

# The Organ

## NOTES ABOUT THE PIPE ORGAN

The pipe organ is rightly called “the king of instruments”. In size alone it dwarfs any other musical instrument. Then, there is the capability. In addition to the specific “organ” sound, it approximates the sound of many other instruments, such as the trumpet. The organ you will hear today was specifically designed around the acoustics of the Messiah sanctuary.

The pipe organ installed in the 1994 sanctuary handled the needs adequately. However, when the sanctuary was expanded in 2012 the organ could not be easily expanded to meet the new requirements. The importance of music to the Messiah congregation was recognized, and both the size and location of a pipe chamber and the acoustics were major considerations in the design of the expansion. After an extended search, Miller Pipe Organ Services of Atlanta was selected to provide the organ.

The instrument has the typical 61 note GREAT and SWELL keyboards (manuals) and a 32 note PEDALBOARD. All of the pipes are under expression, which means all pipes are enclosed. This organ has a predominance of 8 foot ranks, providing the rich sound of the instrument. Details of the instrument are provided below.

For this performance the console of the organ is moved to the center of the chancel and turned so the back of the performer is to the audience, which exposes the pedals.

## DESCRIPTION OF MESSIAH'S PIPE ORGAN

GREAT ORGAN:  
Expressive with Swell

SWELL ORGAN:  
Expressive

PEDAL ORGAN:  
Expressive with Swell

STOP #	PITCH NAME	STOP #	PITCH NAME	STOP #	PITCH NAME
1	8 Principia	16	16 Holzbourdon	31	32 Resultant
2	8 Bourdon	17	8 Gedeckt	32	16 Subbass
3	8 Gemshorn	18	8 Gemshorn	33	16 Holzbourdon
4	4 Octave	19	8 Gemshorn Celeste	34	8 Diapason
5	4 Gedeckt	20	4 Spitzprincipal	35	8 Bassflote
6	2 Fifteenth	21	4 Flute	36	8 Gedeckt
7	1 1/3 Quint	22	2 2/3 Nazard	37	8 Gemshorn
8	8 Trumpet	23	2 Flute	38	4 Choralbass
9	Blank	24	8 Trompette	39	4 Flute
10	Blank	25	4 Clarion	40	8 Trumpet
11	Great Unison Off	26	8 Oboe	41	4 Clarion
12	Great 4	27	Blank	4	oboe
13	Swell to Great 16	28	Tremolo	42	Great to Pedal
14	Swell to Great	29	Swell Unison Off	43	Swell to Pedal
15	Swell to Great 4	30	Swell 4	44	Swell to Pedal 4

8 General Pistons      Set Piston      General Cancel Piston      Sffz pedal lever  
Swell shoe

Great-Pedal pedal lever      Swell-Pedal pedal lever      32 Resultant pedal lever      Crescendo shoe

## Sanctuary Piano Dedication

by John Shriver and Lois Graff, as presented at the June 10 dedication of the new sanctuary piano

The piano was made by Steinway and Sons in their New York factory. Steinway is an American piano company started by the German immigrant Heinrich Steinweg in 1853 in Manhattan. The first piano was given the serial number 483 because Steinweg had made 482 instruments prior to coming to America. This piano is number 484671, which indicates that it was completed in 1984.

Steinway makes 6 different grand pianos, varying in length from about 5' in the S model to 9' in the D, which is the piano we have here. They are handmade. And with about 12,000 parts, each one takes about a year to make. They are made not only from wood and metal, but various kinds of wool felt, as well as leather. The woods are carefully chosen for their strength, resilience, and tonal properties. The rim of the piano is made of layers of hard rock Canadian maple. Tension is built into the rim as the layers are bent and glued in a press invented in the 1880's. The metal plate inside the rim is cast iron. It holds the tension of the strings and prevents the piano from pulling itself to pieces – when the 243 strings in a D are in tune, there's over 20 tons of tension on the frame.

The strings are not actually string, but wire made with precision by Mapes Wire in TN. The composition and diameters are carefully chosen so that when each string is pulled to tune, it is within a few percent of the total tension needed to break the string. The soundboard is made of Sitka spruce from Alaska. Much like a violin or guitar, the soundboard is what amplifies and colors the sound of the vibrating strings. The Sitka Spruce is one of the key determinants of the piano's sound. The string tension and sound are transmitted into the soundboard by a bridge – just as in a violin. It's not flat, but arced upwards like the top of a violin. The keys are cut from a single slab of Bavarian spruce, and their surfaces are made of a plastic polymer – Steinway stopped using Elephant ivory in the 1950s.

Of course, the most important thing about a piano is its sound. The sound of every piano is slightly different due to the natural materials used to make it and the tensions built into the instrument by the manufacturer and the technician. There is no one right sound. Steinway's are clear but complex, much like our religion and faith. The complex series of overtones and the way they interact cannot be analyzed or understood by striking a single key. It is the way that string interacts with others through the bridge, the soundboard, and the rim which gives each piano its unique character.

One of the beauties of an acoustic instrument is that its sound can be molded differently by each performer in the way they touch the keys, a reflection of their personality and how it interacts with the tension and flexibility of the natural materials in this instrument. The piano is one of the beauties of God's creation. It demonstrates the truth in Martin Luther's statement: "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." —John Shriver



Ron Guthrie was one of five pianists who presented works at the June 10 Dedication.

Music opens hearts. Praise, thanksgiving, joy, sorrow, supplication, exhilaration, meditation... music reveals and releases emotion. Through music, God speaks and reveals His great love for us and through music, we can communicate with God. In worship, we join voices as one in unity and fellowship with our Maker, Redeemer, and Guide...and with each other. Through the poetry of hymns, the Word of God is sung and proclaimed.

So when we began the piano search, our goal was to find an instrument that had enough presence to carry through the church, enveloping all those worshiping and encouraging participation. We also needed an instrument which had the versatility and range to communicate our diverse prayers to God in worship. Upon first hearing and playing this instrument, it was apparent that this piano has a beauty that can lift spirits from darkness, rejoice with the saints, calm troubled hearts, and remind us of God's love. The beauty and eloquence of music is a gift from God. Sharing this gift is a responsibility and blessing that is ours. (See WOV hymn #699 *The Singer and the Song*). With this instrument, we hope to glorify God in worship and also serve God by reaching out to the community. May music always turn our hearts and minds to God, the giver of all good gifts. Thanks be to God! —Lois Graff



View of keys and interior of the Steinway D. (Photo by John Shriver/Well Tempered Tune, LLC)