

# Plugins 101 - Finding, Installing, and Running Plugins in Sibelius

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## What are plugins and what are they good for?

In Sibelius, plug-ins are extra features created using a programming language called Manuscript. Sibelius ships with about 150 plug-ins. These plug-ins are documented in the Sibelius Reference. Plug-ins can do many of the same things that built-in Sibelius commands do.

Plugins mostly do not work when you are in Note Edit mode or when playing back. I tend to think of them as “post-processing” for material you have already added to a score. When a plugin dialog is visible, nothing else can happen in the score.

One other important point: if you use a plugin to change elements of a score, it only changes what is there at the moment. If you ran a plugin to change all sharps to flats, and later added more sharp notes, those will not be changed unless you run the plugin again.

In Sibelius 7 and later, several commands on the Ribbon (**Home > Bars > Split** and **Note Input > Arrange > Reduce**, for example) are actually plug-ins.

## Shipping, downloadable, and custom plugins

- Sibelius comes with about 150 *Shipping* plugins pre-installed, so you just need to find where they are and run them.
- There are also about 450 free *downloadable* plugins, which have been donated by volunteers, and are published by Sibelius on their [Plugin Download Page](#). These need to be installed before being used, using **File>Plug-ins>Install Plug-ins**.
- There are a smaller number of plug-ins for sale that you can install on your machine, or you can get someone to write a custom plugin for you, or you can write your own plugins, using the Manuscript language that Sibelius provides. These have to be installed in a more laborious manner, using [these instructions](#) (which are somewhat out-of-date) or by installing and running the plugin [Install New Plugin](#).

## Examples of plugins

- The shipping **Transformations** plugins can be found on the **Note Input** tab of the Ribbon. They are mostly designed to be helpful to composers. They include:
  - Retrograde
  - Invert
  - Double Note Values
  - Halve Note Values
  - Augment Intervals
  - Diminish Intervals
  - Pitch Mapping
  - Randomize Pitches
  - Rotate Pitches
  - Rotate Rhythms
  - Rotate Rhythms and Pitches
  - Shuffle Pitches
  - Transform Scale
- The **Batch Processing** plug-in category has a mix of shipping and downloadable plugins. These mostly process folders of scores or other files and act on all the files at once. Some examples of **Batch Processing** plugins are:
  - Batch Transpose
  - Calculate Statistics
  - Convert Folder of MIDI Files
  - Convert Folder of MusicXML Files
  - Convert Folder of Scores to Earlier Sibelius Version
  - Convert Folder of Scores to MIDI
  - Convert Folder of Scores to MusicXML
  - Export Each Instrument as MIDI
  - Export Each Staff as Audio
  - Export Folder of Scores As PDF
  - Export Folder of Scores In Multiple Formats
  - Extract Parts From Folder of Scores
  - Import House Style into Folder of Scores
  - Rehearsal Recordings

## Why are these not part of Sibelius itself?

Sibelius decided fairly early on that they could separate some commands from the main code base, and work on them independently, so they did not affect the schedule of the main program. They probably also wanted to create some useful plugins to encourage other people to write them, since they were providing Sibelius users with a programming language and plugin editor for free.

Originally all the shipping plugins were written by Sibelius, but they later found outside programmers to write some of them. In addition, if users wanted to write useful plugins and make them available for other users for free, Sibelius would vet them, and then publish them on their [Plugin Download Page](#). Prior to Sibelius 7.5, every release of Sibelius usually included a handful of new shipping plugins.

New user-provided downloadable plugins have been added, and are still being added, to the plugin download page.

## How do I find out which plugins are available, and what they do?

Shipping plugins are already installed when you first start Sibelius. They are described in the Sibelius Reference in **Section 2.13 – Plug-ins**. You can search for the plugins by name in that PDF file. Most of the time that section will give a description of the plugin and tell you which menu to use to run the plugins.

There is no official documentation for downloadable plugins, other than what they provide. Such plugins will usually have a description on their main dialog, and may also have a Help dialog and can include a PDF file when they are installed. Their entry in the plugin download page usually has a general description plus an update history.

When I am looking for a plugin. I usually google something like “*Sibelius <plugin name>*”, and something will probably come up. You could also ask a question on one of the Sibelius online forums.

There have been a lot of blog posts, especially on [Scoring Notes](#) and [Of Note](#), describing specific plugins, and when I publish new plugins I will usually post a description of the plugin to the [Sibelius tech support forum](#) and the Facebook groups **Avid Sibelius Users** and **Sibelius Power Users**.

I have links to a number of documents about plugins on the [Sibelius page of my web site](#).

## The Big List of Plugins™

Philip Rothman of NYC Music Services also maintains a [list of downloadable plugins](#), sorted alphabetically by name, and this can be very helpful when trying to find a plugin you want to install.

You can **sort** the columns by name, category, Sibelius version, or author, but the big gain is the **Search** button. You can type any part of a plugin name, and you will see any plugins that match what you typed, anywhere in the list. This will show you the category, which you can use to find the plugin when you go to install it. The list is also a great way to browse for plugins available on a given topic.

