

APRIL 2025

# The Fleming Flashpaper

The International Brotherhood of Magicians RING 21 Hollywood, California Newsletter

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Meetings held 1st Thursdays' of each month & Board meetings on the 3rd Thursdays' via the link below all starting at 7 pm

[RING 21 JITSI Board Meeting link](#)

All welcome



click logo for website



## Special Lecture By Rafael Benatar

**Thursday, April 3rd 7 p.m. at**

**Holy Virgin Mary Orthodox Cathedral  
AUDITORIUM**

**[650 Micheltorena St, Los Angeles, CA 90026](#)**

Click above for turn by turn driving directions

**This is a FREE\* lecture for RING 21 members and \$25 for non-members which includes the venue fee.**

**\*A \$5 venue fee for members to help offset the rental fee to be collected but Free parking in their lot for all.**

**Rafael joins us tonight exclusively for his five hour lecture. Okay it's likely two hours but packed with his charming magic, explanations, theories, stories and more.**

**See details inside...**

**Plus his full cover story reprinted by permission from Genii Magazine**

# HAPPY FOOL'S DAY

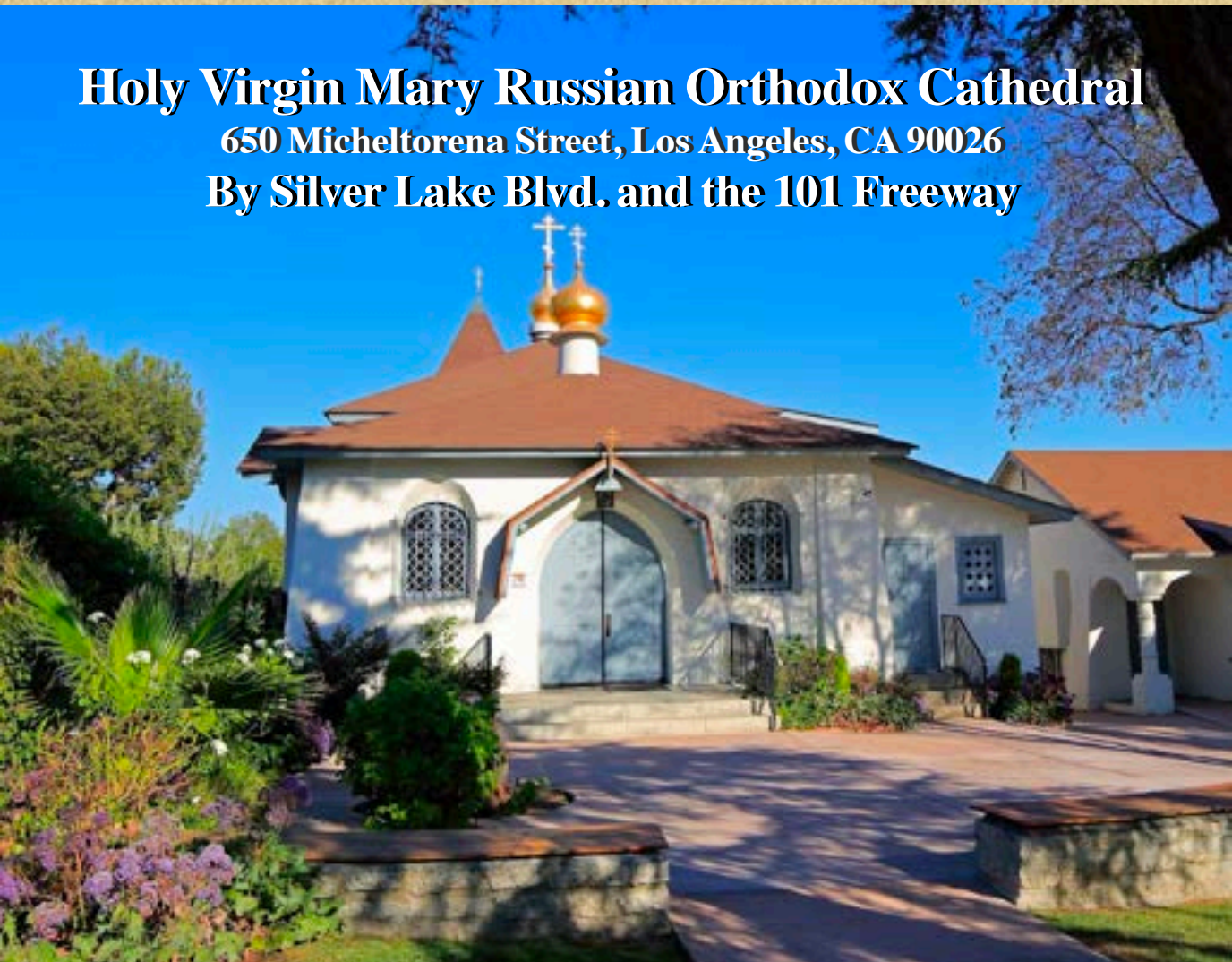
TODAY, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>

THE DAY'S LORE IS FULL OF OCCULT  
AND PAGAN SYMBOLS.  
THE FOOL REPRESENTS SO MUCH MORE...



THE FOOL IS INNOCENT  
AND TRUE TO HIMSELF & HIS DREAMS.  
HE DOESN'T SEE ANYTHING AS  
IMPOSSIBLE AND THEREFORE IS ABLE TO  
TURN THE IMPOSSIBLE INTO REALITY.

**Holy Virgin Mary Russian Orthodox Cathedral**  
650 Micheltorena Street, Los Angeles, CA 90026  
By Silver Lake Blvd. and the 101 Freeway



Check out our very own

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CCM327



**HAPPY TAX DAY!**



These steps are listed on our Membership Charter, representing our Goals and Accomplishments.



**ATTENTION**

**ALL RING 21 Members & Readers of this newsletter...**



**GET 10% OFF!**  
by mentioning RING 21

**Come Visit The Magic Apple!**

*In the shopping center at the intersection of Tujunga Avenue and Ventura Blvd in Studio City*

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# Join The World's Largest Magic Club International Brotherhood of Magicians *And Join Local I.B.M. RING 21 Hollywood!*



- Linking Ring Magazine
- Monthly Meetings
- Conventions
- Lectures
- Contests
- Workshops

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*Celebrating the enjoyment and camaraderie of magic since 1938!*

# It's a double dose of Jay

# Jay Scott Berry

When it comes to teaching the Art of Wonder, Berry is in a league of his own.

