



CASE STUDY

Upgrading Wicked's Visual Spectacle:

Photo Credits:

Mark Senior and Matt Crockett

Client: Wicked: The Musical

Location: London, United Kingdom & UK Tour

Product(s) supplied:

PT-RQ25K

PT-REQ15

ET-D3LEW10

ET-D75LE6



Challenge

Modernise the projection systems used for Wicked: The Musical at its London home, the Apollo Victoria Theatre, by upgrading to state-of-the-art 4K technology and upgrading media servers.

Solution

Panasonic's 3-Chip and 1-Chip DLP™ 4K projectors bring the stunning colours associated with the Wicked production to life, enhancing the visual experience for its audience of thousands every year.

"The RQ25 is so quiet and easy to use; you wouldn't even know it was on during testing. Panasonic's DLP technology delivers unmatched contrast and vibrancy, bringing the world of Wicked to life like never before"

Mike Higgs

System Designer and Programmer

Taking Wicked On The Road

Wicked: The Musical is one of the most iconic productions in modern theatre, captivating audiences at London's Apollo Victoria Theatre since 2006 – and worldwide for 22 years – with its stunning visuals and intricate storytelling. In late 2023, the show embarked on tour, travelling to 10 cities across the United Kingdom and Ireland from December 2023 to January 2025.



This called for a reliable projection and lighting system that could be seamlessly installed into multiple theatres quickly and easily, with minimum set-up and short turnaround times between leaving one venue and arriving at another.

Wicked's production team utilised a single, compact Panasonic PT-RQ25 projector for its tour, sourced and supplied by Stage Sound Services, alongside additional rental equipment. The RQ25 is the world's smallest and lightest 3-Chip DLP™ 4K projector that can deliver up to 20,000lm of brightness, ensuring consistently high-quality visuals across all locations.

The Art of the Possible

The high-performing and reliable RQ25 utilised throughout the 13-month Wicked UK Tour demonstrated that the infrastructure in-situ at the Apollo Victoria Theatre needed a significant refresh. The Panasonic projectors and Catalyst media servers dated back to the show's London inception in 2006, yet had now become obsolete, with projection mapping and brightness requirements far outstripping what was possible with the existing technology.



Furthermore, a lack of technical redundancy meant that if an element of the systems were to fail, there was no immediate backup in place – leaving the production vulnerable to failure. After experiencing the vivid colours of the RQ25's stunning 4K visuals on the road, the Wicked production team wanted to enhance the visual impact of the show at its home theatre



Anyone who has seen *Wicked: The Musical* can attest that it's a dazzling array of colour. Therefore, colour accuracy and matching was a priority. However, the biggest challenge was the tight turnaround times to replace the existing projection and lighting infrastructure with new technology. The old system was turned off for the last time after a matinee performance on a Sunday evening at 5pm, with the next performance scheduled for 7pm the following Tuesday.

This narrow window for installation, testing, and troubleshooting meant that the production team needed a reliable solution that could be seamlessly integrated into the production. At the same time, Panasonic worked closely with the *Wicked* production and video design teams and Stage Sound Services, ensuring seamless collaboration from the initial concept through to final implementation.





The Power of 4K Projection

After evaluating various options, including rival projectors, the Wicked team ultimately selected Panasonic's industry-leading DLP™ technology. They also evaluated LCD technology, yet knew the quality of the visuals weren't up to the standard they were looking for, for such a large-scale production. The time it takes to configure LCD technology – including colour and contrast optimisation – made it impractical with the strict time constraints they were working to.

The Wicked team opted for the same RQ25 3-Chip DLP™ 4K projector used in the UK tour, which would be positioned in the centre of the stage to illuminate the famous Clock of the Time Dragon. It also chose three Panasonic REQ15 1-Chip DLP 4K projectors – Panasonic's first 1-Chip DLP 4K projector to offer 15,000lm – to project visuals onto the side of the stage and illuminate the dragon as it moved.

"There is a lot more video in Wicked: The Musical than people realise. Therefore, we needed a projector that could simply work right first time, with no surprises. For this, the contrast and colour on the RQ25 is a game-changer. It can do everything at once and can illuminate both the stage and wider auditorium. I'm glad that Stage Sound Services recommended Panasonic's 4K projectors, as they were brilliant to work with."

Mike Higgs

System Designer and Programmer

One REQ15 projector was positioned in the centre of the stage – with its advanced lens shift technologies enabling it to act as a backup for the primary projector – with two additional REQ15 projectors either side. The new system was powered by media servers provided by Disguise Technologies, which handled geometric mapping for all projectors.

Despite the tight timeframe between project confirmation and installation, the transition to the new setup was seamless, with on-site expertise provided by Stage Sound Services, who helped to oversee all testing and the final installation.



The entire production and support team could depend on the consistent performance of Panasonic's projectors during the testing, installation, and demonstration phases. For example, the flexibility of the REQ15 and RQ25 lenses enabled the production team to adapt to adjustments in projector positioning and varying image sizes, ensuring all technical specifications were met efficiently.

The compact size and quiet operation of the RQ25 and REQ15s made installation easy, with any adjustments executed quickly. Once installed, the Wicked production team can take advantage of Panasonic's proven, long-term reliability, with each projector delivering up to 20,000 hours of maintenance-free operation, providing complete peace-of-mind for more than 400 shows throughout the year. Ultimately, Panasonic's projectors played a crucial role in meeting both the creative and technical demands of the show.

A Big Step Up for Wicked's 20th Year

The upgrade has significantly enhanced the production team's flexibility and power to reimagine environments such as The Land of Oz and Shiz University, during Wicked: The Musical. This fully immerses the audience in the captivating visual experience throughout the two-and-three-quarter-hour production.

This is thanks to the RQ25 and REQ15 projectors delivering richer colours, deeper contrasts, and higher brightness than ever before, with audience members and designers alike already noting the stunning improvements in clarity and vibrancy.