Here is an example list of plugins that relate to harps:

Show All ▾ entries

Search: harp

Plug-in Name	Author	Category	Sibelius version
<a href="#">Add Harp Pedal Diagrams</a>	Neil Sands	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Alternate Harp Pedaling</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Change Text Accidental Size</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Color Harp Strings</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	5 +
<a href="#">Filter Harp Pedal Changes</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Filter Harp Pedal Diagrams</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	5 +
<a href="#">Harp Arpeggio</a>	Ian Cugley	Harp	5 +
<a href="#">Harp Diagram from Tuning</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Harp Gliss</a>	Ian Cugley	Harp	5 +
<a href="#">Harp Gliss and Octave Notes</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Harp Gliss From Pedal Diagram</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	5 +
<a href="#">Harp Gliss Pitches</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Harp Gliss Playback</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	6 +
<a href="#">Label Harp Diagrams</a>	Bob Zawalich	Harp	5 +

If you click on a plugin name, the link will take you to the **Sibelius Plugin Download Page** entry for that plugin, where you can see the plugin description and update history, and even download the zip file should you so desire.

## Alternate Harp Pedaling

Version 01.09.00

Added 01 Jan 2010 (last updated 07 Mar 2014)

For use with Sibelius 6, Sibelius 7.1, Sibelius 7.5, Sibelius 8.x, Sibelius 18.x, Sibelius 19.x, Sibelius 20.x and Sibelius 21.x

Given some entered note pitch names, the plugin will make a list of all the harp pedalings that include these pitches.

The pitches must be defined using CAPITAL letters C D E F G A B for pitches, in any order, with b or # for accidentals, and optional X for placeholder pitches. Each pitch must be separated by at least 1 space. There can be no duplicate pitch letter names, and no more than 7 pitches. Double accidentals are not allowed.

The results will be put in a listbox. If no pitch can be found for a harp string, an X will be displayed.

Choosing an entry in the list moves a copy to an edit box from which you may copy the tuning text. The text following the tuning (font name and MLNO characters) is text for a pedal diagram. Paste this into a text item in a score to display as a pedal diagram.

- [Download AlternateHarpPedaling.zip](#) (9K, downloaded 25595 times)

*Plug-in written by Bob Zawulich.*

### Categories

- [Accidentals \(9\) »](#)
- [Arrange \(2\) »](#)
- [Analysis \(2\) »](#)
- [Batch Processing \(21\) »](#)
- [Color \(12\) »](#)
- [Composing Tools \(41\) »](#)
- [Layout \(45\) »](#)
- [Menus and shortcuts \(4\) »](#)
- [Notes and rests \(70\) »](#)
- [Other \(42\) »](#)
- [Playback \(23\) »](#)
- [Proof-reading \(6\) »](#)
- [Text \(92\) »](#)
- [Navigation \(13\) »](#)
- [Filter and Find \(47\) »](#)
- [Chord Symbols \(11\) »](#)
- [Note Input \(4\) »](#)
- [Lines \(16\) »](#)
- [Simplify Notation \(1\) »](#)
- [Focus On Staves \(2\) »](#)
- [Comments \(2\) »](#)
- [Harp \(14\) »](#)
- [Transformations \(7\) »](#)
- [Hitpoints \(3\) »](#)
- [Guitar \(6\) »](#)
- [Banjo \(3\) »](#)
- [Selection \(7\) »](#)
- [Developers' Tools \(23\) »](#)
- [Engravers' Tools \(35\) »](#)
- [Tuplets \(4\) »](#)
- [Sight-impaired \(8\) »](#)

