

Using East West Quantum Leap Symphonic Choirs *within* FLStudio

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Overview of the issues involved & the traditional solution

Users of FLStudio may be disappointed to discover that the Word Builder tool used to power the EWQLSC library doesn't load in FLStudio.

This is because the plugin format for Word Builder uses protocols which differ from ordinary VST instruments. Word Builder uses a format known as VST-MA (VST-Module Architecture), or MFX (MIDI-FX), neither of which FLStudio currently supports.

The generally accepted solution seems to be to run Word Builder and Symphonic Choirs as stand alone applications (outside of FLStudio) and use a variety of virtual MIDI cables to control it.

Problems with the traditional approach

The problems I have found when running Symphonic Choirs and Word Builder as stand alone applications are:

1. You have to install and configure another driver on your computer to reroute MIDI data from FLStudio to Word Builder, and from Word Builder to Symphonic Choirs.
2. There is no easy way of getting the sound from Symphonic Choirs back into FLStudio, so you either have to use a virtual audio cable to reroute audio into FLStudio or record your choir tracks to disk and then import them into your project as audio files.
3. When you open your project in FLStudio, you also have to open the Word Builder and Symphonic Choirs applications. You then have to load your saved vocals in Word Builder and the voices you want to use into Symphonic Choirs.
4. Because of the above workarounds, workflow is severely degraded and there's a lot of going back and forth between FLStudio, Word Builder and Symphonic Choirs, which is frustrating and impedes creativity.

An alternative, easier, and (I think so) better approach

Fortunately there is a way to load Word Builder inside FLStudio. This requires the download of one VST shell plug-in, known as mfxshell.

Although it is an experimental plug-in with little technical support, on my system I found it works flawlessly for Word Builder. All the above problems are cured, and all your edits in word builder are loaded and saved within the FLP file itself, keeping everything together in the one application and really smoothing out the workflow.

Basic Setup

Install mfxshell

1. Download this file, and extract mfxshell.dll into your VST folder:
http://xlutop.com/buzz/zip/dxshell_v1.01b.zip
2. Make sure you have Symphonic Choirs installed.

Load Symphonic Choirs in FLStudio

1. Open FLStudio
2. Right click on an empty channel, choose insert from the context menu.
3. Choose "More"
4. Click "Refresh" to find mfxshell
5. Select mfxshell
6. A small box will appear with the text "Word Builder [MFX]", plus any other MFX plugins you have installed. Click on Word Builder.
7. Now add a new channel for Symphonic Choirs VST

Get Word Builder and Symphonic Choirs working together

1. Set the input port of Word Builder to 1
2. Set the output port of Word Builder to 2
3. Set the input port of Symphonic Choirs to 2

Now you should be able to load a Multi in Symphonic Choirs, write some text in Word Builder, and play Word Builder with your keyboard or edit the piano roll.

Finally, achieving full control

There is one final step that is necessary to get full control over the mod wheel and expression controllers, if your keyboard does not natively support these features. If you don't want to access the mod wheel or expression controls of Symphonic Choirs, then you can skip this section, but I think it's worth the extra step:

1. Insert a Midi Out channel, and open the channel to edit the "plugin" settings.
2. Set the channel to 1 and the port to 1
3. Right click on one of the blank knobs and select "Configure"
4. Name it "Mod" for both long and short names, set the CC number to 1. This will give us the ability to control and automate the mod wheel effects.
5. Configure another knob, call it "Expression" and set the CC number to 11. This gives us control over the expression effects.
6. The EWQLSC manual gives details on other CC controller numbers that can be used for various reasons, such as resetting Word Builder to the first word, holding a vowel, and so on. You can automate all of these by configuring the knobs and sliders in the MIDI Out plugin to correspond.

And that's it. I can't promise that this work around will work for all future versions of FLStudio and Symphonic Choirs, but for the current releases this solution works fine and I've been able to open multiple channels singing different parts with no problems.

The main thing is to make sure the input port of Symphonic Choirs matches the output port of Word Builder, and you're all set to go.

Feedback & Questions

If you have found this information useful or you are having difficulties please let me know so I can make the necessary improvements and hopefully help you to get this working.

For the best response, please direct feedback to Alex at: contact@southernstudios.com.au

Disclaimer

I do not support or provide a warranty for the effectiveness and safety of mfxshell, meaning that by following the instructions in this guide you accept full responsibility should something go wrong as a direct result of using mfxshell, including (heaven forbid) the loss of important files, system instability and other dire consequences.

Having made my disclaimer, I have not experienced any problems at all with mfxshell in FLStudio, but to be on the safe side you should make sure you have a recent backup of all your files, or test mfxshell on a separate system where, if anything does go wrong, it won't matter too much.

Good luck and happy composing!