



Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
December 2015

Volume 11, Issue 4

November's meeting

November's meeting theme was *Silks and Vintage Magic*, offered by **Matthew Stafford** who brought in a number of very colourful silks to share with us.

Mark Hogan performed a **Mark Mason** silk & sponge routine using a borrowed bill, but the bill is never returned – so we discussed extensions to the effect to handle the return of the bill. Mark also displayed in a number of different thumb tips to use with silks.

The vintage magic was handled courtesy of **Mike Fisher**, who set up a display of some very old magic sets and effects, including the *Vanishing Mermaid* (plus its magazine ad from 1950!), the *Magic Pencil* made famous by past members of our club that attaches to your button hole, a beautiful vintage Owens *Vanishing Birdcage*, and the *Floating Lady* (a tiny lady on a tiny stage!). Mike also brought in a few vintage magic books, including his first magic book! Matthew also brought in and demonstrated a vintage *Fraidy Cat Rabbit*.

Mike ended the night with a new *Slydini silk routine* he has been working on, where he ties knots into 2 sets of silks, placed them into two wine glasses, and the knots vanish! He then takes the silks to the audience and lets them hold the knots and even tie the knots, and the knots still vanish. Finally he takes both sets of silks, puts them back into the glasses, and the knots reappear! What a great routine!

Next Meeting:

Date: Wednesday, December 9

Time: 7:30 PM

Topic: CHRISTMAS MAGIC!

**Beal Secondary School
525 Dundas Street, London
T-253**

Thanks to Mike and Matthew for bringing their silks, vintage magic and routines!

Mark Hogan

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!
Please send any original reviews, magic
tricks or routines to:
magic_london@yahoo.ca

December's Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, December 9
TIME: 7:30 PM
PLACE: Beal Secondary School
T-253

TOPIC: CHRISTMAS MAGIC

Just in time for the holidays! With magic shows popular during the Christmas season, why not show off and learn some Christmas routines for this year!

Bring any routines that have a Christmas theme – or better yet, take a trick and wrap it in a Christmas theme! You may find a way to extend some of your favourite effects.

So come out and have some Christmas cheer with us – and learn some magic you can use during “the most wonderful time of the year”!

News Of Interest



Magic trick apps for iPhones and Androids

(The Wall Street Journal)

Developers have been conjuring magic apps since the iPhone 1, according to **Bruce Kalver**, a former president of the *Society of American Magicians* and author of a column about tech and magic for the society's magazine. Now the *App Store* is teeming with them. Some are virtual playing cards that will secretly tell you which one a spectator has chosen. Others use augmented reality to make a selected card materialize on the screen.

The bulk of these offerings are underwhelming—which is no wonder. “Most magic apps don’t take into account that the audience...already knows how amazing the electronic device is,” said **Teller**, the usually mum member of the magic duo **Penn & Teller**. To persuasively astonish someone with an app, he added, you need to draw attention away from the fact that trickery is afoot in the phone. Mr. Kalver concurred: “The best apps are the ones where it doesn’t look like the smartphone is doing the work.”

The Misdirection Lesson

The effect: You take a friend’s hand and snap a photo of his palm with your iPhone. After placing the device face-up on his palm, you watch as an image of a crawling spider makes its way across the screen. You move the screen aside and ask your friend to touch it. When he does, he discovers a plastic spider attached to the back of his hand. Screaming ensues.

The secret app: “*Magic Spider*” (\$3 for Android and iPhone). A plastic spider and double-sided tape are also required.

The back story: This isn’t so much a magic trick as a prank, said Mr. Kalver, but he recommends it because it’s a quintessential lesson in misdirection: You stick the spider to the underside of the spectator’s hand while snapping the

photo. "I teach young magicians that trick because it shows you don't have to be extreme to create misdirection," said Mr. Kalver.

The variation: If you don't want to scare the bejeezus out of your friends, splurge on a \$3 in-app purchase that lets you perform the same routine using a plastic butterfly. To make the premise more benign, Mr. Kalver suggested telling a story about a magical butterfly that brings good luck if it lands on your hand. To humanely reveal the plastic butterfly, gently turn your friend's hand over. "The audience, rather than jump, will smile," said Mr. Kalver.

The Card Trick

The effect: You tell your friends there's a new, experimental feature for **Siri**. It may sound crazy, you continue, but Siri can now sense your brain waves to *read your mind*. To prove it, you spread out a deck of cards face up and ask your friend to touch any one, without naming it aloud so your phone can't hear. You launch Siri, and, lo and behold, she names the correct card.

The secret app: "A.I. Magic" (\$5, for iPhone), which has a surprisingly realistic mock Siri interface.

Background: This is one of the many magic apps that will reveal a selected card with a little more flourish than a simple "ta-da!" Like other such apps, it lets you furtively tell it which card your friend chose. The "Penn & Teller Chat Magic Trick" app (\$2, for iPhone) is essentially the same trick, except that instead of involving a phony version of Siri, your friend uses your phone to "send" a text to Penn Jillette or Teller and the magician "writes" her back naming the selected card.

Variation: To up the wow factor, Teller suggested forcing a card—a magic technique whereby the spectator unwittingly chooses the card you want. (Search "Hindu Shuffle Force" online for an easy version to learn.) Combining two tricks—one that does the effect (in this case, the app) with another (the force) to obscure the first—is "a deep, deep, very important magic principal," Teller said.

The High-Tech Prediction

The effect: You tell your friends you're about to perform a prediction trick but admit that such illusions are easy to pull off if a magician has a plant in the audience. To prove nobody is in cahoots with you, ask your friends to each call out numbers that, in turn, someone multiplies on your iPhone calculator. You ask a friend to look at the last two digits of the result, flip to that page in a joke book you have handy and read the first joke there. Before he gets to the punch line, you ask everyone to check their email on their phones. A message you sent just before starting the trick contains the punch line.

The secret app: *Cesara! iCalc Pro* (\$7, for iPhone)

Background: The app, recommended by Mr. Kalver, looks like the iPhone's standard calculator. Without breaking the magician's code, let's just say that with a little subterfuge, you "predict" the result of a complex calculation. In a mentalism trick **Penn & Teller** perform, they use joke books because the payoff "is not just a repetition of information but a *joke*," said Teller. "It has content and isn't just a chance word or number."

Variation: Allow your audience to choose among three joke books rather than offering only one. To ensure they select the book with your prediction, use a classic force technique called the *Magician's Choice*. (Instructions are widely available online.) It's an easy way to layer on a standard trick that obfuscates the smartphone trickery.

Star of Broadway's "The Illusionists" entertains office staff

(Vanity Fair)

Watch **Adam Trent**, star of Broadway's "*The Illusionists*" entertains the office staff at *Vanity Fair*. (My guess is that you'll know every one of them!)

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/11/adam-trent-the-illusionist-office-magic>

'Live' from the Magic Castle

(Jim Atkinson)

Check out these pictures from our own **Jim Atkinson** all the way from Hollywood's **Magic Castle**:



Derek Hughes almost disqualified on America's Got Talent

(CityPages.com)

Derek Hughes is a magician, comedian, and actor. Turns out he's also a bit of a historian, at least in regards to his craft. He recounts the career of a 19th century French magician named **Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin**: "He was super influential for the craft. Think of a magician in your mind, with the top hat, tuxedo, and maybe a three-legged table. That wasn't always what people thought when they thought of a magician."

Up until Robert-Houdin's time, magicians dressed more like wizards, complete with the pointy hat. "Robert-Houdin became incredibly popular in affluent circles, performing parlor magic. What he did that other magicians weren't doing at the time was wearing the attire of his audience."

Hughes notes that magician **David Blaine** used this approach in the late '90s, when he did his first *Street Magic* special. "He's wearing jeans and a T-shirt, so when he walks up to you, you don't assume he's a performer. That makes the magic seem more impossible, because he looks just like you or me. But he has these powers."

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Robert-Houdin's influence can be seen in the craft to this day. "He is the archetype of a magician and he was so imitated," Hughes says. "An American magician even borrowed his name." That American was named **Erik Weisz**, but the stage name he chose was **Houdini**, which he thought meant *Houdin-like*. "Every magician today is a derivative of Robert-Houdin. He was an actor playing a person who had special powers."

It was this notion that inspired Hughes, who had been interested in magic since the age of 10, to take acting classes. In fact, he went on to major in theater at the *University of Minnesota*. "I found out acting is a whole new magic kit. It's the power of make believe; to tell a story, and move people."

Hughes is now becoming a much-sought-after performer, having been given a boost by his appearance on *America's Got Talent*, as well as *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*. He gambled a little when appearing on the latter, as it nearly conflicted with *AGT*. Had his episode of *Fool Us* run while he was still on *AGT*, he would have been disqualified. "I was so nervous, because *Fool Us* started airing in July," he explains. "I went on it, but didn't tell anybody at *AGT*, and my fingers were crossed that it would air after I got voted off or won *AGT*, because the contract is strict and scary."

Hughes tries to recall some of the stipulations. "We own all your material in any known medium now or to ever be invented in all the known universes.' So, I can't ever go to Mars and start a show based on what I did on *AGT*," he laughs.

He got away with it, and used *AGT* as a learning experience — not only as a national platform, but also listening to everything the judges had to say, particularly **Howard Stern**. "He was amazing and so supportive," Hughes says, corroborating the perception that Stern is, in fact, a mensch. "He really is. After one performance, he compared me to **Doug Henning**." Stern couldn't have made a bigger compliment, as Henning was an early hero of Hughes.

"I was 12 when I went to see him at the *Orpheum* in Minneapolis," Hughes says. "And it was one of those pivotal moments. I had been into magic for about two years at that time, and I raised my hand when he needed an assistant from the audience. It was like the quickening, that rush, I just knew he was going to pick me." And Henning did just that.

Once onstage, Hughes informed Henning that he too was a magician. "And Henning, so beautiful and supportive says, 'I'm sure you are.'" Looking out at the crowd, Hughes knew he had definitely found his calling.

"So Stern comparing me to him was so thrilling," he says.

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Concept by: Steve Seguin

The Shell Game is a free newsletter sent to members of the London Magicians Guild and other people in the community interested in magic.

Opinions expressed do not reflect the views of the London Magicians Guild.

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