Inspiring thousands of magicians worldwide with Insightful Lectures, Hands-on Masterclasses, Digital Downloads & Private Mentoring.

The new Excelsior Lecture presents dozens of Original Effects, Moves and Routines, coupled with Performance Philosophy & Psychology.

● Professor Emeritus at The Magic Castle University.

● Headmaster at The Academy of Illusions.

Banquet

10/9/2025

Lecture

11/6/2025

# Upcoming Scheduled\* Events

**April 3**-Lecturer **Rafael Benatar** FREE for members \$25 non-members  
\$5 venue fee for members

**May 1**-Bizarre Magic Performances Night

**June 5**-Close-Up Magic Performances Night for Award

**July 3**-Picnic and magic, Grilled burgers and magic with details to come

**August 21**-Initiation Ceremony (for those that joined the past year;  
to perform a magic effect or even just tell a joke) also ???

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS THE **THIRD** THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

(because of the MAGIC LIVE convention)

**October 9**-*The 87th Annual Awards and Installation Banquet*  
Starring Jay Scott Berry

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS THE **SECOND** THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

(because of a holiday)

**November 6**-The **Jay Scott Berry** Excelsior Lecture

[www.ibnring21.org](http://www.ibnring21.org)



I.B.M. RING 21 HOLLYWOOD PRESENTS

# THE RAFAEL BENATAR LECTURE

Recipient of The Linking Ring Parade of the Year Award, the Ascanio Award for Close-Up Magician of the Year, multiple other awards in magic plus two nominations from the Academy of the Magical Arts for Lecture of the Year.

Born in Venezuela and now living in Spain, see why Rafael is one of our foremost writers and lecturers. A columnist for Genii Magazine and one of the few magicians that performs regularly in all the showrooms of the Magic Castle.

He performs at theaters, corporate and private events and has lectured in more than 300 cities around the world.

Tonights lecture will include commercial and practical items from his working repertoire, including his close-up and stand-up material and his latest update on his well-known cups and balls routine, with new insight on this classic.

His explanations will be full of practical advice that can help raise the level of all the magic you do, such as scripting, management, and handling of volunteers. He will also have some items for sale.

**THURSDAY**

**APRIL 3RD 7:30PM AT**

Holy Virgin Mary Orthodox Cathedral AUDITORIUM

650 Micheltorena St, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Click above for turn by turn driving directions

**FREE FOR MEMBERS\***

**\$25 FOR NON-MEMBERS (INCLUDES VENUE FEE)**

**\*A \$5 VENUE FEE TO HELP OFFSET THE RENTAL FEE TO BE COLLECTED FROM MEMBERS**

**FREE PARKING IN THEIR LOT FOR ALL**

# MAGIC LINKING RING REPORT

BY BOB WEISS

A rare rainy night for Los Angeles but we still had a decent turnout. It was Stage Performance Night that includes voting for the Best by tonight's attendees with the award to be given out at our October Awards and Installation Banquet.

Hosted tonight by "Dr. John" who did also did a nice four ace routine.

Bob Carroll did a rap for seniors that was original and hilarious that led to a poster restoration.

David Martinez did a routine with coins and a very visible bag where they repeatedly appeared along with other surprises.

Ellen Stein performed with a magic yellow rope including threading the needle and knots appearing and disappearing. A guest performer did card flourishes.

Manny D'Mago did an act with a movie memory night theme using postcards and a clothesline.

Nicolas Garcia performed with rope that a handkerchief appeared on and off the rope as well as a rope routine with sliding knots.

Reid Ekman performed with a lightbulb and a white handkerchief and they kept changing places very magically all along with music.

Roy Ball finished the evening doing a card routine using the one ahead method and the insurance policy.

Cool magic raffle prizes help ended the evening.





# Optical Illusions





# Genii

THE CONJURORS' MAGAZINE

**MARCH 2005**

**\$5**

Rafael Benatar Interviewed • Gordon Bean  
Benatar Teaches Six Great Magical Items  
Jim Steinmeyer and Mary Poppins • Brian Sibley  
Martin's Misdirection Lands in Genii • Shawn McMaster  
An Excerpt from Mr. Lucky • James Swain  
Mark Wilson Has Two Tons of Fun  
Roberto Giobbi Completes His Notes on Vernon  
Max Maven's Swiss Spellbinder







# RAFAEL BENATAR

## INTRODUCTION BY CHARLES REYNOLDS

**W**henever a magician encounters a new audience, whether in a close-up or stage situation, he can be reasonably sure of two things. First, that most of the members of that audience are not too enthusiastic about being fooled (with its connotation that you have been made a fool) and, second, that the members of that audience want, at least for the duration of the performance, to believe in magic. It is the job of a skilled conjurer to bring those two attitudes into some kind of balance.

The ability to do this is possessed by relatively few performers and Rafael Benatar is one of them. A trained concert musician (his instrument is the lute), born in Venezuela but a long-time resident of Madrid, Rafael has established himself, off the concert stage, as one of the major figures in Spanish magic. Whether performing with cards (his major area of magical interest) or performing his stunning routine with the cups and balls, it is obvious that Benatar is not only a performer of formidable skill but also a thinker. His booklet and his videotape on this classic effect are important in the magical literature not just because it is one of the more excellent versions of the oldest illusion but for the theory that is behind every move. To study it is to add to your knowledge of the one effect that contains virtually all of the psychological principles in magic.

Benatar's profound study of the psychology of magic and his undeniable technical expertise are not the sole secrets of his success. He possesses that essential factor that separates the outstanding magician from all the others: charm. He will amaze and astonish you, but you are so charmed by his personality that you could not possibly resent it.

There is a much quoted statement by the great Nate Leipzig to the effect that if you are going to fool people, at least they should feel that they have been fooled by a gentleman. Rafael Benatar is, in all aspects of his presentation, a gentleman. Magicians who have studied Benatar's technique and are properly awed by such things as his handling of the Double Lift should not lose sight of the fact that there are other equally important factors, equally well thought out, that have contributed to his success. The cultivation of a personality that makes you enjoy (not feel challenged by) being amazed by him is at the top of the list.

The late Francis Carlyle (in my opinion, one of the greatest of all close-up magicians) once commented to me that an entire book could be written on magical management. What he meant by "management" is how the performer controls the entire performance situation so that all the factors contributed to the entertainment and to the effect being presented. As a study of his work will soon reveal, Benatar is a master of management and much can be learned from an in-depth study of his approach. Check out, for example, his stand-up card routine "Right Between the Eyes" (presented here on p.82), as direct and effective a combination of both mystery and entertainment as one could find. The method is simple, the management is everything. It is Benatar at his best.

