

RIVAGE PM7 Brings Peace Of Mind To Theater Freiburg



Founded in 1866, Theater Freiburg is the oldest and biggest theatre in Freiburg im Breisgau, Baden-Württemberg, south-west Germany. Moving to its present venue in 1910, like many theatres it has seen an almost continuous series of changes and renovations, some more successful than others. Most recently, the installation of two Yamaha RIVAGE PM7 digital mixing systems have brought much-needed peace of mind to head of sound Jonas Gottschall and his technical team.

Featuring orchestral performances, opera, musicals, dance, plays and more, the Theater Freiburg building includes a main stage, smaller stage and Chamber stage. The venue has a long history with Yamaha digital mixers, going back to the DM2000 and the iconic PM5D. More recently, the venue invested in systems by other manufacturers because, as Jonas - who joined the theatre three years ago - says, "At the time there was no Yamaha console that could do exactly what Theatre Freiburg needed."

"You can only work according to the circumstances of the time," he adds. "In 2014, the theatre had to go down a different route, but the system it invested in ran into trouble with the network connection from the control surface to its DSP."

The issues culminated in every live sound engineer's worst nightmare, when three

productions had to be stopped mid-show, in front of audiences. "It took the manufacturer six months to investigate the problem and I don't think they ever found it," says Jonas.

With the RIVAGE PM series, Yamaha has not only continued its long tradition of reliability, it also introduced all the features that Theater Freiburg needed. So the investment in RIVAGE PM7 systems for the main and smaller stages was an obvious solution.

"Reliability is the number one priority for me," says Jonas. "With any system, if there is ever an issue you also need the technical support to be there at the right moment. If it isn't, it doesn't make either us or the audience happy. In my experience Yamaha digital systems have always been fine, there are never any software issues, network connection problems or anything, so I had absolute confidence that we would be safe if we invested in RIVAGE PM."

Not only has the RIVAGE PM7's theatre mode opened it up more to the theatre world, its ease of installation has meant that Jonas was able to install both systems himself. "We didn't need anyone from Yamaha to come in and hold our hand," he smiles.

"We installed the first PM7 system on the smaller stage, which was quite challenging because we had a new PA as well, with only a short time to install both and get them up and running. But it worked out absolutely fine."

He continues, "In terms of the features, in my opinion the sound quality is better than before. I also really like the dynamic EQs. We try to make the amplification of actors onstage very discreet but, as soon as the voice gets louder, it starts to behave differently with the microphone. So the dynamic EQ is a very useful feature."

As with all venues, 2020-21 has seen Theater Freiburg having to cope with many difficult challenges, so innovation and adaptability need to be at the heart of its present and future.

"Normally, you plan for the year ahead. But now, when we have been able to stage performances, we have had to improvise and cope with a very short preparation time," says Jonas. "For the foreseeable future we will need to be very flexible and fast, with limited rehearsals. So I am very happy to have invested in secure, stable systems that work exactly as we hoped they would."

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