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All Cool T1s for Les Mis Production in Warsaw

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The mercury hit record highs as Warsaw sizzled in the European summer heatwave, whilst theatregoers visiting the Stanisław Witkiewicz STUDIO Theatre were treated to an equally hot performance of Cameron Mackintosh's blockbusting musical 'Les Misérables' (school edition) staged by the Śródmiejski Teatr Muzyczny (Downtown Musical Theatre).

The company - made up from talented school pupils aspiring to be acting / performance professionals - produces an annual musical which was lit by LD Michal Piskorski who has also lit the previous two such productions, 2017's 'Footloose' and the surreal slapstick of Monty Python's 'Spamalot'. He worked closely with programmer Krzysztof Gantner from the show's technical sponsor, Prolight, on the spectacle which was directed by Antoniusz Dietzius who also designed the set.

In addition to the young cast, Six Robe T1 Profile moving lights were the stars of the show, provided by Warsaw based lighting and technical sales specialist Prolight. Also, part of this 'specials' package were five Robe LEDBeam 150s and two Spiider LED wash beams.

Michal also utilized the theatre's house lighting rig which includes Robe DLX Spots, DLS Profiles and LEDWash600s plus a few other moving lights and generics.

Les Mis - an ambitiously epic production requiring high production values and outstanding presentation - was chosen to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Śródmiejski Teatr Muzyczny annual showcase productions. The cosy venue was selected because of its stage revolve which was essential for the show - unusual to find in smaller venues - in addition to its downtown location in the prestigious Palace of Culture & Science in Warsaw.

With up to 40 cast onstage at times, a full range of locations to recreate and plenty of drama to convey, Michal faced multiple lighting challenges, including having only two intense days of onsite programming and tweaking.

While he and Krzysztof were fortunate enough to be able to spend a decent amount of time visualising and pre-programming, this was not a substitute for being able to see things for real onstage.

It was the first time that Michal had used T1s. Three fixtures were positioned on the front truss and three on the second most upstage bar, so they were doing both key light and effects, and he was delighted with the versatility and scope of the results, Michal studied at the Leon Schiller National Higher School of Film, Television and Theatre in Łódź, so initially learned about lighting from a cinematographic perspective and began his industry career working in television, mainly on cultural shows. From there he made more contacts in theatre and performance and steadily increased his portfolio in that world. He's worked with Les Mis director Antoniusz Dietzius on previous projects.

Prolight is involved in several projects encouraging young people already working in or considering a career in lighting and performance, and their technical partnership on this production was "essential in assisting us achieve everything we needed in terms of scale and dynamics" commented Michal.

When it came to choosing the additional lighting fixtures for the show, he all the available options at Prolight with Krzysztof and chose the T1s as his primary lights. Having multifunctional luminaires was his main priority.

He was extremely impressed with the results and amazed at the range of options they could get out of just six T1s ... admitting that he has only 'scratched the surface' of the T1's potential on this show due to time and other parameters.

He loves the colour mixing and the general richness and detail of the colour as well as the CT range, plus the fact that the lights are quick to programme as there was not a moment to waste once they were on site ... and all the fixtures needed to keep up with Krzysztof's super-quick wizardry on the console!

He appreciated the quality of the pastels and offbeat colours, the oranges, pale blues and ambers, the soft tinted shades of 'pink-ish' and 'blue-ish' that were possible. They even created an ephemeral 'Paris grey' which featured extensively.

"Sometimes you need what the director calls a 'dark light' in a scene, and this is exactly what we could do with the T1's."

He used the rearT1s for ambience and scene-setting including gobo looks, while the front ones were great for producing softened, abstracted gobo looks and 'enhancing' effects like smoke and flowing water.

Lighting had to create many scenic elements like windows, plus shape the architecture of buildings and interiors as well as recreating the streets of Paris, so the T1 shutters were used extensively.

"It was a to be able to use less lights to do more and achieve better and more authentic looking results" stated Michal.

The silent running of the T1s was a bonus in the STUDIO Teatr, especially the front ones as the truss was not so far above audience heads!

Michal's cinematic approach to lighting is reflected in the detail and radiance of his work and the drama and richness of Les Mis combined with the adaptability and numerous features of

the T1s were a great vehicle for this MO to shine.

Michal has not used a lot of Robe in his work, and that's primarily, because the brand is just becoming established on the Polish Theatre scene, and as original and decade old or more moving light systems are being replaced. Robe with its current range of refined LED fixtures is becoming a more popular choice for performance venues which are technically upgrading and revamping.

Krzysztof programmed and ran the show on networked Avolites Quartz and Arena consoles. The other Robe fixtures were distributed around the over-stage LX bars. The five LEDBeam 150s were positioned on LX Bars 1 and 2 over the downstage area; the DLX Spots and DLS Profiles were in the pros areas, and the LEDWash 600s upstage and mid-stage providing the main stage washes, supported by the two Spiiders either side.

Three performances of Les Mis ran in June with another three coming in August, and the show has been extremely well received. Apart from providing a total contrast to last year's irreverent musical comedy 'Spamalot' in terms of production and vibe, it proves that Antoniusz Dietzius and his young team of actors, creative and and technical crew all the talent to create the most engaging and entertaining professional theatre.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland







