

PRODUCTION POSSIBILITIES FOR *OTHELLO*

MAJOR THEMES

Extremism

Absolutism

Contrast

Race

Deception

Trust

Appearance vs. Reality

Jealousy

SET

Spires/bars of various heights and diameters, some single, others in groups.

Black, green

Very clean, modernistic

Offers a variety of playing spaces

Some lit from within like fiber-optic strands

A few reaching all the way above borders

Several slabs/blocks.

Very naturalistic in appearance

Stationary

One height of table, another raked (covered with contrasting colors - red or blue - gossamer fabric for bed scene)

Draped gossamer fabric

Mottled lack and gold along with solid black and green

Shows contrast with bars (soft-Desdemona/Cassio vs. hard - Iago/Othello)

Bars and fabric painted with fluorescent paint

Undetectable until lit with black light during moments when entering Othello's mind

Shows theme of appearance vs. reality, deception as it creates a sense of optical illusion

Utilize an African/Moorish symbol of jealousy

Could be painted large on center fabric piece or even constructed out of wood or tubing and place upstage or DR and DL

Could appear only under black light

Possibly do the same for Iago with sign of evil or Satan to illustrate several demonic parallels used by Shakespeare

Create a lake or river to encompass added forestage

Pool holding real water with a bridge or island in center or on sides

Represents Venice and also island later in play

Lit from underneath with aid of mirrors, perhaps painted with fluorescent paint on pool liner and lit green for moments of Othello's mind

Have Desdemona drowned by Othello?

Opening battle also waged in wager - enemy killed by drowning

Other set concepts

Show extremism with set that is extremes of size - everything bigger or smaller than real life

Show contrast with color or light (bright vs. dark)

Show race with set that has an isolated center, separated by space or light

Use set pieces on rotating heels with two sides - one clean, uncorrupted, with pleasing coloration; other side fragmented, crumbling, dissonant colors, evil/jealousy imagery

Create a large spider web on stage as permanent fixture to symbolize Iago's scheming and entangling of Othello like the spider and fly. (If web is stretched parallel to floor, could serve as marriage bed.)

STAGING

“Chorus of Conscience” - Group Portrays Othello’s mind

Appears when he speaks soliloquies. Says part of his monologue alone, some with him, some chorally, some individually.

Wearing full face makeup or half-masks with lower faces made up to match. Faces are painted with fluorescent paint. Could get progressively more distorted or more green, less black, as jealousy overtakes Othello or the African symbol for jealousy could slowly take form on their faces with a new line or piece added each time

Open play with mimed scene of battle which shows Othello’s skill as warrior and elopement

He faces enemy who pleads for mercy, but Othello kills him because he is the enemy. Shows his inability to compromise or see anything other than extremes. This could also be the Turk he kills for insulting the city which he mentions in Act 5.

Swords can be painted with same fluorescent paint to start play with blades under black light before lights come up to reveal Othello and Enemy.

Also show Othello’s courtship/elopement of Desdemona in a montage scene perhaps combined with battle scenes to emphasize the nature of their love and relationship.

Costumes could be a mixture of periods

Modern, clean lines with armor and other renaissance “touches” but very modernistic silhouette
Or have chorus in modern or Elizabethan with everyone else in another period

Give Othello some African touches

To help establish his position as an “alien” as well as accentuate the extremes in his character

Concept of claustrophobia

Chorus closes in throughout course of play, getting closer and closer physically to Othello to illustrate the increasingly “smothering state” of Othello’s mind

Preparation

Work on preparing subtext and inner monologue/dialogue . Actors write out.

Write out various objectives and super objective.

Spend time with chorus and Othello so they can get to know each other and find path to reflecting each other on stage. Several exercises on “reading” what’s within