



## **Manual for using Virtual Singer (VS) files produced in mp3 format by *Choralia***

### ***General information***

This manual provides information and instructions about using the Virtual Singer (VS) files produced in mp3 format by *Choralia*.

The VS technology has been developed by Myriad (<http://www.myriad-online.com>), and adopted by *Choralia* as a mean to distribute training aids for choir singers.

### ***Listening to mp3 files – the “Choralplayer”***

Since the very beginning *Choralia* provided mp3 files that can be played using the mp3 player that is embedded in all recent web browsers. *Choralia* now offers a specific mp3 player provided by a third party, the *Choralplayer*, that still makes use of the mp3 player provided by the browser, but also provides additional functions specifically conceived for music learning purposes.

The *Choralplayer* requires a browser that is compatible with the HTML5 specifications. All recent browsers are compatible with these specifications, although some behaviour may slightly change depending on the specific browser used. If your browser is not compliant to the HTML5 specifications, or if you don't want to use the *Choralplayer* for any reasons, a “legacy” alternative is provided, which is described in the following sections.

In all cases, in order to use *Choralia*'s mp3 files you have to understand some specific details such as file naming conventions, especially if you want to download files rather than listening to them through the *Choralplayer*. These details are also described in the following sections.

Please note: the advertisements shown by the *Choralplayer* are present because the *Choralplayer* is based on a third-party technology that can be used under license conditions that require the presence of advertisements. The user must de-activate any ad-blocker installed on the computer in order to pay the software license fee to the author of *Choralplayer*. The *Choralplayer* license conditions require that ads are displayed otherwise the use of the software is not permitted, therefore the use of an ad-blocker is illegal. The ads do not replace the donations required to make use of *Choralia*'s training aids. If you don't want to have advertisements displayed, please use the “legacy” access described in the next sections, or make a donation to *Choralia* so that you can receive an “ads-stop” code allowing to lawfully use the *Choralplayer* without ads.

## **File names**

All file names are in lower-case letters.

When you select a work from the “mp3 catalogue” page of the *Choralia* website, your internet browser is directed to an internet address having the following format:

*http://www.choralia.net/<product code>mp3*

where *<product code>* is the code assigned by *Choralia* and that is different for different works. For example, the product code for the Christmas Oratorio by Saint-Saëns is *ss01*, thus the corresponding internet address is:

*http://www.choralia.net/ss01mp3*

This address shows the main web page for the work chosen. You can access all mp3 files for the work in subject from this page. File names have the following format:

*<product code><song number><voice practice level>.mp3*

The *<product code>* is as described above. The *<song number>* is a number (-1, -2, etc.) relevant to the song sequence. As the same song is processed at three different practice levels for each voice (only voice with metronome, all voices with one voice emphasized, all voices at the same level), each song results in three different audio files for each voice.

The *<voice practice level>* is *ss* for soprano solo (only voice and metronome – first practice level) and *se* for soprano emphasized (second practice level). If voices are split (e.g., soprano I and soprano II), the corresponding number is added to the letters (e.g., *ss1* and *ss2*). For the other voices it's similar: *as* and *ae* for alto, *ts* and *te* for tenor, *bs* and *be* for bass. The *<voice practice level>* is omitted when all voices are at the same level (third practice level).

