

As You Like It - Lighting Design

From the Script and Direction –

This is one of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, with a good duke who is deposed – but regains his dukedom at the end, a bad duke who exploits all – but repents, a dashing hero who is being disinherited by his brother and falls in love, the evil brother who is won over by the generosity of his brother and reforms, an unusually strong heroine who fools her hero and eventually they marry, some cross dressing, a couple of tarts, an old fool who seduces one of the tarts, and numerous courtiers/peasants. The play has the feel of a fairy tale.

The two locations are the palace, where all the “evil” scenes happen, and Arden Forest where all things are romantic and just. This magical place is where all the characters come to find / alter their destiny; Orlando to woo his Rosalind; Rosalind to test herself and Orlando, then re-find her father; Duke Senior to gain his courage to return and regain his dukedom; Duke Fredrick to reform etc. The Palace provides only a starting place for all these transformations because Arden is the focus. Rosalind orchestrates the play; she gets her way in the end and arranges the lives of those around her.

From the Set Design -

The set design is a unitary one but on a turntable, there are about eight different positions that it is used in. The turntable has two small platforms linked by a small bridge, with two sets of stairs and ladders. Both platforms are fringed with light gauze. There are banners, which are flown in to give a more courtly feel or as trunk like additions. There are three masks, on slender trees at 120 degrees around the platform. The set was painted in a variety of colours over a blue base; the banners were gauze or rich colours, the masks bright and 3D.

The set prompted the following thoughts – I wanted to cast shadows with the masks, light up one side or the other as appropriate, light across the top and under the platforms, match the rotation of the turntable with the rotation of gobos, light as separate areas the platforms when used, and catch the banners with broken and side light and do all this in a way it can be controlled.

My Lighting

I concluded that I would suspend realism, that there would be strong contrasts between the Arden and the Palace, and that I would, with the exception of the banquet and travelling scenes, not indicate the time of day. The Palace I characterised as a cold and bleak place with very tight areas lit in a variety of steel or blue tones. In contrast in Arden my colour pallet included straws at low angles, split green leafy breakups, lavender and amber cross lights, “sunlight” yellows, plus gold and flesh front washes.

I used haze extensively to give weight to the Palace and streak the leaf gobos for the forest. There was a single tight and soft focused follow spot to aid face visibility with the saturated colours. By using our scrollers on the drops I could create many different layered looks against the cyc. I lit the masks from two acute angles at all their positions. The scene changes allowed me to counter rotate the break-ups overhead, show the organic lines of the set and sculpt the air through the haze.



Above are examples of images from which gained some inspiration for my colour and angle of light choices.