

MusicOnMyPC Tutorial: How to use Finale PrintMusic as an accompaniment tool

When you play an instrument it is so much more satisfying if you can find someone to accompany you – hence the huge market for sheet music with the backing tracks on CD. However, useful though these CDs are, you cannot adjust the speed so they can be extremely frustrating if you are not able to play at their tempo. In addition, it is easy to lose your place, especially when you try to play along with the track which just has the accompaniment.

There is a solution. It is very easy to use Finale PrintMusic (or other notation products like Sibelius) as an accompaniment tool, and it has 2 major advantages: firstly you can adjust the tempo and make it as slow as you like while you are learning the piece; secondly you can actually follow the animated score and see exactly where you are in real time, so you need never lose your place again!

What's more, because Finale PrintMusic has humanised playback and a built-in soft synth, it sounds pretty good too. Finally there is no need for you or anyone else in your house to be able to play the piano at all, although it is helpful if you have a basic knowledge of notation for doing the edits.

There is another benefit to doing this. It is also the case that if you can hear pieces played correctly then you will learn them much better, and are also more likely to play in tune if you know how they should sound.

Here is a step-by-step guide to creating your own accompaniment/play along files.

Step 1 – note entry

The quickest way to get the music into Finale PrintMusic is to either scan it, or, if you can, find a MIDI file of the piece. I have worked with 2 violin pieces for this tutorial:

1. O. Rieding's Concerto in B Minor Op.35, First Movement, for which I searched the internet and found a MIDI (*.mid) file.
2. Minuet in G from the notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach which I scanned in directly from the sheet music.

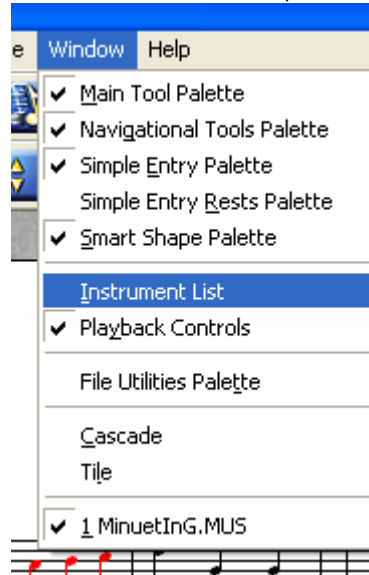
Step 2 – editing

Whichever of the above methods you use, you will probably need to do a little editing. As both the above are violin pieces I have gone through and added bowing marks and dynamics. This didn't take long with PrintMusic's Speedy Editing facilities. With the scanned music I had to edit one or two of the notes in the piano score, but as this does not show in the final arrangement there is no need to worry about any other markings (other than adding dynamics such as mf and mp, as these form part of the playback). The MIDI file import was

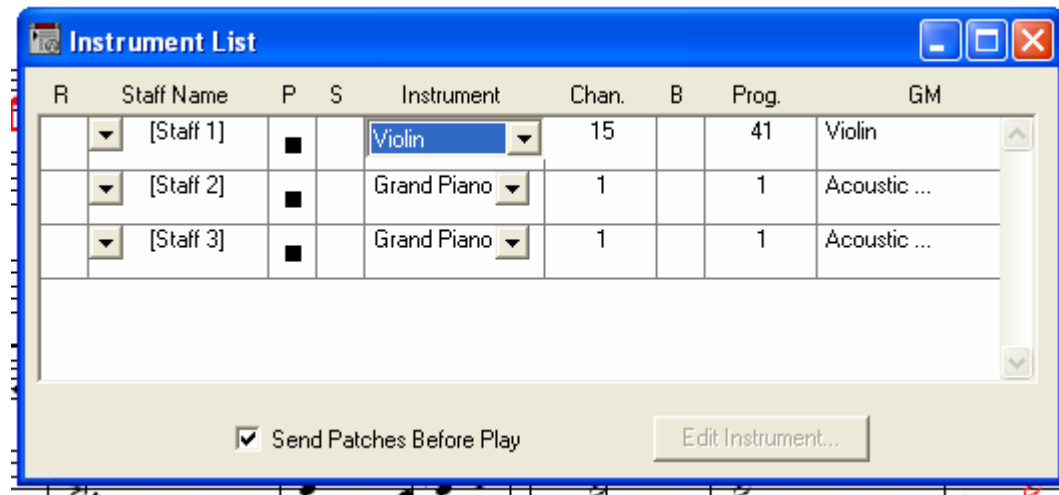
note perfect so did not require any work other than adding dynamics and bowing marks.

Step 3 – assign the correct instrument sounds

Both the pieces I worked on are scored for violin and piano. To set up the correct instruments, select Instrument List from the Window menu.