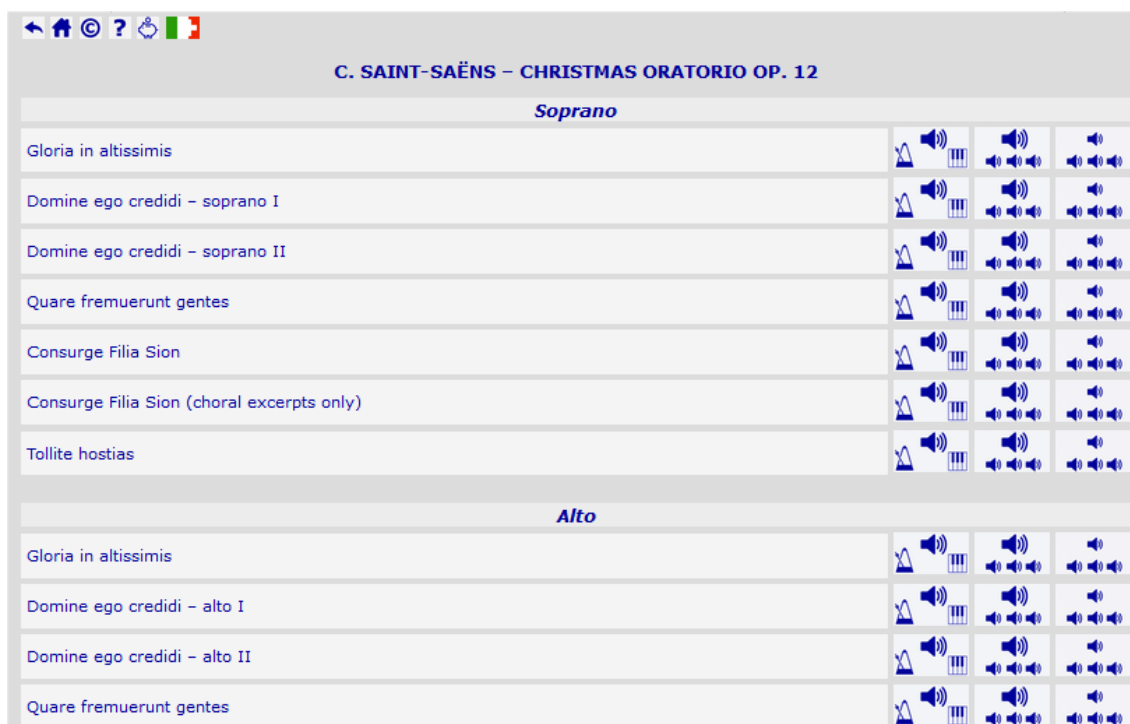
For example, the first two choral movements of the Christmas Oratorio by Saint-Saëns are represented by the following files (please note: the first movement is for SATB, while the second movement is SSAA, i.e., soprano I and soprano II, alto I and alto II):

<i>ss01-1ss.mp3</i>	(first movement, soprano voice plus metronome)
<i>ss01-1se.mp3</i>	(first movement, all voices with soprano voice emphasized)
<i>ss01-1as.mp3</i>	(first movement, alto voice plus metronome)
<i>ss01-1ae.mp3</i>	(first movement, all voices with alto voice emphasized)
<i>ss01-1ts.mp3</i>	(first movement, tenor voice plus metronome)
<i>ss01-1te.mp3</i>	(first movement, all voices with tenor voice emphasized)
<i>ss01-1bs.mp3</i>	(first movement, bass voice plus metronome)
<i>ss01-1be.mp3</i>	(first movement, all voices with bass voice emphasized)
<i>ss01-1.mp3</i>	(first movement, all voices at the same level)
<i>ss01-2ss1.mp3</i>	(second movement, soprano I voice plus metronome)
<i>ss01-2se1.mp3</i>	(second movement, all voices with soprano I voice emphasized)
<i>ss01-2ss2.mp3</i>	(second movement, soprano II voice plus metronome)
<i>ss01-2se2.mp3</i>	(second movement, all voices with soprano II voice emphasized)
<i>ss01-2as1.mp3</i>	(second movement, alto I voice plus metronome)

