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WHERE MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY MEET



## PIFF THE MAGICIAN

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October 2023 • Issue 6 • Volume 6

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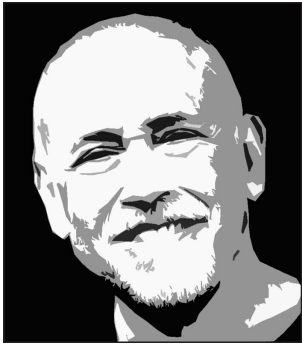
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**UPCOMING CONVENTIONS**

**MAGIC CONVENTIONS WORLDWIDE**

- [November 2-4 - TRICS \(Carolina Close-Up Convention\) in Charlotte, NC](#)
- [London Magic Convention, London, UK, Nov 5](#)
- [November 3-5 - Daytona Beach Festival of Magic - Daytona, FL](#)
- [November 3-5 - Unconventional Convention in Corbin, KY](#)
- [November 9-12 - Pacific Coast Association of Magicians \(PCAM\), Carlsbad, CA](#)
- [November 18 - 19 - Mid West Magic Convention, Ireland, UK](#)



## PIFF THE MAGIC AUTHOR

**A** long time ago, in a galaxy not so far away, a journeyman close-up magician named John van der Put was invited to what was supposed to be a costume party. He asked his sister if she had anything he could use as a costume; she offered the use of a dragon suit she owned. John wore it to the party, which resulted in a good news/bad news situation. The bad news: no one else at the party was in costume. The good news: a

friend said to him, “You could do this in your act. You could be *Puff* the Magic Dragon.” “Wait,” John replied. “I could be *Piff* the Magic Dragon. You might have heard of my older brother – Steve.”

Thus was born the character that took John around the world, culminating in a residency at the Flamingo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, where he performs with his partner, Jade Simone, and his Chihuahua, Mr. Piffles.

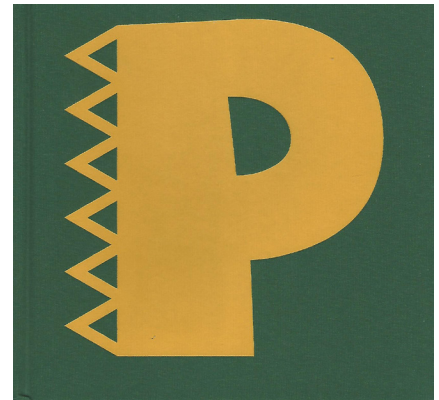
Piff is also the author of the new publication, *Piff the Magic Book*. Anyone who is serious about making a living as a professional stage magician will find this book full of valuable information. You can read my review on page 8.

I took this opportunity to talk to Piff about his book and his career. We had a most enjoyable conversation. You can find a link to the interview on page 7.

Once again, two old friends have turned into books: Larry Becker and Darwin Ortiz. I think I met Larry at a magic convention in the late 1970s, but we really got to spend some quality time together in the early '80s at one of the *Ibidem* conventions hosted by Howard Lyons, Allan Slaight, and Bob Weill. Larry prided himself on the deceptiveness of his creators, and, as I recall, took great pleasure in fooling magicians. He performed his famous Russian Roulette routine at this convention, but I couldn't watch it. The thought of someone risking his hearing on a magic trick upset me. He later published the method for this, which, to my non-mechanical way of thinking seemed fool proof, but it's certainly something I would never perform (or suggest to someone to perform).

Larry was dealing with medical challenges back then; his prognosis was not particularly optimistic. However, he got through it, and, happily, lived a long life. He died on October 7, 2023, at age ninety-four.

Darwin Ortiz passed away on October 13, 2023, at age seventy-four, after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease. Darwin was an author, a scholar, a creator, a performer, and a consultant on casino protection methods. His first two books were for the general public and focused on gambling subjects (*Gambling Scams*, *Darwin Ortiz on Casino Gambling*). In 1988 he released the



first of seven books for magicians and established himself as one of magic's finest creators of card effects. Included in that group of seven were two important magic theory books, *Strong Magic* and *Designing Miracles*.

In my opinion, *Strong Magic* got a bad rap when it was released, partly due to a negative review in *MAGIC* magazine from Chuck Fayne. Chuck didn't really review the book; he reviewed Darwin's performance style, and this was unfair. *Designing Miracles*, on the other hand, was highly praised and rightfully so; it is a thorough examination of how to construct astonishing effects. If you haven't revisited these books in a while, I highly urge you to do so. Both are densely packed with information; I suggest keeping a highlighter and a notebook beside you as you work through them.

Aloha, Larry and Darwin; you will not be forgotten.

This month also brought the sad news that Las Vegas magician Dirk Arthur had died, also on October 13; he was sixty-three. Dirk was one of the last stage magicians in Vegas to use big cats in his show. You can read more about Dirk in the Magic News section of the newsletter.

This month you'll find more magic news, some cool clips, and a fascinating science article on the discovery of unique voice prints in parrots, in addition to articles by our regular columnists Bruce Kalver, Michael Breggar, Mick Ayres, and Christian Bischoff, whom we thank for their generous contributions.

I want to wrap up this month by giving you some insights into the private sessions I offer. After my adventures in Las Vegas in August (chronicled in last month's newsletter), I'm not in a position to do much traveling right now, so I've curtailed any lecture or convention appearances. However, my teaching via Zoom is unaffected, and I would like to expand this aspect of my magic business.

If you are a professional magician or part-time pro, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to have someone with experience "put eyes" on your act. You really can't be your own director/editor; a fresh look from an expert viewpoint can help refine an already established act. I have successfully done this type of work with Penn & Teller, Piff the Magic Dragon, Jen Kramer, Paul Gertner, Doc Dixon, Ben Seidman, and others.

If you are an amateur or magic hobbyist, there are substantial benefits from working with an established teacher:

1) A teacher can help maintain focus. A problem with the world of magic right now is the avalanche of new products. We are constantly distracted by the next new "miracle," which is usually purchased, played with, and tossed into the magic drawer (closet, room, or basement). As with taking lessons on a musical instrument, a magic teacher can structure sessions so the student has limited, attainable goals for each lesson. By reducing distractions, steady progress can be achieved.

2) While the sessions I conduct focus on routines and technique, my goal is to get students to understand how I solve problems so they can apply these strategies as they work on material on their own. My aesthetic approach to magic comes from Dai Vernon. While some may categorize this as "old school," the principles the Professor espoused are valuable, useful, and applicable to all branches of conjuring. In other words, I'm not just teaching tricks and techniques, I'm teaching how to think about magic.

