



Review: Garritan Concert & Marching Band by Rick Paul - 7th January 2008 -



I'd like to begin this review by conducting a quick poll of our readers. Please raise your hand if you are now, or were at one time, a member of a concert band, a marching band, or both.

(Raises hand, then looks around.)

Just as I thought, a fair percentage of us are "band geeks". In fact, most musicians pass through school band programs at one time or another because concert and marching bands are the most common forms of instrumental music groups found within educational institutions. Band programs often start down at the elementary school level, then continue through junior high and high school. Many colleges also have marching and/or concert bands. Mine had neither, but did have a pep band that played at all home, and some away, hockey games. In addition, many communities have their own bands, which often provide the opportunity for musicians of all ages to play together. When you also consider drum and bugle corps, drumlines, brass bands, show bands, and various other variations on the band theme, the number of groups under the general band umbrella is immense.

Until now, however, there hasn't been a sample library dedicated to composers and arrangers who are creating music for concert and marching bands. An arranger wanting to hear a piece prior to getting it into a band rehearsal would have had to mock the piece up using orchestral samples. Unfortunately, you don't tend to find some of the instruments that are extremely common in a band setting (e.g. sousaphones, baritone horns, and saxophones) in orchestral libraries.

Leave it to Gary Garritan, founder and namesake of [Garritan Libraries](#), to introduce Garritan Concert & Marching Band, the first sample library dedicated to composers and arrangers of band music. Of course, it is not all that surprising to see Garritan being the first to fill a seemingly obvious market need. [Garritan Personal Orchestra](#) and [Garritan Jazz & Big Band](#) were both pioneering products in the area of providing high-quality, low-cost sample libraries, complete with tight integration with popular notation programs, geared toward composers and arrangers of orchestral jazz band and big band music, respectively. Let's take a look at Garritan's latest offering.

Background



Garritan Concert & Marching Band (hereafter referred to as CMB for brevity), when combined with the included Native Instruments KONTAKT 2 Player, provides a comprehensive library of software instruments aimed at emulating the sounds found in concert bands, marching bands, brass bands, and other related types of ensembles. Brass, woodwinds, saxophones, drums, and percussion instruments are included. We'll get into more details on the instruments represented below, but suffice it to say all

the instruments you'd expect to find in the marching or concert band environment are represented, as are instruments you may never have encountered -- e.g. the helicon and sarrusophone were both new ones for me.

The development of CMB's wind instrument samples was carried out by the Garritan team, including Tom Hopkins, Garritan's Director of Programming. When it came to drum and percussion samples, however, Garritan also involved a percussion specialist. CMB includes drumline sounds from Virtual Drumline 2 by [Tapspace](#).

As with older Garritan products, such as Garritan Personal Orchestra (GPO) and Jazz & Big Band (JABB), instruments are programmed with a focus on playable musical expression and relatively small instrument size. In a break with Garritan tradition, however, where GPO and JABB generally required building larger ensembles out of single instrument "chairs", CMB provides both solo sounds and multi-player "desks", generally consisting of five "chairs". The idea is that marching and concert bands can grow quite large, and building such groups out of individual players could be daunting. While you can still build small sections from solo instruments, CMB provides multi-player group sounds for most instruments, thus, allowing, for example, building a 15-player section from three 5-player group instruments.

The product package includes a nicely designed DVD case containing the NI KONTAKT 2 Player software and the approximately 1.4 GB CMB sample library on a single DVD-ROM along with a thorough and helpful 70+ page paper manual. The manual includes detailed setup and usage information for the sampled instruments and the KONTAKT 2 Player. In typical Garritan style, the manual also features a brief history of concert and marching bands and a primer on common types of these ensembles. The manual also directs users to one of the most valuable resources for Garritan users, their highly active [user forums](#).

One advantage to using a popular sampler platform is inheriting the system support attributes of that platform, so Garritan can concentrate on the libraries, rather than plug-in format, operating system, and hardware dependencies. As of this writing, the KONTAKT 2 Player used in CMB supports both Macintosh (OS X or better) and PCs running Windows XP. Plug-in formats supported on the PC include VST, DXi2, and RTAS, and plug-in formats supported on the Mac include Audio Units, VST, and RTAS. Standalone KONTAKT 2 Player operation is also supported. Notation program integration is supported via the VST plug-in support and/or direct KONTAKT 2 Player integration of latest generation notation programs such as Finale 2008 and Sibelius 5.

