



An Impact Soundworks Sample Library for Kontakt™

Designed, produced, edited and programmed by Andrew Aversa
Performed by Masayo Ishigure
Recorded by Alec Henninger at Studio Crash
Additional editing and testing by Steve Davit

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INTRODUCTION

We created Koto Nation out of a desire to see traditional Japanese instruments receive a deep, thorough sampling treatment, much like our acclaimed North Indian sample library Sitar Nation. While there are a handful of libraries which include samples of the koto and shamisen, they feature only the most basic articulations and few (if any) velocities or round robins. To our knowledge, the bass koto has never been sampled at all! Given the popularity of the shakuhachi and taiko in many Western film soundtracks, we wanted to allow film composers, hobbyist producers, ethnomusicologists, anime fans and everyone in between access to these classic instruments and complete the repertoire of traditional Japanese sounds available.

This library includes over 4,000 samples (8.8gb) of 24bit, 44.1khz recordings using two mic positions (Close and Room) spanning a wide variety of both traditional and extended playing techniques. We're confident that this is, without a doubt, the most comprehensive koto, bass koto and shamisen library ever to be released. We encourage you to take the time to read this manual in its entirety and learn more about the making of the library as well as how to use it to its fullest potential.

Thank you, and please enjoy Koto Nation!

INSTALLATION

To install the library, first ensure that you have all .RAR files downloaded. Then, simply extract one of them to the directory of your choosing. It will create a "Koto Nation" folder in that directory containing the library and all of its components.

Patches from Koto Nation are loaded and used simply by opening an instance of Kontakt 2 (or higher) and loading the .NKI instrument you wish to play. There is no authorization or registration required.

All audio content for this library is "unlocked" and editable in WAV format! To access the content, browse to the Samples folder and edit away! However, we strongly recommend making backups of the library files before you begin making any permanent edits.

PATCH DETAIL

As you play this library, treat it as a 'living' instrument. We went out of our way to carefully edit each individual sample so that the plectrum attacks, crucial to the realism of koto and shamisen playing, were not lost. So, we encourage you to play parts live on your keyboard to get a feel for each patch. If you must sequence/quantize, you should anticipate notes by 20-50ms (depending on the patch.)

Patches with an "RM" in front denote that they use Room mic samples.

This library makes use of the "TKT repetition script" for several patches to further enhance realism and playability.

Bass Koto Glissando - (C0 to G6)

A large assortment of tonal, pitched glissandi played with tuning to the Western C scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B) as well as atonal glissandi. Each octave contains a different set of glissandi described below.

- C0-B0** = Descending glissando.
- C1-B1** = Accelerating descending glissando.
- C2-B2** = Ascending glissando.
- C3-B3** = Slowing ascending glissando.
- C4-B4** = Accelerating ascending glissando.
- C5-B5** = Ascending then descending glissando.
- C6** = Unpitched plectrum glissando (nonpitched.)
- D6** = Shorter unpitched plectrum glissando (nonpitched.)
- E6** = Rapid plectrum glissando (nonpitched) into wood body hit.
- F6** = Gradual descending glissando played on one string.
- G6** = Gradual ascending glissando played on one string.

Bass Koto Mute - (A#-1 to G2)

A short, percussive articulation where the bass koto is picked with a plectrum while the strings are muted. Higher velocities trigger a quick double strike.

Bass Koto Pizz - (A#-1 to G2)

The bass koto is played in a pizzicato (plucked) style. Compared to the standard pick/sustain articulation, pizzicatos have a lighter attack and harp-like quality.

Bass Koto Slides - (C1 to A1, white keys only, repeated through subsequent octaves)

A menu patch containing a selection of various pitched slides along the bass koto strings.

- C1** = Fast downward slide
- D1** = Slow downward slide
- E1** = Upward slide 1
- F1** = Upward slide 2 (starts at higher pitch)
- G1** = Upward slide 3 (ends at earlier pitch)
- A1** = Upward slide 4 (variation on upward slide 3)

Bass Koto Sustains - (A#-1 to G2)

The bread-and-butter articulation of the Bass Koto, featuring unmuted, sustaining picks of each string with several finger plectrums. A rich, deep tone.