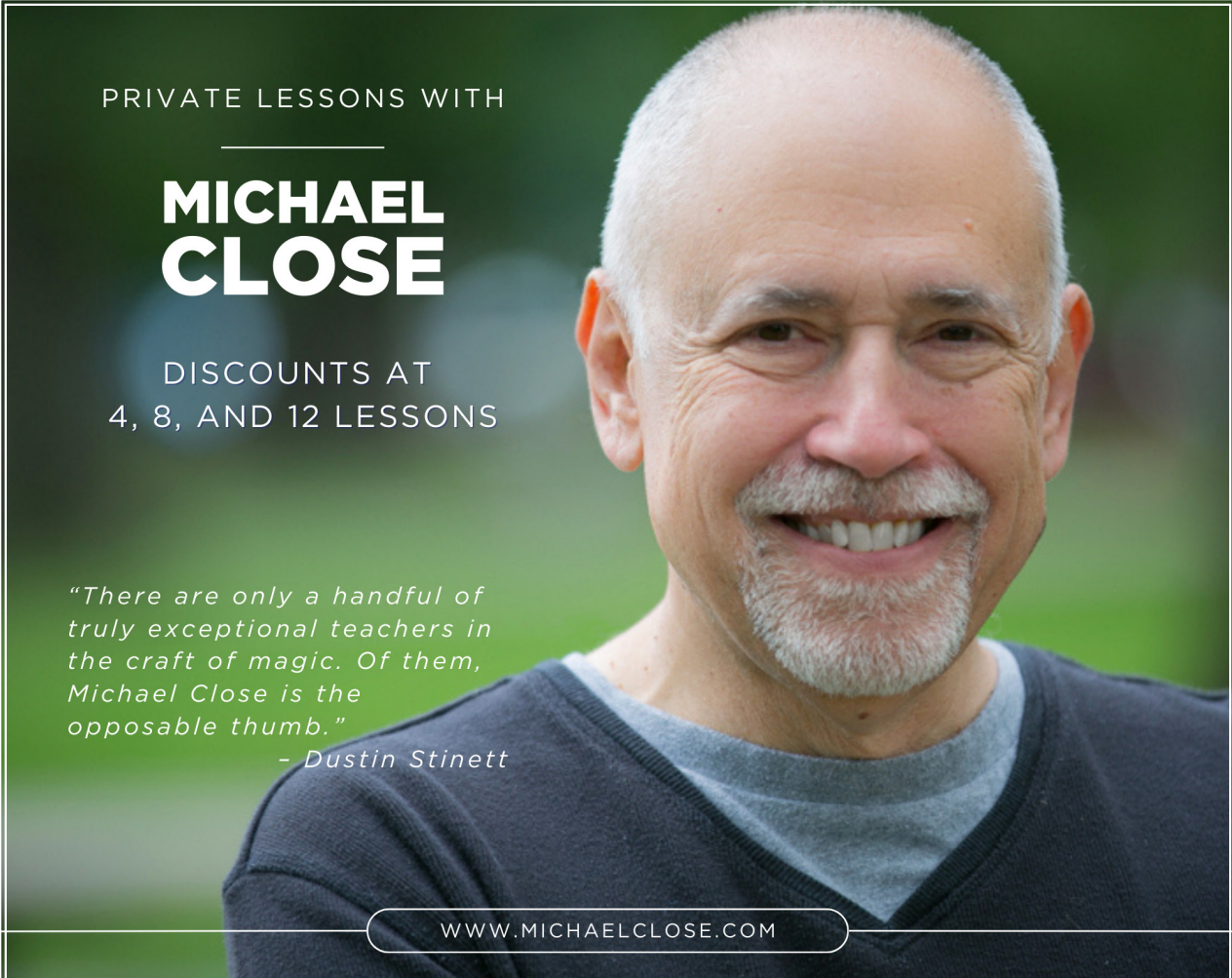
## new column cont'd

3) Money is, of course, always a factor when considering working with a teacher, but I'd ask you to consider this: how much is *your time* worth? With directed training, students learn at a much faster rate. This is important for those of you whose jobs/family-lives minimize your free time. Because sessions are tailored to *your* needs and solving *your* problems, you'll get the satisfaction of working toward mastery, with expert guidance all the way. Also, you should realistically consider how much money you've spent on books, videos, and tricks that were perused and rapidly discarded. Lessons provide information you will actually use.

4) Please don't think to yourself, "Oh, I'm too much of a beginner (or amateur) to make use of lessons." I have worked with students of all ages and experience levels. One benefit of being a relative beginner is you haven't had the chance to develop bad habits. Sometimes, with more experienced students, I have to spend time undoing techniques that have been incorrectly learned.

So, I hope you'll give these sessions a try. You can save money by investing in multiple sessions at a time. Discounts apply at 4, 8, and 12 lessons. The more you purchase the more you save. And, if you have any questions or concerns, please drop me a note at [mail@michaelclose.com](mailto:mail@michaelclose.com). I look forward to hearing from you.

That's it for this month. Please stay well and stay safe. We'll see you in the next newsletter. ♦



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# CONVERSATIONS WITH CLOSE

## PIFF THE MAGIC DRAGON



These days, our friend Piff is a very busy dragon. Joined by his partner Jade Simone and Mr. Piffles the Wonder Chihuahua, he headlines his own show at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas, tours North America (with a completely different show!), and makes numerous television appearances.

He is also an author, with a new book recently released through Vanishing, Inc. (You can read my review on [Page 8](#).)

Piff came to the attention of the magic world with his performance on the first season of Penn & Teller: Fool Us. He reached a wider audience with his breakout performances on America's Got Talent in 2015.

His rise to success is a true testament to the power of perseverance and hard work; as you'll read in his book, his path contained many ups and downs.

I spoke to Piff during a brief lull in his whirlwind schedule. I gained some new insights into this talented performer. I think you'll enjoy our conversation. You can listen to it [here](#). ♦



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# PRODUCT REVIEWS



## Piff the Magic Book Volume 1

By Piff the Magic Dragon

Available from: <https://www.vanishingincmagic.com>

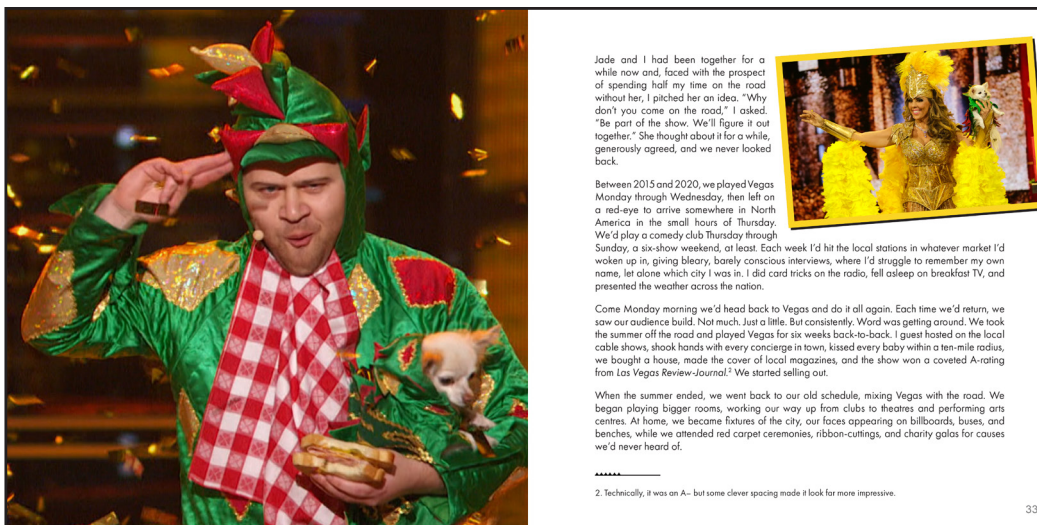
Price: \$69.95 USD

## REVIEW BY MICHAEL CLOSE

I'm sure I don't have to tell you who Piff the Magic Dragon is, or how much he has accomplished in the dozen years since he burst on the magic scene during season one of *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*. He has performed around the world and is currently continuing his long residency at the Flamingo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

He is also an author, with a recently published book, *Piff the Magic Book*. It is a big (431 pages), beautifully produced book, filled with marvelous, full-color photos. What's in it? Here's what Piff writes:

"This book is a collection of the material that took me all over the world as a magic dragon. Most of it I no longer perform. Some of it I still do. This book is not a road map. It's not a how-to guide. If you replicate exactly the steps I took and perform the material I did, success will most likely elude you. In fact, I'm explicitly not giving you permission to find a dragon onesie, a Chihuahua, and a Las Vegas Showgirl to start a tribute act."



I'll give you a general overview of the routines and topics covered in the book, and then I'll give you some specific information to help you decide if this book is for you.

As far as routines are concerned, you'll find explanations of Signed Card to Dog Food Can (a workhorse of Piff's repertoire), Happy Birthday Mr. Piffles (based on Koran's Gold Medallion),



Ring in Egg, Bill in Banana, The Great Chicago Fire (a revelation of two selected cards), David Copperfish (a mind-reading fish effect), Card is Straw (based on Darren Brown's Smoke), Flap Cards (using Blake Vogt's Acro Index Cards), and Piff's signature trick, the piece-by-piece transformation of a signed card. These are all platform/stage routines; most will require specially built props of varying degrees of complexity.

