Sibelius Notation Checklist

Basics - Score (including Juilliard-specific)

- [ ] Tempo markings in correct bold font (Text > Styles > metronome mark)
- [ ] *Ideal:* stick to metronome values (Google metronome wiki for values, e.g 126 vs 123)
- [ ] Wide enough margins so performers can write notes
- [ ] Each staff system doesn't have too many bars (in general 1 - 2 less bars than Sibelius default)
- [ ] Enough space between each staff (in general 1 line less than Sibelius default)
- [ ] Title, composer name, exercise number on each page, page numbers on pages 2 on

- [ ] Instruments in correct order (in general use orchestral order?) More on parts later
- [ ] First line of music has correct instrument names? e.g. Violin I, Violoncello
- [ ] Subsequent lines of music have correct abbreviated instrument names?
- [ ] Measure numbers at the start of each line, large enough?

- [ ] If accidentals are crowded, fix using (Sibelius) Appearance > Note Spacing
- [ ] Correct fonts? If too small or not bolded performers may not see. (use Text > Styles to get right format and placement)
- [ ] <ctrl e> for expression markings, highlight l (ell) for line markings like rit and accel
- [ ] Oddball last line? Use page breaks or system breaks to create a last line with a few bars

- [ ] Full score for class can be double sided, brochure form
- [ ] Highlight each part and type "w" to check each part, Sibelius default format for parts is Horrible and will require rework
- [ ] Works with three movements: title page, put in 3 ring binder or tape accordion style

Basics - Music

- [ ] Correct key signature (or no key signature if chromatic)?
- [ ] No more than 4 sharps or flats in key signature? If so, re-key (e.g. from D# to D) or set to no / atonal key signature
- [ ] Pickup bar should only include beats with notes, e.g. 4th beat pickup should show one quarter, not dotted half rest and quarter
- [ ] Don't start piece with a fermata

- ☐ Correct meter? (e.g. straight or compound time?) If lots of triplets, consider converting to compound time, or vice versa
- ☐ Correct marking for tempo changes with respect to meter, e.g. straight time quarter note = x, compound time dotted quarter = x
- ☐ Correct marking if no tempo changes? e.g. dotted quarter = dotted quarter, or dotted quarter = quarter, etc.
- ☐ Tempo range between 50 and 200? e.g. change from quarter = 200 to half = 100
- ☐ Double barline to denote all key and time signature changes

- ☐ Correct clef for each instrument? e.g. viola is in tenor clef
- ☐ Correct clef changes for each instrument? e.g. violin is OK with ledger lines, others not. If clef change, at least two bars long
- ☐ If strange time signatures (e.g. 5, syncopated times) do notes need to be re-beamed and tied to show beats?
- ☐ Beam over rests to show beats?
- ☐ For time signatures like 7/4 or 13/8, consider breaking down, e.g. alternating 3/4 and 4/4

- ☐ Enharmonically correct? (snort) If a mix of sharps and flats, see if changing some will clean up the score
- ☐ Cautionary accidentals? Especially if sharp in one hand and natural in the other hand (piano)
- ☐ Where can the principle of "least amount of ink used" be applied? e.g. change quarter rest eighth rest to dotted quarter rest (while still obeying the "show beat" rule)
- ☐ Avoid ending with 16th rest, e.g. turn 16th note 16th rest into 8th note

- ☐ Not too many tempo changes (unless this is a conductor challenge)? Each tempo change results in a minute lost during a 20 minute reading
- ☐ Final tempo marked after every rit or accel?
- ☐ If there is a fermata, fermata must show in all parts, on the same beat in all parts (e.g. break up rests if necessary)

Dynamics

- ☐ In general, don't start with mp, use mf or p or f
- ☐ Are dynamic markings in the right place? e.g. expression markings / hairpins etc below music (in the middle for piano), tempo / rit / accel / pizz etc above the music. If not, performers won't see them.

