

Robe Blinds Friedrichstadt-Palast with Delight

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One of Berlin's most iconic venues, the Friedrichstadt-Palast, AKA Palast Berlin, a revue theatre in the city's Mitte district, has made a substantial investment in Robe moving lights to help facilitate

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its newly launched Grand Show production, *BLINDED by DELIGHT*, created by Oliver Hoppmann, complete with a vibrant new lighting design by Chris Moylan of Sunrise Studios.

The venue now has almost 300 Robe fixtures in the house lighting rig, including 54 x FORTES, 22 x PAINTEs, 80 x Pointes, 17 x MegaPointes, 75 x TetraXs, 36 x Tetra2s and 6 x ColorStrobes, confirms technical director Thomas Herda, who oversees a technical department of 85 full-time staff helping to bring these spectacular Grand Shows to life onstage.

Friedrichstadt-Palast's Grand Show and Young Show productions – directed and produced by Dr. Berndt Schmidt – both change up every 2 years, prompting new investments in the venue's base technical kit, together with some rentals.

This year's new investments into the Grand Show resulted in purchasing the 75 x Robe TetraXs used as an animated back-wall matrix of effects upstage of a blow-through LED screen, revealed as another layer of visual surprise in Chris's design. The 22 x PAINTEs and 36 x Tetra2s – supplied to the venue by Robe Germany – are also new for this Grand Show.

Thomas has been at Palast Berlin since 2017, and technical director since 2020, and Chris Moylan has been designing lighting there since 2018's *Vivid* Grand Show.



Caption: Friedrichstadt-Palast technical director Thomas Herda (left), and lighting designer Chris Moylan of Sunrise Studios.

The venue's huge stage area is one of the biggest challenges for any production, as it's a vast space that needs filling with performers and lighting, and while the budget is reasonable, it's not bottomless, so every light needs to bring maximum value to the Grand Show.

A total of 656 lighting fixtures are being used for *BLINDED* by *DELIGHT*; 468 of them are moving and the rest are a mix of LED and conventional luminaires.

When Chris first started working at Palast Berlin, there were multiple different types of moving lights in residence, and over the years he and Thomas have streamlined and homogenised the inventory, and the majority are now Robe.

PAINTES were specified by Chris for their expedient size, which makes them handy for installing anywhere. He had used them before, particularly onboard ships where space is always at a premium.

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In recent years, some of Palast Berlin's older moving lights have been replaced with Robe FORTES, a product that Chris has been using for a while, but before the final choice, he arranged a comprehensive shootout with competitor products for all to see. FORTE proved to be the cleanest option with the best colour reproduction. He likes the optics, the whites, and the front and thinks they are "an excellent all-in-one package option."