There are also essays on using a camera to improve visibility, using a dog in your act, the treatment of spectators (and pets), dressing for the job you want (including a full chronology of the dragon costume), and the usefulness of the post-show meet-and-greet. Also, there is a large chapter chronicling Piff's journey from magic hobbyist to close-up worker to stage performer.

I think *Piff the Magic Book* is terrific; as I have mentioned in other reviews, when a professional releases material from their act, I pay attention. However, there are some things you should know before purchasing.



If you're looking for a book of routines you can easily add to your performing repertoire, this is not the book for you. First of all, these routines have been specifically tailored to Piff's performing persona and style, including his character as a dragon and his pet Chihuahua, Mr. Piffles. Under no circumstances should you run out and buy a dragon costume and a dog. One Magic Dragon is enough; we don't need any pale imitations. (Besides, a low-life, bottom-feeder has already tried that, ripping off Piff's act to perform on a Russian TV show.)

None of the props used are of the "off the shelf" variety. They have been specially designed to fit the needs of the Piff show. Consequently, replicating a routine will require an outlay of cash. So, don't think about replicating them.

Instead, you should study how each effect evolved, how presentational and technical problems were solved; in many cases, this was a long process. If you understand how other performers solved problems, you can adapt that information as you work on your own routines. The most important message these routines deliver is explained by Piff early in the book:

"Nothing in this trick [the first routine in the book] is revolutionary. Anything you learn, any insight

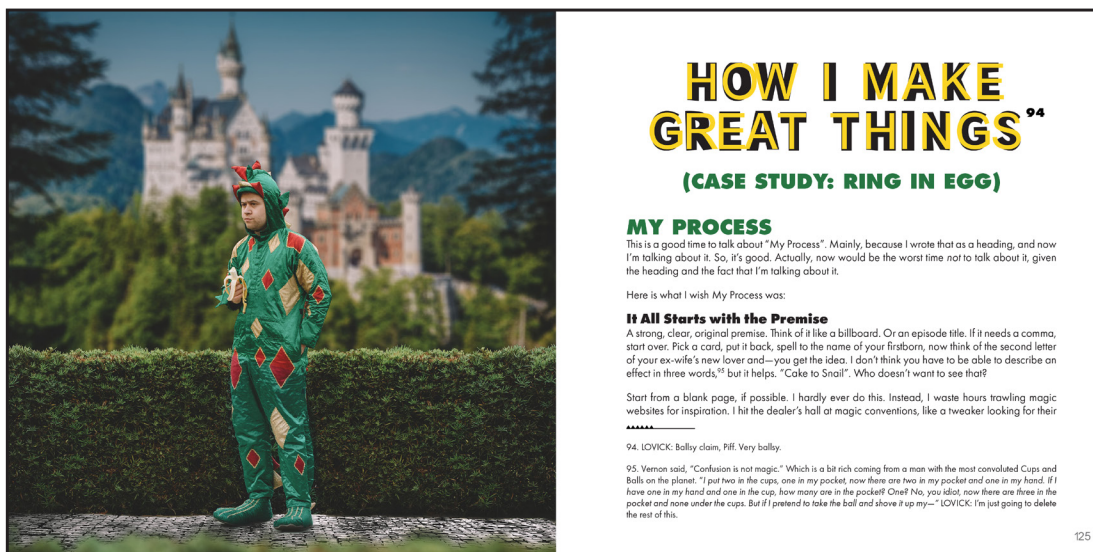
## product reviews cont'd

you gain, should be considered unintentional at best. That's why it is chapter one. Because this trick contains the heart of what this book is truly about. That I, Piff the Magic Dragon, am no genius.

“Ah, clever, you're thinking, playing the humility card. Genius.

“Nope. You want genius? Spend time in a room with Teller. Rehearse something with David Copperfield. Talk to Penn about a germ of an idea. Genuflect at the grave of Johnny Thompson. You're not going to find it here.

“I'm a grinder. I grind it out. I take a thought that's perhaps 2% good idea, I add 86% perspiration, 32% false starts, 13% bad planning, 40% wrong direction, and 12% bad maths, then trot it out a hundred times in front of a paying audience before fixing the most glaring issues, and six months later, I might have something.”



This is *the* lesson, one that magic books rarely offer. Authors present us with the finished creation, without showing us the (often) long and arduous path it took to get to that final result. Many magicians, when working out their own routines, hit those snags and give up, not realizing the key to success is constantly thinking, analyzing, modifying, and rewriting. To me, *Piff the Magic Book* is worth the asking price just for the opportunity to learn how this process works.

So, if you want to add any of these routines to your own repertoire, you'll have to apply a significant amount of brainpower to removing every trace of Piff and adapting what's left to your performing style. This will take time.

The second reason I find the book to extremely valuable is the thirty-page section titled, “How I Became Piff the Magic Dragon.” Anyone with the urge to be a professional magician (and in particular a professional stage magician) needs to read this chapter for the inspiration it provides. Just like a magic routine, a career does not instantly spring into existence. It moves in fits and starts: two steps forward, one step backwards. Piff provides lessons on the importance of

perseverance, desire, and hard work. For those choosing magic as a career path, this chapter is worth the price of admission.



## THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE

After many years of working in corporate hospitality, I made a conscious decision to get out while I still could and try to break into show business. I had a simple rule: Only do shows for people who have bought a ticket. The ticket doesn't have to have my name on, but it has to be a ticket.

The more I did this, the more often the ticket had my name on it, and for the past few years now, my name has been on every ticket. Maybe for some people, that feeds their ego. For me, it just increases the pressure.


Selling tickets is usually a simple formula. Do audiences know who I am? Do they like what I do? Do they know about the show? Through various television appearances, I was able to convince a reasonable number of people to like what I do. So, now I just needed to make sure they knew about the show.

Which is where the press comes in. Here's the rule: Always do the press. Whether you've sold out twelve shows in a week or you're struggling to sell twelve tickets total. Always do the press. That's the rule. You may not need it this time, but you may need it next time. Whether it's a 4 a.m. morning show or an 11 p.m. phone; whether it's an interview, podcast, or opening of a cat salon: Always do the press.

This bit was created for press appearances, such as those local Good Morning, [City]-type of TV breakfast shows. More often than

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I think you now have enough information to make an informed purchasing decision. As I wrote above, I think this is a terrific book. I highly recommend it. ♦



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# MAGIC NEWS

## JOSHUA JAY- REMEMBERING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DARWIN ORTIZ

Joshua Jay wrote...

On Friday, October 13, magic lost one of its greatest intellects. While this is an enormous loss for our art, we take solace in the fact that his body of work will live on for generations. In celebration of his life and legacy, we invite you to enjoy this download that we've made free for the next 48 hours.

"A Triumph and a Talk" is a remarkable interview between Michael Vincent and Darwin that was recorded at The Session. In classic Darwin Ortiz fashion, he offers invaluable advice on everything from making your magic relevant to the importance of viewing your magic from your audience's perspective. You'll even learn a stunning Triumph routine. Read more and download this talk for free [here](#).



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## WHY DERREN BROWN DOESN'T WANT TO SHOCK YOU ANY MORE

Derren Brown wants to take the male ego out of the magic show. Tom Nicholson went behind the scenes at his new production to find out how

At the first London night of Derren Brown's new show, Unbelievable, a very stoic, very strait-laced middle-aged man was pulled up to help out with the finale. All the way through the set-up, he was unmoved. But at the reveal, his face broke into something else: genuine, baffled amazement.

"That guy was having this sort of real experience of magic, which is such a... it's a really unique thing, isn't it?" says Brown. "It's very specific, and you wouldn't get it anywhere else. You could just see him...For a minute, the whole world was just falling apart."

Brown's shows tend to have that effect. He convinced a man he'd woken up during a zombie apocalypse and another that he could land a plane with no joystick experience; he's given atheists supernatural experiences and shredded charlatans, predicted the lottery numbers and cheated death.

Impossible things are his wheelhouse, and he's returned to the theme for the new stage show Unbelievable. During its opening section, which deconstructs the old vanishing cabinet trick, the woman behind me had been laughing along and letting out an amused "aha!" and "ohhh!" with each new reveal. At its climax, when something extremely unlikely appeared in the cabinet, she bellowed: "HOW THE HELL DID THAT HAPPEN?"