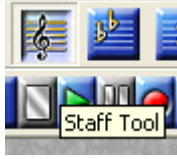
In the Instrument List dialog box, all the instruments are set to piano by default. Change Staff 1 to violin (or the appropriate instrument).



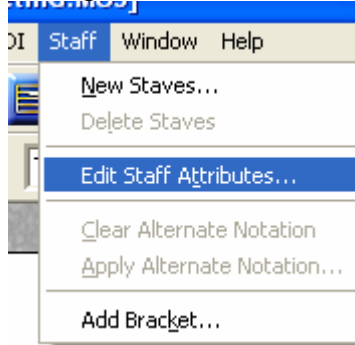
You can also use this to determine whether or not a particular staff will play back or not. That is what the 'P' column is for. If you wanted to mute the violin and just hear the piano accompaniment, then you click in the P column for Staff 1 and the square will disappear.

Step 4 – hide the piano score

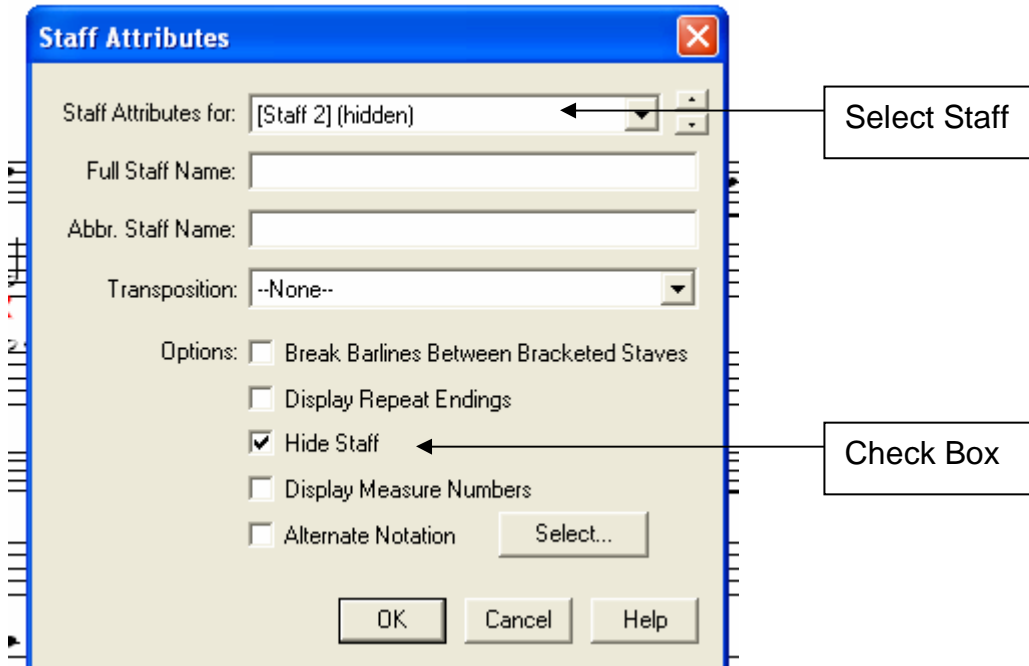
It is very straightforward to hide the music for the staves you don't want to see. Only the violin line needs to be visible. First click the Staff Tool button (the one with the treble clef on).



Now go to the Staff menu and select Edit Staff Attributes



Now use the drop down list to select the staves (in this case staff 2 and staff 3) which contain the piano lines, and for each one in turn hide them by checking the Hide Staff check box.



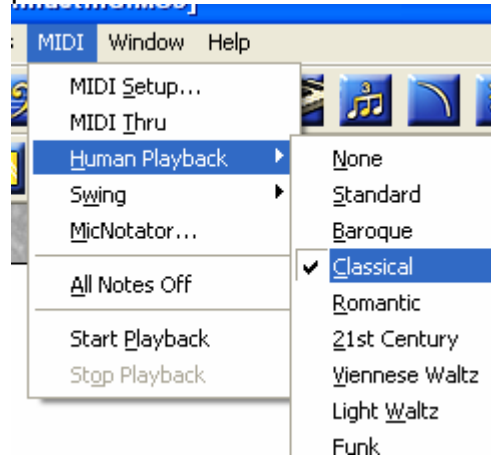
Step 5 – Edit layout

Now you can use the Page Layout tool to line up the violin part neatly.

Step 6 – Edit tempo

That's pretty much it! Just set the tempo as slow or as fast as you like and play along.... Mute the main stave, or play along with it, it's up to you.

Remember you can adjust the playback settings depending on the style of the piece:



Finally, if you also own SmartMusic you can export your work as a SmartMusic file, and expand your library of accompaniments that adjust themselves to your tempo.