



# THE BUZZ

AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY



AMSTERDAM BAR MAGIC SHOW

MAY 17 2023

MICHAEL VINCENT  
PERFORMS IN THE  
AMSTERDAM  
MAGIC CLOSE-UP  
SHOW

July 2023

ISSUE 5



TRAVEL TIP!



# 1/ FRITZ WITH A Z

As I write this, I am in London to watch the last show of Penn & Teller in the UK

3 p.



15 p.

## 2/ HOWARD THURSTON MERGAN

Before every show, Thurston stood behind the curtain, saying over and over, "I love my audience."

## 3/ MAGICIAN IMPROVABLE FRANS DE GROOT

Curiosity was the reason I went to the CREA-Theater. Improvising with magic tricks seems to be an innovative activity.

6 p.



14 p.

## 4/ ROMANY DIVA OF MAGIC

Here is her first column specially written for The Buzz. She reflects on why we buy magic and then never use it!

This magazine is a production of the Amsterdam Magic Society. If you like to contribute, send this to our editor & designer, Frans de Groot: [amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com](mailto:amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com)

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## DEAR READER

As I write this, I am in London to watch the last show of Penn & Teller in the UK. The night before I was performing in a variety show and I realized how much I miss these types of shows. Singing drag queens, comedy, magic, and more. The day after the P&T show, I plan to visit the Magic Circle to do research in their library (they have the biggest library in Europe) and I will give a talk on the Bill Switch.



If you are a member of the Society, you can watch that talk back as I showcased it to the Society in May. I discuss one of my favorite routines. I have done it at every show in May and June at the AMShow.

You read that correctly: the Amsterdam Magic Show just completed two months of weekly shows. And now the cherry on the cake will be the 7-year anniversary of the Amsterdam Magic Show. This time it will be held at Betty Asphalt, so we can have more guests in and make it a true party for the magicians.. A lot of special guests will come, including a two-time Penn & Teller fooler and a Las Vegas headliner.

Also, we had our first lecture at the club. Michal Skubida from Poland. I was very proud that it was packed. We want to showcase the members to magicians who might not be famous but have interesting things to share. You will read a detailed review from Killian Petrick.

"FRITZ"



# Amsterdam Bar Magic Show

May 17 2023!

我是阿姆斯特丹  
最好的魔术师!

What's  
he doing?

Please make  
a connection!

Am I really  
the president of  
the AMS?

Sure!  
You have a  
connection!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA  
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

Frans de Groot





# Michael Vincent

Not many magicians possess the magical combination of superlative sleight of hand and great theatrical presentation, and there can be no doubt about Michael Vincent's claim to be one of the chosen few to possess these particular talents. Over the last thirty years, Michael has earned an enviable reputation as one of the elite magicians and sleight of hand artists in the world.

Michael Vincent has been named "Best Close-Up Magician three times by the UK's Magic Circle, in three consecutive decades, in 1983, 1991, and 2003. In 1993 he was crowned the International Magician of the Year. His performances have been featured at the world famous Magic Castle in Hollywood, California, exclusive celebrity parties, international casinos, high-end corporate events and numerous television shows.

Two and a half years ago, Michael encountered a major setback when he lost his hearing. This is a dramatic event for a magician whose success revolved around his unique ability to communicate with his audience. However, in testament to his unconquerable drive and passion for his art, Michael further honed his ability to read his audience, tuning his senses to read the nuances of communication, body language, and micro facial expressions, turning an obstacle into an opportunity to improve. In a career that continues with drive, passion

STAR OF THE AMSTERDAM  
CLOSE-UP SHOW ON JULY 20  
IN "THE BUTCHER"

and dedication, his stylish and sophisticated performances take sleight of hand magic to a new level of artistic and authentic self-expression. It is this simple philosophy that has defined Michael's place in the history of magic.

