VISUAL SONG BOOK

User guide

How to run a song service, step by step.

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Install and open your library

Visual Song Book runs on Windows 10 and 11. Install it on the computer that runs the projector.

Install

1. Download the installer from the Download section of this site.
2. Open the file you downloaded.
3. If Windows says it protected your PC, click **More info**, then **Run anyway**. The beta isn't signed yet, so Windows shows this warning. It goes away once the app is signed.
4. Follow the installer's steps. You can keep the choices it suggests.
5. Start Visual Song Book from the Start menu.

Plug in the projector

The app picks the projector for you. It opens on one screen and puts the words full screen on the other.

- Plug the projector in before you start, or at any time.
- The status bar, along the bottom, starts with **Output:** and the name and size of the display it is using.
- With only the computer's own screen, it says **Output: none chosen**. Nothing is shown until a projector is plugged in.

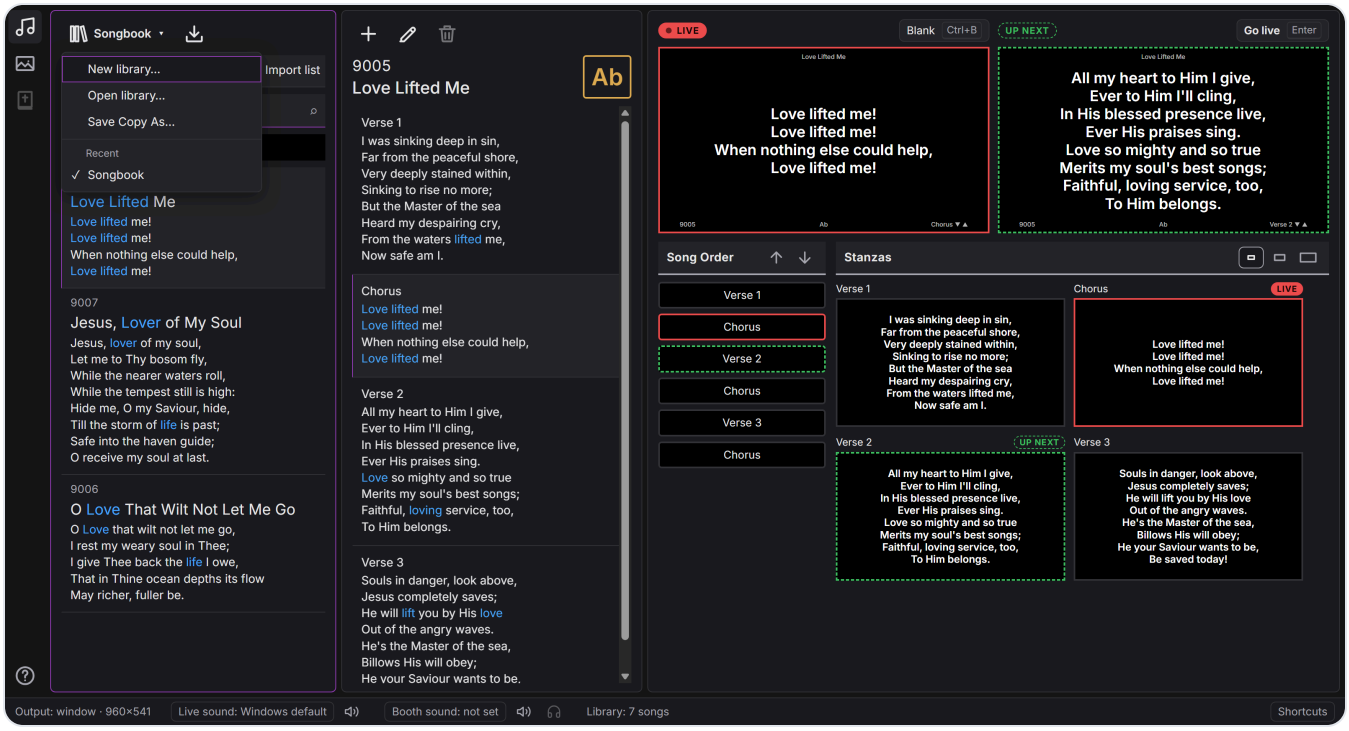
Your song library

Your songs are kept in a song library: one file whose name ends in .vsbx.

- The first time you start the app, it makes a library called **Songbook** in your Documents folder and opens it.
- After that, it opens the last library you used.
- The library's name heads the Library pane. Click it, or press **Ctrl+O**, for **New library...**, **Open library...**, **Save Copy As...** and **Recent**.
- **Save Copy As...** makes a backup. Keep a copy somewhere safe, such as a USB stick.

While something is on the projector, the app won't switch libraries until you end live mode. Nothing you do with libraries blanks the projector unless you choose to.

A first look



The module bar at the far left switches between **Songs** (**Alt+1**) and **Media** (**Alt+2**). Bibles is coming in a later version.

