

# PROTOCOL

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# Recent greening efforts in Canadian production

BY IAN GARRETT

CITT/ICTS shares news of how live performance in Canada is advancing an ecological mindset across the industry.

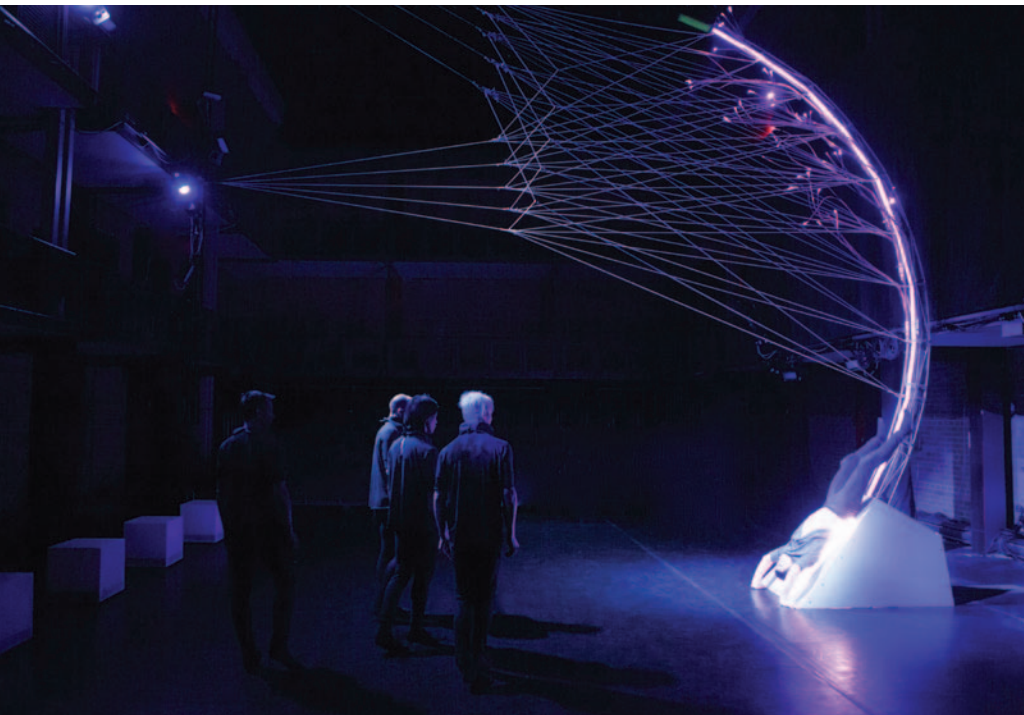


PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID HO

**Zata Omm Dance Project's *vox:lumen* premiered at the Harbourfront Centre in March 2015 and was one of the first entirely off-grid productions, using solar charged batteries and kinetic energy captured from the dancers and audience.**

## PRODUCTION FOR LIVE

PERFORMANCE in Canada has been going green across the industry, from work on stage to the training of tomorrow's designers and technicians. More facilities are springing up that are built with efficiency and technology in mind that support environmentally positive goals. As we know more about the actual impacts of production, we're starting to understand that our work might have the potential to lead the way for a more sustainable society.

In a field where we're doing something new almost every day, the first place we can see the impacts of an ecological mindset is in every new production. Zata Omm Dance Project's *vox:lumen* was the first full length dance concert in North America, if not beyond, to be entirely off grid. Premiering at the Harbourfront Centre in the Harbourfront Centre Theatre in March of 2015 as part of the World Stage series, the show was powered by solar-charged batteries. The show was lit with assistance

from A.C. Lighting on some custom fittings for their Chroma-Q Color Force and Studio Force lines of LED luminaires, as well as a handful of ETC Source Four LED Lustr luminaires, LED tape from Moss LED, and custom sources built by Aesthetec Studios, a local tech and design firm. Lighting designer Simon Rossiter worked not just to determine the placement of the luminaires, but also on determining the power drawn across the inverters on each of the four deep-cycle batteries hidden through the theatre. This production demonstrated that even at the end of winter in Southern Ontario, solar power is a viable solution for even the energy hungry needs of theatrical lighting.

As we see more examples of productions going green—whether that's as visible as the solar panels in *vox:lumen* or pocketed away like the number of shows powering their wireless microphone packs with rechargeable batteries—we are also seeing more theatrical facilities catch onto the trend with these ideas of conservation built-in; especially facilities built for use by educational and community users for both efficiency and ease of use. The Camrose Performing Arts Centre in Camrose, Alberta is an excellent example. This state-of-the-art facility features a 580-seat auditorium with a fully-automated fly system, and is lit by 100% LED fixtures. Built in a partnership between the City of Camrose and the University of Alberta, it offers a unique performing arts facility to the community and students in small city of 18,000. Not only is the inventory efficient, but all four



The Jeanne & Peter Lougheed Performing Arts Centre in Camrose, Alberta features all LED lighting fixtures powered by a solar panel clad fly-tower.

sides of the fly tower's exterior are covered in photovoltaic solar panels. It has received a rating under the Green Globe Certification scheme of four Green Globes, the highest rating possible.

Training for sustainable production is a key part of this evolution in thinking in our industry. While students on the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus will benefit from access to the Camrose PAC, there is a push to integrate sustainability into the curriculum of our higher education

centres of training. York University, University of British Columbia, the National Theatre School in Montreal, and others are all offering dedicated and popular coursework in teaching students to consider environmental impacts across all aspects of their future professional practice. Through professional development opportunities supported by CITT/ICTS and its EcoScene initiative, this has also become available to those currently working. Having supported the Staging Sustainability conferences in

2011 and 2014, which joins professional, academic, and policy-making stakeholders, there are lots of options for enhancing one's understanding of sustainability in production. A 2018 version of that conference, wrapping in the new REFOCUS training program, and the Sustainable Cultural Management program imported from Europe, is in the works for spring of 2018 in Toronto.

Is this just a gimmick or a popular trend? Research says otherwise. Continuing from ideas presented here in *Protocol* in the Fall 2013 article "Stage Lighting and the Environment: Results from a Year-Long Study" by Katie Oman, research into the environmental impacts of production that considers not just what we do, but what we offset by bringing large groups of people together, has continued in Canadian universities. The Hillside Festival, a three-day music festival in Guelph, Ontario has been working with faculty at York and Waterloo Universities for the last three years to look at the carbon footprint of the festival, how the collected festival goers might actually be saving the environment by attending, and in what ways an already eco-minded festival could continue to be a trailblazer for responsible festival production. There is long-term commitment in many parts of the industry



The Hillside Festival's Rainbow Stage, featuring children's performances, is powered by the audience on bikes provided by Tune Your Ride, who produce mobile bike powered festivals that tour Canada.



The Hillside Festival has eliminated single-use drink and dish ware with a volunteer crew of dishwashers.

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**Staging Sustainability 2014** gathered approximately 200 theatre practitioners, consultants, and academics in Toronto to discuss sustainability in theatre. Another is being planned for spring 2018.

of understanding the opportunities presented by sustainability thinking.

What we are finding in Canada is that not only is sustainable change possible, good for the environment, and the efficiencies offer energy and cost savings, but also with

a priority to address climate change, our efforts place live performance and theatrical production at the centre of the conversation on sustainable societies and make us a vital part of the conversation about the future of our planet. That might sound like big talk,

but with a western tradition that originates in the political discourse of the ancient Greeks, it might not be. As a source of entertainment, mutual understanding, and a place for community to gather, perhaps this is exactly how we should be viewing the possibilities of advancing our industry with ecological mindset. ■



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