

artisynth.core.mechmodels.Particle@49752dd4
```

Once a component has been selected, then one has access to all its public methods. The functions `mmat()`, `amat()`, and `avec()` can be used to map between MATLAB arrays and ArtiSynth `Matrix` and `Vector` objects:

`mmat(obj)`

Creates a MATLAB array from an ArtiSynth `Vector` or `Matrix` object. If the `Matrix` is an instance of `SparseMatrix`, then `mmat()` returns a MATLAB sparse matrix. If `obj` is not a `Vector` or `Matrix`, then the method returns the empty matrix.

`amat(M)`

Creates an ArtiSynth `Matrix` from a MATLAB array: either a `MatrixNd` if `M` is a full matrix, or a `SparseMatrixNd` if `M` is sparse.

`avec(M)`

Creates an ArtiSynth `VectorNd` from a MATLAB array. At least one of the dimensions of `M` must be 1.

As a simple example, assume that `part` refers to an ArtiSynth `Particle` object. The following code fragment then obtains the particle's position as a MATLAB array, scales it by 3, and then uses this to reset the position:

```
>> import maspack.matrix.*
>>
>> pos = mmat(part.getPosition())

pos =

     5
     0
```

```

10
>> pos = 3*pos;
>> part.setPosition (Point3d (avec(pos)));

```

The particle's position is returned by the method `getPosition()`, which returns a `Point3d`. Since this is an instance of `Vector`, we use `mmat()` to turn this into a MATLAB array named `pos`. After scaling, we turn this back into an ArtiSynth `Vector` using `avec(pos)` and reset the particle's position using the `setPosition()` method. This method requires a `Point3d` argument, whereas `avec(pos)` returns a more general `VectorNd` object. However, we can create the required `Point3d` from the `VectorNd` using the `Point3d(Vector)` constructor.

As a more complex example, assume that `fem` refers to an ArtiSynth `FemModel3d`. The following code fragment then obtains the stiffness matrix for this model and uses MATLAB to find its largest Eigenvalues:

```

>> K = mmat (fem.getActiveStiffness());
>> eigs (K)

ans =

1.0e+04 *

-8.5443
-8.5443
-6.6442
-6.6442
-5.0636
-4.4762

```

The current stiffness matrix associated with the active nodes is returned by `getActiveStiffness()`. Since this is an instance of `SparseBlockMatrix`, `mmat()` converts it to a MATLAB sparse matrix, for which we can then find the largest Eigenvalues using `eigs()`.

It is also possible to directly query and set the numeric data associated with ArtiSynth input and output probes. This makes it possible to use MATLAB to plot or process output probe data, or compute and prepare input probe data.

Methods to access probe data are provided by the `ArtisynthHandle`:

```

getIprobeData (name); // get data for the specified input probe
setIprobeData (name, D) // set data for the specified input probe
getOprobeData (name) // get data for the specified output probe
setOprobeData (name, D) // set data for the specified output probe

```

The probe in question must be a *numeric probe*, i.e., an instance of `NumericProbeBase`. `name` is a string giving either the name or number of the probe. The `get()` methods return the data as a MATLAB array, while the `set()` methods receive the data as the MATLAB array `D`. The data array is $m \times n$, where m is the number of knot points and n is the size of the probe's data vector.

The following example shows the process of obtaining and then changing the numeric data for input probe 0 of the model `SpringMeshDemo`:

```

>> D = ah.getIprobeData ('0')

D =

0 -10.0000 0 20.0000
1.0000 0 0 20.0000
1.9400 10.0000 0 6.8000
3.0000 0 0 10.0000
4.0000 -10.0000 0 20.0000
5.0000 0 0 20.0000
6.0000 10.0000 0 20.0000
7.0000 0 0 10.0000
8.0000 -10.0000 0 20.0000
9.0000 0 0 20.0000
10.0000 10.0000 0 20.0000

```

```

11.0000      0      0  10.0000

>> % Now change D by removing all but the first 5 knot points:
>> D = D(1:5,:);
>> ah.setIprobeData ('0', D);

```

When setting probe data from MATLAB, the number of columns in the supplied data array must equal the current size of the probe's data vector.

2.4 Scripting commands

The `ArtisynthHandle` object contains a number of methods that make it possible to load models and control simulation directly from MATLAB, rather than using the ArtiSynth GUI. A full summary of these methods is given Section 3.

In particular, it is possible to load a model and then run or single step a simulation.

To load a model, one may use the method

```
loadModel (name, args...)
```

where `name` is either the fully-qualified classname of the model's `RootModel`, or one of the shorter names that appears under the ArtiSynth Models menu, and `args...` is an optional variable-length list of string arguments that are used to form the `args` argument of the model's `build()` method.

Once loaded, simulation may be controlled using methods such as `play()`, `pause()`, `step()`, or `reset()`. The following example shows loading a model called `RigidBodyDemo` and then having it simulate for 2.5 seconds:

