

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Follow-Up Investigation of the Felix Circle

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Abstract—In October 2015, I supervised a series of séances in Hanau, Germany, with the Felix Experimental Group (FEG) physical medium Kai Mügge. The purpose was to try to obtain better documentation of Kai's table levitations than my team was able to achieve in Austria in 2013 (Braude 2014). Although that goal was not met over the course of four séances, we nevertheless witnessed some interesting phenomena that are difficult to explain away normally given the control conditions imposed at the time. These include object movements beyond the reach of the sitters, a very strange "exploding" sound from the séance table, and some extended levitations in which the table seemed to sway or swim in midair. But what may be most interesting about this series of séances is the way the phenomena reflect the complex, and tortured, underlying psychodynamics of the occasion. Indeed, what readers need to know about the FEG phenomena has as much to do with the personalities involved as with the phenomena themselves. As a result, this report focuses as much on the background to the investigation as on the investigation itself.

The Initial Obstacles and the Messy Background

In an earlier paper (Braude 2014), I described my previous investigations of the Felix Experimental Group (FEG) and its medium Kai Mügge. I noted there why at least some of Kai's phenomena were quite compelling and why I was reasonably confident that certain of them were genuine. I found Kai's table levitations to be especially noteworthy, and on two occasions I'd been able to make video recordings of the event—one in infrared light, and the other in light from an incandescent red lamp. Unfortunately, both videos were problematical. In the former, Kai inadvertently (in the darkness) blocked much of the view of the table, so that one of his hands was not visible; the other hand was waving up and down, imitating Eusapia Palladino's practice of encouraging a table to rise. In the latter, although hands and feet are visible, it's not clear in the dim light where Kai's thumbs were. I noted in my paper why I doubted the skeptical suggestion that Kai could have produced an apparent levitation with his thumbs, in a table he had

no opportunity to rig, and in which the table's movements had the sensory characteristics of being weightless and buoyant (rather than forced upward). Nevertheless, it seemed worthwhile to try to obtain better quality video of Kai's table levitations, and I contacted Kai to coordinate an additional series of séances.

But from the beginning, this series proved to be a struggle to arrange, and the difficulties came as no surprise. For one thing, when Michael Nahm and I published our 2014 reports on the FEG (Braude 2014, Nahm 2014), we already knew that Kai had cheated on at least one occasion (not supervised by me), by using a light-emitting device similar to a magician's trick called the D'Lite Flight. That device employs a diode at the end of a very thin wire attached usually to the user's thumb, which can make it appear as if points of light are moving around in the vicinity of the magician. In 2011, regular Felix Circle investigator Jochen S. (pseudonym) took two series of photographs, (remarkably, in retrospect) at Kai's request, from séances in Koblenz, Germany. From the start, the reddish lights shown on those photos looked suspicious to Jochen, and quite unlike the more convincing lights he'd seen at a distance from the medium. After Jochen shared the photos with Nahm in 2014, Nahm noticed that they revealed how the movement of Kai's thumb corresponded to the movement of these lights, just as they would if Kai had been using a device like the D'Lite Flight. Thereafter, Jochen also revealed to us that he had discovered a light-emitting device in Kai's travel bag after one of the Koblenz séances. Furthermore, he told us that after he confronted Kai with the combined evidence of his finding in 2011 and Nahm's discovery about the photos in 2014, Kai apologetically admitted to using the device and to having concealed it on the shelves behind his curtained "cabinet" during the séances in Koblenz. (For more details, including Jochen's firsthand account of this sequence of events, see the Appendix of this paper.)

The publicity generated by Nahm's and my papers, and subsequent Internet discussion by Nahm and others of additional possible instances of fraud, initially led Kai to flatly refuse my proposal to document even more clearly the table levitation we had been able to videorecord in Austria. I told Kai that neither Nahm nor I had been able to explain away, credibly, certain of the manifestations observed in the Austrian series of séances,¹ and that if Kai wanted to demonstrate that he was more than a mere fraud, the best course would be to document even more clearly those phenomena that are most easily captured on video and most resistant to glib skeptical dismissals. I argued that his table levitations should be the focus of a follow-up series of séances.

Kai was apparently unmoved by my arguments, and his resistance was

supported by his wife Julia and members of his family, all of whom argued that he only had more to lose from further work with those interested in studying him under conditions acceptable to scientists. During those few occasions when Kai seemed amenable to trying some further tests, he nevertheless maintained that he could not return to my videographer Robert Narholz's farmhouse in Austria. I had considered that location nearly ideal, because (as described in my 2014 report) it could be controlled easily and was not otherwise accessible to Kai. But Kai claimed he had been terribly uncomfortable there under conditions of constant scrutiny and the pressure to produce good phenomena. Moreover, because Kai claimed that the location was now further tainted by Michael Nahm's transformation from a friendly investigator to one of his most vocal and fierce critics, returning to the farmhouse was, Kai said, out of the question. (For more on Nahm's change of attitude, see Nahm's Commentary (2016) in this issue.)

I then figured that if any further work with Kai was to occur, it would have to be in more congenial surroundings—presumably, his home base in Hanau, Germany. I also recognized that we'd probably have to work in the usual Hanau venue for Kai's séances: the bomb-shelter basement in Kai's parents' house. Although I realized this would inevitably raise red flags for critics, I figured that we could minimize concerns fairly easily. After all, we intended only to study the most easily documented of Kai's phenomena—table levitations. Our limited goal was to obtain even clearer video recording of the levitations than we got in Austria, figuring that if these could be even more firmly established as genuine, then Kai's most ardent and shallow critics would have to abandon the claim that Kai is nothing but a cheat, and that this might open the door to more reasoned and calm appraisals of Kai's mediumship as a whole. Moreover, since Kai had recently cleared out his curtained-off computer/media nook from the bomb-shelter location, the séance room itself was quite bare and would be very easy to search and declare free of suspicious devices. And besides, if we had good video from multiple angles of the levitations, it should be obvious that no tricks were employed. I did try, unsuccessfully, to secure an alternate location for these table séances. But (not surprisingly) Hanau hotels were opposed to the idea of having late night singing and séance-frivolity occurring in one of their conference rooms.

Fortunately, Kai seemed open to the idea of holding further table séances in Hanau, although Julia and family members still tried to discourage him. Even though we had to wait two and a half years before holding our follow-up tests in Hanau, in October 2015, it should be noted that those delays were not due to Kai. On at least two occasions Kai and I settled on a period when he had an opening in his very busy schedule, but it was difficult to get other

key members of my team to break free at those times. The main holdout on those occasions was former circle leader Jochen. Although Julia had assumed regular duty now as circle leader, Kai still considered Jochen to be a crucial component in the mix—someone he not only trusted and liked, but also someone whose scientific credentials both Kai and I recognized to be impeccable. Quite understandably, Jochen’s schedule was even busier than Kai’s. He divided his professional time between research at a world-famous scientific institute and his cardiological clinical work at a hospital. Moreover, he was scrupulous in devoting as much time as possible to his wife and children.

As the time for our tests approached, the entire enterprise fell under the cloud of attacks on both Kai and Jochen. The attacks on Kai were the usual critical assaults, including recent criticism from Peter Mulacz and Michael Nahm in the Society for Psychical Research’s magazine, *Paranormal Review* (Mulacz 2015, Nahm 2015). The attacks on Jochen concerned charges that he was an accomplice in Kai’s fraud and (in a direct effort to undermine his professional career) threats to reveal Jochen’s real identity and contact his employer about Jochen’s allegedly “unscientific” FEG activities. And just shortly before the trip was to take place, Jochen’s identity was indeed revealed in an online blog written by a former, embittered FEG member. So just as the travel to Europe was about to begin, both Kai and Jochen were deeply shaken and wary about our plans to hold séances as scheduled.

