

DUET AT A SPA

by the Editor



every summer of the Buxton Festival (see TABS two issues back, for article by Philip Edwards).

The decision was taken for a memory system, and, as the theatre decided on 120 ways, Duet was the obvious choice. And how glad we are that they made the decision to go for Strand again. Their 1938 bracket handle board, see photo, had certainly given good service. As readers will deduce, it was on a perch, actor's left. The Duet, which will actually be Duet No. 261, will be in a circle box, actor's right.

As the Editorial Pentax was put away, hacksaws went to work on the



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TABS, The June Issue
From Mr Bobby Pagan

Dear Sir,

It has been my good fortune to see the June issue with Frederick Bentham's most fascinating pages on the early days of STRAND.

His pictures of the Hyams Theatres include a Troxy Foyer shot which I don't recall ever seeing, and you both may be interested to know that Charlie Passmore (House Engineer at Edmonton) was at Bedford School with me in 1920/21.

I never saw him again until after a terrifying debut (as a Hick from the Sticks) on Trocadero's Wurlitzer in August 1933, when he re-introduced himself while reminding me that I had not switched off the organ blower. This was just before Troxy's opening and I was being launched at the Troc in the last week of Quentin Maclean's holiday.

Passmore made "in-circuit history" when Edmonton's remote control piano got tired. He reversed its motor and coupled it to a point of the Vacuum Cleaning System. Incidentally there was one quite sinister aspect of the orchestra and organ lifts at Edmonton. It was that in the event of the orchestra coming down before the organ went up, the organist must not put his elbows restfully on the metal surround, lest the descending orchestra lift would shear them off!

Organ presentations were largely dependant on the collaboration and inventive genius of our chief projectionists, notably Percy Pilgrim, Ernie Hurry, Bill Richardson and later, Stan Place under whose guidance I learned how to do a change-over on a GB Kalee 21.

This could go on forever but must not.

I am, Yours sincerely,
Bobby Pagan
Brighton

From Ian Reekie,
Scunthorpe Borough
Council

Dear Richard Harris,

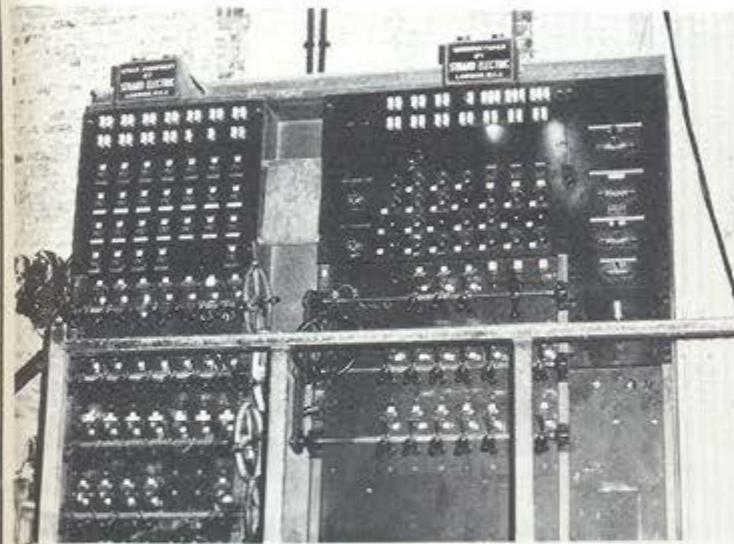
I refer to the article headed 'Special Lighting for The Who' which appeared on page 11 of the June issue of TABS in the section which documented 'The Editor's Journeys'.

Your comments concerning the effect of The Who's lighting rig, which inferred that Scunthorpe's prevailing atmospheric conditions would make any smoke machine redundant, only serve to perpetuate the popular misconception that seems to be held by that deprived section of the community who have never visited the town. There is certainly every indication that the editor's journeys have not brought him in this direction at least in recent years. This omission is particularly unfortunate in view of the large quantity of Rank Strand equipment used in the presentation of the Council's thriving cultural and entertainment programme.

You may recall that during my time in Barnsley, when the Civic Theatre became one of the first purchasers of the new A.M.C. board, I was able with the assistance of Jack Watling to counteract your equally jaundiced views concerning the delights of the South Yorkshire countryside. I am confident that if you were able to find the time to visit Scunthorpe on your travels you could not fail to be impressed (a wet Monday in February is not recommended). With the Humber Bridge at last open civilisation (?) in the form of Hull is only 24 miles away so any expedition need not be too painful. No passports are required and I can guarantee you a warm welcome.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Reekie
Deputy Chief Leisure and Recreation
Officer

BUXTON, the famous Derbyshire Spa, was, I seem to remember, discovered by Lord North. His Lordship was riding home in the wee small hours from an evening spent with cronies. They had all been drowning their sorrows over the success of His Majesty's rebellious subjects in the Americas. He awoke lying by the roadside the next morning, feeling no trace of headache, liver discomfort or even general malaise. This was put down to the fortunate fact that his aristocratic mouth had been partially covered by a Buxton stream



The old Strand Bracket Handle Board — installed in 1938, now 'reduced to produce'.

and some local water had been injected. Thus were the health giving properties of the local spring water discovered for a grateful world.

Our story now moves forward to the beginning of this present century, when the Duke of Devonshire, the local magnate whose seat is nearby at Chatsworth, provided many handsome buildings for the town. Among these was the Opera House, a charming if miniature theatre, now the home

old board, which was, in the Rolls Royce phrase, "reduced to produce".

Sadly, with the exception of M. James Laws of Attleborough, I do not believe anyone is collecting old theatre or T.V. technical equipment. In fifty years it may be as fashionable as steam railway memorabilia. Why, I had to spend 20p each on some Midland Railway porter's brass buttons recently to adorn the Editorial blazer!

Buxton Opera House, next to the conservatory — but not of music. If only the cars hadn't been there, this could have passed as an Edwardian summer's day. Notice the delightful lamp standard.



TABS — NEXT ISSUE

WE hope to publish the following articles, along with our usual contributions.

The New Dundee Rep. André Tammes, the theatre consultant, writes about the project.

Kathy White covers the history of the Dundee theatre.

Fred Bentham will give us another slice of fascinating technical autobiography.

Computer Box Office — both major companies have been given space to put forward their advantages — you, the reader, will be the judge. Plus Graham Waine, Philip Edwards, Norah McNulty etc.