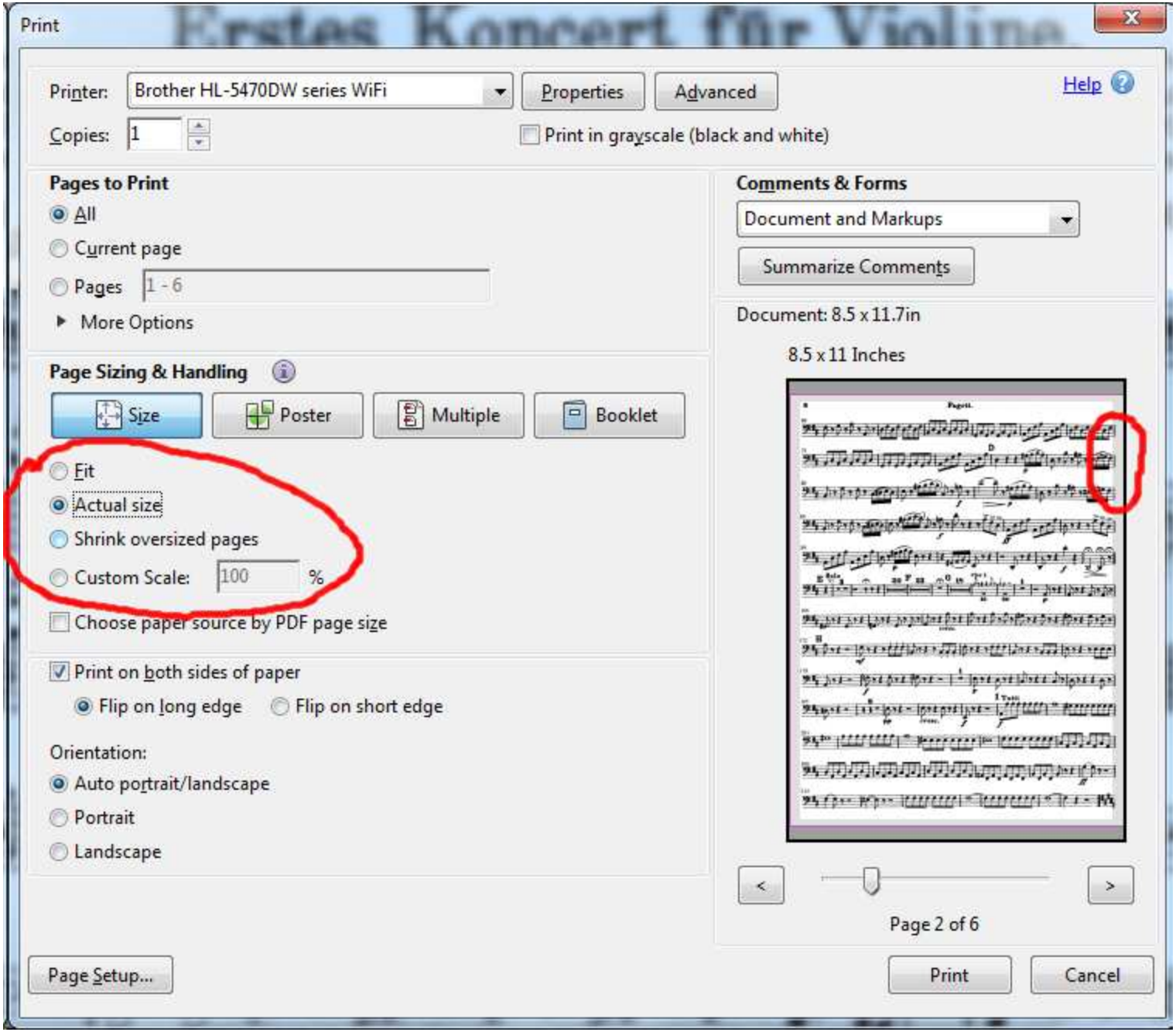
Hanan Bell

From: Peter Klein <pklein@threshinc.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 16, 2015 6:26 PM
To: Hanan Bell; theleague@nwwhitewater.org
Subject: Peter's guide to painlessly printing PDF music

Sometimes when we try to print PDF files of music, what comes out of the printer is not we expect. We may get cut-off staves, missing headers or footers, or the bottoms of each page cut off and printed on an extra following page. This is caused by scaling problems, and by how different printers handle margins. Our music comes from many countries with many different paper sizes, scanned on many different scanners. We print them on many different printers. Each program and device has its own ideas about what is correct, and they may conflict. It's a bit of a digital Babel.

