Lyric Series String Quintet - by Kirk Hunter

Contents

About

While there are plenty of good-sounding solo string libraries out there, I found it interesting that for me, a professional string player, it took a lot of "fiddling" with the instrument to get really musical phrases and melody lines. It was easy to get nice "pads" and "fillers" for sure, but I really wanted a believable single, melody line. Nothing out there, not even my older libraries, seemed to capture that certain essence you hear when listening to a professional player unless you took a lot of time to tweak whatever you were working on. And live-playing? No way. Not "out of the box" anyway.

Legato Discussion - Valiant efforts have indeed been made over the years using all kinds of "legato" and "interval" tricks and whatnot. Some are very nice, but still fall short. Others do capture the right "sound", but the resulting performance always, at least to me, sounds "clunky", "bumpy" or only sounds good when played at certain tempos.

So in analyzing what string players do, it seems that a myriad variables came to play...so to speak. Bowing, slurring, vibrato (amount, speed and fade-in time), string crossing, left-hand-shifting, and more. With so many of these variables, it is hard to recognize a pattern so as to emulate this in a digital instrument. In fact, at this point in time, it's impossible. However, certain occurrences take place often enough to tell the listener, "yes, I hear this as a professional stringed instrument performance.", that one could, in essence, focus on those, and implement them judiciously. It's like putting in a few "aha" features that make for realism.

So how has this been emulated so far? The best of them go to great lengths in using "legato" technology. That's great, except that with string players, it's never the same. Sometimes,

there's a string crossing, sometimes a hand shift, sometimes a bow change.. and on and on. The easy ones to mimmic are the "slurred" or "fingered" transitions. That's because the player does not "bow" the interval, and does not shift the left hand during small intervals. So the "legato" transition is easy to capture. The trouble begins during the many transitions that happen during separate bowing or when a player shifts the left hand. While there is no easy way to capture all of these details, the one thing that seems to be loudly apparent is the sound that happens when string players play larger intervals on the same string. (Especially cellos) It's not really a true portamento and does not *always* happen. It seems to occur most when the players need to move their left hand up or down from it's current position to achieve the note. We have calculated certain probabilities of this happening during certain types of playing styles, and have successfully, to a point, implemented them into the instruments of the Lyric Series String Quintet. And it's all very dynamic depending on the way you play.

And then, there's the issue of vibrato. I know of no professional string player who uses the same vibrato amount, speed or fade-in time statically. In trying to capture vibrato, most of the time, (if handled at all) it is by means of assigning vibrato to a controller. Usually, this is just the *amount* of vibrato and nothing else. That can become clunky due to having to ride the controller back and forth without affecting incoming or outgoing notes, which can be quite difficult to do, and rarely comes off as very natural. Another way of handling this issue has been to have the samples be "baked in" with the performer's own vibrato. If you happen to love that particular performer's style, then you're set. If not, you have no options. Sometimes, some "no vibrato" samples are included whereby you can transition to and from them. But most of the time, one can hear the crossfades and thereby loses the "soloistic" desired sound. The Lyric Series String Quintet instruments (except the Romantic Guarnerius Violin) all analyze your playing style and handle all three vibrato parameters (amount, speed and fade-in) accordingly so as to give you the closest approximation of a real string player's style.

Then there is the bowing. As stated before, there are some decent "fingered" or "slurred" legato treatments out there. However, the ones that attempt to handle separate bowing suffer more, especially violins. The problem is that most ears out there want to hear smooth fluid transitions with little or no separation. But go listen to real performances with separated bowing. They're not usually fluid, especially at faster tempos. It seems that the few libraries out there which have tackled this problem with some, if little, degree of success have been met with negative critique, falling to claims that the "legato" is too abrupt or bumpy. The Lyric Series Strings Quintet instruments provide you with realistic bow changes. By default, they are

markedly separate and distinct. But if you prefer, you can certainly "connect" the bowing for a more "fluid" phrase if you want. And of course, "slurred" or "fingered" legato is also available.

