

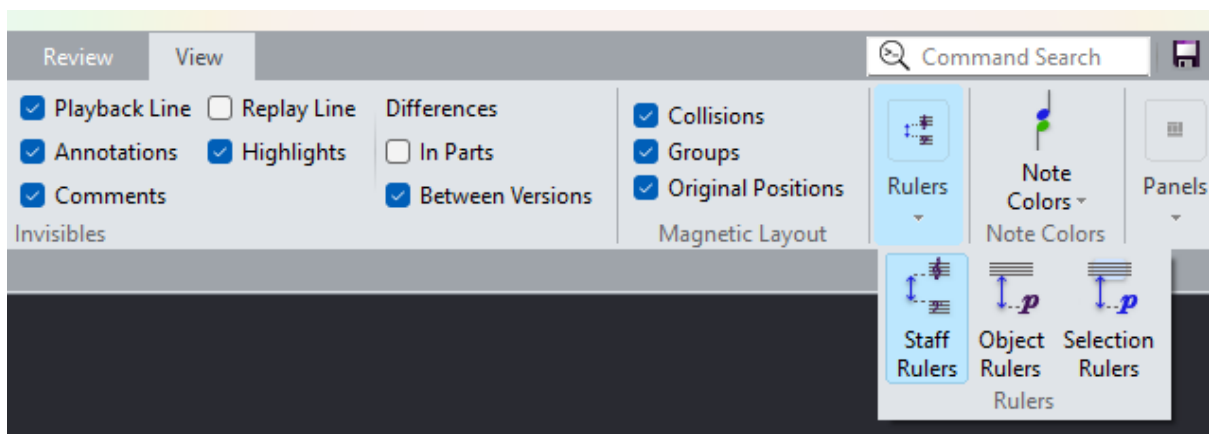
Moving Sibelius Staves and Systems



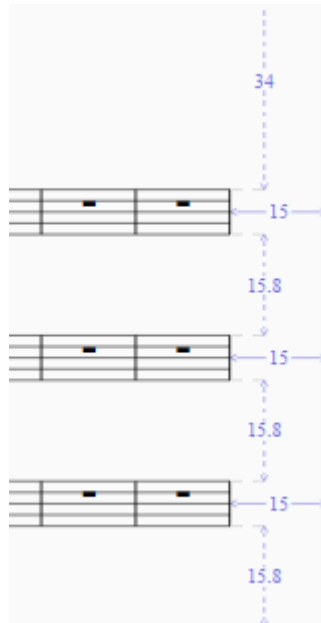
Image credit: Van3ssa from Pixabay

Following on from my previous blog on tidying up Sibelius scores, I have some more pointers now on how to manipulate staves and systems. But before you do anything else –

Switch on the Rulers

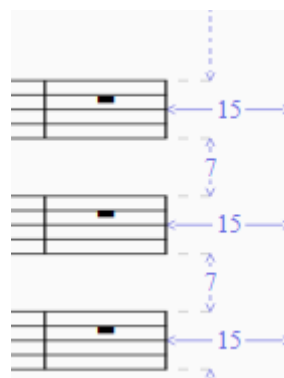


View tab, Rulers, drop down and switch on Staff Rulers. Now you can see the distances between staves more easily, expressed in millimetres:

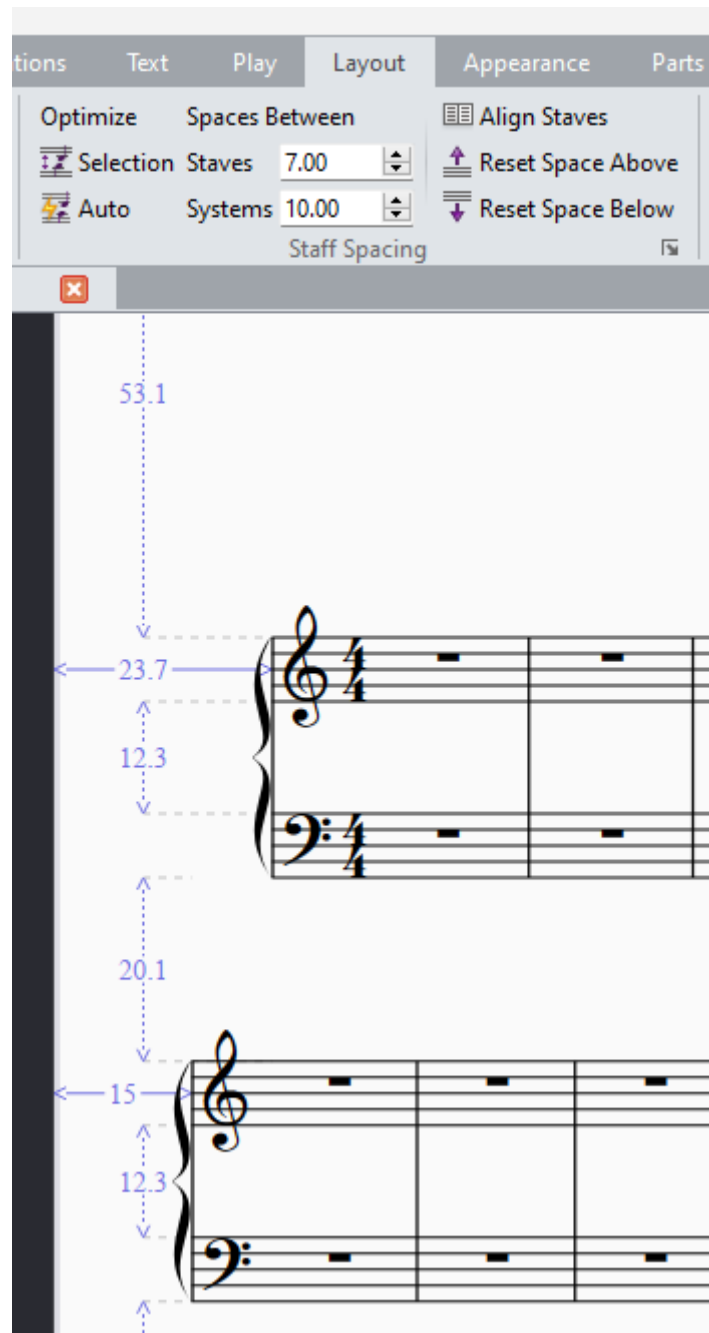


How Sibelius Measures Vertical Space

When setting up the spaces between staves and systems, Sibelius uses a unit of measurement called 'Spaces'. This unit is related to the size of the staff and its actual value is a quarter of the staff size. So, if your staff size is 7 mm, four spaces below will equal just that:



And how do you set these 'spaces'? Easy: just go to the Layout tab, then look under Staff Spacing:



Here we see that there are 7 spaces between staves (in this score equal to 12.3 mm), and 20 spaces between systems (20.1 mm). Spaces are always relative to the stave size.

Those spaces are now your default setting, which means they will be constant throughout this score. You probably know about moving staves manually, just clicking on one, then dragging it up or down. Obviously, that will change the spaces between the staves you've just moved. If you do that then change your mind, to get back to the default position click on that stave again (just one bar will do) then press 'Reset space above' or 'Reset space below', and the damage is mended!

If you want to change the default spacing between staves or systems, simply click the arrows up or down next to the spacing number. You'll see the staves moving. This is a global action.

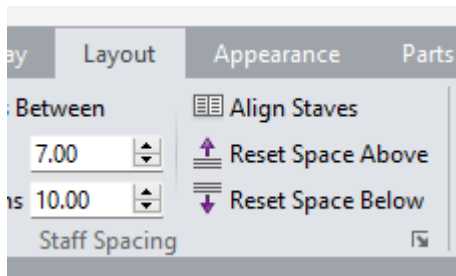
Stave Justification (Snapping Down)

You may have noticed, when moving staves manually, that they suddenly snap down to the bottom, leaving an unsightly gap between other staves:

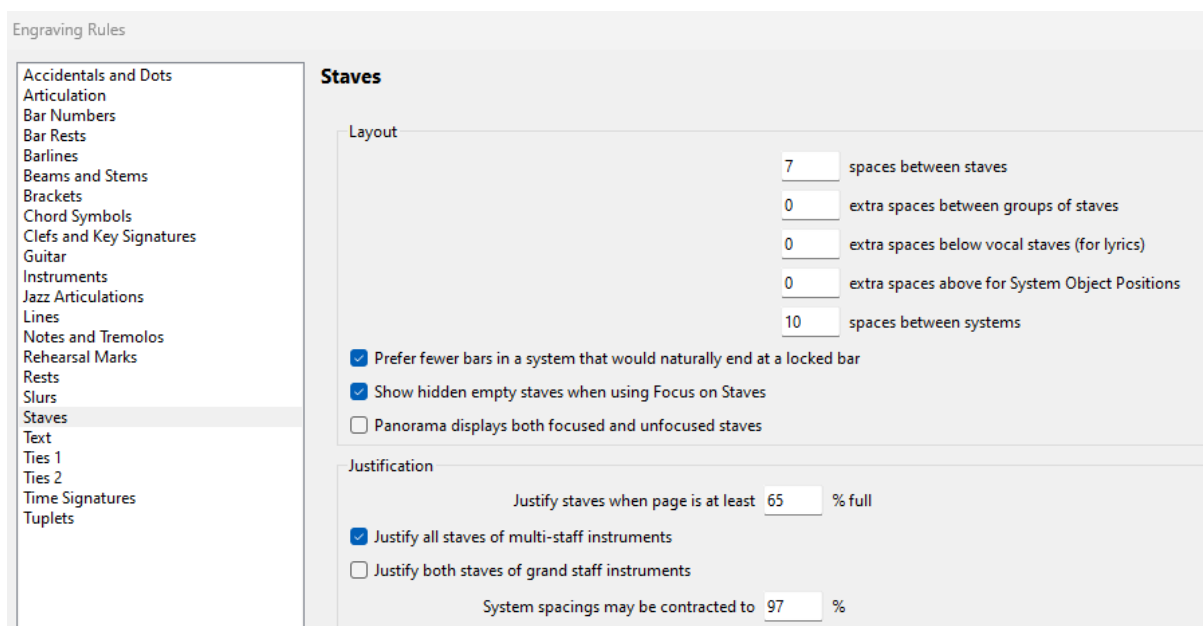


How annoying is that?! The reason is that Sibelius has a default setting for when the page is 65 percent full. The last

stave/system snaps down when you pass the 65 percent level on the page. But it's easy to switch this irritating feature off. See the little arrow at the bottom left here?



Click on that and it will make a shortcut to Engraving Rules/Staves where you can find the Justification percentage, and change that to 100 percent. Then you will never get that annoying snap again!



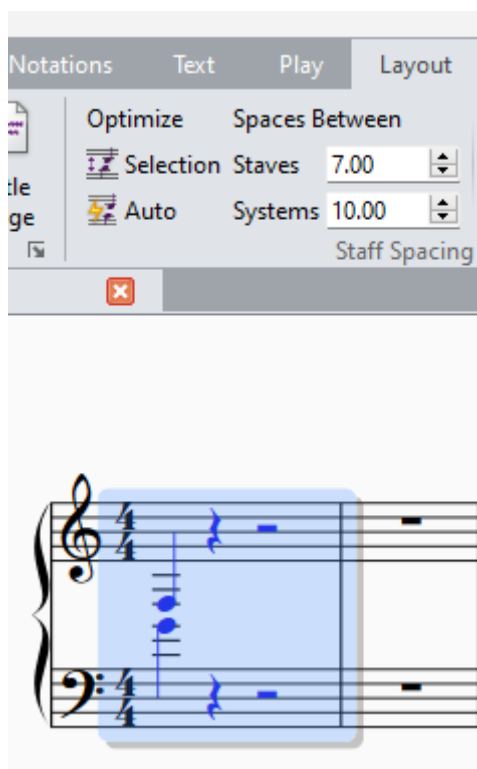
After you've done that, you'll probably need to click on any offending staves and reset the space above. But then you can manually move the staves around to your heart's content without the snap factor!

Optimising space between staves

What does this actually mean? Simply put, it just improves the spacing if there's a problem, such as the following clash (yes, I know this one's contrived, but indulge me):



Back to our friend Layout again, select the two staves, then press Selection (below Optimize) and the following should happen:



However, if you press Auto (below Selection), Sibelius will automatically do this for you as you input and work through your score.

Move one single stave up and down

You probably know how to do this manually, clicking and dragging, but here's an easier method. Select a bar in the stave then:

Shift + Alt + up/down arrow

Add Control to that mix if you want to make the incremental jumps larger.

