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## Ugala Theatre Viljandi

The Baltic state of Estonia is a country with a population of just over 1.3 million ... and one of the strongest theatre-going traditions amongst all ages and demographics, and as a result, there is a lively and eclectic mix of affordable performance options to cater for many tastes.

The Ugala Theatre in Viljandi is one of a number of state funded theatres and a major premium quality producing house.

The most recent round of refurbishment at Ugala in 2017 resulted in a brand new stage machinery system for the 300 capacity main house, which also means they can now configure the space in any format - end-on, traverse, in the round, etc., - which has opened up a whole new world of staging possibilities.

With this new versatility, they decided the time was also right for some new moving lights in the rig, and after a lot of consultation, decided on 10 x Robe DL7S Profiles and 10 x BMFL Blades.

The town also has the only technical theatre training facility in Estonia which is a department of the Tartu University, and happens to have a Robe moving light rig!

Mari-Riin Villemsoo is one of the venue's four person lighting technical team, who are all also lighting designers in their own right, and she told us what a difference that having these new moving lights in the inventory is making to their day-to-day operation.

Mari-Riin has been working full time at the theatre for a year and before that, worked as a freelance designer after graduating with the Lighting Design & Technical Theatre qualification from Tartu University.

The DL7S Profiles are used for front lighting, a task for which the shutters are "perfect" says Marie-Riin. The output is also ideal for their needs. "Using moving lights here for front light saves huge amounts of time".

Above the stage, the use of conventionals is limited, so once again moving lights bring greater flexibility and efficiency.

She likes the colours in both the BMFLs and DL7S Profiles, "they are extremely well matched and work complementarily", and due to the vast colour range they can also be matched very well to the gelled conventional lights that are still in the system.

Mari-Riin likes using a mix of moving and conventional lights in her designs. She appreciates the warmth and texture of the conventional sources and that 'classic theatrical' feel they bring to the visual equation.

The lights are controlled from an ETC Gio console, with a smaller Gio @5 for the 150-seater black box space.

The 8 - 10 new productions each year at Ugala play in rep, so schedules are always busy, and as well as these, they also accommodate concerts, parties and events.

Mari-Riin first encountered Robe products at University where she used their trusty MMX Spots and LEDWash 600s regularly whilst developing her lighting skills.

“As the moving light brand I have used the most for shows and live events, I automatically think of Robe first” she says. “The products are all designed to be very practical to use from a tech’s angle as well as being excellent creative tools for the designer” she stated, adding that the service from Estonian distributor E&T is also very good. “We can call any time if we have an issue and they always come back with a solution.”

The lighting team at Viljandi all operate and design shows and work across all their venues using the various different lights for most productions, so they know first-hand the fixtures’ potential, and are always pushing to see what new effects can be created.

As a designer Marie-Riin relishes creating an atmosphere and letting the lighting guide viewers through unfolding narratives via visual dramaturgy. She is also interested in light art and thinks that potentially any lighting design is effectively a piece of art.

The first time she used the DL7S Profiles for a show it was a big rig and they had only one day of prep ... but she picked up the basics of programming the luminaires in about an hour, and once that was done, started exploring all the cool possibilities they brought to the production.

The best part, she says, was being able to mix moving lights and conventionals without it looking strange or out of place, or there being any radical contrasts between the different light sources. “They really could be blended so nicely together using the DL7S Profiles” she concluded.

This is an ideal choice for theatre venues looking at purchasing new moving lights which can also assist in maximizing their existing lights, as well as those starting with a complete new moving light rig!

Photo Credit: Gabriela Liivamägi













Theatre