The Focus

If it is not clear to you by now, the main focus of the Lyric Series String Quintet is to provide musical, melody lines right out of the box. Further, it is our goal to shorten your workflow time as much as possible. It's not a "do everything" library, but we feel that the attention to being able to create melodic lines makes this product a very valuable asset.

Don't Do This

There is a Romantic Violin instrument that is provided as a "bonus". Do not load this instrument in the same track or multi as the Guarnerius Violin. "Under the hood" controllers will cause conflicts.

Avoid using controllers 20-31, 33-50. They are used "under the hood". You may run into serious conflicts should you engage any of these controllers.

First Things to Edit

Before you go hunting around to make edits, the first things to look at, and that will make the most noticeable changes are vibrato, and bow change edits.

"Bow Change" or "Slur"

By default, the "Long" articulation is selected using the "slurred" option.

LONG (SLURRED OPTION)

By clicking the 3 horizontal dots, you will be presented with two options:

1 - Separate Bowing, or "Bowed" and

2 - Slurred

By default, "slurred" bowing is selected. If you want truly believable "bowed" legato, then choose "Bowed".
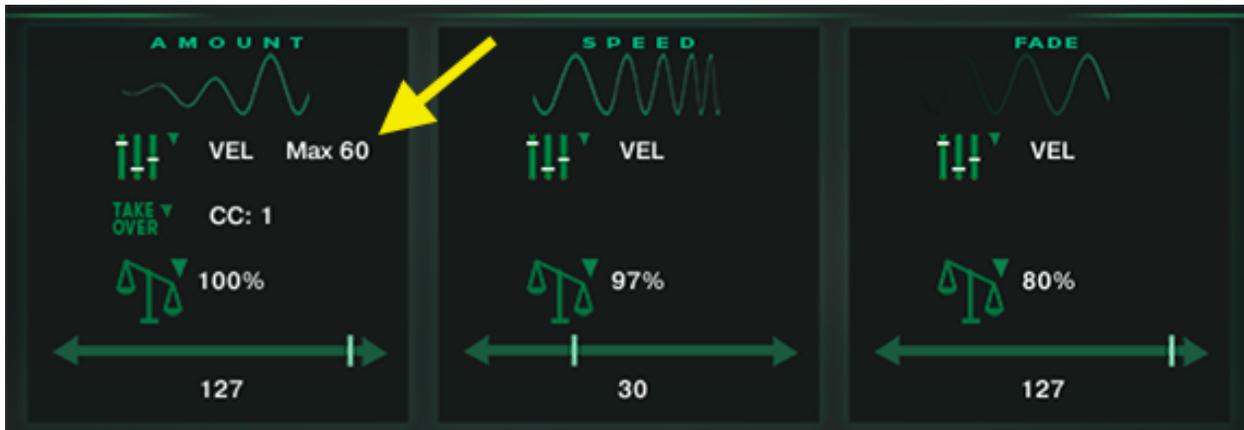
Vibrato

While I personally like a big fat lush vibrato, (and have set this as the default option), some may find it a bit too "heavy-handed". No worries. Just click the Vibrato settings (three horizontal dots in the Vibrato window)

and change the "max" amount for the vibrato:

While you are here, you can make other vibrato changes as well. More about that in the "Vibrato" section.

Those two changes alone will make quite a dramatic difference.

The Interface

We feel that the interface is rather self-explanatory and easy to use. Any feature that shows a settings button on it (either 3 horizontal or 3 vertical dots) will have editable options.

And you can easily "jump" from one feature to another without having to "go back" to a "home" or "basic" page. For example, if you are editing vibrato, and you want to immediately jump to editing the spiccato articulation settings, you can go there straight away since all of the articulations are always visible. This will make your tasks take much less time.
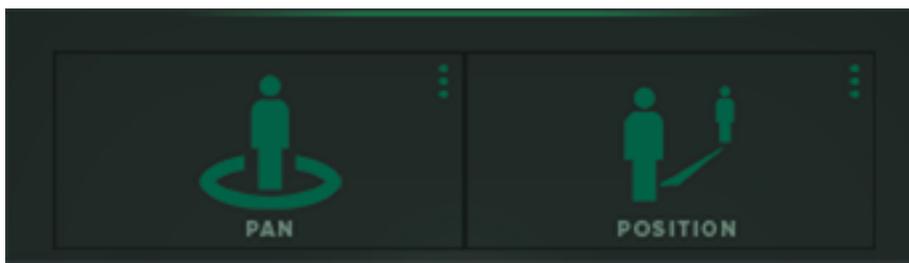
Another convenient feature is that whenever a midi cc option is provided, you will also have the ability to check what all of your current midi cc assignments are via a small "info" button.