Product installation is straightforward. The setup program allows installing the basic software, VST plug-in, RTAS plug-in, and sample library in separate locations. Authorization is via the NI Service Center, which also makes it easy to find KONTAKT 2 Player updates as they become available. If your PC is connected to the net, this is a snap and goes very quickly. There are also arrangements available for PCs that are not connected to the net. The authorization is hard disk-based, and you are allowed up to two concurrent authorizations (e.g. a desktop PC and a notebook). The software is licensed to a single end-user, and is not transferable.

The suggested list price for CMB is \$239. You may find very slight savings at street price -- the best I found from a quick stop at some of my standard e-tailers was \$235.

Most of my testing of CMB was carried out using the VST plug-in under Cakewalk's [SONAR 7.0.1 Producer Edition](#). I also used the standalone KONTAKT 2 Player occasionally, mostly for experimentation. All of this testing was on an Intel Core 2 Duo E6600-based PC with 2 GB RAM running Windows XP Home Edition SP2.

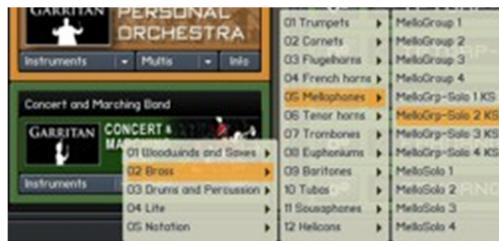
Getting Started

Independent of whether you are using the CMB library standalone or inside a DAW or notation program, you will be using the Native Instruments KONTAKT 2 Player to assign sounds, call up presets, make any sound- or configuration-level tweaks, and handle the playback support. Unlike the original KONTAKT Player, which had a dedicated user interface for each sample library, the KONTAKT 2 Player integrates any sample libraries you have that use it into a single interface. This makes it easy to combine individual instruments from multiple sample libraries within the same instance of the KONTAKT 2 Player.

Each sample library installed will have its own entry in the library pane of the player. That entry allows loading individual instruments and multis, which are multiple instrument configurations, for example to make it easy to load commonly used ensembles. CMB includes a number of pre-configured multis to get you started.

These range from small ensembles, such as a brass quintet and oom-pah band, to large group configurations such as concert bands or marching bands. With the larger ensembles, multi configuration options are provided to allow loading the ensemble as either the full ensemble, a "lite" version of the ensemble featuring instruments requiring reduced memory footprints, or partial ensembles. The partial ensembles each include 16 or less instrument desk for

loading in conjunction with multiple instances of the KONTAKT 2 Player, with each instance loading separate parts of the overall ensemble. Since SONAR only supports a single MIDI port of up to 16 channels per softsynth instance, these partial ensembles are the ones you will want to load when using large ensembles in SONAR.



Of course, you don't need to load canned instrument ensembles from multi presets. If you'd rather create your own ensemble configurations, you can load the individual instruments directly instead. These are categorized nicely to make it quick to find the instrument you are seeking. Simply choose an instrument family (e.g. woodwinds and saxes, brass, drums and percussion), the specific type of instrument (e.g. trumpets, cornets, trombones), and the specific solo instrument, group instrument, or keyswitched

combination (i.e. solo plus group) instrument you want for the specific part. There are also similarly organized sets of lightweight (i.e. low memory) instruments and instruments designed for use in notation programs. The latter typically handle continuous controller assignments differently to suit notation program conventions, as opposed to being optimized for playing from keyboard controllers.

It is worth noting that only programs that directly integrate the KONTAKT 2 Player, support VST plug-ins, or support one of the other plug-in formats available for the KONTAKT 2 Player will work with CMB. The Garritan Studio application, which was available with early versions of Garritan Personal Orchestra and Garritan Jazz & Big Band, and which allowed running multiple instances of the original KONTAKT Player underneath it while presenting MIDI output interfaces to other applications, no longer works with the KONTAKT 2 Player. On the one hand, since the standalone KONTAKT 2 Player can now support up to 64 MIDI channels across 4 MIDI ports, whereas the original KONTAKT Player only supported 8 MIDI channels, there is less need for an external way of creating a large ensemble. On the other hand, the KONTAKT 2 Player doesn't provide its own MIDI output ports for use by arbitrary applications. Thus, for example, while I could run early versions of GPO with my Finale Allegro 2007 notation program, which does not provide a direct VST interface or other direct integration with the KONTAKT 2 Player, I cannot use that program with KONTAKT 2 Player-based libraries such as CMB.