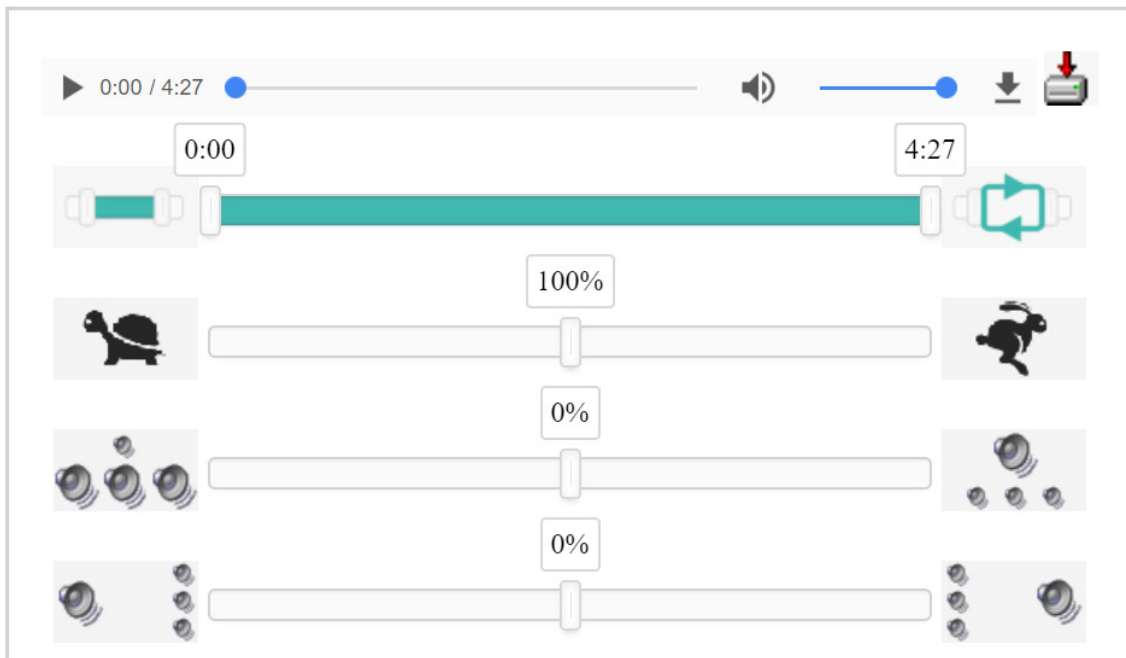
- ss01-2ae1.mp3* (second movement, all voices with alto I voice emphasized)
- ss01-2as2.mp3* (second movement, alto II voice plus metronome)
- ss01-2ae2.mp3* (second movement, all voices with alto II voice emphasized)
- ss01-2.mp3* (second movement, all voices at the same level)

### **Listening to files or downloading them**

Select any work from the “mp3 catalogue” page of the *Choralia* website by clicking on the “listen to” icon (a small loudspeaker) relevant to such a work. The main web page for that work will open, and it will look similar to the following screenshot:



The three buttons on the right side of the page correspond to the three practice levels provided: individual voice with metronome (and accompaniment when present); emphasised voice with all other voices; all voices at the same level. If you click on the loudspeaker icon relevant to a certain piece, a certain voice, and a certain practice level, *Choralplayer* will be activated for that piece, for that voice, and for that practice level. It will look similar to the following screenshot:



The above screenshot is obtained from Chrome. Other browsers may show something slightly different. The two bottom controls may not be displayed in certain cases (see details next).

The top control is the playbar provided by the browser. It allows to play, pause, change volume, mute, and move the time slider through the piece. Chrome also offers a pushbutton (on the right side of the playbar in the screenshot above) to download the file to your computer. Other browsers may not show this pushbutton, while they will anyway show the other download pushbutton that is present on the right side of the playbar. This is a specific download pushbutton, and details about it will be provided in the following.

The second control from top is the *section* slider. It allows to identify a specific section of the piece to be played. The two handles mark the beginning and the end of the section to be played. Initially, the two handles are set at the beginning and at the end of the piece, so the section identified corresponds to the whole piece. Then you can drag each handle to the desired position on the slider and mark the beginning and the end of the desired section. Time labels help to identify the desired position. To precisely set a handle to a certain time value, move the handle near to the desired time value, then double-click the time label to manually enter the desired time value. The handle nearest to the time value you entered will precisely move to that time.

