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Over 200 Robe Fixtures for Latest TSO tour

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In a brief that's pure music to any LD's ears, progressive rock Trans-Siberian Orchestra (TSO) founder and producer Paul O'Neill's instructions to award-winning production and lighting designer Bryan Hartley ... regularly includes getting 'as many lights as possible' on the rig!

The latest 'Letters from the Labyrinth' tour by the maverick prog rock band - which saw two TSO troupes simultaneously play the east and west coasts of America, eight shows a week reaching up to 45,000 people per day for two months - featured over 100 Robe moving lights on each rig - 60 x Pointes and 44 LEDBeam 100s.

These were part of design number 19 by Bryan for TSO, who are well known for their spectacularly visual live performances which have always enthusiastically embraced lighting, video, lasers and pyro. Bryan has been on-board with TSO since it started touring in 1999 and had also previously worked with O'Neill on other projects.

He first used Robe Pointes on the 2013 tour and decided to return to their popular multi-purpose workhorse fixture for this one.

A massive 29 mm pitch screen formed the backdrop and upstage side-stage wings for this latest tour, and with that came the need for some seriously bright but compact lightsources. Eight square-shaped moving truss pods were flown over the stage, each rigged with four Pointes which were used to create a selection of signature ACL effects in all the different positions. "I grew up using ACLs as specials and for WOW factor moments," explained Bryan, "and Pointes are the perfect modern equivalent ... but with a hugely expanded capacity due to features like the zoom."

The remainder of the Pointes were dotted around the other overhead trusses with some on the deck.

In fact he didn't have to repeat a single Pointe ACL look throughout the entire show as there are so many options. "They are simply awesome lights," he stated.

The LEDBeam 100 has been a favourite of Bryan's for a while because they are a pokey little light for the tiny size ... and can be tucked in almost anywhere. On this design, he also grouped them in fours to echo and mirror the ACL look but with a completely different quality of light.

He first used LEDBeam 100s on TSO three years ago when the main visual theme was a projection mapped castle that changed location as the show narrative progressed. He needed small LED lights that could throw light around but not impact on the projection. In addition to the moving truss pods, the 2015 tour stage set included two large claw arms complete with personnel platforms which articulated and moved across the full space. Bryan also incorporated three Robe Cyclones in the design. These ingenious tools - an idea initiated by LD Scott Warner of Karate Pinky Visual Design - comprise a moving head with an integrated ring of 24 high powered RGBW multichip LEDs and a fan, and are excellent for creating fabulous visual and atmospheric effects.

Bryan programmed the show onto a Hog 4 console working closely with lighting director Dan Cassar for three weeks of production rehearsals in Omaha, Nebraska.

Dan directed visuals on the road for the west coast TSO troupe, while Bryan himself operated and oversaw the east coast tour, with the production design for both replicated exactly.

Tour Director Elliot Saltzman oversees the financial aspects of both tours, dealing with all-things-money and everything else - he and Bryan have been working together for over 30 years!

In both cases, lighting equipment was delivered by VER.

The two troupes performed an identical set, with lighting cues for the main numbers timecode triggered, and the Hog 4 also running the Catalyst media servers and video.

Lighting and video control was supplied to the tours by Bryan.

He enjoys designing TSO shows enormously, especially as there is the creative scope for properly showing off lighting and its role in accentuating the mood and drama of the performance. "Paul (O'Neill) really trusts my judgement, and it's great being able to really express the show and the story with lighting and visuals and feel the audience reactions as everything unfolds onstage."

Bryan is a freelance LD based in Las Vegas and has carved out a distinctive style and oeuvre for lighting the heavier rock end of the spectrum. Other regular clients include Megadeth and he also worked with hard rockers Kiss - known for their highly theatrical appearance and show visuals - for 15 years. In January 2016 he won a Tour Link 'Top Dog' Award for Set Designer - voted by the industry - for his innovative work with TSO.

Photo Credit: Jason McEachern