Michael has been mentored by some of the greatest magicians of our time. Influencing his technique and style and combining it with his personality to create an original performance. His magic is a tribute to the wonderful artists who inspired him as a youngster. Magicians who were his mentors include;

Tony Slydini, Alan Alan, Harry Lorayne, Cy Endfield (Director of the Movie ZULU), Derek Dingle, Darwin Ortiz, Larry Jennings, and Michael Skinner.

Michael was extremely fortunate to meet the heroes of his profession, and to learn his craft from them. Part of Michael's ongoing legacy is to continue the chain of excellence these great masters passed on to him. Never ridiculing or humiliating, Michael treats his audience with the utmost courtesy and respect. The Michael Vincent experience is a collaboration where the audience actively participates in the proceedings; an experience that leaves the audience touched, moved, and inspired. Michael brings an amazing SPIRIT to his performance – a joy, a passion, and a sense of wonder.

Michael performs in The Amsterdam Magic Close-Up Show on July 20 in "The Butcher" Do you want tickets, be fast! Click here:

<https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/>





# Magician Improvable

Curiosity was the reason I went to the CREA-Theater. Improvising with magic tricks seems an innovative activity to me. Easylaughs brought three magicians to Amsterdam and combined that with a Musical RomCom and The Jam. Everything for €15!

The Musical RomCom was of a very high standard. Well played and with improvised lyrics and songs on the theme chosen by the audience. Then it was the turn of the magicians. Katherine Rhodes is well-versed in the art of magic as a skilled close-up performer, improviser and established cabaret/stage artist. She is the vice president of the world-famous The Magic Circle and has been called to join the Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star.

Emma Wessleus is an improviser, comedian, singer and magician. She's an experienced improviser who's played and taught at improv schools and festivals all over Europe, such as SWIMP, Riga Improv Festival, Amsterdam Improfest and Mt Olympus amongst others. As a standup comedian, she's been the supporting act like Johan Glans and Tig Notaro.

Andrew Phoenix is a magician and improviser based in London. His combination of magic, comedy, and improv has taken him around Europe, from performing weekly shows in Central London, performing at the BAFTAs, to entertaining the stars of WWE.

It soon became apparent that it was not the tricks that were improvised, but the It soon

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became apparent that it was not the tricks that were improvised, but the presentation thereof. Brainwave deck, Tossed-Out Deck, and Coloring Book, for example, were part of the presentation. Classics in magic were chosen, I am a fan of that. The improvisation existed, for example, in the presentation of the Brainwave Deck, Katherine was constantly interrupted by Andrew with a bell, and then she had to do or say something else. For example, the spectator chose the Three of Clubs (bell), and then it became the Queen of Diamonds, and so on until the last chosen card was face down in play and had a different back.

Consternation arose when Andrew wanted to show the "Venom Cube" by Henry Harrius. The cube the spectator had to mix fell from her hands on the floor in several pieces. End of trick! In my experience, true improvisation is now emerging. How do you solve something like that? Andrew didn't, he was pretty shaken, and the spectator was sent back to her place. You should have a way out in advance for every trick you perform if it goes wrong. Also, Andrew informed the audience that the trick had cost him as much as £150. Why? Even the host of "The Jam" got back to it later. It was the first time in his life that he had seen a magician fail. This incident naturally had an impact on the other performers. The whole performance ended earlier than planned. The magicians ended by playing "Word at a Time" where the audience was allowed to ask them anything. The magicians then had to answer the question by saying one word at a time, making the ending more cheerful. It was admirable that at "The Jam", all three now improvised with the members of the "RomCom" and the audience again.

FRANS DE GROOT





# AGENDA

## JULY 2023

July 6 - Amsterdam Magic Show,  
ANNIVERSARY EDITION - Betty Asfalt.  
<https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/>

July 8 - DYNAMITE MAGIC SHOP 25 JAAR!-  
Velden Website: [https://  
www.dynamitemagic.nl/lezingen-bij-dms/](https://www.dynamitemagic.nl/lezingen-bij-dms/)

July 10 Amsterdam Magic Society, Mascini

July 11-15 - IBM Convention in Pittsburgh,  
Pennsylvania. Websites:  
[www.ibmconvention.com](http://www.ibmconvention.com)  
and [www.magician.org](http://www.magician.org)

