

The Climate of Eden:

Herrick Goldman on *Falling for Eve* Off Broadway

The new musical *Falling for Eve* gives a postmodern twist to the world's oldest story. We start with Adam and Eve—presented, as per usual, as a pair of innocents frolicking in Eden. However, in Joe DiPietro's libretto—based on a play by the show's lyricist, David Howard—Paradise isn't all it's cracked up to be, and it's not long before a slightly bored Eve is disobeying God by taking a snack from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But, contra Genesis, Adam doesn't join in; Eve is exiled, and Adam is left to shift for himself, in what has become a very lonely garden. This turn of events triggers an existential crisis for God (here by played by two actors—one male and one female): If Adam and Eve are permanently separated, how can humanity ever get started?

At the York Theatre Company, in New York, where *Falling for Eve* recently played, the story was played out on Beowulf Boritt's setting, with a raised square revolving deck placed in front of a series of curved portals, the last of which occasionally featured a circular piece that gave on the impression of looking into an eye. The set was entirely white, a choice that allowed the lighting designer, Herrick Goldman, the chance to bathe the action in saturated colors, textures, and kinetic effects.

Goldman notes that, with an all-white set, a theatre with a low ceiling and few, if any, high side positions, he had his work cut out for him. Providing a crucial clue was the director, Larry Raben, who suggested that the designers draw on the work of Shag, aka Josh Agle, the California-based artist whose Pop-inspired works—full of hot rods, tiki heads, skeletons, and other ephemera—feature a cascade of super-saturated hues. "Everything in *Falling for Eve* is in Shag's palette," says Goldman, who adds "he also uses a lot of textures." Drawing on Shag for inspiration "solved the white-on-white problem," the designer says. "It gave me control over color and texture, rather than angle, which is what I normally would have had."

To facilitate his approach, Goldman pulled together a rig filled with effects. "The York owns 16 [Wybron] CXI scrollers and five Rosco I-Cues; I added two more," he says. "We also had access to Prism Projection ReveAL [LED units] which sat on the box booms. They saturated the front of the set with color, and the I-Cues punched through with the necessary key light; we had enough of

them that we could pick and choose our angles. It was like having three followspots. The revEALs provided incredible color rendering and worked well as both face light on actors, and for punchy saturated colors from the Shag palette on the set."

The addition of colorful, almost bejeweled, patterns to the curves of the portals was accomplished using Rosco Prismatic glass gobos. "I've been collecting them for years, and I love their textures," says Goldman. "And, when you put a color in front of a Prismatic, they constantly shift. For example, downstage and upstage on the cyc there were blue textures—a mixture of R79 [Bright Blue] and R81 [Urban Blue] with a clear glass Prismatic behind; it made a kind of chunky icicle effect. Put a CXI in front of it, however, and scroll into red, and it does something completely different. There's another Prismatic called Warm Contrast; it features pale amber with warm lavenders; put a CXI in front of it, and it was like having 30 different colors up there."

As the designer notes, "There was only 2.5' between the first two portals; the third one is only 2' downstage of the cyc. As a result, they were always side-lit, but you needed texture to change the mood on each level of the set. To get that, we used 70° Source Fours to side-light with Prismatics; we got a very specific look [with bands of color] using a striated cyan gobo [Rosco Cyan Strands]. We ended up projecting it on the portal every time God was doing something magical—for example, when Eve was created."

And then there were the kinetic effects. "There was one at the top of the show, from the Rosco X-24 X-Effects projector," Goldman says, adding that it originally was used to suggest the chaos of creation, and again when God was disobeyed. "We demoed the X-Effects for Larry Raben two weeks before the load-in, looking at something like 20 different textures and gobos—then we narrowed it down to what we wanted."

Goldman says the lighting had many programmatic aspects; the downstage portal was bathed in golden tones for scenes in which Adam and Eve were together and happy in Eden. For the scene in which God creates the concept of love, the striated gobos were put into play. The blue-on-blue look signaled the onset of nighttime or moments when the action turned scary for Adam



and/or Eve. "Many of the blue gobos had scrollers in front of them, so we could change the tonality or make them disappear by putting blue color in front of them," says Goldman. "When Eve first discovers the ocean, we pulled the out the colors, and the whole sky lit up with a cool, watery feeling."

There was another set of lighting fixtures to contend with; in the house; Boritt installed a number of objects that resembled asteroids—which were, in fact, made from orange- and purple-tinted water bottles attached to white globes. These were lit from within, Goldman notes, and were placed on their own lighting dimmer. In addition, there were floor lamps with green globes that made

up Eden's tree population. "When they were on, we were in Eden; God lights them specifically when he creates Paradise," he adds.

Filling out the lighting rig was a set of Altman SpectraPARs, used for cyc lighting and for illuminating the underside of the deck as it revolved. All non-house gear was supplied by Altman Rentals. The lighting was controlled by an ETC Ion console. The result was an unusually detailed design that helped to illuminate the twists and turns in the plot.

Susan Nicholson was the associate lighting designer, and Joe Ben Deal the production electrician. *Falling for Eve* ran through early August. ☺