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Robe & Anolis Light Bath Abbey

Products Involved

ColorSpot 1200 AT™ColorSpot 575 AT™ColorSpot 700E AT™ColorWash 1200E AT™LEDWash 600™

Robe moving lights and Anolis LED fixtures were specified by lighting designer Simon Marcus from Enlightened to illuminate Bath Abbey, Pulteney Bridge and other key architectural features around the famous UK World Heritage spa town's city centre for the opening night of the 2011 Bath International Music Festival - "Party In The City".

It is the second year that locally based Marcus has designed a lighting scheme for Bath Abbey, which was founded in 1499 and is one of the largest examples of Perpendicular Gothic architecture in the West Country. His client was Bath Tourism & Leisure.

He needed a selection of reliable, flexible, bright lightsources which could be rigged over four levels of the Abbey. Having large quantities of both Robe and Anolis units in Enlightened's hire stock, and a vast experience of using them for many applications, he knew they would be perfect for the job. He also took the opportunity to use 6 newly purchased Robe ROBIN 600 LEDWashes.

The creative challenges included making it look very special, and doing something different from a 'standard' building lighting scheme, something that would engage and impress the huge numbers of people who flock into town for the Music Festival opening night.

"It's rare to have the opportunity to illuminate such beautiful architecture with no other purpose than to produce a sense of wonder. Accentuating the symmetry, understanding and working to enhance the structure, whilst aiming for the WOW factor was the most challenging and fun part."

Around the base, washing up the walls on the north and east elevations were Robe moving lights - a combination of ColorSpot 1200, 700 and 575E ATs. These were chosen to bring a touch of party atmosphere to the occasion, and used in a series of rich complimentary primary colours. The Robin 600 LEDWash fixtures were positioned at the corners and bathed large areas in striking shades of colour. "The new Robin 600 LEDWash heads are very nice bits of kit," comments Marcus, "extremely bright and very versatile, particularly for lighting at a very steep angle". All of the movers were encased in Robe IP43 LightDome enclosures from Enlightened's hire stock.

Rigged further up on the four roof areas of the Abbey and along the narrow passageways snaking around the roof were a total of 118 Anolis and other LED fixtures. With only a series of tiny, winding passages and staircases to access these areas, having fixtures that were light and portable was essential!

All the lights positioned above ground level were LED, chosen for the practicalities of rigging, power consumption and versatility afforded by RGB light sources.

The windows' apertures were very precisely lit with Anolis ArcLine 36 Optic strips on the sills at the bottom, two fixtures per window was more than enough to highlight the intricate detail and relief work.

To contrast the building stonework against these finer elements, the flying buttresses down the north and south sides of the Abbey were lit by a series of LED units including Anolis ArcPad 48s. "These are incredibly pokey for their size," remarks Marcus. This enabled them to be ensconced into the smallest, tightest nooks and crannies! Special attention was paid to lighting the upper tower with a nice smooth even wash, which because of its elevation became a beacon visible from all across the city of Bath, which is built surrounded by seven hills.

All the Abbey architectural lighting was powered from hard power within the church and the control FOH position was in a door well on the east face - which made programming challenging as there was no way to view the installation from the desk position. A Chamsys MagicQ 120 Pro desk was used to run the lights, operated by Rob Taylor.

Directly adjacent to the east facia of the Abbey is Orange Grove, which includes a circular lawn with an obelisk in the centre and a row of beamed buildings, these were gently brushed with light from a row of Anolis ArcLine Optic 18, 24 and 36 strips located on top of the roof overhang at first floor level. The obelisk and surrounding trees were lit with Anolis ArcLine Outdoor Optic and twelve high output RGB battery uplights.

A few hundred metres away down by one of Bath's charismatic riverside locations were more Robe ColorWash 1200E AT and ColorSpot 700E AT fixtures, stationed in between a row of colonnades and used to pick out the Grade I listed Pulteney Bridge in a series of delicate, fluid watery animations and gobo effects.

The waters rushing over the 3-tiered ovular weir below were also illuminated with the Robes, producing a crisp, atmospheric contrast, and the row columns were up-lit with 64 Anolis ArcSource 6, RGB LED units creating another layer to this installation. This stunning light work brought a completely new life to this section of Bath, which is reported to be one of the most photographed sights in this spectacular city. These lights were looked after by Rob Sayer and controlled via an Avolites Pearl Expert.

To complete the opening night installation, Marcus also lit the Guildhall building on the High Street, just around the corner from the Abbey, again using LEDs including Anolis ArcLine Outdoor Optic 36 RGBA strips up-lighting the columns front of the portico, which were combined with magenta MBI floods concealed in the light wells below street level.

Simon Marcus worked with a crew of 16 crew on the get-in and concludes, "It was an amazing project. Giving the opportunity to turn off the conventional and rather two dimensional blasts of sodium, and showcase what controllable LED technology can really do in bringing a structure to life. Using Robe and Anolis gave me the creative tools and flexibility I needed to produce something very distinctive".

He adds that architectural lighting is a key building block in creating an atmosphere which can influence people's decisions to leave or linger in space.

"Light is a medium that can produce an emotional response; illuminating beautiful architecture and accentuating a sense of elegance and form can produce a feeling of wonder and excitement, and I believe that for a short time Bath at night became a very special and unique place".

The lighting scheme was a massive success. So much so, that half way through the evening, David Lawrence, divisional director of Bath Tourism, Leisure & Culture approached Simon Marcus and asked if the installation - initially only scheduled to run for the one night - could remain in place for a further 3 days throughout the Bank Holiday Weekend for all to enjoy and appreciate.

"There's no greater compliment than the client requesting to extend the show for a further three nights," Marcus commented.