My main collaborator, as in the Austrian 2013 investigations, was filmmaker Robert Narholz, who is preparing a documentary tentatively called *Finding PK*. Since Michael Nahm had no inclination to associate with Kai again after he found out about the latter’s repeated cheating, and since he was now persona non grata at the Felix Circle anyway, we replaced him with someone Kai liked and trusted, and whom Robert and I also could trust—noted journalist Leslie Kean, perhaps best-known to readers of this *Journal* as the author of an outstanding survey of evidence for UFOs (Kean 2010). Leslie, who is currently researching mediumship and postmortem survival, had attended several of Kai’s séances in the U.S. and other physical mediumship circles in the UK, and was quite familiar at this point with the history of the subject and the current state of physical mediumship. Because she’s now a seasoned and critical observer, Robert and I were certain that her presence would be a great asset.

Boots on the Ground

Leslie and I arrived in Hanau on September 30; Robert’s arrival was scheduled for October 3. Leslie and I had hoped to devote the first few days in Hanau to recovering from jet lag and trying to establish a positive and

friendly working relationship with Kai and Julia. I hadn't seen Kai (except via Skype) since our 2013 Austrian sessions, and although those Skype sessions had mostly been friendly (including the one where I confronted Kai about his cheating), I was eager to have some time, before testing, to reestablish the in-person warmth we had previously enjoyed. Unlike some, I did not regard what I knew for certain about Kai's cheating to be an inevitable impediment to cordiality or even to friendship.

So Leslie and I spent some time, soon after arrival, with Kai, Julia, and Jochen at Kai's new and quite comfortable modern apartment. Kai showed us various rare books from his impressive collection of works on physical mediumship, and then the five of us went to dinner. It was clear that Jochen and Kai were both very anxious—Kai because he was afraid of failure and how that would be interpreted by critics and others, and Jochen because of the recent Internet exposure of his real identity and the blogger's unauthorized (and illegal) use of Jochen's photos of Kai apparently employing a device like the magician's D'Lite Flight. Jochen also informed us that his wife was firmly opposed to Jochen being identified, even under his usual pseudonym. At the time they were both quite afraid of further efforts by the blogger to harm Jochen professionally.

I did my best to diminish Kai's concerns. I reminded him that our goal was simply to improve on documenting the table levitations, and that Robert, Leslie, and I all understood that—especially under the prevailing tensions—there was no disgrace in getting no, or only disappointing, results. So I assured Kai I wouldn't be writing a damning critical report about our meeting if he simply tried, but failed, to get the results we'd aimed for. And Leslie and I assured him further that we were confident that something of value would happen, and that we had no doubt that we'd get some good table levitations. The main thing, I reminded Kai quite clearly, was that he should not do anything foolish. I believe Kai understood precisely what I meant by that.

Kai informed us soon after our arrival that he'd be able to participate in only four séances. That came as a surprise. Robert and I had been under the impression that Kai's cabinet séances took more out of him than table séances, due to the physical toll of Kai's "holotropic" breathing and the apparently physically demanding process of producing ectoplasm. So we were hopeful that we could hold more than four sessions, and at least a few on consecutive days to maximize our opportunities for good documentation. After all, we had held table séances on consecutive days during our Austrian sessions with Kai in 2013. So we figured we'd spend our first few days in Hanau just hanging out cordially and holding casual séances, and then when Robert arrived we'd begin to hold well-controlled

sessions. But Kai now explained that he needed one day's rest between séances. I expected his reason for this requirement to be that the stress of the occasion made each table séance more exhausting than it would be under more usual, and informal, circumstances. Instead, Kai's justification was that table levitations are *more* exhausting than cabinet sittings, because in the former he feels more conscious responsibility and stress than when he's in a trance during cabinet sittings, at which times those sources of stress are allegedly switched off. So a cabinet sitting, he was now claiming, is one of his few opportunities to sleep. Now, if Kai's waking consciousness is really and fully switched off during a cabinet séance (a matter deserving further scrutiny, and which Michael Nahm claims is simply false—see Nahm's Commentary in this issue), that might indeed reduce one kind of stress. But considering Kai's pronounced sweating and physical exhaustion after cabinet sittings, I doubt in any case that table séances overall take more out of Kai than cabinet séances.

In fact, I suspect that Kai's reluctance to hold more séances may have had a more mundane explanation than the one he provided. I consider it more likely that Kai was simply anxious and ambivalent about the entire investigation, and that as a result he was sleeping even less than usual and was worried that stress and fatigue would lead to poor results in the table séances. I think Kai hoped to get as much rest and relaxation as possible between the séances, anticipating that each occasion would be difficult for him. And as it happened, Kai reported throughout our visit that he was indeed sleeping poorly, and even less than usual.

Because Robert would be able to join us only from October 3 to October 9, and although Jochen had family obligations, Leslie and I decided that we should hold a séance without them on October 2, just to get Kai warmed up and at least somewhat adjusted to the presence of experimenters generally and us in particular. Kai agreed this was a good idea.

So an informal Séance #1 was held on the evening of October 2, in darkness, lasting about an hour. Sitters (clockwise) were Kai, Elke (Kai's mother), Leslie, myself (SB), and Julia (operating the CD player and red light). The table was Kai's usual plastic garden table, 33.5 in in diameter and 28 in high (see Figure 1). Before we began, Kai asked Leslie and me, individually, to discern how hard it was to lift the table when other sitters' hands were resting atop it. We both agreed we could not make the table rise either smoothly or with its top horizontal and parallel to the ground (much less both together). And any movements we could produce resulted in table movements that felt obviously different from the way ostensibly genuine levitations feel—namely, slow, buoyant, and weightless, and not as if pushed. I've found that when others try manually to move the table

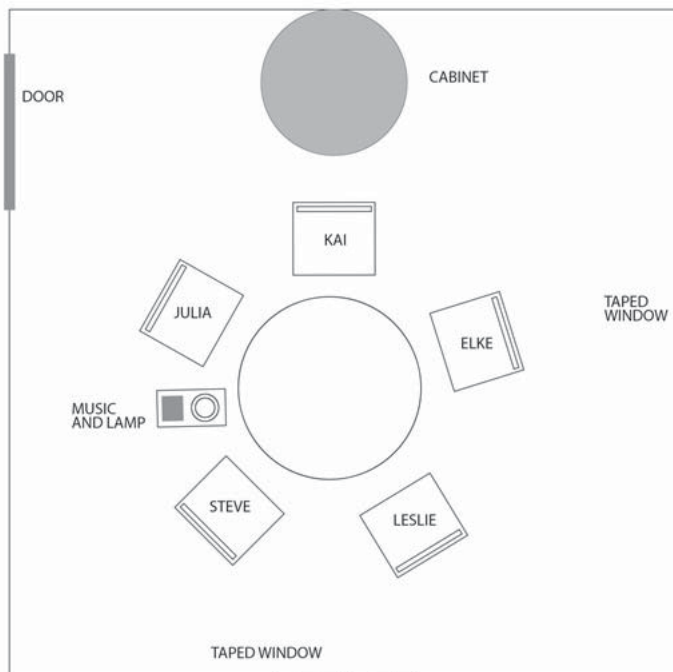


Figure 1. Configuration of the séance room for Séance #1.

upward, the table feels as if it's being forced upward, whereas levitated tables seem to float.

