

Sound of Music

By James Roberts, Staff Writer



Left to right: Derek, Dennis, Tim, Jeff, Kevin, Chris, Todd, Greg photo/SHOKO UNESAKI Tennessee-based Milnar Organ Co. started moving a 113-year-old pipe organ, above, into Campbellsville University's Ransdell Chapel four weeks ago. It will take about six weeks to completely install the 3,014-pipe organ. The pipe organ has been expanded four times since it was built in 1894.

Campbellsville University is nearing completion of its newest chapel, but when the new building is dedicated later this month, a piece of history will also be unveiled. A Farrand & Votey pipe organ, built in 1894, is being installed in the chapel.

"We are very excited," said Nevalyn Moore, assistant professor of music. "I have dreamed of having a pipe organ on campus that was performance-worthy."

And the organ, which will have its public unveiling at the April 18 chapel dedication ceremony, is indeed performance-worthy and massive, according to Wesley Roberts, a professor of music at CU.

"It is a good blend of church organ and concert organ," Roberts said. "I think it is going to serve us very well with our church music degrees, concert programs and church services. It is a joy to play."

The organ is the largest in the area, Roberts said.

Built in 1894, the organ was installed later that year at Christ Church Cathedral in Nashville. It remained there until CU bought it.

"The church was renovating its sanctuary," Roberts said. "They decided that rather than move the organ, they would build a new one."

CU bought the pipe organ for around \$250,000, Roberts said, a third of the price of a new one.

Over the last 100-plus years, the pipe organ has been expanded four times.

"In 1894, it was small," Roberts said, "... probably 15 or so ranks."

A rank is a set of pipes. Each set produces a different tone. Today, the organ has 51 ranks - for a total of 3,014 pipes. Other changes over the years have included updating the console (the playing mechanism) and converting the organ from water-power to electric.

Moving the organ and installing it in the Ransdell Chapel will be a six-week process, Roberts said. Nashville-based Milnar Organ Co. is now in week four. Tonal adjustments and other fine tuning will take at least two weeks, Roberts said. Each pipe in each rank must be adjusted.

With its move to Campbellsville, the organ will also receive two additions - a Trumpet-En-Chamade (a decorative assortment of pipes) and a zimbelstern, which produces a series of bell sounds.

Roberts is eager to hear how the organ sounds at its new home.

"Each one is very different in some way or another," he said. "Even if you built two identical, they'd still sound different depending on where they were."

While Ransdell Chapel will mark the University's largest chapel, the pipe organ also marks the first significant organ CU has had.

"We have never had a performance-level organ on campus," Moore said. "We have a number of organ students, and we have been using the pipe organ at Campbellsville Baptist Church."

"This is a beautiful instrument and it will be a great addition to the campus."

- Staff Writer James Roberts can be reached at 465-8111 Ext. 226 or by e-mail at writer@cknj.com. Comment on this story at www.cknj.com.