



West Cornwall Theatre Group in *King Lear*, 1974.

down the cliffs. Additional lighting equipment litters the theatre whilst rigging proceeds during daylight. Adjustments being left until nightfall. It is all too easy in the darkness to put down a spanner or even a Patt. 263, and if one's memory or geography should fail, it may be morning before the missing article comes to light.

The half moon stage, some seventy-five feet wide, is bounded upstage by a line of low pillars to allay the fear that actors might fall off the edge into the sea. The original grass surface has been replaced with concrete, patterned in large pale tinted hexagons. This, like the lichen-covered rocks rising vertically on both sides, is delightful to light, accepting (and absorbing) colours and shadows alike. Nature has equipped the Minack with many unusual features—rocky ledges and niches on which the actor may suddenly appear, requiring light to be both on cue and on target. Most entrances are either up or down steps, by which the character comes into view either head first or feet first. The theatre seats between five and six hundred, with space for many more to perch on higher up the cliff. So steeply raked is the seating, that all but the first four rows of the audience can see the waves washing against the Minack rock, far below the theatre.

The lighting box, sited on a rock outcrop which divides the audience into two unequal portions, houses the resistance dimmers and switching, together with the sound equipment. There are two banks each of six dimmers, fed via short rated masters, each with the customary two circuits and on/off dimmer switching. Also two junior 8 boards. Thirty-four circuits, originating at a patch panel, terminate in weatherproof 5 amp switch sockets located around the theatre.

Basic equipment provided by the theatre is seven Patt. 543, three 523, three 123

lanterns. This nucleus is added to by playing companies, according to their needs. The additional equipment brought varies from a few extra profile spots to any number of Patt. 123, 223, 243, 263 and perhaps a couple of 293, and on one occasion a diesel generator in the car park to provide power additional to the 50 amp mains supply.

The shape, size and dimensions of the stage and the unbalanced and limited facilities for fixing lanterns, pose many problems to the lighting designer, as also may the total absence of reflected light.

Below the lighting box (and obstructing the operator's downstage view) is the royal box, beneath which are the principal fixings for the main battery of lanterns fanning out across the stage to the unequal extremes of right and left. Well to the side, stage left, in a position best described as "perch" is an inverted "U" barrel to accommodate several lanterns. Whilst stage right above the audience in the "gully" are rock ledges where an agile electrician can find side F.O.H. positions.

At stage level recessed beneath the front row seats are four more circuit outlets. The largest of these openings also being the prompt hole. Several circuits are taken to points behind the upstage balustrade, and more are located behind the rocks off stage right.

On first considering Minack, thoughts of moonrise and the times of sunset and ensuing darkness steal into the lighting designer's mind. Will the production be blessed (or troubled) with a full moon? At what part of the play will it be dark enough for lighting to be noticed, be effective, to take control? Can we have the interval a little earlier please, so that a particular scene will have the benefit of darkness?

At least the matinee will be evenly illuminated! Albeit without control facilities available to man.

Tabman's Diary

a personal view

National Theatre

When a nation with a distinguished theatrical heritage postpones building its National Theatre until today, the job has to be done properly. Apart from a couple of glances at the site from the safety of Waterloo Bridge, Tabman contrived to keep himself completely immune from information on the project until a recent grand tour of the almost completed building. He has to report, quite simply, that the job has not merely been done properly, it has been done magnificently.

Scottish Opera Houses

Edinburgh's proposed Opera House is still a hole in the ground awaiting the pleasure of local government reorganisation, but, donning a Macalpine's helmet last spring, I clambered about Glasgow Theatre Royal which is being restored as a home for Scottish Opera. This splendid theatre, unlike Glasgow's disappeared Alhambra, survived the recent dark ages by use as a television studio. A pity that the lighting control room has to be at the back of the gallery: the operator will miss that *contact* which allows the fullest realisation of the timing possibilities of modern control equipment like the MMS which is being installed. (N.B. *contact* is not the same as *seeing*). Super "Barber of Seville" at Perth's Theatre Royal which only needs the digging of an orchestra pit to make it a prime Chamber Opera House.

Felsenstein

One of the great Directors of our time is Professor Walter Felsenstein of the Komische Oper in Berlin. It was fascinating and exciting to just sit for an afternoon in the stalls of the Vienna Burgtheater while he conducted a lighting rehearsal. Have I any Magic Felsenstein Formula to report? No! Lighting for the great men is just like lighting for the rest of us: painstaking hard work with meticulous attention to detail. Like having a full-cast of stand-ins and checking the balance for every single actor move . . . and having assistants check that balance from sightlines in all parts of the theatre.

Max Rheinhardt Seminar

In a garden near Schönbrunn, in a house with distinct overtones of Rosenkavalier, stands Vienna's famous academy for actors and directors—the Max Rheinhardt Seminar. Visiting Professor Hoesslin's design tutorial for the student directors, I was delighted to find scenic models being discussed under controlled light from a grid of miniature spots. We have all known too many directors (and perhaps more surprisingly, too many designers) with a "work-light" approach to models. Direction, Decor, and Lighting must be an interdisciplinary trinity; and the ready availability of controlled light on the model