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High School Drama Meets High-Performance Elation Lighting on “Mean Girls”

LD Steven Young turns to Paragon and Proteus Odeon luminaires on witty modern classic

Principal Designer and Director of Design at Visual Terrain, Steven Young, brought the hit musical “Mean Girls” to life at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts using a dynamic rig of Elation lighting solutions, including the award-winning [Paragon S](#) LED profile, along with [Proteus Odeon](#), and [Pulse Bar](#) fixtures.



The production took place at the 1,250-seat La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, one of Southern California’s most highly lauded venues and home to McCoy Rigby Entertainment’s annual season of theatrical productions.

“Mean Girls” is a witty modern classic rich in social commentary, written by Tina Fey. It ran on Broadway for over two years, earned twelve nominations at the 72nd Tony Awards (including Best Musical), and has since toured extensively. For Young, whose collaboration with McCoy Rigby Entertainment spans two decades, the comedic production is one he has engaged with for years.

McCoy Rigby Entertainment, founded by Tom McCoy and Olympic gymnast and actress Cathy Rigby, has produced seasons at La Mirada Theatre for decades. Young, who joined Visual Terrain in 2007, has lit over 30 productions at the venue.

Evolving Technology at La Mirada Theatre

Young’s prior work on “The King and I” at La Mirada in 2023, in which he used Elation’s Proteus Lucius LED profile moving head, directly influenced the theatre’s decision to invest in Proteus Odeon fixtures the following year.



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“The King and I really demonstrated what the Elation fixtures could do for the space,” Young explains. “It became the catalyst for La Mirada investing in the Odeons, which came out on top following a shootout and have since become a core part of their inventory.” The Odeons were sold to the theatre by Pacific Coast Entertainment.

La Mirada’s ongoing technical upgrades are led by Master Electrician Melissa “Mo” Skau, who has been instrumental in modernizing the venue’s production infrastructure. “There’s been a diligent effort on Mo’s part to create a better working environment for visiting designers,” Young adds, “and this was part of that effort.”



Elation Fixtures at the Core of the Design

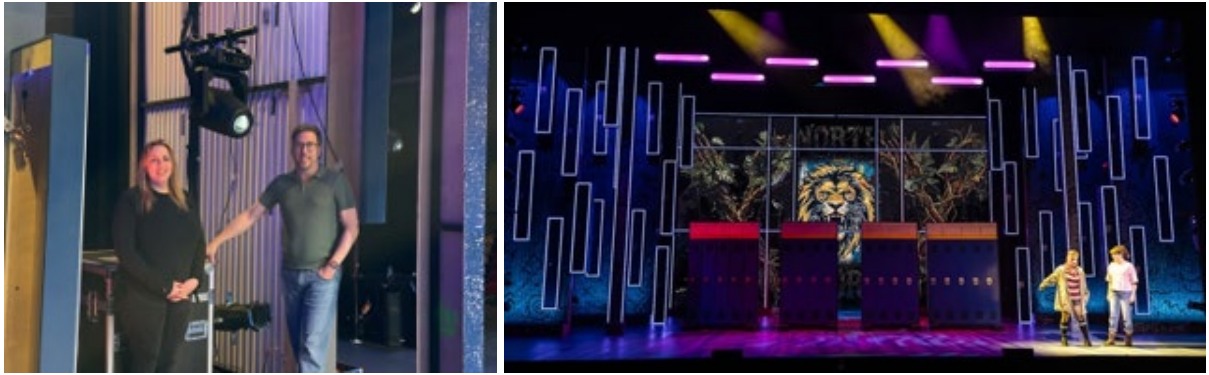
Young describes “Mean Girls” as deceptively complex—fast-paced, intricate, and far more demanding than it first appears. While its high-energy, quirky humor makes it entertaining, beneath the surface lies a sharp comedic exploration of high school social hierarchies.

To light “Mean Girls,” Young deployed a blend of house and rental inventory: 17 Proteus Odeon house fixtures installed across four electrics, 6 Paragon S fixtures rented from BCT Entertainment positioned on stage booms, and Pulse Bar units supplied by Elation for evaluation and creative use.

The Proteus Odeon were a central element of the design, valued for their output, silent operation, and low voltage draw. “They’re very punchy at 32,000 lumens, and what we really liked about them initially was how silent they are,” says Young, who values a noiseless fixture in theatre. He also notes the benefit of running them at 120 volts. “We didn’t have to run extra power, install a new disconnect, or add any additional electrical infrastructure, so it really simplified the installation for them.”

Young highlighted the fixture’s TruTone variable CRI engine, which allows designers to achieve up to CRI 93. “We worked in CRI Flex mode, which was really helpful because the project included both naturalistic looks and more heightened theatrical moments with increased brightness. The difference isn’t as important when lighting scenery, but when it comes to skin tones, color rendering becomes much more critical.”

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Sculpting Story with Light

Young used most of the Odeon's design tools and graphics to shape environments and transitions, including framing, gobos, and animation. "The framing shutters allowed us to create 'boxes' that we used extensively, for example in the high school classroom space, runways, and other small areas. We also used all of the gobos that came with it and tried to vary the looks as much as possible."

A key moment in the show, the song "World Burn," was enhanced using the fixture's animation wheel to create fire-like movement across the stage, while frosts delivered a soft wash that Young says "came in very handy."



Paragon S: Compact Power

The Paragon S fixtures were used as side lighting from booms, three per side, chosen for their design features, as well as smaller footprint and weight advantages. "The Odeons were too heavy for boom positions, so the Paragon S was the perfect solution for the tight set - smaller and about half the weight," says Young. "They're compact, the perfect size for a boom, but still give a great deal of punch."

Used in extended mode, the Paragons provided sharp gobo projection and flexible focus control. "We were able to cut the light off the floor but still light the actors and some of the scenery with them," Young explains. "It was nice to have sharp, focused gobos on people during transitions,



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and then when the scene started, we would throw those gobos out of focus so that they created a soft wash. It was great to use some of the fixture's focus capabilities to help reinforce the story."

Pulse Bar

Young describes how the Pulse Bar fixtures were used to recreate and reinterpret one of the show's most iconic visual moments. "In the original Broadway production, there's a moment where the main character photocopies different parts of a book, and the light from the Xerox machine was such an iconic look. We wanted to do something different, so we used a phone with a giant strobe flash from the Pulse Bars across the stage. The actor was lit with a bit of sidelight and a follow spot, and then that flash would hit. It was brilliant and ended up being incredibly successful."

The moment was executed in white light using the Pulse Bar's cool white LEDs, while elsewhere in the show Young also used their RGB capabilities to color other scenes.



Color Play

Color play was also a defining element of the design, particularly the show's signature pink palette. "There are so many variations of pink in the show," Young notes. "We used eight different shades, ranging from very deep pink to very light pinks, so that we were so close to skin tones it was barely noticeable. The color could be very bold, but also incredibly subtle. We really had to mix those and the Elation fixtures did that wonderfully."

"Mean Girls" ran from April 11 through May 3 at the La Mirada Theatre with critics praising the lighting and visual design as standout elements that supported both the story and the show's fast-paced energy.

"Mean Girls" Credits:

Lighting Design by Visual Terrain, Inc.



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Steven Young, USA-829, Lighting Designer
Madeline Miller, Assistant Lighting Designer
Melissa "Mo" Skau, Master Electrician
Dana Solimando, Director/Choreographer
Rodrigo Varandas, Associate Director/Choreographer
Stephen Gifford, Scenic Design
David Murakami, Projection Design
Adam Ramirez, Costume Coordinator

Venue

La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts

Producer

Tom McCoy
McCoy Rigby Entertainment

Photographers

Jason Niedle & Stephen Gifford

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 production/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. Elation serves clients worldwide through offices in Los Angeles, Mexico City, Canada, and the Netherlands. We invite you to take a closer look at elationlighting.com

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