

# MAGICAL PROPS FOR CHRISTMAS PERFORMERS

BY: LEON MCBRYDE AND STEPHEN GILLHAM

INTERNATIONAL SANTA CELEBRATION

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## THIS WORKSHOP WILL DISCUSS:

TIME PERIOD: ONE HOUR

- HOW TO USE SMART PROPS AND MAGIC TO ENHANCE YOUR PERFORMANCE VALUE
- HOW TO USE MUSIC AND BLUE TOOTH TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE YOUR PERFORMANCE VALUE.
- HOW TO USE TECHNOLOGY AND TABLETS TO ENHANCE YOUR PERFORMANCE VALUE

## THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY FOR SANTA CLAUS:

In this class our goal is to open your eyes to some of the cool things we are using currently to enhance our Santa Claus performance. Many of these devices and their techniques are extremely easy and some are a little bit more technical, but all are very feasible for today's Santa. Heck, if we can do them then you can too.

First, we need a couple of definitions:

**What is Bluetooth?** - Bluetooth is wireless communication standard which allows electronic devices to connect and interact with each other. It can be found in a number of gadgets, from smartphones, to loudspeakers, to laptops and more.

**What is a Smart Prop?** – A smart prop is a device that uses technology either wired or wireless to accomplish what appears to be a perfectly normal (for Santa) or a magical event.

**What is a PA System?** - A "Public Address" *system* is anything that amplifies sound, so more people can hear it. The most basic example might be a megaphone, or single microphone and speaker, used to make someone's voice louder. These days most *PA systems* are used for music too.

**What is Royalty Free Music?** - In a nutshell **Royalty Free Music** refers to a type of **music** licensing that allows the purchaser to pay for the **music** license only once and to use the **music** for as long as desired. For example, you purchase a **Royalty Free Music** license for a video on your website. ... In fact, it simply means "**Free of Royalty**" But it's anything but free.

**What is Smart Santa?** – Smart Santa is when Santa Claus knows everything about the child by using electronic devices usually involving a hidden earpiece and an assistant telling him information on the child that has been supplied by the parents. The term Smart Santa was coined by Steve and Debra Gillham's clients asking them if they would be doing Smart Santa this year. So, it seemed like an appropriate name.

**What is a Phone App?** – Apps are programs for your phone for a custom set of wants and needs. They are easy to install and allow you to do many things you used to do on your computer but from the convenience of your Smart Phone, like controlling your music for story telling as Santa Claus. There are 1000's of Apps and some are free while others may cost. Most any app for a phone can be found for a tablet also.

## THE NUMBER ONE PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY YOU NEED:



Both Leon and I have discussed this at great length. Of all the equipment and props that we have purchased, the best and most important was our PA system. Today the PA system can be very small and easy to carry. For both of us, working as a performance-based Santa Claus, we use our PA systems almost every time we perform.

The company that both of us like for a basic affordable great sounding small PA is Mipro 101. This system weighs in at 4.8 lbs., has 45 watts of power and can play for 8 to 10 hours on battery power. We have used

this PA for up to 200 people. [http://www.proknows.com/MiPro\\_MA101\\_A\\_p/pa\\_ma101.htm](http://www.proknows.com/MiPro_MA101_A_p/pa_ma101.htm)

Uses for this PA system range from storytelling, tree lightings, parades, and even using it in reverse mode to let the parents hear what their child is saying. This is such a vital piece of equipment that both of us always carry two complete systems. Our rule is, **if a prop or piece of equipment is indispensable always buy two.** Our wives just hate that rule.

## YOU CAN START WITH:



This was one of the best ideas that Leon ever had. It's the BOSE SoundLink® Bluetooth speaker. Leon got one of these for his home but after using it and linking it by Bluetooth to his smart phone, he started thinking about Santa Claus applications. Small enough to fit in our gig bags and battery powered this device will amplify music when doing a home visit and can be carried in your bag without any one even knowing. For those tunes you like to sing, imagine having the artist version playing along with the children singing. This is perfect for small groups up to perhaps 30 children. The cost of the newer version is \$129.00 but Sam's Club is blowing out last years model for only

