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22-Aug-2019

Busy Artiste Picasso™ at Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre

Chris Wood uses LED profile moving head for multiple purposes on four on-stage classics

Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre is a popular five-week summer festival in Logan, Utah, that presents four fully staged works in repertory at the Ellen Eccles Theatre. Lighting designer Chris Wood, who just wrapped up his seventh season working on the festival as part of a top-notch cast and crew, had the opportunity to use Elation Artiste Picasso™ LED profile moving heads on this year's productions - *Newsies*, *West Side Story*, *Mary Poppins*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

4 Wall in Las Vegas recommended the Picasso to Wood and although the fixture entered the lighting specification somewhat late, which didn't give the designer much time to familiarize himself with it, he says he got better acquainted with the light through fixture documentation. "I appreciate that Elation puts out a lot of photometric data," Wood said, "which gave me really good information about what the fixture could do and what the light would look like without actually seeing it in person. That was very helpful in planning."



Differentiates shows with moving lights

Following June rehearsals, the festival opened in early July with final shows wrapping on August 3rd. All popular classics and all big shows, the festival schedule was quite demanding with two shows running every day and around 90 minutes between matinee and an evening performance to change out, redo colors and refocus. "Because we don't have time to refocus lights between shows, and the scenic designs are completely different, our moving light package is extremely important in making each show look unique and individual," said Wood, who had 14 Artiste Picassos at his disposal along with other LED moving heads and a large amount of tungsten sources.

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This was the first year they went completely with LED moving lights with the Artiste Picassos replacing some noisier arc source fixtures. “When you’ve got 30 moving lights in a theatre and it’s basically an opera company, trying to keep arc sources cool is a substantial problem,” the designer said. “Once manufacturers started coming out with fixtures with cold white LED engines in moving lights, like the Picasso, we knew we wanted to start shifting in that direction and as a consequence, the noise level in the theatre has come down substantially.”

Creative framing

Wood placed 12 Artiste Picasso units over stage at about a 28’ trim height – three units per electric – for specials, textures, etc., with two units at front of house for textures and washes. The range of shows required the designer to delve into the unit’s feature set with Wood finding some creative uses for its rotating 4-blade framing system. “The fixtures were impressively bright and in terms of gobos and the framing shutters, they worked out fantastic,” he said. “For *Newsies*, my programmer and I did a lot of heavy live moves with the framing shutters, creating shapes around pockets of dancers that corresponded with the choreography on stage. As the group of *Newsies* did different formations during songs, we reshaped rectangles of light around them, which would follow them in realtime with the shutters moving and snapping. The ability to do a full light with the shutter blades was fantastic. We did a lot of reveals with that.”



In one scene, where the *Newsies* enter stage left and stage right, Wood describes a look in which he had the Picasso framing shutters pushed all the way in, then as the actors entered, he pulled them downstage in a wall of light coming down from the set. “It worked out really nicely,” he said. “The movement was smooth and the shutters were pretty much spot on every time so we didn’t need to adjust them when we went back to that look.”

Other visual effects

With four shows in repertory, Wood says the Picasso’s two gobo wheels were extremely handy with enough diversity in design that he didn’t have to change them out. In one creative example, among many, he combined the long bar gobo with the linear prism and rotated it in a way that made it look like gears in machinery moving. He also used the 360-degree animation wheel quite often, for example for rain effects in *Mary Poppins*.



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When it comes to color, Wood says he is picky about his color shades and appreciated the subtractive CMY color mixing of the Picasso, which he says makes it easier to create duller shades or vibrant colors. He used the fixture's CTO color correction a fair amount to balance with the large number of tungsten fixtures and other moving heads in the rig.

Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre is known for its high-quality productions and stunning visual design. From costumes to set and lighting design, the caliber of this year's shows certainly lived up to that high standard.

Photos: Waldron Creative

Lighting Designer: Chris Wood
Associate LD: Josh Wroblewski
Assistant LD: Taelore Stearns
Programmer: Omri Schwartz
Master Electrician: Cody Soper

About Elation Professional

Based in California with a European office in The Netherlands, Elation designs and manufactures a comprehensive range of innovative lighting and video products known for its superior performance, excellent efficiency, and outstanding price:value ratio, all backed by a hard-earned reputation for Total Support. Through nearly three decades of intelligent lighting development, our mission has always been simple: to provide best-in-class products and service while offering the best value:performance ratio in the industry, helping show designers and producers achieve their vision. From discharge to LED, intelligent to conventional, Elation products continue to be a part of the industry's most exciting projects across the globe and our list of references is always growing. We invite you to take a closer look at www.elationlighting.com

For more information, contact:

Elation Professional US

6122 S. Eastern Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90040
USA
Tel: (866) 245-6726 (toll free)
Tel: (323) 582-3322
sales@elationlighting.com
www.elationlighting.com

Elation Professional EU

Junostraat 2.
6468 EW Kerkrade
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)45 546 85 66



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info@elationlighting.eu
www.elationlighting.eu

Elation Professional Mexico
Av Santa Ana 30,
Parque Industrial Lerma,
Lerma, Mexico 52000
Tel: +011 52 728 282 7070
ventas@elationlighting.com
www.elationlighting.com