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Four ICONYX IC8 digitally steerable arrays cover the 'large and lively' bar area

London's Cadogan Hall chooses Iconyx for busy crush bar

UK – The Cadogan Hall in prestigious Chelsea, south west London, home to the world renowned Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, has taken delivery of a Renkus-Heinz Iconyx digitally steerable array loudspeaker system for its popular crush bar where up to 500 concert-goers enjoy their interval drinks.

Formerly a church, Cadogan Hall was transformed into a modern concert venue in June 2004 and boasts an airy 900-seat auditorium with excellent acoustics and unimpeded sightlines.

One area that was due for an upgrade was the hall's crush bar, an approximately square, low-ceilinged and highly reflective room where the buzz of the interval drinks crowd made voice announcements calling people back to their seats inaudible in many areas. The room is also let out for other functions such as book launches, where again the requirement is largely for speech reinforcement.

Acoustic consultants and system engineers COMS had originally been called in three years ago by the venue's lead audio/visual contractor, Futurist Projects of Wakefield, to provide engineering support for an AMX control and video system. Since then, says COMS director Richard Northwood, the hall has developed its repertoire from purely orchestral use to hosting a wide variety of events including BBC Proms and dance events, and has expanded its main auditorium's technical facilities with extra trussing and line arrays.

"They wanted more from a paging system than the existing voice alarm system alone could give them," explains Northwood, "so we were given the challenge of designing a paging system using either the cable that was already installed or only minimal extras. It's a listed building so the client didn't want us to start drilling holes or disturbing Victorian woodwork.

"Their particular demands concerned the crush bar which gets very packed and quite noisy during the intervals and is quite a reverberant space. The architectural restrictions also meant that a distributed ceiling array – which at first sight seems an obvious solution – was out of the question because of the ornate plasterwork."

Faced with wall-mounting the additional loudspeaker system, and following EASE modeling of the room, Northwood specified four Renkus-Heinz IC8 digitally steerable array cabinets, using the companion BeamWare software to direct the loudspeakers' sound beams away from the ceiling and on to the audience.

"They're ideally suited for a project like this," continues Northwood, "a nice compact little box that's quite unobtrusive. We had to work from the walls, so at that point you want something that gives you as much of a fighting chance as possible, and having arrays that are steerable gave us a lot more control to play with. Each speaker effectively covers its own quadrant of the room, but the pair opposite the entrance passage are a little more centered to feed down into a corridor where the main bar is located – it's great to have that kind of focusing precision within each cabinet." The IC8s are fed via a Klotz Varizone system, and are complemented in backstage areas by discrete Fane NXT panels.

The clinching factor for Northwood had been an Iconyx training day in Bracknell laid on by Renkus-Heinz's UK and Ireland distributor, beyerdynamic UK. "It was excellent," comments Northwood. "We had the boxes and could sit and play with them. I realized that not only was it able to give me the control I wanted, it was quite musical too. I knew that once we'd installed a new system there was a good chance the client might want to use them for musical functions as well as speech, and this will certainly do light music support, so I felt I was covering more bases there."

Finally, he adds, "the support from Renkus-Heinz has been great, whether through beyerdynamic or Karl Brunvoll and Ralph Heinz direct; they've been a fun company to work with."

Among this summer's Chelsea Festival events where audiences could enjoy the new facilities were an evening with Sir Clement Freud, former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, Cleo Laine and John Dankworth, Chelsea Opera Group, Raymond Gubbay's Mozart by Candlelight, the London Concert Choir's Rodgers & Hammerstein Classics, the BBC Proms, and of course the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra itself.

Headquartered in Foothill Ranch, California, Renkus-Heinz is the worldwide leader in the design and manufacture of powered and non-powered loudspeakers, system specific electronics and fully integrated Reference Point Array systems.

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