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VOXOS

EPIC VIRTUAL CHOIRS

USER MANUAL



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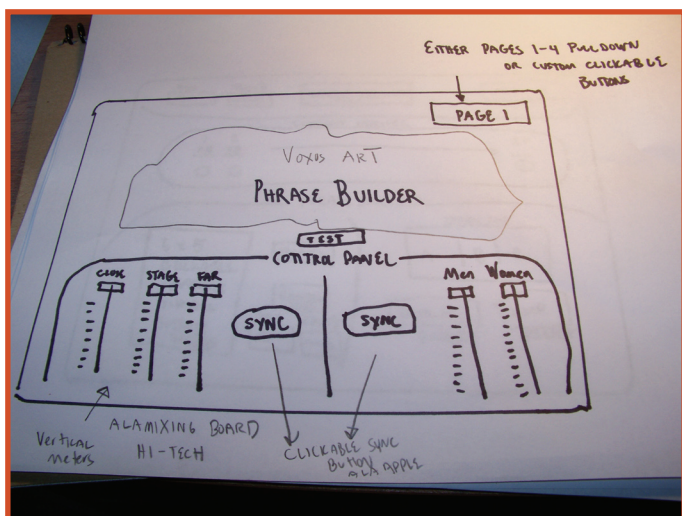
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A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO VOXOS

Holding this book between your fingers you may be somewhat surprised the slimness, the lightness of an explanatory document associated with a product of such girth. Rest assured that this is no creative scheme to shave a few pennies off printing expenses or a plea to save the earth by encouraging digital reading. We have indeed included all information we would find at all useful to you. Yet this diminutive size is simply the result of a conscientious effort to present you with a product designed to be as intuitive, concise, and in-obstructive as possible.

Although our team frequently discusses most every type of sampling project imaginable, we are forced to focus on comparatively few: those which we find feasible, those which excite us, and those which we can truly contribute something new to our community. Although we were aware of the market opportunity presented by making a “next generation” choir library, to replace the aging choir libraries of years past, we couldn’t find a way to implement such a library in the friendly manner that our customers have come to expect to us. Fortunately Native Instruments came to the rescue in Kontakt 4. Updating their “industry standard” sampler with some incredible and, from our point of view, extremely usable new features. It was these features which allowed our wheels to turn, and which ultimately allowed VOXOS to be made.



The initial discussions for VOXOS took place in Tom Patti's (Mike P's brother) car, somewhere on the Bronx-Queen expressway in the midst of a terrible winter traffic jam. The three of us were en route to review some material at Tim Starnes' place, and to celebrate the rare occasion of having most of the team assembled in one place. Although we ultimately went on and approved some new mixes of one our of products, shared a delightful home cooked meal, and indulged in some alcohol-based holiday refreshments, the most important event of the day was indeed this conversation taking place in the somewhat cramped quarters of Tom's beloved car (which incidentally broke down in a random McDonald's parking lot on the way home). We realized that the pieces were now in place to record and produce VOXOS.

Over the next months we began to test the critical programing techniques which would grow to be the foundation of the VOXOS engine. We researched the choir obsessively; in bombastic settings, in quiet settings, in classical settings. We picked apart the brains, and private libraries, of one of Los Angeles' most successful trailer composers and his team. We slept at night with our iPods blasting Orff and Mozart Masses. We certainly hope our product is better for it.

However we hope you never notice the inherent complicities embedded deep within the scripts, the trickery we used in the recording sessions, the thousands of hours of trial and error, but instead enjoy the beautiful GUI, the thoroughly massaged legato connections, the cinematic quality mixes, and the general composer-friendly approach we hope we have provided you with.

It is our hope that this manual will only need to be placed in your bathroom bookshelf for a relatively short amount of time, and you will quickly find your self a VOXOS master. Then you can place this book where all books of its kind belong ... back in its box.

Sincerely,

Your Friends at Cinesamples

Mike and Mike

WHAT IS VOXOS?

IT IS PROBABLE THAT BEFORE PURCHASING VOXOS YOU MIGHT HAVE WATCHED ONE OF OUR YOUTUBE SCREENCASTS, READ A DESCRIPTIVE ARTICLE, GLANCED AT AN ONLINE INTERVIEW, OR LOOKED OVER THE BACK OF THE BOX. NONETHELESS HERE IS AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM VOXOS.

