

Sonica Instruments **TSUGARU SHAMISEN**

Virtuoso Japanese Series

User Manual

Version 2.0 — July 2022

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

The Sonica Instruments Team





Version History

Release notes for Update 2.0

- Groove Browser function added
- Touch noise and Variation switching behavior changed to a latching behavior
- Status LED added to the EQ window
- Updated Product Requirements (KONTAKT 6.6 or later)

Release notes for Update 1.5

Added support for NKS and NATIVE ACCESS





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 *shamisen*, 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.

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, overhead, room, and a 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 SHAMISEN** like an instrument with three independent strings, so 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 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.





Groove Browser

The library comes with many classic *tsugaru shamisen* phrases recorded as MIDI grooves. You can drag and drop MIDI grooves directly from the Groove Browser into your DAW as MIDI data.

NKS ready

TSUGARU SHAMISEN is NKS compatible so it can be used with KONTAKT PLAYER, KONTAKT FULL, and KOMPLETE KONTROL. When **TSUGARU SHAMISEN** is linked with a KOMPLETE 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

KONTAKT 6.6 or later required

KONTAKT PLAYER compatible

NKS ready

System Requirements

Mac: Intel Macs (i5 or better) — Mac OS 10.14, 10.15, 11 or 12 (latest update)

Apple Silicon Macs (via Rosetta 2 and natively on ARM in standalone mode or in hosts that support ARM) — Mac OS 11 or 12 (latest update)

Windows: Windows 10 or 11 (latest Service Pack), Intel Core i5 / equivalent CPU or better, 2 GB RAM

Graphics hardware support for OpenGL 2.1 or higher

Minimum of 4 GB RAM (6 GB recommended)

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

- 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 SHAMISEN**. 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 2 tool in order to use this product. Check the <u>Sonica Instruments website</u> for a step-by-step installation guide and other information about updates.

1. Install NATIVE ACCESS 2

Note: You can skip this step if you already have NATIVE ACCESS 2 on your computer.

Download the NATIVE ACCESS 2 Installer for your operating system from the Native Instruments website (<u>https://www.native-instruments.com/en/specials/native-access-2/</u>) and follow the instructions on the screen to install the tool.



2. Log In with Your Native ID

Launch the installed NATIVE ACCESS 2 tool and log in.

If you do not have a Native Instruments account, click **Sign up now** on the Log In with Native ID window. On the Create a New Native ID window, enter the required information and create a free account.

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-	Email address	
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C	Don't have a Native I now or learn more ab ID	D? Sign up Jout Native
	ATIVE INSTRUMENTS +	s∿nds

t s u g a SHAMIS



3. Register Your Serial Code

After NATIVE ACCESS 2 launches, click **Add Serial**. Enter the 25-digit serial code you received when you purchased the product and click **Enter**. (The serial code is sent you by email after purchase.)



Product registration is complete when **Success** is displayed. The product you registered will appear under the **New** tab. Click the product's **Install** button to start the download and installation process.



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 KOMPLETE KONTROL in the same way.



Overview of TSUGARU SHAMISEN

TSUGARU SHAMISEN works with KONTAKT, KONTAKT PLAYER, and KOMPLETE KONTROL.

Using the library with KONTAKT and KONTAKT PLAYER

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



Using the library with KOMPLETE KONTROL

TSUGARU SHAMISEN is NKS ready, so 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 <u>KONTROL Series Controller</u> Parameters on Page 21 for details.







Three Monitor Fields



The string monitor, articulation, and phrase bank monitor fields are displayed on all four panes — **mix**, **play**, **groove**, 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 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.

Śź			string	monitor
<i>7</i> //	CS	3		
62	G2	2		
\otimes	C2	1		
///				

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

\$		4	string	monitor
7	CS	з		
69	G2	2		
\otimes	C2	1		

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



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





articulation

This monitor field shows the current articulation selected by key switches. You can confirm the current key switch setting on your 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 3rd — first string only
A0: Slide Up 2x times — variation: Whole Tone / Minor 3rd — first string only
A#0: Slide Down — variation: Whole Tone / Minor 3rd — first string only
B0: Slide Up & Down — variation: Half Tone / Major 3rd

Key Switch **Articulation Name** Control 2 **Control 1** 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 CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control F0 Staccato Hajiki F#0 (Pulling off/ Hammering on) CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control Vibrato 1st String Only G0 Slide Up G#0 CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control F1 or CC#11= W / m3 (1st Only Whole / minor 3rd) Slide Up 2x times A0 CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control F1 or CC#11= W / m3 (1st Only Whole / minor 3rd) Slide Down A#0 CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control F1 or CC#11= W / m3 (1st Only Whole / minor 3rd) Slide Up & Down F1 or CC#11= W / m3 B0 CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control (Half Tone / Major 3rd) C1 Slide Up & Down (series) C#1 Slide Up - Down - Up - Down CC#1 Mod.Wheel = Plucking Control D1 Portamento Up D#1 Touch Noise Can be turned on / off for each Key On event E1 Mute Enables G#0, A0, A#0, and B0 articulations F1 or CC#11= W / m3 F1 Variation Switch Slide Noise 1 F#1 Slide Noise 2 G1 Slide Noise 3 G#1 A1 Voice 1 Voice 2 A#1 B1 Voice 3

Articulation List and Key Switch Parameters

Note: Touch Noise (D#1) and the Variation Switch (F1) are only enabled during a Key On event (behaves like a latch)





phrase bank

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

Key Switch	Phrase Bank Name	Number of Phrases		
C7	One-shot Phrases	9		
C#7	8-bar Phrases	9		
D7	Long Phrases 1	15		
D#7	Long Phrases 2	15		
E7	Long Phrases 3	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







_____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** (stereo mix) channel, which is a pre-balanced mix of the three microphone sources. Turning on any of the microphone channels disables the **Stereo** channel, and turning on the **Stereo** channel disables all microphone channels.

vol: Adjusts the volume of each channel.

stereo 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.

