

MDG goes under the sea for The Little Mermaid at Helsinki City Theatre

Posted on November 27, 2019



Helsinki City Theatre is putting on the Disney magic this season with its lavish musical production of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. The theatre's annual musical production is always a major part of its programme: *The Little Mermaid* plays in repertoire in the 950-seat main theatre for over 120 performances from August 2019 to Spring 2020, including the all-important Christmas period. Helping to create the magical underwater atmosphere are haze, fog and low-fog generators from MDG.

In this Disney adaptation of the original story, mermaid Ariel falls in love with human Prince Eric, and sells her beautiful voice to the sea witch Ursula in exchange for legs so she can join him in the surface world.

The ambitious production has been put together by a very talented creative team: director Samuel Harjanne, set designer Peter Ahlqvist and costume designer Pirjo Liiri-Majava, all

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of whom are from Finland, and choreographer Gunilla Olsson-Karlsson from Sweden. Characters are also brought to life with liberal use of flying, and puppetry from UK-based Stitches and Glue. The puppetry and flying demands good haze coverage in all three dimensions, both to create atmosphere and also to mask and highlight the puppetry and set to its best effect.



Helsinki City Theatre's resident lighting designer of nine years, William Iles, chose MDG generators to create the necessary haze for this magical production, using an ATMe haze generator and theONE™ dual-mode haze and fog generator for general ambience, and an ICE FOG Q with a Round Floor Pocket for low fog effects.

"The haze came in handy for creating the illusion of the underwater world with beams of sunlight filtering down to the bottom of the sea," he says. "With the even distribution of the haze at all levels, we could create the illusion of a very three-dimensional world."

theONE™ and the ATMe generator were already part of Helsinki City Theatre's own equipment

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inventory, and are rigged on either side of the stage in a mid-position on the proscenium towers from where the haze spreads evenly throughout the stage and auditorium. “We have owned theONE™ for two years and have used it on many shows and are very happy with it,” says Iles. “It really does the all the work in one unit and fills the stage quite happily by itself. However, because our proscenium is 25m wide and we wanted to fill the auditorium as well as the stage for this production, we brought in the ATMe haze generator to help out. This is more from an aesthetic point of view than volume of output: because of the rigging positions, any heavy input of haze would be visible to the audience, so by using two machines from opposite sides of the proscenium, I can run them at a much lower output and achieve a more subtle effect with a nice, even haze that emanates imperceptibly from both sides.”

The ICE FOG Q and its associated Round Floor Pocket (RFP) are both new to the Helsinki City Theatre and were supplied by MDG’s exclusive Finnish distributor, msonic oy. The ICE FOG Q generator is located under the stage revolve, where it rotates with it, and the low fog is ducted out through the RFP situated centre stage. “We bought the ICE FOG Q specifically for the show but it will certainly be used on many productions in future!” says Iles. “I have to say I’m really happy with it. The low fog effect is very cool: it stays really low, and after stopping the output, it dissolves very quickly so doesn’t linger into the next scene. And, most importantly, it leaves no residue on the floor which is a problem we have had with previous equipment in the past.”



The low fog really comes into its own in two key scenes during *The Little Mermaid*: firstly in an evening scene when Ariel and Prince Eric are rowing a small boat on the lagoon, surrounded by

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creatures who are waiting for them to kiss. “The low fog really works well for this as the little boat sits amid the smooth rolling billows of white fog and really adds to the romantic nature of the scene,” says Iles.

The second scene by contrast is full of drama as Prince Eric tries to find Ariel by following her voice out to sea amid a storm. “The mast of the ship rises out of small hatch in the stage which is covered with the ICE FOG Q output so creating an image of the ship above a foggy sea,” explains Iles. “In all, between these two scenes, we need around 10 minutes of low fog for every show - which is a lot of fog. However, one cannister of low pressure CO₂ will last us for 15-20 shows so we are very happy with the economy of the ICE FOG Q.”

“Helsinki City Theatre’s *The Little Mermaid* really is an amazing show,” says msonic’s lighting sales manager, Janne Koivulahti. “We are really pleased to hear such testimonials from our important customer about MDG’s products. We believe Helsinki City Theatre deserves the maximum praise for their visualization because of the sheer size of the production and the huge amount of work carried out by the talented artistic and technical team. msonic oy is proud to stand alongside world-class MDG in giving them full support.”

For more information on all MDG’s fog, haze and atmosphere generators, visit www.mdgfog.com

Photos:

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