**The Architecture of the Teatro Verde**

The Teatro Verde is an open-air theatre on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore set in a park surrounded by the Venetian lagoon. Its architecture successfully blends the solemnity of ancient classical theatres and the pre-Romantic grace of villa garden architecture, a key element in theatrical life from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

A concrete and stone building, girded by tall trees and clad with boxwood and lawns, the theatre stands as a grandiose decorative feature in the park (it replaced some vegetable gardens depicted in old prints) on the southern edge of the island. It was built from 1952 onwards (officially opened in July 1954) to a design by architect Luigi Vietti, inspired by the teatri di verzura, outdoor garden theatres that adorned the Venetian villas on mainland Venice. The construction of the impressive stage was technically very difficult. It covers an area of 1,400 square metres and in the understage area there are twelve individual dressing rooms, eight rooms for minor actors or choirs, and a suitable number of deposits and storerooms for equipment, electronic devices capable of simultaneously driving 105 high-powered projectors, and various services. It is a construction of great interest in terms of Venetian engineering: the marshy ground had to be reclaimed to build an impermeable area for the stalls, since the floor of the understage was 0.82 metres lower than the average water level of the lagoon. These engineering feats can only be fully appreciated by those familiar with the specific construction difficulties in Venice.

Because of the stage size and machinery, as well as its considerable capacity, the theatre lends itself to complex productions and can comfortably accommodate a large audience. The cavea and controcavea seating sections, in the shape of circular sectors, are flanked by two high side scenes and joined to the stage by the half circle of the orchestra. The cavea is accessed from the rear garden by two stairways leading to a high corridor with flights of steps to the controcavea and the entrances to three flights to the lower seating. There are also two side entrances from below. The orchestra pit can accommodate up to 150 musicians. Beyond the side scenes are the services for the audience (cloakroom, bar and toilets). The complementary arrangement of the cavea and the countercavea is such that, depending on the nature of a individual productions, either one or both areas can be used.

The park surrounding the theatre has tree-lined avenues leading to the monumental area of the island of San Giorgio and the two cloisters.