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Royal Danish Opera Invests in Robe FORTES

Products Involved

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The Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen has invested in 80 new Robe FORTE luminaires in a package featuring 32 x FORTE Profiles, 34 x FORTE Fresnels, 4 FORTE FollowSpots and 10 x iFORTE (IP rated) moving lights, as part of a technical upgrade to ensure that this high-profile venue can offer its productions and creative teams the most appropriate and sustainable technologies to create and craft their art.

Chief LX Sune Schou has worked at the striking and elegant Copenhagen Opera House for 5 years. The venue is one of the most modern such facilities in the world and is located on the island of Holmen in central Copenhagen. Sune is one of three Chief LXs based there and is involved with all aspects of lighting production across all the Opera House's performance spaces.

Designed by Henning Larsen and opened amid an international fanfare in 2005, an average of 12 world-class productions are staged annually, a mix of new and revival works all running in repertoire.

The quest for new moving lights started two years ago.

There were moving lights in the house previously, but these were discharge sources; the lights were obsolete, the spares were getting scarce, and the drive was to source something more efficient and in line with contemporary production values.

Sune and his team – including the house's two other Chief LXs and their four lighting operators – started looking and exhaustively testing all the options to find a good, bright, profile / spot fixture. They also consulted the opinions of some top-level lighting designers with whom they regularly work before making the final decision.

They rigorously examined all fixtures in that same size / class of luminaire which needed to match and exceed the capabilities – and the luminosity – of the previous lights and work well with the 28 metres trim height in the main 1700-seat auditorium.

Obviously, the new lights had to be an LED source, however the most important reason for selecting FORTE was the quality of the optics, and the resulting light coming out of the units.

For an LED source, they met the challenge of being able to function without incurring any chromatic aberrations and shadows when creating soft edges for the beams at different lengths along the focal plane of the zoom, explained Sune.

The venue also generally needs an abundance of profile and wash lamps on the rig, and Robe's FORTE range has both types of lightsource available using the same LED engine, offering identical colours and colour temperatures for the best continuity.

When the full power of the FORTE is not required, as is frequently the case in operatic productions, the engine can be turned down leading to further power saving and greater longevity.

The fact that the LED engine is transferable was a bonus. Robe's TRANSFERABLE ENGINE technology concept offers the possibility of replacing or being able to swap out the LED engine for one with different characteristics.

The new fixtures are positioned on the overhead and side fly bars, making a majority Robe moving light rig now above the stage in this high-profile venue.

The 10 x iFORTES are used for the top side lights, and the reason for having the IP version in these positions is due to their proximity to the humidifiers that run during performances to ensure the singers have the perfect climatic conditions for their voices. These machines are installed immediately above the iFORTES.

Sune is also now looking at a RoboSpot system for additional control of the FORTE FollowSpots to complete the FORTE environment here.

“Having the FORTES saves A LOT of programming time as they all have the same light engines and physical attributes,” he noted, adding that it was also interesting to them when choosing which luminaire, that FORTE is part of a whole family of fixtures. In addition to the FORTE Fresnel and PC wash versions, the TE family currently also includes ESPRITE and PAINTE, all using the same LED source technology.

Troels Oesterbye, one of the Opera House's four lighting operators, is delighted to be working with the FORTES. He observed that it had become "very obvious" that the old moving lights needed to be replaced during the last season.

"The shutters are beautiful and that's a huge advantage for this type of performance, and they are more than bright enough," he concluded.

The first Robe luminaires in the Opera House were some LEDBeam 150s which have proved popular, robust, and useful over the last couple of years, and the new FORTES joined them in time for the new season to kick off with productions of Aida, The Magic Flute, and Eugen Onegin this autumn.

The Old Stage – part of the original Royal Danish Theatre (Det Kongelige Teater or DKT as it is known) – built in 1874 and used primarily for musicals, ballet and some opera, also switched to Robe in 2022 with a large quantity of T2 Fresnels installed to replace all their old wash lights, and they also have T1s in the house under the supervision of the chief LX there, Thomas Bek Jensen.

Sune commented, "So now we all know Robe better in the operational context and the fixtures at DKT have also been working very well in the last year."

He adds that, naturally, great support and back up from the local distributor is essential. "Light Partner's service is exceptional," he stated, referring to Robe's Danish distributor, "They look after us really well and know the importance of finding solutions quickly and efficiently when needed!"

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland

