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Robe Gets Symphonic for Hardwell

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One of the bonuses of working with innovative and influential artists like dance music producer and megastar DJ Hardwell ... is that you get to work on some unique and interesting shows ...

“Symphony: The Global Revolution of Dance” was one of those moments for lighting and visuals designer Andre Beekmans of The Art of Light and operator Jaap Kamps.

The event was a live performance and collaboration between the globally popular and world leading electro DJ and multiple Grammy winning Metropole Orkest at the Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam, celebrating 30 years of dance music. It was staged to coincide with the renowned Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE) conference.

Andre and his Eindhoven based creative visual practice The Art of Light - who have designed and co-ordinated Hardwell’s lighting for some years - were approached by organisers Fourmation Events and MOJO and asked to create a memorable and appropriate lighting environment ... for which he specified over 200 Robe moving lights – Pointes, Spiiders, BMFL WashBeams and BMFL Blades.

The show presented many challenges to Andre and his team which included Art of Light colleague Jaap Kamps, who is Hardwell’s regular lighting director on the road.

A key starting point were the main set elements, designed by Freek Cornelissen of 250K, including a large pyramid shape upstage comprising four equilateral triangles each filled with LED screen. Flown just in front of this was a skeletal trapezoidal shaped lighting sculpture made up from multiple triangles outlined with pixel-mapped LED battens ... which were under the control of the lighting department, fed content via a Hippotizer media server.

The back wall featured a large triangle filled with more LED screen and another flown triangle downstage was positioned just above Hardwell’s DJ booth. The orchestra platform on the deck involved several layers and was also outlined by LED strips arranged in triangular sections.

The roof was filled with flown trusses – the two main ones also triangular in shape to maintain thematic continuity - to provide lighting positions. As the production lighting designer, Andre’s brief – in addition to lighting the “Symphony” show – was to create a rig

that could be used to light a hardstyle evening on the Saturday night hosted by Q-dance, so he needed to produce a flexible solution that would work for both.

The “Symphony” performance was divided into three parts – and the primary need was to produce a hugely dynamic range of looks - to cover all the musical genres featured in the history section, giving each one and the overall whole performance an epic edge.

He needed to create a special style to match the incredible texturing and detail that came with combining the energy of electro dance beats with the richness of orchestral instruments.

On top of that, the lighting generally had to deal with practicalities like ensuring the orchestra could see the conductor at all times and had sufficient light to read their music ... but not so much that they were irritated! Having said that, Metropole Orkest are known for their left-field and out-of-the-box projects!

Just to ramp up the pressure that bit more for everyone on the production ... the event was live-streamed via Hardwell’s website ... so that was another major concern for lighting.

The sixty-three Robe Spiiders were all rigged on the over-stage triangular trusses where they were ideal for top and back light on the orchestra.

There was a substantial 18 metres of trim on these, but the Spiiders provided plenty of power and intensity to light the stage and the orchestra effectively and bring fabulous colouring, immersion and depth to the picture.

The triangles making up the flown pyramid were outlined with Robe Pointes, with the balance of the 115 Pointes - in total - dotted around the other trusses.

The Pointe has been a staple of Andre’s designs since it was first launched 5 years ago - and he is one of the top designers who has helped establish the fixture as an industry standard for lighting dance events. As usual, it was selected for its multifunctionality, speed, small size and the sheer scope and variety of looks that you can get out of this little luminaire.

In addition to these Robe’s, Andre positioned eight BMFL WashBeams each side of the stage on the Ziggo Dome balcony ring to augment the options on orchestra cross lighting. These are positions regularly utilized for getting a good layer of light onto the stage. The high lumen punch of the BMFL WashBeam made it ideal.

Topping off the Robe line-up for this show were 16 x BMFL Blades, used to key light Hardwell, the conductor and the orchestra itself.

Lighting equipment – which also included other profile moving lights, lots of LED strobes and the LED battens on the triangular sculpture - was all supplied by rental company Phlippo, with Virtue Projects taking care of the lighting technical production and support for all the 2018 ADE associated events taking place in the Ziggo Dome.

The main challenges for lighting were in the programming and the LED mapping, the latter was completed via media server, which was run by Andre together with the camera and key lighting, while Jaap ran the main show lighting, both using grandMA2 full size consoles.

They used a combination of timecode and manual operation. All the basic 'building block' looks were timecode triggered – with signal received from the DJ mixer – with all the fine tuning, accents, details and specifics run live – manually – on the night; a process that required plenty of quick thinking, rhythmic fluidity and improvisational skills.

Hardwell and Metropole Orkest spent time together rehearsing in the studio, so while the lighting team had constantly updated versions of the music for their programming, they only had one full live rehearsal at the venue on the afternoon prior to the show.

So, it was down to everyone's expertise and talents to pull off this amazing show which ran for two hours and highlighted the creativity and great music of influencers, innovators, and rhythm warriors taking the infectious beat and vibe of dance music from its underground roots through to the superclubs.

Video equipment was supplied by Faber, with content and control by Eyesupply, and the event's technical production was delivered by Backbone international.

Photo Credit: Jorrit Lousberg





