

Helpful hints for composers and arrangers using Sibelius®

Hinted at by Steve Reading

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Document set-up.

This may seem obvious, but correctly setting up your score will save you time, frustration, and ultimately money (not to mention the mental health of your copyist!).

To do this: -

It is our humble opinion that the paper size for all scores should be set to A3 (or Tabloid 11"x17" in the US) in the **Document set-up** dialogue box. This enables all staves to be seen, and (depending on instrumentation) allows enough space between them to make the score look uncluttered. On completion of your work, if these staves are not required to be seen, simply hide them with the 'Hide empty staves' (Shift/Ctrl/Alt/H) (⇧⌘⌥H) option in the **Layout** menu.

1. Depending on instrumentation, set the staff size as small as you can get away with. For a full orchestra, we suggest 3.5mm. Obviously for smaller ensembles the size can be enlarged.

2. Check your instrumentation. Always input **EVERY** instrument you will be using at the start of your score, and, if possible, keep all staves in view at all times. (The reason for this will be explained later)
3. When you come to printing your work, make sure the **'Fit to paper'** box is checked in the print dialogue menu, or you will get some VERY peculiar results!

Inputting your work

One of the most common problems the music engraver encounters when working on a score inputted by the composer is the issue of attachments. When any ancillary object is inputted to a note (dynamics being the most common), it is vital that care is taken to ensure that it is attached to the note to which it applies. Always make certain that the attachment lines are switched on in the <view> dropdown menu. A sure-fire way of being certain that dynamics are attached is to highlight the note, then input the dynamic/technique etc. whilst the note is highlighted. This forces the attachment to that given note. On part extraction the dynamic (or any other attachment inputted this way) will be where it is supposed to be, and not 'float' around the score.

Another, if possibly obvious, thing is to tell the copyist if the score is **'transposing'** or not. This will save a few brain cells and stop any confusion.

One feature that I always have turned on is the 'Staff Names and Bar Numbers' in the **'View'** dropdown menu. With this activated, you will find navigating around your score much easier!

Text Input

Next we come to text input. This obviously can mean anything from titles, expression, technique, or any other type of word input. Sibelius gives a variety of text ‘styles’ which are very useful for this type of input. It is important to use these styles, especially if you: -

- ◇ Want your score to play back properly.
- ◇ Want it to look uniform

Most importantly, all **Tempo** markings should be in Tempo style. Failure to do this will mean that no tempo markings will appear in extracted parts. The same holds true for **Titles**, which should be in ‘Titles’ style, **Subtitles** in ‘subtitles’ etc. Simple but easily forgotten! **Technique** should always be in ‘technique’ and **Expression** in ‘expression’ (It is amazing how often these two get mixed up!)

Chord symbols likewise should be inputted using their dedicated style (Ctrl. K)(⇧K) and moving from note to note with the space bar.

Attachment of these text styles is also important, and can be assured by the same means as stated above for dynamics.

Piano and Keyboards

As with all hints set out in this pamphlet, these suggestions are my own preferences, and can easily be customised to your own.

Piano solo

As most pianists will sit close to their music, it is not necessary to set the staff size too large. I usually set it to between 5.6 and 6mm. This allows a decent amount of music to appear on each page. Depending on its complexity, I find that between 4 and 6 bars per

system works well, with a maximum of 4 systems per page, with 3 systems on the first page. (This can be done easily by using the **‘Make Layout Uniform’** plug-in in the **‘Plug-ins’** menu.)

Cross beaming

Quite often you will have to use this technique, where the music crosses from one staff/hand to the other. The **User Guide** explains how this is done. However, be aware that there is a bug in the programme (hopefully soon to be fixed), which does strange things with accidentals. You will find that these sometimes have to be inputted manually as symbol items.

I find I prefer (as do most of my clients) that all beams are horizontal. It looks neater, and gives the whole score a more professional look. To do this, highlight a bar, click on **‘House styles’** in the main menu bar, and select **‘Edit Staff Types’**. You will notice that the staff type you are using will be greyed . Click on **‘Edit’**, and select the **‘Notes and Rests’** tab. Check the box next to **‘Beams Always Horizontal’**, then OK and close, and it is done.

Dynamics etc.

Always make certain that, whenever possible, all dynamics (especially including crescendo and diminuendo lines) are spaced midway between your two staves.

Piano with Solo (including voice)

Remember that the pianist, as accompanist, only needs to see the solo part as a reference. Therefore, the solo staff does not need to be set at the same size as the piano. Highlight the solo staff, and use the ‘small’ option in the preferences menu. This sets the staff size to whatever you have indicated you want it to be in the **‘Engraving Rules’** (Shift/Ctrl/E/(⌘/⌃ E) > Staves/Staff Design) menu. The default size is 75%, but this can be altered to your preference.

Synthesisers

All programme changes should be indicated in '**Boxed Text**', (Properties/text/boxed text) and should be at a point size of at least 10-12, and in 'Bold' (to be seen!)

