

UJ Arts and Culture Centre invests in MA3



Jannie de Jager of DWR Distribution with Jade Bower and the technical team at the UJ Arts and Culture Centre

The University of Johannesburg recently invested in an MA3 compact console for the UJ Arts and Culture Centre, situated on the institution's Kingsway Campus in Auckland Park.

Jannie de Jager of DWR Distribution, MA Lighting's sole distributor in South Africa, recently facilitated training at the institution to ensure that the theatre's crew can make the best of the new console, as well as the newly launched MA3 platform.

Jade Bower has served as the production manager at the UJ Arts and Culture Centre for several years and is very pleased with the theatres' latest acquisition. "The UJ Arts and Culture Centre provides students at the university access to theatre and the performing arts, which is an important part of providing a holistic education," Jade explains. "While we do not have a drama department at the university, our students benefit enormously from taking part in productions and in the running of the theatre while they pursue their degrees in various disciplines."

As a state-subsidised institution of higher learning, UJ's budgets are, however, very tight and as such any new equipment that they decide to invest in has to make financial sense for the institution over the long run.

Reflecting on her decision to purchase the MA3 compact console, Jade states that she felt it important that the institution invests in the appropriate infrastructure to ensure that the lighting rigs at the main theatre, as well as the University's two auxiliary performance spaces, allow for future growth and gradual modernisation. "While our lighting rig is still primarily comprised of generic fixtures, I felt that it was wise to invest in a console that would facilitate our gradual move towards an LED-based rig, which is in line with international standards and current technology trends. It was a big decision for us, as buying a new console represents a sizable investment for our facility, but we are all very excited about what the acquisition will do for the space," she adds.

Explaining why she elected to go with the MA3 compact, Jade states: "I spoke with a number of lighting designers, to ask their opinions on the console of choice for the venue, and the overwhelming majority expressed excitement about what MA3 would be bringing to the table. Also, I know and trust that the DWR team will always go above and beyond for their clients. We have built a relationship of mutual trust and respect over the years and, as a result, they are our provider of choice."

Jade's resident technical crew are equally excited about the move to MA3. "I have had training with Jannie in the past, and always walk away with new knowledge and skills," says Musa Sibisi, who has served as a resident senior technician at the UJ Arts and Culture Centre for a number of years. "Jannie is the one who introduced me to the dot2, and I am very excited at having the opportunity to become familiar with the MA3 platform, particularly because it could take me to the next level as a freelancer." Also enthusiastic to get his hands on the new console is Electrical Engineering Masters candidate, Jubilant Mabaane. "I have been volunteering at the theatre as a stagehand for the past two years and have really enjoyed the opportunity to bring my skills as an electrical engineer and apply them in this environment," he says. "I have a deep understanding of the rig from an engineering point of view. However, the senior crew members have guided me to understand what part of my knowledge is applicable and important to the theatre environment. I am really looking forward to learning the programming basics of the MA3 compact console so that I am able to further develop my skills and understanding of the technical theatre field."

The University of Johannesburg has solidified its role in South Africa by striving to inspire the community and serve humanity through innovation and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge. The UJ Arts and Culture Centre has, without doubt, embraced this mission, setting itself, and the people who have found empowerment and new skills in the space, up for great things to come.