

read more...

Continued from July 2010 CTI Newsletter

Photos Courtesy of Milwaukee Ballet

## SHoW DMX Case Study: Peter Pan at the Milwaukee Ballet

Lighting Designer David Grill approached us some time ago about using SHoW DMX for a new full-length ballet of [Peter Pan](#) for [Milwaukee Ballet](#). He'd been working on the project for about five years with Artistic Director Michael Pink. The concept was to develop a seasonal piece like "The Nutcracker" that was accessible to new audiences and families and could be developed as a rental. It took some time to develop funding.

This ballet was the highlight of the Milwaukee Ballet's 40th anniversary season. The score is by Philip Feeney, costumes by Judanna Lynn, scenic design by Rick Graham and lighting design by David Grill (photo at right).

CTI's Andrew Nikel spoke with David Grill



Peter flying in the children's nursery. All five wall sections roll apart and have SHoW and battery power control over sconces, fireplace and set-mount Tinkerbell LED effects in the drawer where Peter's shadow is hidden.

CTI: What were the general parameters and design needs for the project?

**David Grill:** To create a new full length ballet that would be magical and cater to the Milwaukee Ballet's patrons as well as reach out to new audiences. The piece was to be performed in the 2,305 seat Uihlein Hall at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee. The scenery moves were to be choreographed into the ballet and wireless DMX control of battery-powered lighting and effects equipment was the best solution for the productions' needs.

CTI: How did you lay out the design?

**David Grill:** I was involved in the synopsis with the Choreographer, Michael Pink, from the very beginning so as the story evolved I was able to build the design around the story. This also allowed me to really dig into the story line and aid in the creation of the plot and how the story would weave together. As Michael writes the narrative, he looks at the relationships and develops the story. We pose a lot of questions to one another – "What's going on here?" and "How do we do this?". This type of collaborative group forms a type of think tank which is great fun and leads to a better product.

CTI: Were there specific design, budget or physical constraints that you had to work within?

**David Grill:** Money, as always played a role, but we really tried to foresee what the real needs of the production would be as the story and budget evolved. That way we were able to be sure that the real key elements would be guaranteed to fit into the budget. We also designed with the idea that the show would have a life outside of Milwaukee (as a rental) and that it would be able to be efficiently re-mounted.

CTI: Why did you want to use SHoW DMX in this case?

**David Grill:** From the beginning it was evident that the movement of the scenery was going to play a very important role in the production. While some pieces had very specific movement paths that would allow cables, there were numerous pieces that needed to be free to move within the dance space in a very artistic choreographed manner. One example is the children's nursery set with various practicals – as Peter and the children fly out of the upstage window, the set walls needed to revolve to form the London skyline and the outside of the house with Mother, Father and the Nurse peering out the window. Another example was the Tinkerbell LED effects which appeared in various spots on the scenery and an effect worn by a performer.

CTI: Did you do any preliminary testing?

**David Grill:** With the creation of the Tinkerbell LED effects we did a complete mock up to insure we would be happy with the final product. I trusted that the SHoW DMX would work as a control method based on prior experience.

CTI: What settings did you use on the equipment?

**David Grill:** We used SHoW DMX plug 'n play out of the box with no change in broadcast power, channel limiting or number of DMX slots broadcast. We used a single Transmitter mounted Stage Left on top of the dimmer racks. It's a fairly large stage and we had no problems at all.

CTI: Did you use RDM in the project?

**David Grill:** No.

CTI: Would you have done anything differently in hindsight?

**David Grill:** There are always things that can be better as a production evolves and comes to life. There are a few new ideas that I will try the next time but on a whole I was very happy with what was presented on the stage to a sold out run. This was the first time I'd ever seen scalpers outside the theater selling tickets or people with signs saying "Need Tickets" for a ballet.

**About David Grill, Lighting Designer:**

*David Grill has designed lighting for theater, dance, opera, television, architectural projects, and industrials taking him from the Great Wall of China to the great stage of Radio City Music Hall. Mr. Grill was nominated for a Chicago Midwest Emmy Award for Milwaukee Ballet's Romeo and Juliet, a Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lighting Design for the Opening Ceremonies of the Pan American Games Rio 2007 and received a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lighting Direction for the Opening Ceremony Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games.*

*Dance credits include works for Milwaukee Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, BalletMet, Houston Ballet, Ballet Austin, Ballet NY, Northern Ballet Theatre, Cincinnati Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Dayton Ballet, ABT 2, Dances Patrelle (Resident Designer), numerous choreographers and the Purchase College Conservatory of Dance. Mr. Grill also lit*



Smee and Hook stand on a rotating scenic piece on the opposite side of which is the pirate's ship. SHoW DMX controls the fogger and a Tinkerbell LED effect in the c



In this photo we see the opposite side of the scenic piece showing the mid-section of the controls the stove and Tinkerbell's costume is controlled and powered by a Personal performer.



Pirates pull rope for Hook's rowboat across frozen river

the national tour of Sweet Charity, Cinderellabration at the Walt Disney World® Resort Magic Kingdom® Park, served as the associate lighting designer for the Tony, Dora and Olivier Award winning musical The Who's Tommy, and provided lighting direction for The Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular.

Television credits include the Last Comic Standing II – New York, Paralympic Winter Games 2002 Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the Republican Nation Convention 2008, Larry King Live, and The Women's Sports Awards. He has also provided lighting direction for CNN's Atlanta Studio, the National Memorial Day and July 4th concerts and the Superbowl XLI, XL, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXV Halftime Shows.

Architectural projects include the Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Museum, Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Cauldron Park and the Florida Museum of Natural History's Hall of Florida Fossils. His extensive corporate theater credits include Estee Lauder, Pfizer, Georgetown University, Avon, ITT, MassMutual, Dow Jones and Verizon. Mr. Grill has been featured in numerous publications including Lighting Dimensions and TCI and is an adjunct assistant professor and co-chairman of the Design / Technology Department at Purchase College, State University of New York.



A detail here of the Fireplace LEDs from the Nursery Set. These are Jumbo LEDs from <http://autolumination.com> - they're used as truck back-up and dome lights and come in orange and red. They're powered by batteries built into the set piece along with a SHoW DMX Receiver and SHoW DMX Dimmers.



This photo shows the window unit from the nursery set. Both sides of the unit play in three Tinkerbell effects built into the piece and two MR-16 uplights all powered by three SHoW DMX.



This is a shot of one of the SHoW DMXReceiver/Dimmer/Battery/Autocharger sleds made for the production by Scenic Solutions LLC of Dayton OH - <http://www.scenicsolutions.com/> - Dan McLaughlin and his staff built all of the dimming and control gear for the scenic mounts into sleds like this. The sled hangs on the scenery walls by the handle holes and can disconnect and slide into purpose-built crates for traveling. There are relays built into it so that the batteries will charge when plugged in to line voltage and the batteries will not discharge when line voltage is disconnected, except for when they're in use.



You see a close-up of the SHoW DMX Receiver/Dimmer/Battery/Autocharger sled here with detail of the terminal block, relay and connections