July 20 - Amsterdam Magic Close-up Show in  
The Butcher website [https://www.amsterdam-  
magic.com/](https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/)

July 23-25 - Society of American Magicians  
(S.A.M.) in New Orleans, LA - Website: [http://  
www.samconvention.com/](http://www.samconvention.com/)

July 23-25 - 42. Magische Sternfahrt in  
Saalbach, Austria. Website: [http://  
www.zaubern.at/magische-sternfahrt.phtml](http://www.zaubern.at/magische-sternfahrt.phtml)

July 28 - August 6 - Hans Klok & Friends - Java  
eiland Amsterdam. Tickets: [https://  
www.eventim.nl/artist/hans-klok/](https://www.eventim.nl/artist/hans-klok/)

July 30  
BOULEVARD OF MAGIC  
IJmuiden

July 30 - Magic Circle's 2nd Annual Convention,  
London. Website: [https://themagiccircle.co.uk/  
convention/](https://themagiccircle.co.uk/convention/)







# Travel tip

The House of Houdini in Budapest, Hungary, is the premier meeting point for magicians and lovers of the art of magic from all over the world. Located in the mysterious Castle district of Budapest in a majestic location, just a hundred meters from the Royal Palace.

Devoted to the greatest magician and escape artist of all time, Hungarian born Harry Houdini, The House aims to safeguard the largest permanent exhibition of Harry Houdini artifacts in Europe and contributes to the preservation of his artistry for the future generations.

With live magic entertainment and state of the art interactive wonders, The House of Houdini brings the best of magic to one location.

The House of Houdini Collection comprises some of the rarest and most unusual items ever put on display.

Starting with original Houdini items, such as handcuffs, personal letters, and other precious artifacts, the exhibit is enriched with unique original props from the latest "HOUDINI" film featuring Oscar winner Adrien Brody.

During your visit you will be amazed by the most talented young magicians in town at the Orpheum, a mini theater in the Saloon of The House.

Don't forget to take a picture with Harry's Shadow, before you leave. If you are lucky, and he is in the mood, he will amaze you with a never seen before wonder...

The House of Houdini is open every day, 10 am-7 pm. Tickets start at 6 euros for children between 4-11, and are priced at 9 euros for adults. Family tickets are also available by booking your tickets in advance online. Prices include local taxes. Please note that our program is not suitable for kids under 4 years of age.

<http://www.houseofhoudinibudapest.com>





Harry Houdini was born as Erik Weisz in Budapest's District VII in 1874. You would think that the city would be bursting at the seams with mementos of this world-famous Hungarian, but there is nary a plaque to commemorate him. What little we do have is a small statue by Mihajlo Kolodko, a museum bearing his name in the Castle District, details of where he was born – and Houdini beer, recently launched by the Szent András Brewery. That's about it.

Erik was only four years old when his family emigrated to the United States and he never mentioned that he was Hungarian.

Naturally, Hungarians are proud of their international superstar, even if the popular escapologist falsely claimed to have been born in Appleton, Wisconsin. He never claimed his Hungarian heritage. The only allusion to the truth came in 1913, shortly before the death of his mother, when he returned to Budapest and met his long-unseen relatives.

Houdini rented out the Palm Garden of the Royal Hotel (today's Corinthia) for the occasion, celebrating the reunion of his mother and kinship with regal splendor. By then, the illusionist had earned so much money that he even bought his mother clothes originally made for Queen Victoria. It was also at this moment that he fulfilled a childhood promise, by filling his mother's lap full of gold coins.

The Weisz family home was at Rákosárok utca 1. The street is still there, and the house remains, but the street is now Csengery utca. Houdini came from a Jewish family, as his father, Samuel Weisz, was a rabbi and legal counsel, and his mother raised the children at home.

The family had little money, so the decision was made – one that many of their compatriots also took – that they would try their luck in America. In 1878, the Weisz family boarded a ship and reached the New World with high hopes in early July.