In addition to the levitations I describe below, several other interesting events occurred. For example, a few lights were visible at various points around the room, some of them observed collectively. In fact, Leslie, Julia, and Elke each reported seeing lights around the cabinet at the other end of the room and presumably out of Kai's reach. For those, Kai's position at the table was easy to judge by his loud singing. Moreover, we all heard a few strong raps on the wall, far away from the sitters, whose locations, again, were easily discerned by their singing. And (perhaps most interesting) the bell hanging from the ceiling behind my head rang loudly. The bell was located behind me; I was seated across from Kai; and I'm certain that no one of the sitters was within reach of that bell. In fact, the bell was closest to me, and I couldn't reach it from a sitting position.

We also had four table levitations, none lower than 1.5 ft from the ground; the shortest lasting about 4 sec. The final two were the most impressive. For Levitation #3, the table rose at least 2 ft, remained there

for about 5 sec, started to descend slowly but remained several inches off the ground, and then slowly rose again to a height of about 2 ft, remained there for several seconds, and then descended rapidly, hitting the laminate flooring with a plastic thud.

In Levitation #4, the table rose at least 2.5 ft, and after being aloft for several seconds it began to sway, dipping first to my left, then to my right, and back and forth a few more times, almost as if it was “swimming” to the rhythm of the music. When that was done, the table descended rapidly. The whole event probably lasted at least 15 sec.

Kai, as usual, was dressed in a short-sleeved T-shirt. Clearly, there were no hidden contraptions up his sleeve that he could extend under the table in cover of darkness to make the table rise or “swim.” In fact, as usual when we greet each other, we did so with an extended and warm hug. So there was at least a hug-body check, and I felt nothing under Kai’s shirt.

More Formal Séances

Séance #2 was held on October 4, the day after Robert arrived. We set up two cameras, but Kai was clearly nervous about their presence. For one thing, he claimed (as he often does) that the phenomena like to hide and that attempts to capture them will likely either reduce them or snuff them out altogether. Robert and I assured Kai, as we had done many times before, that it was better to record modest phenomena under good conditions than florid phenomena under poor conditions. Kai said he understood, and I’m quite sure he did (the point is not difficult to grasp). But Kai was also concerned that the cameras might be turned on accidentally or surreptitiously, as had happened with Peter Mulacz’s infrared camcorder during our initial investigation of the FEG (see Braude 2014). So, to calm Kai down, Robert covered the cameras with a black cloth and kept them turned off. Our plan was that if good phenomena occurred and Kai was prepared to experiment, we’d turn the cameras on later, and in the meantime simply accept the fact that Kai needed to get accustomed to the presence of low- light-sensitive cameras. We didn’t like the fact that this left us only two more opportunities to get the video footage we’d hoped for. And Kai had already conceded that the longer we waited to get such footage, the more pressure he’d feel at the later séances. Still, Kai was not ready to begin with the cameras turned on and uncovered.

So, after dinner with Kai and Julia it took about an hour to clear the room. Kai’s standard black cloth “cabinet” routinely hangs toward the back of the room, and we removed both it and other pieces of unnecessary furniture. The chair that had been in the cabinet (the standard resting place of focus objects like a tambourine) remained, and a large circular drum

(diameter approximately 18 in) was placed against the chair legs, leaning somewhat precariously (see Figure 2).

Robert, Leslie, and I checked the room thoroughly. We unlocked and removed the tape from the various windows, and determined that there was nothing behind them but Styrofoam, and certainly no hidden devices. Robert and I also toured the various nearby rooms of the basement, confirming there was no access from those rooms to the séance area. Robert video recorded these tours as well as my inspection of the séance room. We also inspected the séance table, looking carefully underneath. There was certainly no hidden contraption or anything else suspicious. Finally, I locked the door leading upstairs to the rest of the house, and we also locked the door leading to the laundry room.

Elke was disappointed to learn that I wanted to exclude her from this séance, because I wanted to keep the number of sitters to a minimum. Kai was disappointed as well, though he shouldn't have been surprised, and he was wary of our desire to remove the cabinet curtain from the room, claiming that its presence helped concentrate the energy. I promised to bring it back if we obtained no results, in the belief that video documentation could show conclusively that no previously hidden contraption that could levitate the table emerged from the cabinet.

Sitters clockwise from Kai were Leslie, Robert, Jochen, SB, and Julia (who, as usual, operated the CD player and red light).

Séance #2 was in two parts. The first was rather unimpressive; Kai had tired during the hour's wait to set up the room, and his initial enthusiasm and energy seemed to have abated somewhat. Still, we had three full levitations in darkness, preceded by fewer than the usual amount of table movements—



Figure 2. Circular drum (and other “focus” objects) arrangement for Séance #2.

the table just started to rise without the customary strong preamble. The levitations ranged from 3 to 6 sec, and from 6 in to 12 or 15 in. After the levitations, Kai had Julia immediately turned up the red light to show that Julia and Leslie were controlling Kai's hands and resting their feet on his feet. Of course, that doesn't tell us where those limbs were immediately prior to the turning on of the light, but Leslie was controlling Kai the entire time and was able to state that Kai's left hand and foot hadn't moved under her right hand and foot.

After the break there were two strong levitations and more vigorous table movements than we enjoyed in the earlier part of the séance. On two occasions the table rocked quite violently to my left and right, each time lifting two legs high off the ground and then returning to the ground with great force and a loud plastic thud against the laminate floor. The last of these table-leg-banging events seemed to signal the end of the evening's session; at least that's how Kai understood it.

For Levitation #4, the table slowly rose as high as 24 in, the whole event lasting perhaps 10 sec. It occurred in stages, initially rising about half that distance and then—when I thought the event had reached its peak—rising the rest of the way. Levitation #5 was another “swimming” table event, with the table again about 2.5 ft high, dipping back and forth several times over the course of 10 to 15 sec.

At one point I saw a bright red light in the vicinity of Julia's lap. I asked her whether she had turned on a light and she said no.² Other sitters reported seeing a few lights. We also heard a strong knocking sound, which some thought came from behind me but which I thought came from the wall on my left (well beyond Julia's reach, judging by the location of her voice).

By far, the most outstanding non-levitation event was a loud whack from the drum leaning against the chair with the focus objects. The chair was out of Kai's reach, and in any case Leslie confirmed touching Kai's left leg and hand (the side closest to the drum). When the séance was over, Leslie hit the drum moderately with her hand, to see how the sound compared with what we'd heard. The resulting sound was clearly not as loud as it had been earlier, and Leslie's relatively modest pressure on the drum knocked it from its precarious upright position. Undoubtedly, a more forceful, normally produced, sound would easily have moved the drum from its position. I should add that the drum (before Leslie struck it) was positioned as it had been before the séance began. I suppose skeptics could argue that since Kai wasn't searched beforehand, he might have concealed some device on his person that could have banged the drum. But (a) Kai was wearing a short-sleeved T-shirt as usual, (b) his nearest hand and leg were controlled by Leslie (his other hand and leg were ostensibly controlled by Julia), and

(c) if the drum had been forcibly hit—in the dark—by an ordinary object capable of producing such a loud sound, why wasn't the drum knocked over or moved from its original position?

We can't also state with certainty that Kai didn't smuggle in some device, undetected in my hug-body check, that could be used to raise the table. But that supposition seems both implausible and also inadequate for explaining the types of levitations we observed. First, at least one hand and leg were controlled by Leslie (and the other by Julia). And even so, the swaying (or swimming) table would be particularly difficult to produce under the prevailing conditions. Interestingly, Robert impressed us before the séance began by demonstrating that he could raise the table fairly smoothly with his hands, so long as he could grip one table leg between his own legs. But there's no reason to think Kai did this. For one thing, the tactile and kinesthetic experience for me of Robert's lifting of the table was quite different from that of Kai's ostensibly genuine levitations. As I've noted on other occasions, the manually raised table did not feel weightless or buoyant as it moved upward. Furthermore, when the presumably genuine levitations took place, we know that Kai's legs were spread apart (this was confirmed immediately following the levitations, when Julia turned up the red lamp to illuminate hand and foot controls). I suppose Kai might have braced two table legs with his own spread knees and supported the table in that manner, but Leslie (and presumably Julia) nevertheless controlled Kai's hands and feet, and in any case Kai couldn't have made the table sway under those conditions. Leslie also confirmed that Kai didn't have any sticky substance (like resin) on his palms that could have been used to raise the table when she controlled his hand by placing her hand on top of his (with his palm faced down on the table).

