



Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
May 2006
Volume 1, Issue 8

April Meeting

April's meeting was our annual auction. And what an auction it was! There were more items for sale this night than some past auctions put together! It was a great turnout, and the bidding went fast and furious.

One of our former members, Bruce McKay, donated a large portion of his magic collection to the auction, which all proceeds going to the club. That helped the club raise more than \$180 on the evening!

As well, one of our guests made their performance to join the club. Gonzalo Arboleda gave a terrific performance of a handcuff escape. With both hands handcuffed and placed into a bag, he was able to free himself, even throwing in a bit of comedy by looking at his watch!

Congratulations and welcome to the club, Gonzalo.

- Mark Hogan

Next Meeting:
Wed. May 10, 7:00 pm
Beal Secondary School,
Room 225
525 Dundas St., London
Topic: Edible Magic

May's Meeting

Wed. May 10, 2006

We're having a competition, and you're invited. The topic – chosen mostly at random – is food. Come out to the meeting in May ready to do some magic involving food and/or drink. The person with the best routine will win a wonderful prize.



Word from the President

Seems like May's meeting will be all about voting.

First, we will be holding our elections for next year. We have 5 elected positions that work together to make sure the club runs smoothly each year: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Sergeant-at-Arms.

One or two of those positions will be vacant this year so we are looking for some new volunteers to get involved.

What do you have to do? Basically there is not a huge time commitment involved. The executive usually meets in late August or early September to talk about the coming year. Then during the year they give

their opinions on whether we should spend money on specific lecturers or anything else that may come up.

Without people getting involved, the club won't flourish. I'd particularly like to appeal to anyone who has ever been bored at a meeting or lecture to get involved. Make it less boring. It's your club.

The second set of voting will revolve around the Al Munroe Fellowship award. Each year we try to honor the individual who has made the greatest contribution to the club members. This can be interpreted in lots of different ways. Someone who helped you learn a new trick or skill. Someone who made you feel welcome at meetings. Someone who watched encouragingly while did a trick. Someone who made you laugh. Someone who made you want to go to the next meeting.

In May we nominate three people for the award. We then hold secret vote for the winner of this award, which gets announced at the June dinner show.

Finally, May's meeting while have a contest for best trick involving food or drink. Last year there was a competition for best torn and restored trick. There was a bit of confusion whether the contest was one of originality – best trick you created yourself – or performance of someone else's trick. The criteria for this year include both.

Whichever performance impresses you the most for whatever reason deserves your vote. Most popular routine wins \$50.

- Steve
Seguin



Annual Dinner Show

June's meeting will be our annual dinner show. We get together around 6:30 at the Elephant & Castle for dinner and good company. Around 8:00 we move into a private room downstairs and put on a show.

This event is open to anyone. There are no fees for non-members. Anyone is encouraged to bring guests – friends, family, anyone.

The show is open to anyone who wants to perform. We encourage people to put together 5 minutes or so of their best material. Basically something that you have performed for an audience or always wanted to. There are no explanations. No tricks you just learned that afternoon. Just a great chance to share your love of performing magic.

We always like to let the Elephant & Castle know how many people are coming. We'll go around and ask people at the May meeting if they are planning on coming and bringing guests.

If you want to perform, you have to reserve a spot in the line up in advance. Let me know at the May meeting or send me an e-mail. If you want to perform, you **MUST** let us know in advance. Performance time may be limited and is given on a first-come, first-serve basis.

We Want Your Reviews! Please send any reviews of magic tricks, books and videos to:
Steve_Sequin@hotmail.com



News Of Interest

Jason Alexander at Magic Castle

Jason Alexander of Seinfeld fame is performing a mentalism act at the Magic Castle in Hollywood. Apparently the show has been selling out.

Alexander has had a longtime interest in magic. The Academy of Magic Arts previewed his act during a very special benefit that they had for hurricane Katrina on Dec. 10, 2005 called "Magic Aid".

Reviews have been quite positive.

New Blaine Special Coming



David Blaine returns to ABC in a two hour prime time special called "Drowned Alive – Seven Days Under Water at Lincoln Center" on Monday, May 8.

Blaine will attempt to hold his breath underwater longer than any other human being after spending seven days living in a human aquarium in full public view. The current record is a stunning eight minutes, 58 seconds.

The question everyone is asking, of course, is how will the inane commentator manage to fill those nine minutes of television to make it interesting?

Keith Barry: Extraordinary

Another primetime magic special, featuring magican/psychologist Keith Barry, will broadcast on Friday May 12 on CBS. The special will feature Barry demonstrating his intuitive capabilities and amazing talents on stars such as singer/actor Jessica Simpson; actors Matthew McConaughey, Wilmer Valderrama, Elijah Wood, Nicollette Sheridan, Vivica A. Fox, and more.

Barry, already popular in his native Ireland, has become a Hollywood force to be reckoned with over the past two years. He has previously been seen in the 2004 MTV Spring Break special, a live stage-show tour entitled "Brainwashed", and a live show at the Hard rock Hotel in Las Vegas.

Dr. Phil to Get Prime Time Sweeps-Month Magic Special

Ok, I made that up. But I'd watch it.

I'd watch it for sure.

Want to Learn More about Jerry Andrus?

Watch this:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=>
=

[9033686938169552807&q=jerry+andrus&pl=true](http://www.9033686938169552807&q=jerry+andrus&pl=true)

'Nuff said.

Illusionist Gets August Date

The supernatural movie *The Illusionist*, starring Edward Norton, will be released Aug. 18.

Premiered at Sundance this year, the movie is a big-screen adaptation of Steven Millhauser's short story "Eisenheim the Illusionist." Norton plays a magician in turn-of-the-century Vienna who falls in love with a woman above his social standing. When she becomes engaged to a prince, the magician uses his powers to win her back and undermine the stability of the royal house of Vienna.

David Copperfield Tricked Muggers

After a recent show in Florida, David Copperfield was walking with two female assistants when some alleged thieves appeared. While the four thieves made off with hundreds of dollars from the assistants, Copperfield's publicists claimed that the illusionist fooled the robbers by showing his pockets were empty even though they were filled with cash, a cell phone, his wallet, passport and jumbo lota bowl.



Magic Reviews

Magic From Maui by Carl Andrews

I like Carl Andrews' material. *Magic from Maui* contains his thoughts on getting work as a close-up entertainer and being successful at it. He then details 27 routines that he has used to make a living at resorts throughout Hawaii.

The first section of the book covers the business end of things. It focuses primarily on restaurant magic but also includes Andrews' thoughts on corporate, bar, theatre, and other events. He discusses how to solicit work at restaurants and includes a sample letter he uses to introduce himself to a restaurant. He also talks about how to promote yourself and tips on working with booking agents. Finally he discusses the type of material to use, some specific tips on what to do when working a strolling event, and how to approach a table or group of people.

Andrews advice is solid. It is invaluable for anyone wanting to pursue this kind of work.

If that weren't enough, Andrews goes on to explain the routines he uses to be successful. Everything in the book comes from his regular repertoire. The material is practical, entertaining, and very, very magical.

A few of the highlights:

Ain't No Mo: A great sponge ball routine. For the last year, I've been performing this routine exactly as Andrews has written it, and it always gets a great response. It's straightforward, clean, and fun.

Pair O'Dice: This is Andrews' version of the Sachs Dice Routine. I've been working on this for a long time now, and I can't wait to add it in to my set. It's a powerful, impromptu piece.

Hula Fusion: I actually skipped over this one when I first read the book, but I started playing with it this week. It's a great version of the Anniversary Waltz – an effect that I never really cared for. Andrews version is very clean, very strong, and very well-motivated. It's also a great piece of visual magic.

You Don't Know Jack: The first time I saw someone perform Mike Close's Frog Prince, my dinner arrived before any magic occurred and I never saw the end of the trick. You Don't Know Jack is a streamlined version designed for restaurants with all of the impact of the original.

Déjà Vu: Andrews' version of Sankey's Paperclipped. A great routine for a powerful piece of magic.

There are also routines for card on ceiling, ring flight, card in wallet, Scotch and Soda, Triumph, and the Card Stab, plus a whole lot of original effects.

Each routine is described in full with the complete performance script Andrews uses. There are some funny lines throughout. More importantly, the routines are designed to bring out the likeability

of the performer. They make the five or ten minutes you spend working a table enjoyable, memorable, and fun.

Since writing the book, Carl has released a number of DVDs with this material on it. The book has everything that is on the DVDs (and more), making it a far better value. Because I liked the material so much, I've bought most of his DVDs just to see him perform. The DVDs show him in real world situations performing the routines exactly as described in the book (no fake studio audiences here). Seeing the routines performed simply emphasizes how strong and how practical the material in the book is.

It is not often I add a routine I read completely "as is". Usually I tinker or combine bits from several sources. The fact that I have added several full routines from Magic From Maui speaks volumes for the quality of this book.

Interested in learning more? Why not visit Carl Andrews web site:

www.carlandrews.com

We Want Your Tricks! Please send any original magic tricks:
Steve_Sequin@hotmail.com

Opinions Are Like...



Re-reading Magic from Maui made me think about what makes a entertaining experience watching close-up. I decided to re-

print something I wrote a while back in a series I did for Online-Visions.