As a child, Houdini knew he wanted to be an illusionist. He borrowed his stage name from one of his role models, the famous magician of

the age, Frenchman Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin. The 'i' was added to the end to imply a sense of Houdinesque in French. Little Harry decided early on that his specialty would be to get out of as many impossible situations as he could, even developing a theory of the art of liberation, and keeping a diary of his vocation, his stunts, and his ideas. His famous stunt in Moscow in the blustery winter of 1903 included being stripped naked, handcuffed, and then locked in a Siberian prison van. He freed himself in 28 minutes.

When Houdini and his mother returned to Hungarian soil, the illusionist was at the height of his career. He was elected president of the American Society of Magicians nine times in a row, he joined the Freemasons of New York, earned a Master's Degree in just five weeks and even wrote books, tried filmmaking, and picked fights with ghost summoners and mediums whom he considered fraudulent. This is what ended his friendship with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – whose wife engaged in ghosting.

By the 1920s, Houdini had become a highly respected man, attending American universities and giving lectures. His downfall came when he tried out a new stunt: claiming to have such iron-strong abdominal muscles that no force could injure him, he invited viewers to hit him as hard as possible, without fearing the consequences. Unfortunately, he was in the early stages of appendicitis, and the blow he received was so strong, it virtually exploded his appendix. Harry Houdini, the (seemingly) indestructible escape, lived for 52 years.

It was 50 years after his death that his Hungarian origins came to light. His official birth data became public in 1972, at which time people discovered that the famous Houdini was a Hungarian immigrant from Budapest. Unfortunately, this new information did not engender any significant Houdini cult in Hungary, although there have been some initiatives to this effect in recent years.





It was that time again: society night in the capital. So while enjoying a delicious glass of Laphroaig Quarter Cask I found my spot at the front. What immediately caught the eye of this close-up fetishist was our new close-up mat. I now speak from experience, but a very nice model, including our brand new logo.



After some words from El Presidente we could watch the first lecture. Our colleague from France, Edgar. He gave a wonderfully smooth chat about the fifteen principles of magic and how they coincide with Disney's so-called "imagineering". It was also very nice to hear about capturing your paradigm. I've been very preoccupied lately with what drives/moves my stage character when I perform. It's always nice to hear other perspectives on topics like this. Then the man with the best stage name ever: Woody Woet. I was about posture and stage presence. Obviously me on stage (where I belong) but nice to see up close how Woody (he also explained this) directs exactly everything that



happens during his time on stage with just his posture and the position of his feet. Something to think about, even when I'm sitting behind a table. What also struck me from up close, by the way, were his cards with his own design. It has to be your thing, but it is and remains good branding of course!



Finally, our colleague and my new friend from the close up / card magic world in Poland: Michal Skubida. Sleight / card-heavy lectures are not always necessary but when you come across a good one (like now) and you can get a few things out of it. I swear by it, seriously. With the "multiple out" principle as a basis, I saw a few gems pass by. A nice variation on the "two card monte" with a kicker ending, a top stock false shuffle, and a very funny impossible location (read: a zippo lighter). The AMAZING stop force variation stuck with me the most. Definitely some material to think about, to add to my own toolbox. Of course this evening closed again as it should be. With colleagues but especially friends from the magic world in a cafe / bar with a drink, many bad jokes, and above all a deck of cards in your hands.

KILLIAN PETRICK



# AMSTERDAM MAGIC SH☆W

ANNIVERSARY EDITION ON JULY 6 IN THE BETTY ASFALT COMPLEX



Santiago Michel - Las Vegas



Jo de Rijck - Belgium



Chris Williams - Wales



Robert Blake - The Netherlands

Early-bird tickets for the show are up at: [www.amsterdam-magic.com](http://www.amsterdam-magic.com)





# Out of sight out of my mind

## Books VS videos



For the past 10 years, I've heard a lot of people say "I'm not a book reader" or "I prefer to learn magic through video".

I completely understand why people think this way, and don't get me wrong there are some amazing magic videos out there that will teach you wonderful material. However, I do believe that books are necessary for any magician to learn more about magic and to become a proper well-rounded magician. All the masters in magic will tell you the same.



