

# SARAH TYLER-WALTERS TRANCE MEDIUM

## Exploring the Mysteries of Trance Cabinets

by Sarah Tyler-Walters

At The College of Psychic Studies, several photographs of the rooms, particularly those on the top floor, offer a glimpse into their historical use, such as Harry Prices's laboratory, where a trance cabinet was a common sight.

A student asked me about one of the photographs and what the large curtained-off area was for. I explained it was a trance cabinet or a variation of one. This led to the obvious question: 'What was that, and what was it used for?'

A trance cabinet is used with trance and physical mediumship.

### **What is a trance cabinet?**

Practically, a trance cabinet is a large cabinet where the medium sits. It can have three sides and a lid with curtains down the front. Alternatively, it can be a corner of a room that is curtained off across the diagonally, creating an enclosed area (floor to ceiling). The cabinet, often painted black with black curtains, serves as a practical tool for spiritual practices, although historically, they were unpainted dark wood, and the curtains were mostly burgundy velvet (similar to theatre curtains).

### **What do you use a trance cabinet for?**

The cabinet, or box, is not just a physical structure. It serves a crucial role in spiritual practices by containing and enhancing energy. It acts as a vessel to hold the energy and, as such, amplifies it. Over time, the cabinet builds more and more energy, holding the trance vibration.

The cabinet also serves as a backdrop for the audience, providing a stark contrast against which the energy can be seen more clearly. This element of the cabinet's design actively engages the audience in the process of witnessing the phenomena.

Most importantly, the cabinet was used to prove that physical phenomena were created by Spirit rather than faked. In Victorian times, physical mediums were tied to a chair (wrists and ankles) and gagged and placed inside the cabinet, and the curtain would be drawn. The physical phenomena would then occur outside the

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cabinet in the room, such as sounds, voices, and apparitions. Afterwards, the curtain would be drawn to show that the medium was still bound and gagged. One famous incident included the medium's suit jacket being turned around.

When he was bound, his jacket was on the right way, but afterwards, when the curtain was pulled back, his jacket was on the wrong way round (buttons at the back) - seemingly taken off him and put back on again by Spirit whilst the curtain was drawn.

### **Are trance cabinets still used today?**

Today, physical mediumship circles and trance mediums continue to use these cabinets. They remain an invaluable tool for those developing as trance mediums, even if they are not producing phenomena. This reiteration of their contemporary use keeps the audience informed about current spiritual practices.

In fact, in late 2019, the College of Psychic Studies had a new one built for me to my specifications. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that the cabinet was stored for two years. Since 2022, I have been working to build the energy in the trance cabinet, and it is coming along nicely.

If you visit the College and take a tour, you may even see it in situ in room 403.

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