



TSUGARU
SHAMISEN
VIRTUOSO JAPANESE
SERIES



Sonica Instruments
TSUGARU SHAMISEN
Virtuoso Japanese Series
User's Manual

Thank you for purchasing TSUGARU SHAMISEN, part of Sonica Instruments' Virtuoso Japanese Series. We hope you fully enjoy TSUGARU SHAMISEN, which has been conceived to achieve the ultimate in authentic Japanese sound.

Sonica Instruments Team

Introduction

What is the tsugaru shamisen?

The shamisen, together with the koto and the shakuhachi, is an essential instrument for making Japanese music. The tsugaru shamisen [also written as tsugaru jamisen] originates from the Tsugaru region of Aomori prefecture and has evolved quite independently of other types of shamisen. Of the three basic categories of shamisen — futozao, chuzao, and hosozao — the tsugaru shamisen falls into the futozao camp. Larger overall than other sham-isen, it offers a more powerful sound with a weightier tone and greater volume. The instrument is usually used to accompany minyo folk songs or to play solo pieces, and in these solo pieces its unique style shines, especially the slap-like picking techniques with the bachi plectrum, inspired improvisations, and speed picking. Because of its unmistakable tone and compelling power, the tsugaru shamisen is now often adapted into pop music, rock, and dance music.

Virtuoso Japanese Series

About TSUGARU SHAMISEN

This product was developed to reproduce the tsugaru shamisen with as much realism as possible. This is why we recruited Nobuto Yamanaka to play the tsugaru shamisen for our sampling sessions, who put tremendous energy into each note with his unerring skill and superb concentration. And through uncompromising recording and KONTAKT programming, we crafted TSUGARU SHAMISEN to be the closest software instrument ever to the real thing. That's why we encourage you to turn to TSUGARU SHAMISEN to add a distinctive and memorable voice and texture to all kinds of music.

It is also our intention with the Virtuoso Japanese Series to always respect Japanese instruments and performers. One of our hopes is that TSUGARU SHAMISEN users will become better acquainted with the enchantment of the real tsugaru shamisen.

Product highlights

24 bit, 96 kHz multi-microphone recordings for full-fidelity

For the recording sessions, we used an assortment of more than 10 microphones with colorless microphone preamps and captured every nuance of the instrument in 24-bit 96 kHz fidelity. (The product contains 24 bit 44.1 kHz samples.) The package comes with four microphone patterns — Direct Mic, Overhead Mic, Room Mic, and Stereo Mix — for mixing versatility.

Filled with an array of articulations, five phrase banks, kakegoe voices, and slide noises

More than 20 articulations, slide noises, kakegoe voices, and phrase banks are key-switch controlled, for highly expressive and realistic performances from your MIDI keyboard.

Unique articulation mechanisms and interfaces to recreate natural tsugaru shamisen playing techniques

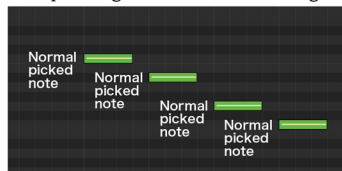
String Mode Mechanism

Although the tsugaru shamisen has three strings, unlike the guitar, chords are rarely played. Instead, a tsugaru shamisen performance usually consists of single-note phrases played mainly on the first or third string. To recreate this performance style, we developed the String Mode Mechanism, which operates TSUGARU SHAM-ISEN like an instrument with three independent strings so that you can select and play a specific string. When performing, the String Mode can be instantly selected with key switches. This lets you go back and forth between the three strings to play phrases just like on the real instrument.

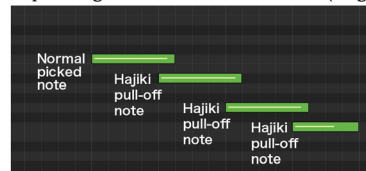
Hajiki-Legato function recreates hajiki pull-offs

Hajiki is a left-hand pull-off technique fundamental to the tsugaru shamisen. When playing a MIDI keyboard with Legato, you can instantly access the hajiki sound without a key-switch control from any articulation.

When picking without connecting notes

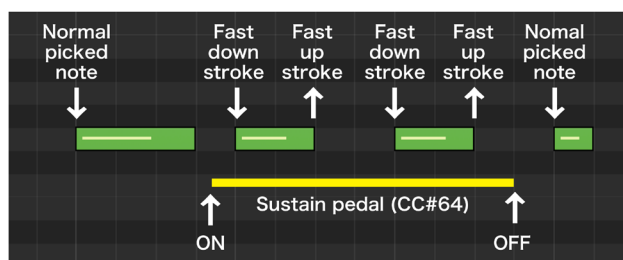


When picking with notes connected (Legato)



Alternate picking function reproduces continuous bachi plectrum attacks

TSUGARU SHAMISEN includes a function to recreate alternate picking, with Key On events triggering down-strokes and Key Off events triggering upstrokes. This function is active only while the sustain pedal is held down and inserts alternate picking instantly into any articulation. You can easily perform tremolo picking patterns by repeatedly hitting a key with the sustain pedal held down.



