



A Gloria Christmas:

Brawner & Associates Lights a Holiday Concert



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DONNIE BRAWNER

Prestonwood Baptist Church, based in Dallas, Texas, is known for its extravagant Christmas productions, which feature large casts, lots of scenery, and plenty of lighting gear. This year, however, the church took a break, instead producing a concert titled *Gloria: A Thousand Voices Sing Christmas*, which was aired on the Trinity Broadcast Network, Daystar, Family Net, and local ABC affiliates.

The title was no exaggeration, notes lighting designer Donnie Brawner, of Brawner and Associates. "It featured the 550-person adult choir and over 500 children and youth totaling 1,100 voices, backed by a 70-piece live orchestra. Communilux Productions built a set that put the choir members on multiple levels. This helped in terms of building in a sense of depth and breaking up the wall of choir."

In addition, says Brawner, "The backgrounds upstage of the orchestra ranged from a 100' house cyc or a white LED curtain which really built in the dimension. Just downstage of the orchestra was a custom-built sharktooth scrim, designed to amplify light projection, that was used to reveal the

orchestra at certain moments through projected images on the scrim via video or lighting."

Brawner made use of the church's house package of intelligent lights, which includes 14 High End System Studio Colors and 12 Vari*Lite VL3000s, as well as four Lycian followspots. "The rest of the intelligent lighting was brought in for the show," he says. "The majority of the front light was supplied by VL3500s and the VL3000s. If I'm going to use intelligent lighting for television key light, Vari-Lite is my choice. They're really consistent, color-temperature wise, with limited lamp flicker. Thirty Martin Mac 2000 Profiles were used for over-stage and floor textured backlight, with 28 Mac 600NT units providing general backlight wash." The package was supplied by Christie Lites, Dallas.

House conventional lighting included 95 ETC units, ranging from 5-50°, covering the orchestra, acting as specials and providing sidelight. "We also had 192 PAR cans providing audience light and sidelight with [Wybron] scrollers. We used house MR-16 units to light the church interior walls for background." Controlling

the lighting was the house console, an MA Lighting grandMA.

The big challenge in the production, says Brawner, was the lack of time. "The strike and re-hang started on Sunday afternoon with a Friday night dress rehearsal. Our schedule prior to load-in did not allow for WYSIWYG. We logged between 30-36 hours of programming in two days for a Friday night dress. We did three tapings Saturday and Sunday."

Overall, says Brawner, the key to lighting Prestonwood's events is this: "The lighting units must be plotted to give you the biggest results. The numbers are huge—a 140' wide stage, a thousand singers, a 70-piece orchestra with over-the-top orchestrations, and many climactic endings to each number. The lighting, in my opinion, has to underline that. You can run out of gear after the first song—you have to plan for that in the design process. The performance, celebration, music, action, and lighting, has to be a tight, cohesive package." The result was a concert worthy of Prestonwood's reputation for big events; look for the church's newly designed Christmas Festival to return this year. 