

Sources for this column include *Around the Town* (ATT), *Diapason* (D), *Local Press* (LP), *Melody* (M) and *Variety* (V).

November 1924 (D) ...

Nearly three quarters of a century devoted to organ construction in the United States is the record of a firm in the Central West which serves as an example of the advance of organ building, far from the eastern centers. In its career, this firm has built upward of 4,000 instruments.

Such, in brief, is the history of GEORGE KILGEN & SONS, INC. of St. Louis. The founder, George Kilgen, was an organ builder in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century. He was a participant in the revolution of 1848 and came to this country with Carl Schurz. At first, he was employed by the Jardine Organ Co. in New York. In 1851, he went into business for himself, the beginning of the Kilgen establishment. Here he remained for some years and became known as one of the prominent organ builders of the East.

In 1873, with the growing tide of western development, the Kilgen factory moved to St. Louis because of that city's central location and its accessibility to raw materials. The firm has moved every few years to larger quarters, and now is one of the best-equipped pipe organ plants in the world. The policy has been to specialize in and build only pipe organs.

George Kilgen's son, Charles C., after 15 years of assisting in the work, became a member of the firm in 1885, which became "George Kilgen & Son."

While growing in size and reputation for artistic work, Charles Kilgen's four sons joined the working force a number of years ago, and in 1924, the company was incorporated under its present name. Charles C. became president, Alfred G., George J., Charles C., Jr. and Eugene R., members of the board and officers. It is a closed corporation, the stock held by those immediately engaged in the business which is operated by their own capital.

It has been a tradition that each one, before becoming a member of the firm, must work in every department, becoming a practical organ builder, expert on tone and action, and an organ architect. It is no unusual thing to find a man whose father worked in the firm before him and whose son is working alongside him. In the personnel are listed some of the most famous organ experts in voicing, electric action, pipe-making and acoustics.

Kilgen makes every part of their organs, even casting the pipe metal, and making the magnets. It has gone into research deeply to develop its electro-pneumatic action and to enhance tone qualities.

Kilgen organs are in use throughout the country and in many foreign countries.

NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



Besides many four-manual church instruments, the firm has installed 4-manual organs in the Grand Central Theatre in St. Louis, the Majestic in Houston and the Capitol in Minneapolis.

April 1925 (M) ...

It is certainly possible for an organist of the theatre-concert type to attract the enthusiastic and whole-hearted interest of a surprisingly extensive following.

This was well exemplified in the case of ALBERT F. BROWN when he recently left the Forest Hills (Long Island) Theatre console for a tour through the South. The patrons of that house, one of the finest in the East, and serving probably one of the most exclusive residential suburbs on the Atlantic Coast, united in a petition to the theatre management to have this popular organist returned. They were so vehement that Mr. Brown cut short his tour and soon was back for a short time to the great satisfaction of the patrons who had submitted this unusual but decidedly complimentary petition.

At present, Mr. Brown is located in Geneva, Illinois, as demonstrator for the Geneva Organ Co. (formerly the Smith Unit Organ Co.) He also presides at the Fargo Theatre organ in Geneva and broadcasts nightly from WJJD, the big station maintained by the Loyal Order of Moose in Mooseheart, Illinois.

Mr. Brown's programs are attracting world-wide interest. The suitability of this organ for broadcasting is demonstrated by the clever artistry of Mr. Brown which brought messages of appreciation from points as remote as Alaska, South America, and Pacific liners enroute to Hawaii, to say nothing of the numerous ones received from radio fans in the States and Canada.

When the new Ambassador Theatre on Lake Drive in Chicago opened in May, Mr. Brown was chosen to initiate the wonderful new Geneva organ which is equipped to make good photoplays interesting, by adding to them the charm of appropriate music. One extremely interesting facet of this opening is that for the first time in the history of music, an organist will play "in light colors" in addition to

playing in "tone colors" and different pitches.

Mr. Brown's success as a photoplay organist-broadcaster is, due to his excellent preliminary training, his 12 years or more of work with leading teachers of effective photoplay presentation, and the inherent assets which made it possible for him to profit so fully from study and experience.