The pushbutton on the left of the section slider enables or disables the *section player*, so you can toggle between playing the whole piece or just the section identified.

The pushbutton on the right of the section slider enables or disables the *loop player*. If the loop player is enabled, the section (or the whole piece, depending whether the section player is enabled or not) is played and, when the end is reached, it is played again from the beginning. If the loop player is disabled, playing stops at the end of the section (or of the whole piece), so you have to manually click the button on the playbar to restart the player.

The third control is the *tempo* slider. It allows to slow down or speed up music. The slider controls “tempo” from 50% (very slow) to 150% (very fast) of the nominal speed (100%). The “tortoise” pushbutton on the left side of the slider reduces “tempo” in 5% steps, while the “hare” pushbutton on the right side of the slider increases “tempo” in 5% steps.

Large speed variations with respect to the nominal speed may result in noisy or distorted audio performance. This depends on the specific browser you use. Currently, the best performance is offered by Chrome and Safari, followed by Mozilla Firefox. The performance of Microsoft Internet Explorer and Edge is a little bit worse.

The fourth control from top (or second from bottom) is the *level* slider. It allows to change the amount of emphasis applied to the voice of interest with respect to the other voices and with respect to the accompaniment. When the slider is in the middle, the level of emphasis is set at the normal level, as it is in the original file. If the slider is moved to the right, the accompaniment and the other voices are attenuated, and they are even completely muted if the slider is fully set to the right side (100% value). As a consequence, the voice of interest is more and more highlighted with respect to the rest. If the slider is moved to the left, the voice of interest is attenuated, and it is even completely muted when the slider is fully set to the left side (-100% value), while the accompaniment and the other voices remain at their normal level. This allows, for example, to test singing one’s own part without any help from the corresponding virtual singer. The two pushbuttons on the left and on the right side of the bar move the slider in 5% steps. When files with all voices at the same level are played, this control works on all voices together with respect to the accompaniment (this may be useful, for example, to mute a “for rehearsal only” accompaniment when studying “a cappella” pieces).

The last control is the *stereo* slider. It allows to move the voice of interest to the left or to the right of the stereo space, while all other voices and the accompaniment are moved opposite. This helps to recognise the voice of interest when emphasis is not enough or not desired. The use of headphones or earphones is recommended in this case. The two pushbuttons on the left and on the right side of the bar move the slider in 5% steps. When files with all voices at the same level are played, this control works on all voices together with respect to the accompaniment.

The two bottom sliders, when moved away from the middle position (0% value), require that the browser has enough memory available to perform some digital signal processing calculations. Not all browsers are compatible with these functions, and some browsers, especially on smartphones where the amount of available memory is small, may not work when the duration of a piece is long. If your browser does not work when the bottom sliders are moved, reset the two bottom sliders to the middle position (0% for both) and use only the top controls, as apparently there is not enough memory available for your browser to perform the digital signal processing calculations. Alternatively, you can use the “basic” access to the *Choralia* website as described in the next sections. On Android smartphones, Mozilla Firefox appears to use a smaller amount of memory with respect to Chrome, so for certain pieces the two bottom controls may work with Mozilla Firefox and not with Chrome.

The two bottom controls may not be displayed in the following cases:

- you are using a browser that is known not to be compatible. For example, Microsoft Internet Explorer is unable to run certain functions required by the two bottom controls;
- you are listening to pieces where the special mp3 files required to operate the two bottom controls are not yet available on the *Choralia* website. Please contact [info@choralia.net](mailto:info@choralia.net) to request that the special files are prepared for the specific work you need.

If you want to download the mp3 file to your computer, the best way is to use the specific download pushbutton that is provided on the right side of the playbar. This pushbutton performs the downloading of the file as a binary file rather than as a mp3 file, and this may solve some problems with specific browsers and settings that do not handle the downloading of mp3 files normally. Please note: the mp3 file will be downloaded “as is”, for the whole piece (not for the specific section you selected) and at the nominal speed. To play a specific section or to change “tempo” after you download the file you have to install a suitable mp3 player on your computer (see details in the last section of this manual).

