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magazine

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**PINEHURST'S
ALLURE?**

SHHH!
IT'S MORE
THAN GOLF

A JOYFUL NOISE

**CALVARY GRAND ORGAN:
MUSICAL MASTERPIECE**

CALVARY'S
GRAND
ORGAN
HITS HIGH
REGISTER
AS MUSICAL
MASTERPIECE

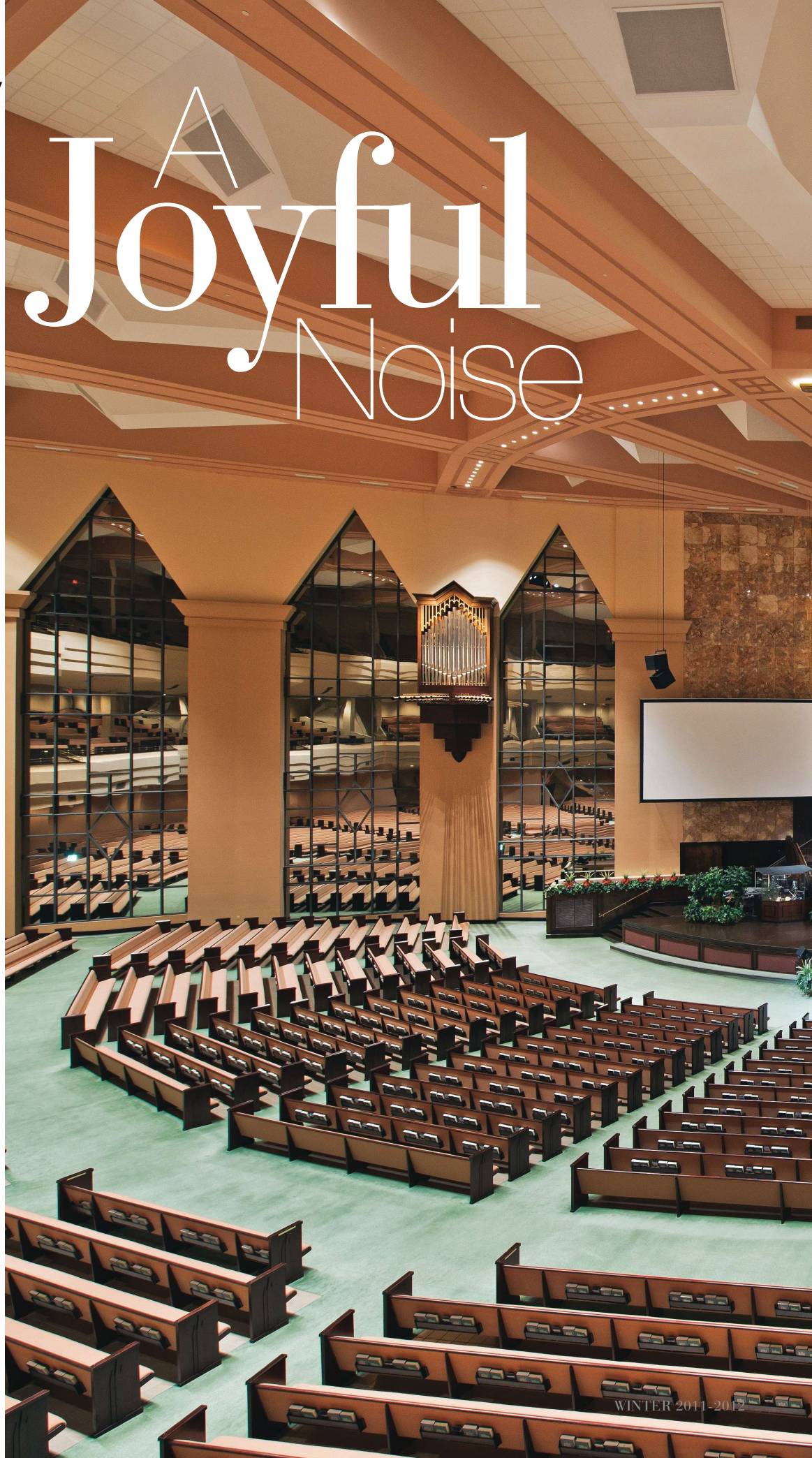
By Nan Bauroth
Photos by Cameron Triggs

AT FULL THROTTLE, the Calvary Grand Organ reverberates majestically. Rich, resonant vibrations of its luminous pipes envelop all 2.5 million cubic feet of air space in the soaring Calvary Church sanctuary. The glorious sound of music seems to bear witness to the presence of God, and that is precisely what this magnificent musical instrument was intended to do.