Mr. Brown belongs to that school which believes in absolute synchronization of the music with the picture at all times. We venture to state that a large part of his popularity with theatre patrons is accounted for by his ability with which he does this difficult yet necessary thing.

March 21, 1926 (LP) ...

BASEL CRISTOL, a young organist who was born in Dublin, Ireland, will inaugurate a series of matinee organ request concerts at Chicago's Tivoli Theatre, beginning tomorrow afternoon. Each program will be about 45 minutes long.

October 2, 1926 (LP) ...

The Majestic Theatre in Rochester, New York is reopening tonight under new management. Hear ERNEST MILLS in his original interpretations on the mammoth (sic) Kohl organ. Wonderful organ music which will hold the hearers by its excellence, will be the rule. Programs will be changed five times a week at this neighborhood house.

December 1928 (ATT) ...

A very unique inspiration has resulted in ROLAND KERNS and Mr. Thomson's composing of "Come Back Again," "At Twilight, I'll Think of You," "As Long as You're With Me" and one which will be released very shortly, "Looking Around." Mr. Kerns is organist at the Wesmar Theatre in Norristown, Pennsylvania. He formerly played at the Strand in Easton and the Ardmore (Pa.) Theatre. He features solos, novelties and screen presentations with great success.

Circa 1928 (V) ...

JESSE CRAWFORD, at the New York Paramount introduced a novelty, programmed as "Berliniana." It is a review of numbers written by Irving Berlin and finally plugs his latest songs.

Circa 1928 (V) ...

EDWARD K. HOUSE had them singing powerfully at his performance in Chicago, and he is said to do the same invariably. His slides are original and coaxingly funny and his organ-pumping is as good. House rates way up in his field here.

December 1928 (LP) ...

EDWARD C. MAY, concert and feature organist of the Schine theatre circuit, has been engaged as organist at Rochester's Liberty Theatre where he will play a Wurlitzer.

GOLD DUST:

1/28 JEAN WEINER over Atlantic City's WPG; JOHANNA GROSS, Cincinnati's WLW; F. ARTHUR HENKEL, Nashville's WSM ... 11/29 GEORGE LATCH, Loew's Rochester ... 1/30 EDWARD C. MAY, Rochester's WHEC ... 12/34 WILLIAM MEEDER, New York's WJZ; RAY BERRY, Rochester's WHAM; LEW WHITE, NBC

Network; RICHARD LEIBERT, New York's WEAF; GORDON JOHNSON, Buffalo's WBEN; JESSE CRAWFORD, New York's WJZ; EDDIE DUNSTEDTER teams with Ransom Sherman on St. Louis' KMOX "Laugh Clinic"; SQUIRE HASKIN, Rochester's WHAM; STAN-LEIGH MALOTTE, New York's WJZ ...

9/35 England's REGINALD DIXON over GSB, GSD, GSI; FRANCIS J. CRONIN over WORC, Worcester, on the Yankee Network; CARL COLEMAN, WGR in Buffalo.

That should do it for this time.
So long, sourdoughs!
Jason & the Old Prospector



SWEET AND LOVELY. Gerry Gregorius at the 3/18 Wurlitzer in Uncle Milt's Pipe Organ Pizza Co. restaurant. Available from Terry Robson, P.O. Box 06796, Portland, OR 97206.

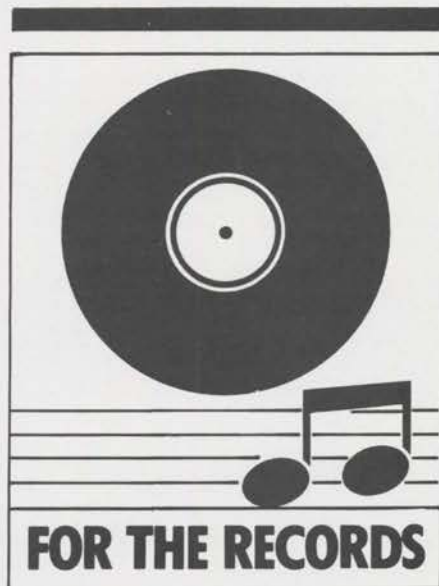
High bias CrO² dolby cassette only. \$9.00 postpaid. Overseas \$10.00 postpaid in U.S. funds.

