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Robe Finds Sanctuary at Rumbach Street Synagogue

Products Involved

T1 Profile™ **Spiider®** **LEDBeam 150™**

Budapest's Rumbach Street synagogue, designed by Viennese architect Otto Wagner and completed in 1872, has recently been restored to its original Moorish revival style exquisiteness and glory. It has re-opened to the public after decades of dereliction following a partial reconstruction in the late 1980s / early 1990s which ran out of funds, and this more recent effort which was finished during the pandemic.

In addition to being used for prayers and other spiritual activities, the main chamber (sanctuary) and other related spaces have been reimagined and kitted out with the latest technologies. AVL Trade was chosen to integrate a full lighting and AV system into the synagogue as the final detailing of the restoration project which has transformed the venue into a set of stunning modern event spaces for Hungarian Jewish umbrella organization, Mazsihisz.

AVL Trade's Csaba Csanadi has worked on the project for over two years ... the initial approach and invitation for the company to tender on the project came just as the pandemic was starting! He didn't think twice when it came to the right moving lights for the job and specified a selection of Robe fixtures including 12 x T1 Profiles, 12 x Spiders and 16 x LEDBeam 150s.

These luminaires were all selected for flexibility and because they fit nicely and neatly into the space, offering multiple options for the venue's mix of activities.

The synagogue is tucked away in one of the narrow winding streets of Belvaros, the historical centre of Pest old town in the east of the Hungarian metropolis which is also a colourful party district. "It was a huge honour to be involved in this project and to work with the Rumbach complex director Henriett Kiss, who oversaw the restoration, and her team," commented Csaba.

The sanctuary will be used for concerts and other performance events. The impressive retractable Bimah in the centre sinks completely into the floor via hydraulic lifts, enabling the space to be used for 300 capacity end-on concerts and religious services using a small stage. When the stage is located centrally in the room, the capacity is increased yet further.

AVL's lighting design took the octagonal architecture and structural form of the sanctuary as a starting point, and it was fundamental to maintain the integrity and visual harmony of the room with any installed technology.

One of their first brain-teasing jobs was establishing flying points, a hugely intricate job which involved working in the restricted wooden roof space 25 metres above the floor of the chamber and drilling unobtrusive holes through the ornate ceiling without damaging its surface, then rigging motors and winches safely and securely around the joists.

This facilitated hanging trussing below providing technical positions for lighting, audio, and video.

The two main lighting positions are an 8-faceted truss, flown above the Bimah in the central space and a straight truss in front of the stage area.

T1 Profiles are rigged in both positions. "They are a fantastic all-round fixture producing great skin tones and with excellent dimming, perfect for camera applications and also for theatrical style shows and musical performances," stated Csaba.

The Spiiders were picked for their washing capabilities, rich colours and because they can produce effects and a bit of craziness using the individual pixels or the flower effects.

The LEDBeam 150s were a "complete no brainer," stated Csaba. "They are small, light and unobtrusive enough to be displayed anywhere in the room as needed - on the stage floor or rigged on the truss to highlight the ceiling and other architectural features!"

All the lights are run over ArtNet with a portable ChamSys console as part of the package, which can be set up in various positions around the room.

The system is good to go for any event.

Being able to light the whole environment and highlight its unusual décor and colours with rich golds, reds, and blues - more often found in Asia and Islamic mosques and architecture - was integral to the lighting brief. The interior is covered in intricate hand sculpted and

painted plasterwork, beautiful stained glass rose windows, octagonal balconies, an original mosaic floor and countless other visual details.

Henriet Kiss is delighted with the results.

As the building opens and is taking bookings post pandemic, she expects a busy schedule including plenty of Israeli artists who will be performing. "Good Lighting is essential for the concerts and cultural events that will be staged here and we needed a system that also respected the heritage council requirements."

As well as the sanctuary, Rumbach Street synagogue now has a permanent interactive exhibition / museum on the third floor narrating the story of Hungarian Jews through one extended family, the Pulitzers (Politzers); plus a 40-seat conference hall and a large kosher café. It will be a cultural jewel at the hub of Jewish society in this cosmopolitan and vibrant European capital city.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland







