



Mahagonny De Vlaamse Opera



De Vlaamse Opera knew what they wanted for this radical Calixto Bieito production of Weill and Brecht's satire, but also knew that they needed it to remain within budget. Working with production manager, Kjell Peersman on the set for 'The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny' we stayed completely faithful to the original visuals, yet provided a functional set that was strong enough for multi-level performances.

Initially working with just an artist's impression of how the client wished the set to look, early collaboration enabled us to simplify and adjust the content, maintain visual accuracy and work to suit their budget. The set consisted of three tiers of caravans and trailers, with some performances taking place in front, on top of and inside the individual vehicles. To simply use real caravan façades was not possible, as not only were the doors into the theatre not large enough, but many caravans required a roof reliably strong enough to be danced or jumped upon at some point during the performance.



We produced scenic reproductions of the caravan side and corner sections with the bottom two caravans constructed as dollies, complete with 'fake' caravan wheels. The second row was fixed to a steel sub-structure, 2.5m high and 3.5m deep, which also served as a performance area. These lower two rows of caravans were all constructed to be suitable for performers to dance on the roofs. The third, top row was flown, with one caravan being used as an entry point on to stage during the performance.

The caravan 'interiors' had to look every bit as authentic as the exteriors, with many being internally lit during the performance and with characters moving in and out of doors and windows. For the exteriors, we sourced an assortment of components from a caravan dismantler and then clad many of the 'walls' with a vinyl dance floor covering which gave a convincingly realistic finish. We fitted the larger stage level caravan with an electric roller shutter and extending roll-out dance floor platform along one side. Rope light phrases appeared on many caravans and these were attached to CNC'd wooden letters and mounted on steel frames.





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Artistically, it was a big success. Technically, it was even better. Every item was used to its limits show after show but performed perfectly from the first rehearsal to the last performance. I can't thank you enough for the way we came to realise this project. I even had a very angry complaint from one of our sponsors saying that he could provide new caravans much more cheaper than the second hand rubbish we'd bought on Ebay - and then I showed him the rear view! Thanks to all who took part in this wonderful project.”

Kjell Peersman, Production Manager