Brass and Winds

To keep menu and submenu sizes and depth manageable, Garritan breaks the wind instruments down into two main groups: "Brass" and "Woodwinds and Saxes". We're going to look at both families together since they share a number of traits on the sample programming and usage fronts. First, though, let's take a quick look at the types of instruments you'll find in each of the groups. (For a more detailed instrument list, see the [Garritan Concert & Marching Band product page](#).)

Within the Woodwinds and Saxes group, the instruments are organized into six subgroups: Piccolos, Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, and Saxes. With the exception of Saxes, each of those groups has only one layer of menus beneath them containing either solo instruments only (i.e. Oboes and Bassoons) or solo and group instruments (i.e. all the rest). It is worth noting that the Clarinets menu includes not only the ultra-common B-flat clarinets, but also other common and not-so-common members of the clarinet family (i.e. E-flat Clarinet, E-flat Alto Clarinet, Bass

Clarinet, and Contrabass Clarinet). While the B-flat Clarinets are found in solo, group, and keyswitched combination instruments, the other members of the clarinet family are provided in solo instruments only. As for Saxes, they are sub-organized by instrument, including Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass Saxophones along with Sarrusophones. (I'd never heard of a sarrusophone before, but it is apparently a type of instrument that resembles a cross between a bassoon and a saxophone that was originally designed to replace oboe and bassoon parts in outdoor bands where the volume potential of those instruments would be a limitation.) Soprano Saxes, Bass Saxes, and Sarrusophones have only solo instruments, while the other instruments have solo, group, and keyswitched combination instruments.

The Brass instruments are organized by instrument type: Trumpets, Cornets, Flugelhorn, French Horns, Mellophones, Tenor Horns, Trombones, Euphoniums, Baritones, Tubas, Sousaphones, and Helicons (another instrument I'd never heard of, which turns out to be a predecessor of the sousaphone). All of these instruments have solo, group, and keyswitched combination instruments available. The Trombones group also includes a solo-only Bass Trombone. A number of the instruments also have mute configurations available via keyswitching. These include the Trumpets, Cornets, French Horns, and Trombones. I think it is fair to say that the diversity and depth within the Brass family is one of the key things that sets CMB apart from other instrument collections which overlap somewhat with the instruments represented in this collection.

Readers familiar with GPO and/or JABB will already be reasonably familiar with the basics of playing CMB wind instruments, with one key exception. Similar aspects include use of velocity for attack characteristics (e.g. accent), mod wheel (or breath controller or expression pedal) for volume, sustain pedal for slurring (versus tonguing with the sustain pedal up), and pitch wheel for pitch bend. A number of other continuous controller assignments are similar to those in GPO and JABB, including automatic variability control (CC#22 for tuning and CC#23 for timbre), portamento control (CC#20), and decay length (CC#21).



The key difference in CMB versus GPO/JABB wind instruments is the notion of solo and group instruments in CMB. Where these exist in a combination instrument desk, switching between them is via keyswitching. For example, you could have a 5 clarinet group instrument for use in most of a piece, then use a keyswitch to switch to a solo clarinet in one section, then switch back to the group when the other players rejoin the arrangement. Where muted instruments exist within the brass family, different keyswitches will choose between solo muted, solo open, group muted, and group open instruments. (There may be multiple types of muted instruments in both solo and group cases, too.) Besides the one-player/multi-player distinction between solo and group instruments, and that group instruments are polyphonic (which also means the solo instruments in keyswitched combination instruments are polyphonic), one other important distinction is that only solo instruments allow vibrato control. Where this is available, controller use is similar to earlier Garritan wind instruments -- i.e. aftertouch controls vibrato intensity while CC#17 controls vibrato speed.

It probably goes without saying that there is a difference in the realism that is achievable when using a five-player section sample compared to playing five individual solo instrument samples separately to play the same part. Perhaps one of the more extreme cases to demonstrate the difference would be playing trills. No two players will play the same trill identically. Thus, playing a part five times with different solo instruments will be able to achieve much more realistic results than having the five-player section sample trilling -- i.e. with five instruments trilling in lock step with one another, at least on trill rates (the attacks may still be staggered slightly). Of course, if you are building a larger section, you could mix additional section samples, and possibly some solo instruments, in to get closer to a realistic result.

