

Record number of Robert Juliat Dalis colour the sky for Snégourootchka at the Bolshoi Theatre



Robert Juliat's award-winning Dalis 860 LED cyclorama lighting fixtures are currently playing a key role in *Snégourootchka* (The Snow Maiden) by Rimski-Korsakov at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, Russia. The opera premiered on 15 June on the 1740-seat Heritage Stage on a set designed by Vladimir Arefiev, with lighting by Damir Ismagilov.

In the largest installation of Dalis to date, Ismagilov chose to use 92 Dalis 860 asymmetrical LED units to illuminate three enormous lightboxes – the largest features of the set in this spectacular production – which form the backdrop to the Russian folk tale that tells of the Snow Maiden's ill-fated love for the human, Mizgir.

The lightboxes, each of which measure 22m wide x 15m high, are suspended 3m above the stage, and positioned upstage and on each side to form a box, covering the whole stage in width and depth to create an 'endless sky' surrounding the acting area.

They are used to provide an even sky-glow, coloured with different shades of cold white and light blue. In the finalé, a strong tungsten light spreads on stage to symbolize the end of endless winter when the dead-cold sky turns to golden-amber as the brightest point of the show.



To create this signature feature and maintain the ambience throughout the performance, Ismagilov required a very even, very strong wash for the lightboxes, and was tasked with finding a fixture that could handle the scale of the production and the challenges of the hanging positions and set design.

The lightboxes were constructed using screens and blackout banners to bounce light from the back drop onto the rear of the front screen, for a softer and diffused effect. They were built with just one lighting truss at the top and one at bottom – and no opportunity for hanging positions at half-height within the lightboxes to make the wash more even. The fixtures would not only need to be capable of providing strong and even cyc-light, but also be cool enough to operate close to the lightbox screens without melting them.

The Bolshoi team found the ideal solution in the Robert Juliat Dalis units, 46 of which were rigged evenly on trussing at the top of the light boxes, with another 46 rigged at the bottom, standing on platforms suspended on flybars and motor hoists.

“We decided to use Robert Juliat Dalis 860 for several reasons,” explains the Bolshoi Theatre’s head of lighting, Ayvar Salikhov. “First and foremost, the beam spread and angle is perfect for our needs: the output is strong

enough to throw the light up to the full height at the top of the 15m lightbox and give an even wash using just the top and bottom rows, without a dark gap at half-height.



“Secondly, the Dalis has a wide colour range that can produce a tungsten-like spectrum, and its cold LED light source makes possible to set up many fixtures within the closed space of the lightbox with no fear of heat damage.

“Lastly, the dimensions and simplicity of the Dalis are exactly what we need. They are lightweight with perfectly simple cabling and a flexible rigging system – this is essential as Bolshoi is repertory theatre and we must be able to set up the lights really quickly. Similarly, Dalis’s compact size, robust body and specially engineered flightcases are all equally important as the fixtures are stored in stock and are transported on stage for every show.”

Damir Ismagilov was equally happy with the choice of Dalis, both for its performance and for the aesthetic possibilities it gave to his design: “Due to Dalis’ ability to create a perfectly even wash of light across large surfaces in a wide range of intensity levels and colours, we were able to obtain the effect of huge isotropic, sky-like, light source that set the character of the lighting for the scenes and helped determine the special atmosphere as the action changed. For example, a wide spectrum of cold shades of white and exceptionally smooth, seamless light transitions allowed us to portray a very precise feeling of a leaden sky that could imperceptibly fade into a dense twilight shade. In the finale we could mix a bright, saturated sunburst tone which harmoniously complemented the tungsten tones of multiple stadium-lamp clusters as they projected from the stage into the audience.”

The team at the Bolshoi Theatre is already familiar with Robert Juliat as they have Robert Juliat Lucy, Flo, Victor and Aramis followspots in their inventory, alongside D’Artagnan profile fixtures and Jalousie automated shutters for HMI Fresnels: “We have used Robert Juliat for a number of years and are very happy with their great lighting quality and durability,” continues Salikhov. “We find them the best on market in terms of light quality, size and ergonomics, and are very pleased with the high level of technical support we receive from Robert Juliat.

“We are pleased to see that Dalis has the same reliability as we haven’t experienced any technical issues with them during the whole production. This has been a great advantage because it would be a very hard task to reach the fixtures inside the lightbox after everything is set.”