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MECC Invests in Robe FORTES

Products Involved

FORTE®

Mackay Entertainment and Conference Centre (MECC) is a busy and diverse complex of nine different venue and event spaces in Mackay, central Queensland, Australia, hosting a lively mix of corporate launches and conferences to opera, music, dance, and performance shows.

Head of lighting Dan Grace and his team are delighted to be amongst the first in Australia to have Robe new high power FORTE's LED luminaires in the house, with a purchase of twelve of the fixtures plus twelve new Robe Spiider LED wash beams, with more of both types of moving light to follow once the season ramps up again!

The decision to buy FORTES was underlined by MECC's previous experiences with Robe - with nearly 100 fixtures already, including 30 x DL7s, a mix of profiles and fresnels, which directly replaced 36 hot and power-hungry 2K fresnels in the main theatre in 2019.

The last batch of these DL7s arrived together with three RoboSpot systems and BMFL FollowSpots, a move that was driven by MECC's head of AV, Mark Blake.

Mark and Dan are part of an MECC technical team of 18. They were both instrumental in persuading the local government officials who oversee MECC's operation that the time was right to convert the theatre to a full LED stage lighting rig.

Moving forward, LED is now a prerequisite for any new lighting investments and "it made sense to keep brand consistency throughout the venue and we enjoy a great relationship with our supplier Kennedy Amplifier Hire Service and Australian distributor Jands," confirmed Dan.

The new FORTES and Spiiders will mainly be utilised in the Convention Centre halls as part of the main production lighting rig. The other eight FORTES and six Spiiders on order are destined for the main auditorium, however all these newest fixtures will be interchangeable according to requirements in the different venues.

Dan's ultimate goal was to have a lighting rig that could offer multiple possibilities from one standard design, which would suit all events from a conference one day to a concert for 1500 people the next, etc.

Features like framing shutters, the large zoom range, the deep saturated colours, and low noise all played a part in the decision to choose FORTE.

The ability of the Spiider to be a wash or a beam due to the zoom, and its excellent array of colours made it an easy choice as a replacement for their LEDWash 600s.

When it came to the FORTES, initially they had been thinking in terms of a BMFL for power and versatility, but as the time approached to make this particular investment, so did the requirement for it to be an LED source, so first they looked at Robe's ESPRITE.

This was the first Robe product to offer the manufacturer's proprietary cutting edge TRANSFERABLE ENGINE (TETM) technology with a unique replaceable LED light source.

They then got wind during 2020 of Robe releasing a powerful LED BMFL type - with loads of power and features packed and decided to wait until this was available to make their final decision.

Dan received the FORTE spec sheet and was "super impressed", especially by the two rotating gobo wheels, the shuttering system and the 1000W LED. "I knew without even seeing it ... that this was the perfect luminaire for our venue, and one that would last us well into the future," he enthused.

The decision was made, and the PO signed!

MECC's history with Robe actually goes back a few years, even before Mark arrived in 2016!

The first Robe fixtures came to the venue in 2013 recalls Dan, who has been there for nine years, and that was a purchase of DLX Spots and LEDWash 600s ... which are still going strong today!

The original decision to choose Robe was made collectively between all the tech staff at the time, explained Dan, together with influence from local rental / production company Kennedy Amplifier Hire Service (KAHS), from whom they regularly sub rent various equipment.

In 2014, Robe Pointes were added to the inventory. They liked the punch and multiple features of these which meant they could be used across any of the spaces.

When Mark joined, the association with Robe continued, together with the commitment to purchasing more sustainable lighting in the form of LED fixtures. Looking for some good general-purpose LED luminaires, they decided on 20 x LEDBeam 150s. This number was boosted by another 8 when they purchased the 30 x DL7s.

You can never have enough LEDBeam 150s!

In a normal year, MECC would stage a vibrant mix of around 350 diverse events across all venues, halls, and spaces.

In March 2020 with a busy year ahead, everything stopped as countries worldwide grappled with their first waves of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mackay's local council retained staff and kept everyone working, with time meaningfully utilised in updating safety management systems, venue cleaning, purging old and unused kit and various other stuff, installing new cable runs and generally creating and refining infrastructure to make life in the production fast lane easier long-term.

In August 2020, the Mackay Festivals team produced "Festival Sessions", a small run of live streamed events featuring 2-hour performances by a wealth of local talent from the Mackay region – DJ's, bands, soloists, comedians, canvas painters and even some dance schools – all of which were hugely popular with the live entertainment starved public!

After August, things slowly started picking back up and all the usual events like concerts, dance school season, schools' awards nights etc. started reappearing on the schedule.

The next 6 months are looking like all-action as they will be delivering a regular calendar of shows to the usual high-quality production standards as well as plugging any gaps with the demand for events, conferences and shows that could not happen in 2020!

Go MECC!

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland



