

Introduction

withis.mid is a multitrack MIDI file (a so-called type 1 MIDI file) intended to be played with, transformed, and reworked.

By itself, MIDI doesn't yet make any sound. Instead, a MIDI file contains information for digitally controlled instruments, specifying which notes are played at what time, similar to a musical score.

First unzip the archive. To become familiar with the .mid file's structure, you can simply play it. On Windows, you can open it in Windows Media Player; VLC should also be able to play the file both on Windows and on macOS.

Aside from note messages, the file contains channel volume and channel pan automation, some modulation data and program change commands to assign sounds to individual tracks in the song. You should be able to hear separate instruments play separate parts.¹

To work with the MIDI file, you can use practically any DAW (digital audio workstation). Below are short instructions for some popular choices. If you aren't using any DAW yet, most of the paid options have a time-limited free trial version.

GarageBand

GarageBand is free for macOS users and can be downloaded from the App Store. In it, you can simply open the file via the File -> Open... menu command.

The software supports General MIDI², which means that it will pre-load the tracks with instruments that correspond to the program numbers embedded in the file, and also pan the channels and automate the volume.

Logic Pro

Logic works very similarly to GarageBand in this respect. Just open the MIDI file via the File menu and start playing the project.

¹ This might be surprising, since we said before that MIDI doesn't make any sound. That's still true, the actual sounds are produced by a synth built into your operating system or the software playing the file. There is also a special type of message in the MIDI protocol known as program change; it can be used to switch presets on an instrument. The General MIDI standard (see footnote 2) assigns various types of musical instruments to program change numbers, which is why you can hear different voices.

² We mentioned general MIDI before. It's a standard that assigns certain MIDI messages to typical musical applications. For example, the MIDI protocol itself doesn't have a "volume" message; it simply has continuous control messages with meaningless ID numbers. The General MIDI standard says CC (= continuous control) no. 8 should always control volume, for example. Not all manufacturers implement General MIDI, but it's the reason you can hear different voices when you are using the built-in operating system synthesizer to interpret the MIDI file.

Cubase

In Cubase, drag the MIDI file into an empty project. Similarly to Logic Pro and GarageBand, Cubase should pre-load instruments onto the channels and interpret modulation data.

FL Studio

Just like in GarageBand or Logic, open the MIDI file via File -> Open... and accept the default.

While FL Studio implements general MIDI, during testing we found that the synthesizer preset FL Studio loads on the Wobble track by default can sound droney and overpowering. Turn the track volume down manually, then start changing the sound.

Ableton Live

To import the MIDI file, drag it into an empty project. Live doesn't implement general MIDI, however, so it will create MIDI tracks without any audible software instruments on them.

Because of this we have created a template Live Set to get started with, which is also included in the archive. The MIDI information is the same as in the .mid file, however it comes already pre-loaded with instruments, volume automation etc. Please note that you will need at least Live 10.0.6 Intro to open the Live Set.

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