



Garritan PC MAC Personal Orchestra 5 £99

This all-in-one orchestral instrument has a great pedigree, but how will the latest version fare in a market that's more competitive than ever?

> Garritan Personal Orchestra (AAX/VST/AU/standalone) is an all-in-one orchestral library aimed at those wanting to program convincing symphonic parts on a budget. Version 4 (9/10, **cm147**) included a 2GB sample set (piano, woodwind, harp, percussion, pipe organ, brass and strings), around 300 instrument presets, and 28 ensemble presets.

GPO5 ups the ante somewhat with a 12.5GB sample bank and just over 500 instruments, including everything in GPO4 and new additions across all categories except woodwind. There have also been a few improvements to Aria Player, which has a new look, drag-and-drop patch loading, and improved dynamic transitioning between sample layers (a system dubbed Sonic Morphing).

There's also a new Convolution reverb with 27 sampled spaces, including six concert halls, and various chapels, ballrooms and scoring studios. This shares Aria Player's one auxiliary send with the existing Ambience algorithmic reverb, which also gains proper high- and low-frequency EQ and Damping. Although both reverbs are of good quality, the single send and basic Mixer features (Level, Pan, Mute, Solo and Send) are GPO5's one major weak spot.

String machine

Among the significant additions to the GPO5 sound library are three new Steinway pianos

– a well-balanced Concert D, a mellower Concert D, and a very lively Studio B. Two new sets of timpani provide a bright and a more rounded option, while a set of four orchestral toms with single hit, roll and flam articulations further expand the percussion palette. The new pipe organ, Custom Organ Console, includes 74 stops, and the choir sample set now includes a selection of Aah, Ooh, Oh and Eeh articulations across six sections (soprano, alto, tenor, bass, boys and children). Among the main brass instruments (trumpet, French horn, trombone and tuba) are some excellent solo and ensemble marcato, staccato and sustain patches courtesy of Project SAM. Oh, and there's a new harp (Concert Grand), which uses MIDI controllers to mimic the pedals of the real thing.

The biggest addition, though, is a significant chunk of the original Garritan Orchestral Strings library, comprising a vast array of sonically consistent articulations, both as individual and keyswitched patches, and ranging from solo instruments and small sections (two to six players), to much bigger ensembles and a full orchestral string section. Throw in first and second violins and you have the sort of sonic flexibility that's often lacking in string libraries at this price point. What's more, with quick loading (the whole Garritan Orchestral Strings bank is a nimble 4GB), string programming feels even more achievable and fun.

GPO5 is a solid if not earth-shattering update, and although the mixer could be more powerful, at this price, that's by no means a deal-breaker. The dynamic transitioning in GPO4 was already good, and the improvements to it are subtle but welcome. Overall, version 5 continues the software's tradition of value and flexibility, and is a superb option for the thrifty producer looking for quality orchestral sounds in a flexible, easy-to-use package. **cm**

Web www.timespace.com
Info Upgrade from GPO4, £38

Alternatively

IK Multimedia
Miroslav Philharmonik 2
cm228 » 9/10 » From €480
Using the powerful SampleTank 3, IK's package covers plenty of bases

Garritan Instant Orchestra
cm177 » 9/10 » £119
A more cinema-ready, less arrangement-heavy experience

Verdict

For Garritan's famous Strings!
New Steinway pianos
Extensive performance controls
Convolution reverb
Compact sample footprint
Affordable

Against Mixer is underpowered

It's amazing what a hundred quid will get you these days – GPO5 is packed with big, impressive orchestral sounds and lacking only in the mixing department

The big performance

To make the most of GPO5, you need to get into its real-time controls and performance features. MIDI CC assignments are fixed and instrument-specific, common examples including volume (mod wheel, CC1), legato (sustain pedal) and auto-legato on/off for sustain instruments (CC64). Dig a bit deeper and you'll find CC controls for things like bass drum fundamental level, vibraphone tremolo level/speed, and string bow noise.

For keyswitching, typical articulations are

augmented with useful options like roll on MIDI note release for snares and timpani, and trill on release for solo violins. New GPO5 instruments take things a stage further with CC-assigned ADSR envelopes for many of them, and clever use of CCs for the pedal settings on the new Concert Grand Harp.

The most complex set of MIDI CC assignments is found on the Custom Organ Console, with 24 controllers assigned to level and bypass for 12 organ stops.