



21 years of experience means we know the crap you put up with everyday!

HOME NEWSROOM CURRENT ISSUE

PLSN TV

GEAR

RESOURCES

SUBSCRIBE

JOB BOARD

Lady Gaga 'Joanne' World Tour

by Steve Jennings • in Production Profile • Created: October 12, 2017



Share This:

f Facebook y Twitter Pinterest

Note: This feature was prepared shortly before tour dates in late September and October were postponed or cancelled due to Lady Gaga's hospitalization for body pain caused by fibromyalgia. The tour is set to resume Nov. 5. -ed.

Lady Gaga's Joanne World Tour is a two-hour extravaganza to behold. Her performance starts on a main stage. She later walks out into the arena via bridges that lower from the ceiling, bringing her to three intimate stages within the audience... for closer fan interaction. We spoke with key members of the production that bring this all together, starting with LeRoy Bennett, production and lighting designer.



LeRoy Bennett Production & Lighting Designer

LeRoy Bennett met with Lady Gaga in Nov. 2016 to discuss the tour design. Her input at that time was to have more video and less dancing.

"Lady Gaga wanted to make the show less about the choreography. The *ArtRave* tour [2014] was the first time we brought her into the audience through use of the Plexiglas walkways. We wanted to continue the concept of her being able to be immersed in the audience throughout the show. It's a big part of who she is and what the show is. She loves being involved in the energy of the audience. That was my premise... taking what we did last time to another level.



"The idea with the stages was to be able to take her on her journey through the bridges appearing and enabling her to go deeper into the audience. I wanted the audience to walk into the arena and not understand what was going to happen — you don't really see what the full stage set is before the show starts — the settings appear and evolve throughout the show. All you see is a flat black stage and three smaller stages throughout the arena on the floor. The idea was to take her on her journey, but also reshape the room.



"She was shooting a movie when I finalized the concept... she was pretty busy. I had to send the renderings to Bobby Campbell, her manager, to show her on set. The only thing that changed from concept to fabrication was the automation in the main stage and the big pods over the audience. We were given a strict budget that we had to stick to, so Tait and I worked through how to make it fit. But the integrity of the design remained intact.



"Gaga is pretty trusting in me and my choice of how things are lit. Normally I take the lead from video, then augment lighting to fit that video content so they are working as a complete concept together. The first show itself was pretty much intact. We did some catch up work, but only minor details. When she first walked into production rehearsals, the first thing we did was show her all the automation and how the stage could change shape, all the things we could do with the bridges and satellite pods that could turn into screens. She can work out in her mind how the journey should go after seeing her environment.



"Originally, Richy Jackson [her choreographer] and Michael Bearden [music director] had Gaga out on the B stage within the first three songs, but I didn't want that to happen. I wanted it to be more dynamic and stretch out the show. It took a little massaging to get them both to come on board, but it all worked out. I wanted the reveal to last longer."



When Gaga is at her piano, that's where she really shines and shows the world who she is, says Bennett.

"The B stage and the piano were both completely covered in dichroic film. I wanted it to be a place for her to shine and really stand out in the arena. The piano is a very modern, high tech, sculptural piece that I was trying to create for her. The piano is multifaceted — I wanted to use lasers that were triggered by each piano key. Sometimes the strings played within the piano itself, then sometimes the lasers hit mirrors which bounced them out of the piano itself, creating a great effect.

"I always love working with Gaga. She has amazing talent, is an incredible songwriter, singer, and musician. But most of all she's an amazing human. She's so honest and open about who she is. It really makes it a joy to work with her. Harry (Forster), Jason Baeri and Loren Barton (video), did an amazing job programming the show and keeping up with all of the changes. Nisha, Dan and the Image Engineering team did a great job working with Tait to make the piano happen. Solotech was fantastic in putting the show together with both video and lighting and getting me what I wanted to make the show happen. Everyone involved has done an incredible job."



Harry Forster Lighting Director & Programmer

Forster has worked with Bennett on Gaga events for about four years now. When not doing main tours, they're working on every other performance or show that Gaga has done.