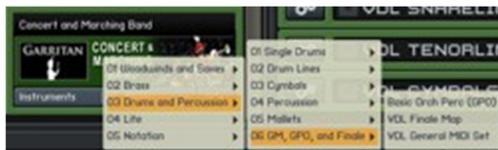
This is the tradeoff CMB is asking you to make for being able to build larger ensembles much more quickly. Whether it is a net benefit or a net loss versus the GPO approach of building ensembles from individual instruments likely depends on your purpose. If the end goal of your use of CMB is to mock something up while writing for a real band, which is the key market Garritan sees CMB serving, the tradeoff is likely a good one. You save time but still get something reasonably in the ballpark. If you are trying to get as accurate a band simulation as possible for an end recording, the tradeoff may be somewhat less optimal. However, in most cases, I suspect it will still be a livable tradeoff when you consider the context of the mix and how exposed, or not, individual section parts may be in the

big picture. Ultimately, if you are creating a large ensemble, I believe you will still save a good deal of time. However, you may have to work a little harder to make exposed parts feel more realistic, especially if they include playing styles that expose the general weaknesses of section sounds versus multiple individual instrument sounds.

As for the quality of the individual wind instruments, I was generally very pleased with the solo sounds. While I was less pleased with the section sounds on their own, once I put them in the context of a larger ensemble and full arrangement, I felt that they worked just fine. For example, playing a clarinet section patch on its own felt a bit like playing a chorused synth patch. The main things that set it apart from a synth patch were the possibility of tonguing and slurring, which a synth patch would not have, and that the lower registers had the more distinctive, airier sound we associate with a clarinet playing in that register. (To be fair, the middle registers of a clarinet tend to sound about as close to a sine wave as any acoustic instrument.) However, when that same section patch was put in the context of a band arrangement the sound seemed to fit well enough. In particular, nothing about it stood out to suggest it couldn't have been a real clarinet section. By contrast, the solo clarinet patches felt much more like acoustic instruments even when soloed and played in the middle registers.

Drumline

Garrigan has departed from tradition in providing the drum and percussion instruments for CMB. Whereas Garrigan has done all their own sampling of instruments for past products, and also for the winds component of CMB, a significant portion of the percussion instruments here were provided by a third party specialist. Over half of the drum and percussion contingent in CMB comes from the Tapspace Virtual Drumline 2 (VDL) library. The VDL samples were played by the percussion section from the renowned Santa Clara Vanguard, a modern drum and bugle corps. The VDL samples included in CMB are a subset of the full VDL product (see the [Tapspace VDL web site](#) for details on the full product, including the instrument list). The CMB subset includes most of the basic instruments needed for concert and marching bands, and Garrigan augments these with some of their own samples. If you're writing for, or trying to simulate, a dedicated percussion ensemble, however, you may want to consider purchasing the full VDL.



The drums and percussion section are organized into six main groups: Single Drums, Drum Lines, Cymbals, Percussion, Mallets, and "GM, GPO, and Finale". That last one consists of multi-instrument drum maps bundled into a single KONTAKT instrument, with mappings tailored for General MIDI compatibility, GPO compatibility, and use with Finale notation software, respectively.

Single Drums include three Bass Drum options, Snare Drum, Tenor Drum, and Toms from Garrigan as well as Concert Toms, Impact Drums, and Roto Toms from VDL. Besides normal hits, some with automatic left hand/right hand alternation, some of these drums include specialized hits and other playing techniques such as sustained rolls controlled via mod wheel, flams, ruffs, and crushes.

The Drum Lines category includes Bass, Tenor, and Snare Drumlines, all from VDL. These feature multiple players, both with individual left- and right-hand drum hits, as well as unison hits of various types and sustained rolls. There are also a few special purpose hits, like harness hits in the Snareline. The Drumline instruments are likely to be the heart of a marching band drum corps, while the single drums may be somewhat more likely to be used in a concert band situation and in smaller ensembles.

The Cymbals group includes both band and orchestral cymbals, as well as a gongs, from Garrigan, in addition to a combined Cymbals/Hi-Hat group and Finger Cymbals from VDL. The Garrigan Cymbals feature a variety of playing techniques, such as hits, piatti (i.e. hitting the cymbals together, as opposed to hitting a cymbal with a stick), hit chokes, piatti chokes, and scrapes.

The Percussion group includes Timpani and Triangle from Garrigan, and Castanets, Flexatones, and Police Whistle from VDL. Note that the timpani automatically alternate strokes in a round-robin fashion when hitting the same note

multiple times in a row. While this makes things much simpler when notating parts, it may be a little trickier to play when playing parts manually on a keyboard. By comparison, GPO used different octaves of the same note for left hand and right hand strokes.