Furthermore, Robert tried a little experiment of his own. While the table was aloft, he pressed down on his side of the table to see whether it would dip there, as if it was being raised by Kai from his position across from Robert. He reasoned that if Kai had been lifting the table with his hands from his side of the table, one would think that the table would yield relatively easily to Robert's applied pressure at the opposite side. But the table resisted, as if the "force" raising it was applied uniformly, or from the center of the table.

One of the persistent criticisms of Kai (especially from Peter Mulacz) is that Kai is uncooperative and that he (rather than the experimenters) specifies the séance conditions. That was clearly not the case this evening. Granted, Kai didn't let us do whatever we wanted, but we didn't expect to do everything we wanted. We recognized that Kai was already anxious, and we knew from the start that we'd probably need to tighten séance conditions

gradually. In that light, I think it's fair to say that Kai was quite cooperative. As I noted (and as we expected), he was unhappy about not having Elke or the cabinet present in the room, and he also lamented the removal of many carefully arranged accessories for his normal séances. But he understood what was at stake, and his concern seemed genuinely only to be that the phenomena would be less strong under our imposed conditions—not that no phenomena would occur. The only conditions Kai actually required were darkness and the covering of the cameras. The former is a common séance condition and no big deal, and we compensated for it to some extent with hand and leg controls. The latter request was completely unnecessary, since we weren't attempting then to record the proceedings. Instead, we were interested primarily in getting Kai more comfortable with rather Spartan séance conditions, enhanced scrutiny, and the presence (but not the activation) of cameras. In my view, Kai was needlessly paranoid about the latter condition, insisting that we cover the cameras with a black cloth, so that they wouldn't surreptitiously or accidentally record the proceedings. However, I understood that this had to do with Kai's experiences with Peter Mulacz, who had lied to him³ and violated séance protocols. So I urged Kai to overcome his fear and reminded him that I had always been honest and respectful of him and had never violated any agreements. In any case, Kai's heightened wariness, justified or not, was a notable element throughout this investigation, and it undoubtedly was an impediment to success.

I also attach little significance to the fact that Kai resisted turning on the cameras during this séance. The next two séances made clear that Kai was willing, after this period of adjustment, to permit the running of more cameras and more sensitive cameras than we'd had in Austria, and also that he was also willing to have the red light turned on—not just after the levitations began (which is what occurred in Austria), but while waiting for the phenomena to occur.

In an email to me, Kai offered various reasons for his disappointing (to him) results in Séance #2. One was his concern over the access and rights to whatever video footage we obtained, a matter which he thought had not yet been settled with Robert (although Robert and I thought the matter had been clarified). Another was the concern over hidden filming, a fear Kai placed fully on the shoulders of Peter Mulacz.

But apparently the main issue was that Kai said he was caught up in Jochen's extreme distress over, first, the disgruntled blogger's threats to reveal Jochen's identity, and second (and more important) Jochen's concern that the blogger had accused him of covering up Kai's fraud, and then threatened to make that claim to Jochen's employer. Jochen naturally feared that this allegation, even if false, might be enough to undermine his



Figure 3. Arrangement for Séances #3 and #4. Note arrow pointing to hanging bell (top right).

pending professorship. Of course, the only reason this was even an issue for Jochen is that Jochen had felt implied pressure from his friendship with Kai not to reveal the truth about Kai's cheating with the D'Lite Flight-type device Jochen had discovered in Kai's travel bag. That put Jochen in the compromising position of having to lie to me or others in order to protect what Kai revealed in confidence to him (see my 2014 report, and the Appendix in this article). From the start, Kai should have confessed to the fraud, explained why he fell from grace, apologized, and moved on. Instead, Kai's dishonesty on this matter (and probably other matters) continued unabated. Since Michael Nahm's and my previous *JSE* reports appeared, Kai has had many opportunities to admit that he cheated with the D'Lite-type device, but he has consistently denied it. Moreover, when Robert interviewed Kai for his documentary, after our series was completed, Robert asked directly if Kai had ever used a device like the D'Lite Flight, and Kai again denied it.

Séance #3, October 6. The results of the séance this evening were disappointing but not entirely unanticipated. Robert set up two video

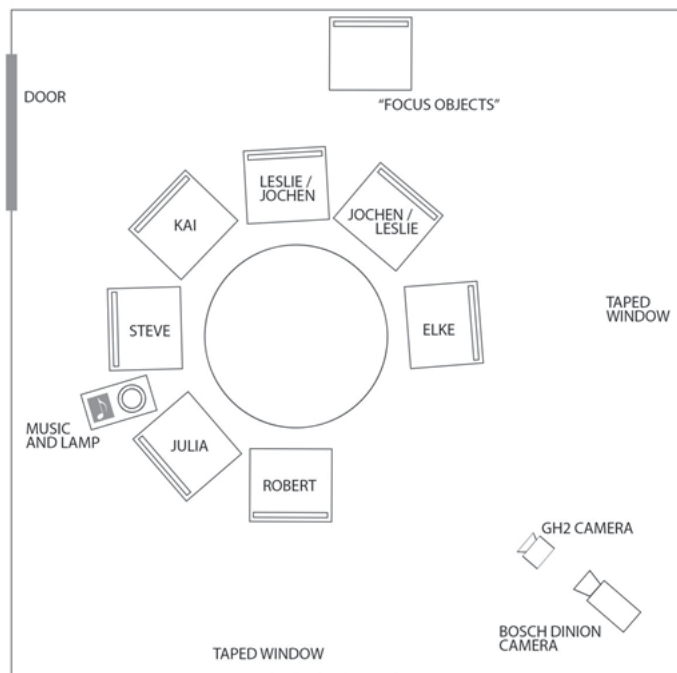


Figure 4. Diagram of room arrangement for Séances #3 and #4.

cameras: a low-light Bosch Dinion Starlight HD surveillance camera covered the tabletop and showed sitters' hands, and a hacked Panasonic Lumix GH2 captured the view under the table. We planned only on illumination from the red light next to the CD player. Despite Kai's lack of communication during the day, he apparently had been working himself into a positive mental state and seemed ready (and maybe even eager) to get results. We had agreed to have the cameras running all the while, uncovered, and Kai seemed at least cognitively (if not emotionally) to be at peace with having the cameras record so long as the room was dark. To help him get into and remain in a positive frame of mind, we allowed Elke to join us again, despite the fact that as a family member she's a natural target of suspicion, and despite the fact that the extra body around the table only increased the difficulty of obtaining a good camera angle on the proceedings. We dealt with the former issue by having Elke controlled by Jochen initially and (after a break) by Leslie. The latter issue was solved by normal hard work in setting up the cameras. Figure 3 shows the arrangement of the séance table for Séances #3 and #4. Figure 4 shows a diagram of the room and table arrangement



Figure 5. Bosch camera view of séance table. Kai (center) has his hands on the shoulders of adjacent sitters. Julia (seated to the right of the light) has her hands on my and Robert's wrists.

for those sittings. Figure 5 shows the clarity obtained with the Bosch camera, and also shows Kai (center) with his hands on the shoulders of adjacent sitters, something he did often during the séance. Figure 6 shows a synchronized split view with the two cameras.

