

Using Finale's MIDI Capabilities

When creating arrangements or compositions in Finale (for example, for the third type of Final Project), you can find a great deal of useful information available if you look carefully at the Finale documentation entries related to the MIDI Tool (Help->User Manual->Index ... then browser through the index to find "MIDI Tool"). Note: to see the MIDI tool, you must make sure that the Advanced Tools palette is visible (Window->Advanced Tools). To use the MIDI Tool, you simply click on the icon in the Advanced Tools palette that looks like the 5-pin MIDI cable plug. This online documentation provides a great deal of information about the many advanced capabilities of the MIDI Tool.

To get you up-and-running quickly, however, you can follow the steps below to set the MIDI patches (i.e., sounds) to appropriate instrumental timbres for your piece. First, complete the Note Entry & Editing process ... i.e., enter all notes, add expressive markings & dynamics, and make any necessary changes to the note entry portion of your work. Then, open the **Instrument List window** to assign MIDI channels and patches. Remember – and this is *very* important – that, in order for an individual staff contained in your Finale file to have its own instrument timbre, it *must* be assigned a unique (one of 16) MIDI channel number.

Let's assume that you are working with a string quartet arrangement and you want to assign appropriate sounds to each of the four staves of your Finale arrangement. Follow these steps:

1. If you have not done so already, open your Finale file containing the notes, expressive markings, dynamics, etc.
2. Name each staff appropriately¹
 - a. select the Staff Tool (the one with the treble clef)
 - b. double-click on the square at the beginning of the staff you wish to name
 - c. in the "Staff Attributes" dialog box, click on the "Edit" button to the right of the "Full Staff Name" label
 - d. enter the name you wish to use to identify the selected
 - i. if you wish to use an abbreviated label for the staff on subsequent pages, you can enter that by clicking on the "Edit" button to the right of "Abbr. Staff Name"
 - e. click on the "OK" button to accept the changes
3. Open the Instrument List window: Window→Instrument List
 - a. this window contains a list of all staves in the current file and information relevant to the use of MIDI, along with recording, playback, and soloing options²

¹ If you used the "wizard" to create the file, the names will be automatically assigned based on the instruments you chose.

² Explanation of the function of each column in this window is beyond the scope of this tutorial, but you can find complete information in Finale's exhaustive online Help files (Help→User Manual→Index).

4. Make sure that there is a “check” in the box next to “Send Patches Before Play”
 - a. this ensures that the appropriate MIDI program change information will be sent each time file playback begins
5. In order to assign a different MIDI channel – and, therefore, a unique instrument timbre – to one or more of your musical staves, you must create a new instrument
 - a. in the Instrument List window, click on the “Instrument” column of the “Violin I” row (the first violin part)³
 - b. from the drop-down menu, select “New Instrument ...”
 - c. in the dialog box that appears, enter the following information
 - i. for “Instrument Name,” enter: Violin
 - ii. for MIDI channel, enter: 1
 - iii. click on the drop-down box next to “General MIDI” and select “41: Violin” (this is the General MIDI patch number 41, a violin timbre)⁴
 - iv. leave all other setting at their default values
 - d. click on the “OK” button to save these changes
6. Assign the newly created instrument timbre to the Violin II part
 - a. click on the “Instrument” column of the “Violin II” row (second violin part)
 - b. from the drop-down menu, select “Violin”
 - i. because the first and second violins will use the same instrument timbre, you do not need to add a new instrument ... these two staves will share the same MIDI channel and, thus, MIDI program change information
7. Create a new instrument for the Viola
 - a. click on the “Instrument” column of the “Viola” row
 - b. select “New Instrument ...”
 - c. in the dialog box, enter the following
 - i. for “Instrument Name,” enter: Viola
 - ii. for MIDI channel, enter: 2
 1. remember this *must* be a unique number so that the timbre will be different than that assigned to the violin staves or to any other staves in your arrangement
 - iii. click on the drop-down box next to “General MIDI” and select “42: Viola” (this is the General MIDI patch number 42, a viola timbre)
 - iv. leave all other setting at their default values
 - d. click on the “OK” button to save these changes
8. Create a new instrument for the Cello staff
 - a. click on the “Instrument” column of the “Cello” row

³ This text in the “Staff Name” column will be determined by the information you entered previously when you named each staff, as described above.

⁴ Depending on your computer & MIDI hookup, you may find that the program changes are slightly off. Remember that there are 128 timbres contained in the General MIDI specifications. These are numbered from 0 to 127 ... *not* from 1 to 128. If you find that your sounds seem to be slightly off, you can try to adjust your program change selections down by one number and see if that fixes the problem.

- b. select “New Instrument ...”
 - c. in the dialog box, enter the following
 - i. for “Instrument Name,” enter: Cello
 - ii. for MIDI channel, enter: 3
 1. remember this *must* be a unique number so that the timbre will be different than that assigned to the violin staves or to any other staves in your arrangement
 - iii. click on the drop-down box next to “General MIDI” and select “43: Cello” (this is the General MIDI patch number 43, a cello timbre)
 - iv. leave all other setting at their default values
 - d. click on the “OK” button to save these changes
9. You have now set the instrument timbres to unique instruments, so when you playback the Finale file using the built-in controls (Window→Playback Controls), each staff will have its own unique timbre. Of course, in a string quartet arrangement like the one described above, the instrumental timbres are all quite similar. You may wish to experiment with more dramatic timbral differences in your arrangement (saxophone, organ, guitar, etc.) so you can hear how dramatically different the arrangement sounds using different instruments

Remember:

- each instrument *must* be assigned to a unique MIDI channel
- changing the MIDI program information for any staff assigned to a given instrument changes the instrumental timbre for *all* staves associated with that instrument.

Once you have created instruments, as described in the step-by-step instructions above, changing the instrument timbre assigned to any of these instruments is as easy as selecting a new instrument from the “GM” (General MIDI) drop-down box of the Instrument List window.