

**Mbira bva Zimbabwe
for NI Kontakt & Logic EXS24**



The Mbira is a Zimbabwean instrument with metal keys, a resonant wooden body, and a distinctive percussive sizzle that traditionally serves to attract ancestral spirits.

The Mbira bva Zimbabwe features:

- 252 stereo 24-bit WAV samples
- Chromatic metal key notes and release noises
- Percussive “sizzler” samples from the Mbira body
- 1 program for NI Kontakt 3-5 with scripted interface
- 3 programs for NI Kontakt 2
- 3 programs for Logic EXS24

Introduction

The Mbira, shorthand for *Mbira dzavadzimu* or “voice of the ancestors”, is an instrument that has been played by the Shona people of Zimbabwe for thousands of years. It’s also the national instrument of Zimbabwe.

It is very significant in Shona religion and culture, and considered to be a sacred instrument. The Mbira is usually played to facilitate communication with ancestral spirits.

Our Mbira bva Zimbabwe is a twenty-two key version with added *machachara*—or “sizzler”, as we call it—to give a buzzing sound. The buzzing is traditionally important because it is believed to attract the ancestral spirits. We have deconstructed the sizzler from the original tone, so that you can mix between the chromatic tone, the release noises, and the sizzler sound, all within the Kontakt interface.

You can also adjust the sizzler’s decay independently, to find your perfect balance between the tone of the Mbira keys and the buzz of the sizzler.

We sampled the Mbira bva Zimbabwe library in two velocity layers, and recorded four round robins for each of the chromatic metal keys, sizzlers, and release samples. The instrument was close-miked in stereo, and the library contains 252 24-bit WAV samples.

The key range of the Precisionsound Mbira bva Zimbabwe is from B1 to C5.

Mbira bva Zimbabwe for NI Kontakt 3,4 & 5

The file in NI Kontakt 3, 4 & 5 format requires the full version of NI Kontakt and does not work fully with the free Kontakt player!

Mbira Page



On the front page of the GUI, named “Mbira”, you can adjust the character and dynamics of the sound. From left to right, the controls are:

Envelope

Attack: sets the time in milliseconds for the chromatic notes to reach full volume when a note is played.

Decay: sets the time in milliseconds for the chromatic notes to die away to silence when a note is released.

Sizzler

Mix: blends the Mbira’s chromatic notes with its buzzing sizzler sound. When *Mix* is zero, the chromatic notes and sizzler are equal in volume. When *Mix* is at -12, you hear only the chromatic notes. When *Mix* is at +12, you hear only the sizzler.

Decay: sets the time in milliseconds for the sound of the sizzler to die away to silence when a note is released.

Response

Release: sets the volume in decibels of the key-off samples that play when a note is released.

Velocity: sets the relationship between how hard you strike the keys (MIDI velocity) and the volume of the sound. At 0%, the volume of the sound is unaffected by how hard you play. At 100%, the volume of the sound is strongly affected by how hard you play.

Stereo + EQ Page



On the Stereo + EQ page, you can shape the tone of the sound. From left to right, the controls are as follows:

Stereo

Width: sets the stereo image of the instrument. This dial moves in 10% increments. At 0%, you hear the natural stereo recording of the Mbira. Values below 0% narrow the stereo image, becoming mono at -100%. Values between 10% and 100% introduce a stereo widening effect.

- ① If you use a width value between 10 and 100%, be sure to check your mix in mono, because stereo widening can sound different when mixed to mono.

EQ

Lo Gain: sets the volume of low frequencies, between +/-6 decibels.

Mid Gain: sets the volume of mid frequencies, between +/-6 decibels.

Mid Freq: sets the centre of the frequencies controlled by the *Mid Gain* dial.

Hi Gain: sets the volume of high frequencies, between +/-6 decibels.

- ① The Lo and Hi EQ frequencies have been pre-tweaked by Precisionsound to suit the instrument.

Reverb + Delay Page



On the Reverb + Delay page, you can apply effects to the sound. From left to right, the controls are as follows:

Reverb

Level: sets the volume in decibels of the convolution reverb effect.

Type: changes the impulse response of the convolution reverb. Seventeen impulse responses are available, ranging from short springs to churches and cathedrals. You can also disable the reverb by setting this menu to “Reverb off”.

Delay

Level: sets the volume in decibels of the delay effect.

Delay on/off: enables or disables the delay effect.

Time: sets the gap in milliseconds between delay repetitions.

Tone: sets the high-frequency damping of the repetitions generated by the delay, where 0% = no damping, and 100% = full damping for a darker sound.

Feedback: sets the extent to which repetitions generated by the delay are fed back into the delay, to produce more repetitions. At 100%, the delay continues regenerating indefinitely.

Spread: sets the stereo image of the repetitions generated by the delay, where 0% = mono, and 100% = full stereo for a ping-pong delay effect.

Credits Page



Recording and sound editing by Lars Westin

Kontakt scripting by Iain Morland <http://www.iainmorland.net>

GUI Graphics by Lars Westin

This product includes impulses from the free Bricasti M7 library by Acousticas, used under license.

The Mbira bva Zimbabwe manual was written by Iain Morland, with introductory text by Lars Westin.

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