Resonance mechanism for sawari and resonant tone effects

TSUGARU SHAMISEN provides separate sound sources for the azuma sawari and resonant tones that are crucial to create the tsugaru shamisen sound. And just like the real instrument, the resonant tones respond to the specific interval being played. Furthermore, they are adjusted automatically to match different tunings and key transpositions to ensure an accurate recreation of the instrument's sound. The volume of each resonance component is adjustable.

Three tunings as well as key transpositions

The library comes with three standard shamisen tunings: Ni-agari, honchoshi, and San-sagari. Changing the tuning changes the pitches of the open strings, although the keyboard's chromatic notes do not change. The sawari and resonance effects track the tuning changes to recreate the inherent sound of each tuning.

Instrument Editor permits fine adjustments to the instrument

The built-in Instrument Editor lets you adjust the volume and fine tuning of each string and the noise mixer lets you set the sawari volume, the resonance volume, and the release noise volume. This gives you the ability to precisely tailor the instrument's sound to your liking.

Two play modes and two pitch bend modes

There are two play modes to suit your musical ideas. The Single mode provides the most realistic feel, while the Poly mode lets you play chords. There are also two pitch bend modes: Solo, which affects only the string being played, and All, which affects all three strings.

NKS ready

TSUGARU SHAMISEN is NKS compatible so it can be used with Kontakt Player, Kontakt Full (Ver. 5.7.3 or newer), and Complete Kontrol.

When TSUGARU SHAMISEN is linked with a Complete Kontrol keyboard or other NKS-compatible hardware, you can quickly preview tones and make full use of the hardware's knobs and controllers.

Product Specifications

Native Instruments Kontakt 5.7.3 or newer

Kontakt Player compatible

NKS ready

System Requirements

Mac OS X 10.10 or newer

Windows 7, Windows 8, or Windows 10

Intel Core 2 Duo or AMD Athlon 64 X2

A minimum of 4 GB of RAM (16 GB is recommended) is needed on both Mac and Windows systems.

Data size ~6.95 GB in NCW format (equivalent to ~17.6 GB in wav format)

- Native Instruments Kontakt or Kontakt Player 5.7.3 or newer is required to use the library.
- Installing the product requires a minimum of 6.95 GB of free disk space.
- Use the recommended Native Instruments Kontakt or Kontakt Player system requirements at a minimum.
- Installing the product on a computer with a faster CPU and ample RAM is recommended for optimal library performance.

Important: Online user registration is required in order to use the library.

Required MIDI Controllers

With a number of MIDI controllers, you can access the full functionality of TSUGARU SHAMISEN for more lifelike performances. (CC: Control Change)

Sustain Pedal CC#64

With the sustain pedal held down, releasing your finger from the keyboard will play an upstroke. In this way, you can recreate alternate picking with Key On events triggering downstrokes and Key Off events triggering upstrokes. This function is active only while the sustain pedal is held down and inserts alternate picking instantly into any articulation. You can easily perform tremolo picking patterns by repeatedly hitting a key with the sustain pedal held down.

Modulation Wheel (CC #1)

Plucking control — Controls the nuance of the attack when the string is struck by the bachi plectrum.

Key switch F1 and Control Change (CC #11)

This controller controls certain articulation variations. Note that the MIDI CC number is fixed.

Note: TSUGARU SHAMISEN always uses MIDI CC #11 (Expression) to control certain articulation variations. Therefore, when using the MIDI Learn function, please avoid assigning CC #11 to a knob.

Make use of the convenient Quick Reference to TSUGARU SHAMISEN (PDF)

We recommend that you have a look at the included PDF file while you get acquainted with TSUGARU SHAM-ISEN. This file gives a quick overview of the distinctive playing techniques and scale tunings of the tsugaru shamisen as well as some tsugaru shamisen-specific terms.

Before Using This Product

You need to **register your serial code** and **download the library data** with the Native Access tool in order to use this product. Check the Sonica Instruments website for a step-by-step installation guide and other information updates.

1. Install Native Access

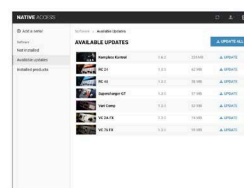
Note: You can skip this step if you already have Native Access on your computer.

Download the Native Access Installer for your operating system from the Native Instruments website (<https://www.native-instruments.com/en/support/downloads/>) and follow the instructions on the screen to install the tool.



EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

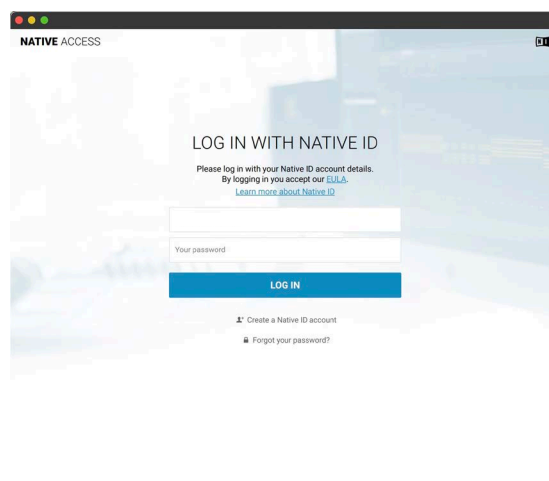
- ▶ The easiest way to get all your music creation tools ready for use
- ▶ Download, install, activate, and update all your software from one place
- ▶ Spend more time making music and less time managing products



2. Log In with Your Native ID

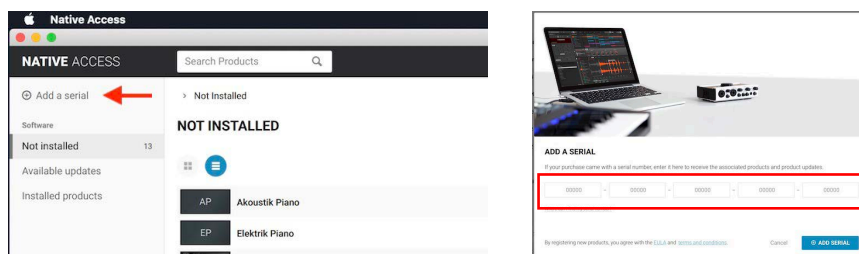
Launch the installed Native Access tool and log in.

If you do not have a Native Instruments account, click Create a Native ID account. On the Create a New Native ID window, enter the required information and create a free account.

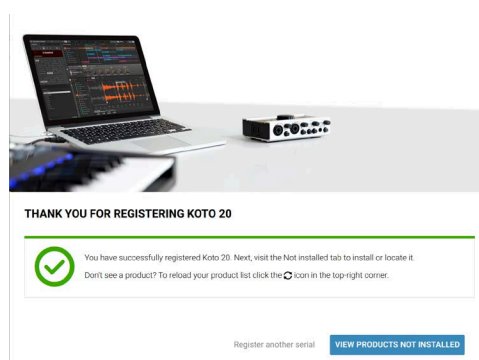


3. Register Your Serial Code

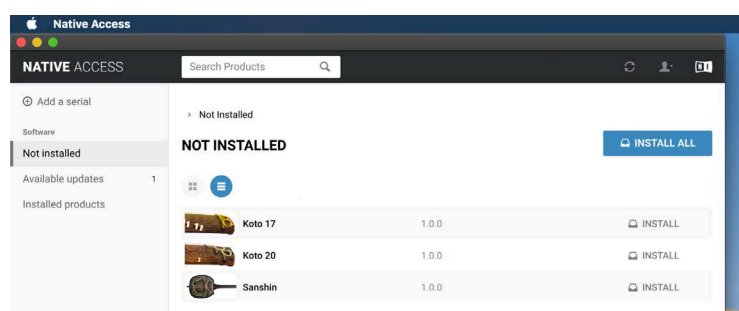
After Native Access launches, click Add a serial at the top left. Enter the serial code you received when you purchased the product in the red box shown below. (The serial code is sent you by email after your purchase.)



Click the ADD SERIAL button to register your product serial code. Next, click the VIEW PRODUCTS NOT INSTALLED button to open the installation window.



The product you registered will appear in the Not Installed list. Click the INSTALL button to the right of the product you wish to install. The download and installation process will now start.



This completes the installation of the library.

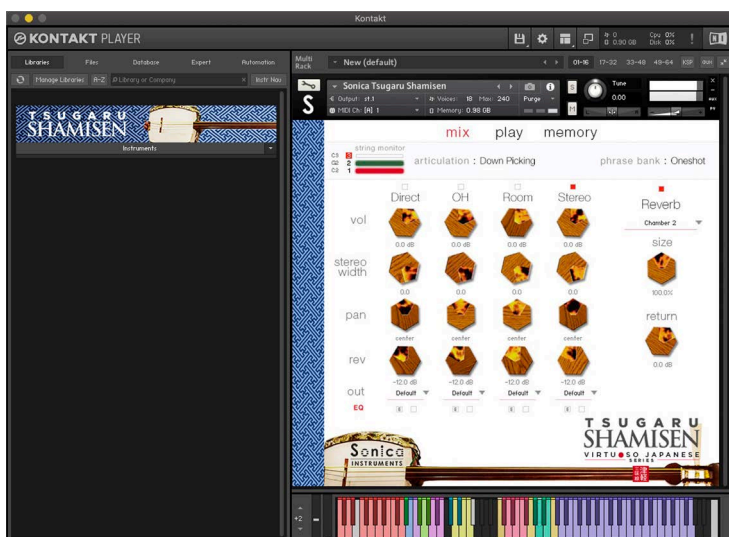
After the download finishes, launch Kontakt or Kontakt Player. The product will be added automatically under the Libraries tab on the left side of the screen. You can access the library in Complete Kontrol in the same way.

