Chord Symbols As Polychords

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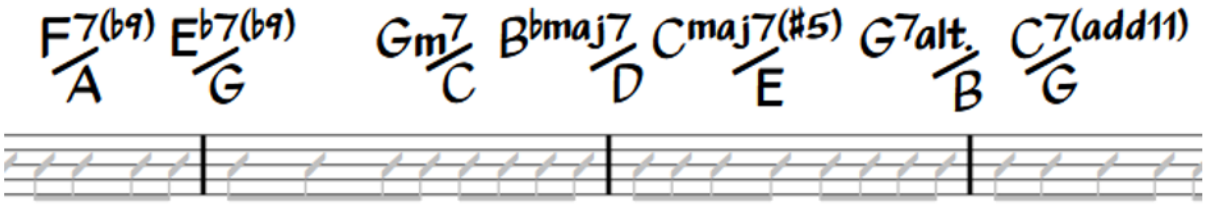
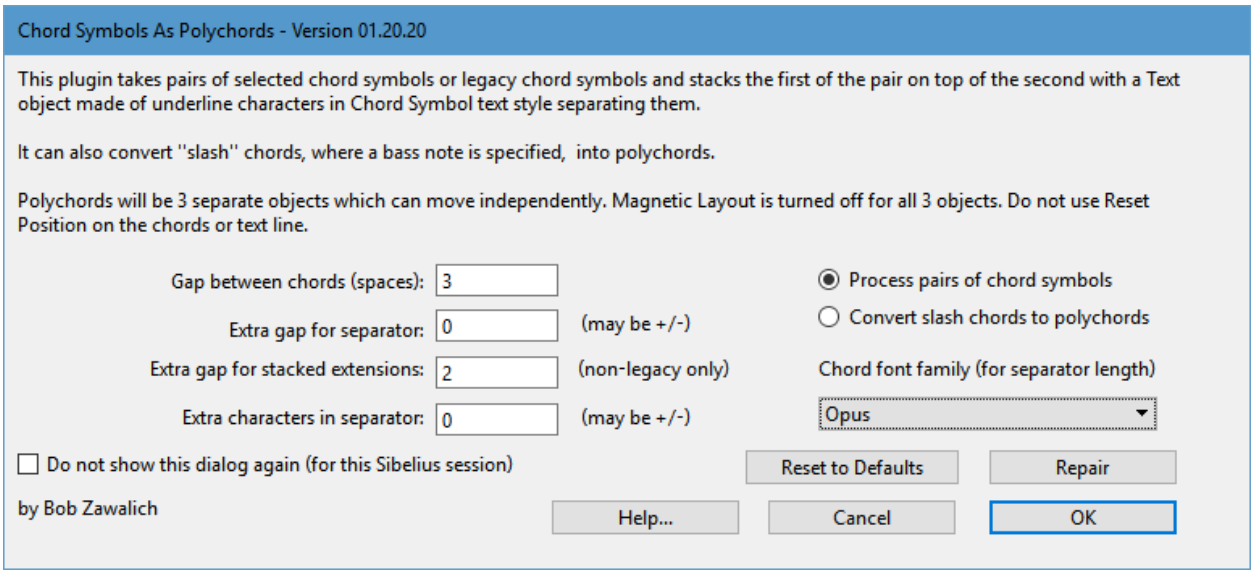
The shipping plug-in **Chord Symbols as Fractions** was written back in 2003 to convert chord symbols that have bass notes in "slash" format (e.g. Fmaj7/G) into fractional format, where the chord name, an underline, and the bass note are stacked vertically, like a fraction, to save horizontal space. The fractions thus produced are always **legacy chord symbols**, which are **Text objects**, rather than **Chord Symbol objects**, which have been the default format for chord symbols since Sibelius 6.

The fraction format is often used for **polychords**, which are 2 full chords stacked on top of each other. If you are using legacy chord symbols, which are Text objects, you can create a slash chord, such as Abm/G7, with a full chord on the bottom, and use **Chord Symbols as Fractions** to write it out as a fraction. Chord Symbol objects (sometimes referred to as "new chord symbols") allow only a single note name, not a full chord, on the bottom, so they cannot produce a full polychord.

Another common chord symbol format is slash chords that stack the components separated by a diagonal slash. There are no plugins that produce these, but in Sibelius 2018.11 and later you can use the special font **Pori Chords ASC**, as described here, and shown below.



The **Chord Symbols As Polychords** plug-in allows polychords to be made up of Chord Symbol objects. It takes pairs of selected Chord Symbols or legacy chord symbols and stacks the first of the pair on top of the second, separated by a Text object made of underscore characters in Chord Symbol text style.



How to use the plugin

1. Select the chord symbols that you want to pair up. Be sure the top chord is either to the left of or on top of the bottom chord.

2. Run the plugin and check that the offsets are what you want. You may need to experiment with the dialog settings if this is a different chord font than the last one you used.
3. Check that the chord font family matches or is similar to the Chord Symbol text style. This will make the separator length match the chord symbols.
4. If you want to process both slash chords and pairs of chords, you will need 2 passes. Process the slash chords in the first pass.

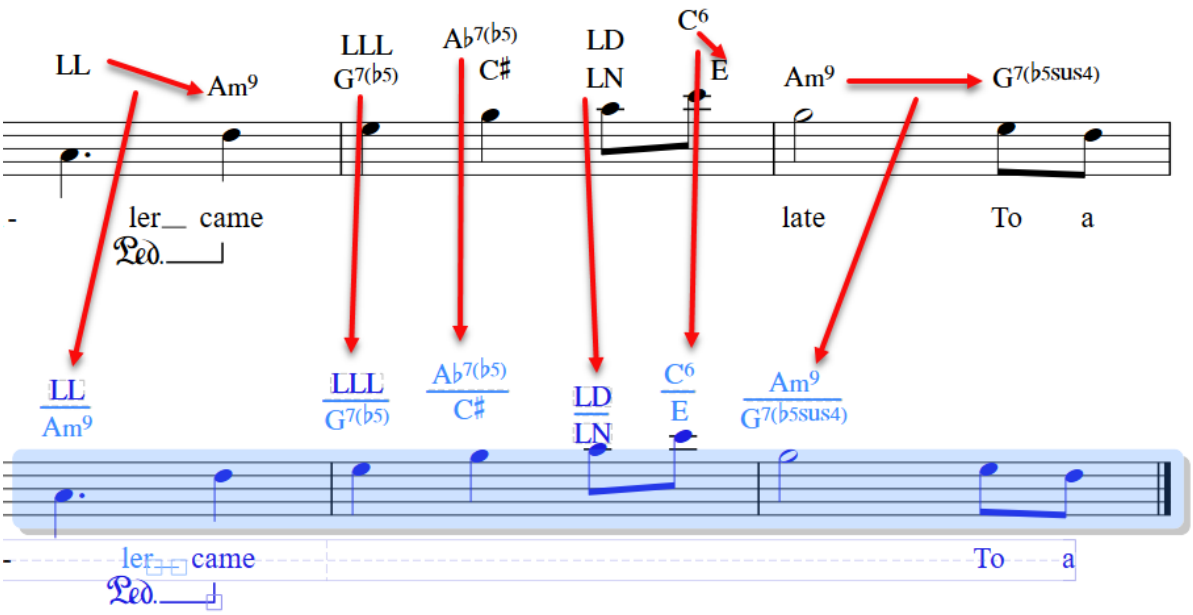
Since the plugin will treat successive chords as a pair, you should be careful to only select chords that you want to be made into polychords.

You may need to adjust the dialog settings for different chord fonts. The settings (except for **Chord font family**) are saved across Sibelius sessions.

Polychords will be 3 separate objects which can move independently. **Magnetic Layout is turned off for all 3 objects**. Do not use **Reset Position** on the chords or text line, or the 3 elements will end up overlapped.

There is also an option to convert slash chords to polychords, so you could create a chord symbol with just a bass note and then edit the bottom part of the resulting polychord. If the original chord symbol was a Chord Symbol object, then resulting chords will also be Chord Symbol objects. If you want to process both slash chords and pairs of chord symbols, do the slash chords first as a separate pass.

Here is an example of some chord symbols (the LLL, LD, and LN chords are legacy Text objects). Note that, because Magnetic Layout is turned off, some chords which used **Magnetic Layout** to avoid notes will be too close to the notes as polychords, and will need to be manually adjusted. (But not with **Reset Position**!) It is usually better to adjust the position of the chord symbols to avoid the notes before running the plugin.



