

# Portable lighting systems

A HOW may be considering a portable lighting solution out of necessity or for creative purposes. **James Cooke** aims the spotlight on what to consider

## A FIXED LIGHTING INSTALLATION IS

not only a sizable investment for houses of worship, especially when tight budgetary restraints are to be taken into account, but might not be practical or even possible. As an alternative, portable lighting systems could be worth exploring. They are often a more affordable option and do not require invasive installation, which can cause problems of both an aesthetic and structural nature within a sanctuary. Portable fixtures also offer a flexibility that installed lighting solutions can't, which can lead to more creative applications.

'There are venues where it is impossible, for safety or heritage preservation reasons, to have fixed lighting,' says Mark Ravenhill, president of GLP (German Lighting Products), 'and so portable lighting is the only option. Perhaps power availability is also a concern in some spaces and so having a system that can scale can also ensure its full usability.'

## Flexibility and creativity

'A good portable lighting system serves many purposes, both practical and

creative,' explains Ben Dickmann, product manager for Chauvet Professional and Iluminarc. 'These systems can be assembled and positioned in multiple ways and the use of coloured lighting especially enhances the mood or emotion of a room, and can even be used to project an effect.'

'In any venue or site where things are developing and changing, perhaps due to growth or to using multiple rooms, having a form of portable lighting could well be a solution,' notes Mr Ravenhill. 'It can ensure that you satisfy all of your needs across the different spaces, without putting too much pressure on your expenditure. You can achieve flexibility in being able to work in campuses of different sizes and serve the different needs of the congregations or classes that are being hosted.'

'Having a system that is portable often means that it is in a number of parts, and therefore allows you to be creative in its design, each time that it gets assembled,' Mr Ravenhill continues. 'There can be other benefits too. GLP's X4 atom for example is also IP65 rated so it can be used outdoors, even in inclement weather, giving even more flexibility and options to the way you use your lighting system.'



Mark Ravenhill, president at GLP; (Right): GLP's X4 atom



Chauvet's Ovation E-910FC full colour LED portable lighting fixture

maintained and transported. Each fixture is different so be sure to read all the documentation included as it will tell you how to maintain your equipment for a long life.' He also recommends investing in 'good quality travel cases' and states that 'Doing so will prevent them from getting dented or scratched and also protect the delicate lens systems.'

## Financial impact and maintenance

Mr Dickmann notes that portable lighting systems make for good starter solutions. 'A portable system is a cost effective way to start. You don't need to invest significant money into infrastructure to support a full system,' he says. 'It also allows you to easily adapt to other events and needs without having to rework the entire system. There are also many other considerations involved such as rigging, power and system training that you don't need to worry about with portable systems.'

'The financial benefit is a big one, in having a single system that can be reused in many spaces,' adds Mr Ravenhill, before highlighting an additional cost to consider. 'Every time that a system gets disassembled or

moved around, then there is a potential that it gets damaged, so getting proper flight cases for transport will really help protect the gear from unnecessary damage. It's an extra cost, but worth the investment, and a lot of the lighting manufacturers can also supply cases for their fixtures.'

While on the subject of maintenance, Mr Dickmann notes that 'All lighting equipment should be properly

## Considerations

A portable lighting solution can be deployed and re-deployed at multiple venues and for varying purposes, but unlike a fixed installation, it will not have been designed especially for a particular space and function.

'Typically a full, fixed system is designed specifically for a purpose,' says Mr Dickmann. 'Fixtures are placed in optimal positions to light the sanctuary as well as possible. With a portable system, this is rarely accomplished. While a portable system will deliver acceptable light, it more than likely won't be optimal.'

Another consideration is the set up and take down time before and after each service, as well as ensuring that the HOW technicians and volunteers are able to complete these tasks.

'It takes more resources in terms of time and people to take a system down and then get it set up again in a different space,' Mr Ravenhill comments. 'So, having a strong network of volunteers or team members is a requirement.'

'I think a main consideration is the support resources that are needed to get a system from one place to another,' the GLP president adds. 'And