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Parni Valjak Rocks Pula Arena

Products Involved

FORTE® FS **MegaPointe®** **LEDBeam 150™** **LEDWash 600X™** **MMX Spot™**

“Valjak I Prijatelji” (Valjak & friends) was a very special show staged in Pula, Croatia, in the city’s magnificent Arena Roman amphitheatre venue and dedicated to Aki Rahimovski, lead singer of legendary Croatian rockers Parni Valjak. The enigmatic frontman died suddenly and unexpectedly in January aged 66, just ahead of a major tour, leaving everyone deeply shocked.

Slovenian lighting designer Nikola “Niko” Podlesnik was honoured to be lighting the emotionally charged gig. He chose Robe moving lights as the backbone of his rig to help deliver all the drama and sentiment of the evening, which saw the remaining members of the band perform with a series of famous Croatian singers taking on the vocals, including Rahimovski’s son, Kristijan.

Lighting equipment was supplied, together with the full technical production including audio and video, by Zagreb-based rental specialist Promo Logistika. The company has a large Robe inventory, all of which is out now as the demand for live shows and events skyrockets over the summer.

Previous to this show, Niko was booked to LD the 40-date Parni Valjak (Steam Roller) tour at the start of the year. After Aki’s passing, he lit another “Valjak I Prijatelji” gig at Zagreb Arena in March for which he used over 100 Robe movers. Very enthusiastic about the brand and his work, Robe is usually his first choice of moving lights.

Pula Arena has a permanent stage setup facilitated by the annual Pula Film Festival committee which is used extensively for that plus the other shows and events using the impressive space. Constructed between 27 BC and AD 68, it is among the world's six largest surviving Roman arenas and the only one to have its four side towers fully preserved.

The performance space is a lot smaller than Zagreb Arena, but Niko and everyone else on the crew were delighted to be working in Pula again as the venue is so unique and has an amazing atmosphere.

Taking the 16-metre-wide stage with 8 metres of headroom as a starting point, and working in conjunction with the video designer Kristina Bengesz, Niko specified 40 x MegaPointes, 8 x MMX Spots, 24 x LEDBeam 150s and 12 x LEDWash 600s together with two manually operated FORTE Follow Spots.

“MegaPointes are a perfect fixture for a show and venue / stage of this size,” he commented, “They have masses of power and offer so many creative options,” all of which were for the 30-song set comprising all Parni Valjak’s big hits and other favourites, from power ballads to folk rock and several genres in between.

Twenty-four of the MegaPointes were in the roof trusses, with another 12 filling the left and right back corner positions which were angled at 45 degrees either side of the square upstage LED screen showing playback video. Due to the wind factor and the way it blows through the Arena, it’s not possible to have side skins attached to the stage.

The final eight MegaPointes were on the deck along the downstage edge of the stage for low front lighting and for shooting forward into the audience.

“It was very important to draw the audience into the action, involve them and help feed all the energy coming offstage out into the arena,” explained Niko adding that this two-way communication drove the lighting and video design, with IMAG images being fed onto two side LED screens.

MegaPointe has been a favourite fixture of Niko’s for some time. “A few MegaPointes can go a long way,” he stated. He loves the small size, the animation wheels, and the way you can create a full range of fluid and kinetic effects. He also appreciates the zoom, the CMY colour mixing and, above all, the speed of the fixtures.

Prior to this show, Niko was lighting the Slovenian version of “Your Face Sounds Familiar” for POP TV in Ljubljana using an all-Robe rig with MegaPointes as the primary fixtures.

The eight MMX WashBeams were on the front truss for lighting the band. This older Robe fixture is still very popular and much loved in the Balkans, and Niko also used these on the same TV show, noting their “great CTO” and camera-friendliness. That was relevant here as well as the show was recorded for later broadcast / distribution.

The LEDBeam 150s were rigged on the side trusses where they were great for filling in back-of-camera gaps, also useful for colouring the stage from different angles and with different effects. “They are so small and usable they fit almost anywhere!” he declared.

The 12 x LEDWash 600s were positioned behind the stage and used to illuminate the amphitheatre architecture immediately behind the stage in a series of colours which, together with the stunning Croatian sunset, boosted the magic of the occasion.

Niko first utilised FORTE FollowSpots at the Zagreb Arena show and reckons they are “incredible”. He comments on just how much LED technology for stage lighting has advanced in the last five years. “They have excellent CRI and colour and I love using them whether its TV or live” he commented on the FORTES.

Parni Valjak was founded in 1975 in Zagreb when the country was still Yugoslavia, and it was one of the bands that influenced him as a kid. “The creative inspiration for this show definitely came from deep inside me,” he said.

He had an open brief to craft a beautiful looking show as the artist’s management trust his skills and empathy with the music.

As well as producing a great light show, he considered things like how comfortable they would be feeling onstage, with careful and considerate placement of lights. “This band are such a part of our history and culture, so respect is a very important element when lighting them. If they feel comfortable it helps them play a great show for their fans.”

In Pula that night a truly incredible show was delivered with passion and feeling by the band and all their creative team which included FOH sound engineer Nenad Zubak. The fantastic performance captured the hearts and minds of the 10,000 Croatians lucky enough to get tickets and celebrate the legacy of Aki Rahimovski with his closest friends and colleagues in the band.

Niko is based in Maribor, Slovenia, and trained as a kindergarten teacher before leaving to follow his dreams and enthusiasm for music and lights. He has been using Robe products for around 10 years, starting with the noughties flagship ColorSpot 1200 product, and continuing when the game changing LEDWash hit the market in 2010. He’s a big Robe advocate, commenting, “Robe is innovative and keeps step with the times and changing technologies. I love working with the wide range of creative products.”

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland







