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1 Introduction

Recorded and produced by e-instruments in one of the best sounding studios in Germany, SESSION STRINGS brings the sound of a premium string ensemble directly to your fingertips. Its highly expressive, tight, warm and direct sound makes this Instrument the perfect solution for amazing soulful strings for your pop, disco, R'n'B or house productions. SESSION STRINGS enables you to produce high-quality ready-to-go string sections for modern productions without hours of fine tuning and tweaking, yet also boasts an incredible set of expressive features accessible from a highly intuitive interface. Designed for maximum ease of use, start playing and instantly control the full, lush ensemble—48 fully production-ready patches made up of four violins, three violas, two celli and two double basses.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy SESSION STRINGS.

– Your Native Instruments Team

1.1 More about SESSION STRINGS

SESSION STRINGS was recorded and produced in one of the finest studios in Germany famous for its disco and pop productions during the 70s. Supreme quality and precious instruments from the 18th and 19th century were used for recording. Top musicians from some of the finest orchestras in Europe performed a large number of strings articulations at the highest musical level.

Intuitively laid out, the instrument groups are mapped across the full keyboard range, with double bass on the lower keys and violins at the top end. You'll experience beautifully smooth cross-fading between each instrument group as you work your way up the register. The range of expression in SESSION STRINGS is phenomenal - with easily controllable falls, slides and crescendi instantly creating soulful and funky licks.

When playing legato, SESSION STRINGS beautifully reproduces the transition between notes, adding a truly human touch to your tracks. What's more, the unique Animator feature can take your productions into deeper territories - working in a similar way to an arpeggiator, the Animator can instantly transform a chord into a groovy staccato, spiccato or pizzicato phrase, and is creatively tweakable via the intuitive interface. With instantly accessible reverb and EQs, it's easy to get the right string sound at once.

Also included is the possibility to dial up the legendary 60s string sound of Motown records, recreating it in all its mid-range wall-of-sound glory.

1.2 About KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER

SESSION STRINGS is an Instrument powered by KONTAKT; you will, therefore, have to have KONTAKT or the free KONTAKT PLAYER installed on your computer in order to use SESSION STRINGS. Refer to the KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER documentation to learn how to load and configure KONTAKT Instruments.



1.1 SESSION STRINGS loaded in KONTAKT 4

2 SESSION STRINGS: Controls

This chapter will introduce you to SESSION STRINGS specific controls, which are situated in the Performance View section of the Instrument within your KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER software.

To show or hide the Performance View, press the Performance View button (PV) in the lower right of the Instrument Header:



2.1 The Performance View button in the Instrument Header



To learn how to operate the Instrument Header's controls, refer to the documentation of your KONTAKT or KONTAKT PLAYER software.

2.1 Basic Controls

There are seven basic types of controls: knobs, sliders, buttons, switches, drop-down menus, click menus, and numericals.

2.1.1 Knobs

- To change a knob value, click on it and drag up to move the knob clockwise, or down to move it counter-clockwise.
- Knobs can be fine-tuned by holding down your computer keyboard's [Shift] key as you move the knob.
- [Ctrl] + Click (Mac: [Cmd] + Click) resets a knob to its default value.

2.1.2 Sliders

- To change a slider's value, click and drag the slider to the right to increase, or to the left to decrease the value.
- Sliders can be fine-tuned by holding down your computer keyboard's [Shift] key as you move the slider.
- [Ctrl] + Click (Mac OS X: [Cmd] + Click) resets a slider to its default value.

2.1.3 Buttons

These are all toggles—click once to turn on, again to turn off. Most buttons will change their background color when actuated, thus reflecting the new state.

2.1.4 Switches

Like buttons, these also function as toggles. The right position indicates the off state while the left position means the switch is on. Clicking the switch changes its state from on to off or vice versa.

2.1.5 Drop-Down Menus

These look like buttons, but have small arrows that point down. To access a drop-down menu's entries, click on the menu. A list holding several entries drops down. To select one of the entries, move the mouse to the regarding entry so that the entry gets highlighted, then release the mouse button. The Instrument takes whatever action you've requested, then closes the menu.

2.1.6 Click Menus

These work like scroll bar arrows in any computer program. Click the top arrow to access the previous setting. Click the bottom to access the next one (Click menus are only available in the Instrument Header).

2.1.7 Numericals

These are fields that contain numbers.

- ▶ Click on the numerical, then drag the mouse up to increase the value, and drag down to decrease the value.

or

- ▶ Double-click on the numerical, and type in the desired value.



Directly editable numericals are only available in the Instrument Header. The parameter values in the Performance View can be changed only by operating the according knob.

3 The Performance View

The Performance View holds all the relevant controls for shaping the sound of the Instrument. SESSION STRINGS controls are divided into 2 separate pages, namely the main page for Performance settings and the FX page containing the effects settings.

3.1 Main Page

This page contains all the controls relating to the way in which SESSION STRINGS is performed. The Animator is also found here, which gives you the ability to play rhythmical phrases of short string articulations at the same time as other articulations—a powerful real-time performance tool.



2.2 Instrument Header with Performance View Open (Main Page)

3.1.1 Performance

- **Legato/Glissando:** defines whether or not (menu selection On/Off) specific Legato or Glissando samples are triggered when legato lines are played. This function also allows monophonic legato lines to be performed with one hand while at the same time playing chords with the other hand.
- **Pitchbend:** defines how SESSION STRINGS responds to the pitch bend control. Options are Scoops/Falls and Normal. Scoops and Falls are very short Glissando up and Glissando down samples, mainly used for accentuation. If Scoops/Falls is selected and the pitch bend control is at maximum position, scoops will occur for the following note-on events. If the pitch bend control is at minimum position, falls will be selected for the following note-on events. If Normal is selected you can use pitch bend in its usual way.
- **Sustain:** defines how SESSION STRINGS responds to the sustain pedal. If Animator is selected, you can activate the Animator by pressing a sustain pedal (CC64). If Normal is selected you can use the sustain pedal in its usual way.

3.1.2 Animator

The Animator is a Step-Sequencer and contains 8 different velocity steps. To activate it, click the switch next to the Animator label. Alternatively you can use a sustain pedal that is connected to a pedal input on your MIDI keyboard. If you are using a pedal, first set Sustain Mode to Animator.



2.3 Animator Controls with Animator switch on

- **Phrase:** This drop-down menu gives you a choice between Chord Mode and Arpeggio Mode. In Chord Mode the Animator will process input chords as chords and play them according to the velocity sequence. In Arpeggio Mode chords will generate an Arpeggio with each note corresponding to the velocity values of the Animator sequence. Each group (Chord Mode and Arpeggio Mode) contains a list of different articulations (staccato, pizzicato, spiccato) in combination with matching Animator patterns.

- **Dynamic:** controls the velocity range of the Animator pattern.
- **Groove:** controls the note values of the Animator from ¼ Notes up to 1/16 triplet.

3.1.3 Envelope

- **Attack:** controls the fade-in time of all samples.
- **Release:** controls the fade-out time of samples after a key is released.

3.2 FX/Settings Page

All SESSION STRINGS effects settings controls are found on this page. These controls affect the way in which the instrument responds and will give expression to your individual playing style. You can also use the EQ settings to adjust the frequency mix and add varying amounts of reverb based on different convolution room presets.



2.4 Instrument Header with Performance View Open (FX Page)

3.2.1 Velocity

To turn Velocity on or off, click the switch next to the Velocity label. When set to on, dynamic is controlled by velocity in the usual way. When set to off, modulation (CC#1) controls dynamic. Use this mode to produce dynamic changes after a note is pressed.

- **Min:** defines the lowest velocity value of the SESSION STRINGS.
- **Max:** defines the highest velocity value of the SESSION STRINGS.

Input velocities will be scaled according to the Min and Max values. The combination of these two dials limits the dynamic range of the SESSION STRINGS and expands the resolution within that range. Setting the Max and Min to the same value will result in the same dynamic from all strings, no matter how hard or softly they are played.



2.5 Velocity Controls

- **Curve:** is used to adjust the total velocity response of the SESSION STRINGS to your master control keyboard. It changes continuously from logarithmic, linear to exponential.
 - Linear translation of the input velocity (middle position): The input velocities are not processed.
 - Logarithmic translation of the input velocity (dial left): This is useful if you happen to use a “light” master keyboard (which outputs higher velocities even when you play rather softly) as this transforms higher input velocities to relatively low ones.
 - Exponential translation of the input velocity (dial right): This setting is useful for “heavy” master keyboards as the strings respond more easily to your playing.

3.2.2 EQ

- **Low:** is a gain controller for low frequencies with fixed frequency and bandwidth.
- **Middle:** is a gain controller for middle frequencies with fixed frequency and bandwidth.
- **High:** is a gain controller for high frequencies with fixed frequency and bandwidth.



The switch next to the EQ label turns the entire EQ on or off.



2.6 EQ Controls

3.2.3 Reverb

This reverb is a convolution reverb.



2.7 Reverb Controls showing different Room Convolution Presets

- **Type:** This dropdown menu offers a choice of different room and hall characters of the convolution reverb.
- **Mix:** controls the amount of the Impulse Response that is mixed with the clean source signal.



The switch next to the Reverb label turns the Reverb on or off.

4 Presets

SESSION STRINGS comes with 48 presets (nki's) organized in two groups:

- **Performance** – these presets contain a wide number of strings articulations and include the Animator function. They are designed for real-time performance.
- **Individual** – these presets contain one or two articulations and no Animator function (only the FX/Settings page is available). They are designed for detailed arranging and programming.

These two groups can be found in the “Standard” and “Mtown” folders. The MTown presets emulate the typical sound of Motown strings recordings from the 60's and 70's.

4.1 Standard Preset List: Performance

- *01 Legato FortePianoCresc.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and forte piano crescendo for high dynamics
- *02 Legato SustainAccent.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and sustain with attack for high dynamics
- *03 Legato Tremolo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and tremolo for high dynamics
- *04 Legato Crescendo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and short crescendo for high dynamics
- *05 Legato.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato and spiccato (for the Animator)

- *06 Glissando FortePianoCresc.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and forte piano crescendo for high dynamics
- *07 Glissando SustainAccent.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and sustain with attack for high dynamics
- *08 Glissando Tremolo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and tremolo for high dynamics
- *09 Glissando Crescendo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and short crescendo for high dynamics
- *10 Glissando.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato and spiccato (for the Animator)

4.2 Standard Preset List: Individual

- *01 Sustain.nki* – individual pure sustained notes (2 velocity layers)
- *02 SustainAccent.nki* – individual sustained notes with attack (1 velocity layer)
- *03 Legato Sustain.nki* – combination of sustained notes, sustained notes with attack for high dynamics and legato transitions for legato play (within one octave) (3 velocity layers)
- *04 Glissando Sustain.nki* – combination of sustained notes, sustained notes with attack for high dynamics and glissando transitions for legato play (within one octave) (3 velocity layers)
- *05 Tremolo.nki* – individual tremolo articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *06 FortePianoCrescendo.nki* – individual short forte piano crescendo articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *07 Crescendo.nki* – individual short crescendo articulation (1 velocity layer)

- *08 Pizzicato.nki* – individual pizzicato articulation, including round robin (2 velocity layers)
- *09 Staccato.nki* – individual staccato articulation, including round robin (2 velocity layers)
- *10 Spiccato.nki* – individual spiccato articulation, including round robin (2 velocity layers)
- *11 Glissando down.nki* – individual fast glissando down with sustained note (2 velocity layers)
- *12 Glissando up.nki* – individual fast glissando up with sustained note (2 velocity layers)
- *13 Falls.nki* – individual short glissando down articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *14 Scoop.nki* – individual short glissando up articulation (1 velocity layer)

4.3 MTown Preset List: Performance

- *01 MTown Legato FortePianoCresc.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and forte piano crescendo for high dynamics
- *02 MTown Legato SustainAccent.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and sustain with attack for high dynamics
- *03 MTown Legato Tremolo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and tremolo for high dynamics
- *04 MTown Legato Crescendo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and short crescendo for high dynamics
- *05 MTown Legato.nki* – contains sustain articulations, legato transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato and spiccato (for the Animator)
- *06 MTown Glissando FortePianoCresc.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and forte piano crescendo for high dynamics

- *07 MTown Glissando SustainAccent.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and sustain with attack for high dynamics
- *08 MTown Glissando Tremolo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and tremolo for high dynamics
- *09 MTown Glissando Crescendo.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato, spiccato (for the Animator) and short crescendo for high dynamics
- *10 MTown Glissando.nki* – contains sustain articulations, glissando transitions (legato play within one octave), scoops and falls (via pitch bend), pizzicato, staccato and spiccato (for the Animator)

4.4 MTown Preset List: Individual

- *01 MTown Sustain.nki* – individual pure sustained notes (2 velocity layers)
- *02 MTown SustainAccent.nki* – individual sustained notes with attack (1 velocity layer)
- *03 MTown Legato Sustain.nki* – combination of sustained notes, sustained notes with attack for high dynamics and legato transitions for legato play (within one octave) (3 velocity layers)
- *04 MTown Glissando Sustain.nki* – combination of sustained notes, sustained notes with attack for high dynamics and glissando transitions for legato play (within one octave) (3 velocity layers)
- *05 MTown Tremolo.nki* – individual tremolo articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *06 MTown FortePianoCrescendo.nki* – individual short forte piano crescendo articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *07 MTown Crescendo.nki* – individual short crescendo articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *08 MTown Pizzicato.nki* – individual pizzicato articulation, including round robin (2 velocity layers)

- *09 MTown Staccato.nki* – individual staccato articulation, including round robin (2 velocity layers)
- *10 MTown Spiccato.nki* – individual spiccato articulation, including round robin (2 velocity layers)
- *11 MTown Glissando down.nki* – individual fast glissando down with sustained note (2 velocity layers)
- *12 MTown Glissando up.nki* – individual fast glissando up with sustained note (2 velocity layers)
- *13 MTown Falls.nki* – individual short glissando down articulation (1 velocity layer)
- *14 MTown Scoop.nki* – individual short glissando up articulation (1 velocity layer)

4.5 Playing with Performance Presets

Here are some tips to help you maximize the playability of the various performance presets.