The Stage

The Stage has two settings:
Pan, and Position

Pan:

This is not just a simple pan feature. We have found that a lot of instruments that utilize a "pan" do so "globally". That is to say that even the reverb/convolution gets panned as well. This is NOT the case here. Only the input signal (the samples) get moved on the stage. This way, the room you have selected stays intact and does not move.

Mic Position:

Move the soloist closer or farther from the microphones.

<div align="center">

Performance

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Clicking this button reveals eight different performance features:

Legato:

Click this button to turn Legato on or off.

    Settings:

Legato overlap time (makes the legato more smooth)

Accents:

Settings:

Choose midi control, slider control or velocity control.

Set maximum accent level if "velocity" is chosen as control.

Staccato:

This is a very useful feature that enables any long articulation to be "staccato-ized". (Long, tremolo, trills, harmonics). While most libraries have a staccato feature that is performed by playing a note, and then lifting the bow, what's left out is the style of staccato that is created by stopping the bow immediately. This is used all the time in baroque and other styles of music.

Settings:

Choose midi CC and keyswitch assignments

Set staccato length with slider or midi cc

Con Sordino:

Settings:

Choose midi CC and keyswitch assignments

Sul Tasto:

Settings: Choose midi CC and keyswitch assignments

Left Hand Shift:

This is a very important and unique feature to this library. As stated before, string players often shift their left hand, (mostly during larger intervals, and at slower tempos) during some phrases. The sound of this is unique to string players and immediately identifies them to the listener as a real performer. We have attempted to closely approximate this feature and have used virtual intelligence to engage this when it is appropriate.

Settings:

Choose midi CC and keyswitch assignments

Enable/disable feature entirely

Instrument Noise:

This adds some minor instrument noise such as certain overtones and body sounds of the actual instrument.

Settings:

Noise volume

Human Pitch:

This feature detunes the very beginning of the note randomly to give a slightly more "human" sound.

Settings:

    Effect amount

Articulations

All articulations receive a keyswitch assignment just above their buttons. Also, in their settings is what is called a "uacc" midi controller. Turning this on from any articulation turns it on for all of them. This is a special controller that enables you to change articulations with just one controller. The built-in values of this controller are as follows:

LONG (BOWED): 0-7
LONG (SLUR): 8-15
TREMOLO: 16-22
TREMOLO PONTICELLO: 23-30
HALF TRILLS: 31-45
WHOLE TRILLS: 46-60
SPICCATO: 61-75
PIZZICATO: 76-90
HARMONICS: 91-105
INSTANT VIBRATO BOWED: 106-116
INSTANT VIBRATO SLURRED: 117-127

Therefore, in your sequence, you can "draw in" your controller assignments using just a single midi controller. The articulations will be accurate during playback.

Long

    Settings:

        UACC Options

        Separate Bowing

        Slur

Tremolo

    Settings:

        UACC Options

        Sul Pont.