Sitters clockwise from Kai were Leslie, Jochen (they switched positions after the break), Elke, Robert, Julia, and SB. Both Julia and Kai cooperated fully throughout the séance. Julia offered no resistance to being moved away from Kai and seated on the opposite side of the light and CD player, and she insisted throughout on placing her hands during the séance on the hands or arms of her adjacent sitters (Robert and me). Kai likewise remained in contact with me throughout—his right leg touching my left leg (and often his knee pressing firmly onto my leg), and his right hand either next to or atop my left hand, or else on my shoulder. Leslie informed me that Kai did the same (on his left) for her, in the first half of the séance.

The table began to shudder even before we had officially started the séance—simply when we started placing our hands on the table. So it appeared that we were poised for serious action. However, although we got some vigorous and dramatic table tilting (the table even fell over on its side on two occasions), we got no levitations, and the phenomena pretty much dwindled after about 15 min. During some of the table tilting, the table remained quite still in a tilted position—on one occasion for about 10 sec, and on another for about 14 sec before falling over. Video shows how



Figure 6. Synchronized split view from the two cameras during a table tilt. Kai's hands rest on the slightly raised hands of adjacent sitters.



Figure 7. Split view of extreme table tilt. The table remained in this position for 10 sec before moving farther in the same direction and then falling over.



Figure 8. Split view from 8 sec after that in Figure 7. The video makes clear that Robert's right hand is actually off the table (not pushing it).

little contact Kai had with the table on those occasions—see, e.g., Figure 7 and Figure 8. At one point we took a 5-min break, hoping to have a return to dramatic table movements, but the second half of the séance was largely uneventful. Kai repeatedly addressed the “spirit control” as if it was an entity (other than himself) that feared the presence of the camera. Over and over he shouted “the cameras don’t record in the dark.” Of course, one has to wonder if Kai was reminding himself of this.

I think it's fair to say that Kai's willingness to work with cameras in Germany exceeded what he had allowed previously in Austria, where we had to wrestle with him to use even one camera. Here, in Séance #2, he allowed them to be set up in the room, ostensibly ready to use if the spirit control agreed, even though their presence worried him. In Séance #3, Kai arrived seemingly at peace with (and possibly almost enthusiastic about) the idea of having two cameras running all the while. Now the sinister interpretation of this would be that, since the sessions were held in the usual bomb-shelter location rather than a neutral location as in Austria, Kai had ample time to rig the location. On the other hand, we looked over the location very carefully before each séance, and we found no device on Kai or in the basement that could have produced the most dramatic table movements or the drum thwack.

Séance #4, October 8. This was our final séance. Leslie, Robert, and I arrived at 7 p.m., again searched the séance room and surrounding rooms carefully, and again determined that there was no possibility of an accomplice entering the séance room or any apparatus for raising tables present. Then, to give some encouragement to Kai, we added the cabinet back into the séance room, at its usual place next to one of the walls (and searched the cabinet carefully). Robert also added a GoPro4 action camera to the two cameras used in the previous séance. Once everyone appeared, I as usual locked the doors leading to the outside, and kept possession of the removable key leading from the basement to the front door. Jochen, Kai, and Julia appeared in the basement at about 8 p.m. Jochen was agitated by a discouraging talk with Michael Nahm earlier in the day, concerning Jochen's role in the FEG sittings and the possibility of his being a co-conspirator in Kai's fraud. But I urged Jochen to try to hide his feelings, so as not to pollute what we'd hoped would be Kai's positive state of mind. Overall, I'd say that Jochen did this fairly effectively. Still, he was feeling overwhelmed and undoubtedly somewhat distracted by the recent assaults on his character and the threats by the disgruntled blogger to harm him professionally. So I don't think we can rule out that Kai was sensitive enough to pick up on some of this.

It was hard to gauge Kai's state of mind when he arrived. He seemed positive, but subdued and low energy—ostensibly from lack of sleep, but no doubt also from increased anxiety and lack of confidence. He kept singing to himself prior to our sitting around the table (and even as we sat around the table), as though he was making an effort not to think about his worries over obtaining good video. Although the séance had some intriguing moments, it can't be rated as a success, and Kai struck me once again as being relatively low in energy and enthusiasm throughout the proceedings.

Sitters clockwise from Kai: Leslie, Jochen, Elke, Robert, Julia, SB. Apart from one table levitation and a mysterious exploding sound from the table toward the end of our session (more on that below), perhaps the most interesting features of the session were psychodynamic. The session began, as before, with strong movements, but nothing special emerged from them. After a break, when it seemed as if we were likely to have an uneventful séance and the table movements were slight, I suggested, in the spirit of Batcheldorian frivolity (Batcheldor 1984, Isaacs 1984), that we concentrate less on making the table do something dramatic, and simply redirect our attention elsewhere. I suggested whimsically, in particular, that we talk about the weather. Almost immediately, the table responded with more vigorous movements, as if it was glad for the relief from such unrelenting earnestness. And that led Robert, Leslie, and Jochen to join me in making jokes or comments about different kinds of weather, shouting out what kind of weather we should discuss: thunder, lightning, floods, monsoons, hail, etc. While we did that, the table continued to respond strongly. But Kai seemed unable or unwilling to enter into the spirit of the moment (I also think neither Julia or Elke participated in the frivolity; I could hear my neighbor Julia continuing to sing softly to the music). Instead, he kept invoking the spirit control to make the table move. Then, continuing in this frivolous vein, I suggested we tell jokes, and I rattled off a few jokes. Again, the table seemed to like the playful atmosphere. In fact, our one brief levitation, lasting about 3 sec and rising about 1 ft, occurred during this period. But although Kai laughed at the jokes, he never really joined in or supported the effort to be less serious and less focused on success.

Why was that? One plausible hypothesis is that Kai, who is invested both psychologically and financially in his role as a promoter of spiritism, felt and disliked the fact that success under these Batcheldorian conditions of distraction implied that his own role (or that of the spirits) was not as crucial as he'd like to think. And that might have been exacerbated by Robert's chiming in approvingly when I noted that this seemed to confirm Batcheldor's views. Or, perhaps Kai was simply too anxious to succeed. After all, a blank séance would undoubtedly have encouraged some to argue that Kai could only fraudulently produce phenomena under conditions of his own choosing.

Often, during the séance, the table's movements were short and jerky, but strangely forceful, as though the table movements had great energy behind them but not enough or the right kind to break the table free from its location, or even result in the more usual circular movements and banging of legs against the ground. Then, toward the end of the evening, during another period of relative calm from the table, there came an exceptionally

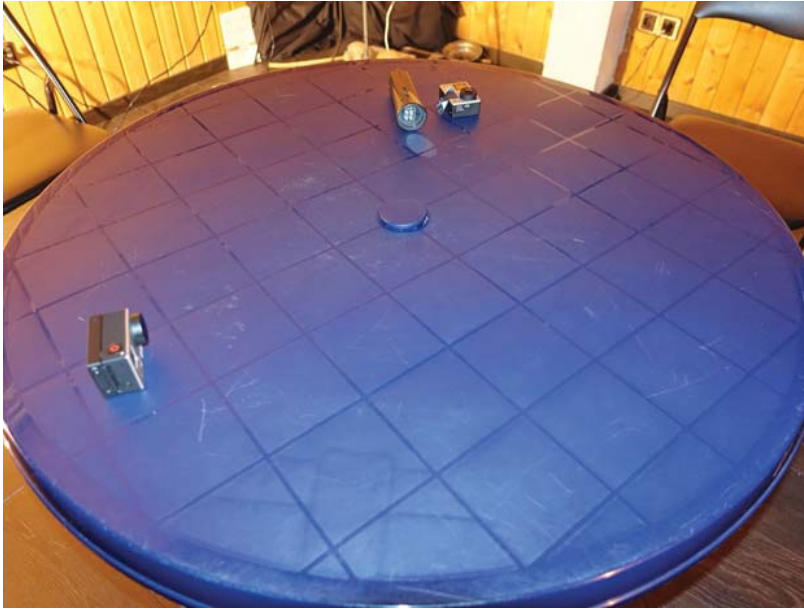


Figure 9. Raised center portion of séance table. Pushed up after the séance for illustration.

