

5 / 4 / 2021

Robe T2 Profiles Make No Noiz for West Australian Ballet Shows

Products Involved

T2 Profile™ Spiider®

The first Robe T2 Profiles to arrive in Australia were snapped up by Perth-based lighting and visual rental and production company What Noiz and made their debut on the lighting rig designed by Matt Marshall for West Australian Ballet's compelling "As One: Ballet at the Quarry".

This was performed as part of the 2021 Perth Festival at the Quarry Amphitheatre, a magnificent outdoor rock quarry in Perth's coastal suburb of City Beaches.

What Noiz's founder and owner Benjamin Fry explained that they had been looking for a powerful LED profile for some time. They loved what they saw in terms of features and functionality with Robe's T1 ... but wanted something with just a bit more brightness ... and then along came the new T2 Profile just at the right moment!

These have replaced the company's older discharge profile moving lights from another manufacturer.

"It's a beautiful fixture," stated Ben, adding that he was considering both the T2 and Robe's FORTE ... however it was the complete silence of the T2 Profile - designed from the ground up for theatre and other performance events that tipped the scales as it is one of their primary sectors.

He mentioned that the quietness is also ideal for servicing high-end corporate events and other spoken presentation scenarios where no noise is essential.

Additionally, he appreciated all the subtleties and elegance of the T2, complete with CMY colour control and DataSwatch filters offering exact pre-programmed colours via Robe's RCC (Robe Colour Calibration) algorithm plus the extremely flexible 2,700 - 8,000 degrees K variable colour temperature.

The purchase was completed in time for the West Australian Ballet's 2021 summer season with its three dynamic works combining ballet and contemporary dance.

"4Seasons" was a stirring existing work choreographed by Natalie Wier; "Heartache" was a collaborative re-working of six different pieces delivered by the Company dancers and artistic team, with a concept created by artistic director Aurélien Scannella and principal rehearsal director and artistic associate Sandy Delasalle; and "Moment of Joy" was a brand-new piece presented by West Australian Ballet principal dancer Dayana Hardy Acuña and soloist Juan Carlos Osma.

This exciting outdoor venue, formerly a working limestone quarry, dates to colonial times, and West Australian Ballet is the resident company there every Perth Festival season.

The Company's lighting designer Matt Marshall was delighted to be the first in Australia to use the T2s, having already used the T1 Profiles on various projects.

He explained that one of the pieces needed shifting colour temperature adjustments and shuttered rectangular looks, the next demanded saturated vibrant colour, while "4Seasons" required large, shuttered corridors of light ... which is the effect for which the T2 Profiles were positioned.

This was Matt's first time designing a show at the Quarry Amphitheatre, although he has seen many West Australian Ballet productions there in the past - having studied at WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts) where he graduated in 2000 and has been a lighting professional ever since.

"I needed a shuttering profile with a wide zoom range and decent output so the T2s seemed perfect," he commented, adding that it was tight freighting the T2 fixtures to Perth in time with the current COVID border control measures making the process protracted, but they arrived just in time!

Six of the eight T2 Profiles were positioned over the stage and used as specials and for shuttering large rectangular shapes across the stage, with the other two downstage on the front truss and used as front light and texturing positions to assist if any of the choreographers wanted additional front light.

The units were "specifically distributed to allow for all the shuttering shots I needed, but still flexible enough to be a standard rig for additional movement".

Being outdoors, the technical production has certain givens in terms of positions and power, and Matt utilised the theatre's standard ground support setup and worked hard to make all the elements realise the design, which also involved several house fixtures lighting the limestone cliffs behind the stage. With a little bit of extra budget, he changed the usual tungsten side light to LED to produce saturated side lighting for one of the pieces.

For the work that needed the shuttering, it was an ideal solution to be able to do this remotely on the fixture rather than waiting for crew to climb the truss to focus lamps!

However, the feature impressing Matt the most on the T2 Profiles was not actually a factor in this production because they were outdoors ... but the noise - or rather, lack of it!

"The absolute silence makes it such a GREAT fixture for theatres or concert halls! Conductors worldwide will simply love these fixtures," he declared.

In addition to the T2s, twelve Robe Spiiders were on the lighting rig, together with an assortment of conventionals.

The main challenge of the project for Matt was evoking the intimacy of a ballet performance on an outdoor stage and achieving that in a very short tech week frequently interrupted by rain!

He worked alongside Rhys Pottinger, programmer from West Australian Ballet and "an absolute whizz" at getting the show together and experimenting with the various T2 features in the available time!

The schedule was further complicated by a COVID shut down for a week just as the Company's opening night started.

It was decided to continue with the season, which was sold out, keeping performers dancing and easing the public back into the concept of going out to enjoy live performances again, with extra shows scheduled to accommodate everyone.

Matthew has also been back in Perth since the pandemic began. Since leaving WAAPA he was based in Sydney for 15 years, and then for the last three was working all over Australia and internationally. He feels his decision to return to Western Australia for the moment was extremely fortunate, as it gave him - amongst other things - the chance to work with West Australian Ballet's fabulous technical team headed by technical director David Cotgreave.

His lighting crew for the "As One: Ballet at the Quarry" season was led by head of lighting and audio, Neil Webster alongside Adrian Wright, Dillan Kuiper and Peter Young.

These eight new T2 Profiles plus one more have been added to What Noiz's existing Robe stock of Spiiders and LEDBeam 150s. "We love our Robe fixtures," declared Ben, all of which have been supplied through exclusive Australian distributor, Jands.

He feels that Robe takes a "personal responsibility" for delivering its products which is reflected in their design and engineering.

"Everything about the lights is thought-through and properly applied," he says. "This diligence and attention to detail evokes a large level of trust in the brand, its philosophy and products."

Ben thinks that luminaires like the ESPRITE, FORTE and T2 all using the same framing modules is clever forward thinking, and he and the What Noiz team are extremely happy with the T2s.

"It's everything we wanted in a moving head and even the 'bananaring' of the framing shutters has been solved and at full zoom these are perfectly straight!"

What Noiz was started eight years ago by Ben and business partner Daniel Hocking as a bit of a novelty and an enthusiastic hobby at the time, initially staging silent discos. The venture was extremely successful, and two years later they started growing, purchasing equipment, and offering bigger and better production values to clients.

While most clients are now in theatre, the arts, and corporate worlds, they still do the odd silent disco!

Ben has also personally been associated with the West Australian Ballet since 2005. He has taken on assorted roles in that time including as a lighting operator, head of lighting, lighting designer ... and now as a supplier, and is extremely passionate about this work.

In March 2020, as happened everywhere, COVID-19 hit and event and performance activities ground to a halt, however with Western Australia's swift recovery, the arts industry has largely recovered and is back to performing with audience capacity limitations.

Ben reckons it will still be a long road back to 'normal', whatever that may now be ... but his hope is by the next summer at the end of this year, some international touring activities will have re-started and that the artist and technical communities will be on the road to re-starting and thriving once more.

Photo Credit: Bradbury Photography





