

# Four setups for any format meet concert hall's every need.



**Place des Arts, Montréal, Canada**

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**Martin Saintonge**, Director of Producer Services and Production, Place des Arts

## Setting the scene

Opened in 1963, Place des Arts is unquestionably one of Montréal's finest performing arts venues. Recently this multipurpose cultural complex embraced a fundamental change, moving the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal to the Maison Symphonique, a 2,100 seat concert hall, elsewhere in the venue.

In relocating its orchestra, Place des Arts has repositioned its former home, Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, as a concert hall of labyrinthine flexibility. With capacity for almost 3,000 the venue hosts two resident companies, as well as everything from large scale musicals, rock, jazz and international artists, to circus, variety and comedy.

## Establishing objectives

When Guy Levesque, Technical Coordinator for Place des Arts, joined in 2015 he suggested the venue replace the audio system they'd had for many years, and in doing so, shift to an entirely different brand.

“I didn't select d&b immediately,” says Levesque. “Initially I asked most of the major sound companies to submit a proposal for the venue. Previous to my arrival I was working as a sound engineer and technical director in a variety of sectors: circus, plays, musical theatre, dance and other performances. One way and another I had been on tour for seventeen years and encountered a lot of systems.”

Place des Arts formed a committee including Richard Soly, whose audio responsibility at Salle Wilfrid spans thirty two years, nineteen as head of sound. “I reviewed all the proposals,” explains Soly. “The only sound system that could work required an 80 degree horizontal pattern to avoid touching the walls.”

Levesque confirmed Soly's key parameter and made it the focus of his brief. “The primary aim was to replace an old left/right PA system. We asked for all proposals to have the largest coverage and the biggest spectral uniformity in all seats as you would expect. But, regarding the acoustic of the venue, side walls and ceiling do not help at all when using a sound reinforcement system. So, the correct horizontal directivity angle of the speaker itself was critical, and with three balconies vertical coverage was no less important.

“Last point,” adds Levesque, “the new PA is at a fixed position. If the PA is not used by a visiting production, we need to hide it easily.”

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“During the re-opening day we made a presentation of four different setups available from the main PA. For amplified concert we have two distinct setups with quite different configuration of the subs, a choice that reflects the variety of needs for contemporary pop, rock and jazz.

“For conference the system can be used with no subs at all. Our main V-Series system, when configured for use without subs, will perform down to 67 Hz.

“Finally, we have what we call our basic setup, this does include some subs but is a catch all configuration that will satisfy many users that require a full range performance but without a heavy low frequency emphasis.

“All four different PA formats we stipulated are easily recalled using the d&b R1 control software, and with all of them we are very satisfied to find the perfect preset for our venue.”

Final endorsement goes to Place des Arts’ Director of Producer Services and Production, Martin Saintonge: “We are proud to say that, in a recent survey we received a significant increase in comments of satisfaction in ‘sound quality’ from the public attending Salle Wilfrid.”

## The solution

The restricted ‘hiding’ space available in the ceiling meant the system’s dimensions and weight would need to be in the midrange. After looking at many leading sound reinforcement companies, the d&b V-Series was chosen for its 80 degrees (h) directivity and ideal size. “It also brought one other significant feature,” says Levesque.

Francois Corbin of d&b Canada project managed the design process with Levesque and explains the attraction of this ‘special feature’.

“The room has four seating levels including

the three balconies. The upper balcony is effectively blind sighted from the PA position, although obviously it has a view of the stage but sits above the proscenium.

“We had to prove on paper using d&b ArrayCalc software that we could affect the best coverage; least excitement to the room acoustic; and by implementing d&b’s ArrayProcessing algorithms, achieve outstanding sonic consistency across the vertical horizon of the room. Even to that third balcony.”

Levesque scrutinized the data closely.

➤ **System: Vi8, J-INFRA, T10, V-SUB, Y7P, Y10P**