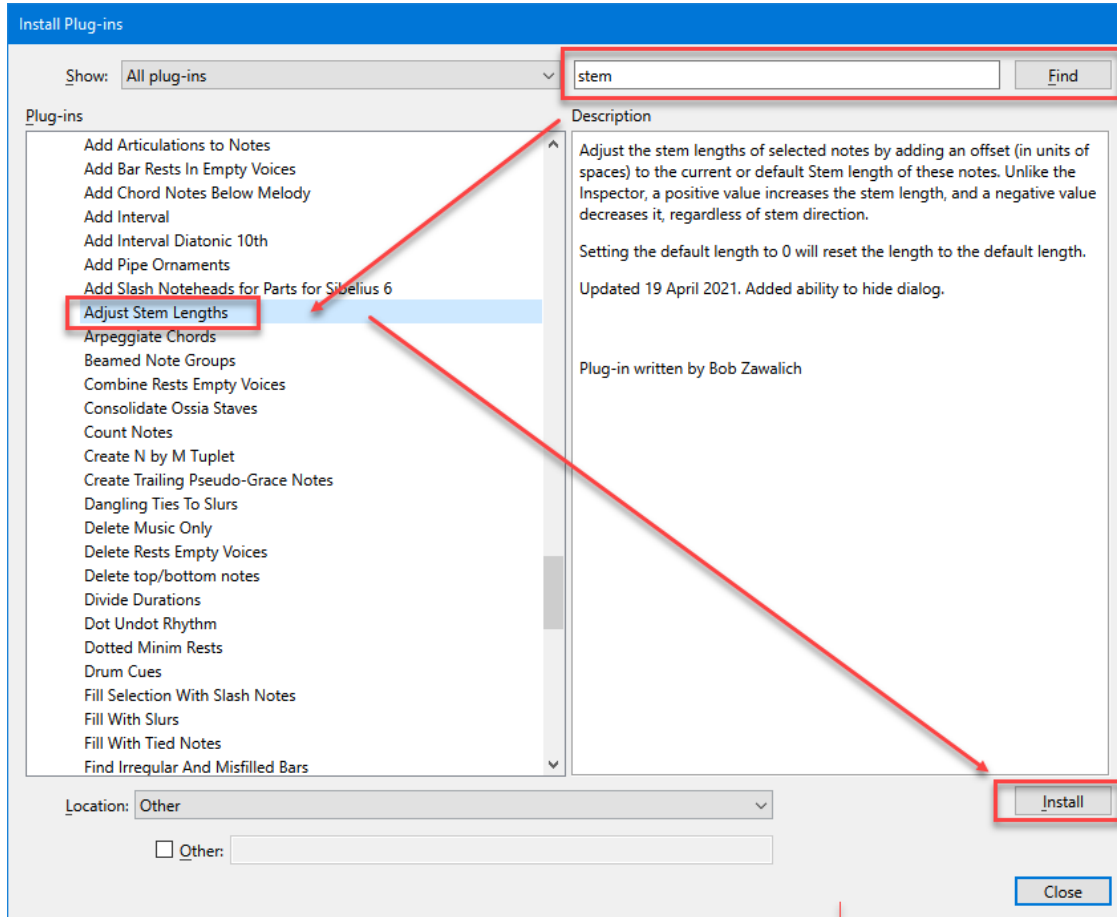
Typically, in Sibelius 7 or later at least, you will not want to download the zip file, but would instead install the plugin in Sibelius using **File>Plug-ins>Install Plug-ins.**

[Scoring Notes has a post about this list.](#) Thanks to Philip Rothman for hosting and maintaining it.

I keep a shortcut to this list in all my browsers.

## Installing downloadable plugins (Sibelius 7 and later)

You can install plugins from the Sibelius Plugin Download Page using the plugin installer at **File > Plug-ins > Install Plug-ins**. Recent versions of Sibelius Ultimate (2019.4 or later) have a **Find** box where you can type in the plugin name or a part of the name, and find matching plugins. In earlier versions of Sibelius 7 or later, you would need to know the category of the plugin to avoid having to search through 500-odd plugins, and that was one of the motivations for creating the [list of downloadable plugins](#).



## Installing custom and user-written plugins (and plugins prior to Sibelius 7)

The plugin installer was a game-changer for using plugins. Prior to that you had to find the plugin **zip** file on the download page, unzip it, and then copy the resulting **plg** files to an appropriate plugin folder.

[These instructions](#), though detailed and well intentioned, were a hardship for many people, and this limited the use of downloadable plugins. I wrote the plugin [Install New Plugin](#) to make the process easier, but there was the problem that you needed to install **Install New Plugin** before you could run it, and the chicken and the egg were kind of looking at each other in confusion. Now in Sibelius 7 or later you can use the plugin installer to install **Install New Plugin**, which you can use to install the plugins you bought, and so on.

If you are using a version of Sibelius prior to version 7, or write your own plugin, or buy plugins that do not provide their own installer, you will need to copy the file to a plugin subfolder or use **Install New Plugin**.

We old-timers did that for a long time, but if you can avoid it, I recommend doing so. The plugin installer is your friend.

## Duplicate Plugins

Duplicate plugins, which are plugins with the same “name without path” but different full paths are a problem in Sibelius. See [Eliminating Duplicate Plugins in Sibelius](#) for details.

**Run Plugin By Name** and **My Plugins** will warn you if there are duplicate plugins the first time they run in a Sibelius session, and will tell you which copy it thinks Sibelius will run, but if you have duplicate plugins you are in an unstable situation and you cannot really know if the plugin you want to run will be run. This can be really bad, or harmless (if they are identical copies of the same plugin), but you don't really know which.

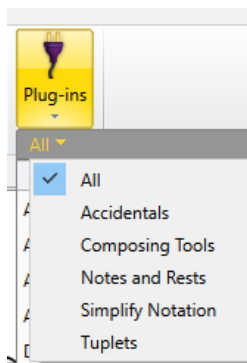
If you encounter duplicate plugins you should stop and figure out which plugin is the correct one (usually the most recent one), and delete the duplicate files. Proceed at your own risk.

