

Gearhouse Splitbeam expands and updates its followspot inventory with Robert Juliat Arthur LT

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Gearhouse Splitbeam of Johannesburg, part of South Africa's Gearhouse Group, has updated and expanded its followspot inventory with the addition of 3 Robert Juliat Arthur LT 800W LED 4°-10° (Long Throw) followspots, supplied by Robert Juliat's exclusive distributor for South Africa, DWR Distribution.

Founded 15 years ago by Alistair Kilbee, Gearhouse Splitbeam focuses on theatre and long term rental, having built a reputation as the go-to company for lighting, audio and AV requirements for every size of production from small independent theatre shows to large franchise musicals.

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My Fair Lady. Picture: Nardus Engelbrecht

Its recent investment in RJ Arthur LT followspots came as a result of an expansion of Gearhouse Splitbeam's lighting fleet in which the team also made a concerted effort to modernise and shift to LED sources: "Because of our primary involvement in theatre we place a lot of emphasis on equipment that is capable of producing quality light that exacting designers expect in a theatre environment," explains HOD Lighting, Mathew Lewis. "It's not enough for lights to be bright. They need to create excellent whites, have a uniform beam and be capable of enduring gruelling long term runs where failure is not acceptable."

Answering these exacting criteria in providing the subtlety, good beam quality and precise intensity control demanded by theatre were Robert Juliat Arthur LT followspots, as Lewis explains: "In our industry, and especially in South Africa, there really is only one brand when considering followspots and that's RJ. Any designer is happy to have RJ followspots on their show and most operators are very comfortable and familiar with how they work."

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My Fair Lady. Picture: Nardus Engelbrecht

“We briefly considered automated spotting systems however we felt, especially for theatre where the spotting needs to be absolutely precise and often very subtle, manual spots still offer the best option for being able to create the looks on stage that theatre designers want.”

Already in possession of three RJ Aramis spots and one RJ Cyrano followspot which, says Lewis, “have given us great service over the years,” the next question the team at Gearhouse Splitbeam asked was which spot is the closest LED equivalent to the Aramis, which has been the perfect size and power for the venues the company usually works in. “With help from Kevin Stannet at DWR who pointed us in the direction of the Arthur LT it really became a no brainer,” states Lewis.

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My Fair Lady. Picture: Nardus Engelbrecht

Arthur LT is a 4°-10° 800W LED long throw followspot which delivers 2000 lux at a distance of 50m and a high CRI (>94). Arthur offers a choice of several ventilation modes, including 'silent' for theatre and opera use.

“Arthur creates a beautiful beam on stage, which is crucial for us because the quality of the light on the stage is just as important as the brightness. To my mind there are not many other followspots on the market that can match RJ for the optics in their spots.

“Added to that is the reliability of the units as well as the ease of use. Whether you want to make them fully manual or link them to DMX to control intensity from the desk. The latter is a huge plus which designers love, allowing them to achieve a subtlety and synchronisation between the spots that wasn't always possible with manual operation.

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Stuart Brown & Lucy Tops in Dear Evan Hansen. Credit © Daniel Rutland Manners

“A further massive advantage of Arthur is that it can be powered off normal 15A single phase outlets which means no more bulky ballasts or the need for three phase power up at the spot box. This is especially popular with our technicians as it makes set up much easier and quicker.”

The advice and service Gearhouse Splitbeam received from DWR Distribution was as invaluable as ever during the selection and purchase of their new Robert Juliat followspots. “DWR is always awesome!” confirms Lewis. “They really are a cut above and constantly come to the party with clever solutions and ideas whenever we need them. Kevin is usually the first phone call we make

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when we need advice and his help with our RJ Arthur LT purchase is no exception. We essentially purchased the units without having seen them which I think is testament both to the trust we have in Kevin and DWR, as well as with RJ and the quality products they produce.”



Stuart Brown and Ntshikeng Matoane in Dear Evan Hansen.
Credit © Daniel Manners

Gearhouse Splitbeam’s new LED Arthur LTs have already done service on *My Fair Lady* in Cape Town and Johannesburg as well as *Dear Evan Hansen*, and are scheduled for the run of *Chicago* later this year along with many other shorter runs. They have also become popular with parent company, Gearhouse South Africa, when it requires subhires for events. “They will most definitely be working hard going forward,” concludes Lewis.