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MASQUE SOUND LIGHTS UP THE GREAT WHITE WAY WITH CAPTIVATING MUSICAL *NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET OF 1812*

Custom Audio Equipment Package Delivers a 360-Degree Experience

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 21, 2017 — When Broadway’s Imperial Theatre was transformed for the 360-degree musical, *NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET of 1812*, Sound Designer Nicholas Pope was presented with some serious audio challenges. To start, he had the daunting task of delivering an exceptional sonic experience to everyone in attendance at what is a uniquely laid out theatre. To help him meet some of the show’s hefty audio demands, he turned to [Masque Sound](#), a leading theatrical sound reinforcement, installation and design company, for a custom audio equipment package.

In designing the sound for the show, Pope was driven by the musical’s artistic side. “Often in the sound design world, I see a disembodiment of the voice, which I don’t like,” explains Pope. “I think it removes the audience members from the performers to a certain degree and I wanted to ensure on this piece that the actors felt like they were in the same acoustical space as the audience. Since the show is in 360-degrees, it was very important to track them throughout the entire space to guarantee that emotional connection. The custom audio equipment package that Masque Sound provided was instrumental in the success of the sound design. I am thrilled we were able to work with them on this piece.”

Putting a show together of this size and scope was a massive endeavor for Pope and his crew. “The totality of it all was a huge challenge,” adds Pope. “With 56 channels of wireless, 16 channels of IEM transmitting and another 12 channels of coms, just the pure number of wireless and covering the entire room with RF was an enormous undertaking. In addition, the stage manager sits backstage and is unable to see front of house so she calls the show exclusively off a huge video system. Add in all of the localization, a full 288 x 288 LCS matrix and tracking of 30 actors throughout the entire space, plus all the wireless instrumentation, an extremely large playback and monitoring system, and we were presented with an almost impossible task.”

At the heart of the custom audio equipment package provided by Masque Sound is a DiGiCo SD7 digital console. Meyer Sound’s D-Mitri Digital Audio Platform is the main driver of the system and all the localization. The show is using a full D-Mitri matrix 288 x 288 cross points. A mounted DiGiCo SD10-RE handles all the mixes for the monitors.

From a speaker standpoint, it was critical to design a system that allowed for the localization to occur in a 360-degree space from every point in the house. Much of the PA consists of Meyer Sound speakers, including the LEOPARD Series main arrays (32 cabinets), CQ-1s (19 boxes) and UPJs (54 boxes), as well as d&b audiotechnik E3s to make up the surround delays.

For microphones, there was no question about the way the show was going to be designed. “Every single microphone in the entire show is at all times in front of the PA, which is a sound designer’s worst nightmare,” says Pope. “Everything was close mic’ed and that drove the decision to go with the DPA d 4065 headset microphones. They are beautiful sounding microphones. We also used 56 channels of Sennheiser wireless in the show on the receiving end of things. The roving instruments for the most part use DPA d:vote™ 4099s.”

(more)

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Another interesting component to Pope's sound design was the use of specialty software to do all the localization, allowing the FOH operator to use an iPad as the interface for the show. The software, designed by Pope, is completely unique to the show and has been incredibly stable.

"Masque was absolutely wonderful to work with," adds Pope. "They were able to provide me everything I requested. The team at Masque Sound is purely professional and the level of expertise and the depth of the team's knowledge of equipment is always astonishing. Masque Sound is always a pleasure to work with. In addition, I couldn't have put this massive undertaking together without my amazing sound team. My FOH engineers Walter Tillman and Scott Sanders were incredible in providing all the localization for the show and ensuring that everything moved properly and correctly with the actors. Jim Bay and John Cooper do a fantastic job backstage taking care of all the microphones. Production Engineer Mike Wolczyk, Associate Sound Designers Sam Lerner and Charles Coes along with my assistants, Beth Lake and Steve Dee, all had very challenging jobs and all were outstanding and played a huge part in ensuring the productions success."

"I'm quite certain no sound system like the one that Nicholas Pope designed and Masque Sound supplied has ever been incorporated into a Broadway musical," said Sonny Paladino, Music Supervisor for *NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET OF 1812*. "Nicholas and I discovered early on during the pre-Broadway tryout in Boston that we needed to come up with something completely unique. A sound system that could allow us to track the action throughout the entire space, as the actors moved about the theatre. Between writing an app to track the actors in real time on an iPad, to installing speakers literally everywhere in the space, Nicholas and Masque sound actualized what I thought might be impossible! What we have running at The Imperial theatre each night is beyond innovative, beyond groundbreaking, I would call it magical."

NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET OF 1812, stars multi-platinum recording artist Josh Groban in his Broadway debut. Inspired by a 70-page slice of *War and Peace*, this "vibrant, thrillingly imagined new musical" (The New York Times) is "stunning and blazingly original" (Entertainment Weekly) and brings us just inches from Tolstoy's brash young lovers as they light up Moscow in a "heaven-sent fireball" (The New York Times) of romance and passion.

Natasha is young, Anatole is hot, and Andrey isn't here... but what about Pierre? Natasha is a beautiful ingénue visiting Moscow while she waits for her beloved fiancé Andrey to return from the war. In a moment of indiscretion, she is seduced by the dashing (but already married) Anatole and her position in society is ruined. Her only hope lies with Pierre (Groban), the lonely outsider whose love and compassion for Natasha may be the key to her redemption... and to the renewal of his own soul.

Created by Dave Malloy (Ghost Quartet, Preludes) and directed by Rachel Chavkin (Hadestown, Artistic Director of The TEAM), *NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET OF 1812* began previews at Broadway's Imperial Theatre (249 West 45th Street) on October 18, and officially opened Monday, November 14, 2016. Beginning July 3, 2017, Okieriete "Oak" Onaodowan, best known for originating the roles of Hercules Mulligan and James Madison in *Hamilton*, will join the cast as "Pierre".

For more information, please visit: www.greatcometbroadway.com.

For more information on Masque Sound, please visit: www.masquesound.com.

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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 President Geoff Shearing. 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*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Once*, *Kinky Boots*, *Aladdin* and *Fun Home* to yearly Super Bowl broadcasts and installations of varying sizes, including Western Connecticut State University, the Jim Wise Theatre at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and the historic St. Patrick's Cathedral. 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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