Move a group of staves up and down

To do the same with a group of staves on one page (without affecting those on other pages) select a bar in the uppermost stave of this group and press:

Control + Alt + up/down arrow

Move the bottom staff without affecting other pages

Sometimes it's useful to move just one bottom staff without it affecting any other pages. Select any bar in that staff and press:

Control + Shift + Alt + up/down arrow

Take bars back/forward a system

You might want to do this if you need to equalise the numbers of bars per system. This is the scenario we often love to hate:



So we need to move those lower bars back up to the top stave. Select all the bars you need together then press:

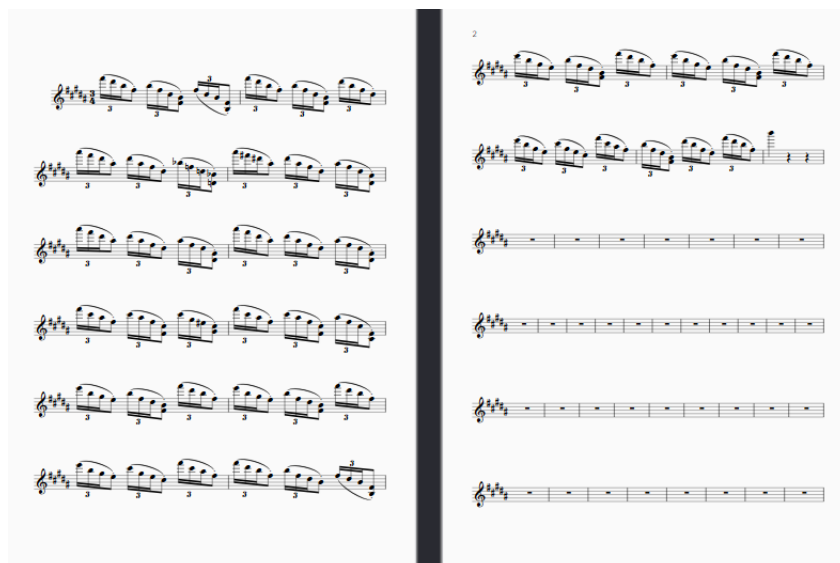
Shift + Alt + M (the SAM technique as I call it)

in order for this to happen:



Take a system back/forward a page

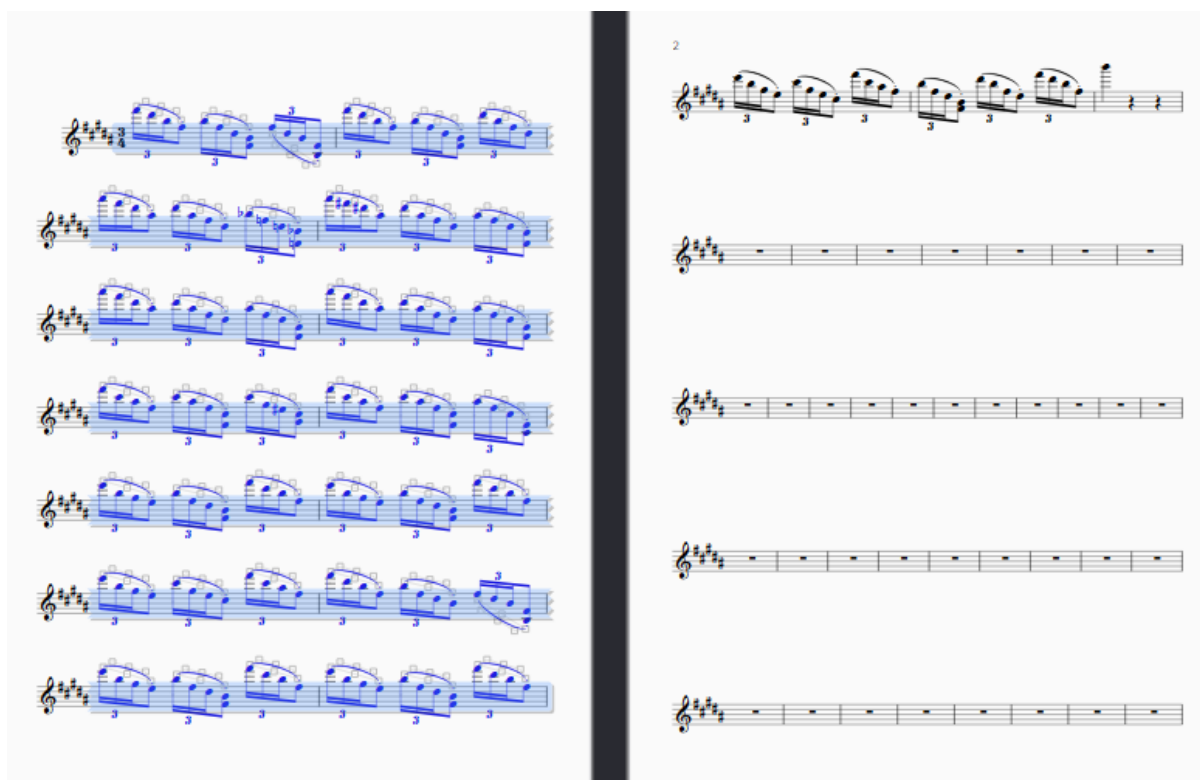
This one has foxed me for far too long! But the solution is so aggravatingly simple. Say, for example, you want to move the top stave of p.2 below back to p.1:



Just select that top stave and all of p.1 then press:

Shift + Control + Alt + M (or SCAM, for a way to remember!)

