

Unabridged Notes & Sources: *How Magicians Think*

1: Why Magic? (Part I)

“Max Maven was the first person I encountered who expressed the idea that we have to evolve from whatever got us into magic in the first place.” Michael Close, *Paradigm Shift: Volume Two* (self-pub., 2018), EPUB.

7: Seriously, how do you saw someone in half?

For a fascinating play-by-play on the development of this trick, read Steinmeyer’s thoughtful account, which was helpful in writing this piece. Jim Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned to Disappear* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2004).

To learn more about Goldin’s lawsuit, see Gary R. Brown, “Sawing a Woman in Half,” *Invention & Technology* 9, Issue 3 (Winter 1994), <https://www.inventionandtech.com/content/sawing-woman-half-1>.

8: What happens if a magician reveals a secret?

Thanks to Michael Weber, who provided the quote to open this essay in a personal correspondence.

Jacob Loshin, “Secrets Revealed: How Magicians Protect Intellectual Property Without Law” (self-pub., July 25, 2007), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1005564>.

10: How are we fooled exactly?

For more on frisson, see Mitchell Colver, “An orgasm for the skin: The strange science behind ‘aesthetic chills,’” Salon.com, May 29, 2016, https://www.salon.com/2016/05/29/an_orgasm_for_the_skin_partner/.

The Paul Schrader quote was as told to Eliana Dockterman, “Ethan Hawke Refuses to Complain About Getting Older,” *Time*, August 20, 2018, <https://time.com/5362184/ethan-hawke-blaze/>.

For more on how we process the unexpected, see Ed Catull, *Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration* (New York: Random House, 2014). Catull, a co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios, talks about how neuroscientists say we only see 40 percent of reality with our eyes. The rest is filled in by our brains.

11: Who’s your favorite magician? (part I)

The René Lavand quote (“That’s why I’ve come here—to stimulate your sense of wonder.”) is from Richard Kaufman and René Lavand, *Mysteries of My Life* (self-published, 2011).

13: How often do magicians practice?

The Roberto Giobbi quote (“A little better is much better.”) is from *Introduction to Card Magic*, Roberto Giobbi, self-published, 2012.

15: Why is magic still so male-dominated?

For more on Ding Yang’s act, see “Ding Yang Performing at the Greg Frewin Theatre,” uploaded July 10, 2018, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPEnoMTwGCM>.

Details about the gender-based experiment were drawn from Gustav Kuhn, *Experiencing the Impossible: The Science of Magic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019).

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Details about the gender-based experiment were drawn from Gustav Kuhn, *Experiencing the Impossible: The Science of Magic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019).

Suzanne Sauvage, Christian Vachon, and Marc. H Choko, eds., *Illusions: The Art of Magic* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions and Montreal: McCord Museum, 2017).

Ersy Contogouris, "More than a Lovely Assistant: Representations of women in magic posters during the golden age of magic," (working paper, Université de Montréal): 127–131.

16: Why Isn't Harry Houdini considered the greatest magician ever?

Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant*.

The Bernard Shaw quote is from Sauvage, *Illusions*

17: How do you build a magic show?

The story about passing through towns was told to me by Andi Gladwin, as told to him by David Jones.

The Gene Wolfe quote ("You never learn to write a novel. You just learn to write the novel you're writing.") came to me via Neil Gaiman.

The Jorge Luis Borges quote ("The secret is not as important as the paths that led me to it.") is from his short story "The Ethnographer."

18: How do magicians use technology?

Robert-Houdin likely didn't stop a major war with a demonstration of a magic trick. Jim Steinmeyer and Peter Lamont dissect and correct this error, one of magic's gospels, in their book *The Secret History of Magic* (New York, TarcherPerigee, 2018).

19: How are you using technology?

For a great comparison between science and magic, see Noel Daniel, ed., *The Magic Book* (Cologne: Taschen, 2019): 334.

21: Who's your favorite magician? (part II)

The "flight time" reference in the Jeff McBride profile should be attributed to Penn Jillette, who used it to refer to a magician's stage time.

22: Do magicians get fooled?

The Teller quote to open this chapter is from Teller, "Teller Reveals His Secrets," *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 2012, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/teller-reveals-his-secrets-100744801/>. (Michael Close has expressed a similar sentiment in print and verbally.)

The Teller quote ("My job is to leave you with a beautiful question, not an ugly answer.") came from a program from a New York City show by Teller.

23: Why do some people hate magic?

"Believe it When You Need It" is a phrase I borrowed and adapted from a Grateful Dead album The Grateful Dead, *Pacific Northwest '73-'74: Believe It If You Need It*, recorded in 1973 and 1974, Rhino Records, September 7, 2018, compact disc.

27: What makes David Copperfield so iconic?

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27: What makes David Copperfield so iconic?

I refer to Chris Kenner as David Copperfield’s consigliere, but Kenner is also one of the most influential magic creators of his era. He invented a seminal coin effect called “ThreeFly” and helped pioneer the “cardistry” movement (see pages 70–71).

36: What makes Penn & Teller so dynamic?

Penn & Teller’s “The Red Ball” trick is based on David P. Abbott’s floating ball trick. In 2005, Teller carefully studied, annotated, and co-authored a two-volume account of Abbott’s work: David P. Abbott, *House of Mystery: The Magic Science of David P. Abbott*, ed. Teller and Todd Karr, (Los Angeles: The Miracle Factory, 2005).

The John Lovick quote is from Nicky Ramos-Beban and David Cox, “Asparagus Valley Cultural Society,” *MAGIC Magazine*, September 2015.

Penn & Teller Souvenir Booklet, undated. Profile pieces written by each

37: What’s your favorite magic trick?

Additional thanks to John Lovick, who corresponded with me on the details of “Honor System” and provided great insight.

38: What do magicians do in secret?

The Michael Ondaatje quote (“What is interesting and important happens mostly in secret.”) is from Michael Ondaatje, *The Cat’s Table* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

Both the International Brotherhood of Magicians and the Society of American Magicians are inherently exclusionary. When I suggested merging the organizations under the banner of International Society of Magicians, a former president replied, “Will never happen.”

39: Do you have magic students?

At Rafiel’s request, I’ve changed details of his story and, in two cases, I’ve merged details with another prison pen pal, to help hide their identities.

41: Who Are Your Favorite Magicians? (Part III)

The idea that Tommy Wonder would make a list of best stage *and* close-up magicians was originally a Max Maven observation, and I heartily agree.

49: Why do magicians have such big egos?

For more on this, see “Introducing the Dumb Houdini Store,” *The Jerx* (blog), November 26, 2018, <https://www.thejerx.com/blog/2018/11/25/introducing-the-dumb-houdini-store>.

52: Why magic? (part II)

The J. J. Abrams quote (“Maybe there are times when mystery is more important than knowledge.”) came from J. J. Abrams, “The Mystery Box,” March 15, 2007, TED video, https://www.ted.com/talks/j_j_abrams_the_mystery_box?language=gl.

The David James Duncan quote (“Wonder is unknowing, experienced as pleasure.”) is from David James Duncan, *My Story as Told by Water* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2001).

The Jim Steinmeyer quote (“When we see a magic trick, when something happens that appears to be impossible, we are forced to realize the limits of our views, our doubts, and our expectations.”) comes from Steinmeyer, *The Secret History of Magic*.

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