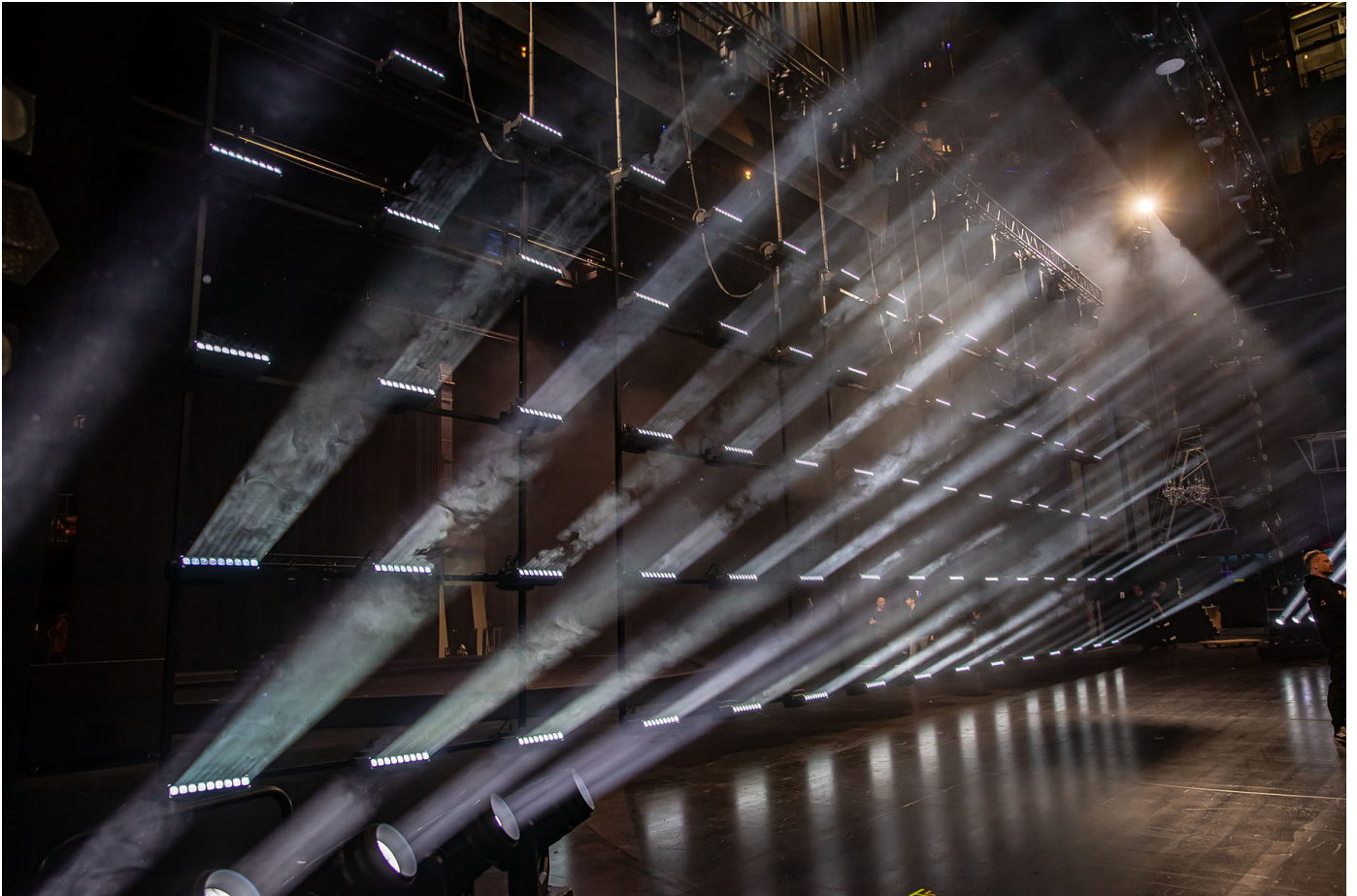
Thomas mentions that having the FORTES and other new Robes in the house rig has also meant less ongoing maintenance is needed.

Pointes were the first Robe fixtures there, he elucidated, after which they kept adding to that initial purchase. The total is now 80 x Pointes, which are in constant use, together with the 17 x MegaPointes.

For *BLINDED by DELIGHT*, 12 x MegaPointes a side are rigged in wagons and pushed into positions upstage for specific scenes.

Chris's starting point for lighting a Grand Show is usually the set or production design, which was created for *BLINDED by DELIGHT* by Florian Wieder & Cuno von Hahn, and director & author Oliver Hoppmann also had input into the initial brief at this stage.

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This is also the first time a full LED screen has been featured onstage, which also influenced Chris in choosing and positioning luminaires.

With over 30 individual scenes and musical numbers in the Grand Show, comprising 100 plus performers, including acrobats, aerialists and the famous synchronised Palast Berlin 'kickline', the Grand Show sweeps the audience on an "emotional journey into the world of dreams and happiness," and is an intense, fast-moving, and highly dynamic environment.

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Lighting has multiple roles – assisting the narrative, lighting the performers, helping build the drama and razzamatazz, as well as meeting the conceptual goals of several different choreographers involved in curating this extravaganza of colour, movement, and energy.

Spacing and positioning of lighting was critically important in being able to cover the large stage areas up to 40 metres wide, and this had to be carefully balanced with choreography space and other technical elements like PA, moving side screens, and set trucks.

And ... everything had to look fabulous from all 1899 seats!

