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Robe gets Operatic in Estonia

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A Robe moving light rig supplied by Tallinn-based rental company E&T was used for Estonia's two highest-profile annual summer opera festivals, the Birgitta Festival organized by the Tallinn Philharmonic Society and Saaremaa Opera Days organized by Eesti Kontsert.

Both Festivals are acclaimed for their stunning productions and charismatic settings, and both staged a range of different works throughout their 2019 seasons.

Saaremaa took place on a 60 x 30 metre stage built beside Kuressaare Castle on Saaremaa Island in the Baltic Sea. The castle is one of the best-preserved medieval fortifications in Estonia and provides a magical backdrop for all the operatic action to unfold.

For the Birgitta festival, the same staging company constructed a temporary roofing / staging structure adjacent to the elegant ruins of the Piritä Convent in Tallinn, which dates to the 15th century.

In both cases, the lighting rig comprised around 120 Robe fixtures – a mix of Spiiders, MMX WashBeams, MMX Spots, LEDWash 800s, CycFX 8s, DL4S profiles, Spikies and ParFect smart whites – which were used in conjunction with several conventional theatrical fixtures.

The lighting designer for the 2019 Saaremaa Opera Days was Denis Enyukov, who is the permanent LD at the Moscow Helicon Opera, which also staged all this year's shows, and he sent a complete lighting plot to Olev Luhaäär from E&T who co-ordinated the kit list. Five major opera works were on the bill this year, plus two gala shows, one for children.

At Birgitta, promoted as an 'international musical theatre' festival, the shows encompassed a diverse mix of opera, ballet and musical galas. There was a 'house' lighting rig, but a different LD for each of this year's six performances, so Olev received all the different LD requirements and from these compiled a kit list and a proposed a 'production' design which was the most logical solution to keep everyone happy.

The main reasons that the core rig was made up of moving and intelligent LED luminaires – was to attain the flexibility needed for the daily changeovers, as the productions played in 'repertory style', all requiring super quick and efficient turnarounds for lighting and set.

The overhead lights were installed on LX trusses and that is where the majority of the Robe LED washes, and hard-edged MMX luminaires were positioned. At Saaremaa they were supported by extensive side booms on the floor and Robe CycFX 8s were brought in to up-light the back cloths and other scenic elements.

“We needed powerful light sources that were as quiet as possible, so MMX is a solution in this scenario,” commented Andres Sarv, assistant LD for Saaremaa. He also thinks the Spider is a “great theatrical wash light tool” primarily for the smooth 18-bit LED dimming which is great for subtle and sensitive transitions.

At Birgitta, some of the over-stage bars were used for scenery, so the LEDWash 800s, Spiders and MMXs were distributed on two advanced trusses and the two most downstage overhead LX trusses, with some on the far upstage truss, leaving the rest of the overhead space free for set.

On the floor in between side booms rigged with conventional profiles were 8 additional MMX Blades, four a side along the downstage edges for cross lighting. Eight Spikes along the front of the stage provided effects that filled the whole stage.

The ballet LDs in particular love the ParFect smart whites for providing excellent warm and cool white side lights.

Priidu Adlas, LD for the “Planet Harmony” production at Birgitta commented: “The Spike is a perfect fixture for smaller stages. It is multifunctional because of the coloured flower effects and 3-facet circular rotating prism and through these functions, in certain situations, it can sometimes replace spot type moving heads.”

In each case, the small size and brightness of the Robe fixtures was an asset to the productions, and the features and functionality offered the LDs and other creatives plenty of options to enhance all the drama and intensity at the centre of these two highly successful events.

Photo Credit: Kalev Lillorg (Birgitta) and Gunnar Laak (Saaremaa)