## Running Plugins

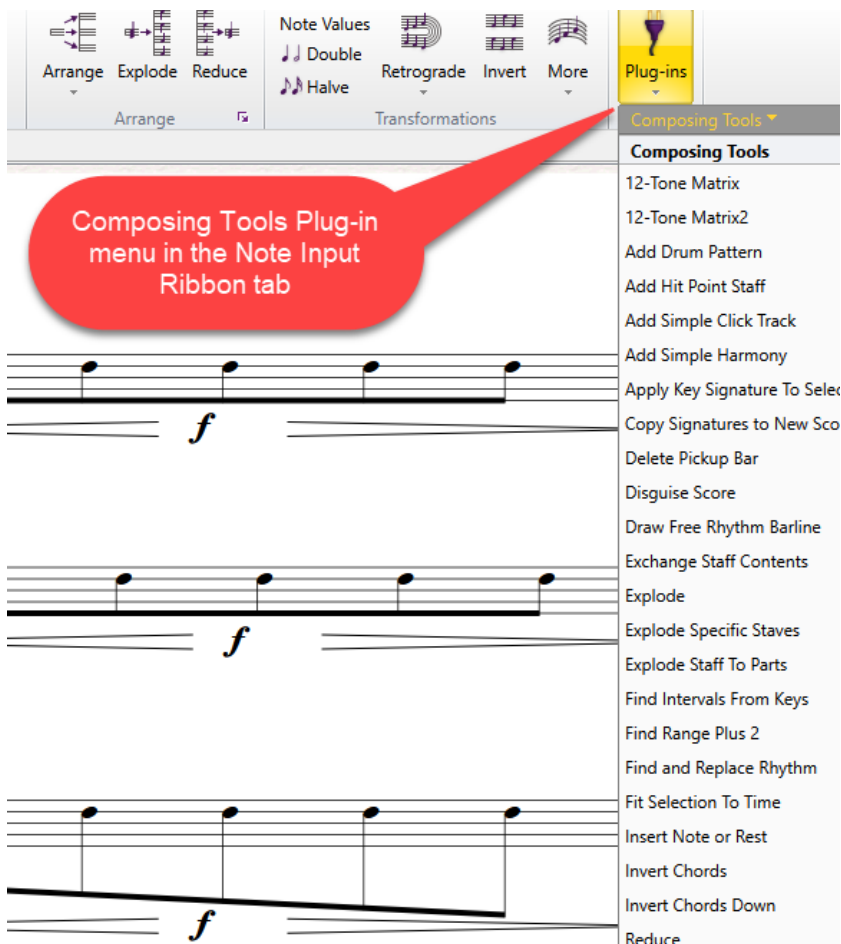
Running Sibelius plugins requires you to either know the menu that contains your desired plugin, to assign shortcuts to the plugins you use, or to use plugins that run other plugins.

1. You can run plug-ins from the Plug-ins menu in Sibelius 6 and earlier, or from plug-in galleries present in several of the tabs in the Sibelius 7+ Ribbon (Home, Note Input, Text, Play, and Review).

Here is an example of one such menu, on the **Note Input** tab of the Ribbon (screenshot is from Sibelius Ultimate 2021.2). There are several submenus:

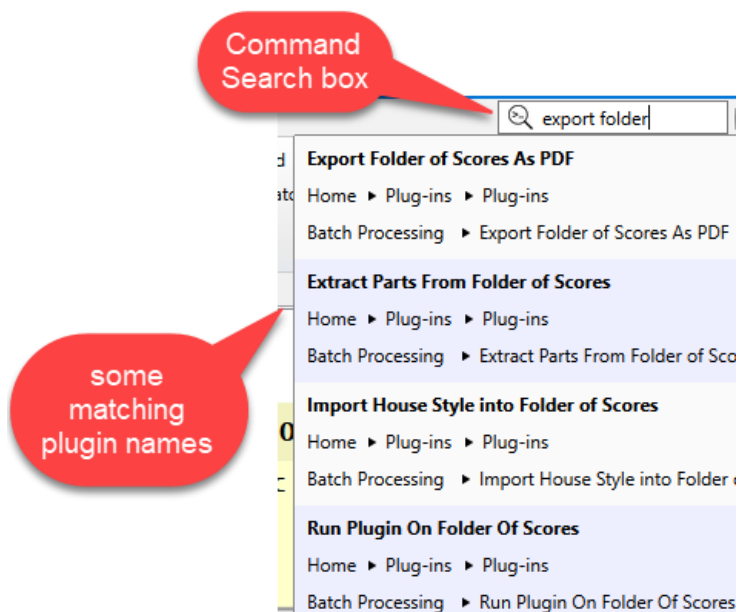


Here are the plugins contained on the **Composing Tools** sub-menu



I would say that finding the appropriate menu, and then finding the plugin on the appropriate submenu is not a very efficient way to access a plugin if you need to use that plugin often.

2. In Sibelius Ultimate 2021.2 or later, you can type in a plugin name to the Command Search box at the top right end of the Ribbon, and pretty quickly find and run a plugin. It sometimes takes a while to figure out how to best write your search string.





### 3. Assign a shortcut to a plugin

Go to **File>Preferences>Keyboard shortcuts>Plug-ins**, select a plugin and assign it a keyboard shortcut. Now when you type the shortcut the plugin will run.

The only real problem with this is that there are a fairly small number of shortcut keys available, and you need to remember them.

4. Use other plugins to organize and run your installed plugins. These include
- Run Plugin By Name
  - My Plugins
  - Fixed Plug-in Shortcuts

## Shortcut strategies for plugins

Available keyboard shortcuts are in short supply and Sibelius does not make it easy to find out if a shortcut is available.

About the only way to tell if a shortcut is available on your machine is to go into **File>Preferences>Keyboard shortcuts** and try to add a shortcut to a command. If that shortcut is assigned to something already, it will tell you what it is assigned to, and you can either decide to override the assignment and put it on your command, or choose a different shortcut until you find one that is available.