In Songs, the work moves left to right across three panes: **Library** → **Song** → **Stage**.

Pane	What it is for
Library	Finding songs. Its tabs are Search, Browse, History and Import list.
Song	The song you opened, as written. New song, Edit and Delete sit in its header.
Stage	Live on the left and Up next on the right, with the Song Order and the Stanzas grid below.

- **The active pane has a purple outline.** The arrow keys, Enter and Esc act on that pane.
- **Red means live. Green means up next.** Each is also labelled in words.
- **The header buttons are icons.** Hold the mouse over one to see its name and its key.

- **The Shortcuts button** in the status bar lists every key. Esc or a click outside closes the list.

When a beta ends

Each beta works for a set time.

- The status bar says when it ends, such as **Beta · ends December 25, 2026**. The start-up screen says so too.
- Shortly before the end, a notice at the bottom left says when the beta ends. Click its × to close it.
- After the end, the app still opens and everything works except going live. A song that is live when the beta ends stays live until you end live mode.
- Then download the newest beta from this site and install it. It replaces the old one. Your songs stay where they are.

Import your songs

Import brings your songs in from an older Visual Song Book file, one whose name ends in .vsb. The file is read on your computer. Nothing is sent anywhere.

Import a file

1. Click **Import** (the icon at the top of the Library pane), or press **Ctrl+I**.
2. Choose the .vsb file.
3. Read the report. It says how many songs were imported, how many were already in the library, and how many were held back.

Each song keeps its words, author and copyright. The old file has no CCLI number: type it in the song editor if you need it.

Importing the same file again changes nothing. Songs already in the library are left as they are.

Fix a held-back song

A song with a problem waits in the **Import list** until you fix it. A problem might be a song number used twice in the file, or a key the app doesn't know.

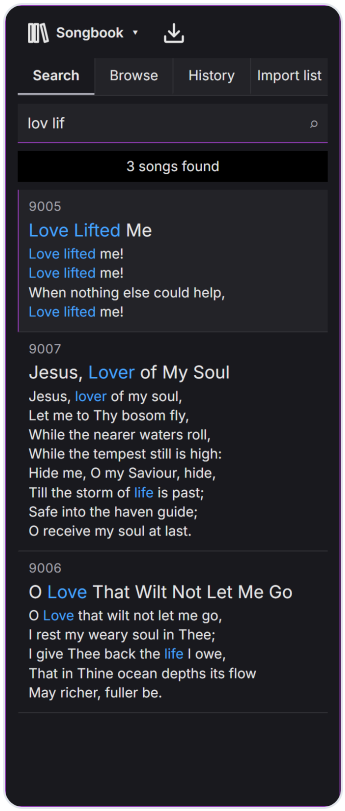
1. Open the **Import list** tab (**Ctrl+4**). Each song says what stops it.
2. Click a song, or move to it with ↑/↓ and press **Enter**. It opens in the song editor, with each problem in red under its field.
3. Correct the problems, then click **Import** or press **Ctrl+S**. The song joins the library and leaves the list.

To drop a song instead, click **Remove from the import list** or press **Ctrl+Del**. The app asks first. Importing the same file again doesn't bring it back.

Fixing imports never disturbs the song you have open for the song service. The Import list has a Song pane of its own.

Find a song

Type in the search box and the results appear as you type. A song opened from Search, Browse or History lands in the same Song pane.



Search (Ctrl+1)

1. Type a song number, part of a title, or a few words of the lyrics. Parts of words work too: **lov lif** finds Love Lifted Me.
2. Press **Enter** or ↓ to move into the results. ↑/↓ show each song in the Song pane.
3. Press **Enter** on the one you want. It opens on the stanza that matched, with your words highlighted, and the Song pane becomes active.

With the mouse, one click shows a result and a double-click opens it.

Browse (Ctrl+2)

Browse lists every song.

- Type in the filter box to narrow the list by title or number.
- **Keys** ▾ shows only songs in the keys you tick. **Clear** empties both filters.

- Click **Title**, **Number** or **Last modified** to sort. Click again to reverse.

History (Ctrl+3)

History lists the songs shown live for at least 10 seconds, grouped by day, newest first. Its filter box works like the one in Browse.

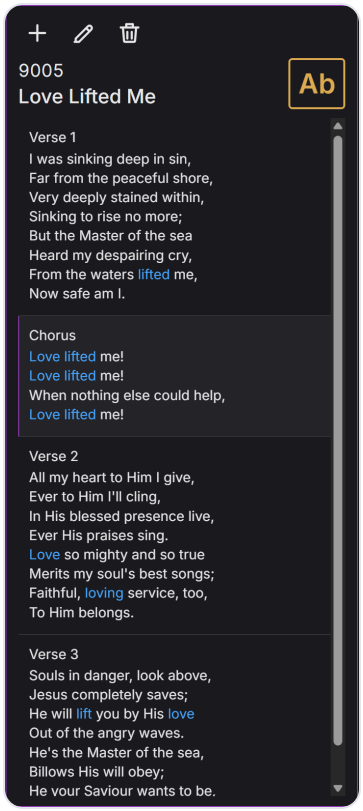
In Browse and History, **Esc** goes from the list back to the filter box. Esc again clears the filter.

