

SOUNDWARE FOR ORCHESTRAL AND CINEMATIC MUSIC

THE 11 DEVELOPERS YOU NEED TO KNOW

BY ROB SHROCK

THE LANDSCAPE OF LIBRARIES FOR orchestral instruments is more like an exclusive members' club compared to the wild jungle of electronic music soundware we rounded up last month. Orchestral libraries tend to be sample-based, with a larger data footprint, and are more expensive due to the technically demanding nature of capturing so many performance variations.

As a producer/arranger who works extensively with both live players and samples, my ears are constantly getting a reality check as I bounce between real instruments and virtual ones. The primary goal here is to emulate what it ultimately sounds like when a real ensemble is miked up, recorded, and played back through speakers. Nothing ever sounds as glorious to me as standing in the room with a live ensemble of great string and wind players. On the other hand, it's sometimes much easier to execute a particular passage with precision and larger-than-life tone with the aid of great samples. There are several developers who push the bounds of technical achievement and believability that are worthy of your attention. Here are my top picks.



8Dio

This company burst on the scene with no less than 40 completed titles in 2011. 8Dio quickly found itself in favor among many composers for film and TV, as their selection of libraries covers everything from classical to cinematic to EDM. The big, expansive nature of their strings and woodwinds excel at larger-than-life orchestrations.

Their deep-sampled strings titles are divided into separate libraries of violins, solo violin, violas, cello, and basses. The *Claire Woodwind* series of solo woodwinds is remarkable, although for me they tend to work better as solo instruments rather than for building up ensembles. Their percussion titles, such as *Epic Toms* and *Solo Taiko*, immediately fit into an action cue, and several 8Dio titles are built around the cinematic production toolkit concept. I look forward to 8Dio diving deeper into the world of orchestral brass. **8dio.com**



Audiobro

Audiobro is built around the *L.A. Scoring Strings* library and is the brainchild of composer Andrew Keresztes. As the core library has developed over the years, it has pioneered a lot of the current trends toward building up smaller sections into larger ensembles by the use of smaller sections. *LASS* actually divides each instrument section into *divisi* A, B, and C; a separate "first chair" solo instrument; and a full section mix. Real legato, auto-arranger, virtual stage placement, and tuning tables are just a few of the many features under the hood of this very capable core library. As I often combine two or three string libraries when I work, *LASS* almost always makes that list when I start.

LASS Legato Sordino takes the concept of *LASS* and mirrors the feature-rich architecture in a dedicated library built from the ground up with actual *con sordino* (played with a mute) samples. While many libraries resort to EQ, filtering, modeling, and other trickery for muted strings, Audiobro does it right and the results are glorious. Since the arrival of *LASS* in 2009, many developers have had to up their game to stay in it. **audiobro.com**



Big Fish Audio

These players have been around since 1986, practically from the dawn of commercial sample libraries. They have titles in virtually every genre of music, including orchestral. Although Big Fish Audio does not develop every one of their titles in-house, they do a great job of working with developers to help bring their creations to light and to market. Sometimes just perusing their catalog of available titles can inspire a creative idea when I'm working on a new score.

London Solo Strings, *Elite Orchestral Percussion*, several Chris Hein titles, and the Prosonus collection are the high-end standouts of the group. In particular, the Prosonus sounds have been updated for Native Instruments Kontakt 3 scripting, keeping this venerable set of samples current and useful to today's composers. **bigfishaudio.com**

Cinesamples

Started in 2007 by Michael Barry and Michael Patti, two former students of the USC Film Scoring Program, the *CineSymphony* collection of titles is rooted squarely in the cinematic sound of Hollywood. Their approach is direct: hire players who regularly play on film scores; record them at the MGM Scoring Stage and Sony Pictures Studios, where many of the best Hollywood film scores are recorded; and put Oscar-nominated master engineer, Dennis Sands, in charge of overseeing the sampling sessions.

Currently, *CineWinds*, *CineBrass*, and *CinePerc* are divided into a *Core* library with the bulk of the basic articulations and a *Pro* expansion that fills in the gaps with deeper sampling and additional articulations and techniques. *CineStrings Core* has just been released as of this writing, and there are several additional percussion, keyboard, and other titles that all fit well together. The sound tends towards the big and dramatic, but I have also been able to caress tender and sweet moods from these libraries. As a token of respect, the players involved in Cinesamples sampling sessions also receive a small royalty for library sales. **cinesamples.com**

EastWest

Founded in 1988 by Doug Rogers, EastWest has a vast quantity of titles endorsed by a who's who of film and TV composers and record producers. Rogers' hands have been involved in many of the virtual instrument innovations in use today, like construction-kit loops, sample streaming, and consonant/vowel typing for choir libraries. EastWest now owns the legendary United Western recording studios (renamed EastWest Studios), which operates as a commercial facility and base of operations for the development of new libraries and virtual instruments.

There are too many great orchestral and cinematic titles available to list, but the standouts for me are *Hollywood Strings*, *Hollywood Brass*, and the *Storm-Drum* libraries. Not content with just creating great content, EastWest has designed most of their newer libraries to run on the custom Play platform. Partly a custom sample playback engine and partly a proprietary copy protection system, Play also allows for some instrument development and implementations unique to EastWest. In general, Play is harder on your system resources than the currently ubiquitous Kontakt platform, but most A-listers don't mind. The sounds are just too awesome. **soundonline.com**