

HEMA MASKOWITZ



MY TRIGGER

A temporary office job for a lighting supplier led to a diploma in lighting engineering. Then a passion for theatre and performing arts combined the two, and now I get to use light for both architecture and entertainment.

MY EDUCATION

I'm originally a qualified interior designer, later specialising in lighting with an illumination engineering qualification. I've done some essential courses on how to manage one's own business, but most of the lighting knowledge comes from hands-on work and experience.

MY ROLE

I own my own small business, so my titles are director, manager, head designer, engineer, marketing, finance, purchasing and delivery driver! I prefer lighting design over all of these.

MY GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT

Stepping out of corporate lighting companies to start an independent, project-focused business. The first show I was paid for was a very nice experience, but *The Secret Garden* was particularly special. I still have people telling me how the lighting evoked such emotion during the show, almost a year after the fact.

MY INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATIONS

Ingo Maurer was a spectacular designer: his light fittings and art installations have always made me excited like a kid at Christmas. They can be so very unconventional, so beautifully thought out and well made. They tick a lot of design boxes for me.

MY FAVOURITE TECHNOLOGY

For events, it's anything that can be controlled via a DMX universe. The gear that's available these days makes for the most fun you can have pushing buttons - the colours, shapes, movement, special effects like smoke and bubbles - you can have so much fun creating a show.

MY ESSENTIAL TOOLS

My notebook! There's always some form of pencil and paper nearby to make notes and record changes required. After the fun of designing, seamless execution is what changes a show from good to great.

MY ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

A lot of things are going to be very hard, and people will be rude and try to break you because they feel threatened by your skills and your craft. Do not listen to them. You've got it.

THE GREAT GATSBY

An original adaptation of the classic by F. Scott Fitzgerald, performed by the Cape Town Theatre Company, June 2022. The lighting design played a key role in enhancing character emotions and set the tone for various scenes. Since the colour green is such a key element in the story, various colours were used for the symbolism they carry: red represented anger, orange implied heat and pressure, the soft whites and blues implied innocence and kindness between the lovers. We also built special lighting into the set. The oculus, which represents the omnipresent deity, lit up when needed, looking down onto the story, eerily appearing only when judgement was being passed. There were also LEDs in the back panels to set the scene for Gatsby's house and the parties. Textural effects were added to outdoor scenes, and smoke was used to set the tone for the Valley of the Ashes.



THE SECRET GARDEN

Amateur productions often have a shortage of funding, so a limited and abstract set required the lighting to fill both physical voids and the imagination of the audience. Colour was used in a symbolic manner. In the first few scenes, Mary, the main character, is orphaned by a cholera outbreak in India, so yellow light was used to make her look insipid and lonely. At times, the choreography called for abstract movement and dancing, with performers trapped inside 'boxes'. These fixtures had to be rigged so they could be lit from overhead, as the mesh on the boxes obscured the lights from the front.

Photo credit: Christoff Van Wyk

