

Robe Adds Some Magic to Circlassica Show

Posted on June 24, 2025

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The popular Circlassica show returned to Madrid for the 2024-2025 season staged in the iconic IFEMA Madrid big white tent, with a new edition, *Circlassica, la historia mundial continúa* (*Circlassica, the world story continues*), produced by Productores de Sonrisas and lit by Juanjo Llorens who once again sprinkled some of his illuminative magic on the action.

Juanjo has a penchant for spectacularly lighting high-octane, high-impact circus-style performance shows and this was no exception, so he reached into the toolbox for Robe moving lights, using 40 × LEDBeam 150s, 22 × Spiiders, 20 × MegaPointes, 16 × LEDBeam 350 and 14 × ESPRITES.

These were all picked for their multifunctionality “I took advantage of numerous features on all these fixture types,” explained Juanjo, “power, different types of looks and lenses, varying LED sources from RGBW multichip to a single high-power white chip, and also discharge lamps.”

Like so many designers ... Robe’s MegaPointe is still a fixture he knows, loves and uses whenever possible!

Even though he has lit *Circlassica* many times, Juanjo always loves coming back to revisit and reinvent the look and the lighting ambience.

He works with a team of “highly skilled and creative imagineers” – a set designer, screens director, artists, artistic director, sound designer, choreographer and overall technical director, and at the top of the pyramid, creative director Manuel González, who is one-third of Productores de Sonrisas.

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All these protagonists have the freedom to throw ideas into the mix, and their imagination and ability to think outside the box are what drive the show's visual aspects.

A common starting point for the evolution of a lighting design for this type of project is manipulating the psychology of light.

"The presentation and the lighting must appeal to children and help ensure they don't get bored, so keeping everyone enthralled and engaged is the goal!" stated Juanjo.

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The core lighting was rigged on a box truss hanging between the tent's two rear poles and the front arch, a space offering up around 12 metres of headroom above the 12-metre diameter circular stage floor.

The rigging infrastructure around five prominent LED screens was also used to facilitate some lighting elements, and the LED surfaces were positioned to give clear sightlines around the whole marquee.

A rear bridge truss was flown upstage of the box truss at 10 metres but in front of the set to provide positions for backlight and effects fixtures, as well as some dynamic movement without distracting or obstructing the performers.

Three trusses each side of the marquee – left, centre and right – were used for front light positions and to generally open up the space.

Two central circular trusses were flown directly above the stage / ring, one with a 12-diameter flown at 14 metres high, and inside of that a 3-metre diameter truss trimmed at 18 metres.

For more side positions, there were 4 drop-down booms at 4 metres high each – two on the legs in front of the set, and two coming down from the front of the box truss. Additionally, floor lighting upstage and in front of the set enhanced entrances and exits through the stage doors.

ESPRITE is a fixture Juanjo has recently started using, and he takes full advantage of “the blades, effects, colour wheel, colour mixing, gobos, animation wheel, zoom, and of course, the fantastic brightness.” These fixtures were distributed between the box truss, the circular truss and the top truss.

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LEDBeam 150s were dotted all over all the trusses and used to light the audience in both spot and wash modes. "There is so much flexibility in its zoom and colour mixing," he notes on the LEDBeam 150s, utilised to produce highly concentrated light and as broader brushstrokes of light at the various times he needed to 'paint'.

The ones on the box and side trusses were great for lighting faces and for side lighting singing acts, presenters and juggling routines, allowing the latter to keep a clear view of their diabolos, clubs or whatever implements they were juggling with. "Sometimes the props are thrown very

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high, so it's vital to avoid shining light directly in their faces!" explained Juanjo.

LEDBeam 350s were placed on the ground and around the scaffolding surrounding the band at various heights so the musicians could be seen and used for producing broader beams than the LEDBeam 150s.

Spiiders on the box truss were ideal for ambient light. Juanjo notes that artists like Spiiders as a more gentle and subtle light source for lighting larger groups of people.

For Juanjo, MegaPointe added plenty of magic and was the 'secret creative weapon' in the show. "It can be used to produce perfect patterns, it is super-bright and very reliable," he enthuses. MegaPointes were located around the box truss and on the drop-down booms, on the front and rear legs of the ground support and on the front truss.

The overall lighting was designed with dynamics and versatility at the fore to cover the wide array of different artists and acts appearing onstage – from circus to dance, including musical performances and magicians.

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Although Juanjo is a specialist in lighting circus-style performance and acrobatics, his challenge is always maintaining the integrity of his design while accommodating the special needs of the act. Some routines are highly dangerous and need lighting very specifically, not just for drama and impact, but also for safety.

“I enjoy establishing a bond with the artist and starting to connect with them, which is essential for making them feel comfortable and safe,” he explained.

He alludes to the fact that working in the circus genre is highly addictive! “The job is much more like being in a family than people imagine. I feel like I’ve been adopted.” It’s that feeling of camaraderie and belonging that he feels makes circus “the greatest show in the world”.

He worked closely with programmer Pau Farreny on this show, plus crew chief Iván González who was also the lighting operator, plus two lighting technicians, Guillermo Cello and Gonzalo Gerbolés, both from Circlassica, who oversaw the everyday tasks including equipment maintenance.

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Cori Bustamante, Juan Elvira and Rafa XVII were Juanjo's lighting assistants, and Gonzalo and Guillermo were also the trusted follow spot operators.

Excellent planning by the show's technical manager Flavio Bañuelos and infrastructure manager Marco Monteiro were also integral to making the project flow seamlessly.

The show's technical director was Productores de Sonrisas' Rafa González, who together with press and media director María González and aforementioned artistic director, Manuel González, make up Productores de Sonrisas.

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Some of the lighting kit is owned by Productores de Sonrisas, and the rest of it was supplied by rental company Smart Fussion.

Photos by Pepe Castro