



CONFESSIONS of a **FORMER MONKEY** **MIND DOCTOR**

by Daniel Povinelli and Brandon Barker

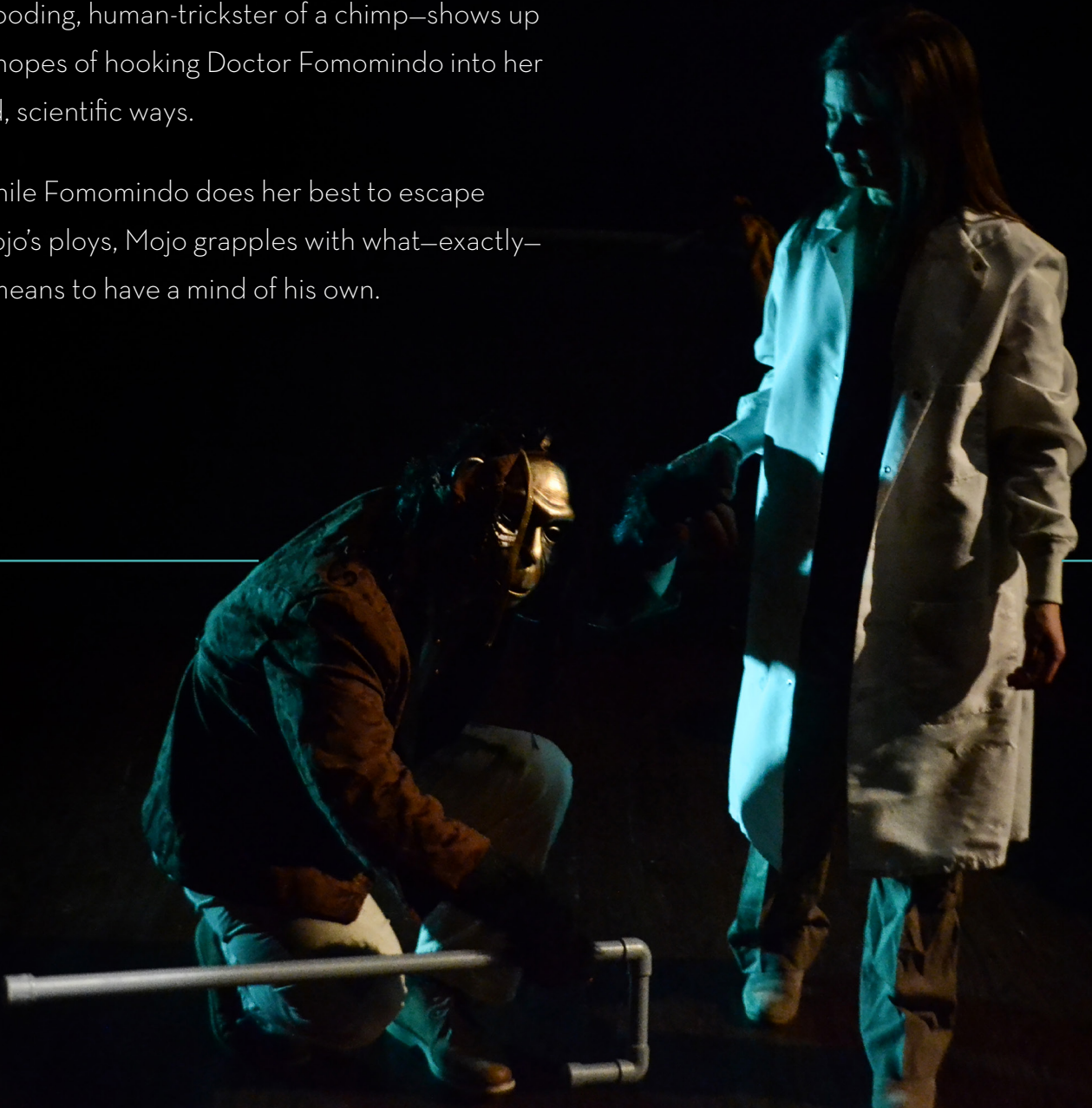
A PLAY IN TWO ACTS



A girl falls in love with chimpanzees. She spends her life studying them, trying to close the gap between humans and animals.