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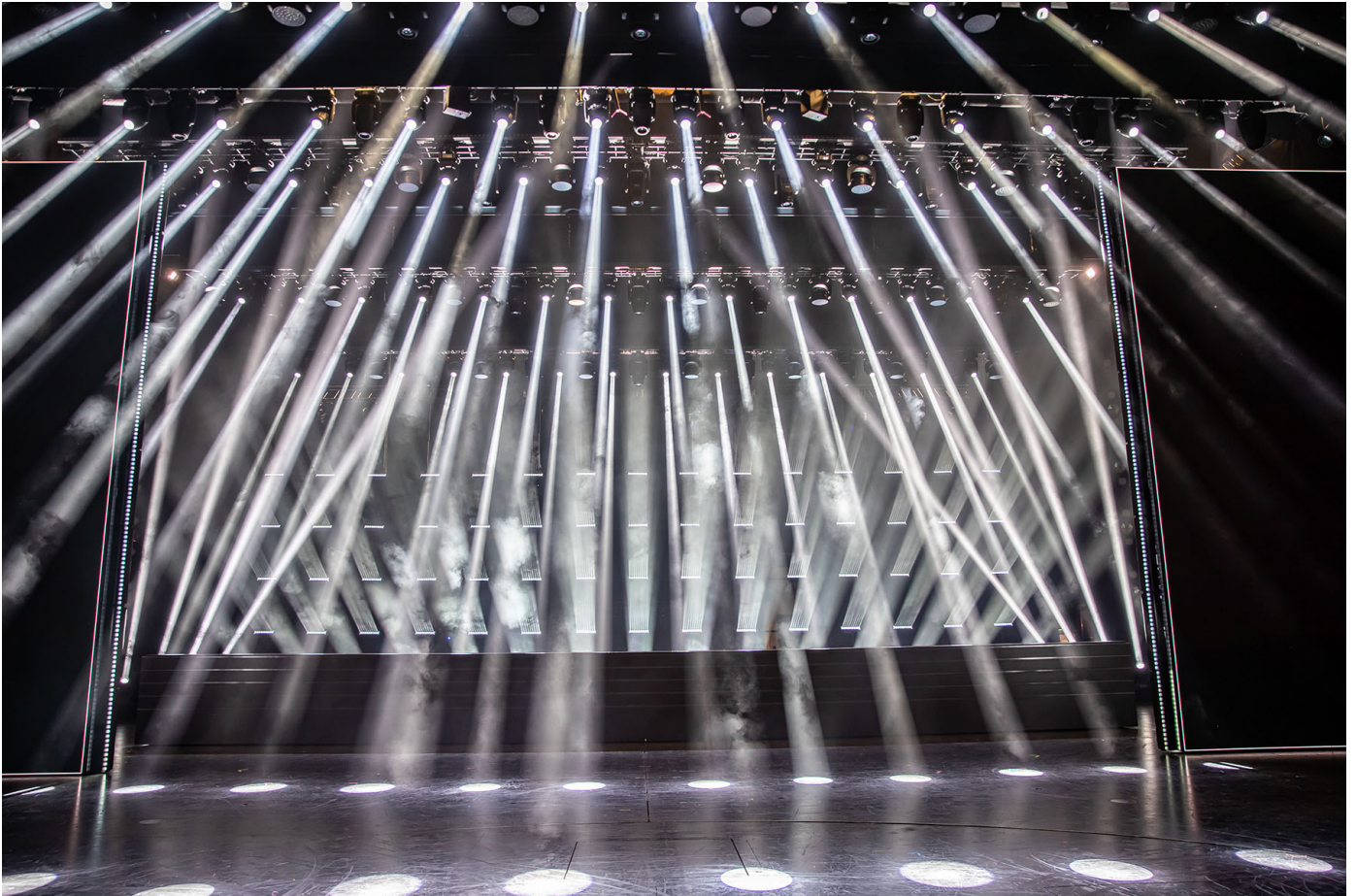
The TetraX matrix was conceived as a modern take on the wall-of-light effect, bringing a contemporary studio look to a classic revue environment on a monumental scale.

“I wanted to have lighting effects on all sides, just as you would with a camera environment,” explained Chris, adding that he also needed something that would work with the transparent screen in and out.

He needed a fixture versatile enough to create beams, blinder and wash effects, plus an array of kinetic shimmering and sparkling texturing from a front-mounted position at the back of the space ... and the TetraX ticked all the boxes.

As Grand Show creative planning starts around two years in advance, Chris had the idea of using TetraXs and then the chance to experiment with the fixtures on a club tour with German pop singer / songwriter Leony, featuring four columns of TetraXs. He was delighted with the results and confident that a super-sized version would have the requisite WOW factors for *BLINDED by DELIGHT*.

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It was then down to the ingenuity and skills of Thomas's team at Palast Berlin to create the infrastructure on which to fly the 75 x TetraXs. They are rigged to five moving frames that can fly in and out on special winches, changing the matrix configuration, and they can also be moved offstage. "They did a brilliant job," notes Chris.

When the lights are on, the frames are nearly invisible, so this giant wall of illuminative movement looks as if it is magically suspended in thin air.

The Tetra2s are rigged around the edges of the side screens and move manually with these objects. "I really wanted to accentuate the verticality of the set," noted Chris, adding, "from these

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positions, the Tetra2 battens provide quality effects for the audience sitting at the sides.”

Chris’s Team included lighting programmer and longtime collaborator Matthias Schöffmann. Andreas Schindler was also onsite to program video, which is triggered via the lighting console. They had an 8-week period onsite to build and refine the Grand Show before a glittering premiere revealed the fabulous world of *BLINDED by DELIGHT* during the first week of October.

Photos: By Louise Stickland