WOW! Recordings of this quality are few and far between. Since I have been reviewing, this is only the second recording that deserves a rave. Even though this recording was made at a pizza establishment, there is not even the slightest hint of pizza organ fare. It is pure theatre organ at its best.

The organ at Uncle Milt's has been recently rebuilt and revoiced. Bob Hansen, the head technician, deserves praise for so perfectly finishing this organ. It is both delightful and thrilling. It has an ensemble which should make organ technicians sit up and take notice. It is a splendid example of a concert-capable theatre organ.

Mr. Gregorius' performances are superb, polished, tasteful, subtle, in a word perfect. His arrangements are very orchestral, with phrasing that could only come from an intimate knowledge of the lyrics; this, and flawless execution have all combined to leave the listener with a sense of the rightness of the interpretations. As an example, "Summertime" has been played by many organists, this is the first time I have heard it played RIGHT, and each selection is like that. They are as follows: Jeanette MacDonald favorites; "San Francisco," "Sweetheart," "One Alone," "Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life," "Beyond the Blue Horizon," then we are favored with "Always," "The Waltzing Cat," "Taking a Chance on Love," "Dambusters March," "Sweet and Lovely," and finally, selections from *Porgy and Bess*; "I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'," "Summertime," "It Ain't Necessarily So," "A Woman Is A Sometime Thing," "I'm On My Way."

The recording engineer, Fred Armentrout, has shown great skill in capturing



the presence of the instrument, and the ambience of the room. This is an alive recording. The tapes are BASF CrO², real-time dubbed, and dolby B.

This tape, in some senses, could be called a study in what happened when everything is right. I'm sure I'll enjoy this tape just as much many years from now.

When is the next recording coming out?

Bob Shafter

ASTRA 1983. Nigel Ogden at the 3/8 Christie in the Astra Theatre, Llandudno, North Wales. Available from COS Tapes, 23 Aveling Park Road, London E17 4NS England. Price is \$10.00 postpaid airmail. Dolby cassette only.

COS tapes come through once again. An impromptu session, no rehearsal, no retakes, has produced a recording that might be called inspired. It's often difficult to believe there are only eight ranks, so well did Mr. Ogden use the organ, and so well were the acoustics of the theatre captured.

Nigel Ogden has to be one of England's premier organists. I've had the opportunity to hear his work in a number of venues, and he always does an excellent job. This recording shows great depth of feeling and an almost uncanny understanding of what the music wants, coupled with great technical ability which leaves the listener comfortable in the knowledge that they've just heard something outstanding. The theatre organ

world would be better off if we could get more recordings from this artist. The selections are; "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," "Satin Doll," "The Nearness of You," the immortal George Gerswin; "S' Wonderful," "Strike Up the Band," "Our Love is Here to Stay," "I Got Rhythm," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "A Foggy Day," "The Man I Love," "Rhapsody in Blue."

The instrument is another excellent example of what's happening in England. Even though it has eight ranks, it has a very big sound and a beautiful blend. It just can't be faulted.

Recording engineers could, and probably should, be taking lessons from John Leeming. The listener hears the organ and the room, and this theatre has a lovely acoustical environment. We always get this quality from Mr. Leeming.

You won't be disappointed with this tape.

Bob Shafter

Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising organ recordings are encouraged to send review copies to the Record Reviewer, THEATRE ORGAN, 4633 S.E. Brookside Drive, #58, Milwaukie, Oregon 97222. Be sure to include purchasing information (postpaid price, ordering address) and a photo of the artist which need not be returned.



Do You Know Any Young Organists?

The rules and regulations for the 1988 Young Organist Competition have been sent to all chapter presidents. If you know of a talented youngster (age 13-20) who might be interested in entering, contact your chapter immediately so he can start preparing for the competition. If you have questions, contact Lois Segur, 1930-301 West San Marcos Blvd., San Marcos, California 92069.