Overview of TSUGARU SHAMISEN

TSUGARU SHAMISEN works with Kontakt, Kontakt Player, and Komplete Kontrol.

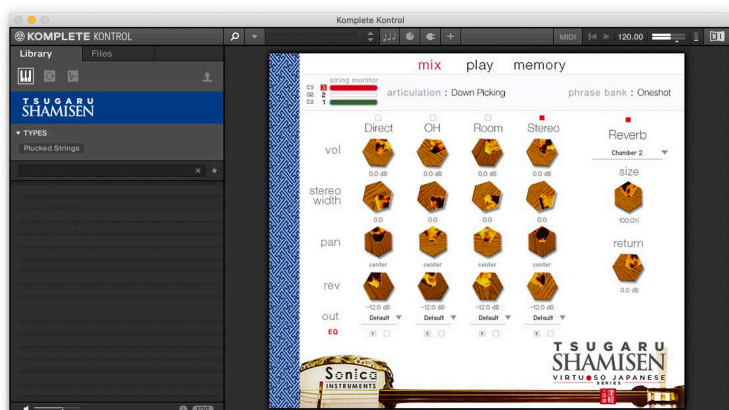
The library works with Kontakt and Kontakt Player

Once the library is activated, the **TSUGARU SHAMISEN** library panel will be added to **Kontakt's Library Browser**. Please load and use the tone model you want from the Library Browser.

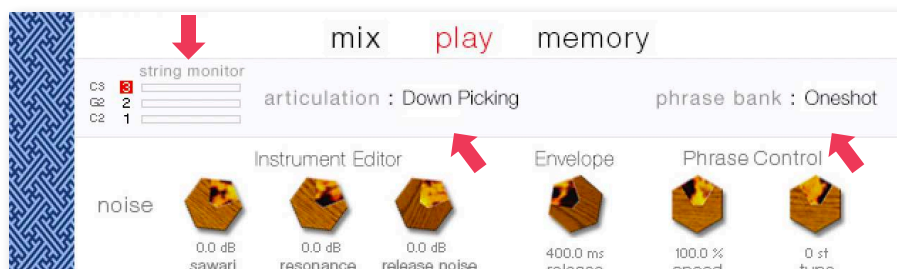


The library works with Komplete Kontrol

TSUGARU SHAMISEN is NKS ready, the library can be linked with **Komplete Kontrol** or a **Komplete Kontrol keyboard** to preview tones and save settings as presets. You can also make full use of the Komplete Kontrol keyboard's knobs, controllers, and browser. See [Komplete Series Controller Parameters on Page 18](#) for details.



Three Monitor Fields



The string monitor, articulation, and phrase bank monitor fields are displayed on all three panes — mix, play, and memory. This lets you see immediately the currently selected string mode, articulation and phrase bank at all times.

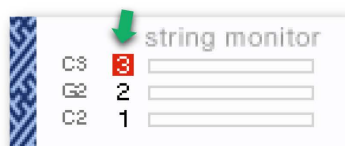
string monitor

Although the tsugaru shamisen has three strings, unlike the guitar, chords are rarely played. Instead, a tsugaru shamisen performance usually consists of single-note phrases played mainly on the first string (the thickest string) or third string (the thinnest string). To recreate this performance style, we developed the String Mode Mechanism, which operates TSUGARU SHAMISEN like an instrument with three independent strings so that you can select and play a specific string. When performing, the String Mode can be instantly selected with key switches. This lets you go back and forth between the three strings to play phrases just like on the real instrument.

The screenshots below show the string monitor field indicating in real time which string is currently selected and being played.



This indicates the open string notes. The open string notes change according to the key transposition.



The selected string is highlighted in red.



The string being played is highlighted: Red indicates the open note; Green indicates a note played on the neck.

string selector

open string

String Mode List and Key Switch Parameters

Key Switch	String Mode
C#2	1st String Mode
D#2	2nd String Mode
F#2	3rd String Mode

Open String List and Key Switch Parameters

Key	Open String Sound
D2	1st open string sound
E2	2nd open string sound
F2	3rd open string sound

articulation

This field shows the current articulation selected by key switches. You can confirm the current key switch setting on the KONTAKT keyboard. Some articulations have variations, which can be switched with MIDI CC #11 or by clicking and selecting the variation.