With Unbelievable, though, he has stepped back into a directing and writing role, and he's been enjoying listening in to all the things he misses when he's in a dressing room: the buzz of people on a night out, audiences whispering to each other.

Read the interview [here](#).

## **MOVE OVER DAVID COPPERFIELD. NEW MAGICIANS BRING DIVERSITY TO MAGIC**

Growing up, Katrina Kroetch didn't know girls could be magicians. She watched David Copperfield and Criss Angel but never saw a woman in a magic show except as an assistant.

When she was 18, she was a professional princess – performing at kids' birthday parties, twisting balloon animals and painting faces. At this time she thought magic was scary.

“As a little girl, I loved 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' because she did what Spider-Man and Batman do: She fought evil, but she did it in a little mini skirt with lipstick on,” Kroetch says. “Eight-year-old me – I loved seeing strong women.”

“I do think representation matters,” she says.

Today, fewer than 10% of professional magicians are women, Vicki Greenleaf, a spokesperson for LA's Magic Castle says. And few come from communities of color.

Now, women working alongside the Magic Castle – a fixture in the magic scene – are trying to change this.

Now Kroetch is 28 and performs as The Magical Katrina – doing shows in person and virtually; she performs for clients across Southern California including the Boys & Girls Club, NASA, and Google.

Elizabeth Messick, who performs under the stage name The Siren of Magic hosts many parties for The Los Angeles Women's Magician's Association.

“I'm trying to push that change forward by being welcoming and being the safe and the nonjudgmental person,” Messick said.

Messick has built a little magic theater in her apartment, where she invites other women magicians to practice their tricks and receive critiques. Read more [here](#).



**Elizabeth Messick performs at The Magic Castle in Los Angeles at The Siren of Magic.**

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## **MAGICIAN, ILLUSIONIST DAVID SEEBACH; THRILLING CROWDS FOR 50+ YEARS**

ELM GROVE, Wis. - For more than 50 years, Milwaukee's own David Seebach has thrilled and amazed crowds all across the with his illusions. This coming weekend, he's back at Sunset Playhouse for a weekend of shows mixed with magic, humor and a few tricks 'n' treats. Brian Kramp is in Elm Grove with a preview of this weekend's performance.

Watch video [here](#).

## magic news cont'd

### REMEMBERING DARWIN ORTIZ

Darwin Ortiz, a revered figure in the world of magic, passed away on October 13, 2023, following a brave battle with Parkinson's disease that spanned several years. Born in 1948, Ortiz's journey into magic began in New York City, where he nurtured an early fascination with card tricks. His passion drove him to drop out of NYU Law School in 1974 to pursue card magic full-time, a decision that led him down a path of profound impact on the magic community.

Ortiz's realm of expertise lay in gambling and card manipulation, earning him the epithet 'G.O.A.T' (Greatest of All Time) within his magic community. His prowess extended beyond mere technical skill to encompass superb storytelling and compelling presentations, enabling a deep emotional connection with his audiences. This unique ability to captivate and move audiences set him apart in the magic community.

As an author, Ortiz contributed significantly to the theory of magic, penning influential books like *Strong Magic*, *Designing Miracles*, and *Lessons in Card Mastery*, among others. These works delved into the intricacies of magical phenomena and presentational strategies, offering a rich resource for both amateur and professional magicians. His writings weren't just confined to magic theory but also extended to gaming protection, exemplified by his book, *Gambling Scams*.

Ortiz's death has left a palpable void in the magic community, with many expressing their condolences and sharing heartfelt tributes to honor his legacy. His teachings, writings, and unforgettable performances have left an indelible mark on the world of magic, continuing to inspire magicians globally. Through his profound contributions, Darwin Ortiz's legacy is bound to live on, ensuring his name is remembered and revered in the annals of magic history.



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### LAS VEGAS MAGICIAN, ANIMAL SHOWMAN DIRK ARTHUR DIES AT 63

LAS VEGAS (KSNV) — Long-time Las Vegas magician and animal showman Dirk Arthur has passed away.

Arthur was known for his 20 years of performances with big cats in Las Vegas. The most recent was at Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino in 2015, where his show 'Dirk Arthur's Wild Illusions' took place.

Westgate Las Vegas released the following statement:

"Westgate Las Vegas is deeply saddened by the loss of Dirk Arthur. He was a special talent and will always be a cherished member of our Westgate family."

He was the last magician to use wild animals in a Las Vegas magic show Watch video [here](#).

## **10 EXOTIC CATS REMOVED FROM MAGICIAN DIRK ARTHUR'S VEGAS RANCH**

**Oct 18, 2023**

When he died on Sunday at his home at age 63, Las Vegas magician Dirk Arthur left behind 10 matters requiring immediate attention — six tigers, one snow leopard, two clouded leopards, and one bobcat.

A representative of Clark County confirmed to KLAS-TV/Las Vegas that the county's Animal Protection Services removed the cats from Arthur's ranch — located South of the Las Vegas Strip near the Silverton Casino — and are currently caring for them.



“Magic acts with exploited wild cats disappeared from the Strip years ago, and PETA is calling for any exotic cats who survived Dirk Arthur to be sent to accredited sanctuaries where they'll have space to roam, opportunities to swim and climb, and freedom from stage lights and filthy cages at last,” read the statement from PETA Foundation Director of Captive Animal Welfare Debbie Metzler.

Read more [here](#).

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## **THE RHAPSODY THEATER KICKS OFF THEIR SECOND SEASON WITH THE ZABRECKY HOUR**

The Rhapsody Theater, 1328 West Morse St., Chicago, is thrilled to announce their second season. The 200-seat venue in Rogers Park has been thrilling guests with unique magical productions. The new season brings ten full-length theatrical magic productions. Six shows are new and created specifically for the Rhapsody Theater, and four are already critically acclaimed and premiered during season one.

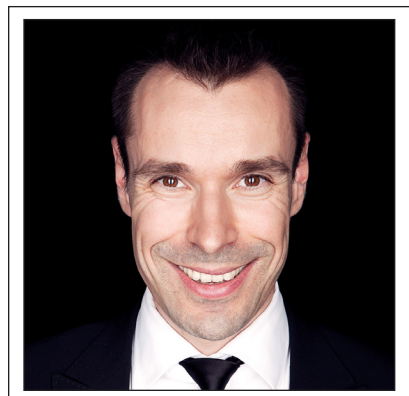


The new season started with the Magic Castle Stage Magician of the Year, Rob Zabrecky, presenting his hit show, The Zabrecky Hour. We attended his Friday the 13th performance, and we were amazed. Zabrecky is one of the most sought-after magicians of our day, given that he is a two-time Stage Magician of the Year award winner. The 90 minutes flew by, and I didn't want it to end. He mixes humor along with stunning magic tricks. We laughed out loud while scratching our heads and saying how did he do it.

We had the opportunity to meet Zabrecky before the show. His demeanor reminded me of Norman Bates with a dash of humor. I was amazed at how his character held firm during his performance. His presence on the stage is controlled, along with impeccable timing. He could hold the moment just long enough as the audience erupted with laughter.

To purchase tickets or for additional information about new upcoming productions, visit [www.rhapsodytheater.com](http://www.rhapsodytheater.com) or call the box office at 888.495.9001

## HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MAGIC THROUGH PRACTICAL THEORY



I will show you a way to make your magic more powerful. It's all about creating meaningful relevance in your tricks. Relevance can make your audience give you undivided attention, it can move them to tears, and it can make them feel you know them like a friend. This is because relevance addresses the audience's feelings directly. Compare this to the impossibility of a trick, which we discussed in our last column. Impossibility is geared toward the intellect of the audience and only yields an indirect emotional effect. With relevance you go straight for their heart and their instincts. Let us define relevance as "emotional power caused by thematic significance."

