



Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
February 2016

Volume 11, Issue 6

January's meeting

It was a cold and snowy winter's night – and not a lots of folks came out. But those who did saw and presented some terrific stuff!

Matthew Stafford and **Mike Fisher** were discussing some different types of saw illusions and livestock cages, and surfed the 'Net looking for ones used by different magicians. (If anyone sees a Harry Anderson Death Saw for less than \$5000, contact Mike!)

Matthew Stafford showed us a video of a show in which he used 2 new HUGE rabbits in one *square circle* routine. And then he actually presents the routine live (pulling out a magic hat, giant straw, top hat, fancy scarf, hanky, and one HUGE rabbit – that didn't act up for the rest of the night!).

Matthew also brought some clear plastic cards with different playing cards printed on them – and used those to determine a spectator's thought-of card!

Mike Fisher showed off a new effect he had recently built – *six treasure chests spinning on a wheel!* A spectator could put anything of value in any box without Mike looking and spin the wheel – and Mike could determine which box contained the item! Very cool idea, Mike!

Next Meeting:

Date: Wednesday, February 10

Time: 7:30 PM

Topic: ROUND ROBIN!

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

Mike also brought a beautiful *Fairchild Double-Wrist Chopper*. Two spectators put their hands in the device and held onto a magic wand while Mike pulls the solid steel plate right through both their wrists!

He also performed a nice *Out of this World* routine using cards imprinted with Bess and Harry Houdini's picture! **Mark Hogan** showed a variation of the effect that could be used as a follow-up. Plus he showed us his take on **Ted Outerbridge's** *Time of Day* routine for determining the time set by a spectator on a beautiful old pocket watch indicating the time of his grandfather's death!

Mark Hogan performed Michael Ammar's version of *Ambitious Classic*, where the Ambitious Card routine is performed on a smaller and smaller number of cards until only one card remains – a spectator's selection not seen during the entire effect!

As well, Mark showed **Petrick & Mia's** *Spirit Card*, where a selected card is returned to the case and vanished – then reappears reversed in the centre! He also did two Phil Goldstein card effects – *Choice Flesh*, where the 4 Kings eat playing cards but leave the spectator's selection alone – and *Jumping Bean Aces* – where the Joker turns 3 Kings into 3 Aces – and then turns itself into the final King!

Thanks to those who came out – the magic was excellent!

Mark Hogan

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!

Please send any original reviews, magic tricks or routines to:

magic_london@yahoo.ca

February's Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, February 10

TIME: 7:30 PM

**PLACE: Beal Secondary School
T-253**

TOPIC: ROUND ROBIN

The idea is simple – we go around the table to each person & they present anything they have or can think of. We keep going until we run out of tricks ... or collapse from exhaustion.

Bring anything you have that you want to share ... and as many of them as you like ... or just do something impromptu that comes into your head. Everyone gets their chance to shine ... and we all get to see a LOT of magic.

We've done this a few times now and it seems to be working really well. Dust off some tried-and-true effects or demo something you've never done ... we'd love to see them all!

News Of Interest



Magic for the eyes by a deaf magician

(Wisconsin State Journal)

The magician known as **Magic Morgan** is a showman first — whether making audiences laugh with his comic timing or inspiring gasps as he makes a flapping white dove appear from thin air.

It's the happy and amazed expressions he sees from the stage that are gratifying. The applause at the end of his shows matters less, because **Matthew "Magic" Morgan** doesn't hear it.

Morgan, who is deaf, is one of Wisconsin's many colorful magicians. He and his wife and stage partner, **Liliana**, are frequent performers at [Kids in the Rotunda](#) at the *Overture Center*, and will be making an appearance there Saturday, with free, family-friendly shows at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

An interpreter is also part of the show, translating the couple's *American Sign Language* into verbal English for non-ASL users.

The Morgans will bring a stage full of classic magic props: color-changing silk handkerchiefs, decks of cards, illusionist's boxes and animals that play a role in their stage act. Children Elijah, 11, and Samantha, 8, are also in their parents' show.

"We are our own brand," Morgan explained through his longtime friend and hired sign-language interpreter, Colleen Keating. [Magic Morgan's act](#) is not only designed to awe, but to educate the audience.

