

Chaparral High School installs top-grade Vari-Lite luminaires to enhance professional learning

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Killeen, TX, USA - The brand-new Chaparral High School in the central Texas city of Killeen opened its doors in August 2022 with a state-of-the-art performing arts wing designed to elevate student learning. It is equipped with an array of luminaires from Vari-Lite, the originators of the modern moving head and a [Signify](#) (Euronext: LIGHT) entertainment lighting brand, including a Neo and Vision.Net control system, VL800, Acclaim LED and Coda LED fixtures, and Aurora LED Strips.

The arts center within the \$147 million school boasts a 1,200-seater auditorium, band, choir, and orchestra rooms, a black box theater, set design workshops and teaching spaces, built by

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American Constructors and designed by James Fauver at PBK Architects.

“Our mission was to provide an integrated, fully networked, professional standard stage lighting system that would be intuitive to learn, access and use for both students and staff,” says Erich Friend, principal consultant at theater consultancy, Teqniqal Systems. “Our desired outcome was that they would be able to create compelling stage shows, in any format or configuration, quickly and efficiently.”



To achieve intuitive operation and powerful, wide access to the lighting system, the team installed Vision.Net touchscreens, button stations and sensors at strategic locations around the building. “We wanted granular control from every part of the building,” Friend says. “The lights in the auditorium, including the blue backstage running lights, work lights and house lights are DMX- controlled individually. Multiple network switches feed over 73 DMX 3 Port Nodes throughout the facility. Each lighting control panel is programmed to perform specific actions that relate to their specific location. For example, in the fly galleries, there are controls for the work lights and show running lights, and out in the entry vestibules there are entry stations, ensuring no one needs to ever walk into a dark theater. We even integrated a Ghost Light function into the houselight presets over the stage apron so the drop-off remains visible when the rest of the theater is shut-down.”

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Other key aspects to the setup include a system over-ride that will put the entire theater into an automated five-minute shutdown, as well as astronomical time control with the potential to deliver hundreds of events with full day-of-the-week and calendar scheduling, which has been programmed to power down the system at a predetermined time each day.

“We’ve made some actions and control ports student-proof to ensure the venue is consistently safe for everyone,” says Todd Graham, project manager at Killeen High School. “During a show, the stage manager can take control of all the remote stations and certain control panels are recessed into the wall - or locked - so they cannot accidentally be activated.”

Every lighting scenario has been thought about from the multi-configurable black box to the main auditorium, which can be organized as a concert hall or a musical theater space. The result is a dynamic environment, replete with luminaires that have been selected and positioned to satisfy all possible scenarios.



In the performing arts spaces, Aurora LED Strips have been chosen to illuminate the orchestra and for up-lighting or down-lighting clothes and scenery. Other luminaires installed include Acclaim LED PLE, Acclaim LED Fresnel and Acclaim LED Zoomspots, Coda LED, and VL800 Series Event Profile and Event Wash fixtures. Together, they cater for everything from dance to theater, musicals, rock music and general presentations both in the main auditorium and black box studio.

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Mandy Stockhausen at representatives Bell & McCoy collaborated with Jeff O'Brien, Regional Sales Manager, Vari-Lite at Signify, on the project, sourcing the Vari-Lite rig from dealer, BATT'S AVL. The Vari-Lite team also delivered comprehensive training on the Neo console, Vision.Net and fixtures.

Graham comments: "The students are thrilled to work with this new technology. The auditorium lighting has been eye-opening for our students, many of whom have transferred from schools with older facilities. Their main takeaways have been how to operate the lighting control, follow spotlights, and fly systems during the run of a musical performance.

"The venue has been booked with concerts and events from organizations across the area, and we are looking forward to using our new Vision.Net and Neo control system and the new lighting rig in future productions. I am excited and honored to have the technology exposure for our scholars to get them college and career ready."

Samantha Dunaway, Theater Director at Chaparral High School, says: "I've never worked in such a modern well-equipped venue; it's a real privilege creatively. Having only LED luminaires means we have saved a lot of set-up time and the students get creative much faster. The health and safety of the students is also hugely improved as we don't have to send them up ladders to change gels and gobos or focus fixtures, and we can create multiple moods and atmospheres on stage quickly and easily. Our students have been given the highest specification professional standard lighting system. If they want to go into technical theater as a profession, then everything they could possibly need to flourish is right here."