

# **Gearhouse Splitbeam Invests in Robe iFORTES**

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South African theatrical technical production specialist, Gearhouse Splitbeam, has invested in 16 new Robe iFORTE moving lights which are out on a major new GWB Entertainment production of the iconic Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, "Cats", one of the world's longest running, most popular and successful musicals.

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Presented in collaboration with Peter Toerien Productions by arrangement with The Really Useful Group, and in association with Cape Town Opera, this production kicked off in South Africa, playing a total of 77 shows at Artscape in Cape Town and Montecasino's Teatro in Johannesburg between December and February, and will be on the road in Asia for at least the next 18 months.

The original 1981 lighting design was created by the legendary Howard Eaton who came out to co-ordinate and oversee re-lighting the show in Cape Town, which now has a flourish of contemporary styling together with some of the latest technologies, while all the conceptual and creative essence of this captivating lighting project remains the same.

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For this version, the lighting director and programmer was David Totaro, and when Splitbeam's CEO Alistair Kilbee suggested utilising iFORTES to provide powerful front and back lighting, he and Howard agreed and were happy to work with these fixtures.

When Splitbeam knew that they would be supplying lighting for the tour and it was decided that – given the duration of the tour – investment was the way-to-go, Splitbeam's head of lighting, Mathew Lewis, started looking at all the available options, then took his recommendations for Alistair.



Mathew explained that, seeing this as a great opportunity to invest in a new round of luminaires,

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they ideally wanted a light that would be robust, flexible and future proof, and iFORTES ticked all the boxes.

The luminaires were delivered by South Africa's highly enthusiastic distributor, DWR Distribution, in time for the prep for Cape Town.

The company already has 48 x Robe ESPRITE Fresnels, purchased in 2025 with the HCF (High Colour Fidelity) LED engines installed, together with a set of HP (High Power) TRANSFERABLE ENGINES - ready for swapping out according to show requirements - and a set of PC lenses to offer a choice of ESPRITE Fresnels or PCs.

They also have 22 x Tetra2s, which, together with the ESPRITES, have been constantly working and proved rock solid, so there was already plenty of logic and good experience leading them back to Robe.

This, coupled with the power and quality of light offered by the iFORTES, cemented the belief that this was the best option. "International LDs are generally happy to work with Robe products," noted Alistair, so when the *Cats* creative team indicated that this was also the case with them, the decision was confirmed.

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Mathew commented, “In terms of high-powered long throw fixtures, we think iFORTE is the best available right now, especially in colour and output quality.”

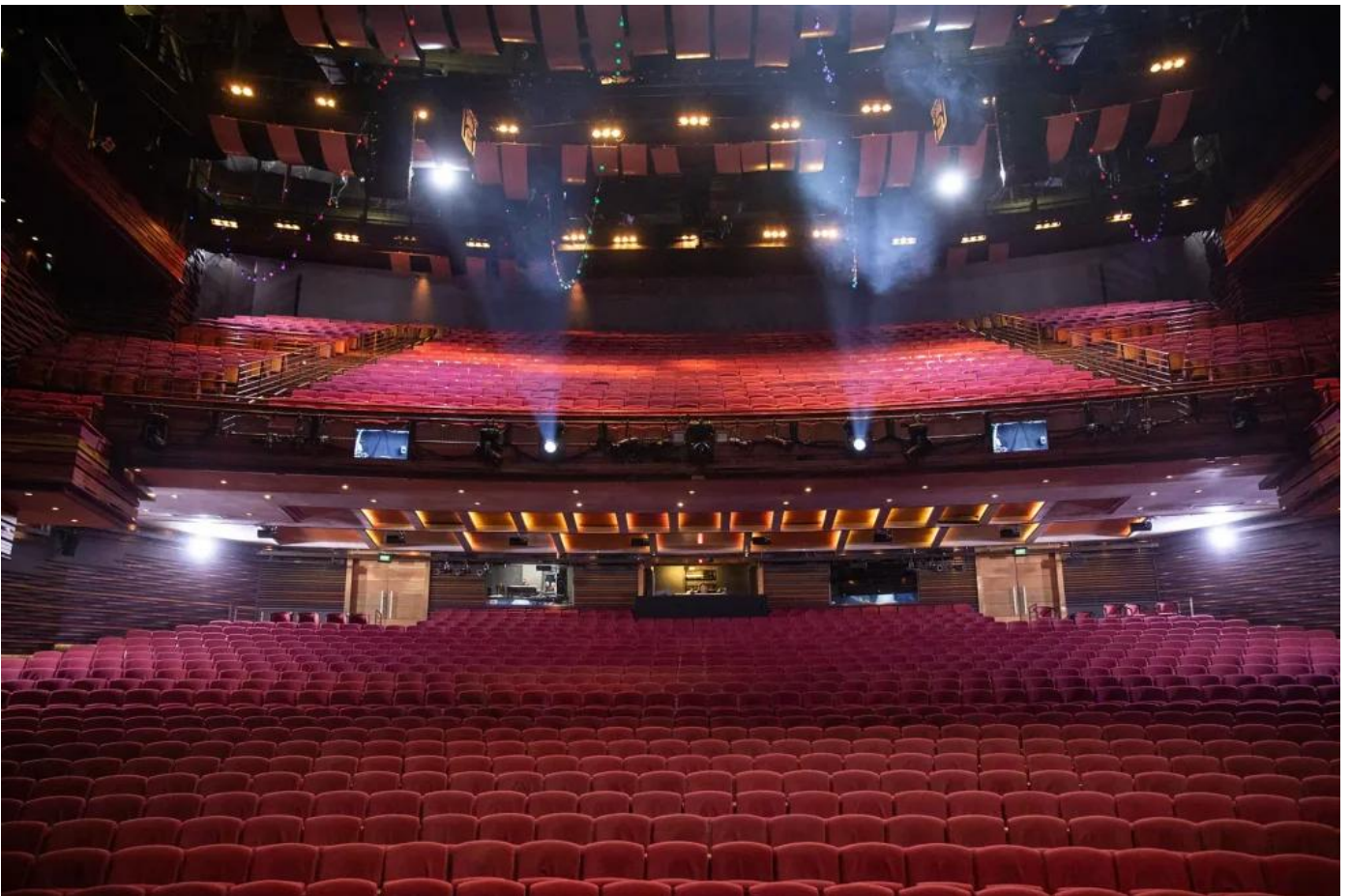
He added that - looking ahead to the fixtures’ lifespan beyond the *Cats* tour - as part of the Gearhouse South Africa (GHSa) Group, which has also already invested in ESPRITES and a huge amount of other Robe fixtures both historically and recently for their busy event, show, concert and festival schedule, it made sense to align brand-wise and widen the Group wide stock holding.

Alistair further highlighted that iFORTES are ideal for pairing with GHSa’s RoboSpot systems, which “we see appearing more and more frequently on riders and tech specs.” He added that out

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of all the remote follow systems available, in SA, they like the idea of a system that still has all the extra flexibility and control ... and a human operator at the core.

For the *Cats* shows in South Africa, the iFORTES were positioned on the balcony rails and advanced trusses to the front and over the stage to the rear and provided key lighting and specials in addition to effects.



**Photos: By Chris Duys**