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## Elation PARAGON Plays Key Role in Modern *Hamlet* at Mark Taper Forum

A world-premiere modern adaptation of one of the most famous stories ever told, *Hamlet*, recently wrapped at Center Theatre Group's Mark Taper Forum in downtown Los Angeles. Adapted and directed by Robert O'Hara, this modern take on Shakespeare's classic tragedy blended video, new scenes and characters, and a film noir aesthetic with lighting design by Tony Award nominee Lap Chi Chu. To help realize the show's visual concept, Chu turned to Elation's award-winning [PARAGON](#) LED framing profile moving head.



### New Take for a New Audience

Running from May 28 through July 6, the production was boldly imaginative and anything but traditional. "The show was an adaptation that caught the spirit of Hamlet," Chu commented. "It was a fun production, but very different."

With a younger audience in mind, the creative team leaned into a stylized visual approach, and lighting played a central role. "We were looking to do something exciting and new," Chu noted. "The lighting and design mandate was film noir, and I was looking for dynamic, single-source lighting to capture that feel."

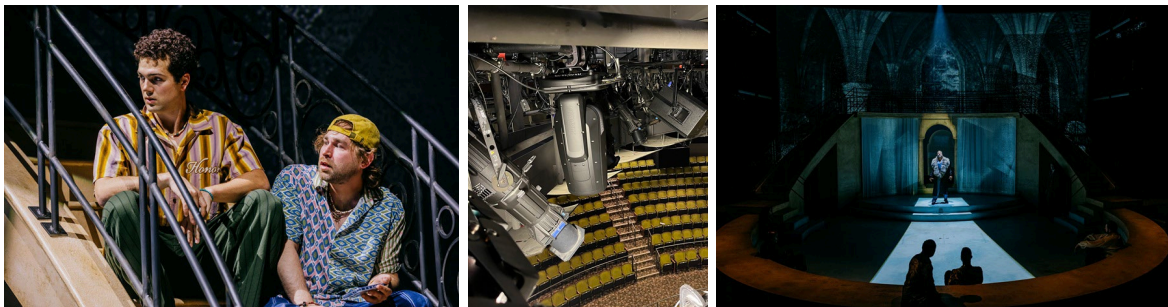
### Finding the Right Tool

To bring the visual concept to life, Chu collaborated with Los Angeles-based Kinetic Lighting. Chu and Aaron Staubach, Head Electrician at the Mark Taper Forum who operated the show, were introduced to the PARAGON through Kinetic along with Elation Product Application Specialist Nick Saiki.



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“Nick articulated well why the PARAGON is different,” Chu explained. “What really stood out was CRI as an adjustable, fadeable parameter. No other fixture can do that. In the past, you had to rather ungracefully drop in a CRI filter, but PARAGON gave us the ability to fade smoothly from one CRI value to another—going from looking great on skin for a front light special to cutting through space with greater firepower. That was very exciting to me as a designer and is a big advantage in live theatre.”



Staubach agreed: “My role is technical so I go to a lot of demos, and the difference between fixtures can be marginal. But when I heard about PARAGON’s CRI adjustability, that was big for me as well. Being able to dial that in on a cue-by-cue basis, more punch one moment and adjust for skin tones the next, gives designers a lot more flexibility. As head electrician, being able to point out that feature to a designer is very exciting.”

PARAGON, available in three models (S, M, LT), is built around a custom-designed white LED engine and Elation’s TruTone variable CRI system. TruTone allows seamless adjustment from CRI 70 to CRI 93, letting designers find the best blend of lighting intensity vs color accuracy to match any scene or artistic requirement.

### Feature-Rich

Five [PARAGON M](#) fixtures were used in overhead positions throughout the 739-seat space, providing coverage for the three-quarter thrust stage. Chu frequently uses shutter looks in his designs and found the PARAGON well-suited for that. In one striking moment, a single PARAGON fixture was used as a top light, cut into a rectangle to represent a grave, the only light on stage during the scene. “It was powerful, even in a tight shuttered look, with light bouncing off the set,” he said. “That one beam was central to the scene.”