Benatar's close friend and contemporary in the Spanish School of Magic, Juan Tamariz, has summed up the Benatar secret: "Great hands ... great intelligence ... great feeling." To that I would add "great charisma" and hope that those who have not yet seen Benatar work will be able to experience his real magic for themselves.

## INTERVIEW BY GORDON BEAN

**A**lways, there is that smile. From its first arrival, it never fails to light up an audience. Rafael Benatar has all the attributes of someone with remarkable charisma—energy, confidence, skill—but a great deal of his charm comes from how much he enjoys his own performances. Few other performers maintain such genuine, high-wattage enthusiasm—and I think I know why.

Most of us begin magic when we're socially stunted teenagers, as afraid of ourselves as of our awkwardly approached spectators. To compensate, we escape into speed and parroted patter, subconsciously pretending that the spectators aren't there. Though understandable, such behavior is unfortunately very hard to cleanse from one's system and tends to linger in subtle ways in even some of our most accomplished performers.

Rafael, on the other hand, came to magic once he was already a serious, mature musician. Apart from dexterity and dedication, such a launch point gave him a less obvious but crucial attribute: a real joy at being able to encounter his audience directly. An instrument may be played in an empty room to a microphone, but magic demands an audience and that's a connection Rafael obviously cherishes.

Not surprisingly, Rafael is one of the most engaging conversationalists in all of magic. I always look forward to his

visits to Los Angeles—or to my visits to Madrid. The following conversation began at The Magic Castle, then continued as Rafael and I drove to a nearby restaurant and enjoyed a late lunch out under the Los Angeles sun.

As you'll learn, this was a particularly appropriate route to be taking while discussing a career that began in the Castle's Close-Up Gallery and often brings Rafael back to its receptive audiences.

I had a lovely time, and I learned a great deal, not only about my friend, but about the boundless way magic can blossom when nurtured with care, intelligence—and a genuine smile.

**GENII:** If I'm not mistaken, your serious interest in magic began right here at The Magic Castle.

**RAFAEL:** Absolutely. In my early twenties I made a trip to California with my father, who is an amateur magician, and my two brothers. Although I had learned a couple of tricks as a kid, I wasn't yet into magic. My father wanted us to see The Magic Castle and took us there. What I saw there was wonderful and fascinating, and that was when I began to think of magic as an art.

**GENII:** Was there a particular performer or trick that you saw that really impressed you?

**RAFAEL:** The images that stayed with me forever are those of Martin Nash performing at the Close-Up Gallery. His deep voice, his impeccable card handling, the astonishing miracles, his engaging stories. Imagine the thrill when, 17 years later, I came to the Castle as a performer and Martin was there, offering me his friendship.

**GENII:** Had you seen much magic in Venezuela?

**RAFAEL:** When I was two years old, Spanish magician Enrique Gutiérrez, known as Gran Henry, was performing in Caracas. My father, who was interested in magic, quickly became his friend and encouraged him to move over. He eventually made the move and had, and is still having, a successful career there. Some time after my first Castle visit

he performed at a barbecue at my father's house, causing a sensation among my friends. This encouraged me to subtract a handful of books from my father's library and take them with me to London, where I was living at the time.

**GENII:** So your father helped get you into all this. What's he like?

**RAFAEL:** My father is a businessman with a sharp sense of humor. He has always liked magic, even attended a couple of conventions in the States. He used to perform occasionally for friends and even had a TV appearance doing something mental. I think I picked up some of his sense of humor and the wickedness needed to be a magician.

**GENII:** And your mother?

**RAFAEL:** My mother is a woman of many talents. She played the piano, and became a photographer and a graphic designer with three grown-up kids. She is skillful with the computer and a great cook. Not just a mom that cooks well—I mean a top-notch cook into serious gastronomy, who has authored a couple of books, and is an international bridge player. From her, I guess I've picked up the love for the arts and the drive to do things well.

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**The images that stayed with me forever are those of Martin Nash performing at the Close-Up Gallery. His deep voice, his impeccable card handling, the astonishing miracles, his engaging stories.**



*Rafael with Martin Nash*



*Rafael performs and lectures on the lute and has helped to make the Baroque instrument known to Venezuelan audiences through numerous television appearances*

**GENII:** Tell us about your musical training.

**RAFAEL:** After a couple of years of teaching myself the electric guitar, I became interested in classical music and studied the classical guitar at the Caracas Conservatory under Antonio Lauro, a celebrated guitarist and composer, whose music is performed by guitarists all over the world. A wonderful teacher. He had a knack for how far he could go with teaching. He let you learn by yourself under his guidance without saying much, just keeping you on the right track.

**GENII:** And what had brought you to London?

**RAFAEL:** While studying the guitar, I took an Early Music course with Chilean lute player Oscar Ohlsen, now an amateur magician, too—guess how he started. I had heard of the lute and played lute music on the guitar but I had never thought one could actually study it. I eventually went to London to pursue lute studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, a century-old institution, with a grant from the Venezuelan Government, and became the first lute player to ever get a degree from the Guildhall. That was in 1981.

**GENII:** Tell us about the lute for those who have never seen it or heard it.

**RAFAEL:** The lute is a plucked-string instrument brought into Europe by the Arabs in the Middle Ages. It has a vaulted ribbed back and double strings. While it still exists in Arab countries as a folk instrument, played with a pick, in Europe it developed as a court instrument, played with the fingertips, for which tons of wonderful music was written throughout Renaissance and Baroque times. During this

period, ca.1500-1760, the instrument underwent important changes in shape, size, tunings, and number of strings, from six courses (which is how the pairs are called) all the way to 13 courses. Many Renaissance paintings, like those of Caravaggio, feature lute players, as it was a prominent instrument at the time. It was usually played for small groups of people.

**GENII:** So we could call it close-up music?

**RAFAEL:** Very much so. Nowadays, however, with the right acoustics, it can be played for up to four or five hundred people, like the classical guitar. In its European versions, the lute was played with the fingertips, not even the fingernails. This allows you to pluck the two strings of a pair simultaneously. The instrument was very lightly built so it would respond to a light touch.

