

# DPA Microphones MSS6000

Miking something big and running out of channels? DPA offers a system solution approach that maintains the quality and unobtrusiveness that it has become known for. The MSS6000 gets **JON THORNTON** out of tight corner.



Each satellite box has a recessed screw adjustment for level and pan position for each of the two channels. The advantage of this is that once level and pan are set, it's almost impossible to accidentally alter settings, and discourages idle fingers from unwanted tweaking. The disadvantage is that in practice it's quite fiddly, and although the screws are painted half in red to aid with reading position, seeing this in low lighting conditions can be difficult.

One of the nicest things about the system is that it is just that - a complete system. The MSS6000 is supplied in a very compact, lockable Samsonite briefcase with a sturdy, custom designed foam insert.

This houses five satellite boxes, the master summation box, and the requisite number of interconnecting cables.

Also supplied in the kit is a ring binder stuffed with ten plastic wallets, each of which contains a DPA 4061-BM miniature microphone.

Underneath this is a splendid box that houses a collection of microphone mounts for stringed instrument bridges, sticky pads and tiny plastic clips — all of which make neat, unobtrusive

microphone positioning a remarkably simple affair. Altogether a very tidy piece of packaging.

But just as surely as somebody will try to fill a niche application with a gizmo, somebody will also have a go at repurposing it to do something completely different — and this was the case with the review unit. Rather than being used for sound reinforcement, the unit was put to work during a recording session at the Whitworth Hall in Manchester.

This was an unusual session for a couple of reasons. First, it was a testing ground for a number of experiments with microphone set-ups for multichannel recording. This alone meant that mixing console channels were at a premium. Second, the venue posed its own problems — not being overly large but with the need to fit a fully symphony orchestra plus audience in it. This led to an unusually tight layout for the orchestra, with a further balance problem caused by the 15 additional trumpets located in minstrel's galleries above the stage (don't ask).

A belt and braces mentality dictated that some additional stereo mic positions were also desirable, just in case the surround arrays yielded incoherent nonsense — but the surfeit of brass meant that the poor woodwind section was rather overshadowed in these. Space being at a premium, the MSS6000 came



to the rescue. With some rather unconventional mounting arrangements (4061 microphones attached to miniature clips mounted with sticky pads to the spigots of some small stands), a pair of 4061s was assigned to each of the first and second flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons. Level and pan was set for each microphone, and the summed output happily fed the last two tracks on the recorder.

So how did they perform? Well, although the jury is still out on the multichannel set-ups, the 4061s and MSS6000 performed very well. The microphones themselves were typically flat and uniform in response and their omnidirectional pickup ensured that there was no colouration of sources regardless of relative proximity. The relatively low sensitivity of the microphones is also useful, both in this situation and in a reinforcement application, as it helps reject spill from other nearby sources.

The summation system seems to drive the microphones well, giving a rich, detailed and supremely natural sound. And despite the specifications, which indicate a predictable drop in signal to noise ratio as the number of microphones in use increases, there is very little to suggest an appreciable difference in headroom between one microphone or ten.

Niggles were few and far between — the level and pan controls have been mentioned earlier. The single biggest annoyance was the length of (captive) cable from the 4061 microphones, which proved far too short in some cases, and prevented the satellite boxes from being positioned in their ideal locations. And the miniature clips are very easy to lose on a dark stage. While I could easily add a wish list to the system — remote level and pan controls, headphone monitoring on the summation box — that would defeat the inherent simplicity and functionality of what is a very desirable system. ■

**IF THERE'S A NICHE APPLICATION** anywhere, you can guarantee that someone, somewhere will have a go at making a product to fill it. And from the respected stable of DPA Microphones comes just such a product. The MSS6000 is a mix summation system, designed primarily for miking string sections in sound reinforcement applications. The idea here is that up to ten individual microphones can be summed into a single stereo pair, each with independent level and pan controls, freeing up input channels on a console.

The system consist of up to five satellite boxes, into each of which two DPA miniature microphones can be plugged on MicroDot connectors. The satellite boxes are connected together in a 'daisy-chain' fashion using the supplied 4-pin XLR leads, with the final box in the chain being the master summation box.

This box provides the summed stereo signal on two XLR sockets, and also provides power to all the satellite boxes. The neat thing here is that the master box gets its juice via standard 48V phantom power provided down the stereo output lines. Two small red LEDs on the master box help verify that this is happening.

## PROS

Neat, compact and well packaged; rich, natural sound; whole system runs from phantom power.

## CONS

Level and pan adjustments can be tricky; cable length on microphones too short for some applications.

## Contact

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