And this miracle should happen:

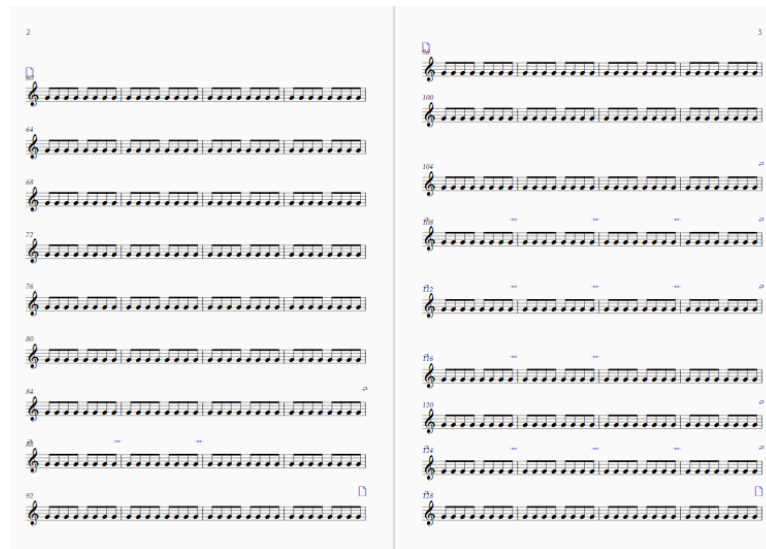


Aligning staves

It's good to have an equivalent number of staves on facing pages. I'm sure you'd agree that the following looks horrible:

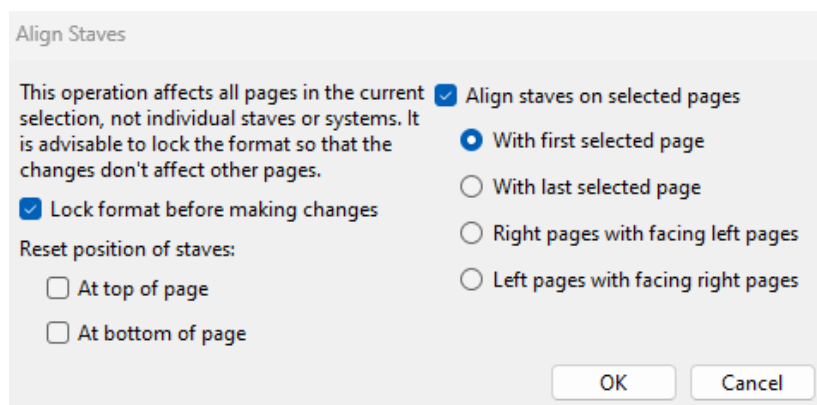


Now, as far as I know, there is no way of just clicking a button to fix this, so if anyone has that info, do please tell me! In a situation like this, I count the staves on each page – ten on the left, eight on the right. Let's change that to nine on each. So, lock the end of the right-hand page, then make a page break at the end of the penultimate staff on the left-hand page. (Page breaks are made by selecting the last barline then pressing control plus the return key.) This then happens:



We now have nine staves on each page. But it still looks messy. We need to tidy up that gappy second page. It's a simple process: select both pages, then do the following:

- Layout Tab
- Staff Spacing
- Align Staves



In this situation, you would align with the first selected page, and doing so results in the following:



The image displays two pages of musical notation, page 2 on the left and page 3 on the right. Each page contains ten staves of music, with notes and rests. The notation is in a standard musical format, likely for a piano or similar instrument. The pages are aligned horizontally, showing the continuation of the musical piece across the two pages. The notes are blue, and the rests are white with a blue outline. The page numbers '2' and '3' are visible in the top left and top right corners respectively.

And if that's sitting a little too low for your taste, put the cursor in any bar on the top line and drag the whole lot up. Realign the other page using the process described above if necessary.

Ivor McGregor October 2024