

Anvil Studio: An Outline Instruction Manual

1. Downloading and Installation of the Anvil Studio Program

In your internet browser, go to www.anvilstudio.com , click on the Download/Install button and follow the prompts. If you're asked to change system settings (eg speaker properties) it's usually best to go along with what's recommended, but you might want to make a note of the keystrokes involved so you can reinstate the status quo in the event of any problems encountered downstream.

2. Downloading MIDI Files

It's a good idea to set up a folder structure to receive your MIDI files before you start. In Windows XP or earlier, you'd normally go to the My Music folder, and create your own named subfolders therein to suit yourself. From Vista or Windows 7 desktop, **Computer > Libraries>Music** is pretty much an exact equivalent.

Then locate the MIDI files required. For WCO repertoire stored on this site, go to **Member's Page**, click on **Rehearsal Music** and a selection of upcoming concert material is downloadable directly. If a midi file cannot be found, an alternative MP3 file should be available. This cannot be used with Anvil Studios, but can be listened to, to familiarise yourself with the music.

You can find a huge range of other MIDI files, on specialist music sites and elsewhere, by interrogating your internet browser. Such sites will usually include a simple download button, from which you can listen immediately (**Run/Play**) or choose to **Save** or **Save As** in your preferred location.

3. Open Anvil Studio

From the Windows desktop, start Anvil Studio from its icon or use **Start>All Programs>Anvil Studio**

The program window displayed at startup comprises (from the top):

- Main menu bar comprising file management commands (**File, Edit, Track, View** etc),
- Playback control panel (see section 5 below)
- Track control panel enabling individual instrument spec, volume/balance settings etc
- Music notation window, scrolling through selected part(s) during playback and as required
- File edit/authoring panel and virtual keyboard enabling key/meter setup, note entry/revision etc
- Context sensitive Help window

As cursor points at each command/button, a tooltip displays its function. The Help window provides comprehensive information on all the program features and enables users to go well beyond the limited applications envisaged here.

4. Load MIDI File(s)

The program opens with last MIDI file played still loaded in memory, for immediate play. To load a different file, choose **File>Open Song** from the main menu bar and navigate your subfolder structure to find the required file. Double click the filename to load it in place of previous file.

5. Controlling Playback

You can access, edit and manipulate all or selected parts of the loaded file's data as follows:

Rewind, Stop and Play

Immediately below the main menu bar is a playback control panel containing a variety of graphical controls. At the left end of the panel there is a slider, which enables scrolling through the file and drives time and musical notation windows accordingly. Below it there are **Rewind**, **Stop** and **Play** buttons, which replicate conventional CD/music player functions.

Cueing

Clicking in the music notation window sets the "now" time, from which playback commences when the **Play** button is clicked. To the right of the slider described above, the **Time**, **Mouse** and **Duration** windows display current "now" time, mouse position within the file and its overall length.

The **New Cue** button enables users to replicate markers used in sheet music, or to enter their own markers to identify/control repeat looping for practice purposes as follows.

Looping

To select a passage for editing or looping purposes, click and drag within the music notation window. With the required section selected, **Edit > Set Record and Play Start and End Times** brings up a dialog box: check the **Record/Play from, Affects which Part of Song gets Played Back**, and **When Playing, Loop this Selection** controls for continuous repeats until the Stop button is clicked.

Tempo

Immediately to the right of the New Cue button is the **Tempo** button, which enables any changes in playback speed without affecting musical pitch. Next button right toggles a **Metronome** on and off; right-clicking gives access to various metronome control options. (To return to the original screen, there is a Back button to the right of the help menu button).

Solo/Ensemble

Within the track control panel, selection of one or more instrument tracks gives access to a variety of voicing specification choices. Each track is assigned an **Instrument** voice, which can then be cycled through **On**, **Off/Mute**, or **Solo** by clicking in the option cell, and has its own **Volume** and **L/R Balance** settings. Thus the user can configure any combination of instruments and voice settings at will, to suit his needs at any time.

Volume

NB: setting track volume(s) as above only determines the sound mix passed by Anvil Studio to the Windows operating system; it does not directly affect output from computer to speakers or phones, which remains primarily dependent on speaker controls and Windows Control Panel settings.

You can choose to have Windows display a speaker volume icon on the Taskbar at bottom right of your screen, which affords shortcut access to this setting outside Anvil Studio. Also, some speakers come with physical knobs/sliders that afford manual control independently of computer settings.

6. Limitations

Anvil Studio freeware can play a maximum of 16 tracks simultaneously, which limit is occasionally exceeded in MIDI files scored for orchestra. However, it is usually possible to edit/combine minor parts in composite tracks, which WCO will arrange prior to posting on its website.

7. Further Study

This primer is intended to enable users effectively to select and control playback for practice purposes only, where suitable pre-existing MIDI files have been or can be located. Authoring new files, and/or editing existing copy, is strictly speaking outside its scope.

It is nevertheless comparatively easy to write and edit MIDI files using Anvil Studio. Data is entered and edited graphically in the music notation window, using commands located in the menu panel below it: interested users can read up on relevant procedures in the program's comprehensive and context sensitive help screens.

WCO will try to post pre-existing files on the website for download in advance of concert dates wherever possible. Where no suitable files can be found, members willing and able to digitise some or all of relevant scores should contact the webmaster who will coordinate assembly if possible.

Winchester Chamber Orchestra

March 2012