Robe Helps Find Happy Ending for Singapore Ballet’s Coppélia

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Singapore-based lighting designer Adrian Tan lit Singapore Ballet’s production of romantic comedy *Coppélia* for the fourth time this year, once again staged at Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, and this time using three different types of Robe lighting products – T15 Fresnels, T3 Fresnels and T3 Profiles – as his workhorse lights.

Singapore Ballet has been one of freelance designer Adrian’s clients since 2011, and in that time, he has lit this specific show three times, initially in 2013, then again in 2017 and 2023.

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Photo by A Syadiq for Teater Ekamatra

This year, with recent upgrades to the venue’s lighting inventory, Robe products made up a significantly larger proportion of the 210 or so fixtures that Adrian used to light the show.

He worked closely with the company’s artistic director, Janek Schergen on *Coppélia*, noting that when lighting a classical ballet piece like this, the main objectives include attaining a fine balance between establishing the mood and drama, and highlighting the dancers in a way that still allows the audience to see their facial expressions.

Capturing the passing of time was central to the *Coppélia* narrative, particularly the “unique

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challenge of depicting a Galician sunrise and sunset, which was at the core of the entire design,” as Acts 1 and 3 take place in a Galician village at different times of the day.

By contrast, Act 2 offered a chance to take a few “artistic liberties with the dark and slightly unsettling interior of Dr Coppélius’ workshop.”



Photo by Bernie Ng for Singapore Ballet

The story tells of a young man – Franz – who falls in love with Coppélia, a silent girl sitting on a balcony, not realising she is a mechanical doll created by toy maker Dr. Coppélius. Everything goes sideways when Franz’s jealous fiancée, Swanilda, sneaks into the workshop to investigate,

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pretends to be the doll, tricks the old inventor … and wins back her love!

Assisting Adrian in this 2026 production were 40 x T15 Fresnel multispectral static wash light sources, 22 x T3 Fresnels and 24 x T3 Profile moving lights, all part of the Esplanade’s house lighting rig.



Photo by Bernie Ng for Singapore Ballet

The theatre has made several recent upgrades to its technical inventories, and the lighting department also has other Robe fixtures, including ESPRITES, PAINTES, T32 and T32 Slims and FOOTSIES, all of which Adrian describes as “brilliant tools.”

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For *Coppélia*, the T3s and T15 Fresnels were all spread out across 10 overhead LX bars.

Adrian had used Robe ESPRITES on a production of *Swan Lake* last year and liked them and has used Robe T2s on another Singapore Ballet production of *Cinderella*. He’s used Robe T1 Profiles on a few occasions, including at the Wild Rice Theatre in Singapore and also at the Adelaide Festival Theatre in Australia.

So, he was delighted to be able to utilise the T3s for the first time.

He had previously used T15 Fresnels on a production of *Yusof* by Teater Ekamatraat the Singtel Waterfront Theatre at the end of 2025, so was aware of the fixture’s capabilities. He knew that T15s could “drive the design of this show through their reliable colour consistency,” so they instantly became the workhorses.



Photo by Bernie Ng for Singapore Ballet

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The luminaires were used as the top washes, where the colour capabilities paired with the “very impressive zoom range” and high output were perfect for the task, even with the bars trimmed at 10 metres.

For the *Yusof* show in the smaller venue, he’d taken a different approach, as most of the trims were around 6.5 metres in height, so again the T15 zoom range came into play, allowing him to insert powerful top light washes with minimal fuss. With the show mostly set in the 1950s and 1960s, the objective was to create a warm sepia undertone for the look and feel of the piece, evoking a sense of nostalgia.

Back to *Coppélia*, Adrian noted that the T3 Profiles were “highly effective” when gobos were needed onstage for texturing the scene: “I am a strong believer in subtlety and being able to blend the gobos and apply the perfect percentage of softness utilising the variable frost was fantastic!”

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The T3 Fresnels were used primarily as back light sources. Adrian “particularly appreciated” the framing modules for giving fine control over shuttering, which enabled light to be kept off the backdrops, black masking, and audience, maintaining the clean, sharp integrity of the lighting aesthetic.

Of all the available features on these T3 fixtures, he most appreciated the variable CTO colour mix. “The consistency across all three different fixture models was immaculate and made the programming process so much easier,” he commented, adding that other designers who have had to deal generally with inconsistent variable CTO filters in the past … will now be able to share

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his joy!

The T32s had about a 1.5m throw distance to light a 6-metre-high, 11-metre-wide cyclorama, so that also gave a very impressive performance.

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