



GARRITAN Personal Orchestra 5

Garritan Personal Orchestra has always been about democratic orchestral-music making for all, at an affordable price. Does GPO5 continue the tradition? **Keith Gemmell** conducts the investigation...

Details

Product **Garritan Personal Orchestra 5**
Publisher **Garritan, MakeMusic**
Price **£99**
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Features

- Advanced ARIA player engine
- All major orchestral instruments included
- Over 500 instrument patches
- Ensemble presets
- Convolution reverb

Garritan's highly successful Personal Orchestra has been selling steadily since 2004. It first appeared as a Kontakt Player instrument, but was updated in 2009 as GPO4, with its own built-in ARIA Player developed by Plogue Art Et Technologie. Since then,

expanded choir; new Steinway pianos; a new harp and a custom organ console. 16 new impulse presets have also been added to the convolution reverb.

Central to GPO5 is the ARIA Player and after installing the software, unlocking it couldn't be easier. You simply drag a registration card onto the

channel strip in the mixer and can be treated with either convolution or algorithmic reverb in the effects page. The settings page handles the more advanced technical details such as performance monitoring, rendering settings, tuning and so on.

Super strings

The number of instruments now included has increased dramatically in this new version, due mainly to the inclusion of the Garritan Orchestral Strings, which includes sections, small

Alternatives

Miroslav Philharmonik 2 from IK Multimedia is a good alternative to GPO5. It, too, contains a full symphony orchestra including solo strings, and has a straightforward user interface. It also contains a range of effects should you wish to add flanging and chorus to your symphony orchestra – useful, but not essential. At £76, the often-overlooked HALion Symphony Orchestra is a real steal at the moment: again, a simple interface and a full symphony orchestra at your disposal. And 2015's Orchestral Suite from UVI has 60 classical instruments.

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updates have been few and far between and as good as it is, it was beginning to look and sound a little long in the tooth compared to its competitors – the strings in particular needed updating. The long wait is now over, though, and GPO5's instrument list has 70 per cent more patches overall; the addition of Garritan Orchestral Strings; updated ProjectSAM brass patches; an

player. No extra sample player is needed and it functions either standalone, or as a plug-in for your DAW. It's amazingly efficient and loading sounds is fast and easy using a simple drop-down menu system. There are four main pages – controls, mixer, effects and settings. Each instrument appears with its own particular set of relevant controls, has a dedicated

Info page

Loading instruments in ARIA is incredibly easy using a drop-down menu system. Here, we have a complete chamber orchestra selected from the Ensemble menu (top right).



Mixer page

If you want, you can mix an entire project within ARIA using its mixer. Nothing fancy – just volume, pan and sends for the reverbs, found in the Effects page. EQ is applied in the Controls page.



section and solo patches in a wide variety of bowing techniques. Due to the original Garritan philosophy of providing an affordable full orchestral library with a light footprint, string articulations were kept to a minimum in previous versions. But with today's computers, resource management is less of an issue, and GPO5 now has

Controls page

Instrument controls vary according to which instrument is selected. This is the Violin 1 set with ADSR dials, tone, mod wheel and portamento, all with assigned CC numbers. Also found here is EQ and auto-legato.



Effects

Both algorithmic (ambience) and convolution reverb can be applied in the Effects page. Ambience has a comprehensive set of controls and the convolution has a large number of presets suitable for all kinds of spaces, rooms and halls.



Overall, the strings are a big improvement and our only grumble is with the fixed vibrato on some patches, which becomes irritating after a while. Nevertheless, at this price point and

The strings are a big improvement, with a huge amount of variation

more bowing techniques than some of the higher end dedicated string libraries. Apart from common articulations like Sustain, Pizzicato, Staccato and Marcato, the large section contains Heavy Vibrato, Grand Detache, Martele, Potato, Col Legno, Sautille and Sul Tasto. As the workhorses of the orchestra, the strings play almost constantly throughout a piece, providing melody, rhythm and accompaniment. So to reproduce authentic-sounding symphonic strings with samples, you need as many options as possible. GPO5 goes a long way towards achieving this.

considering the sheer amount of variation you get – fair enough.

Heavenly voices

The choir is an improvement on the one in GPO4, which only included a light version and the addition of a boys' choir and a mixed children's choir is very welcome – these touches make GPO stand out from the competition.

Gary Garritan specialises in harp sampling (he is a harpist after all) and so we expected the new Grand Concert Harp to be up to scratch – it produces a magical crystal-clear tone, and even features an authentic pedal mode on

the seven white keys in an octave; great for glissandi.

When it comes to pianos, Garritan always seem to excel – and the new Steinway Models D and B are superb. With subtly different tones and two versions of each model, these are worth the asking price of GPO5 alone.

Advertised as a new feature in GPO5, Sonic morphing was first introduced to Garritan products way back with his Stradivari violin. Basically, as the dynamic range of an instrument increases, so does its timbre in a smooth and continuous fashion, without any noticeable transitions. It works well on brass and woodwind, particularly with the French horns, and improves the playing experience of solo sustained instruments considerably. Other instrument libraries have a similar feature but, to our knowledge, no other full orchestral library does.

This is a brilliant orchestral library. No, it doesn't have the very best-quality sounds throughout, and there are a few bugs to be sorted out. However, it's packed with every orchestral instrument any composer, arranger or student might need to write classical music, whether for large or small ensembles... and is probably the most complete library of its type. **MT**

Do you really need this?

If you compose or arrange orchestral music that's eventually going to be played by real musicians in the time honoured old-fashioned way, then Garritan's Personal Orchestra is really all you need. It provides a super-fast workflow and an accurate-sounding rendition with easy controls and built-in mixing facilities. That said, if you're prepared to put in some extra work, highly convincing mock-ups are also possible.

MT Verdict

- + Complete sampled orchestra
- + Efficient ARIA player
- + Self contained – sounds, EQ, reverb, mixer
- + Great value for money
- Fixed-string vibrato
- A few bugs (being sorted)

Garritan's Personal Orchestra has always been a great value-for-money, highly efficient orchestral library with a fast workflow and respectable sampled instruments. Version 5 is even better, with improved sounds and a helluva lot more of them.

9/10