

# Robe brings Colour and Magic to Panto Season

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Robe moving and LED lights - including the newly launched T3 Profile, appearing for the first time on a UK theatre show - proved a perfect choice for award-winning lighting designer Andy Webb during the UK's 2025-26 pantomime season.



*Photo: Barry Rivett*

Andy, an expert at illuminating this very specific performance genre, lit two very different *Jack and the Beanstalk* shows, both for leading panto producers, UK Productions; one at the Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury and one at the Festival Theatre in Malvern.

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While vibrance, glitz, slapstick and panto magic abounded, mashed into a whirlwind of contemporary culture and music, this was the first time that Andy – who has illuminated pantos for 20 years – has lit *Jack and the Beanstalk*. He was super excited for the opportunity to create not one but two fantastic, fast-paced, highly entertaining environments for this show, packed full of visual action, colour, fun and imagination!

A selection of Robe products were an early and essential part of Andy's lighting plots for both shows – all supplied by rental specialist, CEG.

### **Aylesbury**

Robe's new T3 Profile moving light was already in Andy's thoughts for Aylesbury, where the throw from the FOH positions to the stage is 40 metres. Here, he needed power and punch to light and texture all the cloth drops, as well as to form a base layer for all the key lighting.

Andy explained how Robe's T-series multispectral light source is "a brilliant choice" for making colours and costumes pop, while the range of CT whites available are perfect for producing incredible flesh tones.

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*Photo: Barry Rivett*

He also appreciates being able to use the fixtures for covering the stage with sharply focused gobos one minute, then dialling in the frost so the same fixture becomes a quality wash for when characters are on stage, seamlessly slipping back to the gobo looks when they exit.

“It’s incredible being able to do this with one fixture,” he underscores, referring to the versatility of Robe’s impressive ProFrost progressive frost system.

The T3s were also plenty bright enough for this and other tasks in the venue, stated Andy, who ran them mostly at around 70% intensity for the show.

Onstage, 11 x T1 Profiles were positioned on LX bars 1 and 2, and these, coupled with the T3s,

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worked harmoniously for colouring and key lighting.

For the specials, 9 x MegaPointes were rigged upstage on LX 3 and 4, used for tight and bright gobo work, as well as in spot mode for high-impact back lighting effects and for creating additional depth in the big musical production numbers.

Additionally, from these upstage positions, the MegaPointes made great 'hero' lights for Jack and Jill whenever they were onstage.

Another pair of MegaPointes were rigged either side of stage on the front ladders and used for audience participation moments - which are prolific in panto - and as specials to light two mirror balls rigged on the advanced truss to great effect.

For the three stage left and right side booms, Andy chose a combination of Robe ParFect 100 and 150 LED fixtures - a pair on each of the booms, utilising 12 fixtures in total. These were fitted with 20-degree diffusion filters for an extra touch of softening in the side light.

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*Photo: Barry Rivett*

They were augmented with a further four ParFect 150s a side in the FOH positions.

Sixteen LEDBeam 150s on the side ladders, plus four at FOH and another six on LX5, were used to create specials when the beanstalk appeared out of a trap door in the stage - part of an eye-catching stage set designed by Jon Harris, which grew voraciously towards the ceiling.

The beanstalk looked especially eye-catching when lit with the LEDBeam 150s twinned with the tightly shuttered T3 Profiles for gobo work.

All of these Robe moving and LED fixtures were at the essence of lighting this year's performance, for which Andy also tapped into additional lighting from the Waterside Theatre's

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house generics.

Even an experienced panto professional like Andy finds new and exciting challenges and avenues for expression and fun while lighting each one from scratch every year.

Panto is a world where anything can and does happen; you need to be able to think quickly, sharply, and smartly on your feet every minute of the tech period, and preconceptions, rules, and conventions ... are there to be circumvented.

“Fundamental to everything in panto is the storytelling,” he explained, adding that improvising and experimentation, together with some classic theatre prerequisites, encompass an invigorating workflow that he really enjoys:

“Making big visual contrasts is a key, as is embracing all elements of the drama! Good and Evil are high on the list of atmospheres that have to be created and instantly recognisable, but there are numerous other layers of subtlety, together with humour and action. Using colour well is vital to accentuate costumes and set pieces, but the lighting must encompass the high range of visual and narrative dynamics unfolding onstage.”

### **Malvern**

At Malvern – where last year’s production of *Sleeping Beauty* won Andy a UK Panto Award for ‘Best Lighting’ – he opted to use 7 x Robe ESPRITE Profiles in the FOH positions, and these were ideally positioned for lighting the stage and for texturing the cloths.

He again chose 12 x ParFect 100s for the side booms – their small size and high output being ideal for this – and on LX5 to illuminate the cyc, he used 8 x CycFX8s, 1-metre moving linear LED battens, which Robe launched over a decade ago now, but can still be found going strong ... and they are a personal ‘legacy fixture’ favourite of Andy’s.

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“I still like the narrow beam pin effect and the light curtain sweeps you can achieve with these,” he noted, adding, “being able to tilt them is a real bonus.”

Two DL4S Spots – from Robe’s original range of LED theatrical moving lights – were rigged at FOH and used for specials, while a pair of LEDWash 300s, one each side of the pros arch, were used for some cool shadow work and low-level cross stage up-lighting. The compact size was good for this position, together with the quality output.



*Photo: Stuart Purfield*

Both shows were running 3D effects, so there were large screens and projection systems that had to be ‘lit around’, requiring the highly accurate lighting of parts of the stage and set without any spillage. The advanced shuttering of the T1s and ESPRITES was a vital feature in these productions, enabling spot-on key lighting to be delivered to exactly the right places.

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Andy prepared and pre-vizzed both shows with Avolites, utilising Capture and programmed everything on his own Avolites TigerTouch II console in Malvern, ending up with over 300 cues in the desk. In Aylesbury, he worked with the venue's technical manager, Alex Johnson, on the programming phase of the production.



*Photo: Stuart Purfield*

UK Productions brought 11 stages up and down the UK to life with their panto productions this season, offering a high-octane blend of TV and stage stars, dedicated theatrical performers and singers and many talented creatives and technicians all working backstage to create lavish and memorable sets and costumes that were wonderfully lit and sounded amazing, ensuring the highest of production standards were applied to the magic of panto.

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*Photo: Stuart Purfield*

***Photos: Aylesbury by Barry Rivett and Malvern by Stuart Purfield***