Chu also appreciated other features of the fixture, including the prism effects and dual frost. “I always look for a good prism set, and the PARAGON has that. It gives a softness and an undulating feel to the light, or we used it to make one light look like many quickly.” Often used for a strong singular backlight or shaft of light, Chu says the PARAGON’s frost diffusion was used quite successfully when they didn’t want to see a hard edge.

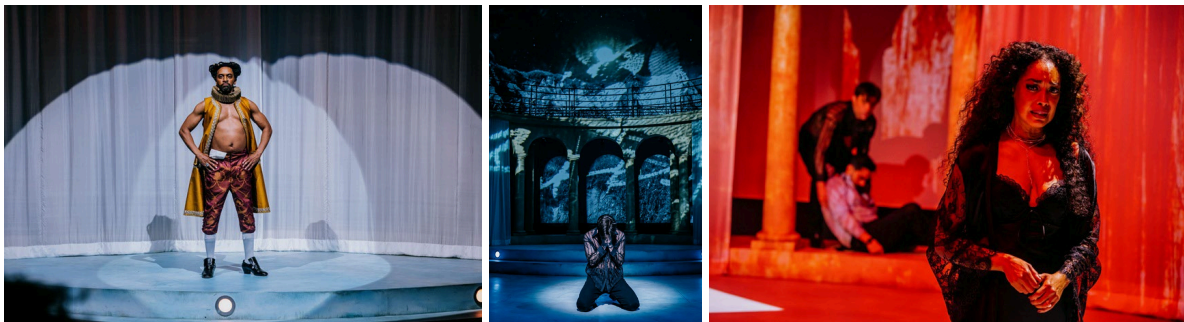
### Making the Aesthetic Pop

Chu says the lighting palette was aggressive and blunt, dropping the CRI to a low level for some scenes and using the CMY color mixing to achieve the desired colors. The set—a drained luxury

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pool surrounded by Spanish architecture—was bathed in saturated blue and teal-green tints, helping set a cool, moody tone.

The PARAGON's color mixing system proved especially versatile in the show's most dramatic transitions. The ability to shift to a bold, all-red look for the show's final moments gave the lighting design added impact. "There is a scene at the end, very stylized, a death scene where everything bluntly turns to red – here we went from a white shaft of light to a signifying type of saturated red with the CMY system," Chu said, calling it one of the production's most striking effects.



### Quiet, Compact, and Easy to Use

Beyond creative flexibility, the fixture also met the show's technical needs. The team praised the quiet operation, compact size, and ease of use.

"Noise is very concerning to me and to designers," Staubach commented. "It could be the best fixture, but if it is noisy, I don't have a use for it. We had PARAGON fixtures mounted just 15 feet above the audience, and you couldn't notice them. That's not always the case with moving lights, especially ones with this much built-in technology. That the PARAGON can gracefully fade through without drawing attention to itself, especially in this venue where the sound level is a big concern, having that be a seamless transition is very nice."

He added, "From a rigging standpoint, it's also a practical fixture. Easy to hang, not oversized, and fit well in the space."

### A Success in Art and Technology

Center Theatre Group's production of *Hamlet* highlighted not only the impact of reinventing a classic tale but also the new possibilities that innovative lighting technology can bring. Chu summed it up: "The jack-of-all-trades nature of PARAGON is tremendous. I don't have to pick one fixture for power and another that looks good on skin—I can have that in one and easily glide from one usage to the other."

Staubach concludes that the show went very well. "Although it wasn't a traditional version of *Hamlet*, it was well received and people walked away with a good evening of theatre."



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Photos: Jeff Lorch

**About Elation**

At Elation, we collaborate with leading professionals in the lighting industry to help bring extraordinary experiences to life. As a designer and manufacturer of a wide range of high-performance entertainment lighting products, we're proud to be a trusted partner to top lighting professionals and rental houses around the world. Our commitment to quality, innovation, and creative solutions has made us a go-to resource in the industry. We also offer an advanced line of lighting control products through Obsidian Control Systems, and a full range of dependable specialty effects called Magmatic. We invite you to take a closer look at [www.elationlighting.com](http://www.elationlighting.com)

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