

LD Joshua Cutts & Project Manager Denzil Smith on Afrikaans is Groot

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Working as Project Manager for *Afrikaans is Groot* since its inception four years ago, Denzil Smith from MGG had always hoped that Joshua Cutts would some day step in as lighting designer for

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this slick, large-scale production. A busy schedule with many other prominent shows had prevented Josh from doing so previously.... that is until the client, Coleske Artists, approved his suggestion to involve Christopher Bolton as a joint designer and thus split the load. They could work simultaneously on separate MA2 desks on the same network using 24 universes.

*AIG* was held in Pretoria at Moreleta Church at the end of last year with the Cape Town leg hosted at GrandWest Casino in March 2016. MGG were the main technical suppliers.



“Coleske Artists are an interesting client because at first you believe they have unrealistic expectations as their expectations are so high and the standard they deliver is so high,” said

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Josh. "But then you do the work, meet their expectations and suddenly you realise that those expectations were right for the show. They drive you hard and they know what they want. They have done their research and know what makes a show a show, what gear they want and what each piece of equipment is capable of."

Lighting had to be spot on for both the live aspect of the show and the DVD recording. The music structure is precise and the lighting was cue extensive, beat for beat on every song, with over 1 600 cues in the show.



Christopher Bolton, who loves to punch numbers on a desk, focussed on fixing the cues after

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rehearsals while Josh made notes from the directors, choreographer and wardrobe, dealing closely with the client and keeping communication open at all times.



“This must be one of the slickest technical productions I’ve seen in this country and I’ve worked on a few,” said Josh. “It’s probably one of the best Front of House set ups due to the amount of individuals all focussed on different disciplines. There is someone doing video, someone doing sound, someone doing lights... and not just one but sometimes four or five people focussed on a small elements within their department.”

*A/G* is all about top Afrikaans artists performing their top selling songs on a world-class stage. “Content is carefully made for each song, ” explains Denzil. “The LDs then have to join into that

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and add all the lighting, which is not an easy task. With a story line in place, the designers have to match and follow suite without taking over with lighting.”



All programming was done off line via two grandMA2s. The detailed screen showed where the artists would stand, where a microphone stand might be placed, where the props were located. “So already in the programming of the lighting, Chris and Josh were working out artist placements and choreography for the dancers,” said Denzil.

Chris and his assistant Jade Manicom spent hours building all the props and putting them into the 3D Visualiser with items such as street lamps, wooden crates, a bridge, bicycle, the skate ramp or

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even chandeliers! To give an estimation of just how many props were used, they filled an 8-ton truck with props alone when moving the show to Cape Town!



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“So in MA 3D you would go to <https://dwrdistribution.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/1D0A4634-copy-500x333-1.jpg> the song and the whole stage changes, artists move to the right, props come out of the ground,” Josh describes. “We called it the basement as it’s underneath the drawing and there were hundreds of props used for the show in 3D. We’d go down into the basement and pull out all the props we needed.”

From a lighting point of view there was full access to the full arsenal of Mark Gaylard’s (owner of MGG) store. “Pretty much the sky was the ceiling and there was no ceiling. It was like being a kid in the candy store,” said Josh. “Chris and I just added lights to the drawing and from a lighting point of view it was one of the biggest rigs I’ve ever controlled. It was 24 universes of lighting which is bigger than any lighting file I’ve ever worked on.” With the exception of one song the show was fully time coded.

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“There were a few firsts on the event,” says Denzil Smith of MGG. “The MA Network has over 20GB dual redundant fibre line running through the venue which networks all the lighting, video and audio. Its one of the first times the MA Network was used for such a large event. It was the first time Kinesys had ever been used in South Africa. The lighting truss moved around on stage during the performance, an MGG first. We also had a 6mm (10m wide x 12 m deep) LED floor, the first time it had been used to that scale. A total of 260 lights used to light up the stage and audience.”

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The scale of the MA Network was fantastic, said Josh. "It was one of the largest MA show files I've ever worked on. It ran pretty well in the end, it was hard work to get it there, and the network was solid. It was the first time we had used MA Fibre Switches. Because we ran multiple networks from FOH, we run multiple types of networks, one for artnet, one for MA net, one for audio and one to possibly video. What makes the MA Net Switch so amazing is that I can then dedicate certain Ports to each one of those types of networks. We are then able to split our network up and keep each element of the show secure with the MA Switches. It was great to use a revolutionary product like that." It ran a full redundancy line so if the lighting were to go down, there was a back up in place.

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The venue, Moreleta, has weight restrictions which meant it was previously impossible to front light the church and this would effect the lighting for the DVD. Denzil and his team came up with a solution, using the Robe BMFL Blades.

