



Projection Studio at Edinburgh Tattoo

The Projection Studio, Ross Ashton's London, UK, based large format projection practice has designed and produced an eye-catching array of massive images appearing on the walls of Edinburgh Castle, forming an integral element of the visuals for the 2010 Edinburgh Royal Military Tattoo.

The projection area is 90 metres wide and stretches the full width of the castle walls. Four PIGI 6K projectors fitted with double rotating scrollers make the images, 3 covering the Castle wall area, and the fourth focussed on providing 'drop-ins' in the area around the Castle gates, through which performers make their entrances.

Ashton worked closely with Loudon on developing artwork for the show, but was also given an open brief to suggest ideas and make visual contributions where they would have the most impact. "There was a lot of projection in last year's show, and so I wanted to create something that would look and feel totally different and, naturally, be very relevant" states Ashton.

The biggest projection pieces this year are for two sections of the show by the Massed Bands - the military bands of the Grenadier and Coldstream Guards with the British Army's Guards bands joined by all the international bands, performing "You Raise Me Up" and "Here's To The Heroes". This celebrates the bravery of all those engaged in current conflicts - specifically Afghanistan and Iraq - and the love and support of their friends and families.

Ashton was sent a series of photographic images from the Army Media & Communications archives to utilise in these sequences, which he composed into a series of moving montages reinforcing the involvement of everyday individuals committed to helping keep the peace and rebuild war torn countries and communities.

For the New Zealand Army band's performance, he produced a stunning Maori mask, which was fitted exactly to the Castle architecture so the entranceway became the mouth. This is surrounded by silver ferns, the National flower of New Zealand, feathering out across the rest of the Castle.

For the Royal Jordanian Armed Forces Contingent, the image is a fantasy scape based on the historical archaeological ruins of Petra, which again is carefully sculpted to the shapes and contours of the Castle.

Visual simplicity is often the best imaginative policy in a show like this, and so the Evening Hymn is beautifully enhanced by graphic images of two soldiers flanking the gatehouse in the Reverse Arms position, backed by a setting sun seen through a stained glass window.

The projection was programmed and is being operated on an OnlyCue system by Karen Monid. She uses her skills and specialist knowledge of the hardware and control system to create incredibly intricate and flowing movements on the PIGI scrolls, incorporating all the wipes and dissolves in a highly rhythmic fashion that is unique to her style of operation.

The projection system was installed by Monid, Michael Barry and Andy Murrell.

Rated as one of the "Greatest shows on Earth" this year sees the Diamond (60 years) anniversary of the spectacle, featuring over 1000 performers from this year's lead service, the Army, combined with a host of international talents, all choreographed in a lively and energetic mix of music, song, dance and drama, produced by Major General Euan Loudon.

Ross Ashton has been involved with the Tattoo for the last 5 years as the projection artist. This year he has just signed up a new 3-year contract to produce the projections on the fabulous backdrop of the Castle, juxtaposed against all the action taking place on the Esplanade below.

"It's always a great privilege to be asked to work on such a unique and high profile a show like this," says Ashton, "Even more so as the true potential of projection has proved itself and has a real commitment from the organisers".

The 2010 Edinburgh Tattoo runs until the end of August.

Photos Ross Ashton