Here's how to get around these issues. You will see examples from my Windows 7 PC. The same principles should apply on other Windows version or Macs, even if the look or exact terms are different. Mobile phones and tablets may not work as well to print music, as they don't always have as many scaling options.

Below is a screen clip of my print menu from Adobe Acrobat, ready to print a page of music. Scroll down below the clip to continue reading.

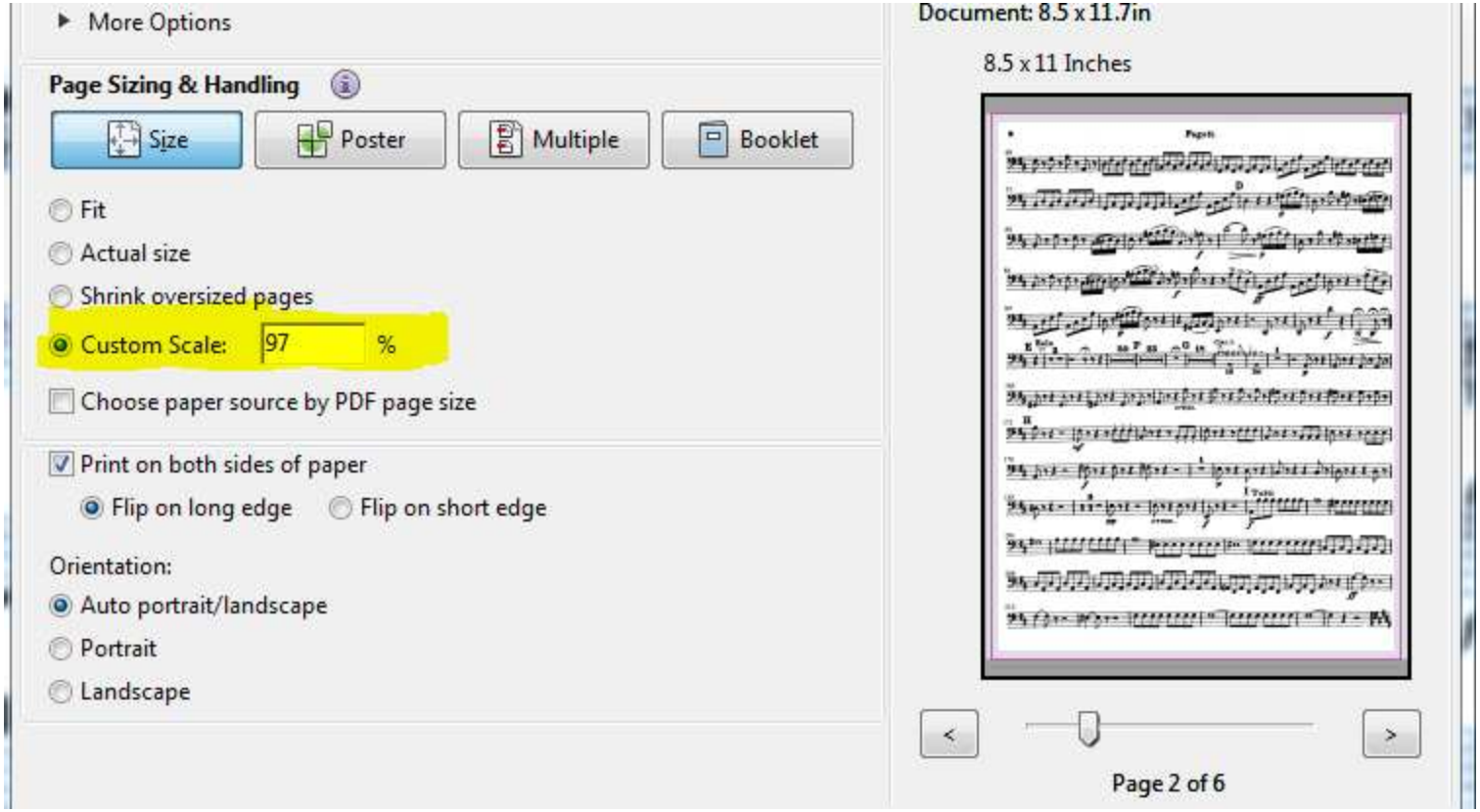


First, notice on the print preview above that the light gray right margin is cutting off one note and the ends of the staves (red circle). Not good.

You'll also notice that the document is a little too big for letter size. The purple outline shows the entire page as the computer will attempt to print it. Most printers can't print all the way to the edge. The white area shows what the printer can print. The light gray areas around the edges of the page are parts of the document that are outside the printable area. Having light gray top and bottom margins works fine on my printer (and most laser printers), as long as they are blank or don't contain anything needed for reading the music. But they can cause a problem on some printers (particularly inkjets).