"We can do everything except hear — that's our very simple, basic message," Morgan said. "We want everyone out there to know that if you work hard and work toward your goals, you can reach your dreams. We want to encourage everyone with that message.

"No matter what audience we're working with, when we look out there for their reaction, when we see smiles, that is where we get our satisfaction and know we've done our job."

Morgan, who turns 42 next week, discovered magic as a young boy living in West Allis. Born deaf, with hearing parents and a brother, he became entranced by the magic tricks of his maternal grandfather, **Carl Andress**, who had once worked for a carnival under the stage name **Waxie**.

Morgan spent hours mastering tricks and studying magic books from the library, according to his profile in "*Silent Magic*" by **Simon J. Carmel**. He began attending [Wisconsin School for the Deaf](#) in Delavan, living there through the week. Each weekend when he came home he made a pilgrimage to his local magic shop to sample its latest tricks.

Both Morgan and his wife credit their families and their schools for the deaf for providing them with a great education, role models and opportunities they can't imagine getting elsewhere.

"When I was 15, my teachers caught me doing magic" and soon put him on stage, Morgan said. Without them and the support of his parents, "I'm not sure I would be here today."

At 16, Morgan's aunt presented him with a sports coat sewn with the name "**Magic Morgan**," and the stage name stuck.

Today, Morgan is the longtime president of the *U.S. Deaf Magicians Society* and recently became president of the *World Deaf Magicians*, an association of 300 performers from 47 countries. Last year Liliana won the top award for stage presence at the *World Deaf Magicians conference* in Chicago. They are co-authors of the instructional book "*It's Magic*."

There are barriers for a deaf magic act — such as the cost of an interpreter, which can be prohibitive for some smaller venues, Morgan said.

"We're not through breaking barriers. We've had some frustrations," he said. "We're not welcome everywhere, but people realize once we're in that it's not a bad deal."

The Magic Morgan and Liliana show is highly visual, without the stand-up jokes and banter some stage magicians use. Instead, Magic Morgan and Liliana focus on physical showmanship and theatrical flair.

"The performance doesn't really need an interpreter," said interpreter Keating, who has voiced many shows for the Morgans. But if a performance doesn't have any talking at all, hearing people "feel uncomfortable," she said.

"We keep our magic real visual, and we always make sure kids get involved," Morgan said. "And they sure do here in Madison. There's a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of interest here. We have animals in the show, and we want to include humor. We keep the show diverse for a diverse audience."



Why is magic still relevant today?

(FastCoCreate.com)

If you think about it for more than a few minutes, the fact that magic is still a popular form of entertainment is kind of surprising. When the first magic theater opened in Paris in 1845, people had few opportunities to see the impossible. Right now, without leaving your chair, you can watch a lifelike giant lizard stomp the hell out of San Francisco; you can control your favorite football players on a photorealistic gridiron; you can send a message around the world in seconds flat. With all of these things in mind, the idea that magic is still relevant to people seems hard to imagine.

But magic *is* relevant. Top magicians still sell out theaters, Hollywood scores regular blockbusters with films about magicians, and—as evinced by shows like Syfy's *Wizard Wars* and the CW's *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*—the reality of an illusion crafted by sleight of hand and misdirection can catch our eyes even when that same screen could also be used to show big-time special effects.

No one knows magic—and how it stays relevant—like **Penn Jillette**, and he can trace the evolution of the form in recent years from **David Copperfield** ("he had a debonair quality that magicians jumped on") to **Doug Henning** ("he created the kind of casual hippie magician") to current stars like **David Blaine** and **Criss Angel**.

"The biggest change in our lifetime was **David Blaine** changing magic from a proscenium to street magic, and changing the attention from being on the magician to being on the audience and how they reacted," Jillette says. "His first magic special was a turning point that changed magic in this country and in the world for the past 20 years. That yielded wonderful, wonderful stuff. And we'll see what the next phase is."

Starting from Scratch

The thing about magic that distinguishes it from every other art form is that, while certain mechanical skills—like card and coin sleight-of-hand—are relevant in multiple tricks, for the most part, magicians have to start from scratch every time they want to develop a new trick.

"Magic is very different from many other forms, because when you learn to play the piano, or to play the guitar, you've learned a skill that can transfer directly to other forms of artistic expression—once you've learned to play a Chopin piece, you can kind of play some Bach. With magic, it's very odd, because every time you want to write another piece of music to perform, you have to build the instrument," Jillette says.

A new trick that **Penn & Teller** are developing for their act involves vanishing a cow dressed as an elephant (when Penn talks, you tend to nod your head and not interrupt). But a trick like that doesn't share much connection with the tricks that the duo have performed in the past.

"We've been working on that for six years with a huge amount of money and a huge amount of hours," Jillette says. "That has been our quest. There's nothing in that trick that we've done before, so what you learn in magic is that you don't really learn how to do things that you're going to do again. What you have to do is build the whole instrument and start from scratch."

Knowing what's possible

More than anything, as Jillette puts it, the real skill that a professional magician with experience crafting new tricks develops is knowing what's even within the realm of possibility. He quotes Danish physicist **Neils Bohr** when describing the mindset of the magician: "An expert is someone who has made all of the mistakes before." In other words, if you—assuming you-the-reader are not someone with an extensive history in creating magic tricks—were to decide that you wanted to walk into the center of a crowd and vanish with nothing covering your body, Jillette would shoot you down right away.

"I would dismiss it instantly as being impossible," he says. "If I brainstorm with Teller, the ideas that we bring up are ideas that, in some way, we can do. We may not know *how* to do them. In fact, most of the time, we don't know how to do them, but we have a sense of what's possible."

Using Technology

Because magic is an old form of entertainment, it seems like incorporating technology into it would be cheating, but Jillette says tech has always had a place in the magicians' bag. "Technology used to be a big thing in magic," he notes. "Movies were created by magicians for magic shows. Electromagnets were used in magic before they were used anywhere else. Mirrors, of course, were new technology used by magic."

Adam Trent—who competed in *Wizard Wars* as "The Futurist," says technology can be a bridge for audience engagement and has used it in his tricks.

"Technology almost brings an audience's guard down, because it's stuff they're familiar with," Trent says. "I don't think that audiences are really familiar with big boxes and spikes and flaming torches and stuff. When was the last time a regular person held one of those? But people hold pieces of technology in their hands every single day, so there's a whole set of assumptions and preconceived notions of what these tools are and how they work. It requires you to think a step further."

Trent takes these ideas in interesting places. One of his tricks, for example, involves wearing a GoPro on his head, so the audience can see the live projections of exactly what he sees—which means that the audience thinks that they're getting an inside look at how his act works. But in Trent's hands, it's just another way to manipulate and fool the audience—viewers watch the trick and focus on exactly what the magician wants them to see. By the end of the trick, the audience has been so misdirected that Trent manages to appear in the audience.

"That wasn't something that started as 'Ooh, I'm going to appear in the audience,' it started as 'I'm going to wear a GoPro on my head for a trick' and 'What can I do wearing this GoPro?'"

Letting constraints drive creativity

Ultimately, everyone has different ideas about how to make their act, and the magic tricks they use, relevant to savvy contemporary audiences. **Penn & Teller** like to devote years of study to tricks that only they could come up with—dressing cows up like elephants and getting them to disappear. **Adam Trent** likes to bring technology into an arena where it feels almost anachronistic. **Dan Sperry** tries to take his inspiration from all of the creative media that inspires him—"like a Kubrick film or something."

For Sperry—and for every magician—the limits of what can be accomplished are both their own imagination and the constraints of reality. And there's a lot of joy in that.

"Magic is great because you can do anything," Sperry says, "But in reality, you can't, because there are only X amount of things that magic can do. You can make something appear, you can make it disappear. You can make it float. You can make it go from one place to another: 'I've got something in this hand, and

another thing in this hand, and they change places!' You're limited to a handful of outcomes. In one sense, anything is possible, because it's magic. But by the same token, you're limited to these potential outcomes—so you have to work within those outcomes to make it really interesting for modern audiences. People react differently to magic."

Shell Game
Vol. 11, Issue 6
February 2016

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.

London Magicians Guild web site:
magiclondon.brinkster.net

London Magicians Guild e-mail:
magic_london@yahoo.ca