

Performance Assistant

Version 1.10

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Introduction

Welcome to a whole new way to practice. This Performance Assistant product will make your practice sessions more fun, and productive, than ever.

Each title in the Performance Assistant series comes on a separate diskette, which contains the music files and a player program that is specially designed for the practicing music student. This User's Guide describes the features of the Performance Assistant player.

You can use the Performance Assistant as an accompanist, or you can have it play your part as well, so you can check your rhythm and intonation.

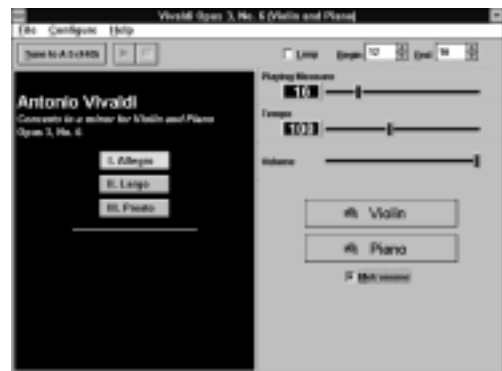
In either case, you set the tempo. One of the key advantages of playing along with computer generated music is that you can have any tempo you like, without changing the pitch.

We are sure you will enjoy this fun, new way to practice.

Installing the Program

To install this program you need Windows 3.1 or 95; a 386 or higher processor, 4 Mb RAM, about 1 Mb of hard disk space, and a sound card or external MIDI instrument. It will work best if your synthesizer is General MIDI compatible.

Insert the diskette into your floppy drive. Then run a:\setup (or b:\setup if your floppy is drive "b"). That's all there is to it! After installation you will get a new icon in a Program Group called Virtual Virtuoso. Click the icon and you will see a screen similar to this:



Selecting a Piece

The panel on the left side of the screen displays the names of the composers and pieces that are available in this product.

There will be one or more buttons that you use to select the desired piece. You can use the mouse (left click) to select any button. You can also use the PageDown and PageUp keys on your keyboard to select the piece to be played.

You can select a new piece at any time, even while the current piece is being played. The current piece will stop playing, and the new piece will be selected. If you have made changes to the tempo, volume control, or loop settings of the previous piece, you will be asked if you wish to save these changes before the new piece is selected.

A panel on the right side of the screen displays the names of the instrumental parts. Each name appears on a button, which can be used to turn off, or mute the part. For example, if you just want the computer to play the piano accompaniment, while you play the solo on your violin, simply click the Violin button before starting playback. Only one part can be muted at a time. If the Violin part is already muted, and you click the Piano button, the Violin will be turned back on.

These buttons can also be switched on and off using the Function keys on your keyboard. Function key F1 will turn the first part on and off, F2 will turn the second part on and off, and so on.

Most titles in the Performance Assistant series also have an optional Metronome track. To hear the metronome, simply click the Metronome check box underneath the Part buttons.

Play, Pause, and Stop Controls

To begin playback, click the Play button (with the green arrow). You can also begin playback by pressing the **P** key on the computer keyboard. This is particularly helpful when you have your instrument in hand. All of the pieces were recorded with a count-in measure, so you will have time to get ready to play before the music actually starts. You will hear the metronome beat through the count-in measure, even if you have not selected the metronome playback option.

There are now two active controls: Pause and Stop. If you click Pause (or press the **P** key), playback will stop immediately. The measure counter will remain on the current measure. While paused, you may change the tempo, play the tuning pitch, change the starting measure, or set up a repeat loop.

You can resume playback from the same point at which playback was paused by clicking the Play arrow (or pressing the **P** key again). Playback will resume immediately (sorry, no count-in), and any change you have made in tempo will take effect immediately.

To stop playback, click the Stop button, or press **S** on the keyboard. Playback will stop immediately, the measure counter will be reset to 0, but any changes you have made to tempo or volume will remain in effect.

Tempo Control

The Tempo slider is active at all times. Using the left mouse button, click and drag the slider to the right or left to increase or decrease the tempo. The tempo display is updated continuously as you move the slider, so you can stop at any desired number, but the tempo of the playback will not change until you release the mouse button.

You can also change the tempo from the computer keyboard. Press the + (**Addition**) key on the numeric keypad to increase the tempo or the - (**Subtraction**) key to decrease the tempo. The tempo display is updated continuously while these keys are held down, but the tempo of the playback will not change until you release the key.

The program can remember your tempo settings for each piece. When you exit the program (or when you select a new piece), you will be asked if you want to save your new tempo for the current piece. If you select Yes, then the piece will automatically play at your tempo every time it is selected (unless you change it again).

There is a default tempo for each piece. This is the tempo that was set for the piece when you first installed the program. You can restore the tempo to the default value by selecting Configure/Restore Default Tempo from the main menu.

Starting at a Selected Measure

Before you begin playback, you may use the Measure slider to select the measure number at which playback will begin.

To set the starting measure, simply use your mouse to move the slider until the desired measure number appears in the panel to the left of the slider. You may also set the starting measure from the computer keyboard. Use the **End** key on the keyboard to increase the starting measure number. Think of it as moving toward the End of the piece. The starting measure will continue to increase as long as you hold the **End** key down. Use the **Home** key to move toward the beginning of the piece.

The starting measure number can be changed whenever playback is stopped or paused (but not while playing).

