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Carola gets Festive with Robe

Products Involved

BMFL™ Spot **MegaPointe®** **RoboSpot™** **T1 Profile™**

Swedish singer and songwriter Carola Maria Häggkvist – best known as ‘Carola’ – has been one of Sweden's most popular performers since the early 1980s, releasing a dynamic range of albums over that time encompassing pop and disco to hymns and folk music.

She’s just played 12 sold-out festive shows at the Slottsladan (Castle Barn) in Steninge Slottsby, around 35km north of Stockholm with special Christmas lighting designed by Danne Persson of Roxy Lighting and including a selection of Robe moving lights – 18 x MegaPointes, 8 x T1 Profiles, six BMFL Spots and one RoboSpot system.

The venue is newly refurbished. The old barn was ‘discovered’ by Carola when she relocated to Steninge Slottsby a couple of years ago and it became her dream to perform there. The charismatic space is 60 metres long, 20 metres wide and dates to 1900. It’s now adjacent to a collection of retail outlets and restaurants which have been built more recently. Construction company Gelba thought restoring the barn was a great idea and started rebuilding it – tastefully – specifically as a performance venue in 2018. The goal was to retain all the old world ‘barn-like’ charm, and with creative use of contemporary materials like Plexiglass, insulation, and modern heating, offer some cool 21st-century event production facilities.

In December 2018, Carola played seven shows at the newly opened Slottsladan which sold out immediately. The shows were so universally popular that this year she doubled the number of gigs to 14 and recorded “Carola’s Advent”, a 4-part TV series for Sweden’s TV3 channel.

Danne has worked with the artist on several occasions during one-off shows, festivals, and telecasts, but this was their first full-scale artist / designer production collaboration. The show contained a mix of Carola’s greatest hits plus some special Christmas and Festive numbers. They decided on no video elements for the shows, so the visual impact and atmosphere was all down to lighting and set. The set was designed by Carola herself including a 12 x 8 stage with a 5-piece band on stage right and a 12-person choir on stage left on risers. Stairs led from the stage to a 25-metre-long 40cm high runway going right out into the audience.

Danne and Carola discussed mood boards. “We wanted a warm CTO feeling at the start of the show and Carola was adamant about emphasizing the warm, cosy and inclusive feeling of the barn,” he explained.

They decided to keep the back wall of the barn as the backdrop, so Danne could wash it with colours and gobo texturing or just let it provide ‘relief’ for a variety of moods.

They added tungsten effect rope lights and LED candles to the set plus some vintage camping lantern with flame-effect LED bulbs which were carried by the choir as they entered. Flying is limited so lighting rental company Scenteknik AVL from Uppsala built two ground supported box trusses 16 metres wide by 9 high, with 9 metres of headroom – that were cleverly concealed behind the Barn’s structural wooden beams.

The first was over the stage and this was rigged with 12 of the MegaPointes on the upstage most truss with three MegaPointes on each of the two upstage legs. In the middle of the back truss, a T1 Profile was positioned and linked into the RoboSpot system for back follow-spot style lighting.

MegaPointes were chosen as a great option for rear lighting and for their excellent beams and gobos which provided the main effects lighting for the whole show.

On the second box truss over the catwalk, the T1 Profiles rigged on the front section were used for general downstage washes, and on the next truss back was a T1 Profile also linked to the RoboSpot system, with a RoboSpot remote camera beside it providing line-of-sight view to the stage for both T1 Profile follow spots.

A one-metre long truss was flown above the bleacher seating complete with a T1 ‘front array’ at the end of the catwalk, covering the areas that the follow spots could not reach.

All the T1s were picked for front light and follow spotting duties for multiple reasons, including their excellent tungsten emulation, which was fundamental to recreating the warm ‘classic’ ambience required.

Upstage on the floor were the six BMFL Spots. Their main function was to project gobos onto the back wall and engage in aerial beam work.

Scenteknik AVL had newly invested in the T1 Profiles. They wanted a new LED profile and narrowed it down to two brands. After Danne saw the T1 at Prolight+Sound in Frankfurt he added them to his initial lighting designs for these shows and this helped convince the company to choose the Robe option.

“The T1 fulfilled and totally exceeded my every expectation after Frankfurt,” enthused Danne having just completed the run of shows! He especially likes the zoom and the white colour correction plus the big front lens and the fact that it makes a nice eye candy as a backlight.

“The optics are great, and it works brilliantly with the RoboSpot system,” he adds - and is also really looking forward to working with T1s on a television project.

The RoboSpot BaseStation was located at FOH.

The operator had control of zoom and tilt to adjust the back light, and the rest of the parameters, including dimmer, were controlled by Danne’s grandMA3 light console, which

ran all the Robes and some other lights including LED washes, LED PARs, LED floods and some conventional static profiles.

He had specifically wanted a remote follow spot system that had handles for the operator – like a camera stand – rather than a mouse, as he believes it's more intuitive with the body flow and therefore easier to make smooth and fluid physical movements this way.

Danne was pleased with how the lighting worked for these shows – especially the gobo projections onto the back wall of the barn to emphasise its unique ambience. He and the other production crew all received many compliments from audiences each night after the shows.

He enjoyed being part of a "great" team which included Jonas Hessel of Scenteknik AVL who was crew chief and looked after dimmers, RoboSpot operator John Nilsson, stage manager Timmie Malmberg and project manager Lotta Bjurenstedt-Waern.

Photo Credit: Karin Törnblom