I run almost all my plugins through the plugins **Run Plugin by Name** and **Run Last Named Plugin**, so I assign easy shortcuts to those 2 plugins.

I decided at some point that I would take over the function keys F3 to F12 for plugin use, so I lost the normal mappings for those commands. I assign F8 to **Run Plugins By Name** and F7 to **Run Last Named Plugin**. F9 – 12 and F6 I have assigned to other plugins I use all the time, and F3, 4, and 5 are my “temporary critical” plugins, which I might need a lot for a specific project.

**Run Plugins By Name** keeps the last 20 plugin I ran at the top of its list, providing a recent working set of plugins I have used, and these are easy to find. **My Plugins** lets you specify a set of plugins to run that do not change unless you specifically change them, so these are effectively another set of plugin shortcuts. **My Plugins** limits you to a set of 36 plugins, with internal shortcuts 0 – 9 and A – Z. My guess is that for many people this would be a good size of a working set of plugins in regular use.

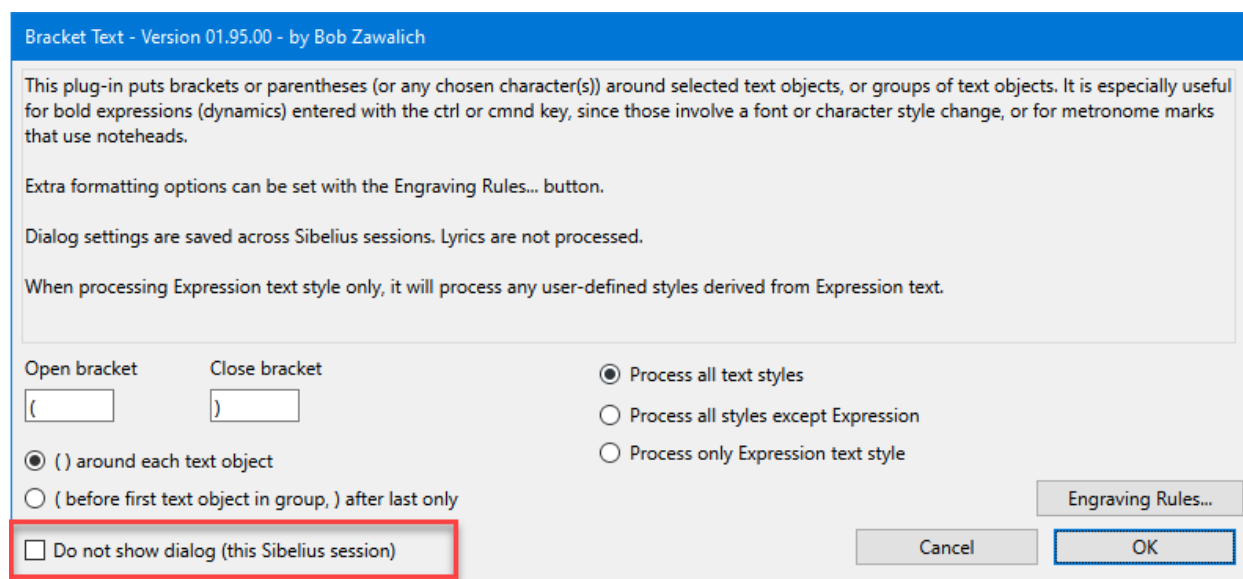
**My Plugins** has a companion plugin **Rerun My Plugins**, and **Run Command Macro** has **Rerun Command Macro**, and **Fixed Keyboard Shortcuts** has the companion plugin **Run Previous Plug-in (for use with Fixed Plug-in Shortcuts)**. If you use any of these main plugin to run your plugins, I strongly suggest assigning keyboard shortcuts to both the main plugin and its companion.

The exact mapping does not matter, but having a consistent scheme will make it easier to remember and manage your shortcuts.

## Run plugins without showing dialogs

If you need to run the same plugin multiple times, it can be annoying to have a large dialog show up each time, just to have you press OK. Some plugins will allow you to hide a plugin’s dialog after the first time it appears in a session (I find it is best to have to see the dialog at least once per session so you can review the dialog settings, so most plugins that I have written that allow you to hide dialogs will always show the dialog the first time a plugin is run in a Sibelius session).

If the plugin supports hiding its dialog there will usually be a “Do not show dialog” checkbox in the lower left corner of the dialog.



There are some other mechanisms for hiding dialogs, but this is the most common one. In most cases, even when a dialog is hidden it can be made to appear by running a plugin with no selection in the score.

