



RESTORATION

1985

The King's has proved such an architecturally stalwart theatre that only twice in its eight decades—1951 and in 1985—has it closed for essential alterations.

The latest £1.2 million scheme, combining the best of old and new, takes the theatre back to its original Edwardian opulence and forward into an expanded future with an enlarged orchestra pit complete with hydraulic lift.

Outside, the red Dumfriesshire sandstone has been cleaned and restored, highlighting the topmost masks of tragi-comedy. The ugly neon vertical sign obscuring the bay windows has been removed and the theatre's name placed under the canopy (sadly, the original iron-pillared one disappeared long ago). Even one of the two original corner shops (a greengrocer's and a tea-room were incorporated into the building) has been brought back into street use as an external box office.

Behind the Italianate facade, the elaborate marble halls and staircase with art nouveau brasswork and stained glass are as they were on the 1906 opening day.

Under the guidance of the Historic Buildings Commission, layers of paint have been removed to reveal the original colour scheme, biscuit, rose-pink, and gold, now sparkling anew. From old photographs and a few survivors, the glass peardrop lights have been carefully copied at Edinburgh College of Art and replaced.

The sculptured caryatids, breasting the boxes, are clothed in gold leaf, and the paintings of the Four Seasons around the dome newly transformed after 40 years of over-painting, justify once more the description of the King's interior as an Aladdin's cave of Viennese baroque.

