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Club After Dark Goes Mega

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Club After Dark is a vibrant new “Dinner Drag Decadence” supper club / cabaret concept, created by legendary Swedish drag artist and performer Christer Lindarw, a colourful, fun-fuelled extravaganza of music and dance directed and choreographed by Hans Marklund, with music directed by Kent Olsson who is also a co-creator of the show together with Christer and Hans.

Staged at the Vasateatern (Vasa Theatre) in Stockholm, the show is lit by Mikael Kratt, who was asked onboard by Hans and producers My Blomgren and Mikael Jernberg, to craft an appropriately spectacular and dynamic lightshow for the evening, which unfolds over three hi-energy acts embracing multiple musical genres.

Mikael immediately thought of Robe’s MegaPointe for this task and specified 14 of these compact versatile multi-purpose luminaires to be at the heart of the show’s lighting supported by nine Robe Spiider LED washes.

Two Robe BMFL WashBeams together with one MegaPointe are running on a RoboSpot remote follow spotting system.

“MegaPointes were the first fixtures that came to mind for this show,” confirmed Mikael. “They were a perfect solution in every way!” – a conclusion he made having used MegaPointes and Spiiders on many other projects. He needed plenty of dynamics and diversity to make the show come alive with visual eloquence.

Before launching his lighting design career Mikael was a professional dancer, and in fact had previously worked with Hans as a choreographer. He was therefore in a unique position of being able to transpose his onstage perspective and skills – not to mention a fantastic sense of rhythm – from the stage to FOH to ensure that the lighting was as fluid and impressive as the cast action.

Lighting effectively became another performer!

The brief was to bring a fresh contemporary look to the stage but with a touch of classical and retro, a nod to the original After Dark shows that were so groundbreaking in their time.

The first two acts are more refined and theatrical with printed back cloths and other drapes coming in and out. The second act ramps up with a parade of Burlesque costumes and its own mini-musical before the guests enjoy their main course. Anyone getting sleepy by dessert receives a giga-jolt of energy as the third act explodes in a whirlwind of colour, excitement, and a hard pumping power pop finale, complete with the reveal of an expanded stage with built-in lighting effects and the upstage LED screen.

“The treatments for this show use techniques from a wide spectrum of lighting disciplines – theatre, concerts, dance, cabaret, opera and TV – and there is simply so much you can do with a MegaPointe, so it was a must-have choice,” commented Mikael.

The fixtures are rigged on two over-stage truss boxes with the MegaPointes towards the back of the performance area.

The other big challenge was the Vasateatern’s exceptionally tight stage space, an aspect that constantly characterized the original After Dark shows, and with that, the limited weight loading on the two roof trusses.

“MegaPointes were small and light enough to tick those boxes as well,” he stated.

He used the fixtures to close the space and make it intimate and personal for the first act and fine-tuned the environment for the musical richness of the second act with “classy spotlighting, great gobo work and the amazing colours.”

Then for the eruption of energy and big ballsy looks boosting the third act, the brightness of the MegaPointes was needed to complete and cut through the intensity of the LED wall in such close proximity.

Follow spot effects were another brain teaser.

Christer loves the drama of a classic follow spot aesthetic, explained Mikael, but with absolutely no space for traditional follow spot positions in the venue, he thought RoboSpot could provide a modern technological answer!

The two BMFL WashBeams are positioned centrally, one over the stage and one on the advanced bar with a MegaPointe on the RoboSpot system deployed upstage centre where a smaller light was required due to headroom restrictions. The BaseStation is shoehorned into one of the old private 'loge' gallery boxes stage left which is no longer used by the public.

The nine Spiiders are all above the stage and provide general stage and set washes. They are largely hidden from view but play an instrumental role in the show. "They are a small light fixture with a great punch and excellent colours," he states. Mikael also loves the flower effect.

"It's a fabulous extra trick in the hat of surprises!"

The Vasateatern's main lighting rig contained some Robe DL4S and DL7S Spot luminaires which were installed with a technical upgrade in 2016, so Mikael decided to incorporate these into the Club After Dark show.

It is the first time he has used them and particularly rates the DL7S Spots which are hanging on one of the front bars. "They are great for producing good skin tones and I appreciate the accurate shuttering" he commented.

All the lighting was programmed by Mikael using a grandMA2 light.

He worked closely with Edvin Nyström who undertook all the show's pre-production and oversaw the get-in and ensured the whole lighting system was operational, while day to day, Club After Dark's lighting is being operated by Max Petersson.

Mikael has thoroughly enjoyed the creative process, along with the great teamwork and camaraderie of producing the show which is scheduled to run long term run with regular breaks.

The process included extensive rehearsals with the cast pre and post costume fittings, plus some intense interaction and collaboration with the video department whilst streamlining the lighting for the third and most demanding act. Due to Covid restrictions, the premiere was delayed for an additional four weeks, which gave the team some extra time to finesse the production.

The additional lighting equipment – MegaPointes, Spiiders, BMFL WashBeams and RoboSpot system – is being supplied by Musiklagret, a rental company based in Borås.

Vasateatern, as the home of this new chapter of the After Dark experience, is a stone's throw from Hamburger Börs, the original venue hosting many of Lindarw's iconic "After Dark" drag duo performances which burst onto the Swedish alt culture scene in 1976 and became enduringly popular and hugely successful both domestically and internationally for the next four decades!

The shows became synonymous with high production and performance values, attention to detail and the 'magic' of inventive and sometimes improbable sets squeezed into the tiny space and plenty of visual and lighting trickery to enhance quick costume and scenic changes. Paying homage to all those great entertainment traditions, Club After Dark takes the unquenchable positive energy, spirit, and flamboyance of drag artistry to new levels.

Photo Credit: Carl Thorborg