The girl, now Doctor Fomomindo, returns to her lab after a two-year sabbatical to say goodbye to her chimpanzees. To her surprise, Mojo—a brooding, human-trickster of a chimp—shows up in hopes of hooking Doctor Fomomindo into her old, scientific ways.

While Fomomindo does her best to escape Mojo's ploys, Mojo grapples with what—exactly—it means to have a mind of his own.



THE AUDIENCE SAYS...

“INSIGHTFUL and
HILARIOUS
ALL AT THE SAME TIME”

“AN EPIC, UNCERTAIN ENDING
that was still
DEEPLY
MOVING”

“WITTY,
ARTFUL
DIALOGUE”

“MOJO
was
AMAZING!”



“A very

FUNNY

BUT IMPORTANT
JOURNEY

THAT TURNS OUT TO BE

PROFOUNDLY
HEALING”



“A MAGICAL
DAYDREAM
TURNED
LECTURE
TURNED
BIOGRAPHY”

“COMEDICALLY
conveys a very
COMPLEX
TOPIC”





DANIEL POVINELLI

PLAYWRIGHT

Daniel grew up on the outskirts of Shreveport, Louisiana writing fiction and poetry. His childhood obsession with chimpanzees and mirrors led him to obtain his undergraduate degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1986) and his PhD from Yale University (1991), both in anthropology. For over 30 years, he has explored the similarities and differences in the intelligence of humans and other animals by studying preschool children, chimpanzees, elephants, dolphins and numerous species in places as exotic as Indonesia, Central and South America, and New Iberia, Louisiana. He is currently a playwright and a Professor of Biology at the University of Louisiana.

As a scientist, he has authored several books and over a hundred scientific papers, and regularly lectures throughout the US, Europe, and elsewhere.

He has received a National Science Foundation Presidential Young Investigator Award, the American Psychological

Association's Distinguished Award for an Early Career Contribution to Psychology, and a one million dollar James S. McDonnell Foundation Centennial Fellow prize. His research has been featured in numerous media outlets including CBS News, ABC News, NPR, BBC television and radio, PBS, as well as in several documentaries, including Martin Scorsese's *Surviving Progress*, Morgan Freeman's *Through the Wormhole*, Alan Alda's *The Human Spark*, National Geographic's *Human Ape* and *Animal Minds*, BBC/Nature's *The Monkey in the Mirror*.

Fifteen years ago, Daniel met his late mentor, Walter Brown, and steered his creative work toward theatre, seeing the unique ways that live performance can reveal what makes humans human. Since then, he has worked as an actor, director, scenic designer and playwright in both amateur and professional settings. His original full-length plays include *Before You*, *Mercy for Puppets*, *Fixing Mr. B*, *Monkey Prize* (with Brandon Barker), and *Strong Coffee: A Ten-Minute Musical in 35 Minutes* (with Claiborne Rice) as well as a collection of short plays entitled, *Perfections for Dummies*. In *Confessions*, Daniel is excited to probe the unstable, ever-shifting, and ultimately egocentric story that story-telling humans project upon the lives of other animals with whom we share this planet.



BRANDON BARKER

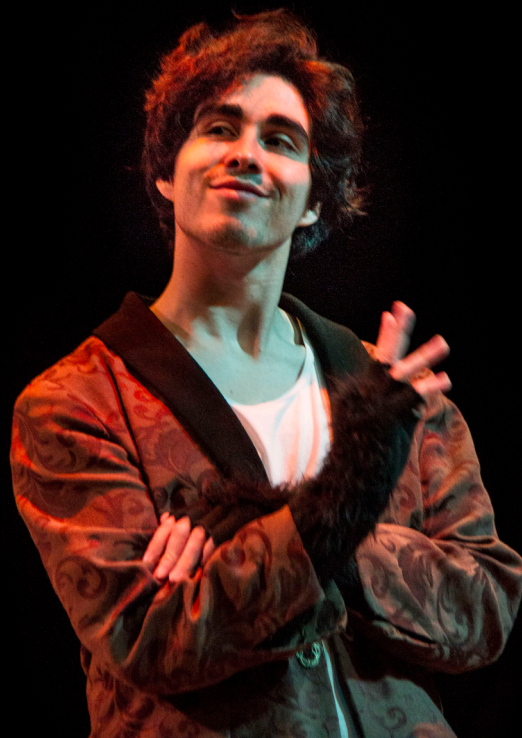
PLAYWRIGHT

Brandon Barker grew up in the rolling hills north of Nashville, Tennessee listening to Johnny Cash's *John Henry* and DeFord Bailey's *Pan American Blues*. The grandson of a Freewill Baptist preacher who married a Japanese Buddhist, Brandon was probably always going to be a folklorist. Today, he is faculty and an award-winning lecturer in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University, Bloomington. Before arriving in Bloomington, he received his PhD from the University of Louisiana in 2012.