Sadly, there are too many superficial and meaningless magic tricks. They pass by the audience like the announcements of the next stop on the subway. We acknowledge those tricks without any emotional response whatsoever and then we forget them right away. But magic gives us such a great opportunity to touch our audience on a deep level through the theme of the trick. When you address a topic that fascinates many people or a spectator in particular or that affects you as the magician personally, you immediately pull focus and arouse interest. The spectators will listen up because they are personally engaged and recognize that the actions on stage are relevant to their lives.

In my book, *Diamonds of Performance*, I discuss three types of relevance: Human relevance, personal relevance for the spectator, and personal relevance for the magician. Each is important, but for this column, let's focus on the first one, human relevance.

There are some topics every human being is interested in. Among those are three classic issues: health, wealth, and relationships. Everyone is affected in their soul by the resulting joys and sorrows. We feel deep longing and oppressive fear and we spend a great amount of time and energy on answering pressing questions such as: Will I be healthy again? How can I make more money? Does she still love me or does she want someone else?

If you understand the fundamental topics that affect and move people, you can address these respective dreams and nightmares through magic and thereby develop a trick with human relevance. Let's recall a couple of magnificent tricks that are highly relevant in this regard:

- Flying (David Copperfield) – The dream of flying
- Miser's Dream (T. Nelson Downs) – Becoming rich
- Sawing a Lady into Halves (P.T. Selbit) – Hurting and healing
- Dove Productions (Channing Pollock) – Creating life
- Bullet Catch (Chung Ling Soo) – Surviving deadly danger
- Escapes (Harry Houdini) – Breaking free
- Question and Answer (The Great Alexander) – Finding answers to the questions of life

Each of these tricks is nothing less than an utter sensation. Try this: Simply describe the effect to someone who has not experienced it and you will see you can still affect them. Emotionally relevant



tricks paint fascinating images in everyone's mind because they address already existing wishes and desires. Some time ago, I realized how I can use this for my personal marketing strategy. When potential customers call me up, I tell them that I conjure money from thin air and that I even teach this to the audience. Just describing this effect over the phone always makes a good impression in my sales pitches.

How do you find relevance in a trick? For this I suggest you do some research on cold reading or you look deeply into your own soul.

There is certainly some truth to it when prominent authors such as Eugene Burger bemoan the trivialization of magic with feather flowers and cheap comedy. As a reaction, a countermovement has emerged that wants to give magic more meaning. Some proponents of bizarre magic refer back to the archetype of the magician as a historic figure clad as a shaman or holy priest who was supposed to be the link between the common people and supernatural forces. This ancient magician exuded a strong and somewhat sinister authority. For now, I am disregarding the fact that this stands in opposition to today's enlightened mindset and that it is ultimately a question of one's personal and spiritual worldview. What bothers me most about this genre of magic is the matter of good taste. If every engraved letter opener is a murder weapon and every charred wooden box is possessed by ghosts, this rigmarole – so pregnant with meaning – is in danger of becoming overly melodramatic and ridiculous. You usually should not need to impose meaning on a trick from the outside; when you do, you often need to include a sufficient amount of irony in your presentation.

Tricks referring to a basic desire or fear (for example, health, wealth, or relationships) are of human relevance to everybody.

It is much more elegant to rely on a topic's inherent and often subtle relevance without addressing it out loud. Implied relevance is stronger. This goes especially for tricks that have symbolic relevance. Symbols are meaningful images that stand for something not perceptible by the senses. Most magic tricks that we consider to be classics carry symbolic meaning.

The cut and restored rope may symbolize injury and healing; the ambitious card – climbing the social ladder; the linking rings – connection and disengagement in human relationships.

This symbolism works implicitly, even when the magician does not openly address it and the audience is not even necessarily aware of it. Symbols affect us subconsciously. When David Copperfield made the Statue of Liberty disappear, he was completely aware of the symbolic impact. But in his presentation, he intentionally did not put excessive emphasis on issues like liberty, freedom, and patriotism; instead he knew the relevance would come though anyway. Even today – decades later – people still talk about this spectacular trick.

These symbolically meaningful classic effects of the ropes or the linking rings are more abstract in nature than those I mentioned in the beginning regarding general human relevance, i.e., flying, Q&A, etc. But in spite of their abstractness (or maybe because of it), they are still extremely relevant to people. There is a reason why those classics are timeless and eternally fascinating. I believe the reason is their deep and powerful symbolism.

That's it for our lesson in relevance today. And here's your homework to improve your own magic: First, look at your favorite tricks and try to link them to one of the three basic human desires; health, wealth, relationships. What has your trick got to do with injury and healing? How does your

## **diamonds of performance cont'd**

trick help you get more money? What lesson does your trick offer to improve the relationship with your spouse?

The second homework is the other way around: What is your personal opinion in regards to a healthy lifestyle, in regards to earning and spending money, in regards to romance? What kind of experience would you like to share with your audience? Good. Now find an effect and work on a presentation that allows you to convey your experience. If you are like me, try to do it with a dash of irony.

And third, tell your friends about your relevant trick. Just describe the effect in a way that stresses the meaning for their lives. You want to make them say “wow,” without having seen the trick.

I believe you will feel energized and motivated to present magic that scores high on human relevance. ♦

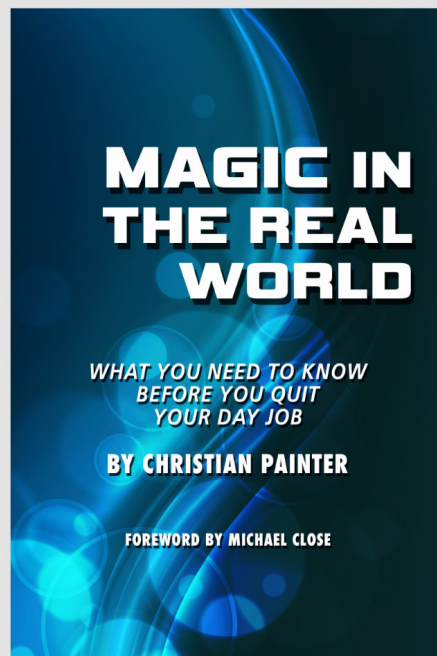
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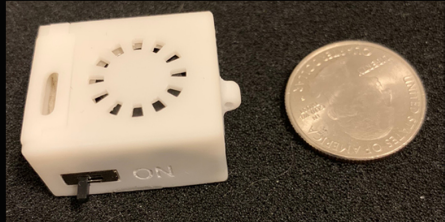
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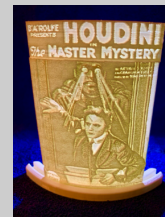
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## PIFF AND MAC KING TALK ABOUT PIFF'S NEW BOOK



## CAN DRAGON'S FLY? YES, YES THEY CAN



# THE MAGIC OF SCIENCE

Why do we include science articles in our magic newsletter? Because we believe that learning about the latest scientific discoveries can be a great source of inspiration for your magic performances. By exploring topics like perception, psychology, and physics, you might just come up with your next mind-blowing trick.

## UNIQUE VOICE PRINTS IN PARROTS

Parrots are exceptional talkers. They can learn new sounds during their entire lives, amassing an almost unlimited vocal repertoire. At the same time, parrots produce calls so they can be individually recognized by members of their flock -- raising the question of how their calls can be very variable while also uniquely identifiable. A study on monk parakeets conducted by the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior and Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona might have the answer: individuals have a unique tone of voice, known as a voice print, similar to that in humans. This finding in a wild parrot raises the possibility that a voice print might also be present in other vocally flexible species, such as dolphins and bats.

"It makes sense for monk parakeets to have an underlying voice print," says the Max Planck's Simeon Smeele, first author on the paper. "It's an elegant solution for a bird that dynamically changes its calls but still needs to be known in a very noisy flock."

Humans have complex and flexible vocal repertoires, but we can still recognize each other by voice alone. This is because humans have a voice print: our vocal tract leaves a unique signature in the tone of our voice across everything that we say.

Other social animals also use vocal cues to be recognized. In birds, bats, and dolphins, for example, individuals have a unique "signature call" that makes them identifiable to members of the group. But signature calls encode identity in only one call type. To date, almost no evidence exists for animals having unique signatures that underly all calls made by an individual. In other words, almost no animals are known to have a voice print.

