

# ZARKANA™

## CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®

### **SETS AND VIDEO CONTENT**

In the lyrical, fantastic world of *Zarkana*, the setting – an abandoned theatre – is a character in its own right. The walls breathe, move and sing. The main set elements consist of three sweeping arches – all sculpted by hand – representing two of the characters portrayed by the female singer.

The first arch represents Kundalini the Snake Lady, whose world is populated by dozens of slithering snakes. It's the largest of the three arches and is decorated with more than 150ft of handpainted resin "snakes" which started out as styrofoam sculptures that were used to create molds for the liquid resin.

The second arch, which also serves as a video screen, harbors Mandragora, a plant-like creature that comes to life with "arms" extending out like scissors nearly 100 feet.

### **Set Design**

The overall aesthetics were inspired by the Art Nouveau movement of the last century, as well as the works of Gaudí and Klimt, while many of the organic shapes in the set elements are a nod to the master French glassmaker and jeweler René Lalique. More perceptive observers will notice these influences in the design of the acrobatic equipment – especially in the lines at their extremities.

### **Image and Video Content**

The complex video content of the show was developed with a cinematic approach and plays an integral role in the storytelling. The goal was to bring maximum credibility to this strange parallel world through lifelike moving images on an enormous LED wall at the rear of the set, and projections on the second of three arches that react to the movements of the performers.

There are more than three million pixels of LEDs on the 90ft by 40ft light wall upstage and the LED arch made of of 118 separate panels. This setup allows for the larger-than-life cinematic tableaux that lend the surreal world of *Zarkana* a heightened sense of reality.

From the audience's point of view, the divisions between live action, stage effects, lighting and projections are seamless. The *Zarkana* stage consists of a sliding platform that retracts like a huge drawer to allow for rapid set and

equipment changes, and the lighting is designed to make these transitions practically unnoticeable, almost invisible.

### **Zoom on a few details**

- No alterations could be made to the structure of the Radio City Music Hall – a national landmark since 1978 – so the entire *Zarkana* set sits on top of the stage. Not a single bolt was attached to the structure.
- The cradle stations used in the flying trapeze act do not employ steel cables to keep them in position. They rely entirely on "hanger tubes" for their rigidity. The structure of the high wire number installed on the floor of the theatre's orchestra pit is freestanding, without any anchor points.

The walls on either side of the stage are covered with a representation of a patchwork of 1ft ceramic tiles, each one different and hand painted with gold leaf on a fabric that allows for transparency and onto which images can be projected. The patterns of the tiles evoke the works of Gustav Klimt and the Art Deco style.

- During the high wire act the video arch is gradually invaded by writhing snakes that pay close attention and react to the artists' movements. This effect is created with infrared cameras. Flames shooting up from the stage are reflected on the undulating forms of the snakes using the same technique.
- The two Eagle's-head bandstands that house the musicians on either side of the stage are 28ft tall and weigh more than 9,000 pounds each.