

Robe T1's help define Narnia for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*



The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe
Bridge Theatre. Photo Brinkhoff-Moegenburg

The highly acclaimed Leeds Playhouse production of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* is enjoying a successful London run at The Bridge Theatre, produced by The **London Theatre Company** via special arrangement with Elliot & Harper Productions and **Catherine Schreiber**.

Award-winning lighting designer Bruno Poet has revived his magical lighting scheme in the new venue, this time choosing to use Robe T1 Profiles as the follow spots, which are being operated with RoboSpot remote follow spotting systems.

Having used the same combination of T1 Profile fixtures and RoboSpots for recent *Tina The Musical* runs on Broadway and in Hamburg and London, he did not hesitate to specify the products again for this show.



The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe Bridge Theatre

At The Bridge, there is no position at FOH for manually operated follow spots, so the two T1 Profiles are located on an auditorium bridge with a steep angle shooting down to the stage. ... which is not accessible during the performance.

This solved the issue of positioning as well as maximizing accurate targeting and minimising light spillage. The T1s can be far more easily blended in to the general visuality of the show than a conventional follow spot.

The operators – including wheelchair user John Piper – are at the back of the auditorium.

The Theatre's head of lighting Nicole Smith explained that the original intention was to base the spot operators under the stage, however with John being one of the most experienced applicants for the operator roles, they decided to move the operating position to an area of the theatre that was fully wheelchair accessible.

“This is one of the wonderful advantages of this technology – it allows the flexibility to change plans as needed and to have lights operated from the most suitable location. John was absolutely THE right person for this job and due to the flexibility facilitated by the RoboSpot system, we could accommodate the best candidate for the job.”



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Colour and Intensity of the T1 Profile follow spots are being controlled via the lighting console, with the operators having full control of Pan, Tilt, Iris and Zoom plus the option of manual override, but mostly they are free to concentrate primarily on following the protagonists on their BaseStation screens.

The T1's excellent colour mixing system enabled Bruno to get the full range of detail and many subtle colours needed to compliment the stage lighting. They are used throughout the show for key'ing and subtly highlighting *Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter as they venture into the wardrobe to experience its hidden magic.*

Lighting generally works throughout to create the two different worlds of the narrative – the grey monochrome dreariness of World War II Britain is starkly contrasted with the vibrant multicolour effervescence of the Kingdom of Narnia, complete with an awesome lion, a talking fawn and an ice-cold cruel White Witch.

The T1s are used heavily throughout the show. They are relied upon to pull the performers out of the darkness whilst simultaneously concealing other elements happening onstage by focusing the audience on specific moments. "It's a very technical show and follow spots were essential to the design," commented Nicole.

In addition to accommodating technicians and operators using wheelchairs, Nicole mentions that RoboSpot technology enables follow spots to be used without losing any seating.



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With very limited wings space due to the full stage width being utilised by the LWW's intricate scenic design, "being able to put the operators literally anywhere is brilliant and it means that we can be as adaptable with our follow spots as we are with our staging! It's all-round an incredible leap forward for a contemporarily designed venue like this."

The stage floor is a deep glacial blue, complete with icy fissures underlit with LED strips that can shift colour. These spectral transformations combined with magical props like huge silk sheets manipulated by the cast journey everyone to the show's different locations. Rae Smith's spare and elegant scenic design so also plays a crucial role in the storytelling.

The general stage lighting rig is a dynamic mix of static and moving LED fixtures which revive the energy and essence of the original in-the-round production in a new format that is also proving highly successful and a box office hit.

Bruno has again enjoyed collaborating with the highly talented team who delivered Leeds including director Sally Cookson, movement director Dan Canham, puppetry director Craig Leo and sound designer Ian Dickinson. Music is by Benji Bower and Rae Smith also designed the costumes.