\$89.00 but don't wait too long or they will all be gone. Be sure to link your phone before going into the event with the children. <https://www.samsclub.com/sams/bose-soundlink-color-bluetooth-speaker/prod20642506.ip?xid=plp:product:1:1>

## ROYALTY FREE MUSIC:

While we are on the subject of PA's this would be a good time to discuss Royalty Free Music. As you will figure out, it's not free. One of the questions we hear a lot is: Can I just use any song I have downloaded as the intro or background for one of my stories? And the answer is No, it's copyright infringement. Using other people's intellectual property without their permission is copyright infringement, and that's a criminal offense. You can

always ask for permission to use the music. I once really wanted to use the song “The Bells of Christmas” by Loreena McKennitt so I asked permission to use it for my website. I wasn’t sure I would hear anything back but Ms. McKennitt, herself, wrote back and said she would have no problem with me using her song but she went on to say that she didn’t own it. Seems she sold it to the Disney Company for the movie “The Santa Clause” and she thought they might. Disney is famous for having problems with people trying to use their property. Don’t mess with Disney! Enough said.

Some of our favorite sites for getting music to use for stories and performances are:

- AUDIOJUNGLE <https://audiojungle.net/?ref=ColtForty5> Songs starting at \$6.00 each
- Audio Network <https://us.audionetwork.com/track/searchkeyword> Starting at \$9.95
- NEO Sounds <https://www.neosounds.com/> Songs starting at \$24.95 each

When you find these sites search for keywords Christmas, Fairy Tales, enchanting, story telling

### CONTROLLING YOUR MUSIC REMOTELY:



One of the best apps we know of for controlling your music with a remote is called Showcues. It’s an app you download for your phone and cost \$89.95

You can learn more about it here: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/show-cues/id525349932?mt=8>

You can control your music with a remote that can be gotten here for \$59.95

<https://www.conjuringcabinet.com/product/showcues-remote/>



The absolute best remote control device is the Audio Ape remote for \$599.00 and are here:

<https://www.audioaperemote.com/product/audio-ape-remote/> This is the remote that I use and it works like a dream. I just wish it didn’t cost so much. The package doesn’t include the phone that is in the photo and I recommend you buy an extra remote. I keep one in my pocket and one on my table. Both work the device during a show.

Of course, you can always just use your phone without a remote. Either using Bluetooth or wired. We did this for years.



## SMART SANTA

You've seen it in all the Santa Claus movies. A child walks up to Santa and he knows their name, their age, all about their family, their pets...well, you get the picture. Now through the wonders of technology this truly marvelous Christmas magic can be performed with all children by using some of the most advanced electronics and a very small ear bud.

Santa is in communication with his assistant who provides the answers to things that only the real Santa would know. The electronics are very important for this effect, but the most crucial component is your assistant. For me, this is my wife, Debra. She is my assistant and she is an absolute wonder at mingling with the parents or party goers. Through careful management and concealment, she provides me with answers to things that only Santa Claus would know. This effect can be done at large corporate parties, small and large home visits, and chair lines with children waiting to get their photos made, just about anywhere Santa goes.

Typically, it takes three "Santa Qualifiers" for a child to know that they have found the real Santa. Our favorite three "Santa Qualifiers" are: the child's name, their age, and their favorite gift that Santa brought them last year. You won't believe the reaction of the children to "Smart Santa." Bring the wonder back into your Christmas!

## THE EQUIPMENT:



*Includes Ear Buds & Microphone!*

I used this equipment for years and it works great. It's available from [http://www.proknows.com/MiPro\\_Wireless\\_Bundle\\_p/mtg-100rta.htm](http://www.proknows.com/MiPro_Wireless_Bundle_p/mtg-100rta.htm) and cost only \$550.00. This consist of one transmitter and one receiver. The transmitter is worn by your assistant and the receiver is worn by you. Santa will hear what ever his assistant tells him, but he won't be able to communicate to his assistant. Range of this is about 300 feet. It's very small and very clear.

