

UNRIVALED

Redefining Standards in Theatrical Lighting



**Cory Pattak runs
colors in *The Heights*.**

OVATION



OLNEY, MD – Cory Pattak never ceases to be awed by the sunsets over Manhattan. “You find yourself swearing ‘this can’t be real,’” said the New York-based lighting designer. “All those pinks, oranges and purples...that can only exist in an Instagram filter, right? But your eyes don’t lie. This is how days often end in Manhattan. I used to be afraid that if I put those colors on stage, it would look too unreal.”

Happily, Pattak set aside this concern recently when he lit a fall production of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Tony Award winning musical *In The Heights* at the historic Olney Theatre. Using a collection of Ovation, Rogue and Maverick fixtures from CHAUVET Professional, he supported the extraordinary visceral power of this slice of life drama with vivid displays of color, including one during the song “Champagne” that captures the surreal beauty of a Manhattan sunset.

“My favorite song in the show is ‘Champagne,’” said Pattak. “It’s performed when two of the main characters, Usnavi and Vanessa, share their first kiss in a scene that always gives me chills. From day one, I imagined their meeting taking place during the final shards of a New York sunset. I saw it happening at that moment when the light cuts through the space between the

high rises and fire escapes in those last five minutes of daylight before the sun disappears. It’s this time, when the sky is exquisitely and almost unbearably orange, that I wanted to capture. The goal was to see how saturated we could make the orange. We took it pretty far with our Ovation ellipsoidals and Rogue washes.”

Elaborating on the role of his fixtures in helping him paint the stage in vibrant colors, Pattak noted, “LED ellipsoidals have come a long way in just a few short years. The Ovation E-910FCs in our rig for *In The Heights* were bright and handled saturates and pastels very well. I never had any fade or mixing issues. The Rogue R2 Washes were workhorses; they did ballyhoos, flyouts, color and strobe pops at different points in the show. They’re really bright too, which was perfect for all the saturated moments, including the sunset scene.”

The evocative first-kiss sunset was only one of many instances when Pattak used color to convey a sense of time and place and underscore the intense emotional forces that run through this story, which takes place over three scorching summer days in New York’s Washington Heights neighborhood.

"This is a super colorful show, which is why it's a perfect fit for me," said Pattak. "Even the lyrics of the show's songs often reference the quality of light. No one calls me for subtle color nuances. Our director Marcos Santana and I spent a great deal of time talking about color and its role in telling the story of In *The Heights*."

A particularly moving moment in the show that is accented by color comes at its end when Usnavi sings "there's a breeze off the Hudson" He is frozen at center stage and the denizens all around him freeze while he reflects on the community that means so much to him. "This scene takes place right after a fire hydrant has been opened to fight the heat," elaborated Pattak. "I was riffing on the idea of water flowing through the streets. I imagined Usnavi as a pebble being dropped into a pool and his actions rippling out from him and touching everyone he meets. I used some finely tuned color and movement from my Rogues to create a virtual ripple onstage that starts with him and moves out in all directions under the feet of the ensemble."

Pattak worked his color-mixing magic with a rig that was anchored by six Ovation E-910FC RGBA-Lime color mixing ellipsoidals and five Rogue R2 moving wash fixtures along with three Maverick MK2 Spot units and six Ovation E-260WW warm white ellipsoidals. He mounted the Ovation E-910FC units on box boom positions and focused them on the three buildings that made up most of the stage backdrop, The Ovation E-260WW fixtures served as a low template sidelight. "Low is my go to angle, especially for a show with a lot of dancing like this one," he explained. "The output I got from these fixtures always cut through any other light we had on stage."

The Rogue R2 Washes were hung on a tail-down electric about halfway up the stage. For the majority of the show their trim matched all the other electrics. However, for the show's pivotal nightclub scene the Rogues were lowered to 10-feet off the deck and used for bright, fast-moving dancefloor effects.

Also adding zest to the club effect were the Maverick MK2 Spot fixtures that were hung over the stage in a triangle to mirror the configuration of the three-building backdrop.

"The MK2s worked a lot during the show, being the

only non-wash fixtures in the rig," said Pattak. "I used them for lots of backlight specials often with a soft gobo to work on top of a wash backlight. For the nightclub, we had them do a fun spinning pattern that cut through all the saturated colors. In some numbers I was able to get nearly a full stage wash from just the three units by using the built-in prism."

Pattak believes it would have been "next to impossible" to create such a colorful panorama for In *The Heights*, were it not for LED technology. "Having all LED units meant that I didn't have to deal with the dreaded 'it won't lamp on' problem that can grind a tech process to a halt," he said. "I also loved how bright and responsive the MK spots were. And what a joy to having matching color temperature and brightness from spot fixtures. No lamps to optimize or replace, no variances, just exactly matching fixtures."

The staff at the Olney Theatre outside Washington DC also helped make this project a success for Pattak. "They did an amazing job of handling such a large show. I know it's definitely one of the biggest lighting shows they've ever done," he said. "Specials props to my electricians Samantha Campbell and Tyler Bristow, and my assistant Rob Siler for keeping track of it all."

Designing for In *The Heights* at the Olney was in many ways a labor of love for Pattak. "I've been lighting shows professionally for 12 years and this is one my most favorite things I've ever done," he said. "While I've worked with Marcos on other projects as a Choreographer, this really was his directorial debut and he knocked it out of the park. It was a wonderful collaboration, an equal give and take of ideas, and a true working relationship built on mutual respect and years of friendship. I made exactly the In *the Heights* that I had seen in my head before we started. I could've kept watching that show over and over. There were so many moments that were the perfect synergy of lights, music, and choreography. We're really all just addicts chasing the fix of those perfect theatrical moments and this show was full of them."

Ovation

E-260WW

Ovation E-260WW is powered by a single source 230 W LED that exceeds the output of a 750 W tungsten light source. This warm white ERS-style fixture boasts extremely smooth dimming down to the very bottom of the curve as well as a flat and even field of light for superior gobo projection. Control options like selectable PWM, RDM, and selectable dimming curves round out this virtually silent ellipsoidal.

Ovation

E-910FC

Ovation E-910FC is a high-performance ERS-style fixture with full RGBA-Lime color mixing and Color Temperature presets of 2800 to 6500 K that match the output of a tungsten source to perfection. Control options include full 16-bit dimming (per color and master), selectable PWM, RDM and onboard dimming curve selection. Also accessible is our Virtual Color Wheel which matches popular gel colors.

MAVERICK

MK2 SPOT

Maverick MK2 Spot is a stunningly bright moving yoke spot featuring a 440 W LED engine, precision engineered optics, CMY + CTO color mixing, two 6-position rotating slot and lock gobo wheels, a 7-position + white color wheel, variable frost, 3-facet prism and 13° – 37° zoom range. Control it as you see fit with DMX, sACN, Art-Net, or W-DMX.