**GENII:** How was your musical experience before you became a professional magician?

**RAFAEL:** Ever since I was a guitar student I've been giving concerts in Venezuela, mainly in Caracas, my home city, where I'm well known in classical music circles and among concert-goers. I have also performed as a soloist in several European countries and have taught seminars and master classes, some for lute players and some for guitarists who are interested in lute music. I've had many TV appearances, which have helped make the instrument known to Venezuelan audiences. After my studies in London I moved to Basel, Switzerland, to pursue post-graduate studies in Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music.

**GENII:** Let's go back to the moment when you picked up some books from your father's library.

**RAFAEL:** I took those books with me to London and that's when I actually began studying magic. I was 24 and didn't know what a Double Lift was, but I did have a good grasp, through my musical training, of what practice means and that's quite an advantage. It usually takes some time to comprehend how something that seems impossible to you can be made possible through practice. Once you've experienced that, you'll love practicing forever.



Photos by Virginia Hunter

Gordon Bean and Rafael exchange thoughts on magic theory

**GENII:** Did you get in touch with other magicians?

**RAFAEL:** Not yet. I was very involved with my music studies but I started learning from those books. Also, I had read about the Vernon books and was eager to get them, so I looked up a magic shop in London and there was this man with a safety pin through his nose who fooled me with some Ambitious Card moves. He brought the books, but they were wrapped, and he would not show them: I don't show the books! he said. After an awkward silence I thought of a strategy. I realized I wanted to buy the *Inner Secrets of Card Magic* trilogy no matter what, but I didn't give that away. Instead I made him an offer he could not refuse: "For every book you let me look at, I'll buy a book." Of course, it didn't have to be the same book but it was an offer he couldn't refuse. After a while I had chosen a few other books I was tempted to buy. I left them at the counter while I went to the bank to get some money. Then a kid from South Africa, about 15, who was also buying at the shop, came running after me: "Excuse me sir, let me tell

you something. I saw the books you're buying and I think you could have made better choices. Would you let me suggest some reading? I have no interest in the shop." I never knew his name. Thank you if you read this. He suggested some books and among them was *The Royal Road to Card Magic*.

**GENII:** And that's where you learned your basic sleights from?

**RAFAEL:** Yes, as well as some tricks that I still use. That's when I came to realize one could learn great stuff from books and do good magic without any gimmicked apparatus. It was a wonderful experience. Felt like nothing could stop me.

**GENII:** And now, looking back, what do you think about that as a way of getting started?

**RAFAEL:** I'm glad I started that way. There was a logical process, for which I thank Hugar and Braue, as well as my musical background. I had the patience and learned the basics first. Ascanio once told me that many beginners arrive at the magic club and see the guys talking about a move, but have no way to distinguish the fundamentals from the latest cool thing. Anyway, I'd say I had a solid start in card magic.

**GENII:** How did you manage your practice time between music and magic?

**RAFAEL:** At the time I had music projects with a tough schedule. It was my last year at the Guildhall, near graduation time and magic was a hobby, so I didn't even consider finding out about magic clubs. I think I wasn't even aware of them. So I taught myself and took as much advice as I could from those books, that also included those of Frank Garcia and *Expert Card Technique*. I must say, however, that no matter how disciplined you get in distributing the time, there's always one thing that is circling in your mind 24 hours a day due to your projects in progress or an excitement over certain discoveries. So my focus of interest shifted back and forth.

**GENII:** Had you began considering becoming a magic pro?

**RAFAEL:** Not even close, not in my wildest dreams, but I was already taking magic seriously. I have always taken my interests seriously. I have played baseball, golf (I was a 12 handicap at 15), and tennis. I have always been the last one to get tired and the last one to consider canceling a game because it's raining. It has always meant a lot more than just play for fun. I subscribed to magazines, read the books, and studied the strategies. And that's how magic eventually turned into a profession, as had happened with music.

**GENII:** It's certainly different from the usual magic-set story. Did you start performing for your friends?

**RAFAEL:** Yes, and I was using Overhand Shuffle controls, Double Lifts, Top Changes and other sleights without having ever had anyone demonstrate them to me. And I think I was doing them quite well. The information was laid out clearly in those books and it was exciting to pick it up.

**GENII:** Having started that way, without meeting other magicians and without a reference point, how were you at keeping secrets?

**RAFAEL:** I've always played it safe with ethics. I wasn't even sure if it was okay for laymen to know that magic books existed, so I hid the books in my bedroom so visitors would not see them.

**GENII:** So when did you first get in touch with other magicians?

**RAFAEL:** Soon after I got to Switzerland to pursue post-graduate lute studies I learned there was a big convention in Lausanne. That was FISM 1982, which I attended for a day. I later learned, looking at the program, that The Professor was there but I didn't really know who he was, and I never met him. That was my first overview of the magic world, of how much stuff was going on. I saw my first lecture; it was Fantasio. His opening line was, "As you know, there are more than a hundred ways of making a candle disappear." And I thought: "If you say so." Back in Basel I looked up "magic" in the phone book and found an address of what I thought was a magic shop. I went there and it turned out to be a private home, that of Fritz Simon, who was the secretary of the local club. After the initial embarrassment, he turned out to be a very kind gentleman and agreed to meet me another day at a bar. When he realized I was serious about magic, he invited me to join the club. There I met Roberto Giobbi.

**GENII:** Who's been your friend ever since.

**RAFAEL:** Yes, and he was also the first to tell me about the Spanish School and who Ascanio and Tamariz were. He also was, and still is, an example of how thorough one could get about studying card magic, about studying magic as an art form. During my time in Switzerland I began attending lectures regularly.

**GENII:** What was your first contact with Ascanio?

**RAFAEL:** Through his writings. Sometimes you read something and find it interesting but do nothing about it. Sometimes it affects you on a subconscious level. But when I read Ascanio, it actually made me stop in my tracks and think about everything I was doing. He had an uncanny ability to extract principles and theories out of his experience and out of observing other good magicians. He was a

keen observer who put the pieces together but never claimed to have invented the principles at work. He was able to see why something would work and lay that out for you to apply. My translation of Ascanio's book of magic theory is about to be published in English.

**GENII:** How did you actually meet him?

**RAFAEL:** I went to Madrid on vacation and called him up. He quickly invited me over and we became friends.

**GENII:** Then you went to Madrid to stay.

**RAFAEL:** Always keeping in touch with Caracas, which I visit regularly, I went to Madrid where I gave some concerts and taught music courses, and had the intention of living there. Then I started meeting Ascanio and also Juan Tamariz, whom I meet regularly ever since.

