

Martin Audio WPS Upgrade for Millennium Forum



The Millennium Forum, a major theatre and conference centre on Newmarket Street in Derry, Northern Ireland, has celebrated its 25th anniversary by investing in a Martin Audio WPS Wavefront Precision sound system, supplied and installed by Rea Sound. Opened in 2001, the city's first purpose-built theatre seats around 1,000 people. "We've been working with them really since they opened," begins Roger McMullan, Director, Rea Sound. "We installed the original PA system and installed or upgraded other elements of the system over the years."

After close to 20 years, the venue began considering upgrade options around two years ago, with Rea Sound involved as part of a wider discussion on the venue. "We established they were looking for a lot more headroom, clearer sound and better coverage," explains McMullan. Crucially, the system needed to deliver for a wide range of productions and events. "They do everything from amateur productions for local schools through to one-man comedians, and up to big West End productions," he says. "They needed a PA that would cater for all they do."

Having installed Martin Audio Wavefront Precision line array systems in many theatres in Ireland, Rea Sound knew WPS would provide the solution for the Millennium Forum: "We knew Martin Audio has that signature sound that can cater

to everything they wanted to do.” The team facilitated visits to other theatres for the Forum’s team to hear Martin Audio kit in action before the project was put out to tender in February. Rea Sound tendered along with others and won.

Installation was timed during a short dark window in the theatre’s busy calendar. “They wanted it in as quickly as possible, but it is a very busy venue,” McMullan says. “We needed three clear days, and so it went in early June. We installed the whole thing in those three days and it went very well.” The installed system comprises 12 x Martin Audio WPS line array elements flown per side, with a further two boxes ground-stacked above a pair of SX218 subs per side. The ground-stacked elements help provide coverage under the lower balcony, where Martin Audio FlexPoint FP6 loudspeakers also act as under-balcony delays.

Alongside the main PA, Rea Sound delved further into the Martin Audio portfolio to specify a comprehensive monitor and infill system. This comprised six LE200 wedges along with four CDD-LIVE 12 powered speakers, specifically selected to cater to the high outputs often required by visiting DJs. The whole system is powered by a total of 15 Martin Audio iKON series multi-channel amplifiers.

Coverage of every seat in the house was a vital component of the design. “The theatre has two balconies: the lower balcony and “the gods,” along with the ground floor stalls, which go quite far back underneath the balcony where the sound desk is located,” McMullan describes. “That was very key to the audio engineers; they wanted to make sure that what they heard at the desk was what the audience heard. The system is able to do that.”

The team created a model in SketchUp before importing it into Display software. Working closely with the technical team at Martin Audio, they modelled numerous configurations to determine array heights and physical placement. “When I heard the system in the venue for the first time I was blown away by the audio coverage. Every seat is covered,” McMullan notes. “You’re always sceptical about what the models predict, but in Martin Audio’s case it absolutely does match.”

Impressed by the system, The Millennium Forum’s Technical Manager, Chloe Harkin, highlights the difference it will make on both sides of the stage. “The new Martin Audio system designed and installed by Rea Sound will completely transform the Millennium Forum experience. For our audiences, it will ensure that no matter what seat you’re in, you won’t miss a single syllable of what’s happening on stage. For artists and technical teams, our space will be more accessible and equipped to cater to all scales of production on a level we haven’t been able to deliver before. From theatre and musicals to conferences, rock concerts and community events, this new system will deliver a fully-immersive, accessible, and memorable experience for production staff and audiences alike.”

The project has proved a huge success for the client and a validation of Rea Sound’s partnership with Martin Audio over many decades. “We’ve represented Martin Audio for 40-odd years, so we have a very close relationship,” concludes McMullan. “This

project has been an excellent example and delivered a fantastic outcome for the client. The technical manager and sound engineers are delighted, visiting tour companies have given very positive feedback, and as a local company, Rea Sound has even heard audience members tell us how good the venue sounds.”

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