## Using plugins to run other plugins

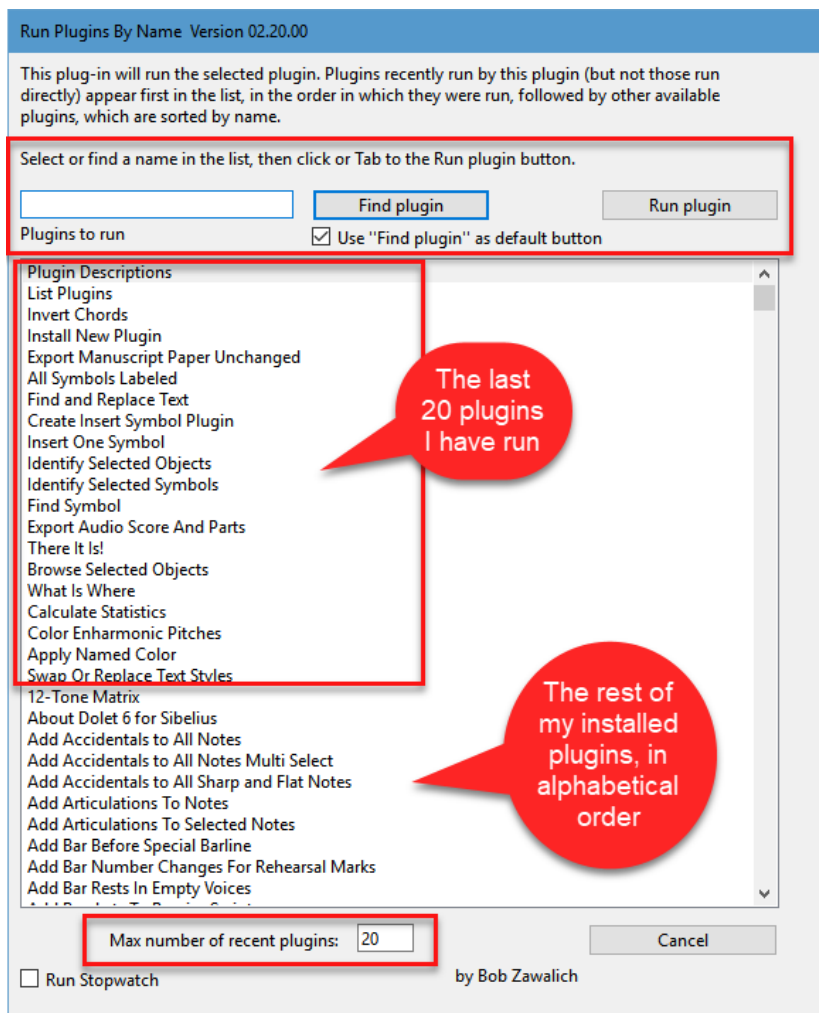
### Run Plugins By Name

There are a number of ways to make the actual running of plugins simpler. I use **Run Plugins By Name** to run nearly all my other plugins.

Install **Run Plugins By Name** (category **Other**). This will install an additional plugin, **Run Last Named Plugin**, as well.

I assign easy-to-use shortcuts for both these plugins because I use them all the time. Since I don't use some of the function keys as Sibelius intended, I use F8 for **Run Plugins By Name**, and F7 for **Run Last Named Plugin**, but any convenient shortcut key will do.

Here is what the dialog for **Run Plugins By Name** looks like:



First of all, there is a list of all the plugins installed on your machine, both shipping and user installed. The first 20 plugins in the list (as determined by the Max number of recent plugins checkbox) are the 20 most recent plugins, in the order in which they were run.

After those plugins, all the rest of the plugins are listed in alphabetical order by name (normally the name that appears on a plugin menu). I don't need to care where they are installed on my machine, or which menu they live in.

To run a plugin, you can type any part of a plugin name in the **Find plugin** edit box, then type **Enter** (which will activate the **Find plugin** button) until you have the plugin you want selected in the list.

Then tab (once or twice as needed) to the **Run plugin** button, type **Enter**, and the dialog will close and the plugin will run.

### Running the same plugin again

If you want to run the same plugin again, you can repeat the above procedure (and the plugin you just ran will be at the top of the list) or you can run **Run Last Named Plugin** (you assigned a shortcut to it, didn't you?), which will run that plugin without you needing to choose it. This works great if you are running a single plugin several times, and you don't need to give it its own shortcut.