Important Note: The messages that tell your system what instrumental voices to use (Violin, Cello, Piano, etc.) are always contained in Measure 0. If you select a piece and then set the starting measure to something other than 0, these messages will not be sent. The music will then be played on whatever instruments the Midi channels were last told to play. If you hear your piano accompaniment being played on a violin and viola (because the last piece you played was a string quartet), simply Stop playback, then select Play and let it play through Measure 0. Then you can stop and change to any starting measure you like and you will hear the correct instruments.

Looping

You may set up a loop, to help you practice any particular passage repeatedly.

Use the edit box labeled **Begin** to select the first measure of the loop, and the edit box labeled **End** to select the last measure of the loop. Using the mouse, click either the up or down arrows on the right side of the edit box. You can also use the computer keyboard. Press Alt-B to select the Begin box or Alt-E to select the End box. Then use the up or down arrow keys to change the values in the boxes (you will probably find this is faster than using the mouse).

Of course, the End measure must always be greater than or equal to the Begin measure. You will see that this rule is automatically enforced. If you spin the Begin measure up beyond the current value for the End measure, the value for the End measure will be set equal to the Begin measure. You may then increase the End measure further. Similarly, if you spin the End measure down below the current value for Begin measure, the value for the Begin measure will be set equal to the end measure.

Click the **Loop** check Box (or press Alt-L on the keyboard). The Starting Measure slider will immediately jump up to the value for the Begin measure. Select Play. The selected measures will be played repeatedly.

If you make any change to the Begin and End measures, the program will let you save your new loop settings. When you select a different piece, or when you close the program, you will be asked if you want to save the current loop settings. If you select Yes, your new loop settings will be in effect the next time you play the piece.

Volume Control

There is a volume control on the right side of the screen. To turn up the volume, use the mouse to drag the slider towards the right.

You can also change the volume using the computer keyboard. Press the **Delete** key to decrease the volume. The volume will continue to decrease as long as you hold the key down. Press the **Insert** key to increase the volume.

If the Volume control is all the way to the right and you still do not get any sound, you may have your synthesizer disabled. Look for a Mixer program in the Program Group for your sound card and make sure the fader for the synthesizer is not muted.

If you make any change to the volume, the program will let you save your new volume setting. When you select a different piece, or when you close the program, you will be asked if you want to save the current volume setting. If you select Yes, your new volume setting will be in effect the next time you play the piece.

Playing the Tuning Pitch

To play the Tuning Pitch, simply click the **Tune to ...** button with the mouse, or press **T** on the keyboard. The Tuning Pitch will play continuously until you turn it off by clicking the button again. This may cause some confusion if you have your Tuning Pitch configured to play on a Piano voice. The first time you click the button, the piano will play the Tuning Pitch. Since the sound of the piano fades out fairly quickly, you will probably want to play it again. But you will find that there is no sound the next time you click the button! That is because you just turned off the first time. Technically, the note was still playing, even though you could not hear anything. Click the button one more time to sound the Tuning Pitch again. For this reason, we suggest that you use a continuously sounding instrument, like the violin, for your Tuning Pitch.

Configuring the Tuning Pitch

Select **Configure/Tuning Pitch...** from the main menu.

To change the Tuning Note: Click the drop-down box labeled **Note**. You will see a list of all the notes in the Midi range. Scroll through this list and click the note you want to use for your Tuning Pitch.

To change the Tuning Instrument: Click the drop-down box labeled **Instrument**. You will see a list of all the General Midi instruments. Scroll through this list and click the instrument you want to use for the Tuning Pitch.

To change the Velocity of the Tuning Pitch: The Velocity is a number between 0 and 127 that determines how loud the note will be played. The default value is 100. If you need to make the Tuning Pitch louder or softer, click the edit box labeled **Velocity** and use the up and down arrows on the right side of the box to change its value.

To change the Channel used for the Tuning Pitch: Click the edit box labeled **Channel** and use the up and down arrows on the right side of the box to change its value. There are 16 possible Midi channels.

Important Note: If you find that the music plays correctly, but the Tuning Pitch does not sound, try choosing a different Midi Output Device.

Measure Numbers

You may find it helpful to put some measure numbers in your sheet music. This will help you when you want to start at some point other than the beginning of the piece, or when you want to practice a specific section repeatedly, using the loop feature.

The measures are numbered beginning with 0. If the piece begins with a pick-up, the pick-up note(s) will be at the end of measure 0. If the piece begins on the downbeat, measure 0 will be silent, except for the metronome track. Measure 0 is a count-in measure that is included to give you time to get ready to play when the music starts.

The midi files take all repeats, so measures in repeated sections are always counted twice. For example, if the first eight bars of a piece are repeated, the measure immediately after the repeat sign will be measure 17 (not measure 9). Count as though all repeats, multiple endings, da capos, etc. are written out.

Summary of Keyboard Shortcuts

On the Main screen:

P	Play, Pause/Resume
S	Stop
T	Turns the Tuning pitch on or off
+ (Add)	Increase Tempo
- (Subtract)	Decrease Tempo
PageDown	Select next piece
PageUp	Select previous piece
Insert	Increase Volume
Delete	Decrease Volume
Home	Move toward beginning of piece
End	Move toward end of piece
F<n>	Turn the n th part on or off
Alt-L	Toggle loop check box
Alt-B	Begin measure spin edit control gets focus
Alt-E	End measure spin edit control gets focus
Alt-M	Select or un-select the Metronome

On the Tuning Configuration screen:

Alt-N	Select the Note list box
Alt-I	Select the Instrument list box
Alt-V	Select the Velocity spin edit control
Alt-C	Select the Channel spin edit control
Alt-M	Select the Midi Output Device

After selecting the appropriate control, use the up and down arrow keys to change the value.