

Allen & Heath dLive Makes Its Mark In Madrid's Juan March Foundation Auditorium

Since 1975, Madrid's Juan March Foundation Auditorium has offered the city's population a rich offering of live music – generally classical – free of charge. The auditorium recently renewed its digital audio mixing system (supplied and installed by integrator Area Suena), replacing it with a state-of-the-art solution from Allen & Heath. Based on the dLive and SQ systems, the solution allows the integration of two adjoining rooms in a Dante network, as well as real-time streaming and the recording of live shows for post-production.

The decision to renew the audio and video mixing and recording systems (including signal flow management) was made in 2019, to keep pace with the venue's level of production and in line with current technologies.

The Juan March Foundation has long relied on production company Scope Produccionones as a partner for the technical operation of the auditorium, with Area Suena brought in to carry out the engineering and renovation project, with work beginning in early 2020.

Among the priorities of the project was the implementation of a high-quality live audio digital mixing system that could be easily integrated with a Pro Tools HDX platform. Concerts offered by the March Foundation are typically filmed for editing and subsequent use, as well as streamed transmission. The venue needed to address the challenge of both audio and video signals being sent to an adjoining space – the Blue Room – which acts as an overflow when the main auditorium is full, allowing spectators to enjoy the performance on screen. Concerts can also be followed from other spaces, such as the cafeteria, thanks to the open architecture of the system.

Given these requirements, the audio mixing system needed to be powerful, flexible, modular and capable of being easily integrated with other platforms (ProTools, in this case) - all factors perfectly addressed by Allen & Heath's dLive system. Area Suena worked in conjunction with Audio-Technica Iberia (Allen & Heath's exclusive distributor for Spain) directly to design and configure the system, which is built

around a dLive S5000 control surface and DM48 MixRack.

The solution was ultimately made up of several “blocks”, some placed in the auditorium's control room (a closed room, located at the end of the stalls, facing the stage) and others placed in a tech room next to the stage. The control room contains the Allen & Heath dLive S5000 and DM48, with the S5000 equipped with a 128x128 Dante card and AES EBU card, as well as redundant power supplies. In the tech room there are two DX32 remote input and output racks, connected by redundant network cable to the DM48 brain. One of the DX32 racks is equipped with 32 channels of analogue inputs; 16 of them on two Prime cards (eight channels each, studio quality) and two standard pre-cards (also with eight channels each). The second DX32 rack is equipped with three standard input cards (24 channels) and one analogue output card (eight channels). A total of 56 channels of remote analogue inputs are available, which are added to the 48 channels of the DM48 rack and the eight of the S5000 surface itself, located in the control, adding a total of 112 analogue inputs always available for routing, live mixing and recording.

Integration with other platforms

In terms of integration with other systems, the dLive system is capable – thanks to its Dante card – of sending up to 128 audio channels and receiving another 128 at 96 KHz. These channels arrive at a Yamaha network switch specially enabled to work with Dante, programmed by Area Suena with two V-nets, in order to have redundancy throughout the Dante network. This switch distributes the signals to other elements, such as the aforementioned ProTools HDX recording system and, very importantly, to the Allen & Heath SQ-5 mixing console (also equipped with a Dante card) that receives and manages the audio that is received in the Blue Room from the main auditorium.

A powerful video recording system by Blackmagic Design and an Antelope Trinity master clock have also been implemented in the project, among other elements, which gives clock reference to all the elements of this installation.

Scope Producciones' Ángel Colomé, Head of Sound at the Auditorium, said that, “this project set some very demanding goals in achieving the highest standards of audio excellence required for the production and recording of classical music.

"That was one of the reasons for opting for the new Allen & Heath Prime input cards, which have preamps of simply extraordinary quality - and I believe we're pioneers in Spain in this regard. The dLive system also allows us to be futureproof, given its expansion possibilities ".

Area Suená's José Afuera added that, "the quality / price ratio of the Allen & Heath systems is by far the most impressive in the industry today. And the possibilities for future expansion and compatibility with practically all professional audio formats made it the perfect choice for the Juan March Foundation Auditorium."

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