Prior to the VOXOS recording sessions we had already fully committed to the inherent concepts of the library. We knew how many syllables we would record, we knew how the programming would work, we knew how the voices would blend, we knew what microphone perspectives we would capture - generally we knew what we would walk away with. This may sound like an narcissistic attempt to pat ourselves on the back, but in fact it is quite critical in understanding the product.

There are a few ways to sample a choir, record loops - which have their obvious limitations, make a word builder, or make a phrase builder.

We knew that one of the ways a sampled choir can sound very fake is by introducing excessive micro-splicing - a technique associated with "word building." We lovingly refer to this as the Stephen Hawking Effect because of the resultant computerized sound. Although this technique can work on rare occasions, there is just something very unnatural and artificial about it - it just sounds fake. This undesirable effect is especially noticeable on short articulations. Constructing a desired word by splicing together a bunch of different source "building blocks" all in the space of a third of a second can sound very robotic.

So, early on we decided to not use synthesis and record all of our shorts live. Basically this means standing on the stage and recording each of our syllables in the matrix for each pitch, for each section, for each dynamic. Needless to say this took a great deal of time to record, but it certainly pays dividends in the "live" factor. We repeated this recipe with the long articulations as well, and thus we walked away with a full representation of each of our desired syllables without using loops or synthesis.

Recording this way enabled our Phrase Builder to produce all the syllables in our matrix at all dynamics and articulations.

VOXOS PATCH SECTIONS

I • PHRASE BUILDER

- Men
- Women

II • SECTIONAL/SOLO LEGATO

- Soprano
- Alto
- Tenor
- Bass
- Boys Soprano Ensemble
- Solo Soprano
- Solo Alto
- Solo Boy

III • ENSEMBLE FX

- Men
- Women

GETTING STARTED

At this point let's just go over a few "virtual" tools you will need to have ready to run VOXOS.

Here is the small list of Midi Controllers actively used by VOXOS:

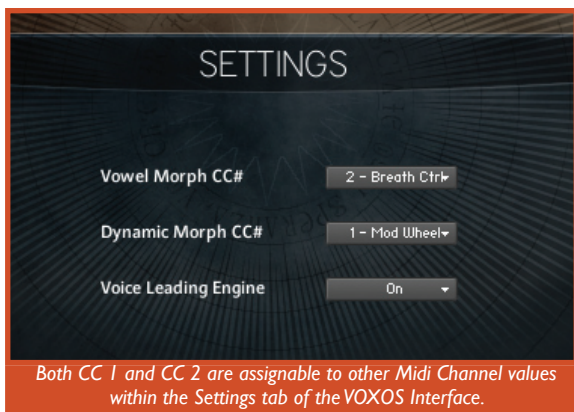
-CC 1 (Modulation) controls the morphing between dynamics in all patches

-CC 2 (Breath) controls the morphing between given vowels in all patches

-CC 7 (Volume) controls the volume of the patch

-CC 11 (Expression) controls the expression of the patch (secondary gain control)

-CC 64 (Sustain Pedal) enables or disables the pedal connection script allowing for easy note connections.



VOXOS is intended to be run on a full size, 88 Key Controller with sustain pedal.

ACTIVE MIDI DATA

MIDI KEY	=	Pitch and Keyswitch Triggering
MIDI VELOCITY	=	Articulation
MODWHEEL (CC#1)	=	All Volume Data
SUSTAIN (CC#64)	=	Note connecting script

PART 1: THE PHRASE BUILDER AND SYLLABLE MATRIX

QUITE SIMPLY, THE PHRASE BUILDER IS A SET OF SAMPLES PROGRAMMED TO ACT AS AN INTELLIGENT ENTITY ALLOWING THE COMPOSER TO LIVE-PLAY ANY ARTICULATION, ON ANY PITCH OR CHORD, AT ANY DYNAMIC, AT ANY LENGTH, WITH EITHER GENDER, WHILE STILL PRESERVING THE DESIRED LYRICAL STRING OF UP TO TWENTY SYLLABLES.

Musically speaking there are two sound sources in the Phrase Builder portion of VOXOS: men and women. The women are comprised of ten altos and ten sopranos, the men are comprised of ten basses and ten tenors.

Short articulations are triggered by playing a note with a MIDI velocity higher than 80 and sustains are triggered by velocity lower than 80. For the Phrase Builder velocity never manipulates volume; all volume is controlled by the mod wheel.

