Anolis for Rakkestad theatre

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An Anolis Ambiane and Eminere auditorium lighting installation is part of a complete revamp at the Rakkestad Theatre, a busy community hub and performance venue serving the Rakkestad municipality and surrounding areas of this thriving and diverse Norwegian agricultural heartland.

Opened in 1988, general manager Magne Bjørnstad oversees everything happening at the 286-capacity venue. Last year this included the radical makeover and complete renovation incorporating the new auditorium lighting, for which he approached stage lighting professional and expert, Lars Kristian Bakke.

Lars lives locally, and provided general advice about the lighting, which before the upgrade was not specifically optimised for any style of event. Lars has been involved with the theatre since he was about 12 years old. It was one of the places that first inspired his passion for lighting, and it holds many landmark memories for him, including operating a ‘real’ lighting desk for the first time! He now works for top Norwegian sales company, Norsk Sceneteknikk, and also has his own lighting design side projects.

Rakkestad Theatre hosts music events and concerts, theatre, and drama productions, it screens movies, is utilised as a rehearsal space as well as being hired out for events, conferences, meetings and lectures, so it is truly ‘multi-purpose’. Next door is a brand-new Cultural School – for the study of music, theatre & dance – which was completed and opened in 2021, just ahead of the theatre receiving its revamp.

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The previous auditorium lighting scheme had been tungsten, which apart from looking dingy and dirty was cost inefficient. Naturally, thinking of sustainability as well as atmosphere, it was a given that this should be replaced with LED, and Lars suggested a combination of Anolis Ambiane and Eminere fixtures.

“I know from my own experience that Anolis is quality engineered and very dependable,” he stated, “it ticked all the boxes on the spec sheet, and I had also heard that Ambiane had been very successful in other such house lighting scenarios.” He still needed additional detail and information from the factory in the Czech Republic before confirming the specification, and commented, “They were extremely helpful and knowledgeable, and nothing was too much trouble to help me find an excellent solution.”

Stage lighting consultant Lars Kristian Bakke on the left with Rakkestad Theatre general manager Magne

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Bjørnstad

“We wanted a fixture that had a good range of CT whites and could provide a range of colours for softer or special lighting over the auditorium,” he explained, so 30 x Anolis Ambiane HP111 RGBW luminaires were purchased and installed by a local electrical engineering company.

The mid-size Ambiane is designed for lower ceiling installations just like this, and they were fitted with 60-degree lenses.

Anolis’ L3™ (Low Light Linearity) dimming system enables seamless fades to black and these fixtures are easily controlled via DMX and a Pharos touch screen system. They can also be patched into the main stage lighting console for more integrated control when needed.

At the back of the seating, Lars specified 10 x Anolis Eminere 4 RGBW LED strips for washing the back wall and illuminating the corridor just in front running behind the back row of seats which is one of the main entry / exit routes for guests. He liked the flexibility of these and the fact that the LEDs can be controlled as 4 individual zones or with all four combined.

The Eminere range offers precision optics and is available in four sizes – 4 being the longest – and this was another great choice for this interior application.

Before this technical refit, Rakkestad Theatre had very little of its own kit, but it is now able to offer full production lighting and audio packages.

Lars commissioned and programmed the Anolis lights with a range of pre-set looks and scenes for all occasions, which can be quickly and easily recalled using a touch panel. “The system makes a huge difference to everyone’s positive first impressions on walk-in,” he noted.

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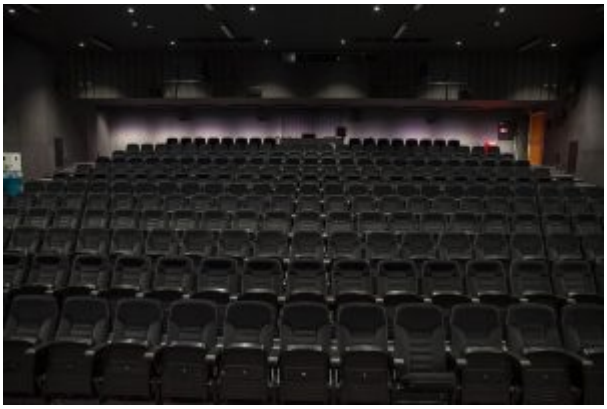

The extensive refurbishment also included complete sound proofing and acoustic treatment around the theatre space; the ceiling was raised and the old ceiling – complete with its previous gen lighting – was ripped out and replaced with a new LED stage lighting installation. The basic infrastructure has also been transformed with the implementation of full DMX and ethernet networking and control capabilities throughout the entire room.

The old movie screen was replaced with a larger retractable one that placed much closer to the audience, dropping down at the front of the stage (and the relevant PA stacks move down on motorised fly bars). A smaller roll down screen was fitted upstage for lectures and presentations.

A basic winch bar system was already installed in an earlier upgrade in 2011, but additional bars were automated in this one.

Additional fly bars have been added over the stage for lighting and AV kit and there is a complete new set of stage drapes, so the space is massively more flexible and usable as well as being a great place in which to work and completely modern, re-purposed for the future.

As a consequence of all this new functionality, the Theatre is even more in demand since everything reopened post-Covid and is once again flourishing at the heart of the Rakkestad community.

Photos: by Louise Stickland

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