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SixBar™ Supports Drama of Cambridge University European Theatre Group's *Othello*

The Cambridge University European Theatre Group toured one of Shakespeare's darkest plays, *Othello*, recently and used effects from Elation SixBar 1000™ LED battens to enhance the drama. Featuring live jazz, this new take on the famed tragedy, which was set within the world of sixties jazz clubs, played venues in France, Switzerland, Belgium and the UK, before holding an ending run at the ADC Theatre in Cambridge from 15 – 19 January 2019.

The Cambridge University European Theatre Group is a self-sufficient theatrical company that tours a Shakespeare play around Europe every December and has been doing so since 1957. The tour is entirely student run, from organizing logistics to the technical elements of setting up lighting and sound in each venue. Tour Manager Lily Burge oversaw all logistical elements of the latest tour, while Production Manager Matthew Latham oversaw the technical elements of the show.



Students hands-on with fixtures

The run posed an opportunity to showcase Elation's multi-purpose SixBar LED battens in a wide range of venues. As it is students that make up the entirety of the company, Matthew Latham says the strong team of crew members were immensely hands on with the fixtures, from designing the rig to setting them up in each venue. Led by Production Manager Latham and Chief Electrician Dylan Phelps, the on-tour technicians were able to handle the fixtures throughout the two-week-long tour and provided a chance for the entire company to learn more about how dynamic lights are used.

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Setting the scene

Eight SixBar 1000s played a key role in Emily Senior's lighting design, four of which were placed at the wings to provide side light. "This not only helped to set the scene as the play progressed, but greatly helped to evoke the theme of mystery and intrigue present throughout the show by throwing colored shadows across the stage," Senior stated. "The most important role that the fixtures played within the production, though, were their use onstage to provide backlight for the main piece of set, an 8-ft tall voile curtain." Four fixtures were placed along the top edge, allowing the curtain to become opaque. "This greatly helped to set the scene for the dimly lit jazz bar in which the play's action takes place as the fixtures provided an array of blue and purple tones."

As the entire production was filled with color, Senior says the main benefit of the SixBar 1000s were their ability to provide a wide range of vibrant color, both to show shifting locations and the life and vibrancy of jazz clubs. "The range of tones they produced were extremely important," Senior says, "as was the fact that they could provide color even when lighting was extremely low in scenes where shadow and tension were to fill the stage."

The SixBar battens played a role in a number of prominent scenes, for example in Iago's manipulation where they were used to offer a dim green sidelight in an otherwise unchanging scene to suggest the presence of the 'green-eyed monster' of jealousy. "Here, the wide-ranging intensity of the fixtures was especially useful," Senior said. "But by far their most important use was in ensuring that the curtain could be made almost entirely opaque, as this allowed for numerous reveal scenes to take place. As the lighting shifted to dim the SixBar lights, the fabric could become translucent and reveal the actor behind, be it Othello listening in on Cassio's apparent admission of guilt or Bianca waiting to enter and speak to Cassio."

The SixBar houses a 6-color LED multi-chip for a wide palette of colors and a discreet, slender design means it can be hidden away when needed. "Their compact, slim size also made them ideal for a touring show, as not only did this mean they were extremely easy to pack away and store on the coach, which carried the entire company and equipment, but it also meant they could fit in even the smallest of wings in the venues visited on tour," the lighting designer states.

LED advantages

The Cambridge University European Theatre Group toured *Othello* using a rig of mostly LED fixtures, the advantages of which were not lost on Production Manager Matthew Latham. He commented: "As well as providing incredible flexibility to our designers during the show itself, the LED-based rig significantly simplified power requirements and therefore helped increase the speed of our get-ins. We have very short get-in windows, and each venue presented a totally different technical set-up, which often complicates rigs with conventional fixtures. The SixBar 1000s were ideal for our design; its huge range of colors helped us to create a visually stunning production, whilst being great on tour as it is so lightweight."

Photos: Gabriel Humphreys



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