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Theatre Muzyczny Gdynia invests in Robe FORTES

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Theatre Muzyczny (Musical Theatre) – in the attractive seaside city of Gdynia on Poland's north coast – is the largest musical theatre in Poland with three stages able to accommodate over 1580 people.

Also known for its world-class performances and high production values, the venue has recently invested in 43 x Robe FORTE moving lights, which are rigged in its 1,070-capacity main stage venue. These were supplied by Robe's Polish distributor, Prolight, who won a competitive tender to supply the new tech.

Bartosz Wolak has worked at the Theatre for the last 11 years as chief LX and head of lighting, a multiplexing role that also encompasses designing and operating the lights for their own productions. He and his lighting team of eight were instrumental in choosing Robe for this major technical upgrade that ensures Theatre Muzyczny will continue presenting the very best-looking shows, including frequent licenced productions coming hot from London's West End.

The FORTES replace the previous moving lights – from another brand – which were installed in another major modernisation in 2013 which included the addition of the new Nova Theatre space plus some structural changes to the main auditorium.

The previous fixtures were becoming costly and time-consuming to maintain, and "apart from that, we needed more up-to-date technology and more flexible lighting to keep pace with increasingly demanding productions," Bartosz explained.

Some of their shows are 'full length theatrical dramas with music' and can last up to three and a half hours, while others are a more traditional musical format which go in and out or run in repertoire with 2-day changeovers in between, a programme also benefitting from more adaptable lighting.

Bartosz and his team wanted FORTES for several reasons, including "the power, the beautiful colours and the stunning effects," and with 43 in the rig, they can be used for both beams and spot lights, so with all that power and versatility on hand, they physically need less fixtures to light a show well.

They all love the frost filter and have a 30% frost implemented here, which effectively allows the FORTES to also become an excellent wash light.

"This is a really magical transformation," notes Bartosz. Critically, it allows them to light a wider range of shows – from complex musicals to typical dramas – with ease.

The animation wheel and the fantastic dynamic effects that can be produced using it also made an impression with everyone, and silent mode was important, as low noise is essential for musical theatre environments, especially for the orchestras. The original moving lights had too often made their presence felt in the auditorium!

High CRI was also a factor, an aspect making the transition from tungsten to LED easier for the actors, who also must get used to working with new LED light sources and their different texture and feel. And of course, that is related to attaining those gorgeous rich flesh tones that allow the makeup to glow and enhance faces with depth and texture. "The actors have noticed that it's different and are now enjoying working with the FORTES," he confirmed.

Robe's TRANSFERABLE ENGINE (TE) technology was something the team also considered could be useful to Theatre Muzyczny as its production schedule is intense and involves a lot of lamp-hours. "The option to replace the lightsource of an LED fixture was definitely interesting to us," Bartosz said.

The stage is 16 metres wide and 20 metres deep – also the largest musical stage in Poland – complete with high side wings and a double revolve. It is both a producing and a receiving house and their own shows are specifically tailored and designed to fit their space. Theatre Muzyczny is frequently licenced to replicate West End shows, underlining the standards of the productions.

For Calendar Girls The Musical by Gary Barlow and Tim Firth, the show was scaled up from its Leeds Grand Theatre premiere in the UK and subsequent London Phoenix Theatre run, and most of the musicals contain plenty of WOW factors.

There is some history of Robe fixtures in the house – eight ColorSpot 700E ATs were acquired for Shrek The Musical in 2012 – which have been well looked after and are still in use on the small stage!

This lighting upgrade and the FORTE investment is also part of the ongoing switch to LED lighting.

The choice of FORTES was partly driven by visiting production riders, including those of Polish TV who cover a large annual film festival hosted by the theatre and some other events, and the house receives several international ballet and dance shows and music concerts.

The FORTES were integrated into all the main stage lighting productions - new and revivals - over a 3-month period as soon as they arrived.

The original part of the Main stage - remaining from before the 2013 refit - has only 3 lighting bridges, so some of the lighting positions are limited, but as the FORTES are so useful and multifunctional, Bartosz reckons that 43 fixtures can easily do the job of many more profiles, spots, beams and washes - with just one unit instead of 4 of different types of light!

Photo Credits: Rzemieslnik Swiatla (courtesy of Teatr Muzyczny), Louise Stickland









