



around were the elusive fairies. One knows what such items look like when spotted at the bottom of the garden but those ones don't sing and certainly don't usually come as tall as twelve-year-old boys!

Where does one begin to give such beings a convincing and magical reality?

We were both keen to endorse the feeling that they are capable of achieving heights unavailable to the humans. Their domain was to become a constructed network of raised areas which soared to a pinnacle from where Titania and Oberon could control all. In the throbbing heart of this mountain of balance and symmetry the drugged Titania will entice the curious mortal stranger to lie with her. In his wildest dreams dear Bottom could have barely imagined such a union.

The tangible quality dissolves with the crisp morning light and his basic needs deny him a clear memory of such a blissful encounter.

His life continues not entirely unchanged. Unlike his friends for whom the night and the dream have put back on the straight and narrow, he is not unaware that there are higher regions to be reached. — 'I am to discourse wonders; but ask me not what'. — If only for once he'd grasp the nettles and get on with it!

The boos would undoubtedly be deafening if one ever attempted to perform at a height of twenty-three feet from the deck in a proscenium theatre. The Kings, Edinburgh in particular. Six feet off the stage and the gallery can only see the performers knees — likewise from back stalls at the Aldwych, and numerous theatres on the touring circuit.

The Maltings, having no sight line problems is indeed a great bonus.

Our humans are firmly set on the ground until gentle Puck persuades them up into the higher reaches. The entire construction, set on an undercarriage of sturdy wheels, can track upstage (fairies and all) to totally vanish, enveloped by on-off tracked foliage screen panels for the scenes where rustics and lovers belong in a more natural environment.

The lighting designer illuminates the screens with projected images. With the juxtaposition of these six mobile screens many other parts of the forest open up before us as we chase on into the depths.

The clothes have undergone many changes, struggling through various periods. Certain silhouettes somehow, always felt very right. I find it particularly amazing how some of these silhouettes, originally in a present day outfit were able to be retained in a costume evocative of the Elizabethan era.

Our final choice firmly places our characters in that exciting period between then and now. They will traverse the centuries linking fragments of time before awakening from the shadows to face another day. As Puck sends us home with 'Give me your hands, if we be friends, And Robin shall restore amends', we feel we have certainly tried. Chris is happy, I think I am happy too. All is decided, — it's in the bag.

It's a nice feeling when all the designing is completed and ready for the workshops. A delightful high from that nervous tingle, perhaps not totally convinced our decisions have been right until it's up there and working.

The five months have flown, I'm left with a pile of discarded ideas. I guess that's what dustbins are for. Our 'idle whims and fancies' give us courage to face the critics. With every channel explored one now feels confident enough to unfurl the sails and head out to the open sea.

*First performances Aldeburgh Festival, The Maltings, Snape.
June 7th 13th 19th.*