

Controlling Volumes of the Lower Right (3rd/Solo) Keyboard

By Paul Jirak

I've seen a lot of different posts about setting/controlling the solo keyboard sounds/voices. I own and play an SU500 Lowrey Royal and what I'm going to share should apply to all SU and later Lowrey organs.

First - The simplest way to control the sound volumes of a given registration are to use the volume control buttons on the organ dashboard. By reducing volumes in the Graphic Mixer Section of the dashboard in combination with reducing the volumes of the Rhythm Plus Orchestration drum button and the ORCHESTRAL Volume buttons and maximizing the volumes of the SOLO volume button you can rebalance the keyboard volumes to make the SOLO sounds seem much louder.

Second - In addition to setting the volumes on the dashboard, page one of the touch screen FEATURES has the "LEVELS (BALANCE)" controls. For the SU500 there are 15 controllable sound elements which includes all the "sound buttons" from ORCH1 to SOLO2. By pressing the FEATURES BUTTON once a Preset and/or a Rhythm Plus Orchestration + associated preset registration is made you can alter the volume settings of all the sound elements individually and then save your new settings to a [memory bank](#). By so editing each sound element you can lower the sound volume all 13 (for the SU500) of the sound elements relative to the SOLO1 and SOLO2 sounds and thereby maximize the sound of the SOLO keyboard. If your volume setting changes are not saved to a memory bank preset, when you turn off the organ, the volume settings will return to their factory settings. I agree with those say that the SOLO keyboard sounds tend to sound softer than the other two keyboards but I think most of what we're hearing is an overshadowing of the SOLO sounds by many of the elements of a rhythm preset when selected. When creating my own registrations, I have used the FEATURES LEVEL (BALANCE) controls to set the various sound volumes with great success. Again, I have to save my registrations to a memory bank preset to save and be able to return to the sounds I want.

Third - If using the Rhythm Plus Orchestration I've found that the SOLO1 and SOLO2 sounds on the solo keyboard are generally well balanced sound levels for the orchestrations being used BUT: The rhythm-plus-orchestrations or backgrounds if you will tend to be over emphasized. If you want less of all the automagic sounds you can, at the start up screen, edit both the sound-type and volume levels of the various elements of the rhythm/orchestration (which includes more than ORCH1 and ORCH2 - there's also an ORCH3 and ORCH4 and more) by touching the screen where the name of the rhythm appears and individually edit down the volume levels from their preset levels or even change the sound that's being used. As in the changes mentioned above, if you want to save your changes you must save them to a memory bank preset of your own otherwise when you turn off the organ the volume levels will be returned to their factory settings the next time you turn on the organ. Of interest: If you go through various Rhythm Plus Orchestration preset sounds without activating the autorhythm background - all of which have a solo keyboard setting which matches the sounds on the GREAT and SWELL keyboards - and you keep an eye on the volume levels both in the GRAPHIC MIXER and the ORCHESTRAL and SOLO sections you'll see that volume levels do indeed vary from rhythm-preset to rhythm-preset.

Fourth - when using and setting GENIUS button/tab sounds, at the time you select the sound you can also adjust the volume level of that sound.

Last but not least, if you're either love with or hate the various FLUTE Tab sounds, you can use the drawbars feature to either raise or lower the volume of each individual flute sound in the organ separate and apart from the volume setting control buttons in the graphic mixer section which controls the overall flute sound volume.

Finally - a reminder: If you do not save your work into a memory bank preset, when you turn off the organ, all your changes are lost.

It's been many years since I've had my LX500, but I remember that even the LX series organs had volume editing capabilities. You just have to do your homework, read your users manual and experiment! ;-)

Have fun!

Addendum

Volume Control

My original post on controlling volumes discussed the various on-board features available on the Lowrey SU500 organ for altering the sound levels on the various keyboards. This little addendum adds a few other suggestions about controlling sounds and sound volumes.

First - When using the autorhythms available in the Rhythm Plus Orchestrations area of the dashboard/organ be aware or more specifically BEWARE of the fact that Lowrey has created every single one of those autorhythms to make the organ sound masterful for beginning players or those people who will forever be EZ-Play players. To digress a bit: Lowrey almost single-handedly killed the organ music publishing business for fine talented arrangers when they turned automatic drum rhythm features into full orchestration settings. And thus was born the EZ-Play music publishing business. But back to my BEWARE! The warning is this: When using the autorhythms, the organ's sounds and backgrounds are designed to accommodate the fact that the person playing the organ is mostly using one or two fingers on each keyboard and not using the pedals. As such you'll often find that one of the HARMONY buttons - DUET, AOC, 3-part, 4-part, etc. - are often "on" or lit-up. One of the first things you can do to cut back on the sometimes overwhelming and sometimes muddy-sounding sounds coming out of the speakers is to TURN OFF the HARMONY buttons if they are on. This is particularly true when you want to use the 3rd/SOLO keyboard sounds. It is the use of the HARMONY buttons themselves which because they make the upper keyboard sounds so full and overwhelming, that the SOLO keyboard sounds can (and do) sound meek and mild by comparison. So, experiment with turning off the HARMONY section buttons if they are lit-up.

Second - The GENIE, ORCH PLUS, MCS, MEMORY and EASY buttons in the Rhythm Plus Orchestration part of the dashboard are lit-up or "ON" when a rhythm style is selected because Lowrey programmed the organ assuming that a beginning player is sitting on the organ bench! Whether or not you are a beginner and want to use the automagic rhythms and sounds learn to TURN OFF some of those buttons! First and foremost try turning OFF the ORCH PLUS and the MEMORY and EASY buttons. You'll immediately find that the background sounds and the sound levels are markedly pared down. The MEMORY button alone, inconjunction with a HARMONY button which is "ON" creates an enormous amount of background sounds which easily muddy the sounds of the keys/notes being played on the UPPER and SOLO keyboards. Turning off teh MEMORY and any associated HARMONY button will really make a huge difference and simplify the sounds being generated by the organ. At this point, the SOLO keyboard sounds now "feel" automatically louder!

Third - A little more about MCS and MEMORY buttons: When the MCS and MEMORY buttons are "ON" or lit-up, lower left keyboard is basically there only for the player to create a one or multifingered chord and the MEMORY "on" will always add harmony notes to any key pressed on the upper keyboard when an associated HARMONY button is "on." With the MCS "ON" the organ will play the rhythm in the selected chord repeatedly and each time you press a different key or keys on the lower left keyboard the organ "thinks" you want the chord programmed for those notes. If you turn off MCS the organ will not change chords if you merely press one different note in the left hand. Use these buttons based on your skill levels - the more skilled you are at creating and playing full fingered chords and creating your own harmonies on the upper keyboard, the more you will find that MCS and MEMORY when "ON" muddy-up the sounds you're trying to create. If you want just the drum rhythms, DO PRESS the "DRUM ONLY" button and you'll be free to create or use the upper, lower and solo keyboard sounds which you will find in the various presets. When you do this, you'll have to be a more skilled organist to create the fuller sounds by pressing more keys on the keyboards!

Fourth - When using the rhythm presets and NOT turning off any of the sound controlling buttons or HARMONY buttons, it is very often the case that you have to play your music up one octave to avoid the very muddy sound which can arise if trying to play at the middle "C" octave. This one change, playing up one octave, will make everything sound better. You can us the SOLO OCTAVE button as an assist in controlling the octove level when playing on the SOLO keyboard.

Hope this helps.

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