Brandon teaches and publishes on a variety of topics ranging from the rise of the pedal steel guitar in Country Music or supernatural legends about the Bell Witch of middle Tennessee to the experimental study of perceptual illusions or the use of Aesopian fables in the science of animal cognition. You can find Brandon's scholarly works in journals and magazines, such as *Journal of American Folklore*, *Journal of Folklore Research*, *Journal of Folklore*

and *Education*, *Current Biology*, *The Psychologist*, and *Scientific American – Mind*, as well as his recent book, co-authored with Claiborne Rice, *Folk Illusions: Children, Folklore, and Sciences of Perception* (Indiana University Press, 2019). Then again, you could just listen to Hank Williams' catalog and catch most of Brandon's drift.

Brandon's creative projects manifest in a range of genres, including short stories like *Searching for Ratzinger* (Im-possible, 2018) and full-length dramas, such as *Monkey Prize*, both co-written with Daniel Povinelli. In *Confessions of a Former Monkey Mind Doctor*, Brandon recognizes a unique opportunity to foreground the mytho-scientific quality of humans' infatuation with other species ... an infatuation that must be as ancient as it is pervasive.





PAUL DAILY DIRECTOR

Paul Daily grew up in Kokomo, IN, and began performing in community theater at the age of 10. He received a BA from Indiana University in 1998 where he double-majored in Theater and Drama and Sociology.

After graduating from Indiana University, he moved to London, England and then to New York City. In New York, Paul served as Associate Artistic Director for two theaters, including Rabbit Hole Ensemble, a company he co-founded and ran from 2005–2007. Paul's last show with Rabbit Hole Ensemble, *The Night of Nosferatu*, was picked up from off-off-Broadway and taken to Wellfleet, where the *Cape Cod Times* deemed the play one of the best shows of 2007. It also made Popshifter.com's list of Top Ten Things to Love in 2007.

In 2008, following the birth of his son, Paul moved to Kokomo to be close to family. In Kokomo, Paul was

instrumental in creating a student theater for the Ivy Tech Kokomo region. He went on to direct its inaugural production, *The Little Prince*.

During the summer of 2010, Paul returned to New York to participate in the 2010 New York Planet Connections Theatre Festivity. He performed in *The Manhattan Project* and was awarded Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play for the role of Charles.

After completing the run of *The Manhattan Project*, Paul moved to Bloomington, Indiana to begin his current job as Artistic Director of Ivy Tech's John Waldron Arts Center. He finished his MFA in Directing at Indiana University in 2014.

Throughout his years in theater, Paul has been involved in every aspect, including acting, writing, directing, designing and teaching. His work has been seen in Bloomington, Indianapolis, Kokomo, Boston, Washington, DC, New York City and London, England. www.pauldaily.com





LILY WALLS

COSTUME DESIGNER

Lily Walls is a Chicago-based costume designer skilled in design, construction, and distressing. A Hoosier from birth, Lily graduated from Indiana University in 2015 with a BA in Theatre Arts before making the big city jump. Previously, she designed a number of shows regionally, from *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Ivy Tech Student Productions) to *the king lear project*, a world premiere original pronunciation production. Chicago credits include Akvavit Theater's English language premiere of *Bad Girls: The Stylists*, American Blues Theater's *Flyin' West*, Midsommer Flight's *Twelfth Night* and Citadel Theater's *The Roommate*. www.lilywallsdesign.com

DAVID WADE

SET DESIGN

After apprenticing at the Wagon Wheel Playhouse in his home town of Warsaw, Indiana, David studied scenic design for opera and ballet at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. David has designed two seasons of plays and musicals for the Mitchell Opera House and for the Bloomington Playwrights Project he has designed for numerous original plays. For Cardinal Stage Company he designed *Pippi Longstocking* and *1776*, and paint charge for *Lord of the Flies*, *Les Misérables*, and *August Osage County*. For Ivy Tech Student Productions he designed *Spring Awakening*, *(Anon)ymous*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Evil Dead: The Musical*, to name a few. He also designed *H.M.S. Pinafore* for Butler University in Indianapolis.