G#0: Slide Up — variation: Whole Tone / Minor 3 —first string only

A0: Slide Up 2x times — variation: Whole Tone / Minor 3 —first string only

A#0: Slide Down — variation: Whole Tone / Minor 3 —first string only

B0: Slide Up & Down — variation: Half Tone / Major 3

Articulation List and Key Switch Parameters

KeySwitch	ArticulationName	Contol 1	Control 2
C0	Mute(front)3rd string only	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
C#0	Up(front)3rd string only	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
D0	Mute 3rd string only	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
D#0	Up Picking	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
E0	Down Picking	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
F0	Staccato	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
F#0	Hajiki (Pulling off / Hammering on)		
G0	Vibrato 1st String Only	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
G#0	Slide Up (1st Only Whole / minor3)	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	F1 or CC#11= W / m3
A0	Slide Up 2x times (1st Only Whole / minor3)	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	F1 or CC#11= W / m3
A#0	Slide Down (1st Only Whole / minor3)	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	F1 or CC#11= W / m3
B0	Slide Up & Down (Half Tone / Major3)	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	F1 or CC#11= W / m3
C1	Slide Up & Down(series)		
C#1	Slide Up - Down - Up - Down	CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control	
D1	Portament Up		
D#1	Touch Noise	Can be turned on / off for each Key On event	key on 時に ON/OFF 可能
E1	Mute		
F1	Variation Switch	Enables G#0, A0, A#0, and B0 articulations	F1 or CC#11= W / m3
F#1	Slide Noise 1		
G1	Slide Noise 2		
G#1	Slide Noise 3		
A1	Voice 1		
A#1	Voice 2		
B1	Voice 3		

phrase bank

This field shows the current phrase bank name selected by key switch.

KeySwitch	PhraseBankName	Number of Phrase
C7	Oneshot Phrase	9
C#7	8bars Phrase	9
D7	Long1 Phrase	15
D#7	Long2 Phrase	15
E7	Long3 Phrase	8



MIDI keyboard layout

C0~D1 : Articulation key switch zone

D#1 : Touch noise key switch

E1 : Mute

F1 : Variation Control key switch

F#1~G#1 : Slide noise zone

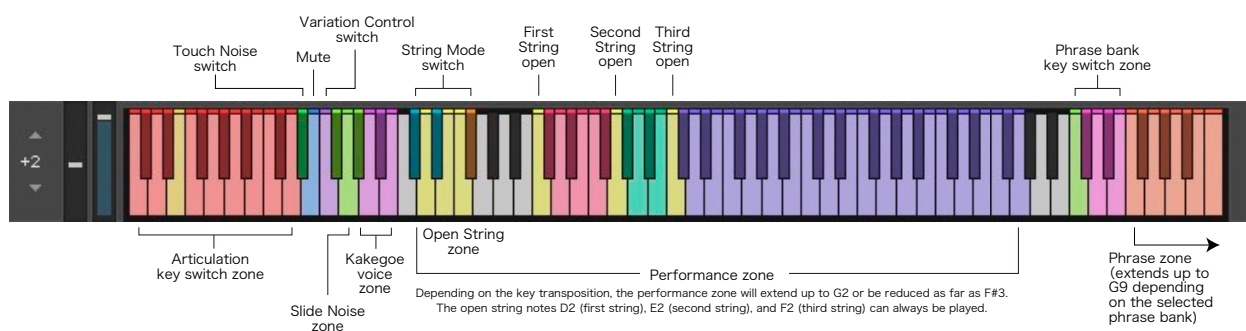
A1~B1 : Kakegoe voice zone

C#2~F#2 : String mode key switches (Light Blue) and open strings (Yellow) zone

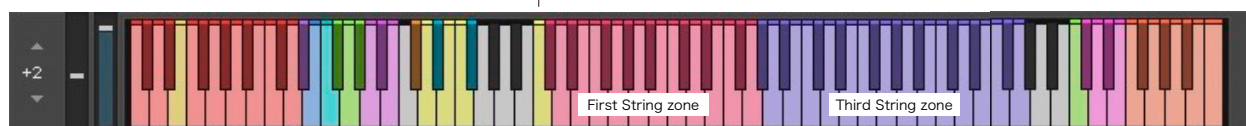
G2~G6 : Performance zone (Yellow: open strings, Pink: first string, Green: second string, Blue: third string)