**GENII:** What was your introduction to the Madrid crowd?

**RAFAEL:** Normally you need an entrance exam to enter the club. Since I was not a beginner, I was told I did not need an exam but still had to comply with the formality and do something. So I chose to give a lecture on the cups and balls.

**GENII:** Where did you learn the cups and balls?

**RAFAEL:** I began assembling a routine with various moves and sequences mostly from Frank Garcia's book. Then I used my routine as a vehicle to put into practice

*Continued on page 58*

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**A subtlety is a grain of sand  
in the laymen's castle,  
but the better the grains, the better  
the castle. What the magician can  
readily appreciate, laymen will be  
sensitive to on a subconscious level.**



*Rafael performing at a street festival in Zamora, Spain*



BENATAR, *continued from page 55*

new principles and ideas I learned, especially Ascanio's theory of in-transit actions. Through all that input the routine evolved into something else. I developed my own loading sequence and replanned the timing. I showed it to Ascanio, to check out my applications of his theories and he was very pleased and wrote a Foreword for my lecture notes (*Transit Cups and Balls*).

**GENII:** In which he said you expanded on his theories and broke new ground. We'll get into that later. Had you performed the routine for other magicians other than Ascanio before giving the lecture?

**RAFAEL:** No, and I hadn't even seen another magician do the cups, at least since I got into magic. Before then I remember having seen someone do it at The Castle and had also seen Bonnie, a lady magician, at the Magic Towne House in New York.

**GENII:** So you didn't know what to expect.

**RAFAEL:** I thought I was proving myself as a worthy member of the club. It turned out to be a successful lecture and

**On one hand Juan Tamariz is the famous guy on TV. But he's also remained an enthusiastic amateur, no matter what. And he's accessible. Also, he's responsible ...**



Rafael, Juan Tamariz, and Dave Williams—the tallest magicians

it earned me the Ascanio Award for close-up magic that year.

**GENII:** How did you first meet Tamariz?

**RAFAEL:** I had read *The Five Points*, *The Magic Way*, and some of his other writings in Spanish. I met him my first time at the club. There I also met some of the people that have become friends such as Joaquín Navajas, a superb coinman; Camilo, one of Spain's greats; Miguel Gómez, cardman extraordinaire; Antonio Romero, a very creative performer; Anthony Blake, an incredible mentalist, and quite a few more.

**GENII:** Any other major influences in that period?

**RAFAEL:** The whole magic scene in Madrid. I began to hang out regularly with Joaquín. I showed him every trick and got his feedback. Another major influence was Johnny Thompson, who worked at the Scala Meliá in Madrid for several months.

**GENII:** Lucky you. How did you two meet?

**RAFAEL:** One day he came to the club meeting and caused a tremendous stir when he did the "Egg Bag" and the "5-Star Koran Prediction." At the time I was finding my way as a musician in Madrid and not even thinking I'd ever become a pro magician. I called him up one day and said I was into card magic and wanted to meet him. Without the slightest hesitation he invited me over for coffee at the hotel bar at 3 p.m. It went on and on and it was fascinating; he talked and taught me a lot, and was also a good listener. About seven hours later it was time for him to get ready for the show but, no, he didn't send me home. He invited me to hang out in the dressing room during his waiting time, and then found me a seat to watch his show. He taught me stuff he'd learned directly from Vernon, Charlie Miller, Zarrow and other legends I had only read about. At the time I couldn't even dream I would later become good friends with Zarrow. Then I attended many sessions with him and Ascanio and Camilo. I remember when a group of spectators approached him in the hotel lobby, asking him to do a trick. He did a one-phase Ambitious Card. He just put the card in the middle and had it rise to the top once. But what a build up. One can't have stronger reaction. A lesson in itself.

**GENII:** Of course, apart from amazing visitors like Thompson, all of you in Madrid are blessed with the constant presence of Tamariz. How would you say he's influenced Spanish magicians?

**RAFAEL:** Tremendously. On one hand he's the famous guy on TV. But he's also remained an enthusiastic amateur, no matter what. And he's accessible. Also, he's responsible, along with Don José Puchol and a handful of guys, for the creation of the Escuela Mágica de Madrid [Madrid School of Magic].

**GENII:** Explain what the Escuela does.

**RAFAEL:** It's a group of about 35 people with the common interest of pursuing and studying magic as an art. We communicate throughout the year via a newsletter to which we all contribute. Then we have a weekend gathering—the Jornadas Cartomágicas—in San Lorenzo del Escorial, a quiet town at the outskirts of Madrid. Although there are many brilliant and highly successful pros among the attendants, everybody remains an amateur at heart.

**GENII:** In the sense that you love the art.

**RAFAEL:** Exactly. Everybody has a genuine interest.

**GENII:** In recent years you have traveled extensively, lecturing for other magicians. What's that like?

**RAFAEL:** I enjoy traveling for work and I enjoy the work. Every lecture comes with pleasant moments with people. I also learn from my own lectures, not only because I can improve my way of explaining things, but because putting my thoughts into words makes me think more. And if I ever have to make an extra effort because I traveled so many hours after a sleepless night and have to get ready to work as soon as I get there, I say to myself this can't be any worse than getting up early to go to an office every day. Come on, I'm sitting in an airplane or a train reading a book. I do enjoy every bit of it.

**GENII:** What about performing for laymen?

**RAFAEL:** That's the whole point of it all. There might be other things generated around it but that's what it's all about.

**GENII:** To what extent do you think lay audiences appreciate subtlety?

**RAFAEL:** A subtlety is a grain of sand in the laymen's castle, but the better the grains, the better the castle. What the magician can readily appreciate, laymen will be sensitive to on a subconscious level. Therefore the reward might not be so immediate, but it affects the image you project.

**GENII:** Is that how it works in music?

**RAFAEL:** Sure. If my lute is slightly out of tune, many people won't be able to tell, but you bet when it's in tune they'll like the music better.

**GENII:** It's always interesting to see theory from an angle outside magic.

**RAFAEL:** Absolutely. That way you can be sure you understand the unadulterated essence. When I lecture, if somebody learns a trick of mine or two, fine. But when I'm really pleased is when people learn something from my lecture and are able to apply it to other material. This proves they have grasped the essence, that they got my point.

**GENII:** Does that work the other way around? Have you learned things from magic that you apply to music?

**RAFAEL:** Yes, to an unbelievable extent. I think I'm a better magician because I'm a musician and a better musician because I'm a magician.