```

>> ah.loadModel ('RigidBodyDemo');
>> ah.play (2.5);

```

A particularly powerful feature is the ability to single step execution in a loop, allowing MATLAB to be used to control or inspect the simulation while it is in progress:

```

>> % single step the simulation for 100 steps
>> for i=1:100
>>     ... adjust inputs if desired ...
>>     ah.step();
>>     ... monitor outputs if desired ...
>> end

```

This allows MATLAB code to surround each simulation step, assuming a role analogous to the `Controller` or `Monitor` objects that can be added to the `RootModel`. The adjustment of inputs or monitoring of outputs can be accomplished by setting or querying input or output variables of appropriate model components. One way to obtain access to these components is through the `find()` method discussed above. As a simple example, consider the `SimpleMuscleWithController` demo describe the *ArtiSynth Modeling Guide*. The same effect can be achieved by loading `SimpleMuscle` and then adjusting target position of point `p1` directly in MATLAB:

```

>> import maspack.matrix.Point3d
>> ah.loadModel ('SimpleMuscle');
>> p1 = ah.find('models/0/particles/p1');
>> for i=1:100
>>     ang = ah.getTime()*pi/2;
>>     targ = 0.5*[sin(ang), 0, 1-cos(ang)];
>>     p1.setTargetPosition (Point3d (avec (targ)));
>>     ah.step();
>>     pause (0.01); % slow down simulation if desired
>> end

```

The call to `pause()` in the above code simply slows down the simulation so that it appears to run in real time.

2.5 Java memory limits

ArtiSynth applications often require a large amount of memory, requiring that the memory limit for the Java virtual machine be set fairly high (perhaps to several gigabytes). By contrast, the default Java memory limit set by MATLAB is often much lower, and so it may be necessary to increase this.

If the memory limit is too low, you may get an out-of-memory error, which generally produces a stack trace on the MATLAB console along with an error message of the form

```
Exception in thread "AWT-EventQueue-0"  
java.lang.OutOfMemoryError: Java heap space
```

The standard way to increase the MATLAB Java memory limit is from the Preferences menu:

Preferences > MATLAB > General > Java Heap Memory

MATLAB will need to be restarted for any change of settings to take effect.

Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, MATLAB limits the maximum memory size that can be set this way to about 1/4 of the physical memory on the machine, and lower limits have been reported on some systems. If you need more memory than the preferences settings are willing to give you, then you can try creating or editing the `java.opts` file located in `$MATLABROOT/bin/$ARCH`, where `$MATLABROOT` is the MATLAB installation root directory and `$ARCH` is an architecture-specific directory. Within the `java.opts` file, you can use the `-Xmx` option to increase the memory limit. As an example, the following `-Xmx` settings specify memory limits of 128 Mbytes, 2 Gbytes and 4 Gbytes, respectively:

```
-Xmx128m  
-Xmx2000m  
-Xmx4g
```

More details are given in www.mathworks.com/support/solutions/en/data/1-1812C.

2.6 Setting the classpath for ArtiSynth

Before running ArtiSynth under MATLAB, it is necessary to ensure that the classes used by ArtiSynth are present within MATLAB's Java classpath. Letting `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>` denote the path to the top-level directory of the ArtiSynth installation, there are two ways to do this:

1. Within MATLAB, run the command `setArtisynthClasspath` with the string associated with `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>` as an argument. Assuming the environment variable `ARTISYNTH_HOME` has been set, then the following should work:

```
>>> setArtisynthClasspath (getenv ('ARTISYNTH_HOME'))
```

2. Create an ASCII text file called `javaclasspath.txt` in one of the directories in the MATLAB search path, and add to this the path name for `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>/classes`, as well as the path name for each `.jar` file in `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>/lib`. So for example, if `<ARTISYNTH_HOME>` is `/home/joe/artisynth_core`, then the entries in `javaclasspath.txt` would look like this:

```
/home/joe/artisynth_core/classes  
/home/joe/artisynth_core/lib/quickhull3d.jar  
/home/joe/artisynth_core/lib/jython.jar  
/home/joe/artisynth_core/lib/jmf.jar  
... etc ...
```

For more details on using `javaclasspath.txt`, see www.mathworks.com/help/matlab/matlab_external/static-path.html.

2.7 Setting the classpath for models

Usually, ArtiSynth applications involve the use of models or packages defined outside of the ArtiSynth core. In order for these to be visible to Java from inside MATLAB, it is necessary to add their classpaths to MATLAB's Java classpath. There are three ways to do this:

1. Add the classpaths to the ArtiSynth's external class path. Instructions for doing this are given the section "Setting the external classpath" of the [User Interface Guide](#).
2. Add the classpaths within the MATLAB session using the `javaaddpath()` command. This should be done *before* the first call to `artisynt()`, perhaps within a startup script.
3. Add the classpaths to an ASCII text file called `javaclasspath.txt` located in one of the directories in the MATLAB search path, as described in Section 2.6.

When adding classpaths for external ArtiSynth models, be sure to add *all* dependencies. For example, if your model resides under `/home/artisynt_projects/classes`, but also depends on classes in `/home/artisynt_models/classes`, then both of these must be added to MATLAB's Java classpath.

Calling `javaaddpath()` *after* the first call to `artisynt()` may result in some warnings about existing ArtiSynth classes, such as

```
Warning: Objects of artisynt/core/driver/Main class exist - not clearing java
> In javaclasspath>doclear at 377
```

The added classes may also not be visible to ArtiSynth instances created by subsequent invocations of `artisynt()`.

2.8 Connecting to an external MATLAB process

In addition to being able to run ArtiSynth from within MATLAB, it is also possible to create a connection between ArtiSynth and an externally running MATLAB program. Data can then be passed back and forth between ArtiSynth and MATLAB. This can be particularly useful if it turns out to be unfeasible to run ArtiSynth directly under MATLAB.

Caveat: The MATLAB connection uses the [matlabcontrol](#) interface, by Joshua Kaplan. It relies on the undocumented [Java MATLAB Interface](#), and hence cannot be guaranteed to work with future versions of MATLAB.

An external MATLAB connection can be opened in any of the following ways:

1. Choosing File > Open MATLAB Connection in the GUI;
2. Specifying the option `-openMatlabConnection` on the command line;
3. Calling the `openMatlabConnection()` method in the `Main` class (see Section 2.9).

When a MATLAB connection is requested, the system will first attempt to connect to a MATLAB process running on the user's machine. If no such process is found, then a new MATLAB process will be started. If a MATLAB connection is opened when ArtiSynth is being run under MATLAB, then the connection will be made to the parent MATLAB process.

Once a connection is open, it is possible to save/load probe data to/from MATLAB. This can be done by selecting the probe and then choosing either `Save to MATLAB` or `Load from MATLAB` in the right-click context menu. This will cause the probe data to be saved to (or loaded from) a MATLAB array. The name of the MATLAB array is determined by `NumericProbeBase.getMatlabName()`, which returns either

1. The name of the probe, if not null, or
2. "iprobe<n>" (for input probes) or "oprobe<n>" (for output probes), where <n> is the probe number.

It is also possible to save/load probe data to/from MATLAB using the following functions available in ArtiSynth's Jython interface (see the section "Jython Interaction and Scripting" in the [User Interface Guide](#)):

```
iprobeToMatlab (probeName, matlabName)
iprobeFromMatlab (probeName, matlabName)
iprobeToMatlab (probeName)
iprobeFromMatlab (probeName)

oprobeToMatlab (probeName, matlabName)
oprobeFromMatlab (probeName, matlabName)
oprobeToMatlab (probeName)
oprobeFromMatlab (probeName)
```

`iprobeToMatlab()` and `iprobeFromMatlab()` save/load data for the input probe specified by `probeName` to/from the MATLAB variable with the name `matlabName`. `probeName` is a string giving either the probe's name or number. If `matlabName` is absent, then the value of `NumericProbeBase.getMatlabName()` (described above) is used. The functions `oprobeToMatlab()` and `oprobeFromMatlab()` do the same thing for output probes.

2.9 Managing an external MATLAB connection from code

The MATLAB connection is associated, internally, with a structure called [MatlabInterface](#), which provides the internal methods for sending data to and from MATLAB. The interface can be obtained and queried from methods in the `Main` class:

```
MatlabInterface openMatlabConnection()
```

Returns a connection to a MATLAB process. If a connection already exists, that connection is returned. Otherwise, a new connection is established with a MATLAB process running on the user's machine. If no such process is found, then a new MATLAB process will be started. If ArtiSynth is being run under MATLAB, then the connection will be made to the parent MATLAB process

```
MatlabInterface getMatlabConnection()
```

Returns the current MATLAB connection, if any; otherwise, returns null.

```
boolean hasMatlabConnection()
```

Returns true if a MATLAB connection currently exists.

