



■ *Garsington Opera in the pavilion at Wormsley: Vivaldi's 'La verità in cimento'*

unpredictable—a cloud comes over and it changes completely. I think of everything I can do to make the set sympathetic to natural light, which is why I tend to use a lot of texture. What we have to do in order to allow for those variations is to light for no light, as it were. Even if the opera starts in clear natural light we always create a basic lighting state. In good weather you wouldn't need to light those early scenes, but if it clouds over, people have to be able to see.'

What this also means for a creative team is that they are obliged, before the show opens, to have their technical lighting sessions late at night because they have to wait for darkness before they can start. 'It can be pretty miserable,' admits Duncan. 'Everyone else goes home and you sit there, wrapped in layers and freezing cold, working your way through the lighting plot. There was one horrible occasion at Opera Holland Park when there was a student on the lighting board who accidentally lost all the cues. The computer just wiped itself because he hadn't programmed it properly and we had to go back and start all over again. We didn't finish till past two in the morning by which time, even though the management had organized taxis to take us home, the park gates were locked. We had to climb over these huge railings and I remember having a complete sense of humour failure and thinking, "Would Sir Peter Hall do this? He would not!"'

The mention of freezing cold does bring up another issue for outdoor opera performances: the unpredictability of summer weather. At Garsington Manor, during performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the particularly small and slender soprano Rebecca Bottone, singing the role of Tytania, grew so cold in her fairy bower as she waited to be awoken by Oberon that the stage crew were obliged to slip a hot water bottle between her sheets; the rain lashed down with such ferocity during a performance of *Don Pasquale* that the tenor singing his first aria could hardly be heard and the performance had to pause after he'd finished while the stage was mopped and swabbed down; and in *Ariadne auf Naxos* Bacchus had a spectacular arrival, by boat, at