That surprised Smeele, a doctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior who studies how parrots use their exceptional vocal abilities to socialize in large groups. Like humans, parrots use their tongue and mouth to modulate calls, meaning that "their grunts and shrieks sound much more human than a songbird's clean whistle," he says. Also, like humans, parrots live in large groups with fluid membership. "There could be tens of birds vocalizing at the same time," he says. "They need a way of keeping track of which individual is making what sound."

Read the full article [here](#).



# MIND OVER MATTERS BY MICHAEL BREGGAR

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Michael Breggar has authored five books (focusing on card magic and mentalism) and is a columnist for *The Linking Ring* ("Auto-Magic"). Michael's latest book is called *Take Five*. It is available as a download everywhere and as a physical book through Amazon.com or directly from Michael at (mbreggarmagic@gmail.com).



I have been thinking a lot about how our world has changed in the last three years, both during COVID and post-COVID. As I write this, there has been an uptick in COVID cases, new strains and new vaccines. Yes, things have changed, but how much has changed back to pre-COVID form? My daytime job in management consulting went through significant changes. There are some things we were forced to do that actually become standardized, even as the fears of the dreaded disease have somewhat dissipated. Virtual meetings (WebEx, Zoom, FaceTime, what have you) have truly revolutionized management consulting and have saved our clients untold millions in the expense of flying people all over the world for two-hour meetings here and there.

Magicians developed virtual shows and approaches to help them manage (and in some cases, save) their businesses. I had developed some new ideas and approaches as well and bundled them into virtual programs. However, mentalism is all about presence. It thrives on living in the moment with your audience. And it is a real strain on credulity when you say you are going to read someone's mind when they are 3,000 miles away from you!

I learned my most effective virtual conceptions were those that adopted a bit of magical thinking into mentalism. For example, a mental card trick was much stronger than a straight mental effect. Mental "gymnastics" were effective too (like Magic Square or other mental number effects) or memory feats or the like (in the 1960s, they called it "Super Mentality").

Here's the thing: can those same effects refurbished for a virtual audience, be re-refurbished and put back into use for a live audience? Here's the answer (as only a true management consultant can give you): it depends.

This month's effect started as a Harry Blackstone stage effect. My Thai-based magician friend morphed it into a walk-around mental/card effect. Then I retooled it into an online effect. It is remarkably effective as a piece in any online/virtual program. Still, you can perform it almost exactly as written if dealing with an in-person small audience; just change the patter and remove the bits that mention being in front of the computer camera! Here it is in its Zoom-y form.

"Who's Zooming Whom?"

Your socially distant audience has volunteered one person to assist you in your next amazing effect. "*Do you have a deck of cards in front of you?*" you ask. "*And is your cell phone handy?*" If they don't have any cards nearby, that's okay. You'll read the work-around in a moment.

*"Take the deck of cards and remove the Jokers, advertising cards, and pretzel crumbs. Then give the cards a good shuffle or two and a good cut or two. Finally, spread the cards face down across the table in front of you."* You can see your helper execute all these things thanks to the magic of telecommunications!

*"Now we are going to use a bit of modern magic in an unusual way. Pick up your mobile phone*

*and turn the camera function on. Now hold it about six inches or so above the spread cards. Move the camera along the spread cards; left to right, right to left and back again. Look at the image of the cards sliding by as you move the camera. At some point, when you feel the cell phone is telling you something, stop moving the camera and just lay it flat against the cards.”*

Pam has complied and has placed her phone on the spread. *“Good! Did the cell phone really tell you to do that? Or are you just playing the game so as not to embarrass me? Next, gather all the cards not touched by your phone and put them back in the card box. There will likely be about six cards under the phone. You’re doing great so far! Now take the cards under the phone and give them a little shuffle, but don’t look at them! When you are done lay them out in a row on the table. Again, move your phone camera back and forth, but this time we’ll ask Ed to say stop. When he does, place the phone down on that card, gather all the others, and put them in the box.”* Pam starts moving the phone and Ed says stop. She lowers the phone and puts the other cards away as instructed.

*“Excellent,”* you comment. *“There may have been times when you thought your cell phone could read your mind, because in their own way they help you focus your brainwaves. Like a lens focuses light waves. I’ll show you what I mean. The single card sitting in front of you came from a deck you shuffled. So, sneak a peek at the card on the table. Don’t tell anyone what it is.”* Pam lifts a corner and sees the Seven of Hearts.

*“Now, I’ll show you how this lens thing works. Take your phone and open the calculator app. First press the CLEAR button a couple of times to make sure we’re starting fresh. Good. Think of the value of the card on the table. Just the value. If it’s a Jack, that would be an 11. Queens have the value of 12 and Kings 13. Aces, of course, equal 1. Whatever the value is, enter it now in the calculator.”* Pam does this.

*“Now listen carefully; cell phones are pretty peculiar! Since there are two colors of cards in a standard deck, red and black, multiply the number on your phone by 2 and hit the equals key.”* Pam has typed in 7 and now types in “x 2 =”. The number 14 shows on her screen.

*“There are four suits in a deck of cards. Your card obviously has one of them! Three remain. So, to the current total on your screen add 3 and hit equals.”* Pam does this and her screen now shows 17.

*“All good so far? Next – and this is a weird one – you need to take into account what electro-neurologists call the ‘hemispheric probability variance.’ Not only can’t I explain it, I can barely say it! But what this means to us is for you to multiply the current total on your screen by 5. Don’t forget to hit the equals button!”*

Pam’s total is now 85. You continue, *“I know this is all crazy stuff, but what we are doing is very precisely configuring your phone as a mental lens! So, think of your card again (or take another peek). Think, this time, of its suit. In cell phone algorithms, if it is a Spade, add 1 to your current total. If it is a Heart, add 2. For a Club, add 3, and for a Diamond add 4 to the total. After all, there are four sides to a Diamond, the Club has three leaves, the Heart has two round lumps, and the Spade has one sharp point. Get it? Good!”* Pam’s total is now 87.

*“Now, we get into some heavy math!! Turn your phone towards the camera so I can see what type of calculator you have.”* She does and you see the standard mobile phone calculator. *“You’ll need to turn your phone horizontally because we need to use the scientific calculator mode.”*

## mind over matters cont'd

Turning her phone ninety-degrees, the scientific calculator appears. *“Now, press these buttons as I tell you: first, press the square root button. Next, divide by 4, for the four suits in a deck. And finally, multiply by 52 – the number of cards in a deck. Now, think of a six-digit number, any six-digit number. It could be your birthdate, month and year, or an address, or part of your phone number, or two three-digit numbers. The important thing is it must be meaningful to you. Okay? Now add that six-digit number to the total on the screen.”*

Pam ends up with 12,976.2559. *“We’re all calibrated now. I just need you to call out any three numbers on your screen, hold the phone to your forehead, and think of the card on the table – only that card. Think it repeatedly. Your phone will act as a mental lens and send your focused brainwaves to me. I hope.”*

Only seconds pass when you exclaim, *“Pam! It’s the Seven of Hearts! Right?”*

Pam drops her phone in surprise and swears never to think private thoughts while using it again!

## VIRTUAL BACKGROUND

If you are familiar with the original Blackstone idea from circa 1940s (it’s been published in numerous places and is usually called Blackstone’s Mathematical Discovery), you’ll recognize that almost all of your instructions are smoke. The only important ones are: take the value of the selection, double it, add 3, and then multiply by 5. To that total, add 1, 2, 3, or 4 depending on the suit.

You’ll need to catch a glimpse at the total at this point, which is why I switch to “heavy math, scientific mode.” It gives me a reason to have them show me their calculator! Whatever the number is at this point, you subtract 15 and you have the thought-of card! How? Well Pam’s number at this point was 87.  $87 - 15 = 72$ . The first digit of this number tells you the value of the card, the second tells you the suit (using the 1, 2, 3, 4 designations above).