Everybody Has to Be Somebody

I have a secret. Want to know what it is? It's one of the most powerful secrets in magic, shared by top professionals worldwide, guaranteed to increase your audience response exponentially. I'll share it with you, but not until I ramble on about something else. See? All secrets have a price.

Every book, article, video or lecture on performing I have come across insist that developing a stage character is crucial to developing a strong performance. Developing a stage character provides a unifying force throughout your performance. It ties everything together. It makes the routines you perform your own. It provides the basis for your humor. It's what sets you apart from other performers. Yet despite its importance, stage character has remained one of the most nebulous concepts in performance theory.

There are two main mistakes I've seen new performers make when it comes to character. The first is to ignore character entirely. Performers making this mistake usually pick and choose their routines based on the strength of the effect alone. Often their patter mirrors the patter provided with the trick when they bought it. This results in a hodge-podge of material that doesn't quite suit them. Despite how strong the individual moments may be, something intangible is missing from the whole and it shows.

Here's a quick test to see if you fall into this trap: "The degree to which other magicians can use your material, and still have good success with it, is the degree to which your stage character has been developed." How well does your material hold up?

Being true to your stage character involves screening the effects and routines you perform in your show. Ideally a magician's character and material should clearly express each other. Unfortunately, this means having to turn down some incredible tricks if you can't figure out how to make them work with your character. This kind of sacrifice can be painful. I've been playing with Whit Hyden's "4 Ring Routine" and Steve Bedwell's "In Over Your Head" rope routine for the last couple of years. They are incredibly strong and hilarious routines, and I would love to add them to my act. I can't, however, because I can't make them fit, and it hurts.

The second mistake is to go to the opposite extreme and concentrate too much on character. Performers of this type mix their own romantic notions of character into their performance. They let their imaginations get carried away with "Wouldn't it be cool if...?" trains of thought.

I've seen magicians and jugglers excuse parts of their behavior by saying it's part of their character. One juggler I knew confided to me that, "My character is a bit of a jerk..." Usually this is done in an attempt to meld a more modern stand-up comedy style with

their act. Unfortunately they usually lack the experience to make it work.

The biggest flaw in this approach, from my point of thinking, is that your performance is not about you. It's about the audience. Your character shouldn't please you, it should please THEM.

So how should you approach defining your own stage character? Here are a few thoughts to set you on your way: First, remember you should be developing just one character. To echo my theme from my last essay, don't try to develop separate characters for separate venues. You'll end up with several poorly defined characters instead of one strong one. Because of this, make sure the character you develop has broad appeal.

Second, start by being yourself. More to the point, be a better version of yourself. All I have ever striven for in my own stage character is to be a little smarter, a little funnier, a little more engaging, and a little more outgoing than I am in real life. Oh, and I try to be taller on stage too.

Third, performing is about energy: the energy you give to the audience, and the energy you receive from the audience. Your character should maximize this energy, ideally rendering him or her "larger than life".

Fourth, take your time. Start with an idea of what you want your character to be like and then start performing. After your first dozen shows, take a look at who you are onstage. Take another look after a

hundred shows. I honestly think coming to terms with your stage character is a question of soul searching, age and experience. Remember all those hard, painful "character building" lessons your father tried to teach you? Well, you have to go through them again, only this time on stage in front of hundreds of complete strangers, night after night.

Finally – and this is the big one – make your character likeable. This is the one trait that all successful magicians have in common. There's an old show business saying, "If they like you, you can do no wrong. And if they don't like you... good luck."

Nothing is more powerful than the crowd's liking you. They will give you more room for error, more time before they get bored, they will laugh harder when you are funny, and clap harder when you astonish them. Liking you, the audience is simply more receptive, more patient, and more responsive. Simply by being likeable, you are guaranteed to dramatically increase your audience's reactions to your effects.

How can you maximize likeability? You can start by respecting the audience and caring about what they think and feel. Crowds sense if you care about them and care about what you are doing. Smile. Be sincere. Put the audience's needs above your own.

Here's a great example. I was watching a local magician, perform for a group of adults. They were mostly banker types and a bit slow to get into the spirit of things. As

luck would have it, there happened to be a single child in the audience. He was about four and incredibly cute. The magician noticed him and made a comment along the lines of how horrible it was for this little kid to be stuck at a party with all these adults. He then stopped his show, brought the kid up, and did the Magic Coloring book just for him. Did I mention how cute this kid was? The audience loved it. It was perhaps the most endearing thing I've ever seen. From that point on, the audience was his. He could have bludgeoned his next three volunteers, and the crowd still would have forgiven him.

So that's the big secret: being likeable is better than being good. Maybe it's not such a big secret, but it merits repeating now and again. But don't repeat it too loudly. I don't want my competition to hear.

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Steve Seguin, Editor

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

Content and opinions expressed do not reflect the views of the London Magic Guild.

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