## THE ULTIMATE SET UP FOR SMART SANTA:



This past season, because I lost the hearing in my right ear, I had to find an alternative to the system we have used for years. The Williams Sound DLT 300 Transceiver saved my Santa season. This unit is a transceiver which means that it both sends and receives information. I wore one unit and Deb worn another and we had two-way communication just like the Secret Service guys have. In fact, this device is used by the FBI as well as the characters at Walt Disney World. Cost for this system with mics and ear buds runs a total of about \$1,200.00 for everything you need. Remember it takes two. So, each individual unit is \$600.00 I bought my system from **CCI Solutions at (360) 943-5378** Be sure to ask for **Dieter** and let him know you were referred by me. He knows what you'll need.

## ULTIMATE HANDY SOUND BY: King of Magic



What a find this was! This is a sound effects device that can be programmed with ten different sound effects. The sounds are triggered by a remote-controlled switch seen in the photo with the five little gray buttons. You can load any sounds you like from the internet onto the device. The unit comes with a small round speaker that has very good sound for its size, but you can also hook this up to a small PA system or to SoundLink® Bluetooth speaker using a cable to the AUX IN on the speaker.

Imagine the sound of walking through the snow and your boots crunching with each step. Opening a door with the squeaking of a rusty hinge. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

<https://www.amazon.com/Ultimate-Handy-Sound-King-Magic/dp/B00U88357Y> Price on Amazon is \$170.22

### REMOTE SWITCH FOR TREE LIGHTINGS AND OTHER

**THINGS:** This helpful device is known by many but not utilized to its fullest advantage. Costing only \$19.98, you can control up to three devices with one remote. I use one of these for all my tree lightings. I also use this to activate a scent machine when needed and it is a wonderful device to turn on laser lights for a fairy demonstration. To find one go to Amazon and enter Wireless Remote Control Electrical Outlet Switch.



[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0087DAW46/ref=sspa\\_dk\\_detail\\_3?psc=1&pd\\_rd\\_i=B0087DAW46&pd\\_rd\\_wg=Gson7&pd\\_rd\\_r=XB85FQ9S8Y9W1ZV1X0ZG&pd\\_rd\\_w=TcomC](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0087DAW46/ref=sspa_dk_detail_3?psc=1&pd_rd_i=B0087DAW46&pd_rd_wg=Gson7&pd_rd_r=XB85FQ9S8Y9W1ZV1X0ZG&pd_rd_w=TcomC)

## RF WIRELESS VIBRATION AND BEEP TRI-MODE TRANSMITTER AND RECEIVER KIT



<http://www.carymart.com/rf-wireless-vibration-beep-trimode-transmitter-receiver-kit-p-1635.html>

This is a very helpful device that allows the parents to let you know when they are in place for different things. I originally used this for doing Sneak a Peeks, so I would know when the family was in place, but I now use it for more things and I'm finding uses every season.

It's a pocket pager. It is designed to vibrate when someone pushes the red button. So, if you are waiting to make a grand entrance, if you are waiting by the stockings in the middle of the night waiting for the family to get into place, just hand

the host or hostess the blue fob. When they are ready, a simple press of the red button on the transmitter and the white pager in your pocket vibrates. For only \$36.00 well worth the money. Extra transmitters are only \$7.00 each I keep 6 transmitters to hand out to each family for the sneak a peek. They mail them back to me after Christmas.

With only an hour for this class we have only scratched the surface of what is available and out there for the modern Santa Claus. Our hope is that we have started you thinking about the possibilities while giving you some of the tech tools that we find indispensable.

Some of our final thoughts on this subject:

1. Just because you are older doesn't mean you should stop learning. Websites such as <https://www.skillshare.com/> and <https://www.Lynda.com/> are two sites with tons of classes on everything from how to use iTunes to Photoshop. Monthly and yearly memberships will put you on the right track. "When you are green you grow and when you are ripe you rot!" Never stop growing.
2. Use Google Calendar to keep your schedule straight or a program like it.
3. Do more with your phone than just make phone calls.
4. And finally, if you just feel that this is beyond you, ask for help. There are plenty of people that will set your system up especially when they understand it for working with children.

Our Contact Information:

**Leon McBryde**  
PO Box 12  
Buchanan, VA 24066  
[Leon@proknows.com](mailto:Leon@proknows.com)

**Steve Gillham**  
5316 Elm Grove Lane  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516  
[sgillham@nc.rr.com](mailto:sgillham@nc.rr.com)