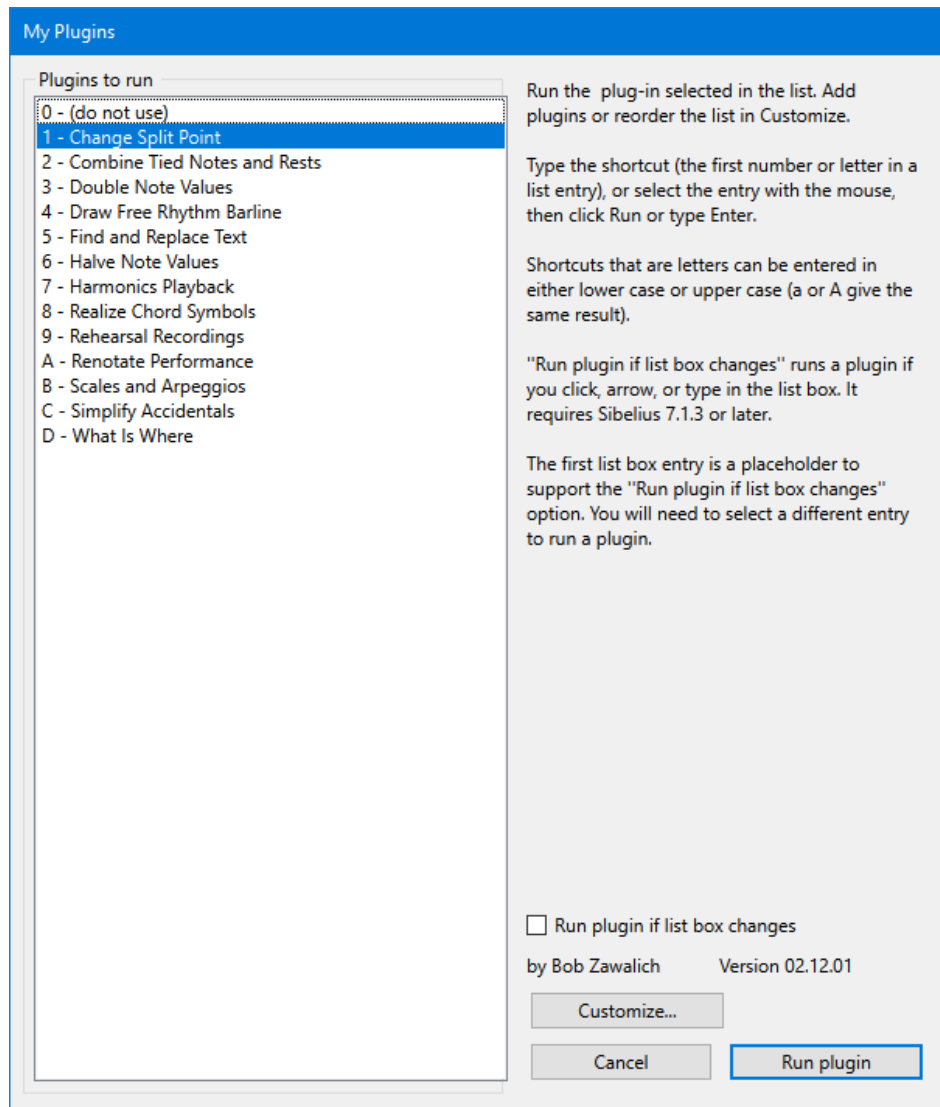
[More details on using Run Plugins By Name are available here.](#)

## My Plugins

**My Plugins** is a plugin in the Sight-Impaired category, originally designed to make it easier for sight-impaired users to run plugins.

It lets you add up to 35 plugins into a list, each of which is given a numeric (1 – 9) or alphabetical (A – Z) prefix that acts as a shortcut. If you assign a keyboard shortcut to **My Plugins** you can run any of the plugins in the list by typing the first letter or number for the plugin you want, and then pressing Enter.

Unlike **Run Plugin By Name**, you have to use the **Customize** option to add the plugins into the list, but once you do that, the shortcuts will be fixed until you change them yourself, which makes it easier to memorize shortcuts for plugins you use often.



### Running the same plugin again

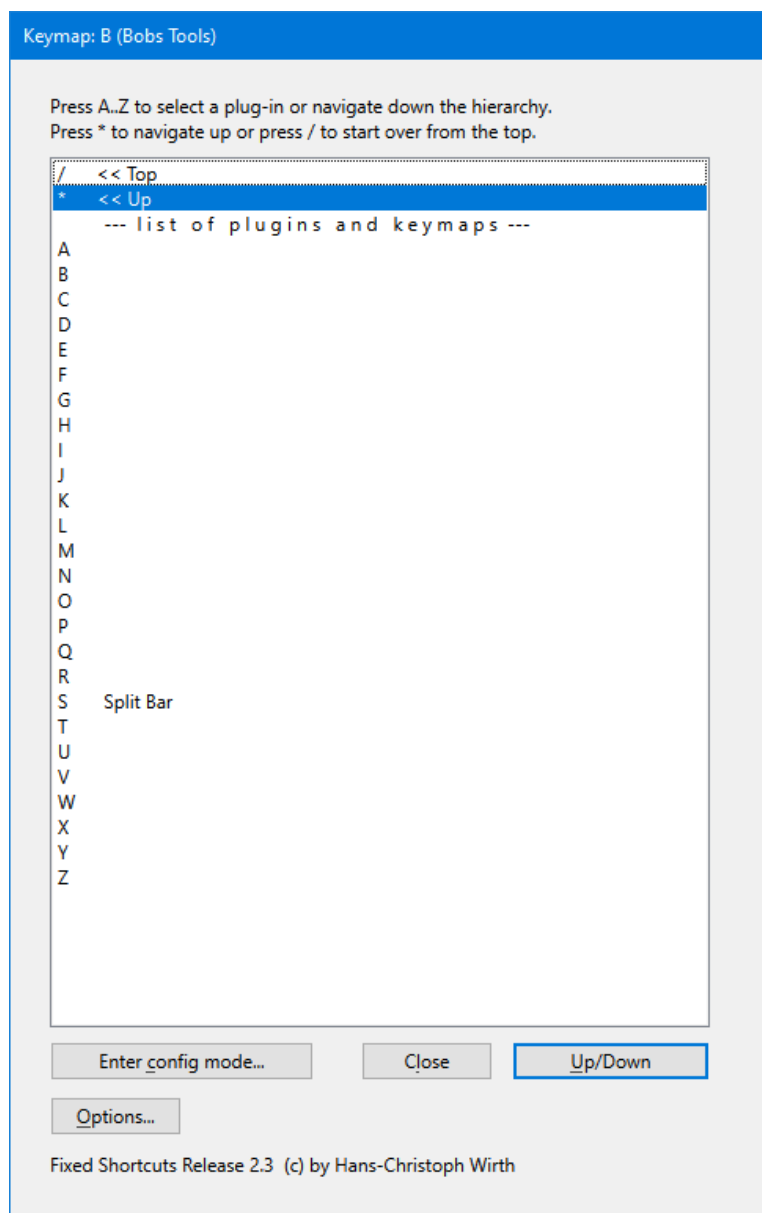
If you want to run the same plugin again, you can run **Rerun My Plugins**, another candidate for a shortcut.

