

VARI*LITE

VARI-LITE VL2600 FIXTURES UNLEASH ‘UNWORLDLY’ COLORS FOR SWEENEY TODD



The Long Center in Austin, Texas, USA, is known as ‘Austin’s creative home’ and is renowned for fostering technical and performance excellence. When it staged a production of Sondheim’s Sweeney Todd over three nights, lighting designer James Sale created an uncompromising ‘unworldly’ series of lighting states using Vari-Lite VL2600 WASH luminaires.

Sale responded to the play’s blood-soaked, dreary, 1785 London setting by unleashing sinister scenes that cut through the darkness with searing, rich colors at high intensities. As the play progressed, the looks started to manifest in the plot driven scenes until all became one, in a dramatic crescendo of color. The VL2600 WASH fixtures were the only color changing lights in his plot, apart from the cyc lights, and Sale programmed them on ‘double duty’ as specials as well as color washes.

“I wanted to put Sweeney Todd in the audience’s faces which meant, to me, he needed to be bright,” says Sale, who has designed the lighting for shows at the innovative Long Center for more than a decade. “The VL2600s were very bright, which was a big plus. The color rendition and continuity from fixture to fixture was terrific and they moved very smoothly.

“I rigged the VL2600s on either side of the stage, in the bottom of the box boom, and about three feet off the deck. They were used constantly. There were several live moves, but they only happened when the set pieces were spinning, which worked really well. The show never stopped, with constant scene changes during action. The instant color change and the smooth pan/tilt of the VL2600s told the story in time to the music. I discovered that the VL2600s can do all sorts of great things.”

The Long Center purchased the VL2600 WASH luminaires in 2020 following discussions between the Center and Tony Tucci, the Austin Ballet lighting designer. “The VL2600s upgraded the previous fixtures, giving the Long Center color consistency, brightness, shutters, steady light, LED lamp stability, and a much quieter hall,” adds Sale.

The production was directed by Doug Scholz-Carlson with Ari Jaimesen serving as Assistant Lighting Designer, Vince Herod as Production Manager and Technical Director. ■





PRODUCTS FEATURED:

VL2600 WASH

PHOTO CREDITS: © JAMES SALE

LIGHTING DESIGNER: JAMES SALE

LIGHTING APPLICATION: THEATRE