C7~E7 : Phrase bank key switch zone

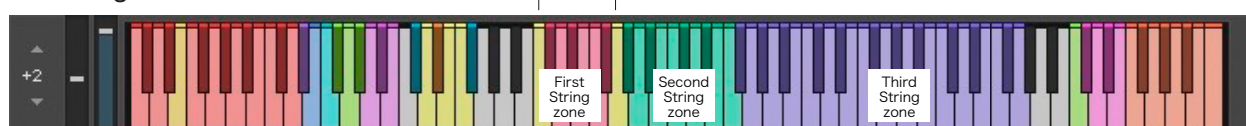
F7~G9 : Phrase zone



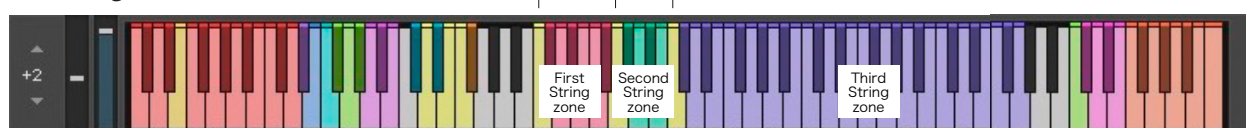
1st String mode



2nd String mode

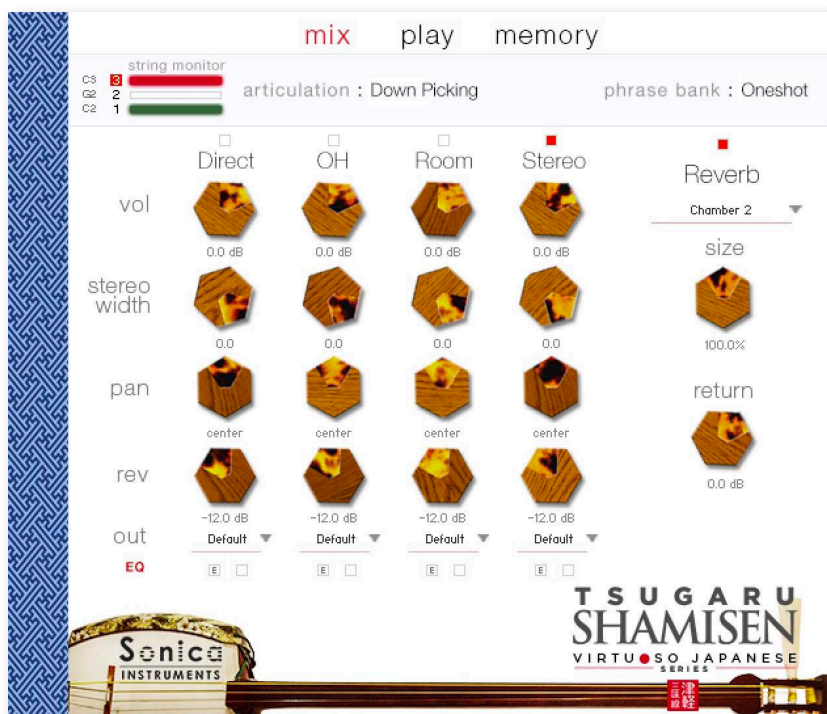


3rd String mode



mix

This pane is used for basic sound production.



Audio Mixer

The audio mixer lets you mix the three stereo microphone positions —

Direct, OH (overhead), and Room — and the Stereo Mix channel, which is a balanced mix of the three microphone sources. Note that turning on any of the microphone channels disables the Stereo channel, and turning on the Stereo channel disables all the microphone channels.

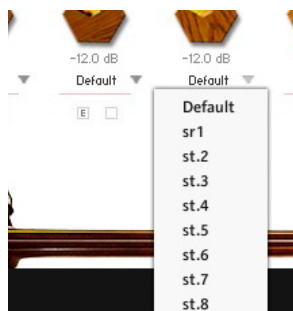
vol : Adjusts the volume of each channel.

width : Adjusts the stereo microphone width of each channel: 100% gives the original stereo width; 0% reduces the width to monaural.

pan : Adjusts the left-right panning of each channel.

rev : Adjusts the send volume of each channel to the built-in convolution reverb.

out : Selects the audio output of each channel. This is useful when sending multiple channels to your DAW.

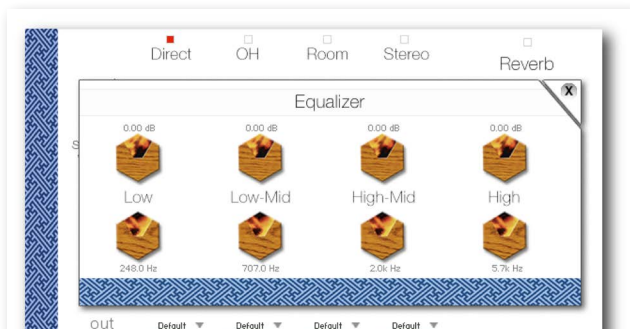


Multiple channel outputs from each microphone sound

After creating outputs,* clicking the Restart Engine button (marked with an exclamation mark) at the top right of the Kontakt interface will update the output list under KOTO 17's out control.

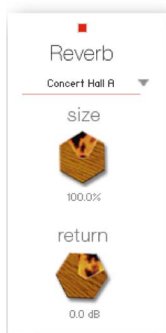
*Please see the Kontakt manual for instructions on how to create outputs.

EQ : Provides a four-band equalizer for each channel. Clicking the left [E] button opens the Equalizer window. Clicking the right button enables or disables the equalizer settings for the corresponding channel.



Reverb

The library contains 30 convolution reverbs, including two impulse responses from a Noh theater, available from the pull-down list.

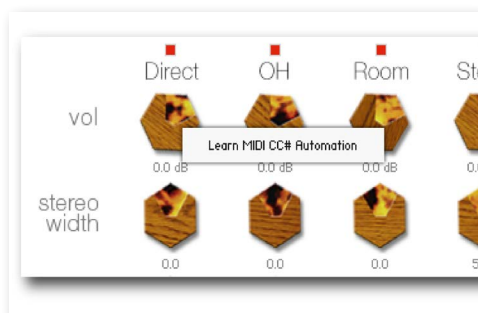


size : Adjusts the reverb time.

return : Adjusts the volume of the reverb component.

MIDI CC# Learn function

All control knobs can be controlled individually with MIDI Control Change (CC) messages.