Moving between tabs

Ctrl+1 to **Ctrl+4** open Search, Browse, History and the Import list. With the Library active, **Ctrl+Tab** moves to the next tab.

Pick the stanza

The Song pane shows the whole song as it will be sung: every verse and chorus in order, repeats included. The number, the title and a large key badge sit at the top.



Choose a stanza

- Move with ↑/↓, or click a stanza. The chosen stanza is marked with a bar.
- A song opened from Search shows the words you searched for highlighted.
- Press **Enter**, or double-click a stanza, to put it on the projector. Preview and go live explains what happens next.
- **Esc** goes back to the Library without touching the projector.

Choosing the next song while one is live

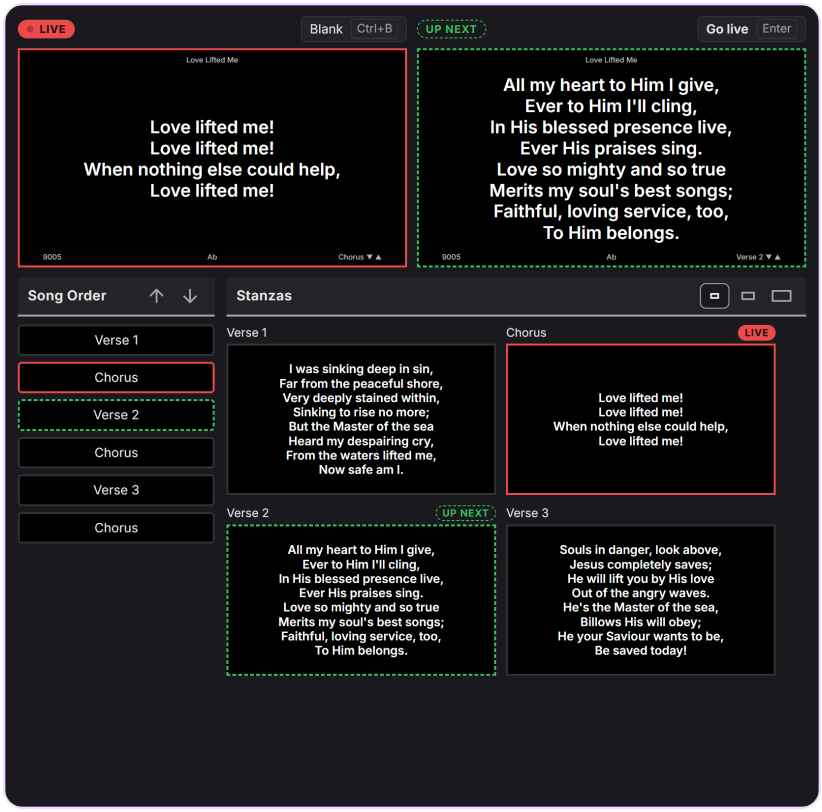
You can open the next song while the current one stays on the projector. The Song pane shows the new song. The projector doesn't change until you say so.

- Once a song is live, the Song pane has no control of the projector. Enter on one of the live song's stanzas does nothing. Move through it in the Stage instead.

- Enter on a stanza of a different song asks **End live mode first**. Cancel has the keyboard, so a stray Enter changes nothing. Preview and go live has the steps.

Preview and go live

Live (red, on the left) is what the projector shows now. **Up next** (green, with a dashed edge, on the right) is what comes next. Below them, the **Song Order** lists the stanzas as they will be sung, repeats included, and the **Stanzas** grid shows each one.



Go live

In the Song pane, move to a stanza with ↑/↓ and press **Enter**. That stanza goes on the projector, the Stage becomes active, and you are in **live mode**.

Move through the song

In live mode the keys move Live:

Key	What it does
Space, ↓ or →	Next stanza in the Song Order
↑ or ←	Previous stanza
1–9	Verse 1 to 9
C	The chorus
B	The bridge
A click on a stanza	That stanza

A jump to the chorus goes to its next place in the order, so Space carries on from there. When the last stanza is live, Up next is blank.

The ↑ and ↓ buttons beside the Song Order heading do the same as the keys. The three small buttons beside the Stanzas heading change the size of the thumbnails.

Blank the screen

- **Esc** in the Stage blanks the projector (solid black) and ends live mode. Esc again goes back to the Song pane.
- **Ctrl+B** blanks from any pane, even while you type. The **Blank** button does the same.
- After a blank, Up next holds the stanza that was live. Press **Enter**, or click **Go live**, to put it back.

Out of live mode, the same keys move Up next instead, and **Enter** or **Go live** sends Up next to the projector.

Ctrl+R ends live mode, clears every pane and returns to the search box: a fresh start. It also closes any sound that is playing.