BRENNEN EDWARDS

LIGHTING DESIGN

Brennen Edwards has been designing regularly in Bloomington, Indiana since 2014, starting with *Mass Appeal*, and has since branched out to the surrounding areas of Shawnee and Columbus, Indiana. She has designed for over two dozen productions, for stage and screen. Brennen has designed regionally for Ivy Tech Student Productions, Windfall Dance, Monroe County Civic Theatre, Jewish Theatre of Bloomington, Indiana University: University Players, Stand Alone Productions, as well as others. Her productions include *Eurydice* (2015), *Leipzig* (2018), *Anon(ymous)* (2018), *All In The Timing* (2017), and *Evil Dead! the Musical* (2018).

As a playwright, she had her first play, *Coffee Break*, produced in 2018.



A man with dark hair, wearing a brown patterned shirt and light-colored trousers, is lying on his back on a wooden structure. He is holding onto a horizontal wooden beam with his right hand. The structure is made of dark wood and has several thick ropes attached to it. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the man and the structure.

JOEL S. WATSON

SOUND DESIGN

Joel S. Watson is an actor and sound designer based in Bloomington, IN. As resident sound designer for Bloomington Playwrights Project he has worked on multiple productions including *Apropos of Nothing* and *Beating a Dead Horse*. Regionally, he has provided sound design for Jewish Theater of Bloomington's production of *Leipzig* and assistant designed for Art of Africa's *My Children! My Africa!* In spring of 2018 he created an extensive auditory landscape for Ivy Tech Student Productions' *Anon(ymous)* by Naomi Iizuka. Joel is also the co-host and engineer of the semi-critical poetry podcast: *Between Oceans and Gold Teeth*, available at soundcloud.com/betweenoceansandgoldteeth.

PRODUCTION BACKGROUND

Confessions originated in 2015 as a traveling theatrical lecture. For two years, Doctor Fomomindo and Mojo entertained academic audiences in New York, Germany, Estonia and elsewhere. These performances inverted the traditional genre of communicating science to the public by using theatre to force scientists and other academics to face the crucial social, ethical, and philosophical implications of their work.

In 2017-18, the concept was developed into an entertaining and haunting drama for the general public. *Confessions* was selected as a featured event of Indiana University's College of Arts and Sciences Animal/Human themed Fall 2018 Themester programs.