**GENII:** In both magic and music, many beginners have trouble getting experience. What kind of magic did you perform for your friends when you were an amateur?

**RAFAEL:** Basically cards. Cards are a perfect tool for the amateur. You can find a deck at most homes, and if you don't, it's still in the ballpark to carry your own. Also, coins make sense, maybe even more than cards, and of course, miscellaneous impromptu, or impromptu-looking tricks. But to be casually asked to perform and pull out a fancy red box that doesn't fit in any pocket was, and still is, out of the question.

**GENII:** What about the Cups and Balls? Could you do it?



*Performing for a lay audience at a corporate party: "That's the whole point of it all."*

**RAFAEL:** The Cups and Balls, even though they are honest props, are perceived as something you brought, as opposed to something you happen to have on you. I feel very strongly about this. This feeling was in me long before I analyzed it. It's not only about how fair it looks. If you happen to be at a party and are casually asked to perform, you will look like a bit of a schmuck if you came prepared. To have small items in your pocket is all right, but no more than that or you'll lose a little audience respect. It's not worth any trick. In such a situation I'd even hesitate to produce a jumbo coin.

**GENII:** So Cups and Balls were out.



*Rafael with Herb Zarrow and Charles Reynolds*



Wowing an audience at a Johnny Walker Promotion

**RAFAEL:** Unless ...

**GENII:** I knew there had to be a way.

**RAFAEL:** If I had friends over at home I might do a couple of card tricks and if they showed some excitement I'd say: "Wait, I'll show you something interesting." Then I went and got the cups. Or I would arrive late at a party with the excuse that I was attending a magic meeting. When asked to perform I asked if they had a deck of cards and then, as an afterthought, I'd say, "wait, I have some stuff in my car."

**GENII:** Which included the loads.

**RAFAEL:** Yes, but there's an attitude to it. At some point during the routine I act as if the trick is over and then decide to continue. It's a subtle thing. I'm almost talking to myself when I decide to continue. Audiences are sensitive to subtle gestures or attitudes. If you make them believe, really believe, that the routine is over and you were ready to pack it up, the surprise of the loads is that much stronger. You have erased from their subconscious the fact that you might be loaded up.

**GENII:** Great concept.

**RAFAEL:** There's a story Juan [Tamariz] told me about the late Padre Wenceslao Ciurol, a prolific magic writer whose books have had a strong influence on Spanish magicians. He was a priest and wore a cassock. When asked to perform he'd say, "Sorry, I'm not prepared," and he'd let them beg. "Sorry, I don't have anything on me." After some more begging, he'd shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, but just one card trick." He eventually ended up producing a full-sized Spanish flag.

**GENII:** Which tends to come first for you, the application or the theory?

**RAFAEL:** Usually you discover that something works, perhaps through repeated performance or experience with related concepts. By understanding why it works you can really apply it successfully in other contexts. Your mind is full of micro theories, so to speak, based on your experience, and if you are able to formulate those in writing or otherwise, you make them more useful to yourself and

available to others. Nobody sits down and thinks of a theory just like that. That would be a hypothesis.

**GENII:** And other people's theories?

**RAFAEL:** You can't just read and immediately apply, unless the theory awakens a knowledge that was already in you. You have to let the stuff sink in. I'm not comfortable having someone simply telling me what to do. Ask my parents [laughs].

**GENII:** I was struck recently when I showed you a trick I was working on and you immediately thought of a new theory behind what I was doing.

**RAFAEL:** I wouldn't give it theory stature but it's still a thought that could be applied to other things.

**GENII:** It had to do with a bizarre object. You mentioned that if a bizarre object—something people have never seen before—appears in the trick, it is often better left for the end.

**RAFAEL:** In that particular case, the trick allowed for the sequence of events to be changed. It was a bizarre card that could be handed out, not a gimmick. I just thought if it appears in the middle, people's perception of the rest of the trick will be somewhat distorted. Again, theory comes when you try to

spell it out in words. At this stage it's just a thought, originated from a sensation, a feeling as a spectator.

**GENII:** And figuring out what motivated that feeling is what leads to the theory.

**RAFAEL:** Right. Theory must, by definition, come after. Theory is based on the past and meant to be used in the future.

**GENII:** Kind of like a lens that allows you to see something in front of you that for some reason you weren't really focusing on.

**RAFAEL:** You can learn by trial and error, which you must do to a certain extent anyway, but good theory makes it easier—and you not only learn faster, but you learn in new dimensions, in your everyday life, even in your sleep.

**GENII:** Talk about the "environment" concept that you discuss in your lecture.

**RAFAEL:** That's something I illustrate with the Cups and Balls.

**GENII:** Can you tell us about it?

**RAFAEL:** Sure, but to do that I must first tell you about my approach to describing, or explaining magic, whether in print or verbally. Most often, I find that detailing exact finger positions is less important than the fact that the reader or listener must be kept aware at all times of what the audience is supposed to see and believe. A good magical explanation touches some key points and the rest must be filled in with practice. Just like you can define a circle with a few dots, or a straight line with only two. You decide what the key points are, and how many, according to what you are contributing.

**GENII:** All right, so back to the environment.

**RAFAEL:** The idea is to create an environment in which what you have to do happens to be the most natural or, better still, the only natural thing to do. The example I use comes halfway through my cups routine. My right hand has gone to my right jacket pocket to put a ball away while my left hand is about to lift the center cup to unexpectedly find a ball there.

**GENII:** While, meanwhile ...

**RAFAEL:** My right hand is reaching for a load in the pocket; an unwashed potato. Now there will be two things in my unspoken script that will motivate all the actions. The first one is “what’s that doing here?” upon finding the ball under the cup. I act as if want to look at that ball closely, as its appearance surprised me, and I’m standing a bit to the right.

**GENII:** So all this defines the environment.

**RAFAEL:** Yes, an environment in which the only natural thing to do is to transfer the cup to the right hand, as if putting it out of the way, so the left hand is free to reach for the ball and bring it up near your eyes. If you can convey that, where you put your fingers is almost irrelevant. This brings the potato half way into the cup held now by the right hand. That’s the first step, which will be over by the time you’re done with that unspoken question. In that environment—remember you are standing to the right—all other ways of bringing that ball near your eyes are unnatural. All actions are continuous and geared to that moment which is what Ascanio has defined as a final action. Everything heads to that—wham!—like a vacuum.