"Once Roy's final production design was locked, we started on making the plans for lighting vendors to look at. Then, working with Tait and Solotech, making sure that everything could work together, since we have so many moving parts. About six weeks out, I was in L.A. to start work on the show file and 3D, and Jason Baeri joined me about a week later programing. We spent 10 days in previz before we moved to Tait Towers, where the different pieces were being assembled. We didn't, however, see the entire rig until three weeks before the first show in Vancouver.



"Both Jason and I had used all the fixtures before and had a good knowledge of how to put them to use before this show, apart from the GLP JDC-1 Strobe. This was the first time either of us had used them. I'd seen demos of the strobe, but nothing could prepare us for putting almost 300 of them together. 90 percent of the show is timecode. Pretty consistently, we'll have the same set list each night. But we have about 10 extra songs programmed, that I know she might throw in at certain cities or shows. Now that we are into the tour, it's definitely settled down. At the start, we were still working out lengths of songs and interludes, and as quick changes, *et al*, got smoother, we had to adjust some things.

"Once we're up and focused, the running of the show for me becomes about getting the 13 followspots perfect, a challenge in some places. I know what entrance she is going to be coming out of, or where she moves to in a blackout, but sometimes she likes to change it. The stage manager tries to keep me as informed as possible, so we don't have any "searching" spots. As the venues change and the trim of our spot trusses change, we have to keep on top of things, make it as consistent as possible for her, as she notices when the slightest thing changes. Dean (Roney) at Solotech was helpful from day one getting us what we needed to make the show work. And his support has continued on the road."



Dean Roney Solotech

Solotech is providing both lighting and video for the tour. Bennett had seen the GLP JDC1 Strobes and liked what they had to offer, and Solotech was pleased to increase their inventory with the products, notes Roney.

"The video wall on the upstage is our new 28mm C-Thru product. It was chosen because it's very light in weight. The lighting wall on the upstage has over 400 fixtures and weighs over 21,000 pounds, so we needed to use something that wouldn't overload the roof in the same area.

"In the house, there are 22 Barco laser projectors — UDX-4K32 models. They project onto the three Pods, as well as the bridges that drop down from them. They're a new product for us, and so far, the results are very good and the possibilities are inspiring.



"On the front of the stage lifts, we have some of our 12mm blow through LED that have 90 Robe Spikie's that shoot though it for a multilayer effect.

"Working with Roy is always a pleasure, and Hydro [PM Robert Mullin] and I have worked together numerous times, including Britney, Justin and Prince tours."



Brian Levine Tait Towers

Levine notes challenges including the large moving stage machinery and the pods in the air that house the projection screens that lower and morph into bridges.

"Each bridge, which are the length of a school bus, had to be light enough to work with the constraints of the rigging, but also be strong enough to span between stages while up to five performers walk across. The bridges also morph from a flat double-sided projection screen before they fold and lower to link the stages together. Our team put a ton of hours and effort into this element, and are very proud of the solution.

"We started very early on with Roy when the show was in its initial concept phase. Roy had a very clear vision about what he

wanted to achieve, and so we worked closely with him and Hydro (a.k.a. production manager Robert Mullin) to match the creative needs with the operational goals. The original concept did not alter dramatically from the final version, and the collaborative and artistic approval process was very smooth.

"The main stage is made up of eight lifts. We designed the mechanics to still allow us to have an underworld for quick changes, backline and monitor world while keeping the machinery separated from the crew and performers who need to work below. The five main elevators in the center of the stage can lift and also tilt and are clad with LED panels hanging from the downstage edge. All of the automation axes on the ground and in the air are controlled via the Tait Navigator Automation System."



David Carrodine Image Engineering

Image Engineering's David Carrodine and Nisha Ramnath met with Bennett in late 2016 for a demo of the company's laser systems integrated with Beam Composer.

