

CZECH THEATRE OPTS FOR STRAND

The town of Ústí nad Labem (Aussig) in the Czech Republic, close to the German border, is not only famous for its historic town centre. The municipal theatre, located in a fabulous mock Baroque building, is renowned far beyond the city boundary, both for its own theatre company and as a venue for touring companies.

The theatre in Ústí nad Labem was built between 1908 and 1909 under the direction of the Viennese architect A. Graf, who was responsible for the construction of other famous theatre buildings such as the opera house in Chemnitz. The Baroque elements which dominate the façade and the auditorium were "borrowed" from other large houses, giving theatre-goers a taste of Viennese operatic flair. Seating over 500 people, the theatre offers an appropriate setting for works by great composers, and the most important chapter in its history began on 30 June 1945 with the premiere of *The Bartered Bride* by Bedrich Smetana.

In successive years the opera company in Ústí has consistently built on its reputation with over a hundred productions of works by many composers, not just ones from the Czech Republic. It is no coincidence that the National Theatre in Prague frequently recruits its new stars from Ústí, and the company's popular tours in other European countries are proof of its quality and wealth of inventiveness. Since 1946 Ústí has had a second string to its artistic bow in the shape of a ballet company, which is also famed throughout the country for its outstanding classical and contemporary repertoire.

The artistic ambitions of the company have been carried along on Strand equipment for many years. Together with many Strand spotlights, an IDM (the first memory lighting control system ever designed) was in use until a few years ago and never failed at a single performance. Strand was naturally called on again at the time of the technical overhaul in 1993, and today a modern Galaxy™ Nova



Imposing neo-Baroque facade of the theatre in Ústí.

controls the lighting in Ústí. Local dealer Technoart, who managed the project on Strand's behalf, were responsible for a perfect blend of new and existing technology; the Galaxy Nova now controls 240 analogue dimmers of Czech origin. There is an interesting parallel here to the theatre in Chemnitz, which was designed by the same architect, because in recent years a Galaxy lighting control has also been installed there.

However, it is not just because of its lighting that Ústí is one of the most modern theatres in the Czech Republic; its sound system and stage mechanics also employ the latest technology. Even the video system, with remote control cameras is of the very best. The new technology is integrated almost invisibly into the architecture of the building, so that it is not at all obtrusive. The Galaxy Nova, with its clear and practically-oriented operating philosophy and high level of reliability, was the first choice for the theatre at Ústí from the very outset. And there is even assistance on hand in case of need - Strand has a service centre in Prague with Stastny-Pavlicek, who are experts in Strand control systems and equipment.



Auditorium ceiling detail.



A grand entrance to a beautiful theatre.



The theatre Ústí from the actor's perspective.



Stage setting for Act 3 Dvorak's "Rusalka" by Vladimir A. Sránek.