From one song to the next

You can find and open the next song while the current one stays on the projector. Nothing changes on the screen until you confirm the switch. The app never replaces a live song by accident.

1. **A song is live** and the Stage is active.

2. **Press Ctrl+1**, or click the search box. The keyboard moves to Search. The projector keeps showing the live stanza. Don't press Esc in the Stage: that blanks the screen.
3. **Type the next song**, then press **Enter** to go into the results and **Enter** again to open it. It appears in the Song pane. The projector is still unchanged.
4. **Choose the starting stanza** with ↑/↓. It is marked with a bar.
5. **Press Enter when it is time.** The app asks **End live mode first**. Cancel is highlighted, so a stray Enter changes nothing.
6. **Click Exit live mode and continue**, or press Tab, then Enter. The new song replaces the old one at that stanza, with no black between, and the Stage becomes active.
7. **Carry on with Space**, or ↓, the number keys, C and B, as before.

To show black between songs, press **Ctrl+B** first. With nothing live, Enter on the new song's stanza puts it up with no question.

The projector screen

The projector shows the words large and clear, and nothing else. The app keeps it up whatever else you do.



What it shows

- **The words** fill the screen. The app sizes them to fit, so a long stanza is smaller and a short one is larger.
- **Lines break only where the song has them.** The app never wraps a line on its own.
- **The title** runs along the top.
- **The number, key and stanza name** run along the bottom.
- ▼ beside the stanza name means another stanza comes next. ▲ means one came before.
- One stanza fades into the next. A blank fades to black.

Photos, videos and slideshows from Media show on the same screen. See the Media topics.

What it never shows

- No dialog, notice or message ever appears on the projector. Questions and notices stay on your screen.
- While the app is open, the screens never go to sleep.

If the projector is unplugged

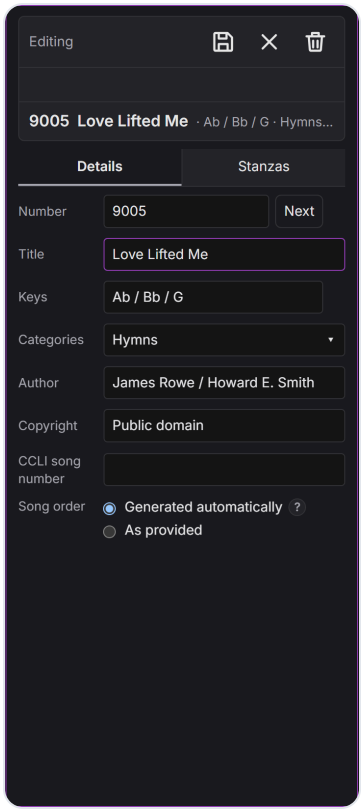
The app carries on. Your screen stays as it is. Plug the projector back in and the picture comes back on it by itself.

Your Live monitor

The Live monitor in the Stage shows what the projector shows. It fades with the projector, so what you see is what the room sees.

Edit a song and its history

The song editor opens in the Song pane. Whatever is on the projector stays there while you edit.



Add or edit a song

- **Add a song:** click **New song** in the Song pane header, or press **Ctrl+N**. The next song number is already filled in.
- **Edit a song:** open it, then click **Edit** or press **Ctrl+E**.

The editor has two tabs. **Ctrl+Tab** switches between them.

Tab	What goes there
Details	Number (**Next** gives the next free number), Title, Keys, Categories, Author, Copyright, CCLI song number and Song order.
Stanzas	Every stanza in one box, with a blank line between stanzas.

Write the stanzas

- Start a stanza with its title on its own line: Verse 2, Chorus, Bridge, Pre-Chorus, Intro or Ending. A stanza with no title is a verse.
- For a title of your own, start it with *, as in ∗Vamp. The * is not shown.
- A title on its own line, with no words under it, sings that stanza again there.
- Lines break only where you press Enter. The app never wraps a line for you.
- **Song order** is **Generated automatically** (the chorus comes after each verse) or **As provided** (exactly as written).

Keys go in one short box, separated by slashes. A range is written with a dash: **F - Ab / Bb**.

Save

1. Click **Save** or press **Ctrl+S**.
2. If something is wrong, nothing is saved. Each problem shows in red under its field, and a ⚠ marks the tab that holds it.
3. Fix them and save again. ✓ **Ready to save** shows when all is well.

Cancel (Esc) asks before dropping unsaved changes.

The editor holds lyrics only. If a song has chords, the editor warns that saving will remove them.

Delete a song

Click **Delete** or press **Ctrl+Del**. The app asks first. A song that is live can't be deleted: end live mode first.

Earlier versions

Every save keeps the song as it was, and deleting a song keeps its last version too. Nothing you save is ever lost. The app doesn't show earlier versions.

History of songs shown live

The **History** tab (**Ctrl+3**) lists the songs shown live for at least 10 seconds, grouped by day. See Find a song.