Books are an important step to learning proper magic, in the beginning, they will be difficult to read because you're reading technical text. For this reason, it's also unreasonable to expect that you can read a magic book at the same speed as you can read a novel. Magic books are just more difficult to read. But don't worry, after a while, they do get easier and easier to read.

When you start reading books you still have to learn how to visualize everything that you read, you can probably visualize the effect from the effects section in the books. But the moment that we start getting to the method it starts to get difficult. It gets difficult because we haven't yet trained our mental muscle that will allow us to visualize an action. Don't worry: that will get easier with time and practice.

The visualization of what you read is a great skill to learn. It's not only great because it allows you to read magic books more easily. But it's also great because it allows you to construct a mental movie of the effect that you've just read. Creating a mental movie is very important because it allows you to see what the effect would look like in your mind. This allows you to see if the method that is given after the effect is optimal and fit for you and it also allows you to set a standard for yourself as to when the effect is done. Constructing the mental movie makes your magic as magical as it can be.

Other than teaching you analytical and visualization skills books are also much more cost-efficient. A lot of the effects on the magic



market today are variations of effects that have been published ages ago. For example, "Heartbeat" by Juan Collas, which is a beautiful effect in itself is essentially a method that was

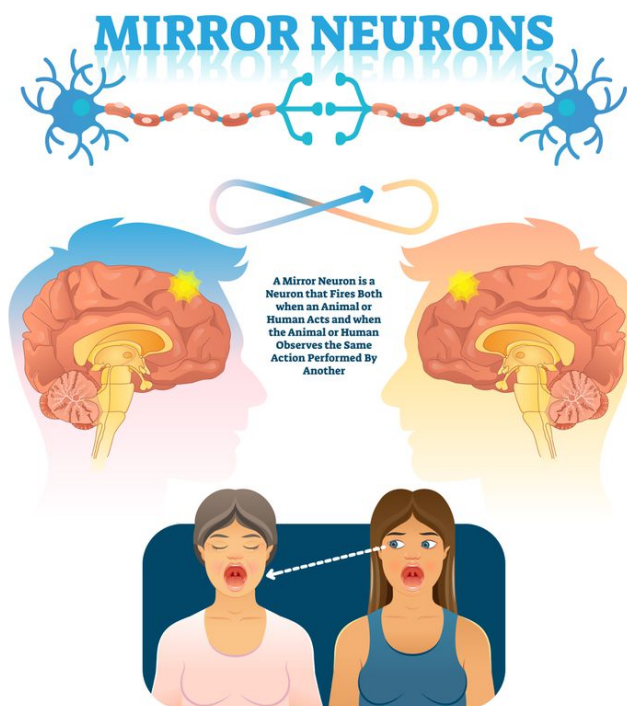


already described in Tarbell.

So now imagine this, you could either buy a download for 30-50 euros which teaches you about 6 effects if you're lucky, or you could buy a book for between 40-100 euros that will not only teach you between 20-50 effects but it will also take its time to explain why certain things in the effects work. I believe that to be even more important, learning why something works. Little details in our art are what makes the magic beautiful and truly magical. We have to consider that in a video there is only a limited amount of time while books are not restricted by that. Because they're not restricted by time the author is likely to give you more details about the effect, both historical details as well as details concerning how it should be performed.

Books however are a bit more difficult to read, because we have to train that mental muscle that allows us to see what we read. Whereas in a video we can just watch the video and learn techniques through our mirror neurons[1], by just watching it. Concerning this, I do believe that sometimes it's better to learn a technique through a video. However, that also brings us to a different problem. Many videos try to fully put on the material that is mostly commercial and will hopefully get it to be a bestseller. Whereas with books even tiny unfinished ideas and wacky techniques are published because the space of the pages allows the author to do that. Sometimes those little unfinished ideas or

those wacky techniques will allow you to finish a piece you've been working on or spark inspiration for new ideas.