sharp and loud sound, and shock wave, seemingly from inside the table, like a kind of explosion but with a very short envelope (i.e. attack and decay). The event apparently startled and frightened us all. I'm quite certain Kai played no role in this. My left leg was touching his right leg (indeed, the two of us were crammed into very close contact to allow for a good camera view of the table), and my left arm was in contact with Kai's right elbow and forearm. Leslie reports similar contact with Kai's left side. Then, as we felt along the table to see what might have happened to it, I noticed that the round center piece (which could be removed for an umbrella to be inserted) had been raised upward (see Figure 9). I tried to push it back down and found that it fit very tightly and could be returned to its original position only with difficulty. I then tried pushing it back up from underneath, and that too required several attempts and some effort. I also confirmed, from photos taken before the séance, that the center piece had been flush with the table top prior to the séance. Our instinctive impression of this event was that the table, which had been moving fitfully and continually all evening, but which had levitated only once, and briefly at that, had built up a great deal of energy that needed to be released somehow. The sound and shock

wave, indeed, seemed to issue directly from within the table, as if some force had exploded there and that the release of energy and vibration within the table pushed the center piece upward.

I should add that Julia's left hand, all the while, was on my right hand, and that Jochen was in contact with Elke. Leslie reports that although she was sitting close to Jochen and had occasional physical contact, she was not controlling him. Now, for those who think (stupidly, in my opinion) that Jochen is a co-conspirator and can't be trusted, I should add that to manually move that center piece upward required a kind of push from below that, even if it could be accomplished quickly in one rapid movement (contrary to what I experienced when trying to move it), it would not have made the kind of sharp, explosive sound that we heard. It would presumably also have required a kind of lucky pinpoint precision of attack that's very difficult (if not impossible) to execute in the dark. Similarly, that explosive and very loud sound would not be produced merely from a forceful thwack on the underside of the table, or a bang administered to the top of the table. Simply forcefully hitting the table abruptly, either from above or below, would have produced a much different kind of sound, a thinner and characteristic timbre of striking a plastic object, not the sharp, explosive blast that we heard. Also, a blow from below would have forced the table upward. But the table was still when the sound occurred, and the only movement of the table during the explosion was its sudden, intense, and brief vibration, not a movement upward. And all this happened within the table top, not in the table's legs, and not in the contact between the table's legs and the laminate floor. In any case, the table legs are covered with a soft material to facilitate sliding around the floor; their hitting the floor simply could not have made a sharp sound.

This event was clearly reminiscent of the famous exploding sound from Freud's bookcase when he and Jung were arguing. Many interpret that latter event as a symbolic (and I'd say psychokinetically mediated—see Braude 2007: Chapter 7) representation of the intense clash between the two men. Similarly, no doubt there was a great deal of tension in the séance room—certainly on Kai's part, however much it might have been veiled by Kai's rather unconvincing and low-energy displays of optimism and enthusiasm. In fact, Kai frequently expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the spirit control for not providing more impressive phenomena. Jochen, too, was tense over the threats to his professional advancement from the disgruntled blogger, and no doubt all sitters were anxious simply because this was our last chance for success.

One final comment about the exploding sound. It wouldn't be surprising if séance raps exhibit anomalous characteristics similar to those Barrie

Colvin found in connection with poltergeist raps (Colvin 2010). We have not yet had the opportunity to see if we can separate out the exploding sound from the background music and conversation. However, when or if that effort succeeds, Robert and I will pursue the matter.

Discussion

At this point in the history of psi research it's inexcusably naïve to think that the experimenter's state of mind (or personality) is irrelevant to the outcome of an experiment. Experimenters aren't simply passive observers, and experimenter effects of various kinds are well-known in the behavioral sciences generally (see, e.g., my Editorials in *JSE* Volumes 23(3) and 27(2)). My remarks so far on the psychodynamics of this October 2015 series have focused primarily on Kai's and Jochen's states of mind. But the attitudes of Robert, Leslie, and myself were undoubtedly a crucial ingredient as well, and they deserve additional comments.

When Robert, Michael Nahm, and I carried out our 2013 tests with Kai, we were optimistic about the prospects for success and reasonably confident in Kai as a trustworthy collaborator who understood and shared our goals of documenting his phenomena under the best controls possible. But a great deal happened, and happened quickly, once Nahm and I started to prepare our subsequently published *JSE* reports on those séances. First (as noted above), compelling evidence surfaced of Kai's cheating on some previous occasions, and that naturally cast a long shadow over the Austrian investigations. Then, because Kai responded badly to these revelations and the doubts that arose in their wake, distrust and hostility among various formerly cordial collaborators became a more prominent part of the emotional background.

It was some time before things calmed down to a point where it was feasible to discuss holding further tests. Even so, it was no longer possible to recapture the earlier state of optimism and enthusiasm. And although Kai realized that the purpose of the proposed new investigation was to demonstrate more clearly than before that at least some of his phenomena were indisputably genuine, negotiations for arranging the new tests were often tense and required revisiting many of the painful exchanges, charges, and counter-charges of the previous months. Robert, Leslie, and I spent a great deal of time trying to assure Kai that we were not out to sabotage him à la Mulacz, denounce him in the way he felt Nahm had been doing, or simply put him in a position where he could only look worse for trying to cooperate with us. So as the time approached for our visit to Hanau, I think it's fair to say that Robert and I were somewhat fatigued from the effort of trying to make Kai feel more secure and positive, and that we

were not very positive ourselves about the prospects of improving on the documentation achieved in the 2013 Austrian sessions. We (and also Leslie) were genuine in our expressions of confidence that we'd get some good table levitations—and indeed, we got some very interesting and impressive ones. But we were also candid with Kai concerning our uncertainty—which Kai shared—about improving on the Austrian table levitation video. We all knew that the psychological environment for the occasion was badly polluted—if only because of the attacks on Kai and Jochen, never mind how the investigators themselves felt about it. That's why we took pains to assure Kai that failure to improve on our earlier results wouldn't necessarily look bad for him and require publishing a critical report.

So even though my team expected to have tables levitate for us, the fact remains that we were not nearly as excited and optimistic as my Austrian team had been two years earlier. Indeed, thanks to the convincing revelations about Kai's cheating in séances not supervised by me, our confidence in Kai and his mediumship had inevitably been eroded, and we were less inclined to put a positive or sympathetic spin on actions or statements that were at least superficially suspicious (e.g., Kai's explanation of why he could hold a séance only every other day). Undoubtedly we wondered whether we were wasting our time and money on this investigation.

Now, Kai is both very intelligent and also very sensitive. Of course, he was aware of many of these feelings, and of course that residue of mutual under-the-surface mistrust, pessimism, and lack of enthusiasm would likely have a stifling effect on the proceedings. But then we must concede that the somewhat disappointing results of this series of séances needn't reflect negatively on Kai. We were investigating the phenomena in his repertoire that are most likely to be genuine (and which I continue to believe are genuine). But there's no reason to think that Kai can produce them easily no matter how psychologically repressive the situation might be. And it's doubtful—or at least an open question—whether we can ever return to something close to the state of grace needed to obtain further convincing documentation of Kai's phenomena generally or table levitations specifically.