Most browsers also allow to download the file by right-clicking on the playbar and then selecting “save audio as...” (or something like that, depending on the browser). On smartphones and tablets the equivalent of right-clicking is obtained with a long pressure on the touchscreen. However, if any of the two bottom controls is set to a different value than the middle position (0%), the file will be downloaded as it is internally handled by the playbar, i.e., as a *wav* file. Files in *wav* format are much larger than the corresponding files in mp3 format, so the downloading may take a much longer time. Any *level* or *stereo* settings applied using the two bottom controls will be applied to the file that you download. Any *section* or *tempo* settings will not be applied, though.

Safari may not offer the function to download the mp3 file with the right click on the playbar, so you have to use special download pushbutton described above, or the legacy functions described next. Furthermore, HTML5 functions on Safari require that QuickTime is also installed. If QuickTime is not installed the *Choralplayer* cannot work under Safari, and unfortunately Safari provides no suggestions to install it. So, please ensure that QuickTime is installed if you want to use the *Choralplayer* under Safari.

### ***Legacy and basic functions, and special browser and mouse settings***

If your browser does not support the HTML5 specifications, or if you don’t want to use the *Choralplayer* for any reasons, you can access the *Choralia* website through the URL <http://legacy.choralia.net> (please note “legacy” in lieu of “www”). This access does not make use of the *Choralplayer*, so mp3 files will be played using the mp3 player embedded in your browser. In this case, what happens when you click on the loudspeaker icon mostly depends on the internet browser that you are using (e.g., Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Chrome, etc.) and on its settings, so the behaviour may be slightly different depending on your specific settings.

In most cases, the left button of the mouse is programmed to download the selected file to your computer, and to send it immediately to the default mp3 player application configured

for the browser. If so, left-clicking an icon will immediately play the file using the default mp3 player installed on your system.

The right button of the mouse is instead usually programmed to show other possible actions that the system can perform on the selected file. So, right-clicking a loudspeaker icon will open a small menu with a list of possible actions. If you want to download the file to your computer, you have to select the correct option in the list by left-clicking on it. The name of the correct option is slightly different depending on the internet browser you use. Typical names are "Save as...", or "Save object as...", or "Save target as...", or something like that. Depending on your browser's settings, the file will be saved into a default folder, or you will be prompted to define the specific folder where you want it to be saved.

Today's internet browsers offer full flexibility to define actions associated to the various mouse buttons. The above settings for the left and for the right buttons are by far the most common. However, slightly different settings may be occasionally encountered. For example, if no mp3 player is configured for the browser, it is possible that the left button is used to save the file to your computer rather than to play it. If you have a non-standard configuration, you may need to experiment a little bit to find the right commands for it. Settings for left-handed people may also completely swap the functions associated to the left and to the right buttons.

Some MAC versions may not be equipped with the right mouse button at all. In these cases, the right button can be usually simulated by holding the "Control" (CTRL) key while clicking the only mouse button. Holding the "Option" key while clicking the mouse button may be another possibility on some models.

As an alternative to the use of the right button of the mouse you may access the *Choralia* website through the URL <http://mp3.choralia.net> (please note "mp3" in lieu of "www"). With the most common browser settings this will offer the possibility to download mp3 files also when clicking the loudspeaker icon with the left button of the mouse. This may be especially required when using software for visually impaired users, as specific, non-standard functions may be associated to the right button of the mouse.

A further alternative is offered in the specific case of problems when using the two bottom controls of the *Choralplayer*, and not with the other controls. You can access the *Choralia* website through the URL <http://basic.choralia.net> (please note "basic" in lieu of "www"). This enables the basic version of the *Choralplayer*, where the two bottom controls are not present.