How to set Learn MIDI CC#

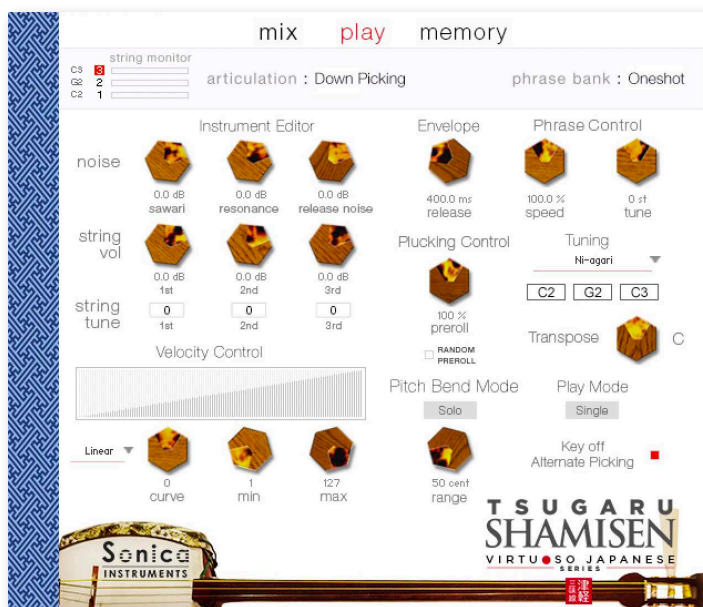
1. Right-click on the control knob and select Learn MIDI CC# Automation.
2. Turn the corresponding knob or move the slider on your MIDI controller.
3. The assignment is complete.

Removing MIDI CC# Automation

To remove an assignment, right-click on the control knob and select Remove MIDI Automation: CC# nn.

play

This pane is used to set the tsugaru shamisen's tuning and tonal nuances.



Instrument Editor

What is sawari?

sawari is the term for the shamisen's intrinsic resonant sound. The tsugaru shamisen uses an azuma sawari near the nut on the first string to produce this sound. The second and third strings also cause the sawari sound due to vibrations in the instrument, but the Ni-agari tuning lets the sawari ring out the best for a bright, showy tone, whereas the San-sagari tuning dampens the sawari sound and the honchoshi tuning lies in between the other two tunings.

noise



sawari : Adjusts the sawari volume.

resonance : Adjusts the resonance volume.

release noise : Adjusts the volume of the noise when the finger is released from the string.

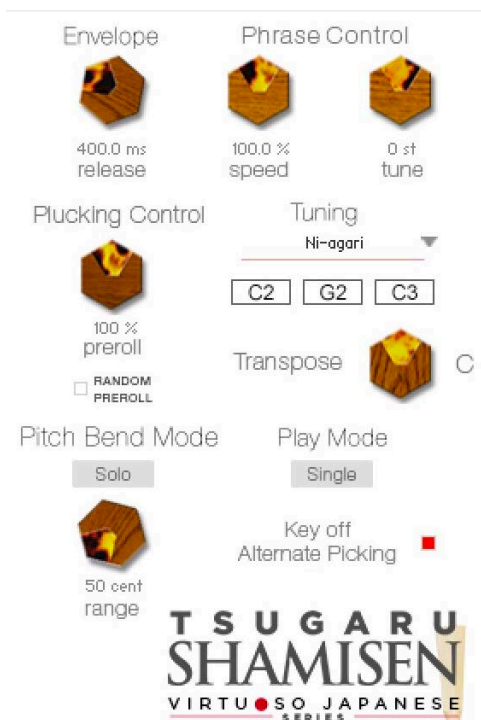
Note: The best way to check the sawari sound is to select the 3rd String mode and then hold down F4 on a MIDI keyboard while adjusting these parameters.

string vol and string tune



string vol : Adjusts the volume of each string.

string tune : Fine tunes each string in increments of one cent between +100 and -100 cents.



Envelope

Adjusts the release time of the string being played.

PluckingControl

Controls the behavior from the moment the plectrum strikes the string until the string sounds.

- **preroll** : Adjusts the maximum time from the instant the plectrum makes contact with the string until the plectrum clears the string.
- **RANDOMPREROLL** : When enabled, randomizes the preroll setting for each Key On event.

Pitch Bend

switches between Solo mode, in which pitch bends affect only the string being played, and All mode, in which pitch bends affect all three strings.

Phrase Control

These two knobs adjust the speed and fine tuning of phrases selected from the five phrase banks. You can also adjust the speed with the key switch articulations between G#0 and D1, since the speed is linked to the articulation.

Tuning

Lets you select from the Ni-agari, honchoshi, and San-sagari tunings, and displays the resulting open string notes. The sawari effect and resonance tone adjust to match the selected tuning.

