

Johannesburg Civic Theatre boasts Robe and ADB



(Above): Opera Mania With his father, Dan

Riley, having played an instrumental role in supplying and installing equipment in the Johannesburg Civic Theatre in 1992, it has been an privilege for Duncan Riley to continue servicing the very same theatre well over a decade later. In a tender awarded to DWR Distribution at the end of last year, 18 Robe Color Wash 700 units as well as ADB dimmers were stipulated.

“Basically Simon James from the Civic Theatre got hold of me and wanted pricing on the units last year in October,” commented Duncan. “He had got advice from LD Denis Hutchinson on what lights to buy and the Robe 700 units were recommended. I gave Simon the prices but due to the amount of the order, the job went out to tender.”

It was with much frustration that Duncan found himself in a roadblock and traffic jam on the day of delivering the tender after DWR’s Cherine Viney had carefully assisted with the paperwork. To say there was pressure in getting it there on time is an underestimate!

Since the Civic have taken ownership of both Robe and ADB, there has been no looking back. Enos Ramoroko joined the theatre in 1994. Initially starting off as a lighting technician, he was promoted to Senior Lighting, then head of Lighting, and currently holds the position of Stage Officer, managing the stage services and equipment back stage.



(Above): Another scene from Opera Mania

“We have been waiting to have these lights for a very long time,” said Enos. “We are very happy to have them. Normally we hired in moving lights, and even though my experience with these units wasn’t great, I did get to use various brands. Of all the lights I’ve used, Robe has turned out to be the best. The units were primarily purchased as a cost saving on power and also to add value to the service we render to our clients at no extra cost.” As a further confirmation, he adds that lighting designers Declan Randall and Simon King have come in singing Robe’s praises.

The units have already been used on various productions including Opera Manio, Aida and Dawn Laga and friends.

“I was really blown away by the units,” Enos continues. “Instead of using 24 lights I’m only using six which makes life a bit easier.” He particularly enjoys the colour wheel and the soft and subtle edge it creates when moving from one colour to the next. “The electric ballast of course is very good.”

As for the ADB dimmers, Enos almost failed to mention them. “I have forgotten where the dimmer room is in the Thabong Theatre, previously known as the People’s Theatre,” he smiles. “I use to have to fix dimmers on a daily basis!”

Enos added that a huge contributing factor to DWR Distribution winning the tender had to do with the longstanding relationship the theatre has enjoyed in regard to service with both Dan and Duncan Riley. “I knew Duncan’s father while I was still working at the Alexander’s when Aubrey Ndaba was still an apprentice,” he says. “For us it’s important in a theatre to have service. I can call at midnight and Duncan always comes.”