Design Project

I would like to do a theoretical performance for Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. I don’t intend to rewrite much like some often do when adapting new concepts, but instead I’d like to draw out some of the subliminal dynamics through the utilization of angles, a gradient of costumes, personal scores, and power lighting in regards to the character of King Lear himself. I think it is possible to create a show that can change with him to show the state of his power and sanity as time goes on. The world itself would become a sort of translator to the audience, to greater show how he feels at a given time through subtle changes.

For the concept of angles, my leading example will be where his daughters are expressing to him their love in exchange for their share of the lands. He is at the height of his power, and his platform will be elevated. Positioned flat and higher than the rest, with the rest of the stage angled down so that all, including the audience have to look up to him, or at least see how all else are below him. As he progressively loses power, the angle will lower until it becomes even. Then he will position himself to the lower sides and the angle will again increase. Along with that, I will utilize a variation on an angling idea used in the old Batman TV show. It is an easily overlooked thing, but whenever a villain is on screen, the camera is skewed. It is a play on words to portray how “crooked” (as in vile, wicked, etc.) each of those characters are. The way I would use this is as he loses his mind, the platforms he stand on would also become more slanted to the side from the perspective of the audience. So in completion, he starts even and elevated looking down, and he would end lower than other characters and at a slant.

My idea for the costume gradient is rather straight forward. Again for the example of when his daughters are professing their love, he would be wearing clean, vibrant, and layered clothing while others would be in simple layers of white or black, aligning with their morality. As the show would go on, his costume would be exchanged slowly for near identical variations with subtle changes. The vibrancy would
fade to solid colors, then gray out. The decoration would become simpler until the layers are gone. He would go from being extremely in contrast to the simplicity of the other characters to grayed out and plain, showing his loss of everything.

Power lighting would tie together with the costume changes. We would begin the show with high lights, being bright, and get slowly darker, perhaps even building to a point the backdrops are near impossible to perceive and the characters are illuminated in spotlights. Along with that, color lights would be used to convey the emotion of a moment. For instance, an angry outburst would switch the light to red, surprise to magenta, sadness to cyan, and happiness to orange. The lighting can help further help the audience understand the current emotion of the moment beyond what words and expressions might convey. While bright color would be helpful in associating emotion, I also want things to dull out over time. As things get darker, manipulate it to almost go grayscale and have all background characters slow a bit until they are halted as if they became part of the set as the colors fade over time, building on the isolation of Lear.

Personal scores would be a sort of overture to the play to accompany the lights as a new resource to convey the feel and tension in the moment. The score would change in volume and instrument based on who would be present at any given time. Music would be a strong way to keep audiences in the moment and understanding of what is being felt and also can help with the actor’s and their pacing within and in between scenes. Following the costumes and lighting, the music overtime would slow and quiet out until it is gone. I believe music would add a new dimension to the world on stage to tie the whole play together and transform an old story into more than a stage production, but an epic, and the show would become something new and dynamic enough to be deemed an “experience” rather than a show for the audiences it would draw.

In complete vision, we would see the performance start with Lear at high angles, vibrant attire, triumphant music, and surrounded by bright colorful lights and lively characters, then by his final moments, he would be gray, skewed, and the world around him would appear gray and motionless. His world would die with him.
http://shakespeare.mit.edu/lear/full.html