

## Splitbeam on War Horse



Photo Brinkhoff

South African audiences were captivated as War Horse, brought to South Africa by Pieter Toerien and the National Theatre, played at The Teatro, Montecasino in Johannesburg recently. The show then moved to Cape Town at Artscape Opera House from 5 December 2014. Technical support in both venues was from Gearhouse Splitbeam.

A truly iconic show based on a book written by Michael Morpurgo, War Horse was only designed to run for a couple of weeks... then they did it again and again and again and it's currently in its seventh successful year on the West End in London. The journey has seen the horses redesigned – the life-sized puppets were created and built in Cape Town by Handspring Puppet Company – and the early days saw performers receiving hours of physio every day. As the show was very physical on performers, more actors were brought in to take shifts.

In South Africa, Gearhouse Splitbeam, was appointed Technical Supplier. "When we were first asked to quote on War Horse we were asked if we could supply the full rig as per spec," commented Splitbeam's Alistair Kilbee. "I had to inform them that some items like the VL500ARC, DHA ROSCO 6 lamp DLC, VL3500 Wash, TW1's and ETC Revolutions were not available in South Africa in the quantities needed." Kilbee recommended substitutions for some of the equipment on the original design, to the Associate Lighting Designer, who was working closely with the show's Lighting Designer, Paule Constable (fondly known as Paulie).

Robe Pointes were chosen as a replacement for some of the VL500ARC and Robe 2500 Wash replaced the VL3500 Washes. "Even though they are not the same type of fixtures the designer felt they would do the job needed for the South African production," said Kilbee. "The other Moving lights were flown in from the UK tour, but we did manage to reduce the amount of airfreight with the substitutions."

What sets War Horse apart is that it does not rely on high tech equipment. There are "a heck of a lot of parcans" – a testimony that it's a good solid design. The scenes and sets are unpretentious and everything has been done to enhance the performance of the puppets.

"The thing I found so interesting about this production was the use of tungsten and discharge fixtures, there is a very clever use of the two different light sources which differentiate between the battle scenes and other scenes," explained Kilbee. "The tungsten lights, ETC Revolutions, TW1's and generics give a nice warm light which is perfect for the feel of the show. Then the discharge gives a cold blue feel to the battle scenes."

4 Avolites ART2000 48way and one Avolites 12 Way 5K TV Dimmer are used for dimming in this production. "The Art 2000's are a world leader in touring dimmers and have proved to be very reliable, over the years – the

Avolites 5Kw dimmer are well over 15 years old and still working fine – proof of their reliability,” he said.

South African supplier, DWR Distribution, assisted Splitbeam with the MDG flying brackets and parcan double yoke modifications to strengthen them sufficiently to take colour scrollers securely without dipping.



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“DWR and Splitbeam are making a habit out of making custom stuff... for the MDG’s on Jersey Boys I asked DWR to make me long high pressure hoses so that we could rig the MDG’s up on a truss and keep the CO2 cylinders on the ground. This worked like a charm, so when I was asked for flying brackets for the MDG’s on War Horse I knew DWR had to make them – which they did – and with the Long Co2 hoses. This makes them the best and most useful MDG’s I have ever seen; they can go almost anywhere and you get the haze you want without any problems or safety issues.”

While scroller parcans with double yokes may be a standard unit in most of the world, they are old school and are being used less and less. “These are not available in South Africa so I wanted to make them instead of importing 90 parcans with double yokes into the country,” said Kilbee. “Again I went to DWR and Dave Whitehouse took on the job of making this happen, which he did together with Keith Pugin. The end result is great and worked perfectly.”

Kilbee always enjoys working on something he can get his teeth into. “This is a very large DRAMA; the rig is the size of a rock n roll concert and has some very important details. I like to see new things and keep up to speed with the way theatre tours are happening in the UK and around the world. We always learn things from the shows. At Splitbeam, we believe you never stop learning, so we keep an open mind about everything,” he ended.

#### Lighting:

12 Robe ColorWash 2500E AT

12 Robe Robin Pointe

6 2kw PC Suitable to hold scroller

7 Philips Selecon 2kw Fresnel

8 Philips Strand 5Kw Fresnel

40 PAR 64 Parcan Scroller – NSP

43 PAR 64 Parcan Scroller – MFL

68 PAR 64 Parcan – NSP  
34 PAR 64 Parcan – MFL  
6 PAR 64 Half Hats  
12 PAR64 Top Hat 10?  
10 ETC Source 4 10Deg Complete  
10 ETC Source 4 19Deg Complete  
6 ETC Source 4 26Deg Complete  
6 ETC Source 4 36Deg Complete  
12 ETC Source 4 PAR MFL  
5 ETC Source 4 PAR WFL  
10 ETC Source 4 Body Double Clutch  
10 ETC Source 4 Lens Tube 19deg  
4 ETC Source 4 Lens Tube 26deg  
4 ETC Source 4 Lens Tube 36deg  
4 ETC Source 4 Lens Tube 50deg  
6 Molefay Frame – 4 Lite  
16 PAR 16 Birdie Black  
26 ETC Source 4 Top Hat 6.25?  
6 ETC Source 4 Half Hat 6.25?  
10 ETC Source 4 10deg Top Hat 13?  
1 ETC Eos  
1 ETC Ion  
2 ETC Net3 ACN Gateway  
1 Apple Airport Extreme Wireless Router  
2 High Speed Network Switches  
2 ME-1000-GRU Mecer 1000VA 2U On-Line Rackmount UPS  
2 SUA750RMI1U APC Smart-UPS 750VA USB RM 1U 230V

8 Monitor ACER 23" LED Full HD  
4 Martin Ether2 DMX8 Decoder  
10 Proplex Rackmount DMX Buffer 8Way  
2 Inline Single Phase DMX Dimmer  
4 Avolites ART2000 48way  
1 Avolites 12 Way 5K TV Dimmer  
1 Medium Ladder  
4 Martin Atomic 3000K DMX  
1 Look Solutions Unique Hazer  
2 Look Solutions Vipor NT Smoke Machine  
3 MDG Atmosphere APS Hazer  
4 Martin JEM AF1 DMX Fan  
1 100A Exhibition distro  
2 Distro Unit 250A Standard  
1 400A Hot Power Distro  
4 Distro Module SOCAPEX  
4 35mm Mains Cable (50m)  
4 63A Three Phase 50m (Power)  
2 70mm Mains Cable (30m)  
5 70mm Rack Links