

QUEEN OF FLANDERS courtesy MONDO magazine



Celebrating 15 years of performances Madame Zingara's new home – Queen of Flanders, is brought to life with the help of theatre rental specialist Splitbeam. **Mondo Magazine kindly allowed DWR the use of this article.**

Madame Zingara's South African travelling theatrical experience has been delighting guests with its performances by outstanding South African and international award winning acts, classical music and brightly coloured costumes – it is easy to see why this unique show has been a success.

To celebrate Madame Zingara's fifteenth anniversary, director Richard Griffin has created a new production – The Celebration – in a magnificent custom- built venue. Named the Queen of Flanders the three-storey high, 650-seater handcrafted mirrored palace features upper level balconies, luxurious interiors and is located on the Cape Town's main public square – Grand Parade.

To help with the creation of Madame Zingara's new home, theatre rental specialist Splitbeam and Light Designer, Mannie Manim were chosen to enhance the technological theatrics and production. Splitbeam, part of the Gearhouse Group, provides equipment rental packages specifically for long term hire on theatrical productions and was therefore the right choice to supply both lighting and sound for the production. Richard Griffin, the founder of Madame Zingara and the creative genius behind the iconic brand directed the electrifying production, assisted by Marc Colli.

"The design process began with the creative team, wardrobe and art department," said Richard. "Analysing the different acts with the intention of creating one-off effects in a unique space of the three storey mirrored tent. The technology brief aimed to create a sound and lighting experience where every guest is immersed in the space, playing on the 3,500 bevelled mirrors and creating an onstage experience for clients with continual shifts of technology."

Helen Surgeson, Splitbeam's Key Account Manager discussed the thought process behind the equipment selection: "The Queen of Flanders Spiegeltent [mirrored tent] is a temporary venue that tours with the production. Unlike its predecessors this newly designed tent was a triple volume space with the audience on two levels. This meant that the stage is now also on two levels and the aerial acts are able to reach even greater heights. The lighting and audio equipment needed to be clear of the performance area and could not impede

audience sightlines in any way. "Therefore all equipment was rigged at maximum possible height," Helen continued.



"The lighting design carefully considered positioning, to light the stage without blinding performers or the audience. Working in the round, with tables close to the stage meant that the choice of audio, lighting design and equipment had to ensure that each and every audience member enjoyed excellent sound and lighting quality from wherever they were seated."

The Splitbeam audio team supplied a compact PA system from Meyer Sound, comprising 12 Meyer Sound M1D line arrays. "Meyer Sound is amongst the top brands in the world, and generally preferred by technicians in the theatre genre worldwide," commented Splitbeam's Senior Audio Technician, Johann Grimsehl. "The venue has a in-the-round set-up, so just setting up a left and right PA system would not have provided enough coverage to the audience. Because of this our solution was to utilise Meyer Sound's smaller self- powered loudspeakers, for the compact size, high-output, low distortion and wide dispersion. Johann selected eight Meyer Sound UPM-1P loudspeakers, two Meyer Sound UPJ-1P loudspeakers and two Meyer Sound UP Junior loudspeakers. Meyer Sound was the perfect match because of the range of products it has available to meet the requirements of a show like Madame Zingara's The Celebration."

Discussing the choice behind the self- powered Meyer Sound M1D cabinets, Johann reflected that there were both positives and negatives to powered and passive loudspeakers. "Not having to deal with amplifiers is great, but then again it means having to deal with more cabling," he stated. "For the Madame Zingara show, self-powered loudspeakers are a huge advantage as they also house an active crossover for optimised frequency and phase response correction. The intelligent AC supply also performs protective functions against power surges and dips. With all this integrated technology, we were able to supply a more compact system without the need for amplifiers and extra processing.

It decreased set-up time and we were able to link a number of loudspeakers to one signal without having to factor in impedance." A pair of Electro Voice PX2181 subwoofers provide low-end for the system, supported by a Klark Technik DN9848E system controller. For mixing requirements a Midas PRO1 console was chosen. "The Midas PRO1 desk was chosen for its versatility and processing and that it is able to do 5.1 surround sound effect needed for production," explained Johann. "It can be configured to suit the engineer's needs and the on-board processing capabilities, as well as the fact that it eliminated the need for any additional outboard gear." The console is very compact and fully digital with 24 microphone inputs on the surface and 16 assignable outputs, which suits the requirements for Madame Zingara. The Midas PRO1 has eight VCAs and six population

groups, it features Klark Teknik DN370 graphic equalisers and wide choice of dynamics processing – making it a popular choice for theatre and live applications.



A combination of Sennheiser and DPA microphones are used for the show, six Sennheiser EW 500 G2 handheld microphones were chosen for the vocalists together with two DPA 4066 headsets for the performers and two Sennheiser EW500 G2 belt pack transmitters for the cellos. “This is an active performance and the DPA headsets are able to withstand moisture and heat while being comfortable to wear and discreet,” explained Johann. “Combined with Sennheiser EW 500 belt pack systems reassuringly stable transmission, the sound quality produced is designed to meet the needs of its respective applications.” For DJ equipment, two Pioneer CDJ-900 Nexus multiplayers and a Pioneer DJM-900 Nexus DJ mixer were chosen.