Photos and slideshows

Photos, videos and sound live in the **Media** module. Press **Alt+2**, or click **Media** in the module bar. **Alt+1** goes back to Songs.

Media has the same three panes as Songs: a list on the left, the chosen item in the middle, and the Stage on the right. Its tabs are **Files** (**Ctrl+1**), **Slideshows** (**Ctrl+2**), **Clip lists** (**Ctrl+3**) and **Playlists** (**Ctrl+4**).

Bring in your files

Do this before the song service. Photos, videos and sound are made ready as they come in.

- Click **Import** (the icon at the top of the left pane), or press **Ctrl+I**, and choose the files.
- Or drag files from Windows onto the left pane.
- Or copy them into the **Visual Song Book Media** folder in your Documents folder.

The app takes most photo, video and sound files, iPhone photos included. Each file shows in the **Files** tab. Until it is ready, its row says **Waiting to convert** or **Converting**, with how far it has got.

- **All**, **Photos**, **Videos** and **Audio** beside the filter box show one kind of file.
- If a file of the same name is already there, the app asks whether to **Overwrite** it or **Keep both**.
- **Ctrl+Del** deletes the chosen file. It goes to the Recycle Bin. A file that is live, or used in a slideshow, clip list or playlist, can't be deleted; the app says where it is used.

Slideshows, clip lists and playlists are kept on this computer, not in the song library.

Show a photo

1. In the Files tab, click a photo, or move to it with ↑/↓ and press **Enter**. It shows in the middle pane.
2. Press **Enter** again, or double-click the picture. The photo goes on the projector and you are in live mode.

The photo fills as much of the screen as it can without being cut off. **Esc** in the Stage, or **Ctrl+B**, blanks the projector. The photo waits in Up next, and **Enter** puts it back.

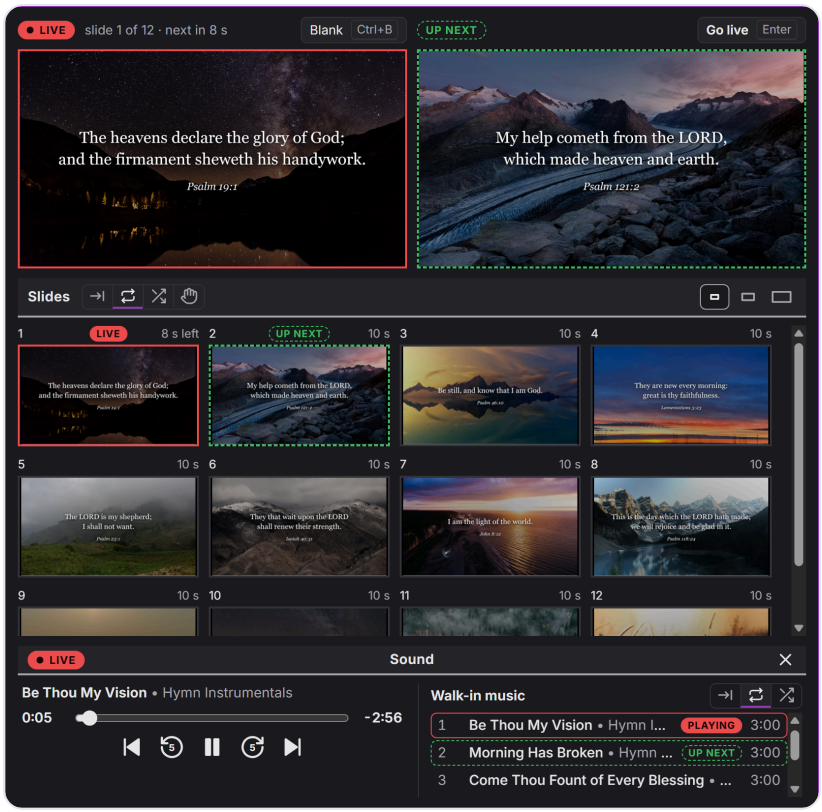
Make a slideshow

1. Open the **Slideshows** tab (**Ctrl+2**) and click **+** (New slideshow).
2. Type a name and click **Create**. A new slideshow plays in a loop, each slide for 10 seconds, until you change it.
3. In the editor, click **+** (Add photos). Click the photos you want, in the order you want them, then click the **Add** button. They go at the end, numbered in the order you picked them.
4. Set **Plays** and how long each slide shows, then click ✓ or press **Ctrl+Enter** to save.

In the editor:

- **Plays** is **Once** (once through, then stop), **Loop** (in order, over and over), **Shuffle** (in random order, each once before any repeats) or **Manual** (the next slide only when you move it).
- **Each slide shows for** sets the time for every slide, in seconds. Type in a slide's own box to give it a time of its own, shown in bold. Clear the box to go back to the slideshow's time.
- Drag ⁝⁝ to move a slide. **Del** removes the chosen slides.
- Shift+click chooses a run of slides, and Ctrl+click adds or removes one.
- While you edit, you can also Ctrl+click photos in Files and drag them onto the slideshow.
- ✕ or **Esc** cancels. Nothing is saved until ✓. The app asks before dropping changes.