General

Page turns can be a problem in keyboard writing. One method of overcoming this is to ignore it! The other is to print out your score using the option of '**spreads**' in the 'format' section of the print dialogue box. This allows the music to be bound as a long scroll. (See **User Guide** for more on this print option)

Be sure to cancel any **Pedal** marks where necessary.

Multipart input.

It is usual for composers of larger works to input 2 parts per staff, particularly for woodwinds and brass. It makes our lives much easier if care is taken to ensure that, (for instance); horn 1 is in voice 1, horn 2 in voice 2. This obviously leaves the problem of voice 2 rests. These can be hidden very easily, (highlight/Shift/Ctrl./H) (⇧⌘H), or left for the copyist to 'clean up' if preferred. Also make certain that all text input (dynamics, technique etc.) are inputted in 'all' mode in the note input (F8) pad.

Doubling Instruments

Should you require 'doubling' instruments in your work, you do not need to create a separate staff for each new instrument. For example, if your Flute has to double on Alto Flute, simply highlight the bar where the doubling starts, go to **Create/other/transposition change**, and a dialogue box will appear. Change the pitch of C4 to G3, and the transposition is effected. If you are working in a non-transposing score

nothing will appear to change, but on part extraction all will be done. Also, make sure your changes are clearly marked on the score.

Percussion

When writing percussion parts, be sure that you are inputting the notes to the right staff. Much time can be lost trying to figure out just which player should be playing which instrument. Please also make certain that all instruments are labelled properly, (and consistently). If you are using a Drum kit, use the kit staff from the Instrument set-up menu. Try not to use this for general percussion input. We find it a lot more helpful to use specific staves for each percussion instrument (there are lots to chose from in the set-up menu). On extraction, they can all be lumped together. If there are only a few percussionists (the orchestra payroll will thank you for that!), just clearly label the changes in the one or two staves used, as mentioned before.

String writing

If using 8vas, trills, and any other string techniques (both above and below), be sure to highlight the note where they start, then hit **L (Lines)** and click on the relevant text or line before adjusting its vertical or horizontal position. This ensures it is attached to the correct note/staff. 8va.lines are very useful for keeping the string line neat, doing away with the need for thousands of leger lines. (These leger lines are, however, often preferred by players, as some find transposing up an octave to be more than they can cope with!) Please ensure that all con sord, pizz., and other technique marks are cancelled where and when appropriate. (Rehearsal time!) A plug-in for checking suspect pizz.'s etc., (along with many other plug-ins which you might find useful) is available from <http://www.sibelius.com/helpcenter/resources/plugins.html>. They are free, so why not use them?

Instrumentation

As mentioned before, try to have all your instruments in view at all times. This enables you to 'see' which instruments you have already scored. There have been many instances where, on extraction, we have found, (for example) 4, 5, or 6 flute parts because whenever a flute was needed, an extra staff was created. This causes havoc with part extraction. If all staves are visible, then you will never need to add instruments to your score, (and you will save a fortune in hourly charges!) This also applies to parts where the occasional 'ossia' above or below the staff is used. You only need to create this once. If required again, use Ctrl/Shift/Alt/S (⇧⇧⌘S) to '**show all staves**' (if you've hidden any) and re-input to the existing ossia.

Importing Midi files

As with all engraving programmes, midi importing is a useful, but potential mine laden way of importing your music into score-writing software. There are a few ground rules that must be followed to make this method of composing/importing work to your financial benefit, not detriment!

1. Make sure you are exporting to '**general midi**'.
2. Be sure to remove all attack and delay options (often used in string parts) before -
3. **Quantising** your input to crotchet (quarter note) or other common denominator value.
4. It is important to remember that options set by composers/arrangers can allow for octave transposition on Contrabassoon/Double Bass and Piccolo parts. We copyists need to know whether midi conversions will have these instruments indicated 'at pitch' or not.

5. No dynamics or reliable phrasing marks are transferred in midi conversions. We will need hard copy (in whatever form) to view all your annotations. It is worth remembering that copyists will charge extra for midi conversions because so much material is missing from them, and they will charge an arrangers hourly fee for 'cleaning up' your score.

Lyric Input

This might seem obvious, but use Shift>L for **Lyrics** only if your score/song has only one verse. In the text menus you will find shortcut for Lyrics up to verse 6. So, if there are two verses use 'Lyrics verse 1'* and for second verse, 'Lyrics verse 2' etc. This is especially important if you wish your work to be included in the latest Internet publishing Software from Yamaha, (www.digitalmusicnotebook.com) as it will recognise each separate verse only if the correct text definition is used.

* This Lyric style does not appear in the default text style dropdown menu. However, it can easily be created. Whilst your score is onscreen, hold down Shift/Ctrl/Alt/T (⇧~⌘T) to bring up the '**Edit Text Styles**' menu. Highlight '**Lyrics**' and click on 'New'. It asks you the usual questions. Just rename it 'Lyrics verse 1', save it, and, hey presto, you have the new style.

I hope this is of use, and do have fun with this great programme. Any comments please feel free to contact me at www.wmpsmusic.com/. Email: info@wmpsmusic.com

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