Bass Koto Tonal Hits - (C1 to G#1, repeated through subsequent octaves)

A percussive articulation where multiple strings are struck simultaneously, creating a mix of pitches.

- C1** = Single hit 1
- C#1** = Single hit 2
- D1** = Double hit
- D#1** = Triple hit 1
- E1** = Triple hit 2
- F1** = Triple hit 3
- F#1** = Triple hit w/ wood
- G1** = Quadruple hit
- G#1** = Galloping pattern (eighth - eighth - sixteenth)

Bass Koto Wood Hits - (C0 to C4)

An unpitched percussive articulation consisting of hand strikes on the wood body of the bass koto at many dynamic levels and with many variations. Each key in this patch contains identical samples and is only mapped out across the keyboard for convenience.

Koto Atonal Glissando - (C2 to B4)

A series of atonal/microtonal glissandos, performed by running the plectrum across the strings on the opposite side of the movable frets.

C2-B2 = Single downward glissando

C3-B3 = Continuous downward glissando (longer)

C4-B4 = Continuous downward glissando (shorter)

Koto Hard Pluck - (C0 to G4, root note E1)

One of the koto's strings is pulled very quickly and violently, resulting in a harsh plucked sound. Only one note was recorded for this patch (lower velocities = long pluck, higher = short), so playing notes far from the root of E1 may sound somewhat tinny and digital.

Koto Harmonics - (C1 to Eb3)

A beautiful plucked articulation where the koto's strings are lightly held at different points to produce harmonic overtones, similar to how guitar or bass harmonics are produced.

Koto Hits - (C1 to C4)

The koto's strings are struck very precisely with the fingers, producing a more percussive, rounded attack. This adds some additional harmonics to the attack sound as well.

Koto Mordents - (C1 to C4) - Modwheel linked to mordent speed

A variation of the normal picked sustain consisting of a quick pitch bend starting at the played note, going up approximately one whole step and then returning back to the original pitch for a sustain.

Modwheel (CC1) - Values of 0-64 enable the slow mordents, while values of 65-127 enable fast mordents.

Koto Octaves - (C1 to C3)

Also known as *awasezume*, a playing technique where two strings are picked simultaneously one octave apart. Lower velocities are not only softer, but have less upper string resonance, whereas higher velocities bring in the upper octave more.

Koto Phrases - (D1, G1, A1, A#1, D2, D#2, G2, A2), Keyswitches on C0 and D0

Contains two prerecorded phrases fundamental to traditional koto playing, triggered by playing within the playable range. The active phrase can be switched using the C0/D0 keyswitch.

Koto Pizzicato - (C1 to C4)

The koto is played in a pizzicato (plucked) style. Compared to the standard pick/sustain articulation, pizzicatos on the koto have a faster attack and a harp-like quality.

Koto Scrapes - (C2, D2, E2, F2, F#2, G2, A2)

A collection of non-pitched 'scrapes' where the plectrum is pulled up and down various strings of the koto.

C2 = Short, very quick scrapes

D2 = A series of very short scrapes

E2-F2 = Slow scrapes up the length of the string

F#2 = Faster scrapes up the length of the string

G2 = Slow scrapes down the string

A2 = Faster scrapes down the string

Koto Sustains - (C1 to C4)

The bread-and-butter articulation of the koto, featuring unmuted, sustaining picks of each string with several finger plectrums. Features a wide range of dynamics and variations.

Koto Sustains (MW Mordent) - (C1 to C4) – Modwheel linked to mordent speed

A combination of the Koto Sustains and Koto Mordents patches.

Modwheel (CC1) - Values of 0 trigger sustains, 1-64 triggers slow mordents and 65-127 trigger fast mordents.

Koto Sustains (MW Vib) - (C1 to C4 – Modwheel linked to vibrato speed)

A combination of the Koto Sustains and Koto Vibrato patches.

Modwheel (CC1) - Values of 0 trigger sustains, 1-64 triggers slow vibrato and 65-127 trigger fast vibrato.

Koto Sustains (MW Vib) KS

Combines seven koto articulations into a single patch. Switch between them using the modwheel and C0-F0. Note – this patch does not incorporate the “TKT” repetition script.