The mirror neurons we were talking about earlier are a great thing from the video, however, they can also hinder our personal development and sense of authenticity. Many people tend to copy what they saw on the video, this doesn't just mean copying the techniques but also the presentation and the mannerisms of the performer on the video. Just think about how many Dani DaOrtiz clones we have today. If that fits you that's fine, however, I'd also prefer to be my own authentic self.

There is only one person in the world that can be you and that's you. By being yourself as you perform you will automatically become special and the only person in the world that can offer the audience that specific experience.

**RICO WEELAND**

[1] Mirror neurons are neurons in the brain that will mirror an action that you see happening in front of you. Essentially your mind is replicating the action so that later your body will also be able to do it.





# Romany Diva of Magic

Some of you may know me, some not. A warm hello to ALL of you!

What is the biggest prop you bought and never used?

You could swop 'biggest' for 'most expensive' of course.

Why did you buy it? What wonderful dreams were you going to fulfil?

Ten years ago, a magic dealer said to me, "Romany, you should do bigger shows! You should do shows with boy dancers and illusions and you'll be really successful!"

This was exactly what I wanted to hear and I had a cool £20k in my bank account ready to invest. A week later, my bank account was empty and my garage was full.

I bought a Bill Smith elevator, a Don Wayne Dream Vision (a prediction board as performed by Copperfield), an Artist's Dream, and a Table Suspension. Oh, plus an Owen Supreme Magic haunted table and six Spider stage pieces.

My husband told me not to, but I secretly bought them anyway. I hate to admit that I should have listened to him!

As you can see by the size of the elevator, this is not a prop for a solo performer without a big budget and tech team. I soon realized my mistake but felt so silly about it that I ignored the problem. For ten years!

As for the Artists' Dream, it's beautiful but the space is only fit for a small, slim woman. Why

SHE REFLECTS ON WHY WE BUY  
MAGIC AND THEN NEVER USE IT!

would I want to make one of those appear when what I really dream of is a butch fireman with muscles! Luckily, that sold, together with the suspension table but I still have everything else!



The Spider stage is top quality but I only needed it once in ten years because I usually work in theatres or on ships. What about the six huge hot pink burlesque feathers fans that I thought would be a wonderful production prop? They might well be, but if they don't fit in the suitcase for international travel, they are surplus to requirements. A UK performer snapped up the Owen haunted table last week and I'm hoping burlesque beauties will fight over the fans. It's crazy to think that it's taken me ten years to admit that I've been storing so much magic that didn't work for me. I've been in denial I admit!

However, I have the sneaky feeling that I'm not alone.

What have you got stored that you never use? And did you tell your wife how much you spent?

Good to be amongst friends.

Until next time,



# Mystery & History

## Morgan



## HOWARD THURSTON, THE MAGICIAN WHO DISAPPEARED

A woman rose in mid-air. Cards hovered, and a box of candy became a rabbit. A horse and rider vanished, floating away as if in a dream, spangles sparkling in audiences' eyes. At the magician Howard Thurston's show, the world flouted nature. Through it all, the audience felt Thurston's affection. Dale Carnegie included Thurston in his famed self-help book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, because Thurston had told Carnegie that before every show, he stood behind the curtain, saying over and over, "I love my audience."

In the 20th century's first decades, Howard Thurston thrilled people with his own brand of stage magic, a giant production requiring 40 tons of equipment. Today, he's all but forgotten, eclipsed in history by his contemporary Harry Houdini, even though Houdini was more of an escape artist than a magician. But in his day, Thurston was the best. "It's sort of like the hype of everybody that wanted to see Hamilton," says Rory Feldman, a magician with a Thurston collection of more than 65,000 pieces.

"Thurston—that's what it was."

