

LIGHTING DIMENSIONS®

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Judgment day

A young woman sexually menaced by a corrupt public official. A government crackdown on sexual freedom. An ugly public confrontation in which hypocrites are exposed. We are not speaking of *Monica's Story* but of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. In a recent production for the Royal Shakespeare Company directed by Michael Boyd, LD Heather Carson provided an eerily effective

design that illuminated both the bright and dark corners of this strange, dark comedy of retribution and forgiveness.

Tom Piper's astringent, theatrical setting was made up of bare wood and was dominated by a dizzyingly steep and curving staircase, which crawled down the rear wall (pictured). Carson matched this set with an arresting design of her own. "In a rep situation, you are always trying to come up with a plan to make your show look different. So I attacked it twofold—with color and structure."

The LD put together a minimal rig of four Lighting & Electronics 1k Mini-Ten pole lights, three L&E 1k Mini-Ten footlights, five L&E 1k Mini-Tens placed at the top of the walls, one 5k unit with a Rainbow color scroller, four 2k units on the rail for pale green and steel blue washes, four PAR cans with Rainbow scrollers as low diagonal fronts, and 13 PAR cans to downlight the stairway (this came from the rep rig). Additional touches included ETC Source Fours to create a path of downlight, to light the downstage exit ramp, and for some facelight on the stairway, and one Strand Alto 2.5k HMI fresnel for sidelight on the exit space upstage of the rear walls. She also used one xenon slide projector to show text on the walls, and two Source Fours with glass gobos for projections of the faces of antagonists Duke Vincentio and Angelo.

"The great thing about Mini-Tens," says Carson, "is the even spread. Depending where you place them, you can often cover the whole space with one light. In the footlight position, you can get a nice hard cut right to the bottom of the back wall, to see the shadow of someone's full body.

"I tried," says Carson, "to



HEATHER CARSON

create the court, the monastery, the graveyard, the whorehouse, and antechamber, using these few lights in various combinations to achieve slight spatial changes. For the whorehouse, it was color, keyed off the green velvet curtains and green costumes—a yellow and green light. [Carson made extensive use of Lee 090 Dark Yellow Green.] For Angelo's court, I used the pole lights and the lights at the top of the wall, to create a look that was bright white, ceremonial, forceful. For the graveyard, there was a blanket of dark green on the floor, to give the floor more weight."

The walls were featured in the production's magical final moment when, with honor and balance restored, dozens of illuminated windows opened up in the forbidding rear wall. "Initially," says Carson, "the idea was that the light would come streaming in the windows. But the structure holding up the back wall would be visible and would have made a mess of shadows. I suggested white light, recessed in the bottom of the openings, as a kind of clean, spiritual architectural reference. There is a 500W flood at the base of each opening." The show is controlled by an ETC Obsession 2; also used are ETC Sensor dimmers.

"Michael Boyd is one of the most intelligent directors," adds Carson. "He talked a lot to me about the motivations of the characters—the emotions rather than the visuals." The result is a *Measure for Measure* that has as much to say about Western society at the end of the millennium as it does the politics of the Elizabethan world. After transferring to London from Stratford, *Measure for Measure* closed at the beginning of March.

David Barbour