To change a slideshow later, choose it and click **Edit** or press **Ctrl+E**. A slideshow that is live can't be changed until you end live mode.



Run a slideshow

1. In the Slideshows tab, click a slideshow, or move to it and press **Enter**. Its slides show in the middle pane.
2. Press **Enter** to start it from the chosen slide, or double-click a slide to start from that one.

In the Stage, Live says where it is, such as **slide 3 of 12 · next in 8 s**. A **Slides** strip marks the live slide and the one up next.

- **Space**, → or ↓ go to the next slide. ← or ↑ go back.
- A click on a slide in the strip jumps to it.
- The mode icons beside the Slides heading change how it plays for this showing only. The saved slideshow is left as it is.
- **Esc** in the Stage or **Ctrl+B** blanks the projector. The slideshow waits in Up next at the slide that was live, and **Enter** starts it again from there.

Videos and video clips

Videos are converted when you import them, so they play smoothly on the night. Import them a day or more before the song service: a long video takes a while. Photos and slideshows explains how to bring files in.

Two sound devices

Before you show a video with sound, check the status bar.

- **Live sound** is what the room hears, usually the sound desk. Click it to choose the device.
- **Booth sound** is for your own headphones. Click it to choose the device. It can't be the same as live sound.
- The speaker beside each one sets its volume. The headphones button mutes booth sound only, never the room.

Booth sound lets you listen to a video before it goes live. You also hear the live sound there.

Show a video

1. In the Files tab, click a video, or move to it with ↑/↓ and press **Enter**. It shows in the middle pane with a player.
2. Play it to check it, if you like. You hear it in booth sound only. The room hears nothing.
3. Under **When the video ends**, choose **Go to black** or **Hold last frame**.
4. Press **Enter**, click **Go live**, or double-click the picture. The video plays on the projector from where the player is.

In the Stage, the Live monitor plays along with the projector. Under it is the transport, worked with the mouse:

- the bar shows how far it has played, with the time gone on the left and the time left on the right; drag it to move;
- the buttons go back 5 seconds, back half a second, play or pause, forward half a second and forward 5 seconds;

- **Preview video** turns the moving picture in the Live monitor off or on. Turn it off on a slow computer. The projector is not affected.

Esc in the Stage, or **Ctrl+B**, blanks the projector. The video waits in Up next, paused where it was, and **Enter** plays on from there.

