Written by George Petersen
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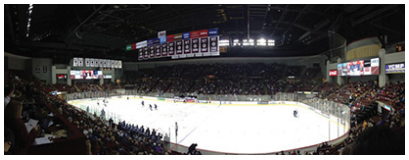

AMHERST, MA — Located on the University of Massachusetts-Amherst campus, the William D. Mullins Memorial Center Arena is home of the Minutemen basketball and ice hockey and Minutewomen basketball teams, as well as hosting concerts and other events. The 10,500-seat venue recently replaced its 20-year-old installed PA with a new QSC Audio ILA System.

The new system includes 72 WL2082-i line array elements and 12 WL118-sw subs driven by 22 PowerLight 3 Series PL340 amps, all under the control of two Q-Sys Core 250i units with a Q-Sys I/O Frame.

The sound system was designed by Acentech and installed by North American Theatrix, working with McPhee Electric. According to Acentech consultant Scott Jordan, “I created a model of the space in EASE, and discovered our initial choice was not going to work. Even doubling our initial choice would not give us the coverage we needed.” Jordan explains. “The hunt was to find a loudspeaker that would give us the necessary wide vertical coverage, keep the weight in check and fit within our budget. I took a look at the QSC ILA product. Once the loudspeakers were put in the EASE model, it was clear these enclosures would do what I needed them to do. The price point also allowed us to add additional enclosures, while staying well within our original budget.”

According to Pat Nelson, of North American Theatrix, “probably the most rewarding part of this project was when we first fired up the QSC system — it sounded amazing right out of the box,” he said, “and it worked just as predicted.”

The new system also includes a Yamaha LS932 digital mixing console fitted with CobraNet output cards feeding the two Q-Sys Core 250i processors installed 400 feet away in the gridwork high above the floor alongside the PL340 amplifiers.

As for intelligibility, “it’s a concrete hockey rink and we’re getting STI [Speech Transmission Index] levels of 0.54 or better — that’s considered good to very good, and well within what we expected,” Jordan adds. “There is no shortage of output, either. We achieved 112 dB, and still

had headroom."

"The client was very happy," Nelson concludes. "The coverage sounds very even, all the way from the first row of seats to the very upper nosebleed seats. That's a great accomplishment."

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