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Assembly chooses Robe for Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2024

Products Involved

PAINTE® **T1 Profile™** **LEDBeam 150™**

Assembly is right at the heart of the vibrance, action and excitement of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and an integral part of this world-leading celebration of arts and culture, a hotbed of potential new work, talent and ideas providing an innovative forum for experimentalism, drama, humour, music, dance and all things performance.

The 2024 event sees Assembly – one of the largest venue operators at the Fringe – operating 26 pulsating venues featuring over 240 diverse shows embracing multiple entertainment genres, with lighting managed by Martin McLachlan, Assembly’s Festival Fringe head of lighting since 2018.

This year Martin specified an abundance of Robe moving lights for several of Assembly’s key venues.

The Assembly Festival Fringe operation involves over 90 technical staff (covering sound and stage management in addition to lighting) over a six-week period which includes two weeks of build and rehearsal before the three-and-a-half-week festival. Martin, together with a small team of four, oversees the house stage lighting and crew across all venues as well as the lighting needs of all incoming productions.

The venues range in size from 60 up to 840 seats, each with a house lighting rig, designed and chosen to deal with all performances in their respective schedule. The larger ones each feature between 4 and 24 moving lights, many of them Robe, adding up to a total of 72 x Robe LEDBeam 150s, 18 x Robe PAINTES and 7 x Robe T1 Profiles, mostly supplied via rental specialist, Encore.

In addition to these Robe luminaires, Assembly utilises 7 x Avolites – A Robe Business – ART2000 dimmers and 8 x Avolites Powercube PD units.

For Martin, the LEDBeam 150 is a perfect fixture for the house rigs in many of these spaces for its “great colours and zoom, small size and general versatility”. LEDBeam 150s have been on the Assembly spec lists since Martin assumed the head of lighting position in 2018.

It is a project entailing around 6 months of detailed planning, logistics and delivery, the final 3 months up to and including the event being seriously full time!

New this year are 18 x Robe PAINTES, the smallest fixture in Robe’s current TE range of multipurpose spotlights.

All the incoming companies playing Assembly venues use the house lighting rigs to the max, and in many cases additional specials are hired. “Assembly’s needs are very much driven by flexibility, and smaller sized lights are also an asset,” he commented, saying that they were very excited to have PAINTES this year, with 10 in the largest venue space, the 840-capacity Assembly Hall.

“This is another brilliant small fixture,” enthuses Martin about the PAINTE. “It is great for this style of work with its shuttering capabilities and plenty bright enough without being overpowering in some of these rooms.”

The most confined performance area this year to feature Robe moving lights was the 100-capacity Dancebase3 with 5 x LEDBeam 150s.

Martin has worked with various Robe products on different projects for the last 15 years, and generally thinks they are well engineered and reliable. He particularly likes the T1 series and noted that it’s good to see a manufacturer taking the needs of the theatre world “seriously”.

His biggest challenge at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the relentless pace of the installation and production schedule during which all the production elements must be rigged, tech’d and used continuously for the period, coupled with finding solutions to satisfy the demands of multiple shows and theatre companies.

The entire process takes stamina and energy in addition to good organisation, technical awareness, imagination and finding the right lights to work in all scenarios.

Working in temporary and site-specific environments, as almost all of these venues are, can also be galvanising, and of course there are budget parameters that also must be met as well as co-ordinating with many different people and personalities with different levels of experience.

Martin underlines the importance of having reliable fixtures to minimise time consumed with maintenance or repair, and there is little margin for this with some venues having up to a staggering 10 back-to-back shows in a day.

All these elements are also part of the unique vitality, fun and buzz of working on the Fringe, where you can get the chance to stage some outstanding shows that showcase rising talent and capture the spirit of creativity, boldness and adventure that is still at the essence of Edinburgh Fringe.

He comments that it's also a great chance for technicians to grow their experience and hone their skills, and part of his job as Assembly head of lighting is also to ensure that this can be actively facilitated.

The house lighting rig at Assembly's 500-seat Gordon Aikman Theatre (GAT) this year was augmented with 7 x Robe T1 Profiles, part of a sponsorship package agreed with Robe UK. The GAT lineup included an animated mix of comedy, dance, theatre and music shows, from Disney in Drag, to Mythos: Ragnarok, to Murder She Didn't Write, to Russell Howard's Wonderbox: Live.

Robe's show truck was present on site in Edinburgh for 2 weeks, offering training seminars, demonstrations, and product awareness sessions, all co-ordinated by Chris Purnell, product application specialist from Robe UK. This highlighted the Robe, Avolites and Artistic Licence – also a Robe Business - support of the event, whilst providing invaluable insights for technicians and others interested in the dynamic range of relevant products and solutions.

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