

Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
February 2025

Volume 18, Issue 6

January's meeting

It was the storm of storms! Well, maybe not quite that bad – but we got a doozy of a snow squall off the lake, which dumped a ton of snow in the morning, but at night it was clear enough to have our meeting, and the theme was “*Double, Paddle or Biddle*”. And we saw lots of effects where a Double, Paddle or Biddle move was used.

Mark Hogan performed **Erik Tait's** version of **Dai Vernon's** *All Backs*, where a deck of cards that were nothing but backs was waved over a photo of card faces -then the photo was empty and the faces appeared on the cards! **Andrew Olmstead** then show us some very slick demonstrations of showing a deck of cards as “all backs”. Mark also performed **Simon Lovell's** *Fingered Three*, where two selected cards change places – one of them in the spectator's hands.

Leo Martins did a very cool pseudo-hypnosis demonstration, where a hypnotized spectator could not drop a card held in his hand, and using a “double talk” technique, the spectator couldn't remember a card they just saw!

Peter Mennie showed us (and ask from us) his favourite “get-readys” for doubles (including one on the side of his leg!), and how they can be used in an *Ambitious Card* routine.

Next Meeting:

Date: Wednesday, FEBRUARY 12

Time: 7:00 PM

Topic: LEVITATIONS!

**Location: Beal Secondary School
525 Dundas Street, London
Room 253**

Jim Atkinson joined in the fun by showing **Mark Mason's** *Twenty One* card effect, where two nines change into two tens, which then visually change into an Ace and a Jack (for 21)!

And **Andrew Olmstead** won the night by showing us his variation of *Jazz Aces*, where four guys (played by the four Kings) and four snowmen (played by the four eights) change places, all to classical music! Everyone raved about this - it was really beautiful and magical. (Editor's note: We all said we hope he markets this soon! My dibs for the name is "*Snowmen Symphony*")

It was a great night and a terrific way to fill a cold and wintery evening. Hope to see everyone next month!

Mark Hogan

February's meeting

DATE: Wednesday, February 12

TIME: 7:00 PM

**PLACE: Beal Secondary School
525 Dundas Street, London
Room 253**

TOPIC: LEVITATIONS!

How many of us levitate things in our performances? I don't see a lot of hands! So why not come out and see and learn some levitations?

Scott Hood has graciously volunteered to show and teach us his *floating hank routine*! And likely some of us have some thread, bands or other goodies in our magic drawer that can be brought out and played with.

So come out on February 12 and learn how to levitate!

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!

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

magic_london@yahoo.ca

News Of Interest



Champions of Magic at Canada Life Place - March 26, 2025

Following a decade touring the world as one of the most successful magic shows in history, the *Champions Of Magic* team are back with an *explosive ALL NEW show* featuring thrilling and mind-bending illusions.

Fusing their skills in grand scale magic, a flair for spectacle and undeniable showmanship, this interactive, high-energy show is sure to entertain the entire family. Combining their signature humor with groundbreaking magic, the world's only team of illusionists present a brand-new production unlike anything that has come before.

"Dazzles audiences with a show like no other." – Broadway World

For tickets, visit: [Champions of Magic | Canada Life Place](#)



David Williamson at FISM Italy 2025

(FISMIItaly2025.com)

We are thrilled to announce that **David Williamson**, one of the world's most talented and entertaining magicians, will join us at the *World Championship of Magic, FISM Italy 2025!*

Considered to be one of the world's most talented magicians, **David Williamson** knows the secret of capturing the imagination of any audience. A born showman and an unusually accomplished sleight of hand artist, David dazzles audiences with a unique and delightful brand of entertainment, blending heart-stopping magic with side-splitting hilarity.

David has been featured on *ABC's Champions of Magic*, where he appeared with **Princess Stephanie** as he performed his miracles at different locations in and around Monaco. David has also co-starred in several top-rated prime-time network specials including *CBS' Magicians' Favorite Magicians*, *NBC's Houdini: Unlocking His Mysteries*, and *NBC's World's Greatest Magic III*. He was

seen recently on *The CW's Masters Of Illusion* TV series as well as *America's Got Talent*.

In 1981 David won first place in the *International Brotherhood of Magicians'* sleight of hand competition. That year he also became the first ever recipient of the prestigious *Gold Cups Award of Excellence* in close-up magic. David was voted "*Close Up Magician of the Year*" two years in a row by his peers at Hollywood's renowned *Magic Castle*. He was also twice awarded the "*Magic Castle Lecturer of the Year*" and the "*Magic Castle Parlor Magician of the Year*". David was voted "*Most Wanted Magician*" at the *2003 FISM convention* in Den Haag.