Conclusion

Although we did not meet our original goal of improving on the video documentation from Austria, we obtained phenomena that, under the conditions of the séance, remain difficult to dismiss. These include the “swimming” levitated table, the ringing of the bell behind and above my head while Julia's and Kai's locations (determined by touch and voice) were clearly far away, the loud bang on the drum (out of Kai's reach), and the explosion from the table in the final séance. These events, in my view,

reinforce the conclusion reached in my 2014 report—namely, that despite the cloud of suspicion generated by confirmed cheating in the past, some of Kai’s phenomena seem quite clearly to be genuine.

I also believe it should be noted again how cooperative (even if unhappy) Kai was about some of the test conditions, how anxious he was over success, and how sensitive he was to the various stresses both he and Jochen felt from recent attacks. It’s also worth reiterating that in both our 2013 Austrian sessions and the recent séances in Hanau, Kai has been willing to conduct table séances under conditions he dislikes, including a few that even some of the least controversial mediums agreed were probably unfavorable to the phenomena. After all, there are still many unknowns about what makes mediums tick and why or when various situations suppress or facilitate the phenomena. Furthermore, these sessions reinforce what most veteran investigators of mediums know already—namely, that navigating the psychodynamics of mediumistic investigations is a complex and often tricky business, and that taking such matters seriously is the only way to advance beyond mere proof of the phenomena to an understanding of why they occur (or fail to occur) and why they take certain forms rather than others. They may also lend support to the view that the medium’s beliefs, or general state of mind—and also that of the sitters—may be more of an impediment to success than the tightness of the controls.

Appendix: Kai and the D’Lite-Type Device

What follows may be more detail than some readers care to know. But I believe it’s important to lay out certain matters for the record. There are two primary reasons for this. The first is to clarify and affirm, as much as possible, Jochen’s integrity and credibility as a member of my investigative team. Because Jochen had revealed to only a few people what he knew about Kai’s cheating in Koblenz (Germany), some felt that he might have been unduly influenced by Kai to remain silent on that matter. And if that was the case, then those individuals might also wonder whether Jochen was either a party to or at least unjustifiably silent about other instances of fraud. The second reason is to help clarify whether Kai merits further attention from serious investigators, even if some, or many, of his phenomena are genuine. These two objectives can be addressed together.

First, I should remind readers of what I reported in my 2014 paper on the FEG. When I initially asked Jochen directly whether Kai had cheated during the Koblenz séances, Jochen struggled to respond, clearly unsure what to say. However, it was easy to figure out what was behind Jochen’s uncharacteristic struggle to produce a simple sentence. I inferred that Kai had confessed to Jochen while also making it clear somehow to him that this

revelation was to be kept confidential, thereby placing Jochen in a morally untenable position about what to say to others (including friends, like me) about what happened in Koblenz. Then, when I confronted Kai over Skype video about this, Kai for the first time in our many conversations couldn't look me in the eye (so to speak). I told Kai why, on the basis of my talk with Jochen, I now knew he'd cheated. Now if Kai had felt my inference was unwarranted, he could easily have challenged it; indeed, he should have done so. But instead, he hemmed and hawed, without directly admitting guilt, apologizing repeatedly and mentioning several times how there's a difference between public demonstrations and scientific investigations. While this was not a direct confession, I considered it then (and still do) to be functionally equivalent to one—a clear tacit confession.

During this time, I understood and sympathized with Jochen's own struggle about whether, how, or when to publicly answer questions about this incident. For one thing, although Jochen's role had been initially and primarily that of an investigator, he believed that over the years Kai had become a friend. And although he was deeply disturbed by his discovery that Kai had cheated on at least the occasion in question, he still felt the tug of protecting a confidence revealed by a presumed friend. He also didn't want to risk losing contact with a person whom he still felt produced at least some genuine phenomena worthy of study (especially those associated with table séances). In his mind, he had several conflicting *prima facie* obligations, one of which was to science—namely, to study phenomena that promised to reveal important aspects of the working of Nature. After all, Jochen is a scientist himself, and an exceptionally well-informed student of the mediumistic literature. He knows very thoroughly the history of so-called “mixed mediumship,” and he understands (as, e.g., in the case of Eusapia Palladino), how convincing evidence of large-scale PK phenomena can be obtained under good conditions even with mediums who have definitely tried cheating on other occasions.

I understood Jochen's dilemma; in fact, I was in a somewhat similar position myself. Once Jochen told me the whole story, I could have been more outspoken, not just about Kai's cheating, but about the callous way he was willing to sacrifice Jochen's reputation to protect his own.⁴ But I too felt that it was premature to abandon study of Kai, and I too didn't feel it was necessary to act at that point. In particular, some of the object movements occurring at a distance from Kai while I was controlling all his limbs I believe continue to challenge the skeptic. Similarly, in my view, some of the results I'd obtained in Austria with Kai had not been explained away satisfactorily (as I discussed in detail in my 2014 report). So I felt it was still worth trying to improve on the quality of documentation secured in

the Austrian séances (at least to give it one last shot). That's precisely why I returned to Hanau (Germany) to work with Kai again.

So for the record, and for the sake of Jochen's reputation, it needs to be made clear that soon after Nahm's and my *JSE* papers appeared, Jochen did report what he knew to various investigators, including both Nahm and me. Although he was initially in an understandable quandary about how to handle Kai's confession, Jochen was neither complicit in the fraud nor determined to keep the matter a secret. He also sent Nahm his sequences of suspicious photos from the Koblenz séances, which Nahm then (and with Jochen's permission) forwarded to me. However, because he didn't want to be cut off from Kai's inner circle and still hoped to observe and investigate the séance phenomena he still believed might be genuine, Jochen withheld his discovery of Kai's cheating from some of Kai's key sponsors and advocates. I firmly believe that Jochen's choice here is defensible, even if ultimately counterproductive. Moreover, he felt that since I had explained convincingly in my 2014 report why I knew Kai had used the D'Lite-type device, the truth was out there (at least for the world at large, if not for Kai's uncritical believers). So although Jochen planned eventually to go on record publicly about what he knew, there was no present urgency to do anything more. The only question for him was a matter of timing: when to finally brace himself for the predictable backlash from Kai for providing explicit testimony.

But it's time for that testimony to see the light of day. Because I had wanted to be absolutely certain about the way the relevant events unfolded, on October 22, 2015, Jochen sent me the following statement describing what occurred.

The first time I saw the flashing red spirit light phenomenon I felt uncomfortable with it and immediately considered it to be suspicious. This "spirit light" looked very different from those I had witnessed during several previous séances around the table, rather than at cabinet sittings. At Kai's table séances, the shape, brightness and local appearance of the lights vary considerably, and they also seem to be both elusive and (perhaps most important) outside Kai's radius of action. In comparison to these, the "spirit light" in Koblenz with its red flashing appearance looked like an electrically driven one controlled by Kai within the cabinet. My skeptical concerns were further substantiated after I took a series of photos of Kai and the moving red light.

So I decided to look into Kai's travel bag after a séance in Koblenz. I expected to find a device in case the "spirit light" was mechanically produced. And indeed I found a boxed device with a light-emitting diode at the end of a very thin wire attached to a fake thumb. I was totally shocked and rushed out of Kai's room. The next day I searched the Internet and found a magi-

cian's prop, which is commercially available for everyone and which looks very similar to the gimmick I detected. It is called the D'Lite Flight (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZfnjSbbU2g>).

Unfortunately I didn't take a photo of the device in the travel bag. But I confronted Kai with what I had discovered, and he denied ever using such a trick.

