

# FOLLOW THE LEADER

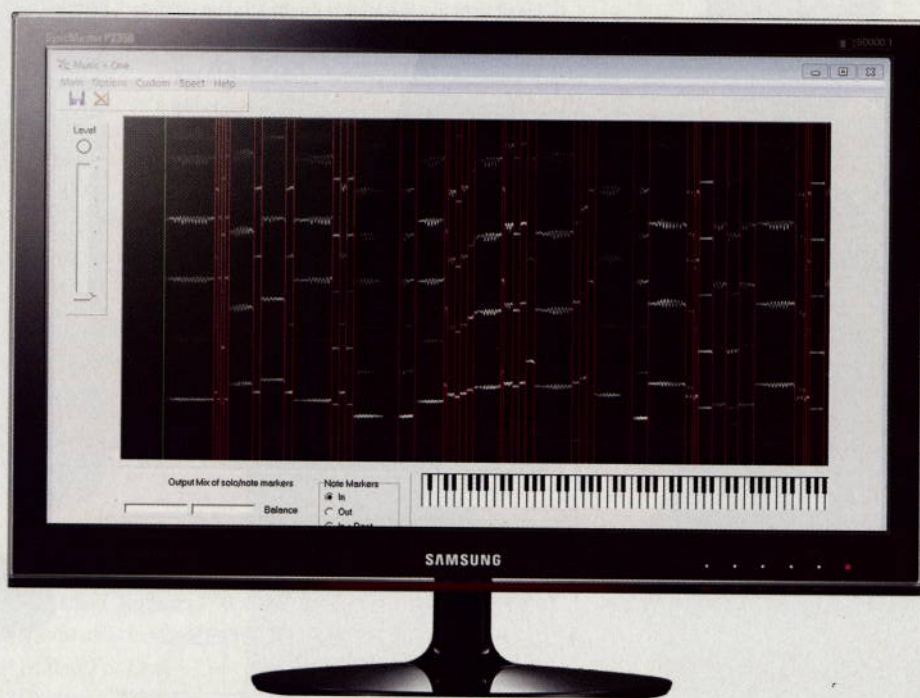
Music + One software nurtures your soloing ability

By Corinne Ramey

## MUSIC + ONE FEATURES:

- Orchestral backing tracks that adapt to your skill level
- A growing library of repertoire
- Windows only; Mac OS not supported
- \$99 activation fee; scores begin at \$14.99

music-plus-one.com



Oh, to play in front of an orchestra! To play solo in front of an orchestra is the dream of many string players—it's the reason many players enter concerto competitions and are motivated to spend countless hours in a practice room. Few will be so fortunate as to play in front of an orchestra, but a new software program, **Music + One**, offers orchestral backing tracks with which you can practice and perform as a soloist.

Recruiting New York-based cellist Jeremy Lamb as my first guinea pig, I took Music + One for a trial run.

I downloaded the trial version of the program, along with the first movement of Haydn's C major cello concerto, which is available free at music-plus-one.com. The program's help menu includes detailed instructions with useful screenshots that helped me navigate some of the issues I had before getting it to run successfully on my computer.

Initially, the virtual orchestra consistently lagged behind the live soloist. Lamb found that the key to success is to not follow the program, but instead to push ahead and have it follow you—M+O will not only catch up, it will adapt to your ability by using speech-recognition software to analyze your playing, improving its ability to play with you after each "rehearsal."

After several "rehearsals," the improved tracking did an admirable job of (mostly) lining up correctly with his playing. When Lamb accidentally skipped a few bars, the program caught up to him, which is something a real orchestra would have struggled to accomplish.

Impressive.

And while the programmed "orchestra" couldn't respond to subtle things like phrasing, articulation, dynamics or musical ideas, its timing continually improved.

Though there is a free trial and several sample pieces on the Music + One website, buying the program's activation key costs \$99. Users then pay for each individual piece of repertoire. Most major concertos—like Mendelssohn, Brahms, or Bruch—cost \$39.99, while shorter pieces cost less. Currently the program is only available for Windows.

Because it just launched, the repertoire list is limited, but look for it to expand. At press time, there are 17 pieces available for violin and only two Haydn concertos for cello—there is no viola or bass repertoire yet, although the website does list additional repertoire as "coming soon."

But Music + One is fun to use and has enormous potential, particularly in educational settings, such as a school, music camp, festival, or even a private teacher's studio, where someone who is experienced with the program could guide students along with it.