Now, look at the red circle I've drawn on the left of the print menu. These buttons control how the document is resized. This is how we get around the printing problems.

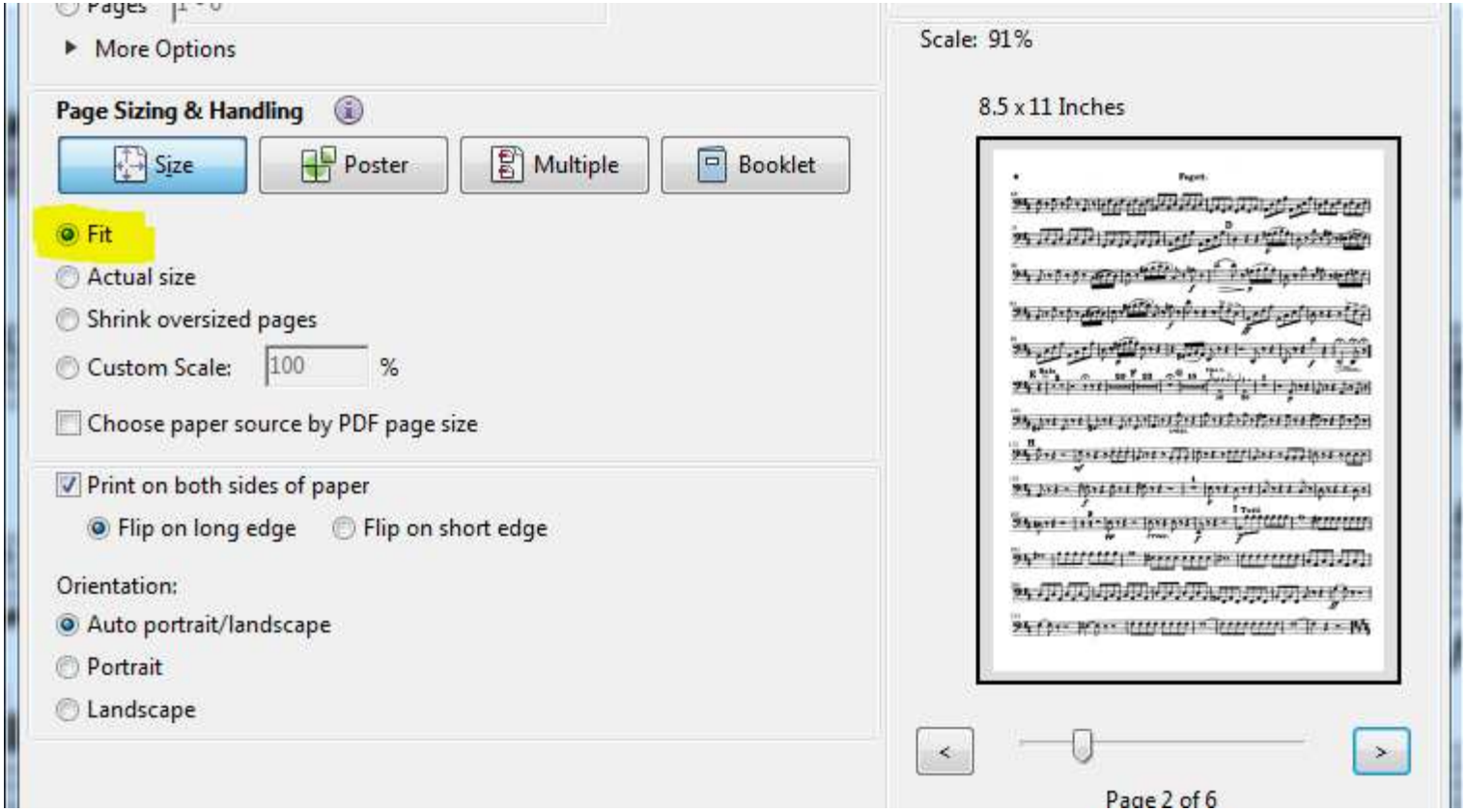
- **Fit** resizes the document to fit the page. This is the easiest option to use, and usually works without trial and error. However, it may make the print smaller than necessary. if your printer ignores the unprintable margins, you can get bigger print by using **Custom Scale**.
- **Actual size**, which is selected above, just prints using the PDF's internal document size. Unless that exactly matches the printer's paper size, you will probably have print problems.
- **Shrink oversized pages** is like **Fit**, except that it will also automatically reduce any individual pages in the document that are bigger than the first. Useful if the document was scanned unevenly.
- **Custom scale** allows you to adjust the print size manually. I find it the most useful option. In the percent box, I enter different scales between about 90-99%, then hit the Tab key so the preview at right resizes. Then I look at the print preview on the right. I use the largest percentage where nothing important is cut off. The example below shows how I would print this page. Notice that the right side of the print is no longer cut off. You may have to squint or use a magnifying glass:



But you'll notice that we still have light gray margins, which are parts of the document that can't be printed. Exactly how the printer will handle this situation varies from printer to printer. Many laser printers (like mine) will ignore the unprintable area, and life is good. But some printers (particularly inkjets) may try to print the top and bottom margin within the printable region. This "pushes" the last staff down too low, so it prints the last staff and/or the bottom margin on another page.

So if you try the above, but still get extra pages, then try **Fit**, or reduce the **Custom scale** until the preview shows little or no light gray margins and the printer is happy. You may have to waste a couple of sheets of paper to find the "sweet spot." Once you do, remember how the preview looks for the future. You'll then be able to print music without your printer rebelling. The custom scale or option you choose may vary--the goal is to get the unprintable margins in the preview to a state where the printer can cope with them.

If all else fails, use **Fit**. Here is the same page using **Fit**, which has automatically scaled the page down to 91%. You'll notice that there are no more light gray margins, and the purple outline no longer displays. The price you pay is that the music is smaller.



My printer imposes 1 inch margins, and ignores anything within those margins. So if I cut off, for example, the publisher's serial numbers or other non-musical stuff at the top or bottom of a page, I'm fine. If your printer thinks that a blank top or bottom margin still must be printed, and does so on an additional page, you have to reduce the scale of the page until it's happy and prints each page as one page.

Hopefully I'm making sense here.

TIP: Sometimes the first page of a piece of music is laid out differently from the rest. Or one or two pages may not print out correctly with a setting that works for the rest of the document. If so, the easiest thing to do is print everything with the best setting for the majority of pages, then reprint the problem pages with a different setting or scale.

VERY USEFUL TIP: If your printer can handle Legal Size paper (8.5 x 14 inches), get some. A lot of the music we download is about 9 x 12 inches or the European near-equivalent. With a little reduction in the Custom Scale, I can get the music to print on 8.5 x 14" without losing any notes or staves. Then I trim the paper down to about 12" in length. This makes the music larger and more easily readable than reducing it down to 8.5 x 11 "letter size." Very helpful for those of us "of a certain age."

Hope this is useful!
--Peter Klein
Bassoon, Rain City Symphony (and retired computer geek).