Don’t forget all the other things I have put in this script after you get the number. This “psychological” distancing is extremely important and adds to the impossibility of this effect! ♦

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# THE ART AND CRAFT OF CONJURING BY MICK AYRES

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Mick is a trickster, tunesmith, and tale-swapper for the Walt Disney Company. Feel free to reach him at [mick@mickayreswares.com](mailto:mick@mickayreswares.com) or via Facebook.



*“The speech of one who knows what he is talking about and means what he says – it is thought on fire.” – William Jennings Bryan*

**O**n the brisk morning of November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln mounted a brown horse and joined a multitude of people as they walked to the grounds where the Battle of Gettysburg had been fought. Four and a half months earlier, when the rifle and cannon smoke had cleared from the fields, seven thousand five hundred Union and Confederate soldiers lay dead along with five thousand of their horses. This single conflict brought home the message that this Civil War was costing our nation a great and terrible price. Now, President Lincoln had come to mourn with the

devastated widows of the fallen.

Edward Everett, a professional politician, stood before the gathered crowd and delivered a eulogy that lasted two hours. When he finished, President Lincoln stepped up and spoke for three minutes. During those one hundred and eighty seconds, Lincoln reaffirmed our Constitution’s proposition that all men are created equal; he vowed that a government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth. However, there was one thing the President got wrong that day. He said, “The world will little note nor long remember what we say here.” Lincoln’s brief speech is now one of the most famous in history.

As performing artists, we can learn much from Abraham Lincoln in this moment because, even on his worst day, he was a far better orator than most of us. Orating is the ability to speak clearly and confidently by projecting your voice in a manner acceptable to the venue. Until the early 1900s, oration was a regular part of every education curriculum. In those days, leaders were measured by their character, their message, and by their ability to communicate it.

Abraham Lincoln had a firm grip on all three of those elements when he delivered the Gettysburg Address to an audience of fifteen thousand townspeople, reporters, and dignitaries. He was not speaking from a stage in a theater designed with perfect acoustics; he was outdoors on a hill without a sound system. Even though he was concerned his speech might “miss the mark,” his lack of confidence never showed and his message got through.

Today, it is not uncommon for conjurers to perform in less than ideal circumstances, too. Things happen. The sound system fails or the client moves the performance area outdoors or the audience is far bigger than expected. If so, your ability to properly orate and project your voice is often the theatrical tool that will save the day.

In my own role as a trickster, tale-swapper, and tunesmith for Disney, the performances are sometimes indoors but can be moved to a pool deck, around a campfire, or in the shade of an oak tree at the drop of a hat. My presentations are specifically designed to appear impromptu and spur-of-the-moment so, as a rule, sound systems are never used. There are no acoustics involved in these outdoor venues, especially when surrounded by soft sand. A regular speaking voice will carry just a few feet before the sound drops right into the dirt, so knowing how to project my voice is critical.

Understand this: projecting your voice well is not yelling. It is more accurately defined as control of your air and energy blended with a deep understanding of your topic, well-practiced enunciation, and unshakeable confidence. At first, vocal projection feels awkward and a bit like shouting, but with understanding and practice it becomes easier and effective. When a performer projects his or her voice well, the audience is not paying attention to the increased volume. Instead, they are focused on the message and relax in the performer's control of the venue. In other words, the guests feel comfortable by knowing their entertainment is in good hands.

Fortune favors the prepared, so have something to say. Know your script. Rehearse until every "um" and "uh" has been eliminated. As a conjurer, everything you say and do on stage is unique to your audience. With this foundation under your belt, you will naturally exhibit confidence when speaking in front of a large group. That secure knowledge and clear intention will be perceived as passion by your guests.

Before you step in front of the audience, do a few things to relax your upper body. Tension in your air passages can make your voice tremble or sound rough. Take several deep breaths, roll your neck and shoulders a few times, raise your arms over your head, and stretch for a moment. Humming long notes will warm up your vocal cords; your breathing will now be deep, easy, and unrestricted as you speak.

Open your mouth. Professional vocal coaches say that just opening your mouth more can solve the projection problem sometimes. Otherwise, your voice will not go far and the poor enunciation will make your words hard to understand. If President Lincoln had not enunciated his words with clarity, he would have lost the crowd's attention in their confusion. A person who mumbles when speaking comes across as disinterested. Your guests will take it personally, because the only thing you are communicating is apathy.

When I first started projecting my voice, I practiced by reading long jokes and funny stories aloud to a friend who stood on the other side of the room. Try it and you will find yourself emphasizing words and acting out the tale a little. Congratulations; you have added color and spirit to your voice.

Stand up straight. If you are not using good posture when speaking, you are strangling your voice. Since your voice is created by the flow of air, it needs a clear path from your lungs and past your vocal cords so it can travel out of your mouth to be heard. Standing erect allows you to pull air in as easily as you expel it through your voice. When projecting your voice, stand tall with your head facing your guests. Your shoulders should be held back, not slouched over. If you have to look down at something, then pause and do so; but look back at the guests before you begin speaking again.

Finally, projecting your voice means just that; you are projecting your voice to a point further away than normal. This requires you to tightly focus your energy when speaking, particularly when it is necessary to speak softly. Professional singers do this all the time. By increasing the energy when singing softly, the quieter voice is still audible but not weak and the emotion is maintained. For conjurers, this technique creates intimacy; the guests naturally lean forward to pay closer attention.

As you practice vocal projection, your voice will become strained at some point. When that happens, stop and relax. Rest your throat, drink some tea, read a book, and come back to it later. Be consistent and you will be heard no matter where you perform.

### **NOSTALGIA**

What follows is a pleasant diversion into mentalism for orators of poetry. Make a photocopy of the

## the art and craft of conjuring cont'd

free-verse poem below. Cut it out, fold it, and keep it in your wallet.

### NOSTALGIA

1 Life presents such grace and toil—  
2 As love, though fruitless, brings joy.  
3 Chasms yawn to challenge desires,  
4 Tho' laughter fills each room of home.  
5 Mirth brings forth smiles and tears.  
6 Memories return to visit again—  
7 As Leviathan's tides rise and fall!  
8 Long we all for the warmth of lore  
9 That lingers as coals of cooled fire.  
10 Days are gone 'ere we waxed immortal  
11 When tragedy lurked 'round every dawn—  
12 We labored to ken the world's weight.  
13 A winter lifeless beyond the season;  
14 Even music scarce comfort proved!  
15 Contentment itself seldom certain.  
16 O' fond memories held—but just only—  
17 Til' questions rise of thine own history  
18 And the truest answer given is 'maybe.'  
19 The mind and heart assailed with doubt  
20 But Spring gives forth new birth.  
21 Hope leaps up and greets each day—  
22 Are not those the times recalled?  
23 Smile and delight o'er triumphs,  
24 Dance and jig to the music of our kin,  
25 These times are surely God-breathed!  
26 Though trials will assail, none will remain—  
27 Returning to youth, contentment reigns.

By **SAMUEL LORING AYRES** (1835–1917) Stamford, Conn.  
Served as U.S. Naval Engineer from 1860 to 1910. Promoted  
to Rear Admiral in 1906 for military contributions during the  
Civil War. "Nostalgia" copyright 1965 by Garden Path Press.  
Used by permission.

In presentation, the poem is passed about and a lady is invited to assist. Say, *"In the spirit of nostalgia, I wish to take you back to memories from long ago. Do you remember the first date you had? Do you remember how old you were at the time? Do not speak that number aloud because that is certainly a private memory for you; we all just hope your first date was worth remembering."*

Continue by saying, *"This poem was written at the turn of the last century in what is called 'free*

*verse.’ In other words, nothing rhymes. Please find the line that matches your age at the time of your first date. Now read that line silently. I like a good poem as much as anyone else, but I like it when the words rhyme. I want you to be the better poet. Look at the last word in your line. Do you see it? Please take a moment and think of any word that rhymes with it.”*

Divining her word involves a limited-range force along with a small anagram. The request to recall her age upon her first date will force her to read a line between 13 and 18. If you wish, you can guarantee this range by first asking her to recall her high school years and then ask the first-date question. Lines 13 through 18 in the poem have been specifically written so the last word has only one possible rhyming word. Below are lines 13 through 18 with the forced rhyming word in parenthesis.