[More details on using My Plugins are available here.](#)

## Fixed Plug-in Shortcuts

This is a plugin written by Hans-Christoph Wirth to solve a problem in earlier version of Sibelius where shortcuts to plugins were not stable. It can still be useful in current versions of Sibelius Ultimate. It is similar to **My Plugins** in that you add entries to the list of plugins, and the plugins retain their shortcuts.

It is described in the plug-in list as “Fixed Plug-in Shortcuts” but the plugin refers to itself as “Fixed Shortcuts”. It has some interesting features that you might want to look into.



### Running the same plugin again

If you want to run the same plugin again, you can repeat the above procedure, or run the companion plugin, **Run Previous Plug-in (for use with Fixed Plug-in Shortcuts)**, written by Corwin Newall, that will run the last plugin that was run by **Fixed Shortcuts**.

[More details on using both \*\*Fixed Plug-In Shortcuts\*\* and \*\*Run Plugins By Name\*\* are available here.](#)

## Writing your own plugins

You can do it! Sibelius provides a plugin editor and the Manuscript Language Reference for free (go to File>Plug-ins to access these.)

Simple plugins can be useful and relatively easy. More complex ones have taken me several months to write.

[I have some documents on writing plugins on my website.](#) They are really just rough drafts, but they could be useful. You can read through the Manuscript Reference and try things out, and you can actually open and look at the code for any installed plugins.

Feel free to study the code, but be aware that it is copyrighted by its authors. Please treat it the way you would treat a score by another composer, and do not copy code that is not marked as public domain without asking permission.

In Sibelius Ultimate 2021.2 and later, Sibelius added Commands that can be run by plugins, and this makes writing simple plugins considerably easier. I wrote a series of plugins, including Execute Commands, cmdutils, and Run Command Macro that provide a development environment where you can set up sequences of commands that you can run, or save as a macro file, or use to auto-generate a plugin that will execute the sequence of commands.

I have a number of instructional documents, including several tutorials, on the [Execute Commands Plugin Documentation](#) page of my website. There you can find [the reference manual for the cmdutils plugin](#) which is a library of additional commands that I wrote to make macros easier and more powerful.

## Where to look for information on plugins

I have links to a number of documents about plugins on the [Sibelius page of my web site](#), including links to many blog posts about plugins on [Scoring Notes](#) and [Of Note](#).

You can ask questions about them on the [Sibelius tech support forum](#) and the Facebook groups **Avid Sibelius Users** and **Sibelius Power Users**.

Composers will find useful tools in the **Transformations, Composing Tools, and Engravers' Tools** categories, but there are lots of plugins you will not use every day, but which will save you hours of work sometime (see, for example [Tie Extended Stable](#)) . It can be useful to browse around.

## Some Interesting Plugins

Here are some plugins you might want to have a look at. Many have links to blog posts or PDF documents describing their use, and any shipping plugins (marked with a \*) will have some explanation in the Sibelius Reference.

12 Tone Matrix\*

Add Harp Pedaling\*

[Add Pickup Bar](#)

[Apply Series](#)

[Apply Named Color](#)

Bracket Text

[Calculate Statistics](#)

[Clipboards](#)

Combine Tied Notes And Rests\*

Copy Double/Halve Note Values

[Disguise Score](#)

[Divide Durations\\*](#)

Double/Halve Note Values\*

Draw Free Rhythm Barline\*

[Edit Instrument Names](#)

[Exchange Staff Contents](#)

[Execute Commands](#)

[Export Audio With Count-In](#)

Export Lyrics\*

Export Selection As Score\*

[Fill With Tied Notes](#)

[Filters](#)

Find and Replace Text\*

[Flip Selected Notes](#)

[Focus Families/Focus Sets](#)

Go To

[Harp Gliss Playback](#)

[Invert Chords](#)

[Lines Between Notes](#)

[Multirests and Empty Bars](#)

[Note Spacing](#)

[Open Selected Parts](#)

[Pitch Mapping/Transform Scale/Percussion Pitch Mapping\\*](#)

[Proof-Reading\\*](#)

[Rehearsal Recordings\\*](#)

Resize Bars\*

[Respell Accidentals plugins\\*](#)

[Scale Notehead Sizes](#)

Scordatura

Solfège

[Tie Extended Stable](#)

Tuplet Plugins\*

[Tuplets Over Barlines](#)

Unfold Repeats

[What Is Where\\*/There It Is](#)

Good luck. Plugins can totally change the way you work with Sibelius. Have fun!