



**WHAT IS IT?**

A Kontakt-driven, flexible string library from Native Instruments

**CONTACT**

Who: Native Instruments  
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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Animator creates instant, soundtrack-ready string sequences
- 2 Rich, warm string sound
- 3 Flexible ensemble sizes

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Upgrade from Session Strings:  
**199 euro**



# NI Session Strings Pro | €299

The market is awash with string libraries. Can NI's latest step up to challenge the big boys? *Jono Buchanan* warms up his bowing arm...

**SPECS**

4 string ensembles, each with 4 violins, 3 violas, 2 cellos and 2 basses  
22 articulations  
Animator changes held chords into rhythmic staccato, spiccato or pizzicato phrases  
Separate workflows for Production and Performance  
Motown presets tailored to capturing '60s/'70s sounds  
Bow noise control allows you to add extra richness to Ensemble sounds  
FX section with 10 convolution reverb types, 3-band EQ and Compression  
48GB of 24-bit, 44.1kHz samples

**System Requirements**  
**PC:** Windows XP/Vista/7, Intel Core Duo or AMD Athlon, 2GB RAM  
**Mac:** OS X 10.5 or 10.6, Intel Core Duo, 2GB RAM

If you're interested in adding high quality string samples to your production work, these days it's a buyer's market, with packages available to suit all requirements and budgets. A few years ago, heavyweight libraries went head-to-head to offer comprehensive string solutions with prices to match but the more recent trend has been for considerably cheaper, albeit less versatile, packages to emerge. Following on from its popular 'Session Strings' library powered by its own Kontakt sampler engine, Native Instruments now return with Session Strings Pro – can this become one of the first libraries to offer the Holy Trinity – versatility, quality and affordability?

**Section by section**  
From the off, Session Strings Pro utilises interesting solutions to tailor your virtual string ensemble to the

requirements of your project, starting with Ensemble size. The library contains four recorded 'Sections', all of which feature four violins, three violas, two cello and two basses but these have been mic'd in different positions to give each Section its own 'Contemporary' or 'Classical' sound. Two Sections are available whenever you load a preset and you can decide how big the overall sound will be simply by turning up or down the volume dials for each section. Speaking of presets, you'll find sounds organised into two Categories – Performance and Production.

As their names suggest, these two approaches are tailored to different working practices with bespoke Edit pages to match. For instance, within a Production preset, you'll find three Tabs, the first of which is a Main page covering Section volumes, Contour (including dials for Bow Noise volume

and Stereo Width) plus Envelope dials to control Attack and Release times. Then comes a KeySwitch page where you can easily assign different articulations, with 29 types available to match the trigger keys of your choice.

On this page you can also set up velocity response to taste, with Curve types and minimum/maximum settings to restrict dynamic range, if desired. The final 'FX' page contains a comprehensive EQ section with Lo, Mid and High cut/boost, all with sweepable central frequency dials, an on-board Compressor and Reverb, with 10 convolution models and a Mix dial.

**Animation station**

A Performance preset features the same Main and FX pages but offers different Tab pages in the middle. Foremost of these is the Animator page, whereby you can switch on SSP's own Step Sequencer. Each step of this features a slider to route a velocity value into the sound engine and with choices of global step size, groove, swing and note length, it's not long before you're holding down a chord and hearing a dynamic, rhythmic string section playing back sequences tailor-made for scoring work, in particular. The Animator's playback engine can toggle between arpeggiators and chord generators, so a held chord can either trigger several notes at once, or run up and down through them, for instance. The second Tab within a Performance preset also handles Articulation switching, but with an emphasis on using performance tricks (pedals, controllers etc.) for instrument switching. Flexibility is key to SSP's success – four sampled ensemble groups, with two available within each preset, independent level control over each, myriad articulations, the dynamic Animator, not to mention high-quality effects. The sound oozes class too and seems particularly tailored to scoring and Pop production work. A real joy. **FM**

**FutureMusic VERDICT**

**STABILITY** [Progress bar]

**VALUE** [Progress bar]

**EASE OF USE** [Progress bar]

**VERSATILITY** [Progress bar]

**RESULTS** [Progress bar]

**Matching versatility and classy sound to reasonable price – SSP is truly excellent.**