SIBELIUS TIPS

by David Ezell

In working with Sibelius notation software I have discovered some useful techniques that are not necessarily easy to find in the manual. Some of them are outlined here. If anyone has Sibelius questions, send email to david@heartwindmusic.com and I will try to give you some helpful hints.

Contents

1. To copy lyrics from a text file to Sibelius:

    1. Copy the lyrics from the text file (Use copy command in Edit menu.)
    2. Go to Sibelius.
    3. Click on the first note that should receive a lyric syllable.
    4. Type command-L (Mac) or control-L (Win).
    5. Type command-V (Mac) or control-V (Win).
    6. Repeat #5 for each word that should receive a syllable.
    7. If there is a slurred note or other note that should not receive a syllable, tap the space bar to skip it.

This syllable-by-syllable approach works better for me than the mass-copy approach that's in the Sibelius reference, because with the mass-copy I find some syllables attached to the wrong notes. When a word needs to be hyphenated, Sibelius will, with few exceptions, do it for you. It is still good to check the dictionary, because Sibelius' hyphenation usually agrees, but not always.

2. To copy lyrics from Sibelius to a text file:

1. Try this procedure first:
   - A. Edit--Select All
   - B. Plugins--Text--Export Lyrics
2. If the above procedure yields a document with the words out of order:
   - A. Select a region
   - B. Edit--Filter--Advanced Filter
   - C. To the left of the dialog box, choose text in the View and Find sections.
   - D. To the right of the dialog box, choose only one line of lyrics.
   - E. Copy the selected lyrics and paste into the text file.
   - F. Repeat D & E for each different line of lyrics.
   - G. If there are unwanted hyphens in the text file:
     - i. Copy a hyphen
     - ii. Go to find and replace (probably in the Edit menu)
     - iii. Paste the hyphen into the Find box.
     - iv. Leave the Replace box blank.
   - H. Check the word processor document, placing all verses, choruses, etc. in the desired order.

3. To put a verse number at the beginning of a lyric:

Use a non-breaking space. I learned about this by referring to Sibelius 5 Reference pages 180 and 185. This works better for me than the plug-in described on page 410.

4. To get a tenor vocal part to play back in the right octave:

1. Create a new instrument in the Create menu or type "I".
2. Select Singers--tenor.

5. To create cue-sized notes:

1. Select the note(s).
2. Open the Properties window.
3. Make sure the Notes section is open.
4. Select note shape 10 from the pop-up menu.

If you use the keypad to change the note size on a vocal line, it will also change the size of the lyrics. Thanks to Sue K. Riley for this tip.

6. To completely select a region:

1. Hold command (Mac) or control (Win), and click a measure at the beginning or the end.
2. Hold shift and click a measure at the end or beginning.
3. Check that the selection rectangle for the region is purple.

This is helpful in transposing regions, changing key signatures or clefs, deleting measures, and other tasks. Sometimes, if the selection rectangle is blue, the task cannot be accomplished.

7. To leave more room for a copyright notice at the bottom of the first page:

1. Choose Layout--Document Setup
2. In the Staff Margins area at the bottom left, check "After first page."
3. In the left part of the Staff Margins area, set the bottom number to a high amount (perhaps 1.0 or greater).

8. To control playback tempo and feel:

1. Make sure you use the correct command., Control-Alt-T (Win) or Command-Option-T (Mac). You can get the tempo entered, including the metronome mark (eg. q = **160**), without the Alt or Option keys. however, if you do this, the tempo will not play back.
2. Be careful which words you use in tempo marks. I once used "Straight Ahead Jazz" as a tempo mark, and could not get the playback to swing. I had to remove the word "Straight" from the tempo mark.

9. To create a transposing instrument, or a guitar part with a capo:

1. Go to House Style-Edit Instruments
2. Select an instrument similar to the one you want to create.
3. Click on New Instrument
4. In the right center of the dialog box, change the settings for transposing score. (Go the opposite direction of the transposition you want.) For guitar 3rd fret, for example, set the transposing score note to Eb. Then you can play as if you're in A and the sound will come out in C.

10. To create slur or tie from a note into outer space (such as at the beginning of a second ending):

Use a non-magnetic slur. In my Sibelius 5 manual, non-magnetic slurs are discussed on p. 136.

11. To globally reverse stem direction of middle line notes:

1. Select a region.
2. Edit--Filter--Advanced Filter
3. On the left, check only Notes.
4. On the right select the correct pitch. (For treble clef it will be Pitch B, octave 4.)
5. OK the box
6. Type "X".

The Sibelius manual correctly says that stems for middle line notes should point down, but many times when the notes are entered they point up. This procedure is best done after you decide what key you're going to be in. Otherwise the notes will move away from the middle line and will have to be reversed again.

12. To reverse stem direction of a group of beamed 8th notes;
1. Select the measure.
2. Go to Notes-Reset Beam Groups
3. For 4/4 type 1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1 into the "Group 8ths as" box.
4. Click on each note that has the wrong stem direction, and type "X".
5. Repeat Steps 1 and 2.
6. Type the desired beam grouping into the "Group 8ths as" box.

For me this is particularly necessary with scanned music. For some reason, some of the 8th notes. have the stem direction reversed. You can't see which 8th notes are affected until you remove the beams by typing 1.1.1...

13. To use colored note heads:
1. Decide how you want to determine the note colors. You can use "Note Colors" in the View Menu, or you can to to the Plug-ins Menu-Notes and Rests and choose either "Boomwhacker" or "Color Pitches."
2. To have the notes print out in color, check "View Menu Options." in the Print dialog box.

14. To make global changes:
1. Use Filter in the Edit menu. Advanced Filter gives a lot of flexibility.
2. Use the Properties window. You can open it from the Window menu, or by clicking on its icon in the toolbar. (I use this for lyric fonts and sizes.)

15. To work as efficiently as possible:
1. Buy the printed reference manual (available separately), and write notes in it as you work.
2. Memorize and use the keyboard equivalents for your most frequently-used menu commands.
3. Always have the latest software version. (Sibelius 6 became available in 2009.)
4. Use PhotoScore to scan music that is in public domain, or that you have permission to use. Music scanning has arrived at a point where it can save you a lot of time.
5. Use a USB musical keyboard. I have found they have fewer issues with connection and communication than MIDI keyboards.
6. If you're working with a small laptop without a numeric keypad, buy an external numeric keypad for easier note entry.
7. Consult with experienced Sibelius users when you have questions.

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