4.5.1 Choosing a Performance Preset

The character of a preset can be determined from its name. *Perf_Legato_FortePianoCresc*, for example, is a performance preset with legato transitions between notes. For performance presets, the last word in the preset name indicates the type of accent articulation that will be produced at high velocities (greater than 112), a Forte Piano Crescendo in this case. Scoops and falls and the Animator function are included for all performance presets.

4.5.2 Legato/Glissando

Performances named “Legato” or “Glissando” behave in a similar way. If the interface control for “Legato” is set to *on*, you will get real legato articulations when playing legato lines within one octave of the key range. In this case SESSION STRINGS behaves monophonically for that legato line. You can still play chords, and it is also possible to play chords with one hand and monophonic legato lines with the other.

4.5.3 Scoops/Falls

Using Pitchbend mode gives you great control in achieving realistic scoops and falls between notes. If the interface control for Pitchbend is set to *on*, you'll get falls (short glissando down) for the next keystroke (MIDI "note on" message) by moving the keyboard's pitch bend control down and scoops for the next keystroke by moving the keyboard's pitch bend control up.

4.5.4 Animator

The Animator offers rhythmical phrases for short strings articulations. To select the Animator Mode, turn the Animator Switch on or press the sustain pedal connected to your controller keyboard (while Sustain Mode is set to Animator). Notes played after Animator Mode is switched on or after the sustain pedal is pressed will be "animated". Note that the Animator and other articulations can be used in parallel (only when using a sustain pedal), illustrated by the following procedure:

Example

1. Play and hold a chord without pressing the sustain pedal. You get a normal sustained strings sound.
2. Press the sustain pedal and play a chord with the left hand. The Animator will start and produce a rhythmical phrase of that chord.
3. Keep this chord pressed and release the sustain pedal.
4. Now play a chord with the right hand.
 - The Animator continues to run and you will hear the Animator phrase as well as the sustained notes of the right hand chord. The Animator will play this first chord as long as *any* key is pressed. This allows you to improvise by using a combination of Animator phrases and sustained notes. With a bit of practice this can be a powerful real-time performance tool.

Animator Controls

- **Phrase:** gives a selection of rhythmical chord phrases as well as arpeggios for pizzicato, staccato and spiccato articulations. There are a total of 36 Animator presets.

- **Dynamic:** controls the dynamic of the Animator phrase. At minimum values all notes will play with the same velocity. This velocity value is determined by the velocity at which the notes are physically played. Maximum values will result in the maximum programmed dynamic of the Animator phrase.
- **Groove:** determines the note duration. Choose from: 4th, 4th triplet, 8th, 8th triplet, 16th and 16th triplet.

4.5.5 Velocity

If *Velocity* is set to off, you can also control the Animator dynamic by using modulation. You can now make rhythmical adjustments in order to change the dynamic of the individual Animator notes as you like.

Example

1. Let the Animator run and set the Animator dynamic knob to “min”. You get a static Animator phrase (all notes play at the same velocity).
2. Now adjust the modulation wheel to set your preferred accents.



Use this intuitive method to create a variety of interesting Animator phrases.

The *Min* and *Max* controls determine the minimum and maximum velocities of the SESSION STRINGS. At their default values, the full dynamic of the control keyboard’s input velocities is maintained. If, however, you only want to use soft articulations, lower the *Max* control. Soft articulations will result even if you play at high velocities.

Curve will change the shape of the velocity curve. Use this to adjust the response of SESSION STRINGS according to your particular control keyboard.



Note: For Performance articulations such as Forte Piano Crescendo, Tremolo and Crescendo there is a fixed velocity switch at the velocity value 112. Notes played at higher velocities than this will produce the Performance preset’s accent articulation (For example, Tremolo for the *Perf_Legato_Tremolo* Preset). Notes played at lower velocities will play with normal sustain.

5 Credits

- **Produced, engineered and mixed** by Thomas Koritke
- **Musical coordination:** Wolfgang Meier zu Eissen
- **Sound Design/Sample Editing:** Sascha Haske, Holger Brauns, Lars Dahlke
- **Script Programming:** Sebastian Bretschneider
- **Interface Design:** Shaun Ellwood, Goesta Wellmer
- **Impulse Responses:** Studiotools, e-instruments
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