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A Night At The Opera

By Ellen Lampert-Gréaux



In celebration of Plácido Domingo's 40th anniversary of performing in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Opera held a star-studded spring gala in honor of its star tenor cum general director at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on April 18. Chris Werner of Chris Werner Design was responsible for lighting the post-performance dinner dance for 600 guests on the plaza at the Music Center.

"The biggest direction from the special events team at the LA Opera was to make the event look dramatically different from previous parties," says Werner. "As a team, we decided to use the iconic Dorothy Chandler Pavilion - former home of the Oscars - as the backdrop to our event. During the development process, the LA Opera staff chose a garden theme as an inspiration for the evening's look."

For visual interest, internally illuminated custom stretched fabric pieces were hung as rectangular chandeliers, providing warm, incandescent light over the tables. This light was supplemented by a template wash over the entire plaza. Coemar ParLite LED fixtures were used to uplight the façade of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion - four narrow-lens units at the base of each column - and ETC Source Four 10° ellipsoidals illuminated the three banners hanging between the columns. Three additional medium-lens ParLite LEDs uplit the trees in planters throughout the plaza, placed at the base of each.

"Martin MAC 250 Entours surrounded the dance floor and lined our only onstage truss," says Werner, whose crew included assistant LD Noah Mitz and media server programmer Loren Barton. "The movement of these lights added energy to the walk-in look and enhanced the later portion of the evening, bringing a club atmosphere to the dance floor."

Four Barco SLM G10 DLP projectors sat behind four RP screens around the plaza. During walk-in and dinner, these screens showcased Domingo's 40-year career in Los Angeles. Two Green Hippo Hippotizer media servers drove the images, with two MA Lighting grandMA consoles used to control all lighting and video. Three Alpha One 3kW Falcon Searchlights were used for simple beams of light over the venue, increasing the perceived volume of the space and adding some Hollywood-style excitement. Additional gear included Barco Folsom ImagePro-HD scan converters and ETC Sensor+ portable dimmer racks.

ShowPro (conventional lighting) and VER (moving lights, media servers, consoles, projectors, and searchlights) provided the lighting gear and production support, with Ligo Lopez from ShowPro serving as onsite master electrician.

"There was a green scenic element onstage, and the tablecloths were also green," says Werner. "This initially limited our lighting color palette. Vibrant floral centerpieces allowed us to open up our previously narrow color range. The evening's lighting was mostly based on a series of static looks, and as the night progressed, our colors were increasingly more saturated. We changed the look of the venue with each course of dinner, starting with a lavender walk-in look and ending with a saturated blue look for the dancing at the end of the evening, complimented by blue video loops on the screens and serving as a contrast to the motion of the moving lights surrounding the dance floor."

Werner started the design process for this glittering evening under the stars in February, and he and Barton did some preprogramming offsite at VER. The bulk of the work, however, was done in the plaza itself during a three-day load-in and tech.



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