Sorting and determining order

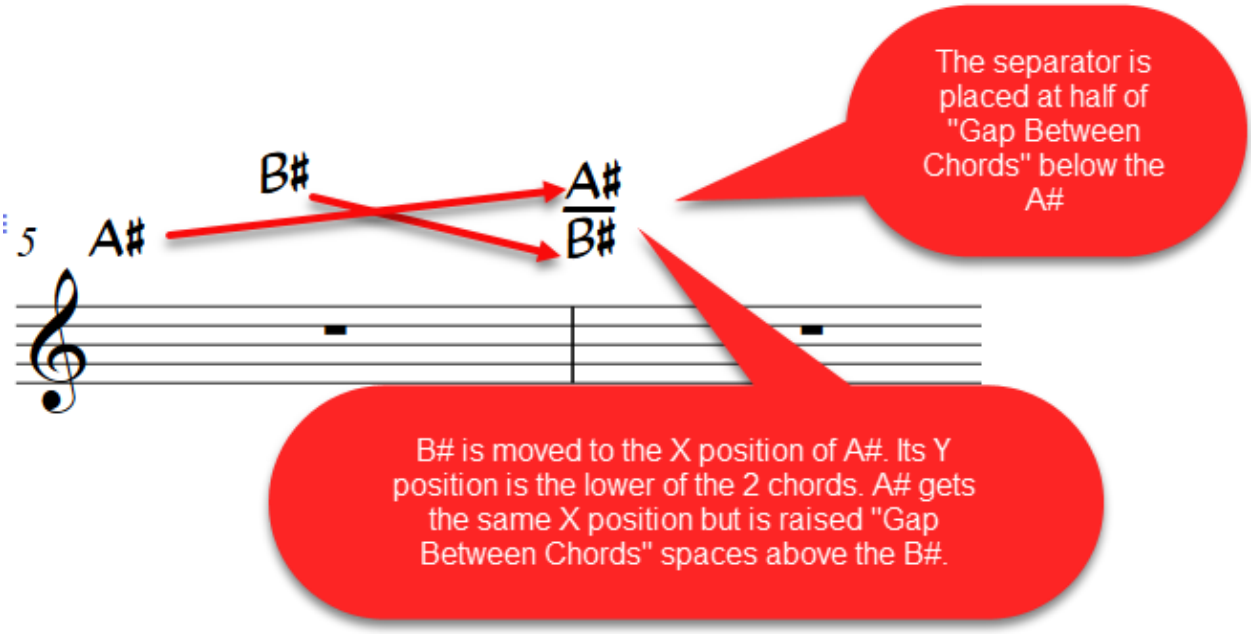
The plugin looks at pairs of chord symbols, and considers the first chord it finds to be the top chord, and the second chord to be the bottom chord of the resulting fraction.

Chords are sorted by staff, bar, and position in the bar, followed by the Y position (highest first) and x position. If you are stacking chords be sure that there are at the same rhythmic/beat position and put the top chord above the bottom chord.

If you are not using a passage selection, the chords will still be processed left to right. The order in which you selected the chords will be ignored. If you want pairs to be processed in a specific order, position them so the plugin will process them in that order.

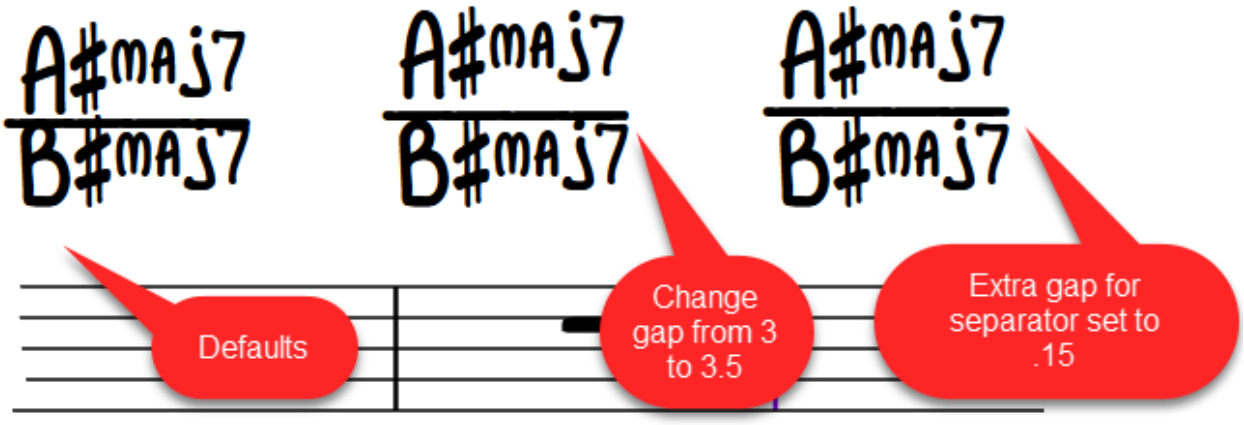
Positioning and spacing

The polychord will be given the horizontal position of the top chord. The lower Y position of the 2 chords will be the Y position of the bottom chord, and the top chord is, by default, 3 spaces above the bottom chord. The separator line is placed at half the gap between chords below the top chord. You can adjust the gap between chords, and adjust the position of the separator line.