The Mallets group includes Chimes, Glockenspiel, and Xylophone from VDL, along with the same instrument lineup plus Marimba from Garritan. The VDL Xylophone features keyswitches to change between single notes and rolls. This is handy since it is somewhat difficult to quickly repeat the same note on many MIDI keyboards.

In general, the quality of the drums and other percussion instruments, from both the Garritan and Tapspace sides of the fence, is excellent, and appropriate for the band context. One minor niggle is that the VDL snare drums sound extremely tight to me, as if playing very near the rims of the drums with very tight snares and drum heads. While the rolls sound a bit more open, and the tighter playing style may be helpful for keeping snare drums in balance with other instruments, my vague recollection of high school band days brings to mind a looser sound. Perhaps this may have been because we were generally playing with a relatively small contingent of drummers in relationship to the overall group size compared to modern marching bands that heavily feature their drumlines. Or perhaps styles have just changed significantly since the late 1970's, or my aural memory is just a bit off after almost three decades of concentrating primarily on other styles of music.

Playing Around

My general method for reviewing software instruments consists of a combination of testing the products on their own, in order to probe their details, and using them in a real life project, in order to get a feel for what considerations might come up in their practical use. Unfortunately, this time around I simply didn't have a real project on hand that called for marching band or concert band instruments. Thus, I decided I'd try and compose a new piece for marching band -- something I'd never tried doing before, but which may well be one of the key things prospective CMB users will be doing with the product. I figured it might be a nice change of pace as a between holidays project.

The first thing I did, once I'd decided to go down this route, was bring up SONAR and load up two instances of the KONTAKT 2 Player, each with a multi for different parts of the Marching Band multi. The first instance loaded the woodwinds, saxes, and high brass, and the second instance was used for lower brass, drumlines, and cymbals. There were thirty instrument parts and MIDI channels spread across the two KONTAKT instances. I then created the extra MIDI tracks and assigned track names, MIDI ports, and MIDI channels to correspond with the relevant instrument desks from CMB in the KONTAKT 2 Player. Setting an initial tempo and turning on SONAR's audio metronome, I was ready to begin.

SONAR 7 has a nice new feature that allows you to run the audio metronome, and playback in general, even if you don't have any data in your project. This is handy for starting an ad libbing-based composition process since you may not want to record the first bits you play prior to getting something to solidify a bit. After awhile, though, I had an idea, so I armed the Flutes track to record the initial melody, and recorded that against the metronome to sketch out a basic melodic idea as a starting point. Next up was recording a Bass Drumline track to get a basic beat down, then some Snare Drumline and Tenor Drumline parts to get the rest of the underlying feel against which the various melody, counterpoint, and harmony parts would play. The idea was to get basic ideas down by adding a track at a time, then refine things as I went along, with the various elements of the composition solidifying over time. Once I got a solid enough idea, I'd probably end up refining individual parts and re-recording the whole thing from scratch since there would necessarily be a lot of excess baggage in the ad libbed parts, especially in the early ones that were added prior to other parts' having solidified.

Somewhere in the course of adding those first few parts, though, SONAR crashed. After that, it seemed like I'd repeat a cycle of restarting SONAR, recording a part or two successfully, then trying to record another part, with SONAR crashing in the second or third part I tried to record during the session. Given I was looking at eventually recording up to thirty parts, this didn't seem like fun.

Fortunately, I'd remembered that I'd had some similar experiences in the past with KONTAKT 2-based instruments, and somehow, be it through web research or trial and error, had hit on the idea of turning SONAR's Multiprocessor Engine off (i.e. in the Advanced tab of the Audio Options). I'm happy to report that I didn't have a single SONAR crash after that. Whether this crashing issue is a SONAR issue, a KONTAKT 2 Player issue, somewhere in between the two, or something totally unrelated that just happens to create some nasty coincidence, I can't say. However, it did make the difference between my happily working with lots of CMB tracks and the kind of crashing nastiness I'd encountered earlier.

As I started to build up tracks, and some of my melodic and other ideas started to gel, I could hear what basically sounded like the start of a marching band, albeit with an overly busy arrangement and a fair amount of sloppy playing. The "sloppy playing" aspect wasn't so much due to literal sloppy playing as it was to making up parts on the fly, then trying to remember parts I'd played previously when doubling them with additional instruments, and not quite getting things right. This is the sort of thing that tends to make me want to switch to notation, so I can consciously decide what I want to play where, then have charts to refer to when I actually do the playing. Unfortunately, it is also one of the areas where SONAR is weak, and I am often tempted at such a point to go out to my notation program, MakeMusic's Allegro 2007, if my notation needs extend beyond tweaking a few notes here and there. It was at this point when I really missed the Garritan Studio from the original GPO, because Allegro doesn't support VST instruments, nor does the standalone KONTAKT 2 Player present MIDI output ports to Allegro.