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 13 A winter lifeless beyond the season;      | (reason)  |
| 14 Even music scarce comfort proved!         | (moved)   |
| 15 Contentment itself seldom certain.        | (curtain) |
| 16 O’ fond memories held – but just only –   | (lonely)  |
| 17 Til’ questions rise of thine own history  | (mystery) |
| 18 And your most truthful answer is ‘maybe.’ | (baby)    |

To determine the correct rhyming word, memorize this simple progressive anagram shown here:

- E** curtain / baby
- O** mystery
- N** moved
- S** lonely / reason

Say, *“By rhyming a random word from this free-verse poem, this means you are now thinking of a word you just made up. Hold that secret word in your mind and I will do my best to pull it out, even if I have to do it letter by letter.”*

In standard progressive anagram fashion, you call out the bold letters one by one. A “yes” response moves you down the chart to the next bold letter. However, a “no” response moves you to the right for the correct word.

If your guest answers “no” to the first letter (E), then you know she is thinking of either “curtain” or “baby.” Respond by saying, “I see a room – perhaps a nursery – because I see a curtain blowing gently on a breeze towards a baby’s cradle.” No matter which word your guest has chosen, this is a certain hit.

As a side note, the word “nostalgia” refers to a remembrance of times from eons ago. The bold letters in the anagram also spell EONS. Perhaps you will find this wee mnemonic helpful as you recall the chart during your performance. ♦

**Nostalgia poem and effect are actually copyright 2012 by Mick Ayres. He can be reached on Facebook or at [mick@mickayreswares.com](mailto:mick@mickayreswares.com).**

# TECHNICALLY SPEAKING BY BRUCE KALVER

Bruce Kalver is a professional magician and tech guru. Bruce is a past president of the S.A.M. and a frequent performer at The Magic Castle in Hollywood.



## TRIVIAL TIME FILLER

Besides magic, magicians are always looking for add-ons to either lengthen the show or become more useful for those corporate events. I found something fun and useful that plays big, costs very little, and is extremely easy to use. Let's talk about **TriviaMaker**.



**TriviaMaker** is an app that makes it easy to create game shows for the crowd to participate in. You create the game on the app and then have people take out their smartphones and go to the website. They put in a game code and they are participating. They type in answers or press buttons on their own phones and it shows up on the screen.

The app keeps score, plays applause or wrong answer sound effects, and you control everything from you iPad or iPhone.

Games to create include an A, B, C, or D answer game, a Spin the Wheel game, a Jeopardy-style game, and even a Family Feud-style game. They are easy to create and easy to access online.

Some examples of how you can use this:

For a birthday party, talk to the parents and ask them questions ahead of time such as, "What is Joey's favorite flavor ice cream" or "Where did he fly on his first plane ride?" As a warm-up, you can play Birthday Trivia with the kids on the parent's big screen TV.

For corporate events, hire yourself out as an emcee for a game show that you create and present.

Use the game show as a survey. There are lots of uses for this app. **TriviaMaker** is available in the iPhone app store as well as Google play for Android. It is free to download and has a very low yearly fee of \$20-\$30 to take advantage of all the features. You can also check it out on their website, [www.triviamaker.com](http://www.triviamaker.com).

## A PUZZLING GIVE-AWAY

I have noticed that micro jigsaw puzzles are becoming very popular. 150-piece puzzles in an oversized test tube are everywhere. Companies that make them to order are all over the Internet. Let me recommend [www.everythingpromo.com](http://www.everythingpromo.com).

Search on their site for "jigsaw puzzle" and you will see them. The minimum order is 300 for \$2.89 each. These are great give-aways for the birthday child or promo material for clients. Order more and the price goes down. Put your promo poster or any photograph on these puzzles. Check it out!



## THE PHONE WHO KNOWS

This column is not a review column. Rather, it is a recommendation column. I don't waste space on my page telling you how bad something is. I use this precious space to tell about good things I've discovered. I had mixed feelings telling you about a new trick by David Jonathan called **VOX**, but ultimately I decided to devote the space to recommend it.



I'll start by saying I love this effect. I've tried it out on many people this past week and it absolutely kills. It is a wonderful "wow" experience for anyone who witnesses it. I am happy with the trick and will use it as part of my repertoire. The effect is an Any Card at Any Number (ACAAN), only instead of you doing it, it's Siri on your iPhone who performs it.

The spectator is given a deck of cards and is asked to keep cutting the cards as many times as they would like. You ask Siri to name a card. After she does, you then ask her to name a number from one to fifty-two. When the spectator counts down to the number, the named card is there.

I know what you are thinking. No, it is not an app. You are using the real Siri. You can repeat the effect multiple times with a different ending. You never touch the deck. Yes, it does look impossible.

David has used a feature of the iPhone that does all the work for you. He's done a lot of thought and programming to make it easy for you to present this effect. You do not need to be a programming genius to do this effect. There are no secret touches on the screen or secret moves. You literally ask Siri the two questions and the rest is done automatically.

So what was my hesitation to recommend this effect? When you buy it, all you get is a piece of paper with a QR code linking to a ninety-minute video. After spending the money, only getting a piece of paper is just not exciting. I think a download would have been more satisfying. Thinking about it though, there are no props needed and the video is really well done. He gives you six ways to present the effect, including an easy way, a perfect way, a challenging way, etc.

In the end, I am happy to recommend **VOX**. David worked very hard to make it a perfect routine. I'll be using it a lot. **VOX** is available from your favorite magic dealer for \$25.

## SHAKE IT LIKE A DECK OF CARDS



This free app does one thing: it reveals a card in a magical way. Your phone is sleeping with a black screen. You simply shake the phone and the selected card fades into view. One presentation can be placing the deck on top of the phone and slowly shaking the cards off until you get to the phone screen, which has the card on the screen. It's a simple app but has some possibilities. If nothing else, it is a quick and easy way to reveal a selected card.

Look for **Shaking Card Trick** in the iPhone App Store. The app is free.

## technically speaking cont'd

### GET ME A LADDER



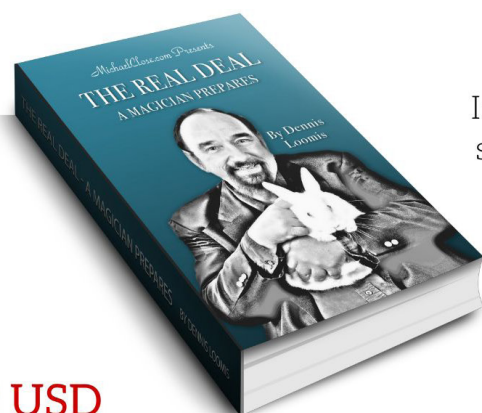
George Schindler sent me an “Is this anything?” email with a link to what could possibly be an appearing ladder. It’s a real ladder you can use around your house. The way it folds is reminiscent of the Appearing Ladders George used to sell in his Showbiz Services magic business.

The ladder, called the Yvan Telescoping Ladder, is thirty-three inches high and nineteen inches wide when folded down. You pull on the top rung and it telescopes up to twelve feet high. Looking at it, I feel it would fit in a large suitcase and can “appear” quickly. Besides magic, it’s a pretty useful ladder to use backstage! You can find it on Amazon.com for about \$100. ♦

## THE REAL DEAL – A MAGICIAN PREPARES

By Dennis Loomis

Foreword by Gene Anderson



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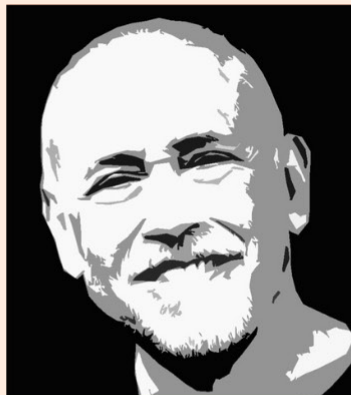
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