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Me & My Girl on stage at The Kilworth House Theatre

Rental feature - with sound designer Chris Whybrow

Staging West End scale productions is second nature to the team at The Kilworth House Theatre in Leicestershire, combining an unusual and uniquely beautiful location with a well-equipped professional open-air theatre venue. *Me & My Girl* was on the menu this summer, directed by Mitch Sebastian and with sound design by Chris Whybrow.

Kilworth House Theatre's management adopts a West End show production philosophy, attracting top class casts, musicians and creative team members for its ambitious programme. Chris Whybrow is no stranger to The Kilworth House Theatre, taking on the sound design mantle for the third year in a row. This year's double musical bill comprised *Me & My Girl* and *The Sound of Music*, performing to full house audiences during the summer. From the design perspective, the open-air venue presented some interesting challenges during one of the worst summers on record – as Chris explains: *"The most exciting aspect of the venue is the sheer fluctuation of temperature, humidity, wind and rain – changing all the time and affecting how the show sounds. You need a really robust system with enough headroom to cope, even during a torrential downpour or a thunderstorm. The audience are fully protected, and the show really does have to go on. An added entertainment is the location of an airfield nearby, so we are also content with occasional aircraft flying overhead. It all adds up to an interesting set of challenges!"*

Chris specified the d&b audiotechnik Q-Series as the main system:

"We used Q1s and Q7s for the main truss array - principally on the vocals with part of the band - with Q7s for the band system. For the first time this year, they put the band on stage with the actors, so we had a lot more band coming down the mics with the ten-piece orchestra! We placed the Q7s in line with the band to bring the image back and give a wider image across the system.

"The speakers have to be tightly focused onto the auditorium and the different performance areas, including extreme left and right - the director has the cast entering from a bridge about 30 metres away for example, and he really uses the whole space. We have foldback hidden in bushes, speakers in trees and use a lot more monitors than normal to allow for this."

Other system components included a DiGiCo SD8 out front, with Shure UR1Ms and UR4s, DPA 4061 mics, and a combination of Shures and Neumanns on the band.

This was the first year that Orbital was contracted to supply the equipment and provide technical support at Kilworth House. Working with Chris was production engineer Dan Bailey and sound operator Jo Matthews.

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