

grandMA3 for Little Theatre



Leon Rossouw, Technical Manager at The Little Theatre, UNISA.

The Little Theatre, based at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, has upgraded to a grandMA3 light console as the theatre moves into its dance season, hosting various performances from ballet to contemporary.

“Although our previous console served us well, it was over nine years old,” explains Technical Manager Leon Rossouw. “We were having issues with updating fixture libraries and the start-up time for the console was time consuming. Software updates were no longer rolled out as the console had been discontinued a few years back

already and some of the hardware was also giving me major hassles.”

In 2010, the Little Theatre decided to focus on promoting theatres in schools and youth groups instead of being a money generating playhouse. While their main clientele consists of private dance studios, schools and drama groups they also host various performing art competitions and Eisteddfods. A number of live acts and production companies use the theatre for music videos, live performances and album launches. Apart from that, the theatre has hosted some of Unisa’s most prolific colloquiums, book launches, seminars, debates and other events.

“As the Little Theatre rarely host shows that run for more than a week, and from time to time even run three separate shows in the same week, there is not much room for things to go wrong or break down,” said Leon, who with Theatre Manager Jan Steyn are the only permanent staff at the venue.

Leon confesses that he was a complete newbie to the MA platform! “Even when I had the opportunity to have a MA in front of me, it was mainly as an operator or doing minor tweaks here and there, it just always worked out that way,” he explains. “But the transformation from our previous console to the MA3 was extremely smooth. I would really like to thank Victor Vermaak from DWR Distribution for initially arranging a demonstration and for assisting me with the quotations. He did an awesome job! Thank you also to the incredible technical support I received from Jannie de Jager and Olebogeng Boinamo. It has been a joy dealing with DWR.”

The ‘MA rookie’ found the console easy enough to operate and all the features were logical. “There are a number of ways to do the same thing, and as I tried techniques that made sense to me, the console would just go with it!” Leon explains.



Thumbs up for MA3

Having experimented with the new grandMA3 light, the dual-encoders have proven to be a handy feature especially during programming, and according to Leon, the console works like a charm even in Mode 2. “The letterbox screens are features I don’t know how I ever did without,” he grins. “Having everything close by and adapting to settings during programming makes it a real pleasure to work on. Although I am still operating our shows in Mode 2, I have played around in Mode 3 and personally feel that the rotary knobs are going to be very useful. There is also a feature for assigning the path of travel for movers which I’m very excited about. Many productions are dependent on moving lights following a specific path when going from one cue to the next or even in loops or chases. In the past this would take me quite some time to set up.”

Having spent some time presenting training at the Little Theatre, Jannie de Jager noticed that Leon was passionate about sharing his knowledge with students. “Leon is very pro-education and it’s wonderful to see,” said Jannie. Leon regularly encourages students from schools to operate and light their own performances and now he is introducing them to the MA Platform. “For the youngsters, the colour changing light pipes on the executors are one of the coolest features!” he added.

Victor Vermaak sums it all up, “Leon is hands-on, heading both lighting and audio at The Little Theatre. He is a theatre person through and through and it’s exciting to see his passion and skill being passed down to the next generation. That’s what it’s all about.”