```
boolean closeMatlabConnection()
```

Closes any current MATLAB connection, returning true if a connection previously existed.

Methods by which a `MatlabConnection` can send data to and from MATLAB include:

```
void objectToMatlab (obj, matlabName)
```

Sets the MATLAB array named `matlabName` to the values associated with the ArtiSynth object `obj`. The ArtiSynth object must be either a [Matrix](#), [Vector](#), or `double[][]`. The assigned MATLAB array is dense, unless the ArtiSynth object is an instance of [SparseMatrix](#), in which the array is sparse.

```
double[][] arrayFromMatlab (matlabName)
```

Takes the MATLAB array named by `matlabName` and returns the corresponding `double[][]` object, with values assigned in row-major order. If the named MATLAB array does not exist, or is not dense and 2-dimensional, then null is returned.

```
Matrix matrixFromMatlab (matlabName)
```

Takes the MATLAB array named by `matlabName` and returns a corresponding [Matrix](#) object. If the named MATLAB array does not exist, or is not 2-dimensional, then null is returned. Otherwise, either a [MatrixNd](#) or [SparseMatrixNd](#) is returned, depending on whether the array is dense or sparse.

`Matrix matrixFromMatlab (matlabName)`

Takes the MATLAB array named by `matlabName` and returns a corresponding [VectorNd](#) object. If the named MATLAB array does not exist, or is not 2-dimensional with a size of 1 in at least one dimension, then `null` is returned.

The above methods are also available in the Jython interface ((section “Jython Interaction and Scripting” of the [User Interface Guide](#)) via the functions

```
objectToMatlab (obj, matlabName)
arrayFromMatlab (matlabName)
matrixFromMatlab (matlabName)
vectorFromMatlab (matlabName)
```

The following example shows a code fragment in which a MATLAB connection is obtained and then used to transfer data to and from MATLAB:

```
import artisynth.core.driver.Main;
import artisynth.core.util.MatlabInterface;

...

Main main = Main.getMain();
MatlabInterface mi = main.openMatlabConnection();

// read a matrix MX from MATLAB. Assume we know a-priori that
// MX is dense, so it will be returned as a MatrixNd
MatrixNd MX = (MatrixNd)mi.matrixFromMatlab ("MX");

// send a sparse matrix K to MATLAB and assign it the name KMAT
SparseMatrix K = ...
mi.objectToMatlab (K, "KMAT");
```

3 Summary of scripting functions

The following is a summary of the scripting functions available in MATLAB through the `ArtiSynthHandle` object:

`getMain()`

Returns the ArtiSynth `Main` object.

`loadModel (name, args...)`

Loads the named model along with optional arguments. `name` is the classname of the model’s [RootModel](#) and `args...` is an optional variable-length list of string arguments that are used to form the `args` argument of the model’s `build()` method. Nominally, `name` should be a fully-qualified classname (e.g., `artisynth.demos.mech.RigidBodyDemo`) but if the model has been loaded before, the simple class name should work as well (e.g., `RigidBodyDemo`).

`loadModelFile (filename)`

Loads a model from an ArtiSynth file. `filename` is a string giving the file’s path.

`saveModelFile (filename)`

Save a model to an ArtiSynth file.

`saveModelFile (filename, saveWayPointData, coreCompsOnly)`

Save a model to an ArtiSynth file. The options `saveWayPointData` and `coreCompsOnly` specify whether to (a) save waypoint data, and (b) save only components from `artisynth_core`.

`play()`

Starts the simulation running.

`play(t)`
Starts and runs the simulation for `t` seconds.

`pause()`
Pauses the simulation.

`step()`
Single steps the simulation.

`reset()`
Resets the simulation to time 0.

`forward()`
Forwards the simulation to the next waypoint.

`rewind()`
Rewinds the simulation to the last waypoint.

`delay(t)`
Delays execution for `t` seconds. In MATLAB, the same effect can be achieved using the MATLAB command `pause(t)`.

`waitForStop()`
Blocks until the simulation has completed.

`isPlaying()`
Returns `true` if simulation is still running.

`getTime()`
Returns current ArtiSynth simulation time in seconds.

`reload()`
Reloads the current model.

`addWayPoint(t)`
Adds a simulation waypoint at time `t`, where `t` is a floating point value giving the time in seconds.

`addBreakPoint(t)`
Adds a breakpoint at time `t`.

`removeWayPoint(t)`
Removes any waypoint or breakpoint at time `t`.

`clearWayPoints()`
Removes all waypoints and breakpoints.

`saveWayPoints(filename)`
Save waypoints and their data to a specified file

`loadWayPoints(fileName)`
Load waypoints and their data from a specified file

`root()`
Returns the current `RootModel`.

`find(path)`
Finds a component defined by `path` with respect to the current `RootModel`.

`getsel()`
Returns the current ArtiSynth selection list.

`getsel(i)`

Returns the *i*-th selection list item (1-based for MATLAB).

`quit()`

Quits ArtiSynth.