        Normal

Half Step and Whole Step Trills

    Settings:

        UACC Options

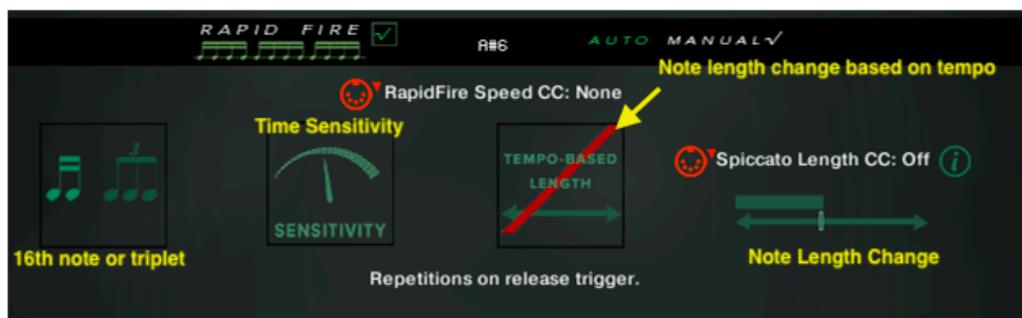   Choose midi cc or slider for trill fade-in time.

Spiccato

Spiccato contains a special feature called "RapidFire". This will enable you to achieve rapid, successive repetitions of the same note. You can have them controlled manually, by tempo sync or by a controller.

    Settings:

        UACC Options

        RapidFire

            Auto or Manual

        Manual - RapidFire notes will happen on note release.

        Auto - RapidFire will either sync to tempo, or to a controller of your choice.
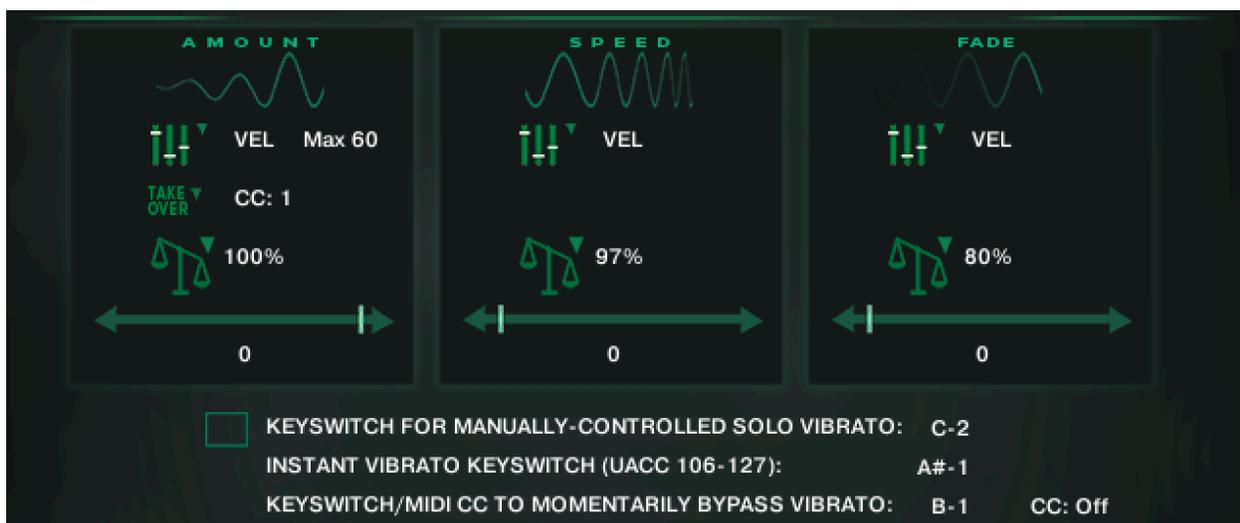
Pizzicato

Harmonics

Portamento

    Settings:

        Choose midi cc

Vibrato

Amount Settings:

    Choose velocity, slider of midi cc to control the vibrato amount.

    Set the maximum amount of vibrato.

    Set the vibrato amount "takeover". If you have chosen to control vibrato amount with velocity this will enable you to use a midi cc to alter the amount of vibrato even after it has been applied. It makes it easy to increase or decrease the amount of vibrato AFTER THE FACT.

    Scale the vibrato amount.

    Set the vibrato amount with a slider.

Speed Settings:

    Choose velocity, slider of midi cc to control the vibrato speed.

    Scale the vibrato speed.

    Set the vibrato speed with a slider. Please note that this will not work if you have chosen to control vibrato speed with velocity.

Fade-In Settings:

Choose velocity, slider of midi cc to control the vibrato fade-in.