Born in Ohio, in 1869, Thurston had a rough childhood that included some time riding the rails. While contemporary accounts reported that he'd been training for the ministry when he decided upon magic, biographer Jim Steinmeyer says that the young Thurston was a near-criminal who escaped institutionalisation by saying he had found religion. Steinmeyer unearthed correspondence between authorities about the high-school aged Thurston. "It's kind of jaw-dropping what they write about this kid," he says. "They say 'If you don't take him, he's at the end of his game.' And 'I really think this guy is redeemable, but he's the roughest case

I've ever seen.'" Thurston overcame those early trials, hiding his background to become, by the time he reached his early 30s, a stage magician whose success rested in part on his gentlemanly demeanour, what Steinmeyer calls his "bank president" grandeur. In his white tie and tails, Thurston performed incredible tricks. One, called the "Rising Card," started with an audience member choosing certain cards, as if for a regular card trick. But expectations turned upside down when Thurston put the deck into a glass goblet. He would then call up certain cards—the king of spades, the ten of clubs—and they would rise two feet in the air, into his hands. The dazzling end was when all 52 cards were thrown, serially, into the audience. One reporter wrote that they fluttered to audience members "like beautiful butterflies."



Audiences of the '10s and '20s loved magic. Many vaudeville shows included magic acts. Thurston inherited the "mantle of magic" from Harry Kellar, who popularized the floating woman illusion, or the "Levitation of Princess Karnac." Thurston added Ziegfeld-inspired touches to his show, like gaudy costumes for his assistants. And he closely



observed European magicians he encountered, as Steinmeyer writes, especially those at London's Egyptian Hall, where the most accomplished magicians gathered.



By 1925, a typical Thurston show included elements of the circus, dancing girls, and a full orchestra and featured an astonishing 36 presentations with engineering marvels. Sometimes, a Baltimore reporter wrote, the number of attendants drew attention to the "complicated apparatus" that made a particular trick work. A list for Act 3, from one of Thurston's workbooks: Nine People Cabinet, Pigeon Pie, Bangkok Bungalow, Egg Trick, Glass Trick, Prisoner of Canton, Phantom Piano, Lady and Boy, Triple Mystery.

Thurston performed for royalty, celebrities and presidents. He pretended to smash President Calvin Coolidge's watch to pieces, only to have Mrs. Coolidge find it in a loaf of bread. Theodore Roosevelt's son Quentin saw the show so many times that he outsmarted Thurston once, by bringing a bag that foiled a trick involving an egg. Children flocked to Thurston's shows, causing reviewers to remind readers that if they were insistent on spotting a false panel move during one of the cabinet tricks, they should let it go to preserve the kids' happiness. He performed annual shows for orphanages. "They're all children, these patrons of mine," Thurston said once. "I am proud of my calling as an entertainer—a dealer in magic art that involves the

practice of deception without causing harm."

Feldman says that part of Thurston's impact was the language he used. "It did not appear as though he was reciting lines. And the stories he shared felt like he was saying them for the first time," he says. "The impression that he made on people was so strong. People who saw him perform returned years later with their own children to see 'The Wonder Show off the Universe' once again."

An excerpt of Thurston's stage patter found in one of his workbooks shows his unique delivery style:

"Many of you are saying to yourself that it is impossible for Fernanda to float in space without any performance and that Fernanda is hypnotised. I'll prove it to you. Wake, wake Fernanda and raise your right hand. Rest and sleep, Fernanda. In all our lives there are certain events that stand out that cannot be forgotten. I am going to show you something now, ladies and gentlemen, you will remember a long as you live. Behold the impossible."

Feldman says that in these moments, many people trusted what they saw. They thought that Thurston himself was magic. "They really believed it. I have some letters that are to Thurston where people are like can you help me find the love of my life? Can you tell me where my brother is?"

Thurston took his role seriously. "The conjuring fever was consuming me, and there was no relief," wrote Thurston in his 1929 autobiography, *Life of Magic*. "I know of no business, trade or profession that exerts so powerful an influence as magic. The love of it becomes a passion." He told a reporter in 1903 that he practiced card tricks for an hour every day and then again before his performances, and he had his hands massaged three times a week, to keep them smooth.

