

LIVE DESIGN

Music of the spheres

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Meredith Monk is one of the most unique voices in dance theatre today, and her latest work, *Magic Frequencies*, is no exception. Billed as a "science fiction chamber opera," it plays with themes of extraterrestrial intelligence and interaction between the reality we see and other planes we can't. Helping to realize this vision is lighting designer Thomas Hase.

"Meredith had the idea of doing a montage of different scenes concerning visits by what we're calling 'the Other,' which could be a ghost or spirits or aliens," Hase explains. "The intent was to set up, with color choices, the idea of visitation and being touched by a spirit, be it otherworldly or supernatural."

This was accomplished with color-blocking and juxtaposition of unusual colors. "In the earth scenes we cut out a square of white light, built with sidelights--Source Fours tightly shuttered--to ground it, and then as the Others were introduced, we would fill in their world with colors that were either unearthly or extremely vibrant." Such colors were a teal made of Lee 118 Light Blue and L201 blue color correction, L104 Deep Amber "pulled down to 60% to give it a fiery red feeling," and L181 Congo Blue.

These colors created a surreal feeling in more ways than one. Obviously they are very striking in themselves, but they also subliminally play on human visual quirks. "That yellow has a spike of green in it, so your eyes are looking for that color Congo Blue, and then I use it consciously later," says Hase. "There's a lot of simultaneous contrast going on--your eye is looking for something and eventually creates it in your mind without it being present in reality. What I wanted to do was continuously have a balance so that we were realizing something unusual was happening."

At the Joyce Theater in New York City, Hase was able to perfect a special lighting effect he had been working on for a while--a solar eclipse that takes place over three minutes. After experimenting with different kinds of equipment, "we used a slow-speed GAM TwinSpin with a piece of infrared glass in it with a punched-out circle pattern which is basically the moon, and another circle that is just slightly larger which is the sun, and ran it at about 1% speed. And by taking the belt off one part so that the sun pattern did not move, and putting the belt on the moon part in a smaller gear so that it moved even slower, we got it nice and steady." Toward the end of the eclipse he added a red corona of flames. "Chicago Spotlight has been supporting this eclipse project the whole time, and Cathy Zukasky has been the person helping me with R&D," Hase points out.

"I really enjoy working with Meredith--she's a very dynamic individual, and she really respects her fellow artists," concludes the LD. "She's essentially a collaborative artist; she wants to work with people to develop something new and educate herself also." Meredith Monk/*The House* is currently touring *Magic Frequencies* across the US, with Noelle Stollmack as tour lighting director.