Dedicated in 1990 at an original cost of \$1.4 million (now valued at \$5.25 million), the Calvary Grand Organ — with an astounding 11,499 pipes, ranging from the size of a soda straw to over 40 feet in length — was created as an essential complement to worship services in the cavernous sanctuary located on the edge of Ballantyne.

“The organ was specifically designed to be of heroic proportions to support a congregation of over 3,000,” asserts David Nelms, master organ pipe technician and principal owner of Pipe Organ Service of the Carolinas. He has faithfully tuned and maintained the instrument once a week since its creation. “With an eclectic voice palette,” he says, “it is capable of playing

A Joyful Noise







Above: The Calvary Grand Organ can mimic sounds of orchestral instruments.

Right: Elizabeth Hildebrand, the organist at Calvary since 2009, revels in the role the instrument plays in worship services.



every style of musical literature.”

That is no small compliment.

Yet, this extraordinary set of pipes cannot sing its own praises, which may explain why few local residents recognize how truly grand the Calvary Grand Organ is. With 205 ranks (sets of pipes that produce five octaves or register of timbre), it qualifies as the 13th largest pipe organ in the world, and the largest all-new church organ ever built. To place it in perspective, the Calvary Grand Organ stands shoulder to shoulder with the Mormon Tabernacle Organ. Given such stature, the Calvary Grand Organ is truly a jewel in

the Queen City’s crown, not to mention a national treasure.

“The Calvary Grand Organ is an artwork,” stresses Nelms, who feels passionately about its place in Charlotte and the universe of pipe organs. “People around the world come here hoping to see, hear and play it.” That includes the organist of the Mormon

Tabernacle. The Calvary Grand Organ has also been featured twice on American Public Media’s “Pipedreams” program on Sunday evenings, alongside premier organs from England and Europe.

Physical Specimen

From the standpoint of sheer physical attributes, the Calvary

Grand Organ is not just an awesome musical instrument but a stunning masterpiece. One hundred and fifty-six gleaming zinc Great and Pedal Pipes form its focal point, rising 65 feet from floor to ceiling. Another 11,396 pipes are housed behind the main façade, hidden from view.

High above the façade, as if



Left: At four stories high, David Nelms tunes the horizontal “en chamade” pipes.

Below: Pictured are four of the organ’s five manuals. The natural keys are made of bone, while the sharps are walnut.



descending from heaven, loom three trompeteria of 1,323 polished metal pipes, including 391 bronze pipes “en chamade” that extend horizontally toward the congregation. On the left is Gabriel’s Horn; on the right, the Herald Trumpet; in the center, three sets of Millennial Trumpets. These five sets of pipes serve as musical heralds for festive fanfares, exclamatory hallelujahs in hymns and wedding processions. The pipes also can lead with a solo trumpet melody against a full organ accompaniment.

Such a wealth of pipes, known as “voices,” bestows the Calvary Grand Organ with 205 characters or colors of sound, the equivalent capability of an orchestra: the imitative voices of 44 flutes and 22 strings (including 15 celestes, with ranks tuned slightly off pitch to produce a shimmering sound based on the difference in frequencies), 28 principals, 34 reeds and 14 tremolos. Add to that an exquisite zimbels (German for cymbal star), whose tiny, tinkling bells rotate in a random pattern to create an ethereal effect.

Breathing life into this 173,000-pound masterpiece of an instrument are seven electrically driven blowers situated two stories below the floor. Another two blowers sit

four stories up to provide wind to the trompeteria. The result is an almost unparalleled voicing that will reverberate in just under three seconds throughout the 5,500-seat sanctuary.

