



Curiouser and Curiouser:

Herrick Goldman Lights *Alice in Wonderland*

Lighting designer Herrick Goldman was hired to create new illumination for the Pittsburgh Ballet's recent production of *Alice in Wonderland*. First created 20 years ago for English National Ballet, it features an elaborate scenic and costume design by Sue Blane. It was seen in the Benedum Center, the cavernous venue that is the ballet's home.

Goldman notes, "It was a fun challenge to update the work to a much more modern and vibrant aesthetic in collaboration with choreographer Derek Deane, who told me that he wanted a modern Vegas feel to the show. For that reason, Curtis Dunn [the ballet's director of production] and I immediately began discussing adding LEDs to the plot."

Getting the gear right the first time was crucial, Goldman notes. "The Benedum is, technically, a road house and there are strict rules for the ballet and Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera [the theatre's regular tenants]. Once out of wet tech, you can only change lighting cues when the cast is on stage. Once the cast goes home the night before the show, you can't write any more cues. If you bring in moving lights, it triggers the need for another programmer and moving light console."

From the beginning, it seems, Goldman knew that his approach would be based around strong colors. "It's all about color and angle," he says. "Given the desire of the creative team and the themes of *Alice in Wonderland*, we started the ballet in a naturalistic light and then shifted into ever-more saturated colors to enhance the story. The tea

part was lit in a golden, sunny amber and the Red Queen was, of course, a saturated blood red."

Goldman adds, "Sue Blane and Derek definitely had strong opinions about the lighting. The costumes are gorgeous and take light so well that being able to put a bright, saturated tonality on many of them really had an impact."

The designer says that his workhorse unit was the Elation Professional Colour 5 Profile LED ellipsoidal spot. Elation says that the unit can emit nearly any color desired from its five-color LED engine, along with variable shades of white light. Goldman used other gear to create provide saturated colors from different angles, using the Colour Profile fixtures to cut through in a clear white light. "I liked the fact that we could achieve a strong Tungsten white or a bluer daylight white from the same fixture," he says. "Next to the inventory at the Benedum Center, these fixtures stood up very well relative to the intensity of Source Four Lekos and other types of fixtures."

Goldman deployed twenty-four Colour 5 profiles in three systems of pipe-end sidelight, with 12 units on each side divided into three zones of four. Each unit was equipped with 19° lenses with R119 (Light Hamburg Frost) for an even wash across the large stage from a 32' trim height. One unit was used as a downlight gobo effect and one as a shallow backlight to center, while one unit had a gobo rotator and Rosco Prismatic glass gobo with yellows and ambers. "When the LED source shifted behind the dichroic texture, the secondary colors really punched through," he says.

The other major lighting unit in Goldman's rig was the Chroma-Q Color Force II, supplied by 4Wall Entertainment. "Their native lensing is great and they're incredibly bright," Goldman says. "We used the lenses on the overheads for scenic washes and downlight and on all the booms as sidelight. They worked just great. I felt that giving Derek saturated colors from the side and toplight would work for his Vegas concept. Having a very bright wash of saturated col-



ors from low sidelight really popped the costumes and scenery, but we could also cut through with white light from LED profiles and traditional sidelight profile units. The rig also contains Colortran Lekos, which are the best-maintained units you've ever seen."

Dunn notes that, because of the number of available dimmers at the Benedum Center, it wasn't easy to integrate redundant lighting systems into the setup. Speaking of the Colour 5 Profiles, he says, "without their color-changing ability, the rig would have been much bigger, as large as 600 units [it was 500]. Instead of hanging four traditional Source Four fixtures for example, we could hang just one Colour 5 Profile. The savings produced were substantial."

In addition to the 26 Colour 5 Profiles and 26 Color Force IIs, the rig included seven 6' mini-strips, 14 Altman PAR 64

MFLs, seven Altman PAR 64 NSPs, seven Altman R40 strips, 184 Colortran Zoom Ellipses, approximately 114 ETC Source Fours, 24 NSI Colortran 8" Fresnels, 20 NSI Colortran Far Cycs, 32 Philips Selecon Pacific Zoomspots, three Strong Xenon Super Troupers, and two Reel-EFX DF-50 hazers.

"The lighting was run by an Eos console expertly programmed by Will Dennis. I was lucky to have Stacey Boggs as an associate. Her expertise in dance and at the tech table saved all of us. There were hundreds of cues and the followspots were very busy." He adds, laughing, "In one scene with Alice and the March Hare peeking in and out from behind many doors, there were so many cues that we called it 'Spotpocalypse.' The crew did a fantastic job." *Alice in Wonderland* ran February 10 – 19. 🎭

