

31-Oct-2025

San Francisco Opera's New Repertory Plot Features Elation PARAGON

The San Francisco Opera (SFO) is bringing a new level of versatility to its repertory lighting with the addition of Elation's multi-functional [PARAGON](#) moving head fixtures. Under the guidance of Justin Partier, Resident Lighting Director at the War Memorial Opera House, the company has integrated 26 [PARAGON LT](#) fixtures across its season productions, including *Rigoletto*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Parsifal*, and upcoming show *The Monkey King* (opening November 14).



Extensive Wish List

Having served as SFO's resident lighting director for seven years, Partier faced the challenge of updating the company's aging inventory of 25-year-old 1200W discharge lamp fixtures. Based on his own observations as well as requirements from designers, his wish list for replacement fixtures was extensive: brightness to compete with the venue's existing HMI lights, excellent color rendering and consistency, advanced color mixing, precise framing shutters, a soft frost option, and a useful gobo package.

Then there were other requirements, such as low noise and reliability, backed by a solid warranty. "The turnaround with repertory opera is very short, sometimes only 48 hours," Partier noted of repertory's hallmark fast-paced rotation, "so reliability was key."

Checking a Lot of the Boxes

After a hands-on shootout at Felix Lighting against several brands, the SFO team selected the PARAGON LT, securing some of the first units after the fixture's launch. "When we saw them, it became clear pretty quickly what fixture we liked. It was checking a lot of the boxes," Partier recalls. The investment marked SFO's first major move into LED-centric fixtures within its repertory lighting setup.



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“One of the first things I noticed was, with everything on, the fan noise dropped considerably. You could really hear the difference compared to the previous season — it was dumbfounding,” he notes. “The LT was brighter than the M model, which was important, and it did all the things we needed it to do. It had that punch and a brightness that wasn’t purplish; with the PARAGON it was clean white bright light. That was a big positive.”

Color Palette

PARAGON is Elation’s new flagship line of LED profile moving heads (S, M, LT) with variable CRI technology, interchangeable lenses, and an advanced suite of design tools. The LT model offers Elation’s SpectraColor CMY + RGB + variable CTO color mixing system as an option, delivering an expanded color range.



“The CMY + RGB color mixing was interesting,” Partier says. “Color and color rendering was something we honed in on during the shootout and light bulbs went off when I saw that in the demo. When we put PARAGON up against our old fixtures, comparing shades like a 30% cyan for example, it was as close as you could get. That was a big practical element for us.”

Use on *Rigoletto*

Purchased early in the summer, SFO’s PARAGON LT units are positioned across several electrics, with two on an FOH balcony rail and two auxiliary side positions. Partier served as the revival lighting designer for *Rigoletto*, using PARAGON fixtures primarily for top, back, and side lighting, complemented by a select number of specials. “They helped a lot with creating atmosphere in terms of the visuals,” he said, “and were really good at lighting background.”

Referencing color and his use of the CMY + RGB [SpectraColor](#) system, he explained, “Since the show has so many bold colors for some scenes and tint colors for others, we stuck with a lot of mixed colors using both the CMY and RGB flags.”



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The designer noted that while a few scenes really showcased the fixtures, overall he appreciated their ability to blend with the existing rig. The fixtures were especially effective in Act 1, Scene 1, providing a variety of looks and colors. Since the old fixtures did not have any frost or animation, they were able to utilize those features of the PARAGON.

Customizable for Every Scene

The PARAGON also features Elation's TruTone variable CRI system, allowing smooth adjustments from CRI 70 to CRI 93. "I like that option," Partier adds, "as some designers often want the ability to balance the lighting."

Designed for multi-role applications, the PARAGON LT allows its profile lens to be swapped for a Fresnel Wash or PC Beam lens, though SFO primarily uses the profile lens. Its three gobo wheels (two rotating, one fixed) and a full animation wheel have allowed SFO to incorporate their own custom gobo designs for opera and other visual effects, including an animated water effect for one production.

Powering SFO's Fast-Paced Repertory

With nearly every opera incorporating the new fixtures into multiple scenes, SFO has gained a versatile fixture that meets both the artistic and practical demands of a fast-paced repertory environment. "They are great workhorse lights and we are happy to have used them extensively in the shows they have been in," Partier concludes, adding that as they get more familiar with them, they anticipate using them even more.

Photos: Cory Weaver

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

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