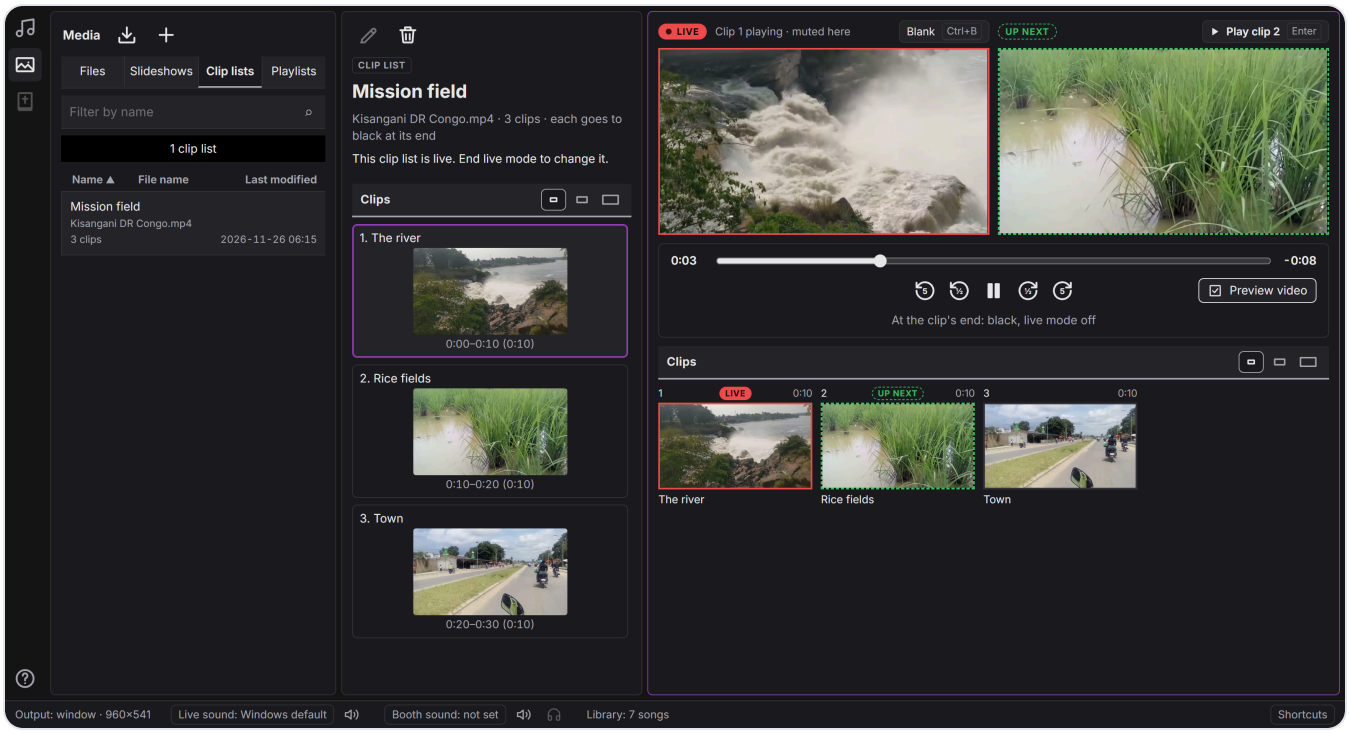
Make a clip list

A clip list is one video with named clips. Each clip plays from its start to its end, then the projector goes to black. Use it to play parts of a long video, one at a time.

1. Open the **Clip lists** tab (**Ctrl+3**) and click **+** (New clip list).
2. Type a name, choose the video and click **Create**. The video can't be changed afterwards.
3. In the editor, play the video. Click **Start** where a clip begins and **End** where it ends.
4. Type the clip's name, or keep **Clip 1**, and click ✓ or press **Enter** to add it.
5. Add the other clips the same way, then click ✓ or press **Ctrl+Enter** to save the clip list.

In the editor:

- A clip must be at least a second long and can't overlap another clip.
- ✎ on a clip changes it. 🗑 or **Del** removes it. Drag ⋮⋮ to move it.
- ✕ or **Esc** cancels. Nothing is saved until ✓. The app asks before dropping changes.



Play the clips

1. In the Clip lists tab, click a clip list, or move to it and press **Enter**. Its clips show in the middle pane.
2. Press **Enter** to play the chosen clip, or double-click a clip.

When a clip reaches its end, the projector goes to black and live mode ends. The next clip waits in Up next. Press **Enter** when it is time to play it.

- **Space** pauses the clip and plays it again.
- ← and → move 5 seconds back or forward. With **Shift**, half a second.
- **1–9** plays that clip.
- A **Clips** strip in the Stage marks the live clip and the one up next. A click on a clip plays it. Out of live mode, a click puts it in Up next.

If music is playing

A video with sound, or a clip list, asks **Music is playing** when a sound is already playing. Click **Stop the music and go live**: the music fades, then the video starts. The room never hears two sounds at once.

Sound and playlists

Sound, such as walk-in music or a backing track, plays under whatever is on the screen: words, a photo, a slideshow, or nothing at all. It plays on **live sound**, so set that up first (see Videos and video clips).

Sound files are imported like photos and videos, in the Files tab of Media. **Audio** beside the filter box shows only sound files. Each one is named by the title and artist from the file, or its file name.

Play a sound file

1. In the Files tab, click a sound file, or move to it with ↑/↓ and press **Enter**. It shows in the middle pane with a player.
2. Play it to check it, if you like. You hear it in booth sound only.
3. Press **Enter**, click **Go live**, or double-click the player. The sound plays for the room from where the player is.

The Sound panel

While a sound plays, the **Sound panel** sits at the bottom of the Stage, in Songs and in Media alike. It shows **LIVE**, the title and artist, how far it has played and how long is left. Its buttons, worked with the mouse, go back 5 seconds, pause or play, and go forward 5 seconds.

- ✕, or **Ctrl+.** from anywhere, closes the sound. It fades out over a second. Press Ctrl+. again during the fade to stop it at once.
- Blanking the screen leaves the sound playing. So does switching between Songs and Media.
- **Ctrl+R** closes the sound as well as clearing the panes.
- When a sound reaches its end, the panel says **Ended**. ✕ clears it, and the play button starts it again from the start.

Only one sound plays at a time. Another sound asks **Close the sound first**. Click **Close the sound and play**: the old one fades and the new one starts.

Make a playlist

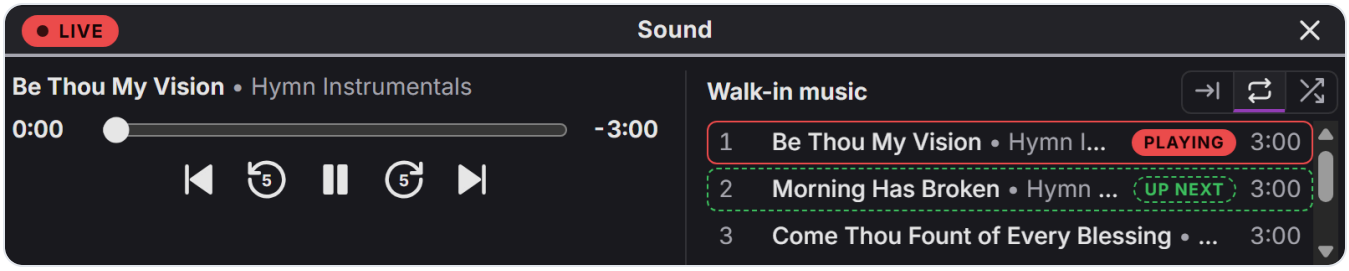
A playlist plays sound files one after another, as one sound.