So why don't we know about Thurston today? Why has Houdini's legacy remained in a way Thurston's has not? Thurston and



his stagey, flamboyant magic have fallen away, while people remember Houdini's muscular brand, the chains and the suffocating amounts of water. Even his name—the exciting vowel at the end, the echo of a whodunit—"Houdini" seems mysterious, powerful. Thurston, by contrast, seems like a name from an agricultural report, heavy and stolid.

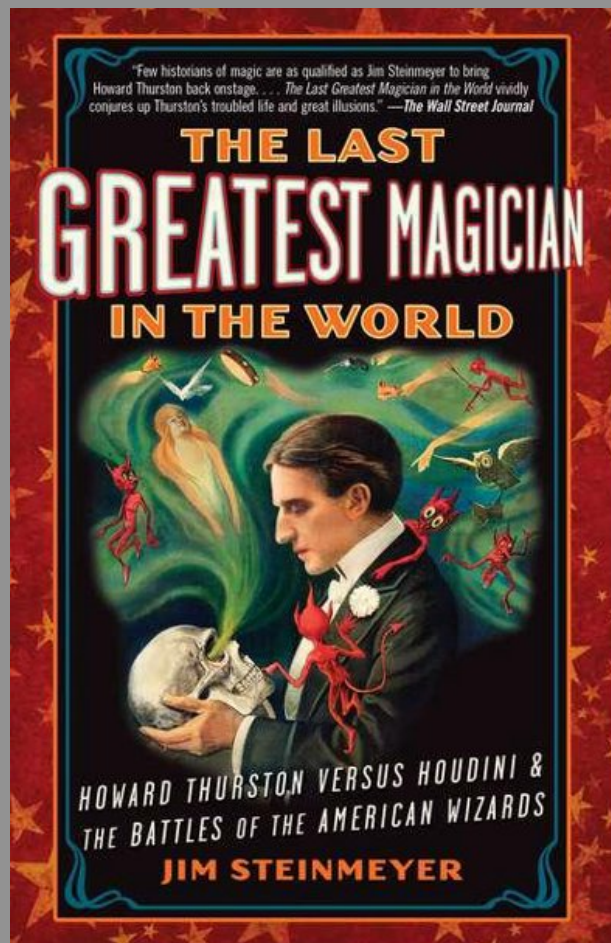
Steinmeyer's 2011 book about Thurston—*The Last Greatest Magician In The World*—takes up this question. He says that the two men came into direct competition only a few times, including when Houdini poached one of Thurston's former assistants for his own show. Houdini served as the president of the Society of American Magicians shortly before Thurston did. More often, he says, they were "circling each other in different forms." Thurston had his over-the-top touring magic show, and Houdini was a vaudeville star with a shorter act and a specialty as an escape artist.

They also possessed diametrically opposed personalities. "You can kind of see how they puzzled over each other personally because Houdini was bombastic and sensational, and sort of exhausting to be around in his own way," says Steinmeyer. Thurston continued performing into the 1930s, appearing on the radio as well as on stage, growing his audience, as Steinmeyer writes. In 1935, he had a stroke and died the following year of pneumonia after a cerebral haemorrhage, leaving behind his wife Paula and adopted daughter, Jane. "Leading American Illusionist Had Vast Repertoire," ran the New York Times' obituary.

Houdini flexed and fought shackles and performed seemingly impossible tasks, but Thurston was as unbelievable in his own way, creating a hazy, glittering world around him that dissolved reality, and eventually ended with his own disappearing act from public memory.

People may not remember Thurston's name, but Feldman sees his legacy in today's magicians. "If you ever watch old footage of Thurston, it really is what you would see if you went to a magic show today. It's the same effects and illusions, it's just a different patter.

His fingerprints are literally on everything across the board, whether or not people realise it. People are watching sawing a woman in half on 'America's Got Talent,' and people don't realise Thurston popularised it."



"He was really the most remarkably honest magician that we had," says Steinmeyer. "He had an unbelievable understanding of what the audience wanted. He had a love for the audience and an incredible desire to please them.

And all the people that knew him, that's what they appreciated--how hard he used to work for the audience. And it's a shame for that reason that he's not remembered."





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