

TOTEM

Cirque du Soleil

«TOTEM traces the fascinating journey of the human species from its original amphibian state to its ultimate desire to fly. The characters evolve on a stage evoking a giant turtle, the symbol of origin for many ancient civilizations. Inspired by many founding myths, TOTEM illustrates, through a visual and acrobatic language, the evolutionary progress of species. Somewhere between science and legend TOTEM explores the ties that bind Man to other species.»

The visual environment of TOTEM is an organic world, a marsh surrounded with reeds near an island (the stage), on which images are projected. Set designer Carl Fillion gave it curves and non-linear forms to reflect the natural world. In the stage part, a trampoline is installed under a roofing floor cover. It is mainly used with the turtle skeleton acrobatic act but is also used at other times during the show. The rolling floor cover is mechanically operated and controlled by the show automation system. The huge turtle shell serves both as a decorative set element and as an acrobatic equipment. The skeleton is raised to the top of the tent or opened at an angle like an enormous shell. Acrobatic human loads on the skeleton and its dismantling for transportation were challenging in the design process.

The upstage parts of the set are the marsh and the stream. Tilted slightly forward, the marsh acts both as a stage entrance and as a projection surface. The variety of moving images projected on the marsh sets the ambiance. The "scorpion bridge," which serves as a mobile platform connecting the marsh to the center stage features variable geometry allowing it to adapt to each tableau. Its eight hydraulic cylinders allow it to rise, descend, extend, retract and curl in on itself like a scorpion's tail. During the show, the bridge is monitored by an operator using four infrared cameras.

At the back, the musician's platform, located 10 feet from the ground required a low maintenance system to raise the platform in a secure manner. SE has designed a telescopic leg that is manually operated. The platform's structure, panels and fall protection can be set up on the legs at work height and then raised in place with technicians operating the legs while standing on the ground.

For the base structure of the stage, the multilevels

required had SE search for a new way of setting them up but in keeping the same no tools OST system and insuring CDS employees safety at set-up and tear down.

Robert Lepage, Writer and Director
Neilson Vignola, Director of Creation
Carl Fillion, Set and Props Designer



Artists walking on The Scorpion



Montage de la scène dans le Studio CDS



Turtle Skeleton in CDS Studio



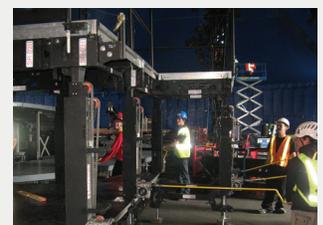
The Skeleton in performance



The Scorpion in SE Studio during tests



Ensemble des Canopy dans le Studio CDS



Supports des Canopy et base des pivots