A short with a velocity of 80 and modwheel value of 100 will sound the same as a short struck at a velocity of 127 and a modwheel value of 100. The velocity switch sees only two colors, black or white - there is no grey area; it's long or short. A sustain (long) will end when you pick up your finger, automatically setting off the appropriate release trigger - for example the "s" in "tus". A short will simply trigger one of the shorts.

In the settings tab you can also change the sustain/staccato orientation and threshold velocity (the default is 80). If you want to load just the shorts or longs by themselves you can load either the Staccato-only or Sustain-only from the PATCH menu.



PHRASE BUILDER MAPPING

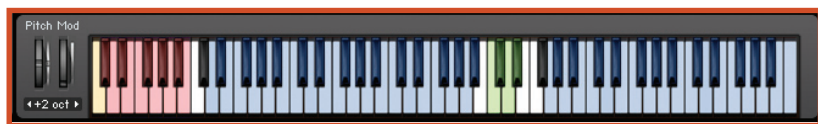
We managed to fit both the women and men's full ranges on to the Phrase Builder keyboard. They are represented by the blue portions of the keyboard above, men on the left and women on the right. They are separated by 4 green keys which represent the shouts and whispers for each section (men shout, men whisper, women shout, women whisper). Down at the bottom of the keyboard, in red, you will find the "string keyswitches" (explained below). The yellow keyswitch is active.

The foundation of the **Phrase Builder** is the Syllable Matrix. The **Syllable Matrix** is an interactive grid of 30 syllables which, when clicked, form a sequence of up to 20 syllables, which we refer to as a "string". Each of the 12 strings has been assigned to a traditional MIDI keyswitch which is shown at the top of the interface. When a **String Keyswitch** is struck during composition, or triggered thereafter during playback, VOXOS will automatically load your desired string, allowing proper realization of your desired lyric. When another String Keyswitch is struck, that string's lyrics will be loaded instead. Only one String Keyswitch can be loaded at a time.

There are 12 **String Keyswitches** (MIDI NOTES C0-B0) which can store up to 20 **syllables** on each **string**, so this allows VOXOS to remember a lyric comprised of up to 240 **syllables** in length.

If a string contains less than 20 syllables it will simply repeat itself automatically from the first syllable in the string. If a string contains exactly 20 syllables, the 21st syllable will be in fact only a repetition of the first syllable - restarting the string once again.

TO PROGRAM A SEQUENCE OF SYLLABLES (TO CREATE A UNIQUE STRING KEYSWITCH), SIMPLY CLICK ON YOUR DESIRED WORDS IN THE MATRIX IN THE PHRASE BUILDER TAB. THEY WILL APPEAR IN ORDER ON THE STRING DISPLAY IN THE INTERFACE.



It is wise to arrange your string keyswitches before new sections in your composition. We recommend not using each string to its entirety where it isn't needed, but rather to stop each string where your lyric for the section is complete. Then go and trigger your next string at the new section of the cue. Kontakt knows only where to begin a string according to your MIDI Note Keyswitch data, so keep this in mind during playback to ensure that you get your desired lyric sequence.

VOXOS will automatically share the lyric between the men and the women, so you need to only program the lyrics once. VOXOS also keeps track of your long or short syllables, as well as shouts and whispers. They will always play in accordance with your string.

SYLLABLE EXTENSIONS AND LYRICAL CONNECTIONS

FINGER AND SUSTAIN PEDALING CONCEPTS

An integral part of all choral writing is syllable extensions. When using lyrics the choir can extend the vowel part of the word over several notes thus allowing syllable changes to fall on stronger musical beats. To extend the vowel portion of a word simply “finger pedal” (strike the second note before releasing the first) where needed. This technique, taught to keyboard students while studying Bach, is quite natural to synthesists - you are probably already using it while triggering legato patches in other libraries like VSL and LASS.

VOXOS knows that it is time to trigger a new syllable when a small hole is left before striking the next note. This can be accomplished by simply lifting your finger off the keyboard.

Now if you want to have a new syllable with no break in the line you can accomplish that by using your sustain pedal. The sustain pedal script will hold a given note or chord until the next note is struck, regardless of when you take your fingers off the keyboard. This is useful to avoid that awkward moment when moving from chord to chord and having to lift your fingers to make the journey. No longer will you need to extend midi regions or tweak with attacks and releases in the envelope section.

If you look below, you will see a two line example of this technique: the top line being the desired sound and the bottom line will be how you can enter the data.