At this juncture it would have been helpful if I had either the full Finale 2008 product from MakeMusic or Sibelius 5, which is now owned by Avid, or another notation program that supported VST plug-ins or provided some other direct support for the KONTAKT 2 Player. I actually did try to download the Sibelius 5 demo, just to get a feel for how this might look. It did allow me to import a MIDI file I'd generated from my SONAR sequence, and I got it to load the KONTAKT 2 Player. I was in the process of trying to figure out how to get the staves in the notation to link up to the KONTAKT 2 Player MIDI channels, when Sibelius "poofed" on me (i.e. disappeared, with no crash message or Dr. Watson log). Perhaps there is some relationship to the instability I'd experienced when SONAR was running the KONTAKT 2 Player with SONAR's Multiprocessing Engine active? As of the moment, I haven't had a chance to investigate this further, and, since I don't use Sibelius anyway, it isn't something I'm likely to spend a lot of time trying to troubleshoot.

As of this writing, I have yet to refine my arrangement and do a polished recording. However, from what I have put together thus far, I am fairly confident the CMB instruments will yield excellent results in context of a more refined arrangement. With SONAR's notation being as limited as it is, however, I do think CMB users who are regularly writing for large groups, are likely to want to augment SONAR with one of the fully featured notation programs that can use CMB's sounds. Alternately, if Garritan were able to find a way to make multiple instances of the KONTAKT 2 Player work with arbitrary Windows programs that do support multiple MIDI output ports, like the Garritan Studio allowed for earlier Garritan products using the original KONTAKT Player, this could be extremely helpful.

Closing Notes

With Concert & Marching Band, Garritan has made a few decided breaks with their past traditions as established by GPO and JABB. The use of multi-player instrument groups allows creating large groups much more efficiently, albeit not without tradeoffs in the realism of simulating multiple players playing together. Incorporating outside samples from the Tapspace Virtual Drum Line likely shortened development time for the library somewhat while also providing access to specialized sampled instruments from an established player in the marching and concert percussion arena. Putting all this together with Garritan's existing expertise in developing sampled wind instruments, not to mention the expanded collection of common and obscure band instruments, has resulted in a library that should be extremely useful for anyone writing for concert bands, marching bands, brass bands, and related types of ensembles.

As with Garritan's other ensemble packages, GPO and JABB, CMB has two key potential groups of users. One is individuals writing, arranging, and/or orchestrating for the type of ensemble in question. This is the key group

Garritan is targeting, and these users will likely be using a fully featured notation program, or, if they are writing for film or TV, perhaps they may be using another DAW with stronger notation capabilities, such as Cubase 4, Logic Pro, or Digital Performer. SONAR users are at somewhat of a disadvantage in this area due to SONAR's limited notation functionality and limited ability to integrate with higher end notation programs. The other group is individuals trying to simulate the targeted types of ensembles in their recordings. CMB does an excellent job in this area, though special consideration, and a bit of extra work, may be required when dealing with exposed group parts playing with techniques, such as trills, where multiple players playing the same thing at the same time yields a markedly different result than a multi-player sampled instrument playing the same thing. It is not that CMB requires more work than, say, GPO, in this type of scenario. It does not. Rather, it is that the timesaving of building large ensembles with multi-player desk instruments may make it easy to forget that not all techniques translate well to this sort of playing. Thus, the user has to be a bit more cognizant of when such techniques will compromise the realism of the simulation, thus requiring the more GPO-like approach.

The bottom line is Garritan is again coming to the table with a product that addresses an important niche, and quite possibly a fairly large niche. The implementation of CMB should make individuals with needs in this area quite happy. I might add that, though I don't normally fit into that niche, and have no expectations of doing a lot of writing for concert and marching band in the foreseeable future, I had a lot of fun playing around with writing for CMB. That has at least tempted me to consider doing more writing and/or arranging for these types of groups in the future. Maybe it's just the former band geek in me talking, but I think it might be quite a trip to have one of my songs played by a high school band. Just don't ask me to go back to playing the clarinet!

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