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MASQUE SOUND CUSTOM AUDIO PACKAGE RESONATES WITH AUDIENCES AT U.S. PREMIERE OF NEW MUSICAL, *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*

NEW YORK, NY, DECEMBER 2, 2014 — When five-time Tony® and Laurence Olivier winning/nominated sound designer Gareth Owen was presented with the task of ringing up a spectacular and captivating sonic landscape for the U.S. premiere of Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at La Jolla Playhouse, he turned to **Masque Sound**, a leading theatrical sound reinforcement, installation and design company, for his audio equipment needs.

Based on the Victor Hugo novel and featuring the Oscar-nominated score from the 1996 Disney classic film, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is the only stage collaboration from two masters of the American musical theatre, composer Alan Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz. In this brand new production, an emotionally rich score highlights the music's orchestral power in an intimate retelling of the famous love story of the bell-ringer Quasimodo, the gypsy Esmeralda and the gallant Captain Phoebus.

"My primary objective in designing the sound is always making sure that the audience can hear all of the words to the story," says Owen. "It seems obvious, but I cannot tell you the number of shows that I see and can't clearly hear what the performers are saying. Masque Sound was able to provide me with the equipment I was looking for to attain this sonic clarity and, as a result, allowed us to achieve our goal."

Another goal of Owen's was to try to make the show sound as exciting as possible, from a musical standpoint. "I will often go to a show and see a massive orchestra in the pit, but they might as well not be there," he says. "You can hardly hear them. They are tucked away and the audience is not getting any excitement from them. I consider my sound designs very cinematic in nature and want them to be exciting and enveloping. Once I've made sure the audience can hear all the words, I make a concerted effort to try and make the music as dynamic and involving as possible, as is the case with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*."

In order to bring that level of excitement to the design, Owen finds close collaboration with the show's music department and cast to be essential. "To a sound designer, the music department can be your best ally," adds Owen. "I like to work with the various musical department heads to learn what it is that they want to hear and do my best to deliver it. Additionally, I find that if I can give the cast exactly what they need in order to perform to the best of their abilities, and give an energetic, accurate performance, the end result is a great sounding show, even if technically tricky to accomplish."

One of Owen's biggest challenges in designing the sound for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was found in the acoustics of La Jolla Playhouse. "The one tricky thing about the theatre is that it has very hard walls with lots of reflective surfaces," says Owen. "With all of that sound bouncing around, speaker choice was critical and that's where the audiotechnik d&b speaker system that Masque Sound supplied really came into its own. I've been a huge advocate of d&b for years and find that, when it comes to constant directivity of wave forms and frequency response, d&b speakers are so much more cohesive and accurate. They were a huge help in cutting down on reflections and induced noise from the walls."

(more)

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The large audiotechnik d&b speaker system that Masque Sound provided included 24 T-Series boxes for stage left and stage right, a T-Series center cluster, as well as Q-Series loudspeakers and B2 subwoofers. The front fills featured E5 loudspeakers, while the out fills were E8 loudspeakers, and E0 loudspeakers comprised the surround sound system. On stage, there was a mixture of E3s, E4s and E5 loudspeakers. Owen chose an Avid VENUE Profile System for the front of house console and utilized another for his monitors. In addition, Owen relied on several Yamaha 01V96 digital mixers to sub-mix various aspects of the show, including the 32-piece choir that is present on stage for the duration of the show.

“Gareth’s design for this musical was impeccable,” says Scott Kalata of Masque Sound. “Even at the show’s first preview, which I attended, the clarity of the dialog along with the show’s dynamic range perfectly matched what I was seeing onstage.”

In addition, as part of its custom audio equipment package, Masque Sound also provided an extensive microphone package that included DPA, Shure and Audix microphones, as well as 36 channels of wireless featuring Sennheiser EM 3532s and SK 5212 belt packs.

“Masque Sound delivered, supplying everything needed to create this soundscape,” concludes Owen. “Scott Kalata really looked after us and Gary Stocker was once again amazing to work with. He was onsite to solve any problems and ensured that everything was working properly. This was a great collaboration, and my team, including Joanna Lynne Staub, associate sound designer; Dave Horowitz, head of sound; and Zoe Blackford, assistant sound designer, all did a wonderful job and worked tirelessly to ensure the show’s success. I have a philosophy that I like to stand in the theatre on opening night, look at the sound system and know that there is nothing in the theatre that doesn’t need to be there. I consider that a sense of professional pride, and I am proud to say that held true on this production.”

The Hunchback of Notre Dame is scheduled to run through Sunday, December 14 at La Jolla Playhouse’s Mandell Weiss Theatre. The next stop for the production is New Jersey, where it will play at the Paper Mill Playhouse in March 2015. For more information, please visit www.lajollaplayhouse.org.

About Masque Sound

Founded in 1936 by a trio of Broadway stagehands, Masque Sound evolved into one of NYC’s most successful theatrical sound reinforcement, installation and design companies specializing in theatrical, house of worship, sporting, corporate, TV broadcast and live concert events. Celebrating more than 75 years in the industry, the company is led by Geoff Shearing, the firm’s 3rd generation owner, and Vice President and General Manager Stephanie Hansen. The company also operates Florida-based Professional Wireless Systems, a leader in the development and implementation of wireless technology. Credits range from major Broadway shows and tours including “Phantom of the Opera,” “Mamma Mia!,” “Lion King,” “Jersey Boys,” “Memphis,” “The Book of Mormon,” “Newsies,” “Once” and “Kinky Boots” to yearly Super Bowl broadcasts and installations of varying sizes, including New York’s New Victory Theater and historic St. Bartholomew’s Church. Masque Sound’s 70,000 sq. ft. corporate headquarters and main assembly facility is located at 21 East Union Ave., East Rutherford, NJ, 20 minutes from midtown Manhattan. For more information, call (201) 939-8666 or visit www.MasqueSound.com.

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Photo Credits:

1: “Ciara Renée (center) and the cast of La Jolla Playhouse’s U.S. premiere production of *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*, book by Peter Parnell, music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Stephen

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Schwartz, directed by Scott Schwartz, running Oct 26 – Dec 14 in the Mandell Weiss Theatre; photo by Kevin Berne.”

2: “Michael Arden (center) and the cast of La Jolla Playhouse’s U.S. premiere production of *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*, book by Peter Parnell, music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, directed by Scott Schwartz, running Oct 26 – Dec 14 in the Mandell Weiss Theatre; photo by Kevin Berne.”

3: “Patrick Page (center) and the cast of La Jolla Playhouse’s U.S. premiere production of *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*, book by Peter Parnell, music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, directed by Scott Schwartz, running Oct 26 – Dec 14 in the Mandell Weiss Theatre; photo by Kevin Berne.”

For further information contact:

Nicole Rosen

D. Pagan Communications, Inc.

631-659-2309

nicoler@dpagan.com

www.dpagan.com

Stephanie Hansen

Vice President and General Manager

Masque Sound & Recording

201-939-8666

StephanieHansen@masquesound.com

www.masquesound.com