

VARI*LITE © Strand

ROBSON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER COMPLETES STATE-OF-THE- ART UPGRADE WITH VARI-LITE & STRAND



Claremore, OK, USA – Since opening its doors in 2006, the Robson Performing Arts Center has existed as a state-of-the-art facility for the benefit of both students of the Claremore Public School system and the town’s wider community. To maintain its position as a provider of both education and entertainment, the Center recently completed an extensive stage lighting and control upgrade which includes more than 300 LED luminaires and a networked control solution from Vari-Lite and Strand.

Designed by architects Wozencraft Mowery and Associates, the 67,250 square foot center was gifted to the Claremore Public School system by philanthropists Frank and Ludmila Robson. It has two performance spaces – a 1,024-seat Main theatre and a versatile, 50ft by 50ft Black Box space. Its educational wing offers classes to Choir, Band and Drama students, with practice rooms, makeup and dressing rooms, scene shop, prop shop, costume shop and sewing room – all supporting a varied program of entertainment.

The Center’s state-of-the-art ethos underpins the quality of education that the school strives to offer, so keeping up with the latest technology is crucial. “We really needed to update our equipment to match the current standard of technology, to ensure the students will be better equipped when they are ready for higher education,” says the Center’s technical director, Pamela Neuok.

To help specify the next generation of lighting and control systems, Neuok and the management team turned to leading theatre planning consultancy, Schuler Shook, which had first worked on the venue when it was still on the drawing board, in

2002. Their team developed a conceptual design to meet the Center’s needs.

With reduced power usage a key requirement to cut ongoing utility costs, the adoption of LED lighting technology was a priority. In addition, the new fixtures would need to offer greater versatility in terms of color and texture. The aim was to upgrade the Main theatre from incandescent sources to LED fixtures, while retaining the incandescent fixtures in the Black Box theatre to ensure students could be trained on both types of luminaire technology.

“We wanted LED equipment that would be comparable in functionality to our previous fixtures, along with some added ‘eye candy’ elements to enhance our performances,” says Neuok. “We also wanted some moving lights to give us additional options.”

At the same time, the Center wanted to take the opportunity presented by the upgrade to improve lighting positions, especially for dance competitions and recitals, and to ensure that it held enough fixtures to offer choice to incoming touring companies.

Schuler Shook’s Jack Hagler says, “Our design criteria were to procure luminaires proven to produce high quality light, and control systems and luminaires that were easy for high school students to learn and use, yet powerful enough to support the robust productions being presented at the school. It also needed to be equipment that would easily interface with existing lighting and power infrastructure. We felt the Strand products met

our design criteria very well, so we included them as specified product benchmarks.”

With Schuler Shook’s design criteria in place, the detailed design and subsequent installation were carried out by Texas-based Batts AVL, as design-build contractor. The specification met all the Center’s needs and more. Providing the backbone of the theatrical lighting rig are 196 of Strand’s high-CRI LEKO® LED Profile luminaires. These fixtures include 112 of the Full Color LEKO LED model, which provides high-quality color mixing from its advanced six-color RGBALC (Red, Green, Blue, Amber, Cyan and Lime) LED engine, and 84 of the Tunable Warm White LEKO LED model, which offers adjustable color temperature from 2700K to 4500K. Extending the versatility of the LEKO LED fixtures even further are a wide range of lens tubes, of both fixed and variable angles.

The chosen moving heads are six of Vari-Lite’s powerful, LED-based VLZ PROFILE luminaires, renowned for their high output, wide zoom range and familiar CMY-CTO color system. For lighting cycs and drops, 16 Vari-Lite SL BAR 660 fixtures were specified, plus eight of the shorter SL BAR 640, included as moveable units to maximize flexibility between the performance spaces.

Lastly, providing extra flexibility for in-house or touring productions are a selection of 78 fixtures from the Vari-Lite VL800 Series. These include 42 of the retro-styled VL800 EVENTPAR, plus 28 of the lightweight VL800 PROPAR with RGBW color mixing and motorized zoom, and eight VL800 EVENTWASH, the mid-sized moving head fixture with RGBW color mixing and seven independently controllable LEDs. “We love the small size of these fixtures and the versatility they will provide,” says Neuok.

For control, the choice of the powerful and scalable Strand NEO CONSOLE made perfect sense. Its intuitive touchscreen interface and flexible control options, as well as its unlimited, scalable architecture and sophisticated LED luminaire control were ideally suited to the needs of both an educational environment and a busy performing arts center. What’s more,

NEO integrates seamlessly with the Strand VISION.NET system which provides touchscreen control access to the house lighting management system.

“The control system was planned to provide ample new outlets at all possible locations where luminaires could be used,” says Hagler. “We specified the types and quantities of devices for general areas in the theatre, while Batts AVL designed the specific installed locations in consultation with the client.”

For Neuok and her team, there was one other essential requirement - that training on the new systems would be provided by the manufacturer, for both students and teachers. To that end, Vari-Lite and Strand entertainment lighting specialist Bobby Harrell is conducting a series of training sessions to ensure that those using this new technology can do so to its full potential. Naturally, in line with current Covid-19 restrictions, these sessions are being conducted via video link.

“We have been having a lot of fun learning this new technology and we are so excited for the students to be able to create looks with the new fixtures and learn the new network,” says Neuok. “Batts AVL was incredible to work with and we would do it all over again in a heartbeat.” ■

PRODUCTS FEATURED:

LEKO® LED PROFILE
VL800 EVENTPAR
VL800 PROPAR
VL800 EVENTWASH
VLZ PROFILE
SL BAR 640
SL BAR 660
STRAND NEO CONSOLE
VISION.NET

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CONSULTANT: Jack Hagler, Schuler Shook

LIGHTING APPLICATION: THEATRE