C0 = Sustains w/ vibrato on modwheel

C#0 = Mordents w/ speed control on modwheel

D0 = Octaves

D#0 = Hits

E0 = Pizzicato

F0 = Tremolo w/ volume on modwheel

Koto Tonal Glissando - (C0 to B5)

A large assortment of tonal, pitched glissandi played with the standard pentatonic *hira joshi* tuning (D, Eb, G, A, Bb). Each octave contains a different set of glissandi described below.

C0-B0 = Fast ascending glissando. Higher velocities increase speed.

C1-B1 = Slower ascending glissando.

C2-B2 = Fast ascending, then descending glissando. Higher velocities increase speed.

C3-B3 = Slower ascending, then descending glissando.

C4-B4 = Fast descending glissando. Higher velocities increase speed.

C5-B5 = Slower descending glissando.

Koto Tremolo - (C1 to C4) - Modwheel linked to playback speed, CC11 linked to dynamics

Metered tremolo on each string. Lower velocities (0-64) trigger slower tremolo, while higher velocities (65-127) trigger faster tremolo. Use the modwheel (CC1) to control tremolo playback speed and CC11 (expression) to control dynamics.

Koto Vibrato - (C1 to C4) - Modwheel linked to vibrato speed

Traditional vibrato on each string. Using velocity and the modwheel (CC1) you can control the exact type of vibrato. Low velocities bend down from the played note, while high velocities bend up. The modwheel controls vibrato speed, with values of 0-64 triggering slow vibrato and 65-127 triggering fast vibrato.

Shamisen Bends KS - Keyswitches on C0, D0, E0

A keyswitched collection of various pitch bends.

C0 = A short strike one whole note below the played note, followed by a long, sustained strike bending up to the played note. Note range: **C1-C4**.

D0 = A fast bend all the way up the string before landing back on the played note. Note range: **C1-G2**.

E0 = A slow, sustained strike half-step above the played note which bends slow up the string before re-striking on the played note. Note range: **C1-G2**.

Shamisen Sustains (MW Vib) - (C1 to G3) - Modwheel linked to vibrato

A deep sampling of *jiuta*-style shamisen using a large tortoiseshell plectrum. Lower notes produce an almost sitar-like buzz due to the ornate construction of the instrument. Modwheel (CC1) controls vibrato amount.

ABOUT THE SESSIONS

Koto Nation was recorded at Studio Crash in Philadelphia, PA by Alec Henninger, the same engineer who recorded Sitar Nation. We had the pleasure of working with world-renowned Japanese instrumentalist Masayo Ishigure as our performer. A student of koto legends Tadao and Kazue Sawai, Mrs. Ishigure has continued their legacy and given koto, shamisen and vocal performances all over the world. She has worked with, among others, John Williams for his award-winning score to "Memoirs of a Geisha", alongside Yo-Yo Ma. We consider ourselves very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with such a master of these instruments for our project!

The koto and bass koto were recorded in a small, well-treated studio room using a Beyerdynamic MC834, Neumann TLM-170 and two Neumann KM-184 microphones running through an extremely transparent Millennia HV-3D preamp into Pro Tools at 24bit/44.1khz. We recorded the shamisen using the MC834, TLM-170 and KM-184 mics through the same chain. The recordings perfectly capture the actual sound of the koto; there is very little coloration from the equipment. If you close your eyes and imagine you're at a live performance, the sound is identical - we compared them side by side!

In order to best achieve an accurate sound, *hira joshi* tuning was used for the koto (D-G-A-Bb-D-Eb-G-A-Bb etc.), while diatonic tuning (C-D-E-F-G etc.) was used for the bass koto and 1-4-8 tuning (D-G-D, E-A-E) was used for the shamisen. In terms of playing style, Masayo performed following the classical traditions rather than contemporary styles with all instruments. The shamisen, for example, was played in the *jiuta* style, as opposed to the contemporary *tsugaru* style commonly heard in contemporary pop, rock and crossover music featuring the instrument.

TROUBLESHOOTING & FEEDBACK

For official updates, patches and extra content, please register at our forums:

- <http://www.impactsoundworks.com/forum/>

Here, you can also post technical support questions, share music you've made with Impact Soundworks libraries, discuss tips and techniques with other users, or share your own edited audio + patches!

You can contact us directly by email at either of the following addresses:

- Technical Support: support@impactsoundworks.com
- General inquiries: admin@impactsoundworks.com

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