

Small is Beautiful for Robe Getting Back to its Base



Basement Theatre in Auckland, New Zealand is living proof of how the “small is beautiful”™ concept can become a hub of creative endeavour, a hot bed of ideas, experimental art, and the instigator of lively political and social discourse as well as an inclusive place for talented live performance imagineers to hone their craft.

In 2022, Basement Theatre purchased its first Robe LED fixtures – two CycBar15s – a sale in proportion to its production needs that has made a big difference to how shows can be lit.

Squeezed into an old industrial building, once part of a large grain silo development, the charismatic theatre has been on the site for 15 years, making the most out of a challenging layout with some out-of-the-box reimagining that has ensured it has everything needed for a busy and thriving venue to function as an iconic cultural melting pot.

A busy and diverse programme of shows run Tuesday to Saturday in the two intimate spaces, attracting generally younger audiences together with those who might not necessarily entertain more traditional theatres. While smaller in size, it has a massively big heart!

The venue’s technical manager Michael Trigg explained that all their fixtures must be flexible and multi-purpose, and the CycBar15s fitted this context.

He looked at several options before deciding on the Robe product being best value for their requirements. The fixtures are rigged in the 100-capacity main space and were purchased with support from Robe distributor Jands New Zealand at the start of 2022.

Michael was looking for a very specific piece of kit. It had to be low profile due to the 2.5-metre ceiling height, and had to be an LED source with a good throw as well as decent angles that would work in the space.

CycBar 15 ticked all the boxes as a lightweight static 1-metre LED batten with 15 equally spaced, super bright RGBW multichip LEDs giving homogenised and smooth colour mixing and linear dimming. A fixed but re-definable beam angle offers optional diffusers and a new split filter system allows three different beam angles across the entire CycBar, generating an asymmetrical light output particularly useful for wall and cyc washing. Optional barn doors can also be used to trim the beam if needed.

The CycBar 15s cover so many bases, Michael explained. “They can be a front wash, a back light, a wash or a top light or they can be rigged vertically for more of an effects look, and the individual pixel control was something that really appealed for this,” he enthused, adding that the fixtures can also be rigged on side booms for dance shows.



They can paint the walls with light using the CycBar 15s, then change the colour one minute and flip the fixtures around the next and use them for key lighting using the diffusion panels.

Michael was already familiar with Robe products through his work in events, so he was happy to specify the brand, and when he left earlier this year after several years in the post, new technical manager Paul Bennett is also delighted with the lights.

Most incoming Basement productions there will bring their own lighting designers and will use the house rig which contains about 40 fixtures, sometimes augmenting this with a few of their own specials.

Basement’s lively performance programme features at least two new works each week staged in one of the spaces and continues to be an engaging and invigorating environment in which all the productions are well looked after.

The venue is right at the heart of the annual Auckland Fringe Festival which has strong roots there, and is also at the epicentre of the New Zealand International Comedy Festival each May.

The CycBar 15s were such a great success that the theatre confirmed an order to triple their Robe inventory, adding two iBar 15s – an updated and IP65 rated version of the original CycBar – and two ParFect 150 LED source ACL style beam fixtures.

Photos: By Louise Stickland