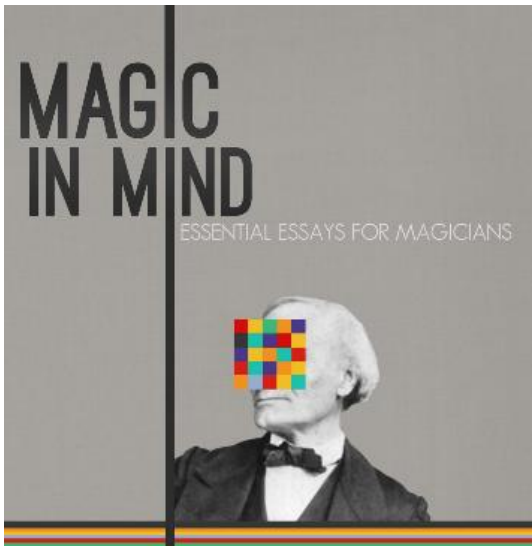
Recently David was named *Magician of the Year* by the *Academy of Magical Arts and Sciences* at the *Magic Castle* in Hollywood. He was also honored with the *Performance Fellowship* by the *Magic Castle's Academy of Magical Arts*. He was also recently awarded an *Honorary Lifetime Membership* by the *UK's Magic Circle*, the world's premier magical society. He is also the recipient of *The Magic Circle's 2022 Carlton Award for "Excellence in Comedy Magic."*

As host of the United Kingdom's acclaimed television series *The Magic Comedy Strip*, David's irresistible mix of humor and skill helped make it one of the highest rated shows in the country. He has created illusions for and performed in several commercials and has developed TV shows for *Walt Disney Productions* and *ABC*, as well as consulting for illusionists **David Copperfield's** and **David Blaine's** TV specials. Other network television appearances include *Masters Of Illusion* and *The World Magic Awards* special where he was named *Comedy Magician of the Year*.

A popular and respected teacher and creator of magic, Dave has travelled the world inspiring magic enthusiasts of all ages and abilities. His best-selling magic book, *Williamson's Wonders*, has been translated into six languages. His instructional videos *Sleight Of Dave*, *Dave 2*, *Magic Farm*, and *Ridiculous* are bestsellers worldwide. David continues to instruct magicians with his popular online *Sleight School*.

David is a featured performer in the World Tour of *The Illusionists Live* touring Australia, The United States, South Africa, Kuwait, and London's West End. He was featured in the cast of *The Illusionists Experience* at the *EIDorado Resort* in Reno. David recently starred in *Presto!* a new magic & variety show. David's new show *Ridiculous* recently debuted to rave reviews at Chicago's *Rhapsody Theater*.

David is also starring as the Ringmaster in *Cirque du Soleil's* exciting new show *Circus 1903* returning to *The Sydney Opera House* this holiday season. He has also has been a frequent favorite Guest Entertainer on *Disney Cruise Lines*.



An excerpt from *Magic in Mind: The Illusion of Impossibility*

(Magic in Mind)

A few years ago, **Joshua Jay** and **Andy Gladwin** from *Vanishing Inc.* released a collection of essays from some of the world's most famous magicians, called "*Magic in Mind: Essential Essays for Magicians*".

Here is an excerpt from one of those essays:

The Big Lie

As magicians, lying is part of our arsenal of weapons. Without concealing or distorting the truth there is no deception. Unfortunately, we also lie to ourselves. The biggest and most insidious lie is the one we saw on our first magic catalogue or in our first magic shop. Here is the lie:

IT'S FUN TO BE FOOLED!

This is a hurtful fabrication. It is not fun to be fooled. People do not like to be fooled. If it were fun to be fooled then **Richard Nixon** would still be President of the United States. The nature being demands seeking out answers to that which cannot be explained. People can become indignant, angry, or resentful if they are deceived. Being fooled is not a pleasant experience. Anyone who tells you differently is naive, stupid, or trying to sell you something.

But the definition of magic I am using demands that the spectators be fooled. If the spectators can concoct any satisfying solution then there is no magic. This is a dilemma; to accomplish my goal I must do the most hurtful thing possible to the spectators. What can I do? How do I soften the impact of the hurt and ease any possible resentment that the spectators may feel toward me? This problem of how to structure a routine in such a way that it minimizes the negative aspects of being fooled is of major importance. Unfortunately, few magicians are even aware of the *Big Lie*, and fewer still have ever considered how to solve the problem.

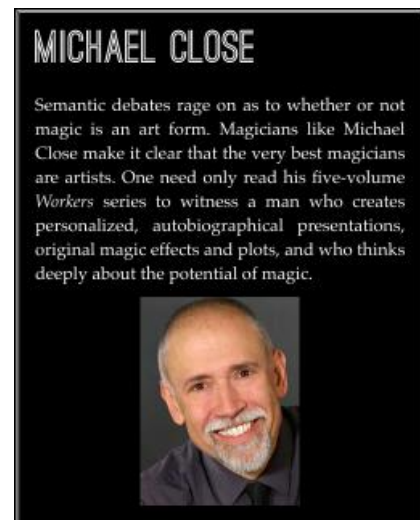
Curiously enough, someone has done research into this problem, and has developed results that point toward workable solutions. What is even more curious is that this information is almost totally unknown to magicians. This is magic's loss, and I intend to rectify the situation now. The information you are

about to learn will lead us away from *The Big Lie* (and all its related trauma) and will head it out of the woods.

