

MANSION



A HIGH NOTE Organ pipes in the glass-and-steel home are meant to be viewed as art, so they're mounted in interesting groupings. At right, the home's kitchen. Far right, homeowner Eugene Blackstone on the Aeolian-Skinner organ.

INSIDE STORY

A Pipe Dream in Cleveland

A doctor and his wife build their modern, 9,000-square-foot house around a vintage organ and its 7,400 pipes; construction details emphasize acoustics, with walls, corners and door openings designed for optimal sound

BY RHONDA COLVIN

BY DAY, Eugene Blackstone heads a research department at the famed Cleveland Clinic's heart and vascular institute. But when he's at home, a different organ takes center stage: a 20th-century Aeolian-Skinner instrument that will have nearly 7,400 pipes when the installation is finished in the fall.

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that the organ is the heart of the Blackstones' 9,000-square-foot home in Bratenahl, Ohio, a small, well-to-do village nearly 5 miles east of downtown Cleveland. At the top of the spiral staircase in the center of the house, a multitude of dazzling copper pipes that are set against bright white walls on the second floor, come in to view.

When construction began in 2005, the couple made sure the wall-to-wall dimensions could accommodate the longest sound wavelength that the organ can produce. Corners and door openings incorporate slight curves to minimize echoes and heighten the reverberations of the organ's notes. Even specialty wall paint was used to help diffuse sound.

"We had lots of discussion about how to make this acoustically good," says Dr. Blackstone, age 72. But it



NOTED Building the home cost the couple nearly \$3 million. Shipping and installation of the organ added another \$1.5 million to the bottom line.

was equally important to make sure the house remained inviting and livable.

Dr. Blackstone began playing the organ when he was a teenager, growing up in Oskaloosa, Iowa. He attributes a deep connection to music to genetics: "It's a disease that runs in the family," he said, noting that both

of his parents played the violin, and that his wife, son and daughter all have music degrees.

Dr. Blackstone enjoys playing English and French cathedral pieces on the organ but says he is open to allowing others a chance to try their hand on the instrument. "I think one of the big opportunities might be for

the Cleveland Institute of Music students to come and bang away," he said. "We've said the more it's played, the better."

The pipes are pretty, but the sound is equally impressive. The number of ranks, or pipe sets that create a specific sound, comes in at 137—that is nearly 30 more than the total pipe ranks of the largest organ at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral, and more ranks than the organs inside Radio City Music Hall and the Metropolitan Opera House combined.

Richard Fleischman, a longtime Cleveland-based architect, was commissioned for the project, in part because he had designed 70 churches throughout his career and was familiar with how to design around the sound produced by an organ. Mr. Fleischman's own home sits next door to the Blackstones' home on the shores of Lake Erie.

The architect also wanted the instrument to be seen as a piece of art, which is why some of the pipes are mounted at different angles while others are arranged in a cluster or hang upside down.

Both the sound and the setting are meant to have impact. "All of a sudden you get goose bumps, because the music is so beautiful and you don't know where the beauty begins and the music ends," Mr. Fleischman says.

The Blackstones' organ includes parts from a smaller-scale instrument they owned 30 years ago when living in Birmingham, Ala. When the doctor and his wife, Janet, relocated to the Cleveland area in 1997, the parts were put in storage while they searched for a place to build their dream residential basilica. Once they found the site, planning began on what would become a contemporary glass-and-steel home that sits on one-third of an acre. In addition to the pipes they already owned, the Blackstones acquired more pieces from Boston, Wisconsin and Germany.

Construction took nearly six years, costing the couple nearly \$3 million. Shipping and installation of the organ added \$1.5 million to the bottom line.

Long term, the Blackstones envision the home as a venue they would make available for weddings or recitals, and throughout the building process they kept their potential guests in mind. For instance, the three-bedroom home has six bathrooms, and the kitchen is set up with space for catering. Three large closets were specifically designed to hold guests' coats.

"We've sort of designed it as such that we can have at least 200 people up here at once," Dr. Blackstone says.

RELATIVE VALUES

STAGE YOUR OWN WIMBLEDON

If you can't make it to London, you could hold your own Grand Slam at one of these homes, which all have private grass tennis courts



\$45 Million
Southampton, N.Y.

18,000 square feet, 12 bedrooms, 12 bathrooms

Named for the trees dotting its more than 9 acres, Linden estate has a regulation-size tennis court made of bentgrass—a kind of turf grass amenable to cold—as well as a referee's chair and a pergola for spectators. The property also has a carriage house, a 60-by-20-foot outdoor pool and two pavilions, each sporting an outdoor barbecue. Indoor life isn't bad either: There's an indoor pool and a fitness room.

Agent: Harald Grant for Sotheby's International Realty



\$825,000

Napier, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand

2,045 square feet, four bedrooms, two bathrooms

At this midcentury home on 2.47 landscaped acres near the North Island bay side city of Napier, the grass tennis court can also be used as an event space. There are citrus and cherry trees, and vegetable-garden beds; the area is one of the largest producers of apples and stone fruits in the country. Inside, the home's picture windows look out to the surrounding patios and veranda.

Agent: Jacqui Taylor, New Zealand Sotheby's International Realty



\$1.65 Million

Sheffield, Mass.

3,700 square feet, five bedrooms, 3½ bathrooms

This 19th-century barn, set on 13 acres in the Berkshire Mountains, looks out over a pond, a pool and a grass tennis court, planted with rye and red fescue seeds. Around the court, the land is tiered to create a natural seating area. The barn was first transformed into a residential space in 1960; it underwent a makeover in 2012. The kitchen has Brazilian quartzite counters and a pizza oven.

Agent: Maureen White, Barnbrook Realty

—Lisa Selin Davis