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Zwolle theatres Choose Robe

Products Involved

T1 Profile™ **PAINTE®** **LEDBeam 350™** **LEDBeam 150™ FWQ**

Two key producing and receiving performance spaces – Odeon and Spiegel – in the bustling Netherlands regional epicentre of Zwolle chose Robe moving lights as a vital element of their transition to LED lighting journey, with the purchase of 6 x T1 Profiles, 18 x PAINTE Profiles, 24 x LEDBeam 350s and 24 x LEDBeam FWQ 150 Washes, all delivered by Robe’s Benelux distributor, Controllux.

Discussions related to the move to LED started in 2022, and Zwolle Theatre’s head of technical Dennis Bouwhuis and head of lighting Jan Willem Jansen explained that as they already had some older Robe moving lights – ColorWash 250s and ColorSpot 700s – in the inventory, they had already known the brand for a long time and enjoyed its reliability.

The Zwolle Theatre dates back to 1869 and also has the Hanzestrohm Hall (AKA the ‘Small Hall’) for 457 people, one of the oldest bonbonnière-style theatre halls in the Netherlands, and a truly beautiful and historic performance space.

Jan Willem and his team – including Antonello Taranto and Kathy Veldman – also look after all things technical for two other spaces in the original building, the 219-seat Black Box Theatre and the Studio which can accommodate 72 theatre lovers.

The large hall – Spiegel – is located on another site across town. It was built in 2004 and officially opened in 2006 by Queen Beatrix to assist in accommodating larger and more contemporary productions, offering a capacity of 960.

All of these are in the process of changing to LED lighting for the house rigs. The venues all receive and produce shows, and in recent years, have become well known for supplying the full production needs of any incoming.

While being familiar with Robe, the lighting department considered various other LED options from different manufacturers, which culminated in a shootout of shortlisted products in the

Spiegel.

“The productions staged in our different sized buildings are diverse, so we needed the most properly ‘multipurpose’ fixtures available that met several criteria,” Jan Willem explained.

With incoming companies usually keen to use their house lighting systems, they needed a good cross section, and this is why all these fixtures were selected. “These four types of Robe products were clear winners in the shootouts,” he confirmed.

The LEDBeam 350s and 150s were chosen for their sheer versatility, and PAINTEs were a good solution for both the large and small halls being lightweight, bright, quiet and good on power consumption.

Antonello noted that with the Small Hall being such a cozy space, luminaires with a low ambient operating noise were a must. “We checked off separate wish lists of different parameters, some of which overlapped, related to all of the spaces,” he confirmed.

They quickly figured that PAINTE would also work nicely as a conventional spotlight and for key lighting – “it basically fitted every niche as needed!” said Antonello, highlighting that the short changeover times also informed the choices, assisting in the quick, straightforward, and efficient setting up of shows.

The first fixtures to be upgraded were those above the stage, stated Jan Willem, but when it came to front lighting, the T1 Profile with its multispectral lightsource ... was THE one! The first time they were used on a show in the Spiegel, all the crew immediately wanted more, and everyone has been hugely impressed with what a real difference they make to how any show or performer can be lit.

“The T1 profiles really completed the whole set of fixtures for us. We felt that – with PAINTEs, LEDBeam 350s and LEDBeam 150 FQWs with the fresnel-wash output – they rounded off the equation perfectly and would work elegantly and practically in conjunction with one another,” commented Jan Willem.

All the new Robe fixtures move between the four venues. They are currently still using some conventionals in all spaces, but this will soon be changing.

The PAINTEs are used in the Small Hall and the Spiegel; the LEDWash 350s are rigged in the Spiegel; the LEDBeam 150s are in the Main building, with the T1s in the Spiegel / Large Hall.

The combinations change each week depending on the different show schedules and their respective production requirements.

Zwolle Theatre produces around 300 shows and events a year, operating with at least one or more of their spaces in use year-round, so it's a busy and frenetic environment where there is always something new ... and rarely a dull moment!

The types of production range from pure theatre shows like drama and dance to comedy, musicals, music concerts and opera as well as corporate, business, and industrial events.

"We're very happy overall with Robe," Jan Willem sums up. "All the visiting lighting designers and operators enjoy working with the brand, and it's important for us to offer the best production options for their shows to look great."

He thinks fixtures like LEDBeam 150s and 350s have become 'industry standard', and he underscores the importance of the local after-sales service and support from Controllux, a relationship that has been fostered with Zwolle Theatre over many years by Dennis Bouwhuis, who oversees all the technical departments.

www.zwolsetheaters.nl/events

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