"We discussed the capabilities and power of the Beam Composer profile for the grandMA2 and ran through a series of laser looks with patch layering along with gradient types such as radial, angular, linear, horizontal, and vertical mixed with the grandMA2's FX engine. We had a followup meeting a couple months later in Los Angeles to discuss Lady Gaga's tour design. Roy wanted a laser piano for Gaga and asked if we could design, build and integrate the lasers into the piano body. Roy wanted something more dynamic than a laser harp integrated into it.

"John Suehle [Image Engineering's chief of technology and co-owner] and his team designed the laser effects for the piano, which includes 44 custom laser modules, each producing 3 watts of white light laser power, custom programming and MIDI mapping that allows Gaga to control the laser effects in the piano directly.

"Simulating piano strings, the laser beams travel across the length of the piano enclosure and exit through carefully placed slots in the lid. Laser color and intensity are controlled by MIDI signals produced by the piano's electronic keyboard enabling Gaga to control the lasers in real time. Preprogrammed chases, i.e., piano laser rainbow effects used in "Born This Way" and color modulation complement the real-time control providing a nearly endless combination of visual effects. Each laser unit communicates to a microcomputer constructed directly to it for lightning-fast processing and response time. The console sends commands to each laser with no lag or processing time.

"Roy also provided us with the set design and possible locations for lasers on the main and satellite stages. He made it clear that it was important to achieve different styles from the traditional laser looks for her show. To achieve this, we designed a 360° vertical laser look using eight lasers around each satellite stage and our pioneering laser control, and design solution, Beam Composer, to deliver the creative laser solution. Beam Composer allowed the tour LD to program, develop a show file, import it and directly control the lasers with the grandMA2 console."



Lady Gaga Joanne World Tour 2017

Crew

- Production & Lighting Designer: LeRoy Bennett
- Lighting Director & Programmer: Harry Forster
- Lighting Programmer: Jason Baeri
- Lighting Crew Chief: Eric Balanger
- Lighting Techs: Athan Antoniadis, Matt LeVine, Doug Eldredge, Gabriel Foucault-Lemieux, Brian Monohan, Shawn Theriault
- Video Director: Robert Mcshane
- Video Programmer: Loren Barton
- Video Crew Chief: John Moore
- Server Programmer: Benjamin Keightley
- Video Techs: Iain Donham, Erik Phillips, Zane Moore, Andreanne Lafrance, Barrie Roney, Maxwell Gabriel, Pascale Boilaeu
- Automation Techs: Rob Hagedorn, Shane Bandy, Justin Lambka
- Production Manager: Robert "Hydro" Mullin
- Tour Manager: Ky Cabot
- Road Manager: Alicia Geist
- Assistant Tour Manager: Tori Cabot
- Technical Director: Chris Vineyard
- Production Assistant: Christine Mullin
- Stage Manager: Steve Roman
- Laser Tech: Dan Norman, JB Culp
- Pyro Techs: Michael "Lucky" Scheirer, Courtney Jennings
- Riggers: William Williams, Shawn Gibson, Daniel Porter,



Production Companies:

- Lighting and Video: Solotech/Dean Roney and Adam Dragosin
- Staging and Automation: Tait Towers/Brian Levine
- Content/Creation: Lobster Eye, Madison & Vine
- Lasers: Image Engineering/David Carrodine
- Pyro: Pyro Engineering
- Trucking: Truck & Roll



Gear

- 3 grandMA2 consoles
- 294 GLP JDC1 Strobes
- 147 GLP X4 20 Bars
- 38 GLP GT-1s
- 45 Robe BMFL WashBeams
- 188 Robe Pointes
- 90 Robe Spikies
- 8 Robe ColorStrobes
- 13 PRG GroundControl followspot systems
- 4 MDG The One hazers
- 10 Martin ZR45s
- 22 Barco UDX-4K32 laser projectors
- C-Thru 28mm Saco rear LED wall
- C-12 video panels (for the front of the stage elevators)
- 2 Robe Cyclones

More Lady Gaga 2017 "Joanne" tour photos by Steve Jennings:

{gallery}17/10/ladygaga{/gallery}