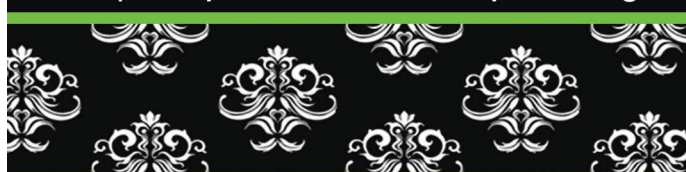
The Console

The Calvary Grand Organ’s console, which weighs one ton, is a work of art itself. The Honduras mahogany cabinet contains five, 61-key manuals, ascending from Choir to Great, Swell, Recitiv and Bombarde. The natural keys are fashioned from bone, the sharps from walnut, with 137 pistons of white maple tucked beneath the manuals.

The console doors comprise a mind-boggling 302 stops (drawknobs) and 200 other controls, rendering it the world’s largest American-made drawknob console. The organ’s command and control center also features solid state, electric console



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action with a digital screen on the left, under the music rack, where the organist can preset 24 memories for each piston.

Fanning out beneath the organist's feet is a pedalboard of keys built of maple and walnut, along with four "shoes" resembling gas pedals — three "expression" and one "crescendo." In addition, the organist can choose from 53 brass toe stubs and eight brass pedal movements. This intricate array of foot controls means that

any music that can be played by hand can be played with the feet as well, freeing the organist to play a melody by foot and separate accompaniment by hand — a talent only highly trained organists possess.

At Calvary Church, that talent is Elizabeth Hildebrand, who earned her master's of music in organ performance from the prestigious Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Ironically, the petite Hildebrand, daughter of a pastor in Michigan, says she minored



Above: Worship Pastor Tim Hathaway discusses an upcoming program with organist Elizabeth Hildebrand.

Left: Master organ technician David Nelms tunes the organ once a week. Here, he is surrounded by thousands of pipes in a room behind the sanctuary.



in music and majored in math in college because she was uncertain music would be a fulltime vocation.

In 2007, when her husband Jason went to work as an attorney for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Organization, the two joined Calvary. She initially served as a substitute pianist and organist, ultimately assuming the mantle of organist in 2009. A performance diva, however, Hildebrand is not. For her, serving as organist is an extension of her faith. "I enjoy playing the organ most for the services when I play with the orchestra or accompanying the choir and congregation as we worship the Lord together," she says.

Wonderful Dilemma

Worship Pastor Tim Hathaway says the church's magnificent organ presents a wonderful dilemma. "Integrating the Grand Organ into all our worship services and the diversity of our congregation is a challenge that requires a lot of prayer," he says. "We have a multi-generational congregation with different backgrounds and musical styles."

For that reason, he might begin services with an imposing traditional hymn such as "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" that utilizes the Grand Organ to its potential, and then blend the instrument in concert with the church members' contemporary 25-piece orchestra for the balance of the service.

But Hildebrand does play preludes by Bach and sacred hymn arrangements prior to worship services on a regular basis. In addition, the Calvary Grand Organ is featured during monthly lunchtime mini recitals on the fourth Thursday of each month, and plays a prominent part in the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony and candlelight Christmas Eve services. The services alone drew

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over 10,000 worshippers last year.

“This organ is tremendously loved and respected by this congregation, and was purposely titled the Calvary Grand Organ to bestow grandeur upon worship service,” Hathaway notes. “From a musical perspective it is unmatched, and was designed for perpetuity as well. Psalm 66 says to make His praise glorious, so the organ is a function of helping us praise God in that glorious way.”

Dr. John Munro, senior pastor of Calvary Church, agrees that the organ plays a highly meaningful role. “In our rapidly changing and uncertain world, we need to be reminded of the unchanging and unchangeable God who is sovereignly in control,” he observes. “As part of our worship, the organ aids us as we reaffirm our faith in the great, eternal, triune God — who is so much bigger than any of our problems.”

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