

Mental Wi-Fi, June 2015



This solo performance took place in conjunction with the UCC Theatre Department's Perforum Conference held in collaboration with Cork's Midsummer Festival at Corcadorca's Theatre Development Centre in the Triskel Arts Centre in Cork, Ireland in June of 2015. In *Mental Wi-Fi*, I contextualized mind-reading not only as a psychological phenomenon, but also as the result of certain quantum mechanical phenomena such as string theory.

In my previous performance, *Visions and Revisions*, I performed numerous demonstrations in which no deception or artifice was employed. In *Mental Wi-Fi*, I focused, rather, on the *pretences* of my presentations rather than the *actual* nature of those techniques. In so doing, I was able to shift away from the delicate techniques of suggestion and ideomotor response, and toward areas which I considered to have significant dramatic potential, such as telepathy and precognition. Unlike the suit and tie *anti-costume* of the Doctoral Showcase, I opted to employ costumes in *Mental-Wi-Fi* that showed their costume-ness (as previously noted^{*}).

In this performance I portrayed two quasi-characters, a Professor and an Apprentice. The retro and comedic approach of this performance had originally led me to conceive of the Professor as a

^{*} See: 'The Dark *Verfremdungseffekt*.'

turban wearing, crystal ball weilding, eccentric. The turban, it should be noted, has always been an important aspect of mind reader parodies, owing largely to the acutal use of turbans by early mind readers. For example, mentalist Claude Alexander, *the Man Who Knows*, was one of the most highly paid entertainers in Vaudeville, and used his turban to conceal an electronic radio device,¹ while Johnny Carson of *The Tonight Show* regularly parodied mind readers through his popular pratfalling character *Carnac the Magnificent* who brandished a cape and comically oversized turban.

I constructed a red turban in preparation of this performance adorned with raven and pigeon feathers as well as a skull and bones emblem. In the end, however, I elected to wear a red fez. Regardless, whether fez or turban, it is impossible to avoid the issues of cultural appropriation and the associated questions of post-colonial influence surfaced by this costuming choice. Performances of mentalism have always had a hand in cultural appropriation, with Orientalism foremost. As with the issues of gender and patriarchy surfaced by *Visions and Revisions*, the issues of cultural appropriation and post-colonialism raised by *Mental Wi-Fi* were issues with which I would grapple throughout the remainder of my praxis.

Works Cited:

Lewis, Tim. 'Derren Brown: "I love technology, but I don't know if it's improved my life."' *TheGuardian.com*. 12 Jan 2014. Web. 15 Oct 2018.

¹ Lewis, Tim. 'Derren Brown: "I love technology, but I don't know if it's improved my life."' *TheGuardian.com*. 12 Jan 2014.