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Arlette Gruss Circus in the RoboSpot Light

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The Arlette Gruss Circus is well known for its love of technology and reinvention, constantly keeping their shows fresh and new ... so this year, when they changed up their old Big Top for an even more spangly new one, they also embraced a new Robe RoboSpot system ... which has impressed everyone!

Talented and highly original lighting designer Arthur Oudin had created a brand-new lighting scheme for the Circus in January after receiving a brief from director Gilbert Gruss and technical director Julien Lhomme. With the new Big Top, he adapted the lighting design to the new truss points and integrated the RoboSpots.

Renewing a big top is a key milestone for any circus, and one that usually happens once every ten years or so. Arlette Gruss Circus - never doing things by halves - opted for a radically different tent, Le Privilège, designed by Gilbert and Julien and manufactured by Italian canvas specialist F. Greco SRL ... with no inner pole.

This allows a completely enhanced visual experience for the audience with an unhindered 360-degree view ... and nobody having to look through any structural elements! Apart from that, the general aesthetics of the space are WOWing everyone who works in, sees, and is entertained in the venue.

The Big Top is effectively anchored in place by its own external pyramid shaped steel superstructure built by Anceschi Carlo & Cie, also based in Italy, and the canvas walls are suspended rather than being supported.

It offers an impressive 16 metres of clearance under the dome, has a 42-metre diameter and a capacity of 1686 seats which can be expanded to 2000.

While pole free construction is a fantastic plus for the audience, it presents several challenges for the lighting crew who now don't have any follow-spot positions above the ring!

Arthur quickly proposed a cool solution of which he was totally confident as he'd successfully used Robe RoboSpots for a show by French comedienne and actress, Anne Roumanoff, at the Olympia in Paris.

He suggested a 2-way RoboSpot system comprising two BaseStations controlling two BMFL Spots, each with its own MotionCamera clamped near the luminaire.

"Looking at products in brand catalogues and showcases is one thing ... and very different from experiencing them for real", explained Arthur. "I had properly used and road-tested the RoboSpot and knew it was right for the Circus.

"Gilbert is a new technology enthusiast and encourages everyone working with him to be curious and experimental, so I am permanently watching out for lateral and interesting solutions. RoboSpot is definitely one of these."

Julien Lhomme and his crew, who had used Robe moving lights - Pointes and BMFLs in collaboration with rental specialist Dushow - for the last seasons, were also keen to use the RoboSpot system and discover its many advantages.

Vincent Bouquet from Robe France's technical services team visited Strasbourg where the Circus is based and conducted a RoboSpot test day, and by the end of this, all the operators were familiar with and happy about using the new system.

"They picked it up very quickly and used the system's features like positional presets in combination with their own human experience for the best results" commented Vincent, explaining that they were recalling the position presets on the system to ensure accurate focusing as soon the moment the beam opens, then the operators took over control manually to follow the performer live.

"Right from the very first show but they managed RoboSpot very well by themselves and I received loads of positive feedback" he confirmed.

Using the RoboSpot BaseStations, the operators were located below the audience stands in a new and comfortable workspace.

Through the searingly hot summer which gripped Europe this year, they were able to keep a lot cooler than if they had been confined to the old follow spot platforms 10 metres above the ring, and there was also the additional safety of operating from a ground-based position!

Arthur is already thinking ahead ... as the latest RoboSpot software upgrades allow multi-device control management which can make things even more dynamic. "We can easily imagine that some of those BMFLs and Pointes in the main rig might be controlled by the spot operators as well and used simultaneously from several positions on the various trusses making up the lighting rig."

Photo Credit: Arthur Oudin







