



CASE STUDY

Panasonic walks on the wild side at the 'ZOO of Life'

Product(s) supplied: PT-RZ31K

Challenge

To commemorate the 175th anniversary of the Antwerp ZOO with a musical uniting people and animals

Solution

Using a Panasonic projector PT-RZ31K to provide high quality images of animals on screen with minimal disruption to the audience

"The interaction between the actors and animals was essential. Consequently, the projector was an actor itself!"

Luc Peumans

Painting with Lights



The Antwerp Zoo is considered to be one of the oldest, most beautiful zoos in the world, celebrating its 175th anniversary since opening in 2018. Having connected people and animals for over a century, the event was commemorated with the recently written musical, *ZOO of Life*. Over 23 performances at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, a total of 700 volunteers and 14 professional actors gave outstanding performances whilst interacting with animals that were brought to life with projections onstage. To do this, the PT-RZ31K series Panasonic laser projector with a brightness of 30,000 lumens was an important contributor.

"The gauze was invisible so that the audience experienced it as if the animals were actually standing on the stage. It worked incredibly well"

Lifelike illusion

"ZOO of Life is an appealing contemporary story about the zoo, love, and loyalty between humans and animals," says an enthusiastic Luc Stevens, the director of *ZOO of Life*.

"It was important that the animals have a strong presence in the performance. Of course, wild animals couldn't be included, meaning we had to think of other options. In the end we chose to show them onto big LED screens; a big 8mm LED screen onstage, two long 4m high side screens and extending the depth of the stage, two sets with LED-clad stairs and a considerable number of video panels in arches above the stage. This created the illusion that the actors were performing in the zoo."

Luc Peumans, from Painting with Lights, the company that provided the decors, adds: "Our job was to create the perception among spectators that they were sitting in the middle of the zoo and were entirely part of the show. Aside from a number of real decor items, the stage set consisted of LED screens where the animals were shown via rear screen projection. For two scenes we used a PepperScrim, which consisted of projecting images of a gorilla and an okapi onto a special holographic gauze with a 30K Panasonic laser projector. This way, the actors could interact with the animals. The gauze was invisible so that the audience experienced it as if the animals were actually standing on the stage. It worked incredibly well!"

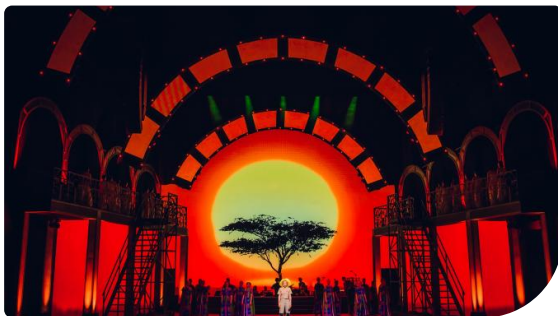
Interaction between actors and animals

Technological innovations made the intermingling of the virtual and the real worlds possible. New technology offers content in all sorts of new forms: mobile, 3D or 4D, or even life-sized via (holographic) projections. Because this technology has been highly simplified over the past five years, production costs have also been reduced whilst the quality continues to improve. This is important to ensure the technology is suitable to educational and cultural projects, alongside its typical use for big companies and the entertainment industry.

The Panasonic projector was highly suited to the change in environment, with the combination of 3-Chip DLP™ imaging with original SOLID SHINE Laser Phosphor technology allowing the PTRZ31K projector to create great detail, excellent brightness, and lifelike colour images with high contrast in large spaces. With all elements combined, it was therefore ideal for the musical.

"For the actors it was quite an experience to work with the projections. At first, the rehearsals were held without images on the backdrop. Only when we went to rehearse in the big hall did they see a gorilla with which they had to interact," says Stevens.

"That was a special experience for the actors. In the beginning it was stressful, but ultimately it worked out very well. Certainly in the scene where an actor sang together with an okapi, the audience had a good reaction which was quite emotional. It really looked as if the animal was standing there, and the connection between the actor and the okapi worked immediately!"



Peumans said, "The interaction between actors and animals was essential. Consequently, the projector was an actor itself! We had to be 100% certain that the projection would not fail during the show. The robustness of the equipment is therefore crucial in creating the experience and fulfilling the expectations of the audience. The reliability of the technology is imperative in this sort of situation. That was why we chose Panasonic. Already we had long standing relations, and Panasonic is our preferred partner when it comes to projections."

Reaching a brightness of 30,000 lumens, the PT-RZ31K was chosen due to the fact it offered high quality images, alongside the two laser diodes that are built into the projector to limit the chance of malfunctions. This makes the PT-RZ31K ideal for business-critical applications where image presentation has to be maintained at all times.

"As we have come to expect from Panasonic, this projector was very strong, reliable, compact and quiet. The latter is an important aspect to perform a musical. The presence of the projector should not distract the audience from the stage."

"The interaction between actors and animals was essential. Consequently, the projector was an actor itself!"

Generating emotion

"The beauty of a performance like this was to see the emotion of the spectators that came out. They were in the zoo for real; they felt it!," an enthusiastic Stevens asserts. "That is why theatre was created: for generating emotion in people. The LED screens and the projection contributed enormously to it. It gives me an incredible feeling of success. It's wonderful!"

Peumans concludes: "We are all very proud to be a part of this production. It was very exciting to work in this fantastic hall and to be associated with such a popular and iconic monument as the Antwerp ZOO. There was a lot of camaraderie, and despite the many technical challenges, everyone was united and determined to produce something very special and memorable. I think we more than succeeded!"

The 23 performances attracted over 36,000 spectators.