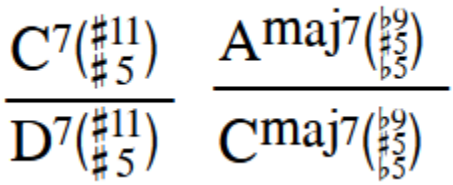
The defaults work pretty well for scores that come from standard House Styles, but if the chords or separator overlap you will need to experiment to find a good spacing. You should select a representative pair of chords and:

- Change the Gap Between Chords fields and try it until you feel there is a suitable gap between the chords. Then try it on several chords with different roots and accidentals.
- If the separator is not where you want it vertically put in a positive small number in “Extra gap for separator” to raise it, and a negative number to lower it.



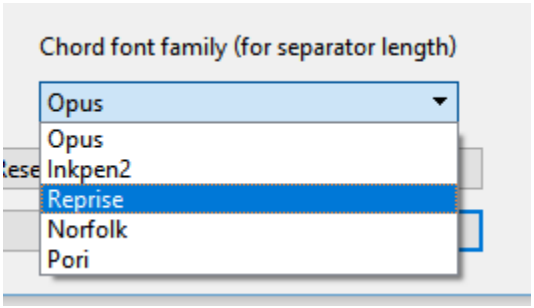
Stacked Extensions

If any of the chords (non-legacy only) use stacked extensions, the plugin will add in the **Extra gap for stacked extensions**. You may want to adjust the position of the separator as well for different fonts.



Separator length

The separator is a Text object of underscore characters, and the number of separator characters is based on the width of the characters in the chord symbol font itself. You should choose the font family that matches, or is most similar to, the chord symbol font used in the score, and this will match the length of the separator to the font characters. (The plugin does not have access to the Chord Symbol font in the score, or it would choose it for itself automatically).



Use **Extra characters in separator** to adjust the length in groups of chords. To manually edit the separator after the polychord is created, select the polychord and use Tab or Shift-Tab to select the separator, then edit it to add or remove underscores. It is difficult to select the separator directly with the mouse, especially when the chords overlap the text.

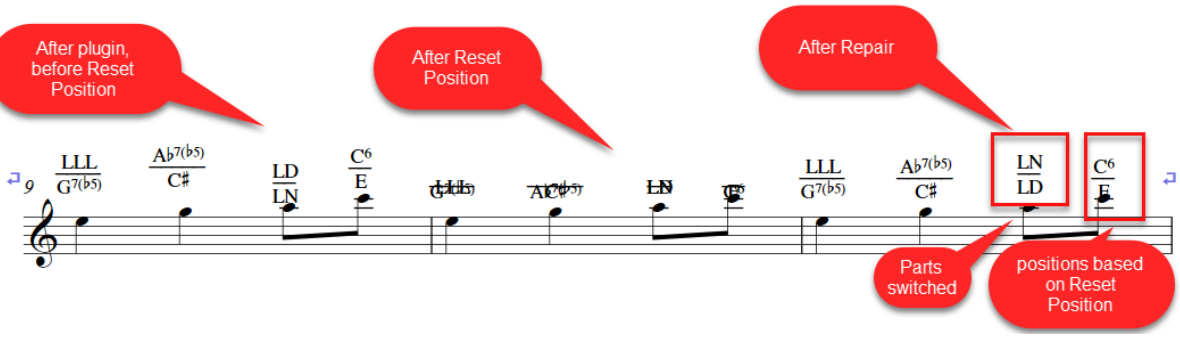
It is tempting to think that a Line would be better than Text as a separator, but lines do not have a fixed length; they can shrink or grow as a score is reformatted, and this can lead to unpleasant surprises.

Reset to Defaults

This will fill the edit boxes in the dialog with the default spacing values, which can be handy if you have tinkered with the values.

Repair

If you run **Reset Position** on a polychord, it will collapse into a pile over overlapping objects. **Repair** will attempt to rebuild a polychord when it finds 2 chord symbols and a separator line at the same position. It cannot tell which note should be the top chord, so it just chooses the first chord symbol it finds, so you may find repaired polychords have been reversed, or the base position is not what is desired, and you will need to fix them manually. **Repair** is a tool of last resort.



Chord Symbols As Polychords was inspired by the work Bernie Cossentino and Jeff Kellum did for the Norfolk and Pori chord fonts.

It may be downloaded directly through Sibelius 7 and higher at **File > Plug-ins > Install Plug-ins > Chord Symbols**. Users may also install it manually in Sibelius 6 or higher by visiting the plug-in download page and following the usual manual installation procedure, or by using the Install New Plug-in plug-in.