Scale the vibrato fade-in.

Set the vibrato fade in with a slider. Please note that this will not work if you have chosen to control vibrato speed with velocity.

Keyswitch for manual vibrato - this will enable a "hot key" that will create a manual vibrato.

Instant Vibrato - this is a very important, yet highly neglected feature in all solo string libraries. As you may know, most products require you to use a controller for vibrato if they even offer the option. Most of the time, thats just ok. We thought it would be nice to set the instrument to follow your playing style (which is why we have 3 vibrato parameters, all individually-controllable). But beyond that, you have a few other additional options. One is this "instant" vibrato. Assuming you've set a certain amount of fade-in time for vibrato, but you want to have some notes be accented with an instant vibrato, you would have to start playing with all kinds of controllers to achieve this. (This kind of playing style happens ALL THE TIME in string performing!) But if want, you can set a keyswitch or use UACC to add instant vibrato to a note.

Momentary Bypass Vibrato - This is another feature that frees you up from having to grab a controller for vibrato. An assigned keyswitch will simply bypass vibrato until you release the key. Inversely, hitting the keyswitch again, will bypass the vibrato.

Please note that the Guarnerius Violin Romantic has no vibrato controls since the vibrato in that instrument was performed, and not programmed.

Dynamics

Settings:

Choose midi cc.

Set midi cc sensitivity.

Set velocity sensitivity.

Ambience

Settings:

Choose Room

Scale Room Enhancement

Multis

KH String Quartet 1:
    KH Guarnerius Violin
    KH Maggini Violin
    KH Amati Viola
    KH Benning Cello

KH String Quartet 1 Romantic:
    KH Guarnerius Violin Romantic
    KH Maggini Violin
    KH Amati Viola
    KH Benning Cello

KH String Quartet 2:
    KH Guarnerius Violin
    KH Maggini Violin
    KH Amati Viola
    KH Gagliano Cello

KH String Quartet 2 Romantic:
    KH Guarnerius Violin Romantic
    KH Maggini Violin
    KH Amati Viola
    KH Gagliano Cello

KH String Quintet:
    KH Guarnerius Violin
    KH Maggini Violin
    KH Amati Viola
    KH Benning Cello
    KH Gagliano Cello

Multis in the Lyric Series String Quintet library incorporate 4 or 5 instruments so as to provide a full string section (without double bass, of course). To avoid an overly "bloated" sound, the upper octaves of the viola and cellos have been removed.

You'll like this - No string section, no matter how accomplished the performers, will ever play PERFECTLY together. Therefore, by default, and to achieve this effect, all except the Guarnerius Violin are set to "randomize" their note entrances slightly. This creates an especially realistic and "human" section. To prove the point, just try the pizzicato articulation! Additionally, the instruments are panned according to the traditional string quartet and quintet by default.

Advanced

ADVANCED SETTINGS

Settings:

Keyswitching - Turn Keyswitching on/off. Also see keyswitch assignments here.

Controllers - Turn all midi controllers on/off. Also see all controller assignments here.

Random Delay - Use this if you are going to overlap more than one Lyric Series instrument. This will cause the instrument to play the notes slightly delayed in a random

fashion so as to not be in perfect sync with other instruments. This is especially great for pizzicato and spiccato articulations.

Restore Factory Settings - This will temporarily restore factory settings. It will not SAVE them. Therefore, should you close the instruments, your earlier changes, such as keyswitch and controller assignments will be preserved.

Bow Change Space - If for some reason you want to make separate bowing more "fluid" and "connected", this feature will accomplish that for you.

Choose midi CC for realtime changes of bow change space.

Tips

Super fast "sautillé" Bowing Style

Select the Spiccato articulation.

Turn on RapidFire and set it to "Manual".

Adjust the sensitivity all the way down to its lowest.

Turn on the "Tempo Based Length".

Now, when you play REALLY fast, the notes have a way of cutting off that most closely resembles the way a fast sautillé is achieved.

Large Chords

Turn off the Intuition in the "Left Hand Shift" settings in the Performance section.