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W-DMX™ CREATES FIRE AT FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON

The theatre festival is a major component of Avignon, where tradition and innovation are constantly intermingled between the majestic walls of its most famous stage: the court of honor of Pope's Palace.

Lighting Manager Philippe Catalano collaborated on the festival's technical direction with Philippe "Pilou" Roy as second desk operator and network manager for Romeo Castellucci's *Inferno* from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Philippe Roy was in charge of the dramatic fireball scene, a very special effect on the upstage wall of the famous court of honor. The wall is part of a majestic edifice of more than 40 meters (130 feet) width and 20 meters (65 feet) high with 28 windows of various sizes.

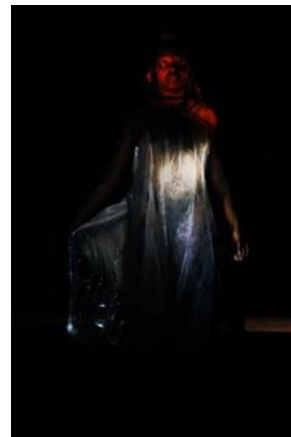
The idea is to give the impression of a free-moving ball of fire behind all the windows, so that spectators believe there is nothing but void behind the wall. Of course, nothing is supposed to actually burn inside the palace. There is no possibility to knock down walls, corridors, stairs or vaulting that make the place a masterpiece of gothic art and an incredible 3D labyrinth. The palace is tremendous and was never planned to host live shows. The walls are very high, there are no rigging points, dozens of corridors, spiral staircases and plenty of safety challenges, plus the structures were never designed to support lighting or truss.

This fireball effect requires the projection of a light beam from the inside of the wall to 26 windows, with the beams being able to move very quickly to give the impression of a free-moving ball behind the wall. The source needed to be Halogen for the graduation and color temperature. As there is only a shallow depth behind the windows, moving heads were not a good choice, since they would not move fast enough, plus there needed to be one source behind each window for the final dazzling effect. The solution was an ETC Source Four profile with 25° field angle combined with a motorized moving mirror. A very small diffuser was used on the fixture and the stained glass windows gave a very convincing Gothic frost. Obviously, a wired DMX or ethernet network in those conditions would be a nightmare, especially when using a motorized light source behind almost every window. The solution was W-DMX™ from Wireless Solution. They used 2 W-DMX transmitters and 13 W-DMX receivers on two different networks.

Philippe Catalano uses one transmitter and two receivers for the general scenic system and Roy uses one transmitter and 11 receivers for fireball effect. Those 11 receivers deliver DMX to the 26 dimmers, to the moving mirrors and to the only Revolution moving head spread across the palace.

Philippe Roy explained, "W-DMX answers to the wholeness of the network. The transmitter is plugged directly into the Congo Junior and all of my fixtures are driven by the receivers. The system worked perfect! I just plugged in the receiver at the end of the wire, without begging myself questions and everything was immediately OK. The LED bargraph gives an instant visualization of the reception and every time it was green [full strength]. We only needed the 3db standard antenna. The networks were fully independent."

This was not Philippe Catalano's first experience with W-DMX. In fact, he also used it in a very clever way at Presence Pasteur, one of the most famous places at the Avignon Off Festival. As Lighting Designer on Vincent Goethal's Bureau National des Alogènes, he was required to control the lights built into a special costume on 5 different channels: 2 amber LEDs, 2 cold white LEDs and an optical fiber gown. The electrical supply was a



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battery pack, graduation made through Tigram dimmers and the DMX is of course transmitted with a modified W-DMX unit, which consisted only of a motherboard and antenna. The receiver was nested in a small rigid plastic case, supplied with a 9V battery, with the connection changed in the RJ45 to drop the weight further. It was then built into a tiny backpack hidden behind the actress' gown.

AVAB France supplied the W-DMX system for the festivals. Jean Louis Pernette of AVAB remarked, "It was definitely not an 'Inferno' working with Wireless Solution! It was paradise, working perfect from day one and during the entire Festival. We can easily conclude that W-DMX is adaptable to either an intricate costume alteration, all the way up to managing the strength of Gothic architecture."

W-DMX by Wireless Solution Sweden AB is the number one system on the market for Wireless DMX, winning awards at major trade shows on both sides of the Atlantic. Lighting & Sound International magazine proclaimed that W-DMX "outshone the rest" in an independent test, "The Great Wireless Shootout". It has been used in high profile projects all over the world, including the Céline Dion World Tour, the Pyramids of Giza, Times Square in New York City and on the world's largest ferris wheel, the Singapore Flyer.



Photo Credit,
Fireball effect: Courtesy of AVAB France