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Robe iFORTES for Royal Danish Theatre Production

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Lighting designer Ulrik Gad specified Robe iFORTES for the Royal Danish Theatre's 2023 summer production, Ragnarok, a new work by Kim Fupz Aakeson which premiered and is being staged at the Jægersborg Dyrehave, a deer park and forest north of capital city Copenhagen. The park is known for its undulating topography, tranquillity, stunning ancient oak trees and large populations of red and fallow deer.

The show runs for 6 weeks in a natural amphitheatre space that has had some performance infrastructure added over the years. All departments of the Royal Danish Theatre collaborate to produce a new summer show every second year which alternates between playing this site and another just outside Aarhus in the western part of Denmark. This is the fifth summer show that Ulrik has lit.

The stage space is completely open, and the usual challenges of outdoor performance are high on the agenda, including the notoriously inclement Danish summer weather, so this year, Ulrik specified 32 x iFORTES as part of the rig. It is the first year the stage lighting rig has been all IP rated.

Ulrik was very energised at the chance of using lights without needing unsightly weather domes or rain covers, but iFORTES were also chosen for their power, optical qualities, and brightness, plus their relative light weight.

Ulrik had looked at the lights earlier in the year and was impressed with the quality of the light output and the flat beam field of the standard FORTE. He appreciates how the optical train design works so well with gobos, shutters and frost options which can be properly shaped and finessed adding subtle detail and texturing to the stage and artists.

"It's a successful and very well thought out and engineered product," he comments, adding that he was "delighted" when he knew he would be able to use the IP version on this show.

Robe's Danish distributor Light Partner was also able to deliver the kit in time and equipment supplier Nordic were prepared to purchase the fixtures, so all the stars aligned for the deal to happen and Ulrik got his luminaires of choice to add to the rig.

The Ragnarok set is designed by Gjermund Andresen and features a prominent large elegant semi-circular metal arc upstage which also provides several lighting and audio positions.

Almost all visible fixtures are positioned randomly in orientation and distributed between five lighting masts on the hill behind the stage, secured to concrete bases embedded in the ground, with three more iFORTES each side of the FOH gantry to the sides of the seating tribune and six – three a side – close to the pit which is actually a pool of water for this show - at the front of the stage, all in optimal positions for side based front lighting.

The throw from the back of the seating tribune is substantial.

Also at the front are four Robe BMFL FollowSpots running on a Macula followspot system with the BaseStations hidden away in the under-stage bunker.

Ulrik started developing the lighting design concepts for this specific project about two years ago, and apart from all the practical reasons, he was keen to spec IP rated fixtures which were becoming more common, so he worked this into the lighting architecture.

When he knew iFORTE would be available, he asked for these to be added to the specification that went out to tender for the lighting supplier.

“While I didn't know exactly the show would end up looking, I knew that the iFORTES would offer plenty of possibilities and have all the adaptability needed to get the show looking right.”

Lights are programmed on a grandMA3, and Ulrik worked in collaboration with programmers from the Royal Danish Theatre to get everything set up and fine-tuned.

The show runs from mid-May to the end of June and is being enjoyed each night by 3500 people.

Creative challenges included contending with nature!

The show starts at 8.30 which during these months is still daylight so the stage lighting is eased in almost imperceptibly, starting by creating an ambience and a general energy which

builds to the more crafted and dramatic theatrical looks that kick in and reinforce the narrative for the latter parts of the story.

As Ulrik notes, when working outdoors, you also receive “great gifts” from nature, and being out under the stars in such a beautiful setting unlocks some truly magical moments as the performance amalgamates with the surroundings.

The production received outstanding reviews for the lighting and visuality, with some saying it is the best production ever seen in the history of the Royal Theatre in Dyrehvan.

He is based in Copenhagen and works all over Scandinavia and further afield internationally, mainly lighting a lively mix of opera, drama, and musicals. See more at www.ulrikgad.dk.

Photo Credit: Miklos Szabo, Louise Stickland







