



MagicBunny.co.uk

TopHat

August 2005 - Edition 41

MagicBunny continues to go from strength to strength. We recently hit 4000 users, which is an amazing feat in itself. Those of you who've been around for long enough to remember the humble beginnings of the site will, I'm sure, agree. If you joined post-2002, you may not know about the site's history. Nigel Shelton wrote a short history in the Chat with the Moderators section a few years back. You might be interested to have a read of this. It's accessible through the Contact Us link at the bottom of each webpage on the main site. I've just spent the best part of an hour reading through this article and some (very) old posts from the forums. I've learnt so much history of the site, despite being here since the beginnings. It's amazing how much you can learn about various people and themes from old posts.

TopHat began shortly after MagicBunny. This ezine is one of the site's most successful projects, with new projects being developed all the time. Comparing old issues to the current ones, I'm always impressed by how far we've come. Last month's issue certainly had an positive effect on members: the response was overwhelming. And this month we have another great edition which, I think, lives up to the exact same standard.

A big thanks to all contributors this month and in all previous months too.

All the best,
~Jon Snoops~
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Blue-tonium

Blue-tonium

Science?

By Peter Marucci



EFFECT:

The magician tucks a blue silk handkerchief into his hand and it "magically" turns into a length of chain.

PREPARATION:

You'll need a small (nine-inch) silk hanky, a length of chain (short enough and with small enough links to conceal in the hand easily), and a thumb tip. Begin with the thumb tip and chain concealed in your left hand; the blue hanky is held at the fingertips of the left hand.

PRESENTATION:

This is a short experiment in the latest scientific breakthrough: the production of nuclear blue-tonium.

No, not plutonium; blue-tonium.

This is the blue-tonium

Wave the silk hanky in your left hand.

Ordinarily, the production of nuclear material requires a great deal of work; but the scientific breakthrough that I referred to uses computer chips to create fission.

And, so, they are called "fission chips" ("Fish 'n chips")

The ordinary blue-tonium is stuffed into one hand

Push the silk into the left fist - into the tip, actually - and steal the tip out.

In the normal course of events, it would take a long time to convert the blue-tonium to a radioactive substance.

But, thanks to the fission chips, this happens much more quickly, setting up an immediate chain reaction.

Open the left hand, letting the chain fall to the table and the hand seen as empty.

This is the chain

Point to the chain on the table.

And this is the reaction

Point to the audience.

TAG LINE: *When I first saw this, I was just like you: Too amazed to applaud.*

SECOND THOUGHTS:

Okay, this is a quickie and might be easily dismissed as a throwaway piece.

Don't do that!

Over the years, I have been amazed at the reaction that this piece has got; even people who may know about the principle of the thumb tip are caught off guard because something totally different happens that what they were expecting.

The routine can be adapted to many contemporary events: brush-fire wars, nuclear-arms treaties, the military in general, etc.

And the possibilities of other equally BAD puns and gags are endless.

Have fun with this.

Peter Marucci

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Life or Death Part III

Life or Death Part III

The Mystery Schools

By P. Craig Browning



Prior to what historians refer to as the "Dark Ages" the auspices of stage magic were, like so many things, part and parcel an aspect of Religion. Even to date, as David Abram's pointed out a few years back in the UTNE Reader, the world of magician's tricks are still viewed as part of the religious mysteries in most "Third World" nations. David speaking of the times he was nearly murdered because his work with Cups & Balls and Sponge Balls surpassed the abilities of the local Shaman. Granted, this little hint of "reality" lends to the skeptic and debunker a great deal of ammunition when it comes to the kind of things they do. What they fail to understand however, is that we are imposing our Western views on this issue rather than respecting their "Eastern" traditions e.g. the bullies of the west are once again revealing blatant disregard for the traditions and beliefs of those that don't "fit" their definition of what is supposed to be.

My personal proposition when it comes to all these things, is that the term "Magic" (or MAGICK if you prefer) is merely a language element — a *mistranslated* term that can be applied directly to the realms of science and technology. After all, Hermetic Law is a constant between the philosophies of the believer as well as those that do not concede such possibilities. I find it ironic how, the very laws that are applied to one's work in Metaphysics are the same founding principles upon which certain groups attempt to disprove the same... talk about fighting fire with fire, this whole approach is priceless! The catch is, Hermetic law, like the auspices of genuine physics, allows room for the "Occult" factor e.g. that element of influence that is "unknown" and in some instances "unknowable". Our kind hearted investigators not allowing room for such possibilities, leaning heavily upon their favored cop-out — coincidence. Which is in and of itself an irony, in that Hermes didn't believe in such things, nor did he sustain the illusion of the paradox e.g. all mysteries contain a solution.

A look through the great traditions of religion the world over reveals some very interesting commonalities — those *golden threads* of truth and wisdom that seem to be a constant or Universal sense of truth. One of those ideas centers on the fact that everything we know is but Illusion. Hermes stated "**All truth is but half-truth; all Lies, but half-lies**" e.g. the proponents of skepticism are just as right as they are wrong... same applies to the world of the believer. But, let's dig a bit deeper...

The Mystery Schools of old were little more than colleges and seminaries — schools of higher learning. Those graduating such academies were learned in many different sciences; botany, meteorology, geology, psychology, math, language, music, etc. Persons equipped with such an education would, just as a matter of mere expression, be seen as magickle entities and persons who could manifest the impossible. After all, to those having absolutely no formal education, being able to create fire, to read the written word or make music was magic. It was beyond their comprehension level in that era. For that matter, few obtained such discipline until the early middle decades of the 20th century. "Education" as it became known, was reserved for the elite of society; noblemen and their children or those taken into the seminary for a life as a Monk or Priest.

Interestingly this reality reveals a myth that can be found within today's New Age movement. I refer to the tall tales of family Grimoires that are generations old. Simply put, the people of the *heathlands* couldn't read or write, so how could they keep such a magick journal and hand it down from generation to generation? Truth be known, most of these family *books of shadow* were composed in the mid and late 19th century based on the published works of Sir Wallace Budge, James Churchward, H.P. Blavatsky and the DeLawrence Magick series, just to name a few primary resources. Of course, this supposition is based on what I know from one particular Fam-Trad whose BOS was stolen in the early 70s and published by one Mr. Paul Huston.

Getting back to the issue at hand... If "magic" is but a term that actually means "Science" then a lot of what has been rediscovered in the past say, 100-150 years about certain peculiarities like Ideomotor Response might just be the "truth" behind such things as Telepathy or Dowsing. After all, there has to be something logical that was taught in those old mystery schools that came off looking like "Magick, right?"

When we look at the magick of our ancestors with a mind far more advanced and studied than theirs, it is

Life or Death Part III (cont.)

easy to mock and scorn them for their ignorance. In our arrogance however, we fail to place ourselves into their shoes and thus, comprehend why they so freely empowered the priests and traveling Bards with the aura of being more than mortal or, at the very least, unlike the common man, woman or child. Our educated mind actually making us ignorant and incapable of seeing the simplicity of such things. Granted, this is a two-edged sword in that we have in our society a massive population that has gone too far in the opposite direction and become so blinded by their belief, that they fail to see what is actually at hand.

Look at the New Age/Wiccan world and how so many carve runes into colored candles in the act of weaving a magickle spell. Long ago before *education* became a common part of culture, the written word and letters were believed to be magickle — keys that opened the mysteries of the Universe. Such intrigues are so well rooted in our minds and cultural lore that we now have conspiracy theories surrounding such things; ***the DiVinci Code*** and ***Bible Code*** being but two example. But then, the ancient mystics all taught that the scriptures could be interpreted 7 different ways — *there were 7 keys to enlightenment or "Gnosis"*. These hidden keys being the occult side to our seemingly innocent religious concepts and theology and yet, the knowledge of such things remains hidden and known only to the few who are chosen to carry the burden. From a romantic perspective this sounds very mystical and enchanting, in truth however, it is the very same thing major corporations, governments and the military do daily when it comes to "company secrets". The scribes of those ancient tomes even being amongst the first "Spin Doctors" known to society; their pens weaving an intentional spider's web that helped conceal the over-all truth — the greater and deeper mysteries so that such things would not get into "the wrong hands".

"The Wrong Hands"? Well, I'm willing to bet that somewhere along the line the ancient mystics and teachers of these things in those old mystery schools, realized that some scruple-less individuals might misuse such technology, exploiting the masses for the sake of cult building and personal gain — personal power and influence. I know I may be grasping at straws, but I'm certain it's no coincidence that certain religious institutions grew quickly after they took over the management of the many European mystery schools way back when... could it be that some of that knowledge really did fall into the "wrong hands"?

Who knows? What is for certain is that some kind of knowledge either evolved or was "borrowed" from these ancient sources and exploited by persons driven by greed and/or the lust for power. We also know that there existed a group of "truest" that honored the ancient codes and sought to do good and empower the masses. This latter side of mystic lore lending strong association to the older hand-written copies of the Bible which, according to numerous scholars, had *secret knowledge* intentionally sewn into some of the wordage and art. An act that's not "new" by any stretch of the imagination, many sacred or "magickle" texts have known such things. A good look at some of the older books of the Old Testament for an example, reveal some unique geographic lay-out of the words so that a picture or deliberate pattern was created (I am referring to the actual documents not the printed tome). According to the code of the ancient scribe, these patterns not only solicited "power" from an outside source, they also lent to the hidden content of the page, certain airs of *protection*. Yet, like a combination lock, a person schooled in the old ways would know how to open the seven seals that prevented the mundane from known the passage's truth. Ironically, even the Vatican admits that it knows only five of these variations (maybe six), the 7th key remains a total mystery to them.

Undoubtedly there are those scoffing and mocking my words at this point but, explain the Secrecy program of the Government or Military and how this differs from what I'm discussing? Explain to me why, even to this day, religious orders have their "esoteric" traditions that are reserved for members of the clergy that prove themselves worthy of initiation into those higher levels? Same can be said about most any field of vocation or organizational body — everyone has "secrets" they share only with an elected few. Not all of these secrets pertain to some sort of conspiracy or "evil". In fact, I'd have to say that the bulk of such knowledge & technology actually exists for the sake of good and improving the status of the human circumstance. The real irony, at least in today's world, is so much of it is dependent upon very nominal (barely measurable) flows of energy, crystals, peculiar geometry (circuitry), and knowing how to properly manipulate these elements via specific "rituals" e.g. you must put in the "right" data in the "right" manner in order to get the desired result. So we really aren't that far removed from the way our ancestors once viewed the world and how it functioned, the processor is all that's "different"... at least, for the time being.

My point is, "Magick" is merely a matter of perspective. Even from the metaphysical points of view, it is a form of science. A student of the occult must learn and acquire a fair understanding of mathematics, music, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, psychiatry/psychology, and maybe a hint of the art of

Life or Death Part III (cont.)

communication in order to become proficient in his/her craft. These are not my words or point of view, but rather what has been revealed in those dank old halls of various Secret Orders since the earliest days of time. It is the "deeper" mystery of the Occult — not the delusional act of speaking with demons or communing with Angels; the Demons are within you and the Angels can be found just about anywhere you want to look IF YOU ARE WILLING TO NOTICE THEM.

Biblically speaking, humankind does not transmute into an angel upon death. Angels are a species or race unto themselves and, from what the Talmud tell us, they actually envy mortals (human kind). The reason for this covetous attitude is that human beings have FREE WILL whereas *the hosts of heaven* do not! But hey, there's a lot about the biblical mysteries we, as the laity, are never told and countless references given to the world by the ancients, that were never included. Some of which really makes one think, that is, if they were to read them and compare it to the accepted standard of today's Christian identity.

Why so much talk about the bible & Christianity? You ask.

Well, it is the one thing most of the western world knows, even if it is by osmosis. We're all exposed to these ideas, even if we aren't *of the faith*, so some assumed familiarity allows us to subconsciously form certain opinions and ideas. But, there is another reason I bring this topic to the fore — the act of counterpoint.

The Skeptic's world has cautiously embraced certain aspects of clergy into its ranks. Individuals that lend a strong sense of both, academia and masculine perspective to the issues surrounding things miraculous. The problem with this marriage is the fact that many ministers and theologians who are allied with any one of the three chief global religions (Islam-Judaism-Christianity) seem to host very serious ulterior motives e.g. to prove all other religions as being false with exception to their own. This is especially true when it comes to Christianity who has, upon more than one occasion, used theatrical effects/trickery in order to sell their own agenda. One of the classics in this act of *bearing false testimony* were the punches and special daggers used to "pierce the skin" of would-be "Witches" during the days of the Inquisition. The blade would slide into the main shaft or handle and thus, when the witch was punctured and didn't whence or bleed, the accuser had all the evidence they required to brutalize the accused. Even today, certain aspects of the church intentionally misrepresent those people's they don't agree with as well as the science that would negate their position on various issues. If this isn't the act of a cult or negative charlatan activity, I don't know what is. Believe me, there is not one aspect of organized religion that is untarnished from such practices (and I do mean ALL religious groups, not just the big 3).

The question we must ask ourselves, is "What is the agenda?"

On one hand, we have some ardent Skeptics... cynics really, who are pushing the philosophy that *nothing exists outside of man himself; humankind is the ultimate and all comes about as the result of science*. This is a very cruel, almost "sanitary" idea that is 100% atheistic in its nature. Unfortunately, it is the one face of the Skeptic's culture that seems to get the most media attention and thus, has become the reason so many religious leaders are teaching against the study or practice or even viewing of magic. It's not that our craft deals in deception or illusion or even that some of what is presented hints at the macabre and occult. NO, it's the idea that mankind is all there is... there is no Divine being in the universe!

On the other hand, we have the die-hard believers who "blindly" embrace most everything they are fed; this little clear stone will energize you and this yellow stone will help you communicate better with people if you place it near your phone. Believe me, I've heard all those games and claims and even helped sell them upon time or two. But as has been pointed out by some of the less delusional of the craft, a rock is a rock and a candle is but a candle, it's what YOU put into it that counts. These are but tools used to help us focus, visualize, and muster the kind of effect, at least in our minds, that's actually desired. Be it a healing, improved awareness, heightened intuition... it's all obtainable via the rituals of faith, regardless of the dogmatic foundations that faith may extend from. Put another way, *there are no atheists in fox holes...*

The "Agenda" as it were, seems to be the spread of total confusion and the promotion of chaos. On the surface no sense of agreement seems even remotely plausible. Then along comes some schmuck that's of the opinion that a middle-ground exists — a point between the two extremes in which honor and harmony are genuine whether you are viewing the issues as a believer or as the skeptic. Then again, in my experience the most devout of believers must approach their faith with a skeptic's heart for blind faith and the endorsement of personal ignorance via the excuse of faith, is but the way of fools. If there really is a

Life or Death Part III (cont.)

God, I'm confident that it would not applaud nor easily appreciate a congregation of idiots, suckers, and victims. Just as we've seen in the tales of Jason and his Argonauts, the Gods love those who do not beg for their help or cling to the hems of their robes.

There seems to be a plethora of examples of great "religious" icons who've held to this elusive idea I've suggested. After all, Moses and Abraham both shook their fists at God and cursed him. These and other prime figures throughout the sacred texts (not just the bible) have revealed their doubt and sought confirmation. So who are we to do any different?

We are obliged to question authority regardless its form.

Many have seen my position on this issue as antagonistic and even disrespectful when it comes to the contributions and life-work of men like James Randi. What they aren't familiar with is the fact that I side with Randi when working with the Shut-eye community, and I use his words or similar, as a way to nudge the sleeping, awake. My opinions on Mr. Randi as a human being are actually honorable far more than they are view to discredit. But then, if it weren't for the Devil's advocate none of us would learn a thing, now would we?

Speaking of which, the devil is always concealed within the details. The more we study and the more we become willing to see the use of these "under-handed" tactics in use in all fields of endeavor, the more we are empowered when it comes to serving our community. That is after all, the claim of the skeptic — to help protect those unlearned in such dubious antics. Therefore we are obliged to point out where and how these things are used and to what degree, no matter where we find them!

We'll chat a bit more on all of this next issue...

By P. Craig Browning

Treasure of the Templars

Treasure of the Templars

Bizarre

By Bruce Graham

EFFECT AND BACKGROUND

1. You explain some of the history of Knights Templar and their treasure.
2. You show a diagram of possible treasure sites, explaining how the treasure was stored.
3. You evenly distribute treasure on the diagram, and then the spectator adds some treasure to any chosen location.
4. Under the gaze of the Master Templar's "all-seeing eye", you move the treasure around the globe for safekeeping, and show that over the years, treasure is looted. The amount of treasure in the stores never increases.

I first came across this about 4 months ago in Edition 1 of "Mind Over Magic" (Shawn McMasters eerie "Guatemalan Worry Dolls" version), and more recently in June Online Visions (Peter Marucci – bizarre "Mystic Runes" version). Many thanks to Peter for reviewing this version of the presentation.

DIFFICULTY

Apart from remembering 2 moves, it is **completely self-working. **

The description seems long, but in reality the trick only lasts a couple of minutes. I'll let you run through it and figure out WHY it works. I have to say, the first time you do this, (the first 3 or 4 times in fact if you are numerically challenged like me), you will sit there scratching your head and grinning stupidly, as it is really quite puzzling.

Treasure of the Templars (cont.)

SETUP AND PERFORMANCE

I struggled a little with the setup, so created a version where the setup was based on the "If you want to hide something, paint it red" principle. Well-hidden setup instructions are in full view of the spectators, leaving you free to concentrate on the performance.

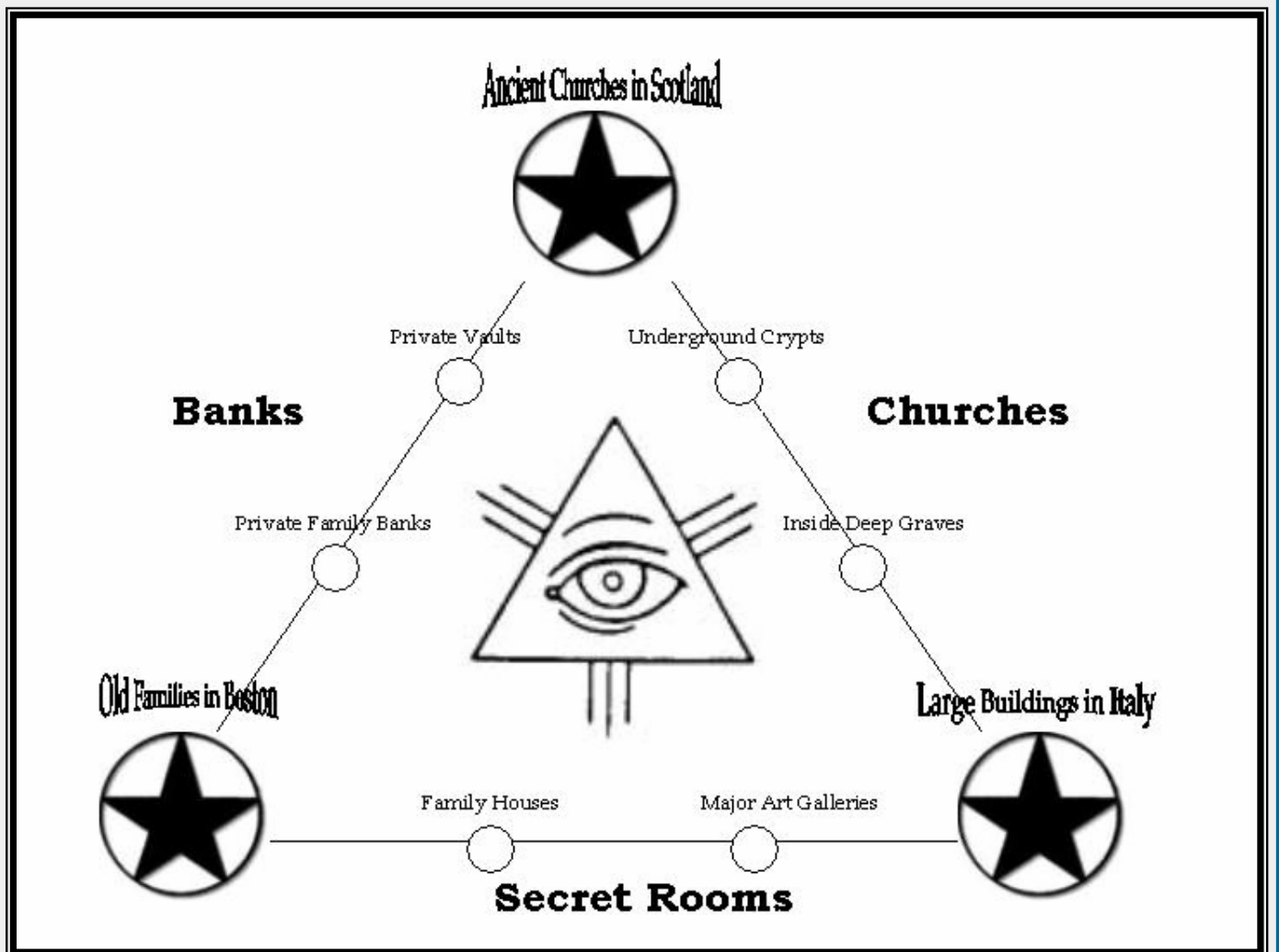
Have a look at, or print out the diagram on the last page of these instructions. Without this, nothing from here onwards will make any sense at all!

This effect actually benefits from immediately repeating it to the same audience. You can repeat Steps 3 and 4 up to 6 times, (although I've never tried this), if required. Each time nothing changes. I recommend 3 repeat cycles

PROPS

You will need:

1. A drawstring bag with 40 – 50 small, old, mixed coins, or small mixed "treasure items", (coins, dollhouse-size candlesticks, broken up Car Boot Sale jewellery etc.)
2. One "Templar Treasure diagram" (see attached), or similar, to suit your presentation and style. A3 is easiest to work with.



Treasure of the Templars (cont.)

SUGGESTED SCRIPT AND HANDLING

Treasure of the Templars - (in best Kenton Knepper / Orson Wells voice.....)

"Mysteries, treasure and symbols have the power to hold the attention of people for long periods of time, over generations, or sometimes over hundreds of years. Look at the pyramids; look at the success of the recent book "The Da Vinci Code", and the enduring stories of the Knights Templar and Masons.

One example of history affecting the present is the number 13. It is often regarded as unlucky, and one theory is that this goes back to October 13, 1307, when King Philip IV of France ordered the arresting and subsequent execution of most of the Knights Templar community

What I am about to show you draws on the Templar stories, but will demonstrate some of the mystery that happens when you mix secret societies, symbols, superstition and treasure."

Bring out the bag of money/treasure, and show it to the audience by pouring it out of the bag.

"The Knights Templar, are rumoured to have hidden vast amounts of treasure. Most people now believe it was moved around the continents, in order to reduce the risk of discovery. One thing is generally agreed however, that over time, the treasure was looted. Nobody would spot small amounts disappearing when movements were being made."

Bring out and put down the diagram.

Imagine the diagram is in front of you, two main points closest to you, (Boston to the left, Italy to the right). One point is at the front (Scotland), pointing away from you. Let's label them A, B and C respectively for the moment

"This diagram represents most of the current thoughts on the Templar Treasure

- 1. The 3 sides represent the symbolic pyramid, which features in many Templar stories.*
- 2. There are 3 main stores where the treasure is believed to lie, (Scotland, Boston, or Italy)*
- 3. The axes of the triangle represent the 3 types of place where the treasure is most likely to have been buried, (Secret Rooms, In/Beneath Churches, or in Banks)*
- 4. The "all-seeing-eye" represents the Master Templar, who was responsible for overseeing the movement and security of treasure*

We will honour the Templars who were executed by placing 13 pieces of treasure in each type of storage place, Banks, Secret Rooms and Churches"

PLACING THE TREASURE ONTO THE DIAGRAM.

The various setup instructions that I've seen confused me; so I designed the diagram to remind the performer of the setup, allowing you to concentrate on presentation.

Look at the diagram:

1. The corners of the triangle have 4-word descriptions. Place 4 coins/pieces of treasure on each
2. The smaller circles along the edges of the triangle have either 2 or 3-word descriptions. Place 2 or 3 coins on them appropriately. The order of the 2 or 3 along the edge is actually immaterial, so long as you have 4, 3, and 2, repeated 3 times.
3. Try to make the placement of coins look as random as possible; do not draw attention to the configuration.
4. Run your finger down any of the "sides" of the triangle, and have the spectator count them. The number will equal 13 each time

"Now, imagine you are a Templar, and you have some treasure."

(Hand them the bag, get them to take one piece.)

"Place it in one of the stores. Anywhere. Over the years, treasure would be moved from store to store under the watchful eye of the Master Templar. The store you put your treasure in was not even entered." (Point to it)

Here is where "the move" is done. You do not have to go near the "pile" that the spectator has just added to.

Treasure of the Templars (cont.)

Always move coins from the sides **over the eye** to the final position with the tip of your finger, in order to show that you have not stolen one somehow.

There are 3 options:

- **OPTION 1** - If the spectator adds a coin to one of the piles of 2 coins, (Private Vaults, Underground Crypts, or Family Houses), go to a pile of 4 (A, B, or C), on the same side (you have 2 choices, it does not matter which you go for), take one coin from there, and add it to **any** pile on any other side of the triangle. All sides, if added up individually, will still add up to 13.
 - **Example.** If they place a coin onto "Underground Crypts", (making a pile of 3), go to B or C, and move one coin to anywhere on the line that joins A and B, or A and C.
- **OPTION 2** - The same applies if the spectator adds a coin to one of the piles of 3 coins, (Major Art Galleries, Inside Deep Graves, or Private Family Banks). All sides, if added up individually, will still add up to 13.
 - **Example.** If they place a coin onto "Private Family Banks", (making a pile of 4), go to A or C, and move a coin to anywhere on the line that joins A and B, or B and C
- **OPTION 3** - If the Spectator adds a coin to one of the three, large "corner" piles, (A, B or C – making a pile of 5):
 - 1> Go to any of the other two corner stars, move one item from that pile of four to anywhere on the side linking this and the 3rd point of the star.
 - 2> Then go to the 3rd corner Star, and move a piece from there to anywhere in the side linking this and the 2nd star
 - **Example.** If they place a coin onto C, (making 5 items), take an item off A, and add it to either of the positions on the line joining A and B. Then take one item from B, and add it to either of the positions on the line joining A and B
 - All sides, if added up individually, will still add up to 13.
- **OPTIONAL COVER MOVES** - Once you have completed any one of these 3 options, you can then shuffle coins around on any one side from a 2-position to a 3-position, (or vice versa). This will not change the number in any side, but will provide some cover for the moves that you have just made.

"When checks were made, it would become apparent that treasure was disappearing. You will see that the Churches, the Banks and the Secret Rooms each still contain 13 pieces of treasure."

(Running your finger down each side of the diagram as you talk and count),

"...As you can see, the Churches still have 13, the Banks still have 13, the Secret Rooms still have 13..."

REPETITION

You can go through this procedure again, in exactly the same way, several times, and the totals will always stay at 13 per side. I believe that the maximum may in fact be 6 times, but I have not worked this through fully! To me, 2 or 3 would seem to be enough.

"More treasure was added to the trove", (offer the bag, or another coin to the spectator to place anywhere)

"Once again, the years pass, treasure is moved between sites, (slide a coin/coins as required), but under the cover of movement, someone removes the treasure; the amount in the Banks, Rooms or Churches never increases. Count again – unlucky 13."

Treasure of the Templars (cont.)

And repeat if required.

Clearing the evidence away....

"Over the centuries however, the exact location has been lost, and that is what makes the mystery as strong today as it is."

Pick everything up, and put it away, before anyone has the chance to come back to reality, and count the total number of items :-)

CREDITS

The history of this appears to be buried back in the mists of time, so I cannot credit anyone with the working, per se. This routine incorporates techniques and ideas from others, namely:

- Peter Marucci ("*The Bermuda Runes*" - 2005)
- Shawn McMaster ("*The Dolls*" - 2004)
- Jim Steinmeyer ("*Understanding the Bermuda Triangle*")
- Jim Steinmeyer "*Impuzzibilities*" (<http://www.online-visions.com/reviews/0303impuzz.html>)
- "*Magic*" magazine - August 2003.

FURTHER IDEAS AND THOUGHTS

- This could easily be made into a children's effect, using jelly babies, or chocolates, suggesting that *"sneaky fairies / goblins etc. steal the sweets right out from under your nose while you are not looking"*.
- I'm sure a "socialist magician" could do something around *"Wealth creation and equal distribution of the wealth of the nation amongst the working classes"* (or something with a somewhat snappier title).
- Perhaps re-distribution of the Worlds Wealth with a *"Make Poverty History"* theme?
- I was playing around for a while putting paper cups over the items. This changes the strange-ness of the side-vs-side revelations a little, but I'll let someone else take up that particular baton of creativity

I hope you have fun!

Rgds - Bruce

Nine Tricks and No Act (YET!)

Nine Tricks and No Act (YET!)

Thoughts From Mid-West America

By Michael Saint-Louis



A long, long time ago, when I was in art school I learned something about magic. I didn't realize it at the time, of course, because I had 'retired' from magic. Two things had led to this, really.... My parents were in the middle of a long overdue divorce and my mother, needing something to do, had actually cleaned my room. I barely ever stayed there (you try staying in a house with two folks suing each other for it) and it was probably a week or two before I realized it. When I did I was crushed. Sure my wheelchair (relax, kids, I didn't need a wheelchair, I just liked having one) had never shined like that before, but my boxes were gone. Two boxes that had originally held reams of

paper had taken to housing my magic collection and my art portfolio and dozens of crumpled up papers. Sketches that were too ugly to look at but with ideas too good to lose were crumpled into paper balls and thrown on top of the boxes. She assumed they were trash. I lost my portfolio and the magic I had collected after 10 years of picking through the junk stores of a town full of retired vaudeville magicians. It still hurts

Nine Tricks and No Act (YET!) (cont.)

to think about and it helped to inspire my retirement. The other factor was the river. Grow up in the crook of two mighty rivers like I did and you'll know the call of the river... especially when they put floating casinos on them. Truth be told, I never wanted to be a top hat, just a hat. Long and short of it was that all that paint and canvas was getting paid for with card work from games both legal and illegal and nobody, not riverboats, not college kids with more cash than brains, wants to play cards or dice or anything else with a magician. So there you go: my first retirement. Anyway, there I am, in art school on a physics scholarship, retired from magic and about to learn an important lesson: it's all about composition.

Damn, that was a long drive to get the mail, huh? Sorry about that, but I'm fixin' to turn 33 and birthdays get me nostalgic. Point is, over a decade ago, after leaving magic behind me I sat in Professor Thomas's studio getting one point hammered home: all the skills, all the technique in the world is wasted on an ill-composed piece. Of course, sitting there at the time I was probably thinking about tweaking the sign system I worked with my partner or, quite possibly, actually about composing my illustrations and the idea that composition applied to magic never occurred to me. But it does. Just like a painter has to carefully balance every object, every color on his canvas a magician must balance every element in his act. And that's why we have to carefully build our routine.

Last time (*99 Tricks and No Act*) we set some guidelines and pared down our stable of tricks and gimmicks. By my reckoning we were left with a scotch and soda set, an Okito box, a German box, a jumping gems stick (a precursor to the Hot Rod), a thumb tip, thimbles, an order prediction bit, a pip jumping card and a magic arrow thing. Let's pare down one more time: thimbles, card and magic arrow all out. Why? Well, the magic arrow and the jumping pips are just kind of weak, played out magic. That isn't to say that they couldn't be saved with a little creativity, it is just that this ain't the place for it. Also, I am worried that all three of these tricks would suffer from angle problems.

Now we have our bag of tricks: the scotch and soda set, a German box, an Okito box, a jumping gems stick, a thumb tip and an order prediction. We'll throw in a couple of napkin folds (paper and clothe) I mentioned before and we should be ready to conquer the world! First, though, let's carefully examine our little magic kit.

Easily the most versatile piece is the thumb tip. There are literally dozens of things we could do with this, so it's a valuable utility piece in our line up. The jumping gems stick is a neat little bit of paddle magic. The inspiration for this article is black with red, white and blue gems on one side and red and white on the other. The white is dead center on each side and the red gem on the double stone side is opposite the blue gem (and not the red gem) on the three-stone side. Just to make sure we are clear, imagine the stick laying in front of you. The three gem side is face up and the order from left to right is red, white and blue. If you roll it over so the double gem side is face up, the left to right order is blank, white and red. I have to admit that I personally hate this arrangement, but let's roll with it. The napkin folds are some basic diversions: the mouse and bunny with clothe napkins can be found in numerous magic books while the paper napkin fold I like best (napkin rose) can be found in Doc Eason's material. I also roll paper napkins into babies (wrapped in blankets) in an adaptation of a traditional American Indian corn husk doll. Penn and Teller provide the order prediction I prefer. It is from *The Sick Book of Penn and Teller* and will only require a small notepad (sticky notes will work) and a pen.

This leaves us with the money magic. The scotch and soda (SAS) set is another highly versatile piece of magic. The only real drawback is that some versions 'lock' and need to be reset with a bang ring while others do not but cannot be examined. The inspiration behind this piece (the \$1 magic sets I started with) is plastic and of the locking variety. My nice set is of the non-locking type so we'll go with that. For sake of consistency, we'll assume that both coin boxes are sized for the coins from the SAS set and that they are matching boxes (that is the German looks like the Okito without a lid).

I'm sure some of you are already thinking that with the small amount of magic we have to work with there is obviously one coin box too many. If presented separately maybe, but we'll make it a point to present the two boxes as one box. After using the Okito we'll switch it for the German to present a 'sucker' version without the lid. Obviously the coin boxes should work with the SAS. In fact, the boxes may provide a good way to ditch the unexaminable coin at the end of the SAS bit.

Looking at the rest of the tricks at our fingers, we should keep the napkin folds as a reserve for certain tables only. Same goes for the prediction. The thumb tip is wide open. The jumping gems are the odd duck

Nine Tricks and No Act (YET!) (cont.)

here and the color scheme suggests, at least in the US and UK, a patriotic theme. Next month we'll hammer this routine out, but for now we need to think about how we can use each of these and how they can relate to each other. One of the best ways to do this is to just start performing them back to back in different orders to try to establish a flow. In some cases your script will force the order of the magic, in other cases the order of magic will force the script so it is best to experiment while you practice these tricks and see what happens.

And about that script... Well, first you need an anchor of some sort. It may be an overall theme to the act or it may be a character. Since there is nothing in our premise (creating walk around magic for a family eatery) to suggest a theme, let's anchor on the character. Being a family act, we need to keep it clean and light. Given my own personal tastes and the direction my magic is going outside of this little experiment, I am going to go with a very subdued vaudeville style. Picture the monologues George Burns or Jack Benny did to begin their TV shows and you'll understand the direction I'm heading. Dry, friendly, self-effacing and safe. Now that I have a character to anchor the act, I can start brainstorming lines as I practice the techniques I'll be using in the act.

In creating a routine we create a miniature, interactive play for our audience, if not a tiny world we invite the audience to experience. We cannot just concentrate on the tricks we are going to use. We must put effort into this world. Luckily we don't have to worry about stage dressing or music and we can concentrate on the character. On the other hand, we do not have the luxury of music or stage props and must rely solely on our character! I won't go into a diatribe here on the need for magicians to become students of acting and comedy, not just magic, but please keep that in mind. As I work on this routine I'll immerse myself in old radio and TV shows to study the pacing and style of the vaudeville masters that are inspiring this act.

Until next month, say goodnight Gracie.

By Michael Saint-Louis

Going For It

Going For It

'Faking It" for real

By David J. Bodycombe



Having studied magic for over two years, I had never had a paid gig before. Double lifts are not my thing, but neither are illusions. Patter always seemed difficult for me to write, and moreover the opportunities for performing the kind of tricks I was interested in were not readily available except for the family at Christmas. I finally hit on an idea – a show based on games and dice, relating to my own professional job as a puzzle writer and TV consultant. I would set a goal of a definitive performance date and "go for it"!

Mainly thanks to personal recommendation, for which I'm thankful, I managed to be offered a slot performing at the Monday night Magic Cavern show at the Baron's Court Theatre. Ironically, I will be doing the second act – a 45 minute slot. Therefore, what follows is my account of going from zero professional (paid) experience to a headline act in two months. A steep learning curve, as I was soon to find out.

I decided to write a diary about the journey, knowing how interesting other accounts of first-time performances have been on the Magic Bunny forum.

Friday 13th May 2004

Hey, I've started to write this on Friday the Thirteenth. Geez, that's a good omen. Well, I'm committed now. I've send the contract off to the Magic Cavern for my show on July 4th, less than two months away now. I suppose my planning has been in my head for quite some time. I've scoured all sorts of websites for

Going For It (cont.)

anything to do with the main theme of my act – dice. I've always been interested in dice and games and this happens to link in with my day-to-day job as a games consultant and puzzle writer. Mercifully the Search function on websites these days makes it easy to narrow down the tricks that are likely to fit into the theme.

It's difficult to know when to stop spending. I saw a great-looking chess board routine yesterday which looked very interesting but it was \$150 – in all honesty, probably more than my entire pay for the act. Still, it didn't stop me paying £75 for a large Driebeck die the other day but I'm going to gloss over that conveniently...

There is no shortage of material for my theme. The more I think of the possibilities that I can link to, the more it seems that I've hit on something that'll make my act hang together as well as provide me with something I'm enthusiastic about anyhow. For example, The One with the Trivial Pursuit Cards, a trick I like but one that's difficult to do out of context, now seems almost ideal. I probably have enough material for this show but if I ever need a second show it could work in there pretty well.

The current line up looks like this:

- Dice tray
- Driebeck Die
- Noughts and Crosses
- Mega Monopoly
- Dice card trick prediction
- Dice stacking
- Quiz show routine
- Chink-a-chink quickie
- Climax to Dice Routine
- Coca Cola Roulette
- Dice off rope

The first two tricks are pretty standard. Maybe that's not a good thing, but they're visual and besides, there's plenty of new stuff later on. Noughts and Crosses is a routine I've devised although, merely two days later, I learned that the principle was already in the public domain. However, my routine's quite a lot stronger in that it requires much less forcing but it will need more jiggery pokery on my part.

Mega Monopoly is a large-scale version of Monopoly. I bought two smashing foam dice from Martin Breeze magic which I can safely throw into the crowd and – in the football mosh pit style – they can randomise the throws for me. The idea is that I predict the square where the roll ends up. This part comes from a very clever idea I've adapted from a Richard Osterlind DVD.

I know I want a card trick that uses dice but I'm not sure which one to use yet. I was going to do an indivisible dice routine – a bit like an indivisible deck but this time the volunteer decides what the spots are showing on a clear spotless cube. However, when I was in International Magic, Jerry Sadowitz sold me a book containing a magic square routine. However, it also happened to contain a fabulous dice trick which I'm convinced is completely unfathomable. I guess to have a brain-fryer in the show will be a good thing even if it won't be my most entertaining trick. Might be worth considering.

The quiz show routine is straight from a Dan Harlan video. Chink-a-chink is the usual, as is Climax to a Dice Routine. Dice off rope is a surprisingly effective trick I bought which looks gimmicked but is surprisingly vanilla in its handling. I have a feeling this'll need quite a lot of work to make fun. My current thinking is to do it as a speed trick – perhaps using the 30-second countdown music from, er, Countdown.

Coca Cola Roulette is a fantastic principle I read in one of the mighty tomes which sit on my bookshelf. It's such a beautifully silly idea but one that, if I play it right, could drum up some danger and tension but in a quite safe manner. The idea is that the MotP chooses 5 out of 6 bullets for me to fire, and I have to avoid the live one. Except that in this case, the silver bullets are from a sixpack of Diet Coke and the live bullet is the can I've shaken for 15 seconds. Hope this one works otherwise it could get messy.

Which reminds me, I must sort out my public liability insurance...

Going For It (cont.)

Saturday 14th May 2005

Have lunch with a TV producer who tells me that a youngish magician who's been in the business 20 years showed him a trick that was lifeless and terribly presented. Can't work out whether this means I have an awful lot of catching up to do or that it's a positive that I haven't developed any bad or lazy habits yet.

Got excited reading though a book of simple but incredibly devious card tricks on the train back, particularly as many of them tap into puzzle-style principles rather than prestidigitation moves. Make a note to study the book more thoroughly in the coming days.

Friday 19th May 2005

My dice stacking, an optional skill based interlude I'm hoping to put into the middle of the show, is coming along a treat. Having bought about four different desk mats from Viking Direct and a £25 dice stacking board from Cards4magic, turns out the best surface I have is the back of a plastic leather-backed, folding close up mat I imported from the States that I had all the time. And the best cup I have is not the hand crafted Jim Zachary dice cup that cost £40, it's the plastic beaker that 'someone' half-inched from a nightclub in Clapham. Duh. Still, I don't care because this equipment, primitive though it may be, makes me look good. I can stack 5 high nearly every time after just a couple of hours practice, and have got a few basic tricks down pat – the dice in a line, the recovery move etc.

Patter for this is proving tricky, although I did think of a couple of nice jokes today so have added these to a Word document I have on the laptop. The secret to ideas, I find, is not to come up with them – because virtually everyone has them – but to actually do something with them. And since they have such a short halflife, the best way to avoid losing them is to write them down asap. Simple as that.

Saturday 20th May 2005

Been working on the quiz show, a very nice routine that will probably have the most comedy of anything I do in the set. Yet it still has lovely mathematical principle behind it that I'm going to enjoy performing. In a sense, it has a very low skill-to-effect ratio which'll leave plenty of scope for keeping my mind on the presentation. It needs a bit of work to make it large enough for parlour stage, though. Dan Harlan, whose routine it is, was kind enough to email me back the method for making the custom cards needed for the routine. Seems like it works, so I'm a happy man.

Dice in various shapes and sizes keep coming through the post. My latest one is a bargain at £15 – a huge metal dice that you can use as a candleholder! Also recently saw Charlie Frye's Eccentricks in the post. Wow, that man can perform. Would be nice to add in a little bit of manipulation in the show (e.g. cane work as a prelude to a bunco booth set-up), but it would need a lot of practice and gall to do it. Maybe next time. There's enough scope for error on my dice stacking!

Speaking of which, the dice stacking is going well. The cup that seems favourite is still the – ahem – half-inched beaker. Problem with it is that it's totally transparent. In a way, I think this might strengthen the effect if sold right. I mean, you can hardly see the dice when the beaker is in motion anyhow. On the other hand, it's less forgiving because if the stack falls you have to do the recovery move pronto (whereas with an opaque cup you can feel/hear it and do the move under cover). Still, I don't think I'll be giving any secrets away so why not?

There's been some discussion on Magic Bunny today about magicians that are, I quote, totally crap (incidentally, this diary is rated 12A for strong language [two mentions], mild peril and brief nudity). Not sure I know what they mean by that phrase. I've seen magicians of all sorts – move monkeys, smarmy types, traditional followers, visual clowns, stand-up comedians, the shock tacticians... all of them have different takes on the genre but none of them are perfect.

I would only call someone 'TC' if they failed four tests: visuals, jokes, trick performance and presentation. If it doesn't look interesting, the patter is purely mechanical, the trick doesn't work and the tone of voice is dull, then TC would be justified. I need to work on parts 3 and 4 – I know my props are interesting (everyone kinda likes dice and games), and I've got some good word gags in the script already. But my performance is flaky – I was halfway through a card trick the other day before realising I forgot to ask them to pick a card... And I'm untested on holding this kind of atmosphere together where there can be little dead air.

Going For It (cont.)

Wednesday 24th May 2005

Have demoed some dice stacking 'in the field' with potential punters and they've been pretty impressed by it. Although, annoyingly, on both occasions I managed to fluff the first attempt – mainly because I was sitting down whereas by natural action was practiced stood up (beside the ironing board, if you must know). Seems people are just as bemused as to how the dice stay in the cup as to the ability of getting them to line up on top of each other. Also tried a card trick that used dice. I hit it more than missed (it is a fairly contorted trick that requires a co-operative punter) although one person somehow chose '1' as the highest number of the dice –thinking in analogous terms of Ace being high, perhaps. Or maybe they're just stupid. Either way, I'm going to ask them to pick the face with the least/middling/most spots on it to avoid any confusion.

Thursday 26th May 2005

Doc has PM'd me via the message board to say he's working the scenes on that day. That's a help to have a friendly face on hand. The run through has been set for 4pm so I'll have a chance to get used to the stage. When I've been there before, I remember the house lights being so bright that it was difficult to see what was going on in the audience. We also sort out what is needed for the music CDs and cue sheet.

It strikes me that the show's not long now – about five weeks away so I need to get moving on the custom-made props. Some of the 'builds' are more than a little tricky. The Monopoly routine requires about 25 large A4 cards that need to look nice. However, I have got a new laminator so that should solve a lot of problems. I pity my poor colour printer however!

The Ostrich Factor by Gerald Edmundson arrived in the post today. It's a very good guide to the art of practising magic. I particularly appreciate the section on patter and storyboarding. He makes the very good point that you can't really script every word you say, so there is a happy medium whereby procedural instructions can be improvised and you just script the gags and important bits. It's a good point and will help unburden me from the more boring parts of the scripting.

Tuesday early morning, 31st May 2005

Did a lot of work on the dice stacking yesterday. I can now stack six high on a regular basis and am starting to get the knack of knocking the dice off the top one by one with the cup, then immediately rebuilding. This is exceptionally tricky and I thought I wouldn't be able to do this, but somehow I've got 80% of 'the knack'. Still, it's even money whether this'll be competent enough to perform on the night.

Also constructed a special plastic screen that'll enable me to use lots of mini dice in my opening dice bomb effect. In that, a large dice completely disappears and turns into hundreds of small dice. The screen stops them going all over the floor and preventing the need to pick them up – not a great look after your first effect on stage.

Tried (with a large amount of success) to reconstruct the logic for my Noughts and Crosses mentalism routine. In essence, I play a game with a spectator and predict the outcome. I've never done it in anger, but I'm fairly sure it's a very strong effect – there are over 255,000 different outcomes so it'll be good if I can nail the right one. The technique required to get this to work involves massive amounts of forward planning, a lot of which I've already done. However, I found that I'd half forgotten much of it so I've spent yesterday going through all the scenarios again.

One wrinkle in the tale is that, two days after originally devising the Noughts and Crosses effect, I saw a very similar idea on a Richard Osterlind video (based on a classic effect that I was previously unaware of). However, I think I prefer my routine because (a) my first move isn't in the centre – which is quite an obvious move, and (b) I can let the spectator take my second move for me! Nor are any of the spectators moves forced by any rules. It's quite a shiner, although it's more complicated than the Osterlind version. I'm looking forward to doing this one.

So, while it felt like today was a wasted day, in fact in the gaps between my various jobs I've actually progressed quite a lot. Need to work more on the storyboarding, though.

Going For It (cont.)

Saturday, 4th June 2005

One month to go! Eeek! It feels like I'm dreadfully under-prepared but in fact, looking down my effects list, I'm in quite good shape. Quite a few of the tricks are virtually presentation-only which means that there's just the script and prop handling to learn rather than any sleights. Of the others, I've been practising at least four of the tricks on a daily basis.

However, I do have some rather large builds to make - oh, and putting back together my opening visual trick which appears to be falling apart as I practice it five times a day. I am also going to try to build a new element into my presentation of the Driebeck Die, but that will require some ingenuity on my part too...

Hadn't heard anything from the promoter for a while, so I chased him up my email and he replied today. Everything seems in hand. Am going to receive leaflets and posters next week. Hope I get them before I go on holiday. I go to a dance class a couple of times a week so will have plenty of people to market towards.

I do need to get moving on my script which is going well but needs to be expanded rapidly this week. I am currently reading Steve Allen's book *How To Be Funny*, which is a studious look at the science of funniness. For some reason I thought I was buying a book by Steve Martin, but no matter as it's very good from what I've read so far.

Saturday, 10th June 2005

Just been to see Derren Brown's new show. Excellent stuff. If I get half the reactions he got, I'll be a very happy man. Although I won't be burying my face in broken glass, hopefully. Tried out my Noughts and Crosses trick on my guest for the evening, which worked a treat. Had a good idea for the presentation for this trick which I shall be typing up anon.

About to go on holiday next week. Shall be taking the laptop with me to get scripting, and some of the more portable props, to test a few things out.

Wednesday, 22nd June 2005

Has it really been twelve days? How time flies. In the between times I have been away on holiday to Portugal. With the few sleights I'm using pretty much mastered, the plan was to properly storyboard the routine while I was away. Sadly that didn't happen. I did get to practice some stuff and read a book and watch two DVDs, but still it could have been better.

I am now officially behind schedule. Not good.

Saturday, 25th June 2005

Spurred on by my last post, I immediately wrote large sections of my script which seems to have taken on an effortless quality to it. I think it's mainly due to the substantial number of jokes and bits of business I've jotted down in this very file over the weeks, and I'm in much better shape than I thought. This means most of the comedy and patter is just a cut and paste job, the only thing left to decide is what order to do things in. For example, getting an audience member up earlier in the trick gives you more chance to chat but equally you don't want them hanging around there for too long when not much is happening to them.

However, I am slightly worried about timings. I have three very long tricks - the Monopoly game, the game show routine and (to a lesser extent) Russian Roulette. The first two certainly clock in at around 8-9 minutes. RR is slightly shorter, but that only leaves me with 20 minutes for everything else. Hmmm. Some of the other bits are fairly quick so maybe a repeating pattern of QUICK-QUICK-LONG will be OK.

Am off to town to buy a large amount of weird and wonderful items from the local stationery and art shops.

Saturday, 2nd July 2005

This week has flown by. I suppose I am now at mild panic stage. Panic in there's two days to go, mild in that I know I'll get there. Today has been mainly spent shopping for bits and pieces to improve the handling of some of the tricks. Some of the physics of my props hasn't worked out how I'd like, so rather than hope for the best I've had a series of mini-brainwaves to basically cover my arse, thus eliminating a whole raft of unlucky or otherwise unfortunate situations. One particular solution has actually made the effect a lot stronger. I am staggered at the number of little bits and pieces I have to buy to make things work properly. For example, you'd be amazed at the lengths I've had to go to to get the right length of pin or the correct

Going For It (cont.)

size of brown envelope.

One of the trickiest things I had to do today was buy an outfit for the show. I've gone for a fairly conservative suit and tie arrangement, although it will become more flamboyant as the show goes on... As I walk around during the day, I am constantly practising bits of my script in my head. I am annoyed at how often I begin my sentences with "Now..." or "OK..." or "Right...". I need to cut out that habit quickly.

The plan is to have a full dress rehearsal tonight and therefore I have a full day tomorrow to tweak, have a few more run-thoughts, put together my music clips and finally relax.

Sunday, 3rd July 2005

Still lots of things to sort out. I make a decision to drop the music CD soundtrack as I have enough cues and props to worry about. And besides, it's not necessary and also the one place where I do need music can be hummed by the audience. That'll be funnier.

Well, only one more day to go until show time, BUT... you'll have to wait until next time for that!

By David J. Bodycombe

Bowl Views: Squeeze It 'til It Hurts

Bowl Views: Squeeze It 'til It Hurts

Pro-Active Muscle Development and Learning Aids for the Classic Palm

By Will Wood



Pro-active muscle development refers to the process of training the muscles in your hands to be able to secretly hold a coin in the Classic Palm position. This process is an important one and usually comes from continued practise, which can be a frustrating and disheartening process. I have developed a practise system which I believe has helped me to train the muscles in my hands relatively quickly whilst still allowing me to learn the technique correctly. I also used a number of Learning Aids which I will also describe in the hope that you will also find some of them useful. However, first I shall give you a short history to put this all in some sort of context.

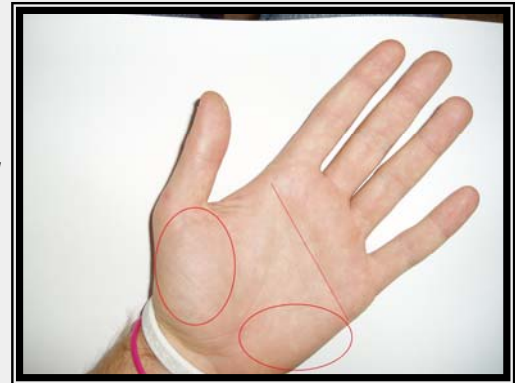
For some time now I have been learning the Classic Palm with coins. I had a particular routine in mind and was working towards being able to perform it. Needless to say, this routine depended on the Classic Palm to be effective. With this in mind, but no prior knowledge of the Classic Palm besides the basic premise, I set out to train my hand. Using various teaching sources (see Bibliography) I acquired various techniques for the Classic Palm, and after some experimentation I developed my own way of a) Palming a coin and b) secretly getting the coin into the correct position. I would also later develop my own way of secretly palming a coin whilst leaving a second coin "unpalmed" but this is merely an extension of the original technique. When I say I developed my own way of palming a coin I simply mean I made tiny adjustments to the techniques taught, which made the motion more suitable for me. In other words I worked out what worked for me. I'll describe my methods here in the hope that you too will find some use from them.

The first and most important part of learning the classic palm is finding a comfortable position to palm the coin and to do that you must first find a coin which you will be able to palm comfortably. I personally experimented with 2p pieces, 10p pieces, £2 coins and American Half Dollars (50 cent pieces). I finally settled on American Half dollars for several reasons; one being that they were



Bowl Views: Squeeze It 'til It Hurts (cont.)

comfortable to palm and another being that they were big and shiny and therefore easy to see for the audience. However, when choosing the size of coin you use and good general rule is that the size of the coin should be relative to the size of your hand i.e. if you have small hands, use a 10p piece. If you have large hands use Half Dollars. The picture above is of 3 coins (10p, £2, Half Dollar) of varying sizes to gauge your decision. Incidentally, American Half Dollars are available to UK residents from many places, most notably Magic Bunny's sponsor, Magic Box.



Now that you have found a coin which you can palm comfortably you can start looking at the mechanics of the Classic Palm and how it actually works. The picture on the right shows the two areas of the hand which do all the work of the Classic Palm. It is the muscles at the base of the thumb and along the blade (or heel) of the hand which grip the coin and secretly hold it in the correct position (These muscles are highlighted by the red ellipses). It is these muscles which you must train and tone in order to accomplish an effective Classic Palm. In the picture the area in which a coin can be successfully palmed lies within the bounds of the two red ellipses and the single red line running along the base of the fingers. To find your "Palm Point", take a coin and lay it in the centre of your flat hand. Place a finger from your free hand firmly on the centre of the coin and slowly touch the thumb and little finger tips together. The coin should feel secure in this position. Now turn your hand palm down and relax your fingers (breaking the contact between thumb and little finger). If the coin stays well gripped in this position as you wiggle your fingers and thumb, you have found your "Palm Point". If not reposition the coin and start the process again. Eventually you will find your palm point and hopefully it will feel comfortable enough to move your fingers around naturally whilst still holding the coin securely.



I now want to talk briefly about getting a coin into the Classic Palm position. The easiest way to get into Classic Palm is to squeeze the coin into "Palm Point" from a loose finger palm. Once learnt it is a relatively simple manoeuvre but in the interest of being thorough I shall explain the steps to accomplish this successfully. Ian Kendall, on his excellent introduction to the subject, Basic Coin Magic, talks about the "Hang Point" of a coin. This refers to the position of a balanced coin on the finger tips which enables you to place the coin into "Palm Point" secretly and effectively. The pictures on the left demonstrate this position. Each person's "Hang Point" will be slightly different and it is merely a matter of experimenting. The points to consider are that you must be able to balance a coin there after dropping it from a loose finger palm and that you can easily push the coin up into Palm Point. This is simply a matter of practise. However, there are more points to consider whilst tackling the Push (i.e. the motion of pushing the coin from Hang Point into Classic Palm Position). Firstly, this action is secret and therefore must look as natural as possible. The natural movement that covers this motion is a simple squeeze of the fist. To practise this hold your hand in a loose fist (without a coin) and push your finger tips into your palm. Then try to replicate this motion whilst pushing a coin from Hang Point into Classic Palm position. Also a natural error, which your hand will want to do, is to push your thumb out in order to push the coin into

Classic Palm. To combat this, simply push your thumb against your first finger as you push the coin into Classic Palm. This way, your thumb will remain tight against your hand, whilst still allowing the base of the thumb to move just enough to allow the coin to be pushed into Classic Palm position.

Now that we have dealt with the mechanics of the Classic Palm we can begin to look at Pro-Active Muscle Development techniques for the move. These exercises are designed to help you develop your muscles to perform the Classic Palm correctly and reasonably quickly. The usual advice given whilst learning the Classic Palm is practise, practise, practise. This is 100% correct and you will not learn the Classic Palm any other way. It is a move which requires hard work and persistence to master and you must be prepared to put in weeks of practise and development to perfect it. However, these exercises will give a goal and purpose to

Bowl Views: Squeeze It 'til It Hurts (cont.)

your practise.

The first exercise is the Run Up. The basic premise is to oppose your thumb against each finger whilst holding a coin in Classic Palm position. To start place a coin into the correct position and secure it. Then when you are ready, turn your hand palm down and touch the tip of your thumb to your first finger.



Follow this by touching your thumb against your second, third and fourth fingers in turn. You should apply hard pressure and at first it will probably hurt because your muscles are not used to having the obstruction of a coin in your palm. However, as they gradually get used to having the coin there, your muscles will tone to grip the coin tighter and tighter. If, as you are performing the Run Up, the coin slips from your palm, simply hold the position you were at and with your free hand push the coin back into its correct position and



then carry on with the run up. I also suggest that as part of your practise you build in rest points (i.e. allowing your hand to rest in a natural position). By doing this you will get used to how the coin should feel and how your hand should look whilst palming a coin. For example, you could do five cycles of the Run Up exercise and then simply relax your hand for 30 seconds and then do another five cycles.



The next exercise is something I've named the Squeeze. Compared to the Run Up it's a relatively simple exercise because you are simply squeezing the coin between the two muscles involved in the Classic Palm. To start, place a coin in the Classic Palm position and secure it. Now squeeze the coin by holding your thumb as straight as

possible, try to reach the base of your fourth finger with the tip of your thumb (as in the picture). Again this will probably hurt at first, because your thumb is not used to having the coin there. However, your thumb will gradually get used to having the coin there and will grip it tighter in the correct position. Again, once you have performed the Squeeze a few times, it is important to relax the hand in a natural position. As with the Run Up, if the coin slips, simply secure it back into position with your free hand.



These exercises are designed to be done over a long period of time so don't strain your self in five minutes. It will take time for your muscles to get used to the coin's presence (it took me roughly two weeks). Therefore, I have taken to carrying a coin with me to most places. The classic palm is ideal for practising whenever you have a free moment, and indeed even when you are doing something. It is also important to do these exercises with both hands because otherwise you will end up doubling the time it takes to tone your muscles.

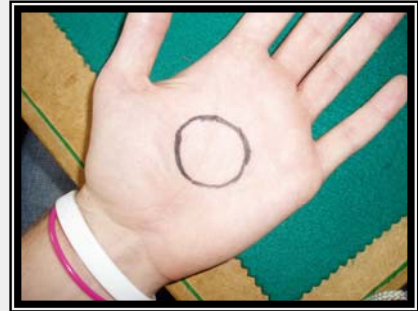
There are also a few learning aids which might help you whilst practising the classic palm. I have already mentioned carrying a coin everywhere with you and this is probably the best learning aid as you can do it everywhere and anywhere. However, it may help to draw a



Bowl Views: Squeeze It 'til It Hurts (cont.)

circle around the coin whilst it is in the correct position in your palm so that whilst practising getting into the Classic Palm you will instantly know if you are correct or not. Another helpful tool that I used was a skin lotion. There are commercially available lotions but I used a homemade recipe, given to me by Bob Greaves, which is as follows. Mixed together, these ingredients form a particularly potent lotion which if applied in a very small amount (literally a drop or two between two hands) will aid grip greatly.

- 1 part Water
- 1 part Surgical Spirit
- 1 part Glycerine



Apart from that all I can suggest is that you experiment and find out what works for you. I hope that you have found these exercises useful and good luck with learning the Classic Palm; it truly is a wonderful tool for creating some amazing effects.

For more information on how to perform the Classic Palm I refer the reader to the following sources:

- Basic Coin Magic CD by Ian Kendal
- The Complete Introduction to Coin Magic DVD by Michael Ammar

By Will Wood

Bad Magic?

Bad Magic?

Or bad magician?

By Sam X



Over the years in magic I hear the same phrase come up time and time again. "That's really bad magic" or "That magic is bad" my question is this: Is it the magic that is bad or is it the magician?

The phrase goes "A bad workman blames his tools" I think in magic the magician can consider the magic to be his tool if you will (I know there are a lot of tools that enable the magic to be completed but on the whole the main tool/weapon of the magician is the magic) so when the magic appears to be bad it is very easy for the magician to pass

fault onto the effect, the gimmick, the location, the audience, the angles and so on and so on. However, how many magicians actually take the responsibility of the bad magic upon themselves? In my experience, not that many.

Recently I have been looking at myself as a performer. Each time I do a routine I look around and see what the reactions are, what the tell tale expressions are and most importantly what I can hear people mutter under their breath. Some of these have been the most useful insights in self improvement. It is not my magic directly that I am improving it is my ability to perform that magic which eventually elevates the magic I do (Hopefully!). Do not read this statement as my own egotistical musings. It is something that I feel very strongly about. A lot of magicians do their effects and say to themselves "That will do" or "That is good enough for a lay audience" – I feel this is wrong. From discussions with those on the same thought train as myself I heard the comment – "Good enough is just not good enough for me anymore". There is nothing wrong with being good enough except when you are compared to those who strive for more.

So, I think we have established that the magic itself is not bad. Magic is only as bad as the person performing it. The professor's nightmare in the right hands can look amazing, take the same piece of magic and give it to the "good enough" magician and suddenly the magic looks bad. Is it the effect or the

Bad Magic? (cont.)

performer?

How can we be a better performer? Feedback. It is not always easy to take when someone turns to you and says "I saw that sleight" or "That was not smooth enough" or "Your loading is just not right" or whatever the case may be. However it is even harder to take it and accept it. How do you improve if you do not listen, take on board, discuss and then ACT UPON the feedback you are given? I do not think you do. I feel very lucky that I have some very good friends in magic that I know will tell me openly and outright if they think something I am doing is awful. I am proud to say that I welcome that advice. If they think it is awful I'll drop it from the act until it is no longer awful. I am not trying to make myself sound like the perfect magician. Not at all, simply because, I am not. This is just something that I notice in magic that does not happen enough.

I feel as though I am starting to ramble and actually rant about this so I shall try and get back on topic.

One example I can give as it happened to me was as follows. I was performing a new sponge ball routine for a good friend of mine. He sat quietly and watched it. At the end the comment was "It's nice, but your timing is wrong" – He was right, my timing was totally out. Now, I could have ignored him. Blamed my bad timing on the setting as I had not performed there, the fact I hadn't rehearsed it again that day or the sponge balls themselves. If I did, I would be lying. It was not any of those things that affected my timing. The only thing that made my timing out by a mile was me making the timing out by a mile. His comment to me was a million times more useful than "Yes, That's good" because frankly if the timing is out then it is NOT good.

Really this article is trying to urge those that do not and remind those that do to keep taking criticism. Keep taking it even if it is a cup of dirt rather than a spoonful of sugar and actually listen to it and USE the advice given to you.

Again, I do not mean to say that I am perfect because I do this all the time. I don't. There are times that I would rather, and do, blame my props rather than myself. It isn't the props fault. It is mine just as it is yours when your magic does not go to plan.

I am not expecting this article to change everyone's perception of how magic should be performed but I do hope that it has given you something to think about. Feedback. Three choices. Don't listen, listen and live with it or listen, live with it and make changes!

By Sam X

Aqua et Oleo Redivivus

Aqua et Oleo Redivivus

Comments on a classic

By Daniel de Urquiza



Hi, everyone.

There are two kind of oil and water routines, perhaps three. The first kind, using only four and four, or three and three cards. Those are normally the technical ones: the kind of routine that uses false dealing typically. A brilliant example is the routine "It can't be done any slower" by my fellow countryman Rene Lavand.

The second kind or type of oil and water routines uses an extra card. An extra black card, an extra red card, maybe more than one. The ones who care about routines with more than one extra card, may be interested in checking "Oil and Water Rides Again" by Michael Skinner, published in "Classic Sampler".

Finally, you have oil and water routines using gaffed cards. Scott Guinn, at www.online-visions.com, has a very complete oil and water routine, using a gaffed card. Also Juan Tamariz, has very good ideas, published

Aqua et Oleo Redivivus (cont.)

at "Truckycartomagia" and "The Magic Way." By the way, the rumour is that Mr. Tamariz is soon going to release a new book on magic theory, where he changes everything he said before. Remember, you knew about it first from me!

Well, going back to the oil and water routines, I will now give you only a phase. Not a full routine, but a mere phase. This phase alone has led me to many ideas, so I hope the same will happen to you.

You need: five black cards and four red cards. From top to bottom, face down: B, R, R, R, R, B, B, B, B. The spectators don't know how many cards you are taking from the deck (assuming impromptu presentation here) or the identities of the cards.

When done and arranged, extend in your hands, showing faces to spectators, keeping the 2 bottom cards as one. The "Sincere Display" ("Enseñada Sincera") from Arturo de Ascanio would be a great help here. If you don't know that one, then you deserve to die. Nah, only kidding, perhaps torture for you would be enough. Anyway, you show only four blacks and four reds. Square, turn face down, deal four cards at the table, face down, calling them red. Flash the faces of the 3 last cards, very casually.

Take the packet of 5 cards in your hand, extend again, showing all blacks, again, not making a point of it. This is what Mr. Ortiz calls and "incidental point of conviction," meaning that if you perform bad magic, you'll end up as a convict. For your own safety.

Square the 5 card packet, turn face down.

Now mix, first from the tabled reds, then from the blacks in the hands. You may flash the appropriate faces of the cards.

Using only your two index fingers (if you have more index fingers, by all means use them all) square the cards.

Pause.

Let spectator take the top four cards. Let spectator turn those cards face up. 4 blacks.

If you have done things well, the other packet doesn't need to be checked. If so, show five as four again, lap the extra card, or use the gambler's cop and steal it.

This idea of the extra card is as old as Marlo, at least. Similar ideas are published by Ben Harris ("Slick Oil and Water"), Tamariz (The Magic Way), Aldo Colombini (you know, Italian Dressing, A Nice Salad, from What's Up Deck), Alex Elmsley ("Shall Fellows well met", "A rebours", from the Complete Works, T. 1).

So, as I told you, this is a "starting point". See how you can go "higher" from here. Mixing face up all the cards? Let the spectator mix the cards? Who knows? Toy a little with the cards, you'll get some very nice ideas, I promise you.

By Daniel de Urquiza