Dr. Neglar's Study

Some months ago I was having a phone conversation with **Scotty York**. During the chat Scotty asked if I was familiar with a book called *Your Audience Really Doesn't Like Being Fooled* written by **Dr. William Nagler**. I was unfamiliar with this work. Scotty sent me some information. What I read came as both a revelation and vindication, since what **Dr. Nagler** had discovered in a laboratory setting totally agreed with what I had stumbled on through 14 years of performing for real people.

Dr. Nagler's study sprang from knowing about The Big Lie. Using more than 50 students as subjects, **Dr. Nagler** and his associates recorded both physiological and psychological data as the subjects watched magic performances. From this data **Dr. Nagler** extrapolated four approaches that would minimize the negative effects of being fooled. I was surprised to discover that those routines in my repertoire that I felt were the most effective fell into one or more of these categories. Through trial and error, over a long period of time, without realizing what I was doing, I had structured my routines to minimize audience animosity. **Dr. Nagler's** four categories are: *Conspiratorial*, *Triumphant*, *Distancing*, and *Non-magic*. I will explain each one.



Conspiratorial approach: the magician takes the spectator in his confidence, as if both were unable to understand why the trick works. My angle on this approach is, as much as possible, to have the spectator be responsible for the magic. Examples of this are *Dr. Strangetrick* and *The El Cheepo Magic Club*. The spectator is the one doing the trick. I'm as amazed as everyone else.

Triumphant approach: the trick has apparently failed, but the magician pulls it out at the end. This has the aspect of a sucker trick, but you don't shove the spectators' noses in it. While most people hate to be fooled, they also don't like to see a performer screw up a trick. When the trick has apparently gone astray, the spectators feel sorry for the magician. When the magician triumphs over apparent failure the spectators cheer his success, even though it means that they were fooled. An example of this occurs at the end of *The Frog Prince*, where it seems the frog found the wrong card.

Distancing approach: the magician removes himself one step away from the action by couching the entire trick in terms of a story. Almost every trick I

do involves this approach to some extent, but good examples are *The Pothole Trick* and *A Visit From Rocco*.

Non-magic approach: the comedy and by-play involved in the routine is really more important than the magic. *Down for the Count* is an example of this. These types of routines are important; it isn't vital that every routine be a brain-basher. If I perform three tricks at a table it is likely that the middle trick will be of this type.

If you examine the routines in the Workers series you will find that they fit into one or more of these categories. You can understand why I was both surprised and vindicated. I always knew that these routines "worked," but now I knew why.

In addition to **Dr. Nagler's** four categories I would offer two more suggestions, one from **Alex Elmsley** and one from myself. Elmsley suggested that if the spectators could anticipate the climax of a routine an instant before it happened, then even though they would be fooled they would feel some sense of accomplishment. I would agree with this assessment with the following warning: the technical requirements of the trick must be completed before the point in time when the spectators anticipate the climax. Here's what I mean: At the end of *The Frog Prince* the spectators realize the folded-up frog is going to be the selected card. But at the point that they realize this, the frog has already been switched. I am clean. Technically, the trick is over. But, as I mentioned in the last chapter, *The Card in the Box*, the spectator anticipation happens at the wrong time. They realize the card in the box will be the spectator's card, but I haven't switched it yet! I hope this clarifies my point.

One more suggested approach I would offer is this: the last trick of your performance need not fall into one of the above categories. After all, at the end of this trick you are leaving, so it is not vital that you be nice. *The Big Surprise* is not a "nice" trick. It kicks people in the head. But I don't care, because I'm walking offstage. I want people to remember me and the best way to accomplish that is to fool them to death just before I leave.

We're Back Home

I think we've had enough of a walk for one day. I did not discuss the theatrical structuring of a routine, but that can be a topic for another time. In this regard, though, some of the best advice on the subject was offered by **Alex Elmsley**. He suggested that at every point in time in a routine we ask ourselves two questions:

1. *Is something of interest happening?*
2. *Can the audience appreciate the effect?*

Elmsley's exposition on these two questions is required reading for anyone who is interested in presentation and showmanship. His entire essay can be found in *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley*, pages 3-14.

This wraps up the first part of my magical filtration system. Other essays will examine other elements. I hope that the above information will be useful as you build your own sieve.

Michael Close
Workers 3
1993

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Vol. 18, Issue 6
February 2025

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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