T1s for Amelie Production

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Amelie The Musical photo by Pamela Raith

Elliot Griggs chose Robe's T1 Profiles to provide major key lighting for *Amélie the Musical*, a new production first staged at the Watermill Theatre, Newbury, UK, which then undertook a nationwide UK and Irish tour and is now playing at The Other Palace in London until the start of February.

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Elliot was asked to light the show, directed by Michael Fentiman and based on the much loved and five-times Oscar-nominated 2001 French art-house romantic comedy film, *Amélie. The lead character has an eccentric upbringing and a vivid imagination* which she uses to explores the complexities of love, loneliness, existence and survival in the big city.

The T1 Profiles – used in addition to the touring lighting rigs at each venue on the tour – are being supplied by leading theatrical rental company White Light, investing in their first T1s for this production as they were essential for Elliot's lighting plot.



Amelie The Musical photo by Pamela Raith

They are used as front light and usually positioned on the front-of-circle bar. In most venues, this meant they would be right above and in close proximity to the audience, so silent running was essential.

"I needed a fully-featured moving light, quiet enough to be amongst the audience and imperceptible," explained Elliot.

The show is sung through with some prolonged periods of complete silence in the action that are integral to the narrative, "so basically I wanted a light that was high-quality, had all the features … and didn't sound like a tank!"

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Many scenes take place on the Paris Metro, so this required Elliot to create video style projection effects to simulate passing trains, and again the T1 provided a solution with its very fast shuttering.



Amelie The Musical photo by Pamela Raith

“The look is achieved using the shuttering in conjunction with the animation wheel The Metro scenes are all about chance encounters and bustling crowds, with the T1’s giving the excellent impression of trains rattling by.”

The fixtures also had to create some authentic full stage projections … and just three T1 profiles go a very long way when used inventively like this.

Elliot is a freelance LD, and while Robe has been on his radar for some time and he’s used some Robe products before – notably Pointes and LEDBeam 150s – this has not been a regular occurrence. However, when the T1 was launched in 2018 as a specially refined product for

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theatre, he was eager to spec them on a production.

Initially, there were more Robes on the design, but some re-engineering was required to fit the budget, and this inevitably involved a few compromises. However, the T1s were an absolutely non-negotiable part of the lighting plot!

Apart from the silent operation and the fast shuttering, Elliot likes the T1's flexibility, multiple other features, smooth dimming as well as the compact size and lightweight.

He also appreciates the additive colour mixing which means that the output is higher than in many other LED fixtures when in darker colours. "The RGBAL LED source allows for subtle tones as well as bright vibrant saturates still punching from way out at FOH with throws of over 15 metres. Yet most effects in the show run at 10% intensity, and they still manage to dim beautifully over long fade times," he confirmed.

Amélie has a different aesthetic to a standard musical production. It abounds with reflective and thoughtful moments and details and is a far cry from the average blockbuster with a large chorus ploughing through a succession of glitzy all-singing-all-dancing 'production numbers'.

The action also flips between absurd scenes, flashbacks and surrealistic moments – highlighting the lead character's lively mind and playful sense of mischief which are her vehicles for dealing with life … keeping audiences sharp, exuberant and laughing.

Set in the late 1990s when Princess Diana died in Paris, there is one crazy Elton John number where a gospel choir appear from nowhere giving Elliot the chance to go wild with the lighting.

Another goal of the lighting and Madeleine Girling's set design was to match the colours, textures and quirky moods of the film which is iconically Parisian, and this entailed much attention to detail and a slick delivery as well as some darker moods and sections.

The lead character (played by French Canadian actress Audrey Brisson) wears a lot of red so Elliot crafted several lighting colour schemes to be monochrome-based allowing the costumes to pop, and the accurate CT whites of the T1 Profiles again proved very helpful.

Elliot programmed the lighting on an ETC EOS console at the Watermill and overall has been delighted with using T1 Profiles for the first time.

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“It’s fast and definitely the quietest light I’ve used to date,” he stated.

Another bonus has been the shutters snapping into position and each being able to cover three-quarters of the beam, allowing control of the complex shapes often encountered when lights are rigged in slips and box positions – or to get around angled set pieces.

“T1 is an LED moving head profile without compromise and a fixture that can well-replace ageing tungsten or discharge units with future-proofed functionality. Apart from all of this, sound designers and engineers will absolutely love Robe for this one!”

When a lighting manufacturer can keep audio professionals happy … that’s a whole next level of product development!

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