



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE:

Name: **Tom Lenz**
Profession: **Principal/Partner**
Company: **513**
Location: **New York, NY**
Portfolio: www.513e12.com
Current Show: **The Break with Michelle Wolf**

Tom is an internationally recognized and award-winning scenic designer. He has worked on countless productions, from televised large scale live events, award shows, concerts, talk shows, and music and comedy specials, including his most recent work on The Break with Michelle Wolf, in which he used QolorFLEX® products.

THE INTERVIEW:

CTI: What was the first show you ever saw, and how did it influence you in terms of becoming a designer?

TL: I have always loved making things with my hands and have been encouraged to express myself creatively. My Mom had always ensured that I was involved in afterschool Arts Programs from childhood onward. Getting accepted into a New York City Gifted and Talented Junior High School allowed me to train in a studio environment of my "Talent" at a young age. Two hours a day in "Art Talent" taught me that being creative is something that was very important, that it mattered to

your GPA, that it should be practiced every day and taken seriously. That was a turning point for me. There was great mentorship in my JHS and we went to see Broadway shows, went to the cinema and always had theatrical performances visiting the school.

My first Broadway show was *CATS* and that really spoke to me. I never liked traditional musicals and so *CATS* was a beautiful visual poem that captured me. As I got older, I started to attend concerts and festivals. Seeing Mark Fisher's design for the U2's Pop Mart Tour was a turning point for me as far as the scale I really wanted to work in. I'm a musician and music is very inspiring to my work. It helps me set my zone when I'm designing.

Designing for music involves visually abstracting the sound. In the 90's, MTV and VH1 constantly televised music specials with artists that I followed, and so that became something I wanted to be involved with and eventually was. Watching those television specials, I really enjoyed the way that cameras could interpret that experience for a mass audience and bring us together as a cultural force.

CTI: What does the typical day in the life of Tom Lenz, Principal/Partner of 513, look like?

TL: We started 513 fifteen years ago and I can tell you there is no "typical day" in this industry. I always say that I am a "Principal/Partner" at



The Break with Michelle Wolf | Photo by Mel Lovric for 513 | Lighting includes QolorFLEX LED Tape and QolorFLEX NuNeon™

"I never liked traditional musicals and so *CATS* was a beautiful visual poem that captured me."

513 because I have to play two very important roles that I am proud of. Designing is my passion. I get to be the Principal Designer of all of my work, express the innermost facets of what makes me who I am and use that vision to help my clients. I am also a Partner at a firm and I am responsible to run the Business of Design for 513. I have to be able to make all of that work as well. Not just the business model of each project, but for the company as a whole.

Trying to balance those priorities is the challenge of my every day. My wife and I work together and we now live and work in Los Angeles and New York City. Our teams are scattered all over the country. Each day, we check in with those teams and align their goals so we can be off and running. I spend my day with clients and with the shows that are already in production. We check in with our teams at the end of the day to review the design work and prepare for the next day.

I get to work with some very talented people and there is not a day that goes by that I don't learn something about myself, my team, our

“NYC is a great place to meet people from all over the world. We are constantly in each other’s faces, exchanging ideas and words. That in itself leads to daily inspiration.”

collaborators, the industry or a better way to achieve a goal. These are long days, but it is satisfying.

CTI: What types of projects does your firm work on?

TL: We have been able to work on a large variety of projects from televised large-scale live events, award shows, concerts, talk shows, music & comedy special, broadcast studios, and immersive environments. We have some great clients who trust us to work with them to tell their stories in a variety of mediums.

One day we might be designing a lobby for the new Viacom offices in LA, while also meeting about a small Comedy Special in Chicago and

working on a Talk Show NYC.

All of those projects have to exist within our day and we have to allow ourselves time to focus on each of them. We have an amazingly nimble staff and a great network of experts that we bring in to work with us on projects within these mediums and further our creative vision.

CTI: What inspires you when it comes to scenic design?

TL: I'm inspired by work that incorporates cutting-edge design techniques and technology without letting the creative or the narrative become overpowered by them. Those are the types of projects that have stuck with me over time.

When I have free time I will usually go and see a dance piece or a more abstract performance piece that helps clear my mind open me up emotionally and creatively.

CTI: How does being a native New Yorker affect your design aesthetic?

TL: I live and breathe NYC. I was fortunate enough to get a great education in NYC public schools and also to attend New York University.



The Break with Michelle Wolf | Photo by Mel Lovric for 513 | Lighting includes QolorFLEX LED Tape and QolorFLEX NuNeon



Learn more about QolorFLEX LED Tape at:
www.citytheatrical.com/products/led-tape-qolorflex

**CITY
THEATRICAL**
NEW YORK • LONDON



Photo by Mel Lovric for 513

“LED tape has allowed me to design scenery which is very similar to our creative process of sketching.”

Most of my family still lives here and some of my best friends have decided to raise families here and that will always be a part of me. NYC has a pulse that I've internalized and informs my work on every level. There are such amazing institutions, museums, theaters, restaurants and clubs that constantly feed me creatively.

There's so much stimulus in NYC all of the time. I've been very lucky to grow up here and to have the access that I have had to the very best things that the world has to offer. NYC is a great place to meet people from all over the world. We are constantly in each other's faces, exchanging ideas and words. That in and of itself leads to daily inspiration.

Now that we spend so much time in LA, I'm working on reigning back my Inner New Yorker and embracing my Inner Angelino so I can figure out how they live in artistic harmony.

CTI: How has the use of LED tape in set lighting changed the way scenic design is done, and how has it changed the relationship between the scenic and lighting designer?

TL: LED tape is a wonderful, useful

tool in our work. It can be there to provide a punctuated “zing” of light on something we want to accent or it can be there to express a softer repeated gesture that pulls out the depth in our design. LED tape has allowed me to design scenery which is very similar to our creative process of sketching.

There has always been a gap between the disciplines of Scenic Design/Lighting Design/Projection/Content Design and these types of technologies help bring all of those disciplines closer. A Production Designer has to be more understanding of good lighting principals to be able to work with LED tape and use it to bring out the most optimum effects. A good Lighting

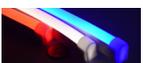
Designer will work with them to help sculpt the set and to collaborate on the best methods of use.

CTI: What future trends do you see coming in scenic design?

TL: The main trends I see are in Content for LED Screens, in Virtual Reality, and in Gaming. I always tell younger scenic designers to make sure they are well versed in those languages. At its core, Production Design is about storytelling. How do does one create a cohesive visual narrative and engage an audience? That same core question applies to different mediums, technologies, and scales of production.



Photo by Mel Lovric for 513



Learn more about QolorFLEX NuNeon at: www.citytheatrical.com/products/qolorflex-nuneon

CITY THEATRICAL
NEW YORK • LONDON