



VARI-LITE

VARI-LITE'S VLZ RANGE IS LED GENERATION SOLUTION FOR DREAMGIRLS

New York, USA – The VLZ range of luminaires have found favor with stage lighting designers and theatre lighting teams worldwide since their introduction in 2017. Now, Award-winning Broadway lighting designer, Ken Billington, has given the VLZ family another stage accolade, choosing to include 66 of the fixtures in his lighting rig for the latest touring production of Dreamgirls, a show he first lit in 2008.

Billington, renowned for his design work on hit musicals, including Chicago and Sunday in the Park with George, among many other productions, explains his selection of Vari-Lite's LED-based VLZ fixture family: "I needed to reproduce the lighting for this production, which was using the same scenery, costumes and direction as 11 years earlier. Equipment has changed from what we used originally, VL2500 WASH, VL3000 SPOT, VL3500 SPOT and color scrollers are no longer available - and if they are, they're old and unreliable."

After seeing a demo of the fixture, Billington was happy to accept the VLZs as the next-generation fixtures that would bring the desired continuity to the new production. "The main challenge was to reproduce this show exactly as it had been done before," said Billington. "The tour is going to Tokyo, where this production has been performed three times previously, and they expect the same lighting."

In total Billington specified 32 VLZ WASH, 22 VLZ SPOT and 12 VLZ PROFILE fixtures. "The VLZ package forms the entire overhead lighting rig for the show," says Billington's associate lighting designer, Ben Travis. "Back light, top light, pipe ends, specials - all VLZ. Then, conventional and LED ellipsoidals take care of side-light and front-light."

Recreating the existing color palette was a key aim for this production. "The color was good," says Billington, "We had pre-mixed the colors in the shop matching my stock 200 color palette. The new colors matched to colors we had used in the previous productions."

Lighting Programmer, Jackson Miller, agrees. "The colors you get out of these units are really clear, clean colors that don't muddy the beam or hurt light output."

And the VLZ fixtures' light output is plentiful, to say the least. "The fixtures are bright," confirms Billington, "in fact a bit too bright! We run them at 50-70% most of the time. When you fade them, there is no beam degradation with the LED, which you would see if there was a shutter doing the dimming on a discharge fixture."

The internal four-blade framing system featured in the VLZ WASH and VLZ PROFILE was also appreciated by the team, although used primarily in the WASH model. "With the VLZ WASH, the framing barndoor system has come in handy," says Travis. "It's impressive how much beam control you can get without compromising the soft edge of the wash or the intensity."

"For this production, the floor is a scenic treatment with large, rectangular boxes. In previous iterations, we've focused the washes to each box, but it's always been a bit fuzzy, as we couldn't contain the wash to the box. Now we've been able to shutter into the boxes, which has helped us to emphasize and define 'rooms' or 'spaces' where there is not an actual scenic structure, other than a painted line on the floor."



Miller adds, "The shutters are pretty great - I especially loved having full shutters in the WASH units. Something that's really nice about them is that even though they are all full-frame shutters, they all seem to exist on the same plane, optically speaking. All four of them can be sharp at once, which is some sort of amazing witchcraft, considering every other full-frame shutter unit I've seen will only sharpen to one or two at a time." Overall, the fixtures have been widely welcomed by the Dreamgirls lighting team. "The quality is great," concludes Travis. "They are bright and crisp. Gobos are sharp when needed and soft when we want them to be. They have met, and exceeded, our expectations." ■

PRODUCTS FEATURED:

VLZ PROFILE
VLZ SPOT
VLZ WASH

PHOTO CREDITS: ©Tsuyoshi Toya, Courtesy of Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, Inc.

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Ken Billington

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER: Ben Travis

LIGHTING PROGRAMMER: Jackson Miller

LIGHTING APPLICATION: THEATRE