“Because the BMFL is one of the brightest, if not the brightest light on the market at the moment, it is also extremely light,” said Josh. “So the roof could handle the weight therefore we could use the BMFL Blades for the front light. We put all 12 BMFLs in the front of the church, which in the past would have been impossible because of the weight restriction. The BMFL was our main fixture for front light, because of camera, colour temperature, brightness and weight. It was fantastic as always.

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*AIG* is a visual show and involves extensive video with LED panels used throughout the set. “Our drive was to carry the video over into lighting. This is not our normal style of lighting because what I usually do is pixel mapping,” said Josh. “In order to achieve the best pixel mapping, we chose all of the Clay Paky A.Leda B-Eyes that MGG own, the Elation Cuepix and the Robin CycFX 8 as these have multiple video pixels on them for the lighting designer to use. We spread them out as much as we could across the stage in the ceiling and on the wings of the stage so that we could have an image across the stage at any given time.

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“We then brought in the Clay Paky Sharpys and the Robin Pointes. We did nice vertical lines with Sharpys popping through the sets. We could do strong hard beams to pierce out of these visuals and also to look for and find the performers, whether they are in the centre, upstage, downstage, or spread. We wanted the Sharpys to draw attention to where the main performer would be.”

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There's a rewarding adrenalin rush, a happy euphoric feeling, on completion of a project that Josh felt having contributed in creating something amazing.

"AIG runs for an entire month, but after the event the crew actually have a post-show syndrome or post show depression," says Denzil. "A week after they are back in the office they feel like a whole part of their life has just gone. Its gratifying, hard work. The 17 crew, accumulating 3 621 hours of work on the production, are just fantastic. They put in long hours and are dedicated. For them *Afrikaans is Groot* is their flagship show of the year and they always give 120%.

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“Having Joshua and Chris this time took a lot of pressure off me I would not have to worry about lighting, I would arrive on site and there would be drawings with lights and everything was done. I didn’t have to chase or worry. Having them on board was a huge jump forward.”

Planning has commenced for the next performance in November 2016 and Josh and Chris have again been assigned as lighting designers. Ticket sales opened to the public recently and within two hours, 52 000 tickets were sold.

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**Lighting List**

- 12 Robe BMFL Blade
- 24 Robin 1200 LEDWash
- 24 Robin 600 LEDWash
- 24 Robe Pointe
- 12 Robe CycFX 8

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36	Robin 100 LEDBeam
12	Robe CitySkape 48
20	Clay Paky Apha Profile 1500
32	Clay Paky Sharpy
4	Clay Paky Mythos
12	Clay Paky A.Leda B-Eye K10
12	Clay Paky A.Leda B-Eye K20
12	Elation Cuepix Panels
4	Robert Juliat Aramis 2500 Followspots
2	Martin Jem Glaciator X-Stream
1	MDG theONE atmospheric generator
2	Le Maitre MVS Hazer



### Control

- 1 grandMA2 Full Size
- 2 grandMA2 Light
- 1 grandMA2 on PC
- 2 grandMA2 Switch with 20GB network
- 4 grandMA2 NPU

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- 2 grandMA 2 VPU
- 2 grandMA 3D render machines
- 1 Resolume
- 1 Abelton Launch Pad



**PA**

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24	VTX V20 Line Array speakers
12	VTX S25 subs
6	VTX G28 subs
20	JBL Vertec VT 4886 Line Array
8	JBL VRX932LA front-fills
6	VRack Amps
2	HD3500 Amps
6	HD1200 Amps
Total power output 385 000 watts	



### **Sound Desks**

Soundcraft Vi6 & Vi 3000 at FOH

Soundcraft Vi5000 Monitor Desk

12 JBL VTX F15 monitors

96 Channels XTA Splitters

37 Channels of In Ear Monitors

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56 Channels of RF Mics

3500 Batteries used for duration of show



**Video Side**

Set Element

Back wall 6,4m x 7,9m high

Two Curved side columns of 12mm LED 3,2m wide and 7,2m high

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6mm LED screen surrounding the drum kit



**For Live Camera Feed used**

2 Christie 20K Projectors onto 10m wide screens

All controlled by a Barco E2 Switcher

Content run from a Watchout Servers

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A total of 42 speaker boxes used to produce the audio for this event driven by 38 5000 watts of power

All artists and musicians have their own dedicated wireless mics and in ear monitors

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A total of 93 channels of wireless mics and transmitter packs used

A custom stage is constructed in the venue, 30m wide, 16m deep and 9m high

The stage is very content driven with the use of LED panes

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**Power**

- 3 125 KVA Gennies
- 2 200 KVA Gennies
- 2 DWR Little Lotta 250 A Distro
- 1 48 way Art 200 Avo Rack Hot Power
- 3 12 Socapex out Pex Racks

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- 5 DWR Huey 63A Distro
- 2 60m 320A Camlock set
- 6 150m 32A Cables with Plug Boxes
- 12 30m 32A Cables with Plug Boxes



Sound and AV Consumption: 100A per Phase

Lighting Consumption: 230A per Phase

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