Transpose

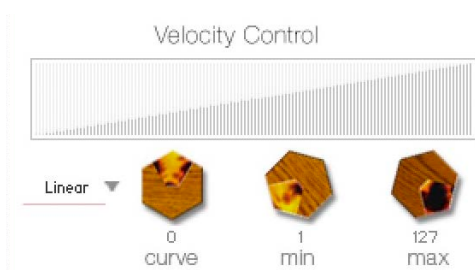
Lets you change the key, and displays the resulting open string notes. The sawari effect and reso-nance tone adjust to match the selected key.

Play Mode

Switches between Single mode, which provides the most realistic feel, and Poly mode, which lets you play chords.

Key off Alternate Picking

Enables or disables alternate picking while the sustain pedal is held down.



VelocityControl

- **curve type** : Sets the velocity curve to Linear, S-Curve, Compound, or Fixed.
- **curve** : Modifies the selected curve.
- **min** : Adjusts the minimum velocity of played notes.
- **max** : Adjusts the maximum velocity of played notes.

When the User curve is selected, the RESET CURVE button resets the curve.

memory

This pane is used to selectively load samples for all articulations and all phrase banks, allowing you to adjust the amount of memory used by KONTAKT. Turning off a Load button in the list will disable the corresponding articulation or phrase bank and reduce the size of the library's memory footprint.

The bottom section displays the MIDI Control Change controls assigned to frequently used controls, the keys to select string modes, and the keys to play open strings.

string monitor
C3 8
G2 2
C2 1

articulation : Down Picking phrase bank : Oneshot

Load	ARTICULATION	Load	ARTICULATION	Load	PHRASE BANK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C0 Mute (front) 3rd string only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A0 Slide Up x 2 times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C7 Oneshot Phrase
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C#0 Up (front) 3rd string only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A#0 Slide Down (Whole)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C#7 8 bars Phrase
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D0 Mute 3rd string only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	B0 Slide Up & Down (Half / Maj 3rd)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D7 Long Phrase 1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D#0 Up Picking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C1 Slide Up & Down (Series)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D#7 Long Phrase 2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	E0 Down Picking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C#1 Slide Up-down-up-down (Whole)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	E7 Long Phrase 3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	F0 Staccato open string only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D1 Portamento Up		VOICE & NOISE FX
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	F#0 Hajiki (hammering/Tapping)		SPECIAL KEY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	E1 Release Noise
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	G0 Vibrato 1st string only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D#1 Add Touch Noise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	F#1/G1/G#1 Slide Noise
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	G#0 Slide Up			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A1/A#1/B1 Voice

Plucking Control — Mod Wheel (CC#1)
Key off Up Picking — Sus Pedal (CC#64)
Hajiki (tapping) — Legato

String Mode Selector
1st string - C#2
2nd string - D#2
3rd string - F#2

Open String Sound
1st string - D2
2nd string - E2
3rd string - F2

TSUGARU SHAMISEN
VIRTUOSO JAPANESE

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Kontrol Series Controller Parameters

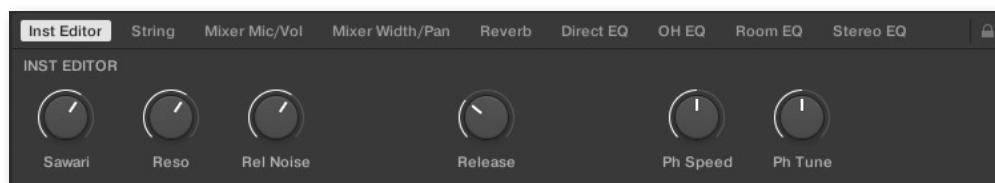
You can adjust controller parameters more intuitively on Complete Kontrol or Kontrol S Series (MIDI keyboards). (See the previous pages for details about each parameter.)

In Complete Kontrol, click the Control button to display parameters.



Inst Editor

Inst Editor provides control over Instrument Editor parameters.



String

String provides control over String parameters.



Mixer Mic/Vol

Mixer Mic/Vol provides mic channel selection and volume adjustment for each channel from the Audio Mixer parameters.



Mixer Width/Pan

Mixer Width/Pan provides width and panning adjustments for each channel from the Audio Mixer parameters.



Reverb

Reverb provides adjustments for the reverb send volume from each channel as well as control over Reverb parameters.



Direct EQ

Direct EQ provides adjustments for the gain and center frequency from Direct channel



OH EQ

OH EQ provides adjustments for the gain and center frequency from Overhead channel



Room EQ

Room EQ provides adjustments for the gain and center frequency from Room channel



Stereo EQ

Stereo EQ provides adjustments for the gain and center frequency from Stereo channel





Credits

Executive Producer: Tomohiro Harada

Kontakt Programming: Rataro. M (Think Master Inc.)

Marketing, Translation: Craig Leonard

Audio Editing: Yoshitaka Koyama

Sample Mapping: Rataro.M (Think Master Inc.) , Yuki Kuromitsu

Recording Engineer: Keigo Sonoda (Pastoral Sound)

Photography: Takashi Matsuda, Keita Ikeda

Music Video: Yasuhiro Nakashima

User's Manual: Yoshifumi Yamaguchi (LRCOT) Project Cordination: Daichi Yoshida Production

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