**GENII:** And transferring the cup would be an in-transit action, right?

**RAFAEL:** Exactly. Something that seems necessary but unimportant on your way to that final action. Now for the second step, the inner dialog, which you might even mumble for yourself, goes, “Let’s put it away.” The only apparent reason behind the actions that follow is putting that ball in your right pocket.

**GENII:** Why the right? If I may ask.

**RAFAEL:** Well, because ... [laughs]. Really, that’s the pocket I use. Since you don’t really have to explain it, just do it as the most natural thing in the world. And it does make sense to use the right pocket.

**GENII:** Not entirely convinced, but go on. We’ll get back to that later.

**RAFAEL:** The only natural thing to do in order to put that ball in your right pocket is for the right hand to put down

the cup, again as an in-transit action, so it can be free to receive the ball from the left hand and put it in the pocket.

**GENII:** And you have loaded the potato and are already taking the next load. Wonderful.

**RAFAEL:** There is some study behind these actions but they’re not difficult to execute. It’s more about acting. We hear people say things like: “That’s a bold move, but he gets away with it.” But getting away with it consistently means it is supported by a solid structure. It would be bold if you performed the same actions with your fingers without paying attention to timing and other resources.

**GENII:** Let’s get back to the right pocket bit. Why the right pocket?

**RAFAEL:** I’m getting there. Larry Jennings, one of my heroes, whom you knew very well, once said that to study your own naturalness you can’t just go to work and study yourself; that you kind of have to catch yourself doing something, in everyday life, and backtrack.

**GENII:** Yes, that was in *Genii*.

**RAFAEL:** Let me put it this way. The actions I described have to be properly motivated to be deceiving, but technically they are no more difficult than buying a newspaper, paying for it, and getting the change back.

**GENII:** And putting the change in your right pocket?

**RAFAEL:** That’s what I’m getting at. See how many people go to the length of transferring the rolled up paper to their left hand, or even under the left arm, as if it were a magic wand [chuckles], only to be able to put the change in their right hand and bring it to the right pocket, even if their left pocket is empty. Go check. Catch yourself doing it.

**GENII:** Or get a job at a news stand.

**RAFAEL:** This reminds me of an everyday occurrence, during my teens, in which I fooled myself several times before I knew anything about magic, back when I was beginning to shave. My mother would come up and say, “Honey, would you please put the shaving cream back in the cabinet, where it belongs?” “Sure, no problem,” I’d say. The next day, the same thing happened again and so on,



*Drawing a crowd at a trade show in Munich*

time after time, and every time I'd swear I had put it back. There had to be something spooky going on.

**GENII:** Until you caught yourself?

**RAFAEL:** Right. One day I was very determined not to get called on that again and, when I was done shaving, I grabbed the damn shaving cream and put it in the cabinet, making sure I made a mental picture of my hand doing that, and closed the cabinet tightly. And now comes the moment when I caught myself. The after shave! To get at it, I had to take the shaving cream back out.

**GENII:** So getting the after-shave was the final action. Once your mind focused on the after-shave, everything else you did went unnoticed. Quite a lesson.

**RAFAEL:** Yes, never put the after-shave behind.

**GENII:** When you're learning a trick, before ever performing it, how do you improve the mechanics? Does being a musician give you any special strategies?

**RAFAEL:** If it's a routine comprised of several phases, split them up and know the situation before each one so you can start right there any time. Maybe the routine is comprised of four phases and only one is hard. If you just go through the whole thing over and over, you'll be wasting some time. If what you really need to practice is phase number three, practice it by itself. Spend more time on it. This means you'll be doing it four times as much.

**GENII:** How can you tell it's ready?

**RAFAEL:** You can't really draw a line, but I have always looked for ways to measure the results of practice because abstract work is, for me, more difficult to tackle.

**GENII:** How's that?

**RAFAEL:** If you decide you want to improve your performance of a trick, that's abstract, volatile. To invent a trick even more so. On the other hand, if what you have to do is type 20 pages, you can estimate how long it's going to take and have a clear view of the task ahead. That makes it easier to get to work.

**GENII:** So what do you do?

**RAFAEL:** I do the trick for myself a number of times, counting the times, without setting too high a goal at first. Say I want to learn "The Divergent Silk" [Vernon's color-changing silk routine]. I work through it and think about it. I might change something to suit me or whatever. At some point you'll know it can be better but might not

know how. In any case I do it, say, 20 times. The actual number depends on your skill and the kind of material in question. Might be 10 or 50, but it's important to count, otherwise 18 might seem like 50, despite the pleasure. So I do it 20 times without thinking. I do try to make it better but I try to be relaxed, without judging myself. I want it to become second nature. Then I stop and assess the situation. Is it any better now?

**GENII:** You bet it will be.

**RAFAEL:** Certainly. And if the answer is yes I might stop and think, then go for another 20 before I think again.

**GENII:** Indefinitely?

**RAFAEL:** Well, you could go on forever but at some point reality creeps in. My point is by the time you can do another 20 times without significant improvement, it must be pretty good. This process doesn't guarantee you're ready to perform, but it's a healthy minimum requirement, especially when compared to nothing. You might set a minimum number of total times and establish as a rule that you will not perform in public at least before you've done that many.

**GENII:** Anything else?

**RAFAEL:** Learn it backward. This applies to learning a script, or memorizing a stack, but can also be applied to practicing routines. I'll give you an example for memorizing a paragraph of text, as it will be easier to explain. If you don't have a system, you would normally go through the beginning first, say the first phase, until you know it. Then you begin learning the next phase and the phone rings. You start again and you get stuck. And you will because the second phase is new to you, and so on. You are likely to learn the first phase very well and from then it gets worse. If you work at it you will eventually learn it but will have wasted a great deal of time.

**GENII:** So how do you learn it backward?

**RAFAEL:** Not really backward, but you learn the last phase first. Then the one before and go through both together. See? This way the new one, the one you haven't seen, comes first. Then begin three phases from the end and so on until you get to the beginning. I have a very specific set of personal rules I have developed through the years that I'm happy with.

**GENII:** And eventually you go through the whole routine in order.



From left, with Shigeo Futugawa, Ken Kurita, and Ton Onosaka. Center, with Lennart Green and Miguel Gómez. Right, with Mike Skinner



**RAFAEL:** Yes, sometimes I take a break and do it all the way through to keep it in perspective. Another thing I do is, if a routine has many steps to remember, I learn how to do it fast as hell. If it should take three minutes to perform I try to do it in less than one minute. This will do away with any hesitations about what comes next.