TO HEAR THIS:



Do - o - o - o - mi - i - nu - us


PERFORM THIS:



Do - o - o - o - mi - i - nu - us


1) Finger legato maintains vowel
2) Pedal connected notes advance syllables

TO HEAR THIS:



Vo - Cah Ky - Ri Cri - i - i - Do Mi Nus

PERFORM THIS:



Vo - Cah Ky - Ri Cri - i - i - Do Mi Nus

1) Articulation is controlled by velocity
2) Regardless of velocity, dynamics are controlled by CCF1 (Mod.)

LATIN SYLLABLE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

#	LATIN	PRONOUNCED
1	A	Ah
2	E	Ay (Ray)
3	I	Eee (Mee)
4	O	Oh (Doh)
5	U	Oo (Too)
6	Sa	Sah
7	Ra	Rah
8	Ca	Cah
9	Ma	Mah
10	Ta	Tah
11	Te	Tay
12	Re	Ray
13	Ne	Nay
14	Do	Doh
15	Vo	Voh
16	Tu	Too
17	Nu	Noo
18	Di	Dee
19	Cri	Khree
20	Vi	Vee
21	Ky	Kee
22	Ri	Ree
23	Mi	Mee
24	Ti	Tee
25	*Tus	Toos
26	*Frayst	Frayst
27	*Nus	Noos
28	*Tis	Tees
29	*Sact	Socked
30	*Vos	Vohs

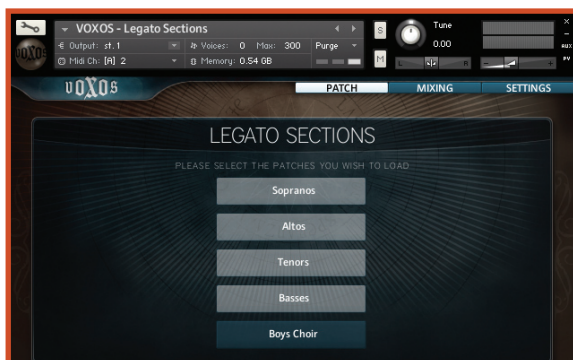
*Includes Release Triggers

PART 2: LEGATO SECTIONS

VOXOS' POWERFUL FULL CHOIR SATB FULLY INTERVAL LEGATO IS UNPARALLELED IN ITS PRECISION AND BEAUTY.

ACTIVE MIDI DATA

MIDI KEY	=	Pitch
MODWHEEL (CC#1)	=	All volume data
BREATH (CC#2)	=	Vowel morphing
DECAY (CC#22)	=	Release smoothing/decay time
SUSTAIN (CC#64)	=	Sustain pedal
MIDI VELOCITY	=	Expressiveness (attack smoothing), legato transition speed



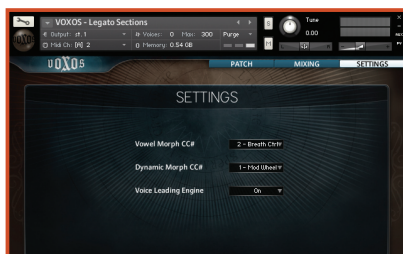
To load a section, click on its name. It will become highlighted and immediately begin to load the appropriate samples. Multiple sections may be loaded at once. Each section will be automatically mapped to its true range - some of which may overlap. So if you wish to adapt a traditional “one section one track” template you can load this patch five times, selecting SATB + Boys one at a time, or you can load the pre-made “Individual Patches.” The end will be the same result.

Using the legato itself is relatively straightforward. Simply play in a legato fashion to hear the legato programming. A soft initial attack velocity will create a small expressive attack, while a higher velocity will trigger a normal attack. The sustain pedal will act in a similar manner to the sustain pedal of an acoustic piano. The mod wheel will control all dynamics and dynamic morphing. CC#2 (breath) will morph between the two vowels Ah and Oo. Playing at a hard velocity will trigger a faster legato transition while playing at softer speeds will trigger a slower transition.

THE VOICE LEADING ENGINE

THE HEMI ENGINE OF THE KSP WORLD

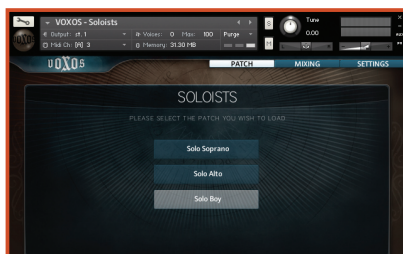
If you prefer to play full choir block chords - while still taking advantage of VOXOS' true legato - you will be using the voice leading engine. The voice leading engine will properly and masterfully take care of all voice resolutions. We suggest using the voice leading engine while having the full SATB loaded, although it will work also for custom ensemble sizes - just men and women for example or SAT for triadic movement. This script will automatically split a section up to 4 parts, so if you wanted a 4 part soprano only chord - this is possible as well.



