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Robe T1s for NTS Panopticon Production

The National Theatre of Scotland's acclaimed production of *The Panopticon* at The Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, directed by Debbie Hannan and lit by Simon Wilkinson, was the first stage production of Jenni Fagan's visceral and brutal narrative of life and friendship.

It follows the journey of 15-year-old Anais Hendricks, failed by most adults she has ever met, who ends up in the Panopticon, a young offenders institution. Inside its distinctive circular architecture amidst a regime of control and dehumanisation, residents develop intense bonds.

Simon was asked to work on the show by Debbie Hannan, and decided to try out Robe's T1 Profile moving light, a flexible and quality multi-functional LED luminaire which has been developed for theatre applications.

One of the challenges of lighting the piece was the imposing geometric set - a series of column-like flats that rotated to offer different structural formats - created by scenic designer Max Johns. These were also a projection surface for video material produced by Lewis den Hertog, providing critical locational information and dramatic digital backdrops.

Simon's starting point was ensuring that lighting and video worked as fluid dramatic partners in the piece.

The six Robe T1 Profiles were all rigged on FOH booms.

Simon needed a quality fixture with accurate shuttering to keep the light off the projections and they had very limited fit-up time, so a conventional luminaire solution was not feasible. He needed good CRI rendering and skin tones from these luminaires ... and plenty of punch when needed.

He looked at what was available. He'd seen a T1 Profile demo and he'd used Robe's DL4S and DL7S Profile fixtures before, so he had some idea of what to expect, but "in some ways this was also an experiment to see exactly what the T1 could achieve."

The lights were used for key lighting and for shuttered sources picking out the action all over the stage. That was his basic requirement, but once the tech period commenced, he started using several additional T1 features that he'd not necessarily anticipated.

The pace of the show flipped between numerous locations in short, tense scenes with frantic quick changes, an energy that demanded alertness and concentration. The stark reality of the care institution and system was juxtaposed with the fantasy sequences going on in Anais' head as she imagined herself in another world.

The whole creative team worked hard to develop a perceptive visual dichotomy through which audiences could live and engage in this contrast.

"Overall, I was really impressed with the T1s!" says Simon, "I particularly loved the punchy tungsten style facilitated by the additive colour mixing, and the way the light brought a beautiful glow to the faces." This was an effect he used consistently throughout on actress Anna Russell Martin who played Anais, the main

protagonist.

He also commented that there was easily enough intensity on the T1 to cut through some powerful upper rear lighting fixtures, and at times he even had to turn the output down.

The T1s were supplied to the production by Cambridge-based rental company CEG. Lighting for The Panopticon was programmed by Ben Terry and run on one of the National Theatre of Scotland's EOS consoles.

The production ran for two weeks at The Traverse where it was extremely well received by public and critics.

On the strength of this first experience with T1s, Simon then specified them for another production, The Season, a musical staged at Northampton Derngate Theatre where they were used for both front and rear lighting.

Photo Credit: Mihaela Bodlovic









Theatre