

**Ward Nigel**

## **Angelic Conversations: John Dee, theatre and philosophia naturalis**

### **performance lecture**

*All philosophies that men have learned or devised are, in our opinion, so many plays produced and performed which have created false and fictitious worlds.*

- Francis Bacon, *New Organon* (1620)

It is more than 400 years since John Dee arrived in the court of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague, ready to practice as ‘natural philosopher’, mathematician, alchemist and to conduct conferences with angels. During his time in England Dee had designed mechanical effects for the stage as well as advising Richard Burbage on the construction of The Globe Theatre. In Prague

This performance lecture will take the form of an angelic conversation: John Dee will be invited to communicate, from beyond the grave, the significance of his hermetic philosophy, its relationship to mathematics and to theatre.

His career ended in failure, his reputation in tatters, but his influence can be discerned in science (Newton’s *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*) in theatre (Dee is a possible model for Prospero). And he is key in establishing the idea of the theatre as microcosm for staging an understanding of the macrocosm .

### **Bio:**

After reading English at Oxford University Nigel trained as a theatre director at Drama Studio London and worked professionally in the London fringe and as an assistant director at the Royal Shakespeare Company. After completing his PhD at Warwick University, he taught at a variety of institutions including, Sheffield University and Central School of Speech and Drama where he ran the MA in Performance Studies. He is currently Principal Lecturer in Drama and Acting Head of Department at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge.

