

ACROBATS FROM THE BAL TABARIN

George Mooney's Memories



George and Ted Durante

It was in 1976 that I became acquainted with George Mooney. He had retired from acrobatics and came to live with his wife Sylvia in Somerset. We became good friends and he frequently came to see me. It was a joy to hear his tales of variety. During his career he worked and performed with a number of different acts. While working with another acrobatics group he met Ted Aston and they formed their own act, namely Ted and George Durante – *Acrobats From The Bal Tabarin*. Their act was based on missed cues and unlikely contortions. They never spoke during the act but preferred to remain silent. One time boxer, George was top mounter whilst Ted, with his magnificent physique was bearer. They wore matching costumes and were immaculately turned out.

Ted and George were booked into the long running show *Hit Parade Of 1948*, which ran for over six months. Top billing in this show was shared between Betty Driver (*The Singing Star Of Screen And Radio*) and Carl and Roger Yale (*Radio's Famous Song-Writing Comedians*). George gave me a hanging card from the show and on the reverse side he listed the tour of 1948 into

1949, which he recorded weekly (see panel).

In 1949 Ted and George were working in weekly variety all over the country and 1950 saw them in *Wildfire*, an ice show at London's Empress Hall for a four month season. In 1951 they were booked into Bernard Delfont's *Do You Remember? 8 Music Hall Names That Will Live Forever*. Guest star was George Robey and also appearing were Hetty King, Wee Georgie Wood and Dolly Harmer, Percy and Mary Honri (musical act), Peter Bernard, Scott Sanders, Jack Edge and Renee Houston and Donald B. Stewart. Youngsters in the show were Larry Gordon's Empire Girls and, of course, Ted and George Durante.

Summer season 1952 was spent at the Dolphin, Brighton in *Roostop Rendezvous*. This exciting show was based on the BBC TV show of that name and the company included Jack Watson, Chris Sands, Mary Meredith, Tommy Godfrey, Ted and George Durante and Leslie Roberts' Twelve Rendezvous Lovelies.

Later in the season Ted and George appeared in Bernard Delfont's *Rhythm Is Our Business*, doing a

TED AND GEORGE DURANTE'S DATE BOOK 1948/9

HIT PARADE TOUR 1948 (Journeys all by train on Sundays)

June 7th	Hippodrome, Norwich
June 14th	Palace, Walthamstow
June 21st	Coliseum,
Portsmouth	
June 28th	Palace, Chelsea
July 5th	New, Cambridge
July 12th	Empire, Swindon
July 19th	Empire, New Cross
July 26th	New, Northampton
August 2nd	Theatre Royal, Hanley
August 9th	Empire, Leeds
August 16th	Hippodrome, Wolverhampton
August 23rd	Hippodrome, Ipswich
August 30th	Shakespeare, Liverpool
September 6th	Knightstone, Weston-Super-Mare
September 13th	Palace, Reading
September 20th	Palace, East Ham
September 27th	Theatre Royal, Chatham
October 4th	Tivoli, Hull
October 11th	
October 18th	Empire, Middlesborough
October 25th	Hippodrome, Eastbourne
November 1st	Windsor, Bearwood
November 8th	Pleasure Gardens, Folkestone
November 15th	Grand, Brighton
November 22nd	Empire, Croydon
November 29th	Alma, Luton

End of Tour

Variety and Pantomime Dates

December 12th –	
February 5th	Hippodrome, Ipswich
February 7th	Hippodrome, Aldershot
February 14th	Regal, Southend
February 24th	Cabaret – Herne Bay
March 12th	BBC TV, Alexandra Palace
March 14th	Empress, Brixton
March 21st	Capitol, Didsbury
April 1st	Cabaret – York Hall, London
April 4th	Empire, Kilburn plus Cabaret

Then into show *Hello Beautiful* – Spring 1949

Moss/Stoll tour. Top of the bill was Winifred Atwell along with Jimmy Wheeler, Jack Jackson, from radio's *Record Round-Up*, Fayne and Evans (sporting impressionists) and Ray and Madge Lamar (dancers) doing two spots.

For Christmas 1953/4 Ted and George were engaged in the lavish pantomime *Cinderella* at the London Palladium. The title role was played by Julie Andrews and Adele Dixon was *Prince Charming*. The marvellous cast included Max Bygraves as *Buttons*, Richard (Mr.

Pastry) Hearne as *The Baron* and Jon Pertwee and Tony Sympson as *The Ugly Sisters*. Ted and George were *The Brokers Men* and they incorporated their acrobatic act into the show. Specialities were by Hall, Norman and Ladd (comic musicians) and The Salamanders adagio act. The chorus featured the Aida Foster Babes, the Pauline Grant Ballet and Kirby's Flying Ballet. The George Mitchell Octette provided the backing. Phew! What a line-up!

After the ten week panto season, Ted and George moved to the Prince Of Wales Theatre to appear in the new Folies Bergere show *Pardon My French* with Frankie Howerd and Winifred Atwell. The show ran for eighteen months.

When appearing in London it was quite a common practice for them to play two theatres a night, presenting their act four times. It meant dashing from theatre to theatre in taxis and on some occasions changing costumes en route. On one particular evening they also included a live television appearance from Radio Olympia.

Much of this article is gleaned from George's notes, programmes, photos, etc and is a fascinating insight into the great days of variety.

Alan Southwood



George and Ted Durante

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6-30 MONDAY, JUNE 14TH, 1948 8-30
 GALA NIGHT WEDNESDAY 2nd PERFORMANCE

CARL YALE presents
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HIT PARADE OF 1948

STARRING

BETTY DRIVER The Singing Star of Screen and Radio	CARL & ROGER YALE Radio's Famous Song-writing Comedians Composers of "The House," "Let Me Go, Let Me Tarry," etc.
HARVEY & HAYES On the Move	THE EIGHT BALLERINAS
LESLIE COMPTON From the Bal Tabarin	JEAN SWEETMAN
TED AND GEORGE DURANT Comedy Acrobats	VERONICA STEWART S.E.C. - CARRISMAN CARNIVAL FRANCIS & CO. CARRISMAN HENRY LANE FOOTBALLER'S BILLBOARD
	THE MELODY MAIDS QAYAR & MATRINA From the "New Hit Parade"
	DOUGLAS MAYNARD From the "New Hit Parade"