DISCUSSION TOPICS

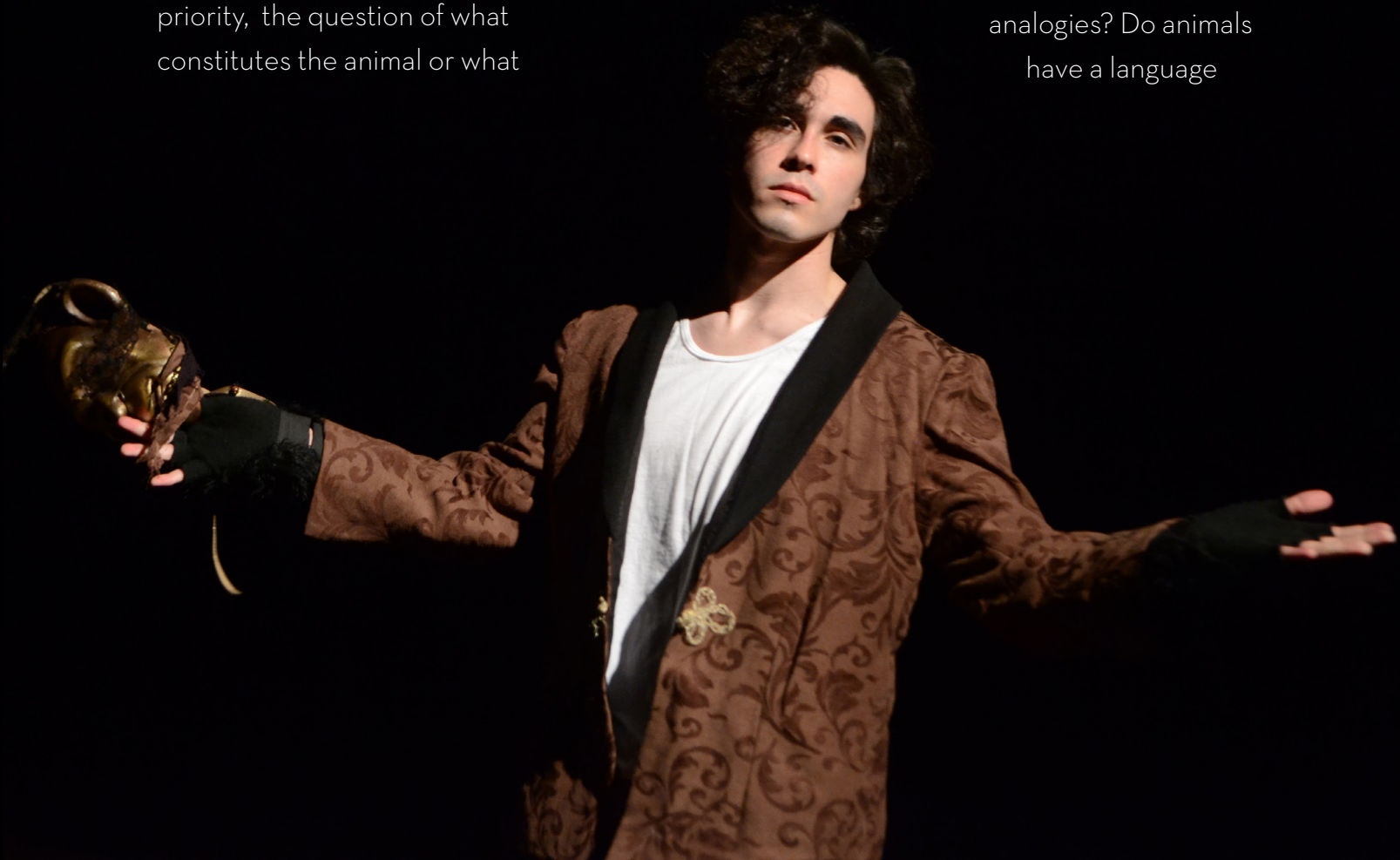
for science and social science classes

SCIENCE Science as a journey of discovery raises the issue of its veracity. There are social rules to science, cultural maps that plot its discoveries. Choices are to be made; intuition and prejudgments are involved. Scientific folklore is as powerful as other forms of folklore. Fidelity to science is a part of science itself. What role does science play in shaping human attitudes towards animals? What are the ethical limits of science, especially as it intersects (and often dissects) animals?

ANIMALS Which question is given priority, the question of what constitutes the animal or what

constitutes the human, and are these questions really distinct? Are animals in need of liberation, or are humans the real prisoners in need of emancipation? Is there a hierarchy of beings, some smarter than others? Could science ever figure out an answer to such a question? Do animals observe humans “scientifically”?

LANGUAGE Language is a code of figures created by humans as metaphors for reality. As such, language is a virtual reality, or at least a description thereof. If you can't speak, do you have a voice? Is the human mind a prison of analogies? Do animals have a language



that mimics reality? What happens to an animal who is taught language, and what happens to language in the process?

PSYCHOLOGY Psychologists argue that animals feel emotions and think about the world. As such, animals (like us) are mental creatures. But in what ways are they not like us? How does the human mind create its ideas about the animal mind? Can psychologists ever escape the power of human psychology to project itself into nature? How many kinds of minds are there?

FOLKLORE Humans have been telling stories about anthropomorphic animals as long as humans have been telling stories. Is this because humans love to tell stories about animals or because humans love to tell stories about humans? Before scientists become scientists they become little humans who are told animal stories. How do these stories influence the questions these little humans grow up to ask about animals? And how do those stories color their interpretations of the answers animals give? Do we need to take “scientific folklore” more seriously?



BOOKING INQUIRIES

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