1. Open the **Playlists** tab (**Ctrl+4**) and click **+** (New playlist).
2. Type a name and click **Create**. A new playlist plays once, then stops, until you change it.
3. In the editor, click **+** (Add tracks). Click the sound files you want, in the order you want them, then click the **Add** button. They go after the last track.
4. Choose how it **Plays**, then click ✓ or press **Ctrl+Enter** to save.

In the editor:

- **Plays** is **Once** (then it stops), **Loop** (in order, over and over) or **Shuffle** (every track once before any repeats).
- A playlist holds each sound file once.
- Drag ⁝⁝ to move a track. **Del** removes the chosen track.
- While you edit, you can also Ctrl+click sound files in Files and drag them onto the playlist.
- ✕ or **Esc** cancels. Nothing is saved until ✓. The app asks before dropping changes.

To change a playlist later, choose it and click **Edit** or press **Ctrl+E**. A playlist that is playing can't be changed until you close the sound.



Play a playlist

1. In the Playlists tab, click a playlist, or move to it and press **Enter**. Its tracks show in the middle pane, with a player for the chosen track.
2. Press **Enter** to play from the chosen track, or double-click a track.

The Sound panel then lists the tracks. The one **Playing** is marked in red, and the one **Up next** in green with a dashed edge. Each track plays to its end, then the next one starts.

- ⏮ and ⏭ go to the previous or next track. A click on a track plays it.
- The mode icons (Once, Loop, Shuffle) change how it plays for this showing only. The saved playlist is left as it is.
- A playlist set to Once says **Ended** after its last track.

Keyboard shortcuts

This is the list the app shows when you click **Shortcuts** in the status bar. Hold the mouse over a button to see its key, where it has one.

Key	What it does
↑	Previous item in the active pane · in the Stage: previous stanza in the song order, or a live slideshow: previous slide
↓	Next item in the active pane · in the Stage: next stanza in the song order, or a live slideshow: next slide
←	Stage: previous stanza in the song order, or a live slideshow: previous slide, or a live clip: back 5 s (Shift+←: ½ s)
→	Stage: next stanza in the song order, or a live slideshow: next slide, or a live clip: forward 5 s (Shift+→: ½ s)
Space	Stage: next stanza in the song order, or a live slideshow: next slide, or a live clip: pause and play, once ended the next clip
Enter	Open the song · start live with the stanza · send Up next to live · Media: put the chosen photo live, or the slideshow from the chosen slide, or the clip list from the chosen clip, or play the playlist from the chosen track · a live clip list: play the next clip
Esc	In the Stage: blank the output (ends live mode), then back to Song · in Song: back to Library · in the editor: cancel · Media, editing a slideshow, clip list or playlist: ✕ (asks first after a change; while changing a clip, cancels the change)
1–9	Stage: Verse 1–9 · a live clip list: play that clip
C	Stage: first chorus
B	Stage: first bridge
Ctrl+R	End live mode, clear every pane and return to search · Media: blank the projector and clear Media's panes; Songs keeps its Stage
Ctrl+B	Blank the output (ends live mode), from any pane
Ctrl+.	Close the sound, from any pane: it fades out while it plays; again during the fade, it stops at once
Ctrl+Tab	Next tab in the active pane: the editor's Details and Stanzas, or the Library's
Ctrl+Shift+Tab	Previous tab in the active pane

Key	What it does
Ctrl+I	Import songs from a Visual Song Book file · Media: import photos, videos and sound
Ctrl+O	Song libraries: new, open, recent, save a copy
Ctrl+1	Library: search songs · Media: the Files tab
Ctrl+2	Library: browse every song · Media: the Slideshows tab
Ctrl+3	Library: songs shown live · Media: the Clip lists tab
Ctrl+4	Library: the import list, songs an import held back · Media: the Playlists tab
Ctrl+E	Song: edit the open song · Media: edit the slideshow, clip list or playlist shown
Ctrl+S	Editor: save (a song from the import list is imported)
Ctrl+N	Song: add a new song
Ctrl+Del	Song: delete the song · import list: remove the song · Media: delete the chosen file, slideshow, clip list or playlist
Ctrl+Enter	Media, editing a slideshow, clip list or playlist: save it (✓)
Del	Media, editing a slideshow: remove the chosen slides · editing a clip list: remove the chosen clip · editing a playlist: remove the chosen track
Alt+1	Songs
Alt+2	Media
Alt+3	Bibles (coming in a later version)
F1	Help: About Visual Song Book