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Robe Helps Perpetuum Celebrate 40 at Ljubljana's Cankarjev Dom

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Popular Slovenian vocal group, Perpetuum Jazzile, celebrated their 40th anniversary with a series of high-profile shows at Ljubljana's Cankarjev Dom, the country's biggest theatre venue, asking Crt Birska from design studio Blackout to create lighting suitable for the occasion.

With typical enthusiasm and imaginative zeal – plus the assistance of substantial quantities of Robe moving lights – Crt created an impressive visual showcase, working closely with Mark Pirc, brought in as video content creator and co-show director with Aljaz Bastic for these special performances.

Crt has lit the group several times over the last 10 years, and specifically more regularly in the last two after as Blackout has become their permanent lighting design provider. In fact, Crt's first proper arena design was 10 years ago with Perpetuum Jazzile for their 30th anniversary.

For this show, the basic elements of his programming from the last two years were taken as the starting point. Initial ideas for the 40th included a stage at 45° to the audience with a shallow thrust protruding in an arrow shape, and above that they wanted a circular truss, which Crt morphed into a triangular shape that more harmoniously mimics the shape of the deck below.

He then filled the 8-metre equilateral triangular truss above the performance space with lights rigged on sub trusses, creating a slightly Floydesque 'monumental chandelier' effect that provided multiple layers of lighting that could be stripped right back or fattened out, depending on the vibe of the song.

The concept worked brilliantly and dovetailed beautifully with the other visual aspects including the angled stage and an upstage 16 x 6 metre LED screen.

The lighting kit was mostly supplied by Ljubljana-based rental company, Intralite, with some pulled from the Cankarjev Dom's house rig – which also features a lot of Robe fixtures. The numbers added

up to 8 x Robe BMFLs, 24 x LEDBeam 150s, 16 x FORTES – part of a recent investment by Intralite – 10 x MegaPointes, 34 x Spiiders and 20 x ParFect 150s.

These luminaires constituted the majority of the lighting rig, together with 32 x LED strobes, 12 more LED PARs plus six of the venue's own genuine Svobodas which were rigged on the triangle and created an ambience of their own.

Twelve of the FORTES were used for the primary back lights in a line upstage. While they looked like they were on a single truss, they were flown on a combination of house LX bars which are arranged in rows left, centre and right of the stage.

The other four FORTES were utilised for side keys. Their accurate shuttering allowed Crt to cut the beams in tight to the stage and the artists. He also used them to project gobos over the singers during the song "Mesto Sanj" (Dream City).

Crt has been using FORTES throughout the year for different projects and loves them for the brightness, multiple features and excellent quality of light.

The eight BMFLs were positioned upstage on the floor and were the only rear lights from this low-level position. They were also a highly effective counterbalance to the power of the FORTE beams coming in from above.

The 10 x MegaPointes were placed inside the triangle, arranged in four rows in a 4-3-2-1 pattern, and they were used as high impact blocky light sources to complement and contrast with the Svobodas, a technique that worked well and dramatically.

The LEDBeam 150s outlined the structure of the triangular truss, eight fixtures on each of the three structural truss pieces creating the shape. From these positions they could produce an all-enveloping stage wash as well as be utilised as a show and effects light.

Crt describes them as "exceptionally handy" little fixtures.

The LEDBeam 150s were also used for audience lighting, a task they achieved efficiently and subtly without blinding people! An ongoing nuance of the venue to make this work is dealing with the high balconies, and the LEDBeam 150s assisted in finding an elegant solution.

The 18 x Spiiders formed the main stage wash looks, with six doubling up as the principal key lighting for the soloists and guest singers.

The six key lighting Spiiders were from the house rig and positioned on the lighting bridge together with all the house profiles. They allowed Crt to match the colour temperatures of the TV lighting as one of the shows was recorded for Slovenian national TV.

Six ParFect 150s toned the triangle with another four boosting the side lighting positions for the solo singers when standing on their downstage marks. Another ten augmented the audience lighting, so plenty of colour and energy could be added to the audience looks for the broadcast wide shots.

Overall challenges included Crt persuading everyone on the merits of going with a triangular shape (rather than a circle) above the stage and getting the whole rig together with the LED screens at the right trim heights, because theatres do not have unlimited clearance. And, as always, time on site was tight!

The get-in for the first show started at midnight ... and Crt finished finessing the focusing of audience ParFect 150s one minute before doors.

The visually assertive style of the show was a big hit with everyone, and Crt even found himself during programming paring some lighting back to ensure the artists stayed central to the picture and being reinforced proportionately by lighting and video.

He enjoyed the collaborative process of working with Mark on the content, show directors Mark Pirc and Aljaz Bastic – Aljaz was also multi-cam director. Crt benefitted from receiving the video content before the show which gave him some valuable prep time to think about matching lighting looks, scenes, and texturing to what would be appearing onscreen, which enabled a more integrated and mood-aligned visual picture to evolve to frame the performance.

Crt and his team at Blackout regularly specify Robe fixtures for their projects. The brand has a very strong presence in the Slovenian market thanks to the proactivity of Ljubljana-based distributor, MK Light Sound.

Photo Credits: Crt Birsá, Matic Kremzar, Simone di Luca