THE **VOICE LEADING ENGINE** IS EXTREMELY POWERFUL AND STREAMLINED, IT ONLY HAS AN ON/OFF SWITCH - WE TOOK CARE OF THE REST.

THE SOLOISTS

VOXOS includes three fully legato soloists; Boy, Soprano and Alto. The overall functionality of these patches is similar to the sectional legato patches. These patches are of course, monophonic; they cannot sing more than one pitch at a time. The alto patch includes some pre-recorded phrases mapped out above her playable range.



PART 3: ENSEMBLE FX

A HIGHLY USABLE COLLECTION OF RISERS, SHOUTS, CLUSTERS, SCREAMS, WHISPERS AND MORE.

ACTIVE MIDI DATA

MIDI KEY = FX Selection
 MODWHEEL (CC#1) = All Volume Data



VOXOS contains a collection of FX recorded especially for cinematic composers and mapped as to require no explanation. All of the FX were recorded separately by gender and have been mapped by gender at octaves. If you find an effect you like in the men you will most likely find the exact same effect mapped 5 octaves above in the women. This makes it easy to create your own FX while maintaining separation over the genders. In the main FX loading screen you will find a pulldown menu with two choices: Effects or Clusters. Simply chose which one you wish to load and don't forget to chose which gender(s) you wish to load as well.

Aside from the normal collection of FX we gave the men some manly grunts and low clusters which can be found in the Effects menu. We gave the women some "Mr. Sandman-esque" bum-bums which can be found in the individual patches folder.

In the clusters section you will find both tonal and atonal clusters. Note that the tonal clusters will be mapped to their tonality accordingly. For example, a G# cluster will be mapped to the G# key.

MIXER

VOXOS was recorded in 5.1 using the highest standards in cinematic recording techniques at the legendary Bastyr chapel.

VOXOS' internal mixer allows direct volume control over each of the soloists, genders, or sections before reaching Kontakt's normal volume control. Additionally at this menu you can also activate/deactivate and set the volume control for each of the five mic positions.

On the right of this interface you will see a pulldown menu where you can choose the item you wish to modify. The red level strip controls the master volume for the section, and the 3 band EQ is also unique for the section.

The five channel strips on the left controls one of the five microphone positions. The pulldown menus below the microphone position will assign an output for that specific microphone setting. To activate a specific microphone position, simply click it so it turns white - click it again to deactivate it. Below each channel strip you will also find mute and solo buttons.



THE FULL MIX PRESET

USE THIS TO SAVE COMPUTER RESOURCES. THE FULL MIX IS A BLEND OF CLOSE, STAGE, AND FAR MICROPHONES, LEAVING OUT THE SURROUND. ADD THE SURROUND MICROPHONE TO ADD EXTRA AMBIENCE, OR, IF YOU HAVE A 5.1 SETUP, ROUTE THE SURROUND MICROPHONE TO YOUR REAR SPEAKERS.

5.1 SURROUND

TYPICALLY A COMPOSER WILL NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE CENTER AND SUB CHANNELS IN A FILM MIX. THE PRIMARY MATERIAL WILL COME OUT THE FRONT LEFT AND RIGHT SPEAKERS WITH MORE AMBIENT MATERIAL IN THE REAR. VOXOS WAS RECORDED AND INTENDED TO BE USED IN 5.1 SITUATIONS. A GOOD STARTING POINT WOULD BE TO USE THE VOXOS FULL MIX POSITION COMING OUT OF THE FRONT LEFT AND RIGHT WITH THE SURROUNDS OUT OF THE REAR CHANNELS.

For the soloists and boys choir we used solo recording techniques as opposed to the standard orchestral techniques used in the full sectional recordings. This would involve recording each soloist on a large diaphragm condenser (either a U67 or a U47) rather than the smaller pencil microphones set at a “spotting” distance which were used for the other sections. This is an example of techniques we used to capture that familiar cinematic, not operatic, mix. However it is useful for you to hear the exact microphone positions as the sectional choirs you can turn the provided microphone positions on and off in the settings window.

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