Robe iBOLT makes Impression at Inauguration

Posted on August 7, 2024



Designer Chris de Lancey from Immersive Show Technology was asked to create a stunning architectural lighting scheme for the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa, to help celebrate the recent South African presidential inauguration.

Chris chose to work with Robe ESPRITE moving lights and one of the new Robe iBOLTS, which were applied with great effect together with projection mapping of the South African flag onto the building.

Cyril Ramaphosa was inaugurated as South African president and leader of a national unity

Copyright © DWR Distribution

government made up of representatives from four major parties – the ANC (African National Congress), the DA (Democratic Alliance), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the Patriotic Alliance (PA).

The final inauguration events are organised on a tight timescale once the actual election results are confirmed and certified – Chris received the call a week beforehand and was asked to present a scheme for illuminating the Union Buildings, a notoriously difficult structure to light effectively due to is extremely long – 285 metre – façade.

Copyright © DWR Distribution



Designed by Sir Herbert Baker in 1908 in English ‘monumental’ style, construction from light sandstone materials began the next year and was completed in 1913. The buildings are semi-circular in shape with two side wings representing the union of formally divided people.

This was the first time that Chris had lit the Buildings. Initially, the client had the idea of projecting the South African flag onto the four end-walls, however after a site visit, Chris proposed lighting the two inner end walls with the projected flags, and lighting along the whole

Copyright © DWR Distribution

facade of the near side wings for better effect and to also to maximise their budget.

The client agreed and Chris then specified six Robe ESPRITES a side for the façade illuminations, and two 40K projectors for the flags onto the two end-walls.



From a conversation with Duncan Riley from Robe’s South African distributor DWR Distribution, Chris learned that the iBOLT had recently arrived in the country! They both thought it would also be a brilliant ‘inauguration event’ for this powerful super-bright laser-lightsource searchlight style fixtures in SA, and that an iBOLT would complete and complement the other elements of the installation perfectly.

DWR’s Duncan and Bruce Riley rocked up on site with the fixtures and set it up and programmed the iBOLT using a small console so it blasted up into the night sky and cycled through a number of colourful and spectacular effects.

Copyright © DWR Distribution



> “It’s a completely awesome fixture and created some beautiful effects,” commented Chris, adding that it juxtaposed seamlessly with the lit building.

The ESPRITES were rigged on truss tower sections on the other side of a road that passes directly in front – with a 9-metre drop – of the buildings, along the edge of the large park / amphitheatre that stretches away in front of the seat of government. They were positioned to avoid greenery, and the shutters used extensively to produce crisp delineating lines between the different bold flag colours.

ESPRITES are one of Chris’s go-to fixtures for multiple shows and corporate events, so he knows them well, but even he was surprised at how well they worked in this architectural context.

Copyright © DWR Distribution



The central curved building and its two distinctive turrets, illuminated by a permanent lighting installation already in place for some years, provided depth, contrast and a negative space that coincidentally referenced the black parts of the South African flag.

The installation ran for three nights from dusk to dawn, bringing the Buildings to life, and was enjoyed and appreciated by the press and the public either side of the actual inauguration ceremony, which took place at midday on 19th June on the South Lawns of the Union Buildings.

Photos: By Chris Duys

Copyright © DWR Distribution

Copyright © DWR Distribution