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Elation LED for Modern “Macbeth” at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts

Alex Jainchill uses dynamic lighting to meet lighting challenges and create magical moments on contemporary version of Shakespeare’s classic tragedy

The Denver Center for the Performing Arts (DCPA) is staging an inventive and reimagined version of “Macbeth” that features an all-male cast, EDM style music and modern design elements. Lighting the contemporary version of Shakespeare’s classic tragedy is Alex Jainchill, who uses LED lighting from Elation Professional to meet lighting challenges and create magical moments in the show, including special black light UV effects.

This modern version of “Macbeth,” which takes place in the DCPA’s newly remodeled in-the-round Space Theatre and runs through October 29th, is directed by Robert O’Hara, who has infused the story with fresh ideas and used the intimacy of the space to create an engaging production. Jainchill puts his own creative imprint on the play as well using Elation LED lighting fixtures - Satura Profile™ and Platinum Seven™ LED moving heads, SixPar 200™ and Arena Par Zoom™ LED Par lights, as well as other lighting. “The show is very current, if not futuristic, so LED seemed like an obvious choice,” the designer stated of the LED fixtures’ modern appeal.



UV, EDM and more

Jainchill explains that the design concept was based on a line in the play where the character Hecate tells the witches to ‘meet me at the pit of Acheron.’ “The concept was based around a ritual performed by warlocks in the pit of Acheron, sort of a cave at the end of the world. We were very interested in this version of the ritual being almost futuristic, certainly modern.”

There are also sections of the show that don't exist in the Shakespeare original, the designer says, segments that they referred to as ‘movements’ that were underscored by EDM music. As the

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production didn't use swords and conventional Shakespearian violence, Jainchill used the UV LED of the Platinum Seven fixtures (the light houses a 7-color multi-chip LED) as an important effect in many of the movements. "For example, Macbeth's Dagger Soliloquy was actually part of a movement sequence in which the floating daggers were represented by the actors' arms in UV-activated gloves," he explains. "It gave the effect of disembodied daggers floating and slashing around MacBeth. The biggest key for using the Platinum Sevens and why I wouldn't accept a substitution in this case was the UV chip. All of the actors had UV-activated tattoos, and the floor had a UV treatment."



Jainchill adds that the Platinum Sevens were lighting workhorses and used their design features to light every scene. "Although the UV was the most important feature of the Platinum Sevens, they also are fantastic wash lights and I would use them again simply as an LED wash light. That being said, I loved using the inner, center, and outer ring beam feature and used the BPM (beats per minute) feature in the ETC Eos effects engine often. Simply creating an effect to move between the rings of the LEDs to the beat of the music was very successful. Also, lighting whole scenes using just the center diode in the fixtures created a much simpler look in the ceiling and gave me additional appearances from the rig that was part of the scenic ceiling."

The LD used a total of 15 Platinum Sevens in the production, 10 mounted in the scenic pentagon ceiling with the remainder hung above 5 Vom entrances, giving him "the closest thing to sidelight I could achieve in the round." He also used 25 Elation SixPar 200s in the show, a Par color changer with a 6-color multi-chip LED, including UV, a light that the LD called "crucial" on the show.

Magic moments

Also used often were LED-based Satura Profile CMY moving heads with framing, whose framing shutters, gobos, prism and other design features the designer says were quite useful. "The ability to put a custom template in the unit and have it cut through in a scene was especially successful and important," he says. Five of the LED profile fixtures were used in the show, working from a custom ceiling piece. "Basically, this show was in the round and the ceiling mimicked the pentagon shape of the room above," Jainchill said, adding that the units were hung so that their tilt point was at the height of the scenic ceiling. "The Saturas stand out because a lot of the violence in the show



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was actually magic violence, since every character was a warlock. In fact, the opening of the play was a movement sequence to the track 'Damn Daniel' by 4B, where the group of warlocks basically fights to determine who will be the MacBeth. Often, I used the Satura Profiles with our custom pentagon template to highlight these magic moments in the show."

Challenges overcome

In-the-round productions always pose special lighting challenges for a lighting designer but there were other factors that also tested the LD. "Lighting dance/movement pieces without sidelight is always a challenge," Jainchill says. "But there were other challenges as well. The cast was huge and we often had 17 people on stage. They also made entrances from 5 stairwells and 5 Voms. Plus, seating is very, very close to the stage floor so lighting everyone successfully and not lighting the audience was especially difficult with everyone on stage. Luckily, I had many tools in the toolbox to accomplish this. The shutters on the Saturas were especially helpful in allowing me to get good light on stage but shutter enough to be off of audience members. The amount of color control I had in this rig was great. Between the moving lights and the LED Pars I basically had color changing ability from every angle it was possible in this room."

Jainchill used an ETC Eos Classic console for lighting control and previsualized the show using Vectorworks Vision. Lighting assistant on the show was Lily Bradford and master electrician was Charles Macleod. "They were fantastic and I couldn't have done the show without their help," the designer concludes.

Lighting equipment:

- 5 x Elation Satura Profile
- 15 x Elation Platinum Seven
- 25 x Elation SixPar 200
- 5 x Elation Arena Par Zoom

Photos: AdamsVisCom

About Elation Professional

Elation Professional is one of the world's leading lighting and visual solutions providers and is the global brand of Elation Lighting. Founded in 1992 and headquartered in Los Angeles, with European sales, distribution and support based in The Netherlands, Elation designs and manufactures a comprehensive range of innovative yet affordable lighting and video products that are distributed through a global network of dealers and distributors. Made up of a spirited team of dedicated personnel, Elation is setting new efficiency and performance standards in Platinum lamp and LED technology and is acknowledged for a comprehensive commitment to Total Support. As a company in expansion with a presence in a growing variety of market segments, chances are you've experienced Elation lighting at a concert, special event, TV, theater, late night venue, House of Worship, theme park, cruise ship, exhibition, architectural space or elsewhere. For more information, please visit www.elationlighting.com

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