



Home Counties Magical Society

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Dr Todd Landman

By Andrew Webb



Dr Todd Landman is actually a doctor of philosophy, and is a Reader at the University of Essex, as well as being what he terms a *metaphysical magician*, and after an excessively long trip to the Home Counties Magical Society (almost four hours!) he kindly shared with us just exactly what a metaphysical magician was.

The first half of the lecture was really mainly a show at first glance, a thought of number was found to be the sum of a magic square, a thought of date looked up in a diary was found to be the same card as the one sealed in an envelope, a freely chosen instrument from an orchestra was almost correctly predicted (and subsequently divined from the mind of the participant), and unseen, freely selected crystals placed into a bag by spectators were all returned to them.

Probably the strongest of these was the final free selection of mini coloured crystal balls, placed into a bag by each of the spectators (including myself) were then placed into a larger bag. Dr Todd correctly returned each to its owner without having seen, or been involved with their selection. It was based on Maurice Fogel's "Second Spot", and set the scene for some explanations.

However unlike most lectures, Dr Todd didn't explain these effects, he instead used them to focus our minds on the principles and methods behind them. He talked about the methods as described by Max Maven, the abilities for us as performers to provide the outcome of an effect using those methods and paths. He also spoke in some depth about the persona and thinking behind how both a mentalist, or a magician could portray themselves, for instance the role of the mentalist is, or can be to show feats that could point to some psychological, or even supernatural power, yet it is up to the performer to decide to dismiss, take advantage of, or not comment on if they actually possess any kind of extra power or ability. He also spoke about themes and stories in performance, commenting on how a story can add to an effect, and bring it from a trick, to entertainment.

Dr Todd spoke about his own character persona, an academic, stuck between views on the physical and metaphysical worlds. Dr Todd presented this first half exceptionally well, creating a performance area that looked professional and completely suited to his character. By that I mean that he did not just perform effects on a table top, he brought cloth coverings, a lectern type performance table, a picture easel, crystal balls, aged maps and more. This put his lecture above what is normally presented as 'trick and explanation' type evenings.

After the break, Dr Todd talked briefly about PSYCRETS, the *British Society of Mystery Entertainers* that he co-founded. Moving on he started to work through three of his effects with full performance and explanation. The first of these was *Cogito Ergo Sum*, using a small book listing a collection of the World's Greatest Philosophers; each page contains information about the history, ideas, and importance of some of the philosophers of the world (Hegel, Aristotle, Marx, Confucius, etc.). Flicking through the book, a spectator asked Dr Todd to stop, a free choice it seemed. Without any normal method, Dr Todd appeared to start to build a picture of the selected philosopher, first with vague ideas building to a complete accurate description of the philosopher. As an additional climax a playing card associated with the philosopher is found and matches a card that was selected freely and sealed in a box at the beginning of the effect! The method behind it was simple, and devious.

Dr Todd also showed and explained his newest effect, *The Condemned*, an effect around the Witch finder general. A member of the audience is correctly identified as having removed a gold ball from a bag, this person is then put to trial as a witch, allowing a number of other interlinked mental effects to be shown, even down to a clever and clean deviation of a thought of English county was performed, before a freely decided on guilty or not guilty verdict by the audience was also correctly predicted.

The effects themselves were detailed and fairly long in performance, meaning that as a story and themed presentation that worked extremely well. Some aspects could also be taken out and used in shorter performance sections as well, meaning that the material could be used by more.

The entire lecture was a refreshing break from the norm, an interesting 2 hours of mixing performance, theory, method and effects into one. Dr Todd is also a mine of information on mentalism, and it's worth attending his lectures just for the, during break and after show discussions! Todd is an enthusiastic performer and clearly dedicated and knowledgeable in his chosen art, for those with a leaning to, or an interest in mentalism, it's a great lecture.