Nevertheless, I tried to find out myself whether this gimmick could explain the suspicious-looking flashing red-light effect which I saw at the end of the cabinet séance. As I wanted to find out how it could have been naturally done, I looked for the wire, the "thumb," or the LED light during later séances, but I could not detect anything. The red light reappeared only once or twice again (as far as I remember) in my presence, this time under very poor conditions of observation. Thus I was not able to figure out whether and how Kai might have fraudulently produced it. I also took a closer look at the series of photos I had taken, but I didn't see anything clearly demonstrating the use of the prop, like the wire, despite the fact that the red-light effect still looked very suspicious. I realize in retrospect that it was my mistake that I didn't notice Kai's thumb movements and also that I didn't enhance the photo series. Fortunately, I later sent the series to Michael Nahm, who instantly noticed in the unedited photo series how the movement of the light corresponded to the movement of Kai's thumb. [This was revealed even more clearly after Nahm enhanced the photos—SB.]

After Nahm showed me that Kai's thumb was indeed moving on these photo series in accordance with the movements of the red light, I confronted Kai again, asking him whether he used the D'Lite-type device and insisting that he tell me the truth because of compelling evidence of fraud. This time he admitted he had indeed used the device I found in his travel bag, and he said several times that he'd made a mistake in doing so. He also told me that he'd hidden the device on the shelves behind the cabinet, which he could reach from within its curtains. He apologized to me for having done this, and I felt pressured by him not to mention it to anyone.

While the present report was in preparation, I felt that the right thing to do would be to inform Kai about the impending appearance of Jochen's statement. Jochen and I had no wish to harm Kai personally, and indeed we both not only forgave him but also still believed that some of his phenomena merited further study. My goal in informing Kai was to give him fair warning, and to encourage him to do the right thing, demonstrate some integrity, admit his mistake, and apologize. I told him that in the past his efforts to try to defend himself against charges of fraud had only made him look less credible. I suggested instead that he follow the lead of many other public figures who've been caught in some kind of scandal by displaying some openness and contrition, and thereby presenting themselves sympathetically to the world. I reminded him that mediums (like all of us) are human and have frailties, fears, lapses of judgment, and other

weaknesses, and I suggested that his own errors could be forgiven if only he'd admit them, accept responsibility for his mistakes, and pledge to do better in the future. After all, and in sharp contrast to Kai, Eusapia Palladino candidly admitted that she'd cheat if given the chance, and investigators simply went with it and tried not to give her the chance! Of course, Eusapia (unlike Kai) didn't adopt the posture of a guru and proclaim herself to be a messenger of great spiritistic truths. Perhaps that's why Kai has not sought forgiveness or redemption. Despite many opportunities to come clean, he's consistently and dishonestly proclaimed his innocence.

Unfortunately, after telling me—in very carefully chosen words—that he simply couldn't admit he'd cheated (which, I remind you, is not at all the same thing as denying that he cheated), Kai contacted Jochen, and from what Jochen later told me about that conversation, I gathered that Kai had badgered and bullied—or otherwise tried to manipulate—him to retract his statement, in part by making him feel guilty about destroying his long friendly relationship with Kai and Kai's family. Apparently in his conversation with Jochen, and certainly during my Skype session with Kai in which I told him about Jochen's impending statement in the *JSE*, Kai was clearly concerned solely with saving his own hide. He expressed no concern for the way Jochen had suffered from keeping largely silent about the D'Lite-type device. Reprehensibly, Kai even told me that Jochen had no legitimate reason to feel any pressure from the attacks on his character or professional life.

The emotional strain from all this was temporarily too much for Jochen to bear, and he said that he needed to cut himself off from all things FEG-related. So from late October 2015 until February 2016 I had no contact at all with Jochen. I can report now that Jochen has voluntarily broken the silence, to let me know that he understands and accepts my obligation to present the facts he had previously revealed only to a select few. I should add that I'm also happy to do what I can to set the record straight about Jochen and to help remove whatever cloud of suspicion might hang over him in the minds of some who follow the adventures of the FEG.

As for Kai, I suppose some will wonder whether he's simply a good medium who will cheat or has cheated on occasion (either out of necessity or convenience), or whether his character is more thoroughly corrupt. If the former, then like Eusapia, Kai should be manageable if case investigators want to study the FEG phenomena further. But what about the latter option? Granted, because of Kai's disregard of, and apparent manipulation and bullying of Jochen, some may want to impugn Kai's character generally. But of course there's no reason to think that good psychics can't have character flaws, or (like most people) behave badly and strike back when

feeling threatened. My own view is that no matter what one's opinion may be of Kai's personality or behavior, the fact remains that he can produce impressive phenomena that are often difficult to attribute to fraud, and he's shown that he can be cooperative, at least so long as he feels it's in his interest. Accordingly, I'm not prepared to recommend a hands-off policy. Indeed, I'd gladly work with him again.⁵ But the psychological background and conditions of observation would have to be considerably better than they were this time in Hanau. And that, for now at least, seems quite unlikely.⁶

Notes

- ¹ Nahm, however, felt certain that nearly all Kai's phenomena had been faked.
- ² Of course, I can't say that Julia had no access to an LED device. But I make no claims for the authenticity of this or any of the other observed lights. I merely note that they were observed, and neither Kai nor Julia seemed particularly concerned about them either. They certainly made no effort to call our attention to them. I can add that throughout the series of séances, Julia's behavior seemed exemplary, especially during the last two sittings where her neighbors remained in bodily contact with her while the phenomena occurred.
- ³ And even admitted it (Mulacz 2015).
- ⁴ One could equally criticize Kai's behavior toward Michael Nahm, who (on December 18, 2014) informed the members of Robin Foy's forum "Physical Mediumship for You" (PM4U) about Kai's confession to Jochen. He did this to counter Kai's repeated assertions on his blog and elsewhere that the red "spirit light" (i.e. produced by the D'Lite-type device) was genuine and that Nahm's claims to the contrary were false. Kai's consistent tactic has been to accuse Nahm of maliciously spreading lies, and shortly after Nahm posted his message Foy uncritically (and, indeed, quite foolishly and without investigating the matter further himself) banned Nahm from PM4U. See Nahm (2016) in this issue.
- ⁵ I realize, of course, that Kai's enthusiasm for working again with me may be, let's say, more muted, now that he finds it convenient to portray me as someone who wants to ruin his career. But as Kai knows, I've been one of his staunchest defenders in the face of serious and sometimes well-founded charges against him. For example, I wrote a stinging rebuke of Mulacz's irrelevant and irresponsible article on the FEG (Mulacz 2015). See my letter in *Paranormal Review* 75(Summer 2015:36) in 2015. In fact, as I've made quite clear in everything I've written about Kai since the revelations about his cheating came to light, I don't consider the fact of Kai's having cheated earlier, in séances I didn't supervise, to be of

much significance. True, it forces us to focus more on the extent of Kai's cheating, and that remains a valid concern. Since Kai learned and used at least one magic trick, we have no choice but to consider how many others he might have in his repertoire (and use with impunity in darkness). But of course, any competent investigator of physical mediums needs to focus on the possibility of fraud anyway, if only to deflect the inevitable and distracting glib criticisms from those who want simply to debunk the phenomena no matter what. At any rate, in addition to the intriguing events reported in this paper, I continue to maintain that our Austrian sessions in 2013 produced some results that have not been satisfactorily explained away, and which are not tarnished by what Kai did with the D'Lite-type device. That's been my position all along, and I still await an adequate normal explanation of Kai's object movements across the room when he's under competent 4-limb control (e.g., as described in my previous *JSE* report, which also included some control of Julia).

- ⁶ This research was supported by a generous grant from the Parapsychological Association's Gilbert Roller fund. I'm grateful also to Robert Narholz, Leslie Kean, Loyd Auerbach, Rosemarie Pilkington, and Michael Nahm for helpful comments on ancestors of this report.

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