Sibelius 7: Advice, Warnings, Shortcuts, Tips and Things that the Tutorial Won't Tell You

by Paul Ahlstrand, November 2013

Starting a New Score

When You Open Sibelius, select "New Score". Choose a template, Treble Staff or Bass Staff. SINGLE CLICK on your choice. You will now be in Document Setup. (All the options presented are much easier to setup now than add later)
 Select the page size and portrait or landscape.

"House Style" lets you select a font. DO THIS! If you don't, the default font looks like shareware. (I use "jazz inkpen 2" for non-classical players and "standard opus" for classical players.)

"Change Instruments" lets you add or remove instruments or move them up or down on the score. (When using the treble or bass staff I often keep the unnamed staff to write notes to myself like "check this voicing" and delete this staff later) You can add or remove instruments at any time by going to home/instruments/add or remove.

Choose a time signature.
 "Pick up bar" – If you know you are going to have a pick up bar set this up

NOW....
If any of your instruments will be resting during the pick-up bar, make sure the rests are of the same duration as the pick-up notes. Do not use a pick-up bar if your score will be synched to a pro-tools grid later.

Tempo – I ALWAYS select a metronome mark even if it is arbitrary. (Much easier to do now) This will allow you to have more flexibility when recording to the click than you can get with the transport panel, allows you to match the exact BPM's of a pro-tools grid or let's you zero in on the exact performance tempo.

Select a key signature, add title etc. and click on create.

Your blank score will now appear. Chances are it will not have enough measures in it. Add measures by Command>b. Later on, if you want to add a measure after a certain measure, use Shift>Command>b. To remove a measure and its contents use Shift>Command, select measure(s) and delete.

Before going further note that the "ribbon" consists of "tabs" and "groups". Some of the groups have a small square in the bottom right corner called the "dialog launcher button."

Input Methods

Use whichever method is easiest for you. If you are using "flexitime" (Command>Shift>f) make sure that you set minimum durations first. (Note Input/Flexitime/dialog box) You will still need the keypad to add articulations etc. If it is not visible go to view/panels. Play/Live playback will preserve the feel of your performance or you can change the feel of a score with play/interpretation/performance.

If a note appears in red it is either out of the range of the instrument or it is "colliding" with a notation on another staff. Keep in mind that by default Sibelius uses conservative ranges, so you can exceed these if you know the capabilities of the players. If notes are colliding you can fix this by selecting the 2 staves and going to Layout/Staff Spacing/Optimize. (If the collision isn't interfering with your work, wait until you are done and optimize the entire score.

Loading Sounds – Play/Setup/Dialog Launcher

Focus on Staves – (Layout/Hiding Bars) let's you view one or more parts at a time. If the parts you want to focus on are not adjacent on your score you can temporarily move them using Home/Add or Remove, select the instrument and move it up or down. You can also hide empty staves but do not hide empty staves in the first system.

Handy keyboard shortcuts and their pitfalls:
Command-S – saves the score. DO THIS OFTEN!
3 – adds a note a third above the selected note or notes
shift-3 – adds a note a third below a selected note or notes
(these work for any interval up to a 9$^{th)}$
S – adds a slur to selected notes. this can only be done one staff at a time
Command-c – copies note(s) or measure(s)
Command-v –paste
(you can also "paste as cue" or "paste to voice" from file/clipboard/paste)
Command-E – use for expression (dynamics) this can only be done one staff at a time
Command-t – adds technique (ie. Arco, pizz., harmon mute)
Play/Interpretation/Dictionary will tell you which techniques are supported. This can only be done one staff at a time.
H- adds a crescendo (one staff at a time)
Shift-H - adds a decrescendo (one staff at a time)
L – for adding lines. If you are adding a first or second ending, select the first and last note or rest in the measure (not the whole measure) before adding to avoid a horizantal collision. Optimize won't fix these. If you want to move these up or down use the arrow keys so you move both endings by the same amount.

Z – for adding symbols like a coda sign. BEFORE ADDING A SEGNO OR CODA SIGN go to Notations/Symbols/dialog launcher. Select the symbol and press edit. Make sure you select "attach to system" so the symbol will appear in all the parts.

Command-L – for adding lyrics. Use space bar to move to the next note.

Command-k – for adding chord symbols. (Capitilize the letter, use "b" for flats, "#" for sharps, ","for major and "." for minor. Parenthesize altered extension. If using multiple altered extensions put a comma in between them and they will appear "stacked". Use space bar to move to the next note or beat.

To add chord slashes (like a guitar part) – enter the rhythm on the middle line of the staff. Use Shift-option-3 to create stem-less slashes and Shift-option-4 to create stemmed slashes.

Unfortunately these slashes will transpose. Best to add them after you transform your score to transposing score. (see AFTER YOUR SCORE IS FINISHED) If not you will have to select the measures go to Shift>Option>9 to transform them back to standard note heads, move them back to the middle line and start over.

Command-3 – creates a triplet. (you will not be able to paste within a triplet. Argh!)

X- inverts a line such as a stem or triplet bracket

After Your Score is Finished

SAVE YOUR WORK

If your score and/or parts are more than 1 page long you will need a header. Click on the first measure of your score. Go to Text, click on Styles and scroll down to "headers and footers." Select "header (after first page inside edge)" DO NOT SELECT "header (after first page)" as this will collide with the instrument names on your parts.

At this point you should transform your score to a transposed score. (Home/Instruments/Transposing Score) Certain lines (ie. Chord slashes, glissandos look wrong in the parts when transposed fix them in the score before going to parts.

SAVE YOUR WORK

CHECK THE INDIVIDUAL PARTS
1. Open a part by clicking on the + sign on the ribbon
2. Do NOT save while editing a part
3. Before going any further go to Layout/Document Setup/Dialog launcher. Make sure the page size is letter and change the top margin on the left page from .59 to 1 otherwise your title might get cut off by some printers
4. Now check the appearance of the part. Objects in orange can be moved in the part without affecting the appearance in the score.

5. After editing each part, go back to the full score and SAVE before editing the next part.
6. Once all the parts are edited you are ready to print or export.

Printing
Always SAVE again before printing. Sibelius is most likely to crash as soon as you hit print. Print the score from the File menu and parts from the Parts menu.

Exporting (These are the options most used)
PDF – for sending printable parts and scores.
Audio – to give someone a rough idea of what something is going to sound like. Double check the metronome mark, mute the click and adjust levels in the mixer panel. The exported file will be aiff.
Previous Version – Exports a sibelius file in a previous version to send to someone who doesn't have Sibelius 7. Try not to do this since the appearance of your score will change. SAVE THIS WITH A DIFFERENT FILE NAME to avoid over writing your work. Send pdfs of your sib.7 score and parts as a reference.