		C.BY	
1	-12.0 dB	-12.0 dB	-
Ŧ	Default 🔻	Default 🔍	
	E	Default	
		sr1	
		st.2	
		st.3	
8		st.4	
		st.5	
		st.6	-
		st.7	
		st.8	

Setting multiple channels for a single microphone output

Please see the KONTAKT manual for how to create multiple outputs. After creating the 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 **TSUGARU SHAMISEN**'s output control.





Direct OH Room Stereo Reverb

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. The EQ can be turned on or off on the pop-up dialog as well.

<u>Reverb</u>

EO



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

size: Adjusts the reverb dwell 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.



To assign a control knob in **TSUGARU SHAMISEN** to a certain MIDI controller:

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

Removing MIDI CC# automation

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





play

This pane is used to set tsugaru shamisen tunings 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. 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.

<u>Noise</u>



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	Phrase Cont	trol	Envelope : Adjusts the release time of the string being played.
	ا 👏	2	Plucking Control : Controls the behavior from the moment the plectrum strikes the string until the string sounds.
400.0 ms release	speed	o st tune	 preroll: Adjusts the maximum time from the instant the plectrum makes contact with the string until the
Plucking Control	Tuning		plectrum clears the string.
10. *	Ni-agari	C3	• RANDOM PREROLL : When enabled, randomizes the preroll setting for each <i>Key On</i> event.
preroll	Transpose Plav Mod)) с в	Pitch Bend Mode : Switches between <i>Solo</i> mode, in which pitch bends affect only the string being played, and <i>All</i> mode, in which pitch bends affect all three strings
All	Single		Phrase Control: These two knobs adjust the speed and fine-
50 cent range	Key off Alternate Pickir	ng •	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
SH			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 resonance 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.

Velocity Control



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.





This pane is used to browse and preview the MIDI grooves included in the library and export the grooves to a DAW.



Velocity: Adjusts the playback velocity of the MIDI groove.



Swing	Grid	Tempo	Feel
0	1/8	120.00 韋	x1.0
0 %		Sync	post

- **Transpose**: Changes the key in semitone increments. This control is linked to the **Transpose** control on the **play** pane.
- **Tuning**: Selects the tuning. This control is linked to the **Tuning** control on the **play** pane.

Swing: Adds a swing feel to the MIDI groove.

- **Grid**: Toggles the **Swing** quantization between eighth notes and sixteenth notes.
- **Tempo**: Specifies the playback tempo. The tempo cannot be changed when **Sync** is enabled.
- **Sync**: When enabled, syncs the MIDI groove's tempo with the DAW tempo.
- **Feel**: Toggles the playback tempo of the phrase between *x*1.0 (original), *x*2.0 (double-time), and *x*0.5 (half-time).
- **Process**: Toggles at which point the **Swing** feel is applied, either before (*pre*) **Grid** is applied or after (*post*) **Grid** is applied. This control lets you access a variety of playing feels even with the same phrase and settings.



Using a MIDI groove

To load a MIDI groove into the Player, double-click on the MIDI groove you want to use from the Groove Browser [1]. Click the play button [2] to start a preview playback. Double-clicking on a pattern while the MIDI groove is playing will switch patterns without pausing the playback. You can move to the previous pattern or next pattern with the arrow keys (3) in the Player.



Loading a MIDI groove into your DAW

You can load a MIDI groove into your DAW as MIDI data. Simply drag the groove with the key [4] and drop the groove into your DAW.







memory

This pane is used to selectively load samples for all articulations and all phrase banks. Turning off a **Load** button in the list will disable the corresponding articulation or phrase bank and reduce the size of **TSUGARU SHAMISEN**'s memory footprint. Key switches and articulations without a **Load** button are always loaded.







KONTROL Series Controller Parameters

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

In KOMPLETE KONTROL, click the **Control** button to display parameters.



Inst Editor

Inst Editor provides control over Instrument Modeler parameters.



<u>String</u>

String provides scale and key adjustments.

l ≤ ► li	nst Editor String	Mixer Mic/Vol	Mixer Width/Pan	Reverb	Direct EQ	OH EQ	Room EQ	₽
STRING								
(\bigcirc	\bigcirc		(\mathbf{D}		
1st Vo	I 2nd Vol	3rd Vol	1st Tune	2nd Tu	ne 3rd	Tune		





<u> Mixer Mic / Vol</u>

Mixer Mic / Vol provides mic channel selection and volume adjustment for each channel.



Mixer Width / Pan

Mixer Width / Pan provides width and panning adjustments for each channel.



<u>Reverb</u>

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 for the Direct channel.







<u>OH EQ</u>

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



<u>Room EQ</u>

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



Stereo EQ

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



Groove

Groove provides control over Groove Browser parameters.



Credits

Executive Producer: Tomohiro Harada KONTAKT Programming: Rataro. M (Think Master Inc.) 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 Marketing & Translation: Craig Leonard User Manual: Yoshifumi Yamaguchi (LRCOT) Project Coordination: Daichi Yoshida Production

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