Looking now to the lighting used in the venue, Mannie explained that the brief was to create something that would make the show glamorous, exciting and magical wherever possible. “I needed a full range of capabilities – washes, profiles, beams, break-ups, gobos, colours and zooms,” he explained. “But I had the budget to consider. I was given a lot of good advice by distributors DWR and Electrosonic, as well as from Splitbeam on how to achieve what I wanted, within the budget we had.”

The lighting package comprises a mixture of Vari-Lite, Robe and Martin Professional fixtures, which were chosen with the assistance of the Splitbeam team. “Mannie’s initial specification included a number of lighting fixtures not owned by Splitbeam or the Gearhouse Group,” explained Helen. “So we spent a day in the DWR Distribution demo room going through all the fixtures to see which of those we owned would match the requirements of his design. Through this process we were able to substitute all but two fixtures, those being Martin Professional Rush PAR2’s and Martin Professional MH4 beam lights, which were then purchased especially for the production. The winning fixture of the demo was the Robe Pointe, which was able to reduce the number of fixtures we needed due to its capability of being both a spot with a variety of gobo effect features and a beam light; therefore being budget friendly and reducing the weight of the rig. The VL2500 Wash and Spot also had features that fitted the requirements well and the fact that they were compact almost silent fixtures, was a bonus.”



The lighting was rigged as high as possible over the stage in sections, so not to interfere with the audience or performers. The use of profile fixtures with variable beams – 12 Vari-Lite VL2500 Spots and 12 Robe Pointes – helped overcome this challenge with support from 12 Vari-Lite VL2500 Washes and 12 Robe Robin 600 LED washlights.

“A built in feature of the Queen of Flanders is a circular truss just below the apex of the tent – perfectly situated to allow overhead lighting to the aerial acts,” explained Helen. “The balance of the overhead lighting is spread over two additional concentric rigs at lower heights but still do not limit the movement of the acrobatic performers.”

Installed under the circular section of the stage with a glass window in front of them are eight Martin Professional Rush PAR2 moving heads and six Martin Professional MH4 beam lights, which are used left and right of the staircase leading down to the stage as under-stage uplighters. For hazer effects a Le Maitre MVS hazer was chosen.

The lighting was programmed on a MA Lighting grandMA2 light console and the show is run by MA Lighting on MA onPC software package with an ETC Ion fade wing, which were synced together. “The grandMA 2 light was used because its ease of plotting and then, due to space restraints, the MA onPC is being used

to run the show,” said Helen. “The MA desks are widely used in South Africa and Mannie was able secure the right kind of programmers to support him in executing his design. All of these factors made it the obvious choice.”

As the venue was a new structure, the Splitbeam team had to realise the space in the week leading up to the installation and while working closely with the Madame Zingara team, find and create solutions. Helen went onto explain that discussions about the project had started with the Madame Zingara's management team almost a year prior to the build. “We had given ourselves more time than usual for the installation,” she explained. “And employed a local project manager who fed information to Splitbeam on a daily basis. This was so that the equipment and accessories being prepped in our Johannesburg warehouse met the requirements of the venue.”



Mannie finished by reflecting on his experience with the Queen of Flanders: “This project, more than any other I have experienced, was a total team effort. It was an education to work with Rick Klessens and his family who built the tent just like his father and grandfather before him. The final result is the joint effort of the whole team in all departments coming together to realise the vision of Richard Griffin.”

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

SOUND

12 x Meyer Sound M1D line array; 8 x Meyer Sound UPM-1P loudspeaker; 2 x Meyer Sound UPJ-1P loudspeaker; 2 x Meyer Sound UP Junior loud- speaker; 2 x Electro Voice PX2181 subwoofer; 1 x Midas PRO1 console; 1 x Klark Technik DN9848E system controller; 6 x Sennheiser EW 500 G2 microphone; 2 x Sennheiser EW500 G2 backpack; 2 x DPA Microphones 4066 headset; 2 x Pioneer CDJ-900 Nexus multiplayer; 2 x Pioneer DJM- 900 Nexus digital mixer

LIGHTING & SPECIAL EFFECTS

12 x Vari-Lite VL2500 Spot moving head; 12 x Vari-Lite VL2500 Wash moving head; 12 x Robe Robin Pointe moving head; 12 Robe 600 LED washlight; 8 x Martin Professional Rush PAR2 moving head; 6 x Martin Professional MH4 beam light; 1 x MA grandMA light console; 1 x MA Lighting onPC software package; 1 x ETC Ion fader wing; 1 x Le Maitre MVS hazer

INSIDER INSIGHTS NAME: Marcel Wijnberger

JOB TITLE: Splitbeam Technical Manager

LIKES ABOUT TECHNOLOGY: The great thing about technology in the industry at the moment is the capability to seamlessly converge lighting, sound, audiovisual and set automation, through whatever medium we choose to trigger it.

DISLIKES ABOUT TECHNOLOGY: The downside is figuring out how all the disciplines can speak to each other and when operating in a converged state, one failure can lead to a domino effect on the entire set- up.

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