

Gearhouse Splitbeam Keeps All Options Open with Robe

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Johannesburg-based theatrical lighting rental specialist Splitbeam – part of the Gearhouse South Africa Group – has invested in new Robe ESPRITE Fresnels and Tetra2 moving lights to help service its busy, vibrant, and varied client base.

The 48 x ESPRITES were purchased with the HCF (High Colour Fidelity) LED engines installed and Splitbeam simultaneously bought the HP (High Power) TRANSFERABLE ENGINES to have handy for swapping these out according to the show's requirements, together with a set of PC lenses to offer a choice of ESPRITE Fresnel or PC.

The company is strongly 'brand-agnostic' explained managing director, Alistair Kilbee, so the investment was based on customer demands – lighting designer requests and technical rider specifications:

“These are THE fixtures that people are asking for right now, so we need them onboard to ensure we can offer the very best service and standards.”

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My Fair Lady. Picture: Nardus Engelbrecht

The new Robe products have been used on several high-profile productions including “My Fair Lady” with lighting designed by Denis Hutchinson which recently played at Teatro Montecasino in Johannesburg; “Dear Evan Hansen” staged at Artscape in Cape Town with lighting by Niall Griffin; and “Magic Box” which is currently touring, including a run at Abu Dhabi’s Etihad Arena in February, where LD David Seldes utilised 36 x Tetra2s.

In addition to being frequently requested, the new Robe luminaires are part of an ongoing investment process designed to keep the best and most appropriate technologies and innovations available. “We are all about providing the correct specifications for each individual

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production,” confirms Splitbeam’s head of lighting, Mat Lewis.



My Fair Lady. Picture: Nardus Engelbrecht

The flexibility and value of Robe’s TE fixtures for a theatrically orientated rental operation is clearly a benefit for Splitbeam, and this was a major deciding factor in choosing the ESPRITE Fresnels, after looking at and testing several options.

The lights were supplied by Robe’s South African distributor, DWR. Their account manager Kevin Stannett suggested that Splitbeam looked at the ESPRITE Fresnel when he learned that Alistair

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and Mat were on the hunt for theatrical grade wash fixtures.

Two critical features that Alistair and Mat were looking for were excellent colour rendering – an area in which Robe’s ranges excel – and internal scrim which is another key for lighting theatrical shows.

Theatre lighting designers are demanding and often hard to please – as Robe has learnt over the years, from which the manufacturer has been keen to learn and take this knowledge onboard to produce some truly impressive fixtures that work in this exacting creative environment.

The Tetras2s – 22 x Tetra2s and 22 x iTetra2s – are being used on all three of the productions mentioned above – and they were picked for being adaptable and multifunctional.

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Dear Evan Hansen. Picture: Daniel Manners

They can be used as a wash, as set practicals or as effects lights. Everyone loves the flower effect and the numerous kinetic and twinkling looks that can be created as well as the big sweeps of light and colour.

On "Dear Evan Hansen", Tetra2s were used on a circular truss to create a wall of light above the stage and became central to the show, effectively part of the set as well as integral to the lighting design.

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Tetra2s are also a perfect solution to get a lot of light sources into the often space-challenged lighting grids and fly bar systems which are common in South Africa.



Dear Evan Hansen. Picture: Daniel Manners

Apart from looking great in theatre shows, both these two fixture types can also be used for television and broadcast work or film and cinematic applications.

Splitbeam is delighted with the ESPRITE Fresnels and Tetra2s, which are their first substantial Robe purchases for some years. All the fixtures have proved highly reliable with no issues at all

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across multiple shows and venue moves.

The theatre world's initial reticence in transitioning to LED had much to do with the early LED technology and products not being able to adequately emulate the beautifully soft and textured nuances of incandescent sources, especially at low levels and during slow fades, etc. This is no longer the case and is an area that Robe has addressed with optical precision to produce characteristics in their theatrical ranges that are almost indistinguishable from a halogen source.