Sibelius Tips

- ☐ If creating multiple voices, use voices 1 and 3 they will line up perfectly. With voices 1 and 2 you'll

have to mess with the score to line things up

- ☐ Sibelius can split key signatures in score, e.g. violin in G and viola in D

Strings

- ☐ Bow markings (or mark legato)
- ☐ ~~No slur over repeated notes or pizz~~ (obsolete)
- ☐ Correct markings for arco, pizz, legato, etc.
- ☐ Make sure enough time to switch from arco to pizz, etc. (a couple bars are recommended)
- ☐ Glissando marked from notehead to notehead?
- ☐ Valid double and triple stops?
- ☐ Short, choppy passages go against the strengths of using stringed instruments
- ☐ Sibelius may not show glissando if crowded, create less measures per line
- ☐ Double bass notated one octave higher
- ☐ Double bass is slower speaking instrument, bass has more opening on start, don't write fast. Everyone else can play fast

Piano

- ☐ If pianist is amenable, deliver fully notated PDF score beforehand, and MIDI playback as well
- ☐ In general avoid adding pedal markings, leave up to performer
- ☐ Change clef if too many ledger lines
- ☐ Test to make sure notes work with hand positioning (especially cross over)

Winds

- ☐ Clarinet score notated in B♭? Marked on the score as notated in B♭?
- ☐ Keep track of what happens with key signature when you transpose - get fa# do#. Sibelius - no key option
- ☐ Clarinet low notes are warm and soft, high notes are loud and piercing. Not possible to do high notes pianissimo
- ☐ Note: You Can write long passages, clarinetists can circular breathe
- ☐ Legato - need slur, otherwise they tongue

Conducting

- ☐ No GP during a page turn (it's noisy during the silence)
- ☐ If there is a GP, also put a fermata so that the conductor isn't forced to conduct time during the GP

Vocal

- ☐ Avoid really weird intervals, keep as diatonic as possible. Other instruments are easier to play, or you may have to tune (e.g. strings). Singer has to generate sound from scratch
- ☐ High notes? Create an ossia, the singer will treat this as a challenge
- ☐ Dynamic markings above the staff for singers because lyrics are below

- ☐ Stems based on syllables
- ☐ Lyrical extension lines (extend to tied notes)
- ☐ Comma in lyrics comes before extension line
- ☐ Sibelius won't always show extension lines, may need to have less measures per line

- ☐ Tenor - treble clef but small 8 - written an octave down
- ☐ All female voices written at clef
- ☐ Singers never change clef

- ☐ Possible to write outside normal range if you write for a particular singer, e.g. sopranos can sing lower (belting)
- ☐ Voice tends to get richer and darker with age
- ☐ Range from low - belting, weak area, golden area (can sing strong and loud), up to high
- ☐ Keep high notes as climax, and sparse, don't burn out singer
- ☐ High notes: consonants much harder to vocalize
- ☐ High notes nothing less than f dynamic

Parts

- ☐ Each instrument part clearly notated at beginning of part score with instrument name in large font? e.g. Violin I
- ☐ Correct format depending on context? Parts for string quartet, piano with voice - piano should have full score
- ☐ Large enough for performer to read from afar (e.g. while holding a violin)?

- ☐ Correct clef for instrument? (and not just tenor clef for viola, using paste as cue sometimes royally screws up clef, e.g. if you paste as cue piano bass clef into violin you may get a gazillion ledger lines in the violin part).
- ☐ Viola ranges of clef writing depending on ledger lines and what they can comfortably read. Violinist may not be able to read tenor clef. If lots of ledger lines, re-clef. If change clef, make sure for at least 2 bars, avoid lots of clef changes.

☐ Enough cues (or small staves) for performer? (you can never have too many) Note: For Sibelius 7.5 you can place cues directly in the score.

☐ If intricate interplay between instruments, consider cue staff (small staff with blank lines hidden)

☐ Parts printed single side, *not* stapled or bound so performers can do what they want (e.g. tape them accordion style)

☐ Does music account for page turns?

☐ Parts marked solo or tutti where appropriate?

☐ Are you using a fermata where the fixed number of beats would be better? e.g. fermata or G.P. followed by everyone trying to synchronize is hard

☐ Analyze performer markings on parts after class

Reading

☐ First to arrive are first to be performed. Place parts on correct stand behind and underneath parts that are already there (pros/cons: first reading may be warm up, players fresh. Later readings they may be tired)

☐ Do the performers bounce around to look at other parts? May indicate a need for more cues, etc.

☐ Pianist: can have double sided in 3 ring binder, make sure music accounts for page turns. If single pages or page turns are a challenge (music dense, or pianist cannot read ahead enough), can lay out 2 or 3 and page turner can overlay on top. Future (and present options): iPad with foot pedal to turn pages