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Tallinn City Theatre Re-invests in Robe

Products Involved

T2 Profile™ T2 Fresnel™

The acclaimed Tallinn City Theatre is re-opening after a three-year closure that saw implementation of a full renovation and technical upgrade programme, including the purchase of new Robe moving lights – 55 x T2 Fresnels and 17 x T2 Profiles – and the addition of a complete new main venue which is two stories below ground, and brings the busy and vibrant repertory theatre's performance space total to seven – 4 main, two extras / experimental and an outdoor area. The same team also operates shows in another building down the street.

The theatre, founded in the 1960s, is housed in a maze of interconnected medieval merchants' houses in the charismatic heart of Tallinn's old town, a highly atmospheric setting steeped in history, folklore and tradition that is perfect for staging a range of thought-provoking performances.

Head of lighting Emil Kallas explained that, with a 350 capacity, the newest venue is now the largest hall in the complex with the most substantial lighting rig including the 72 new Robe moving lights, which were delivered to the project by Robe's Estonian distributor, E&T, also based in Tallinn.

The new hall, built two stories dug down into the ground, has 24 motorised fly bars and 8 trusses in the roof, and the lights are distributed across these.

The other venues are The Black Box which can accommodate 128 people, the Small Stage which seats 85 people and the 'Heaven', a flexible space ensconced in the roof of the building with a capacity of 140.

The new Robe lights were specified by Emil and his team of five lighting crew, and silent running was a prime consideration, as all the halls are intimate spaces with audiences in close proximity to the technical elements.

They also required excellent colour rendering and loved those perfect T-series flesh tones, as well as accurate replication of all the Lee colour range.

Whilst the theatre was closed, the company worked from a temporary home at the nearby Salme Cultural Centre, where the lighting rig also contained some Robe elements – 23 x T1 Profiles and 18 x Tetra2s, which they enjoyed using. Emil notes the “excellent” Tetra zoom, finds the tilt function exceptionally handy and says the general output is great for washing large areas evenly.

The T1 Profiles at the temporary space had even managed to shift the opinions of some LDs who were unconvinced about LEDs. They saw for themselves how the Lee colours were reproduced and looked authentic with the T1’s outstanding tungsten emulation characteristics.

Smooth, seamless dimming was also important, but above all they “wanted fixtures that would last and give good value,” Emil stated. The theatre’s schedule is busy, with around 50 shows typically staged a month – produced and received – across the various spaces.

After the great T1 experience, it was the extra punch of the T2 that convinced everyone that this was THE ideal moving light for the new space which has a decent 10 metres of headroom for the motorised house bars.

Two RoboSpot systems were also part of the investment, and these will be used in this new venue for remote follow spotting, replacing traditional follow spots. The additional flexibility of running RoboSpot systems gives the option of using the luminaires conventionally in the rig or as dedicated follow fixtures at any time.

Emil and the team thoroughly evaluated a rented RoboSpot system in the temporary venue before deciding it was a hugely viable purchase.

They have some lighting designers on the house crew and work with regular external freelancers, commissioning them to light some of their own production shows, so it was important to have a brand that everyone will accept and be happy to work with.

The theatre also has a previous history with Robe.

The first fixtures in there were Robe’s first generation of theatrical LED moving lights, the DL4 series, together with LEDWash 600s and ParFects, installed around 12 years ago and “all still

working many years later,” observed Emil, who has been in the head of lighting role for 7 years.

“So that was a big plus for Robe, as we knew the kit was solid and reliable,” he explained, saying that it is also the intention to add some IP rated Robe products to the inventory for the outdoor space.

Naturally, the importance of a good working relationship and understanding with the local distributor “is another essential component” of the bigger picture related to making major investments like this, which is also linked to the ongoing transitioning of theatres and performance spaces to using more sustainable stage lighting sources.

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