**GENII:** Even as an amateur, it's clear you were taking the art seriously. When did you start performing professionally?

**RAFAEL:** It was gradual. I began getting occasional gigs in Madrid. The real break came when I got a summer gig, performing close-up four hours a day for three months, at the amusement park restaurants, along with Miguel Puga, who had also arrived in Madrid from Granada. That's when I started getting the feeling of being a professional and did some of the tricks in my repertoire over a thousand times. Eventually I learned to perform on stage and by now I enjoy it just as much.

**GENII:** What kind of work have you done?

**RAFAEL:** I've played pubs, night clubs, and magic theaters like La Cripta Mágica, a wonderful place in Madrid. I do steady corporate work, banquets, trade shows, sales meetings, and private events, as well as a fair amount of lecturing for magicians, and some writing and translating. I've enjoyed the translating, but that's something I'm beginning to scale back on as I need the time to write my own material.

**GENII:** Do you still perform magic for your friends?

**RAFAEL:** Sure, and it's a pleasure.

**GENII:** How different is it now?

**RAFAEL:** I'm not desperate to perform and never push the issue. Even if you really are desperate, it pays to hold back. Let them beg a little bit. Refuse once in a while so they don't take you for granted. It should never look as if they're giving you a chance to perform. It should be a privilege to them. This alters the mood in favor of the magic. Expectation makes the performance better—as long as you can deliver, of course.

**GENII:** And that also applies to professional engagements.

**RAFAEL:** Yes, there are factors that alter the mood. Some you can control, some you can't. For example, there's a world of difference in performing for a room with one empty seat or a room where somebody had to be left out. If people are wondering if they'll be able to get in, the whole thing seems more important and there's more energy in the audience. Occasionally somebody who hires me for a corporate or a private event will tell me I am a surprise. I'll talk them out of it if I can, and they usually understand. It's more effective if there's some expectation, some hype. I make sure they know a few facts about me they can tell their guests. And they'll do their best. While you want to impress them and their guests, they want to impress their guests for having brought you.

**GENII:** Good point. On behalf of the *Genii* readers, I want to thank you for spending so much time with us.

**RAFAEL:** You're welcome, Gordon. It's been a pleasure. •

## “QUOTES”

**Ascanio:** *Rafael is, without any doubt, a master of that weapon, so difficult to handle, but so greatly efficient, which is timing.*

**Martin Nash:** *Rafael is not only an excellent performer and entertainer but, even more important, has a thorough understanding of his craft.*

**Billy McComb:** *He does it all better than all the rest.*

**Charles Reynolds (Genii Magazine):** *Benatar's profound study of the psychology of magic and his undeniable technical expertise are not the sole secrets of his success. He possesses that essential factor that separates the outstanding magician from all the others: charm. He will amaze and astonish you but you are so charmed by his personality that you could not possibly resent it.*

**Michael Skinner:** *Rafael has a real flair for presentation and his sleights are as smooth as silk. He is well read in card magic, has a fine appearance and a charming personality.*

**Juan Tamariz:** *Great hands, great intelligence, great feeling.*

**Herb Zarrow:** *Personable, intelligent and creative. I most certainly recommend seeing his lectures and reading his published material.*



# MAGIC CASTLE LIVE ON STAGE

SAT MAY 3, 2025 - 7:30 PM

The night before this is their awards show same venue!

The Academy of Magical Arts Presents

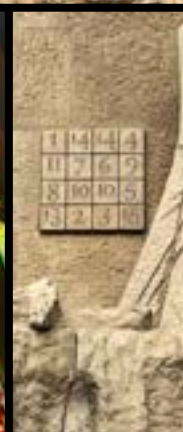
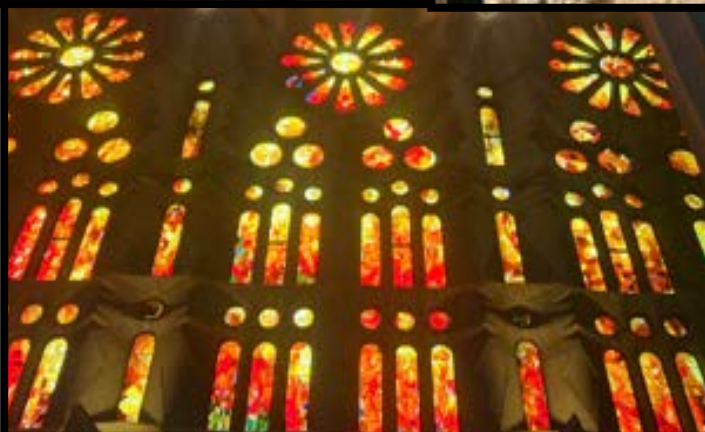
## Magic Castle LIVE on Stage!

The United Theater on Broadway, Los Angeles, CA, United States

While on my recent vacation in Barcelona, Spain I visited the Sagrada Familia, a church designed by Antoni Gaudi which is the largest unfinished Catholic Church in the world and an UNESCO World Heritage Site, yet it's still under construction for another few years *but* began construction over 140 years ago although that's not why I write this article.

While inside it holds 9,000 with it's massive stained glass windows and pillars that are made to look like trees to the heavens, that is quite magical but still not why I write this article.

For outside this amazing church are carved onto it Biblical scenes, however I notice a magic square. Yes, a magic square adding up to 33 which is the age Christ lived to as well as the levels of freemasonry. They even sold magnets of this. It adds to 33 310 different ways!





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**Events**

**5**  
APR **Chipper Lowell - Comedy Magician: CHIPPER LOWELL ...**  
Sat, 7 – 11 PM  
The Comedy & Magic Club, 1018 Hermosa Ave  
Hermosa Beach, CA



**5**  
APR **Magician Shawn McMaster at The Grape**  
Saturday  
The Grape, 2733 E Main St  
Ventura, CA



**6**  
APR **Magic Burrow**  
Sunday  
The House of Magic Foundation For The Arts, 15500 W Telegraph Rd ST...  
Santa Paula, CA



**16**  
APR **A Night of Magic and Comedy**  
Wed, 5:30 – 9:00 PM  
Padua Hills Theatre, 4467 Padua Ave  
Claremont, CA



**29**  
APR **Champions of Magic**  
Tue, Apr 29 – Wed, Apr 30  
Fox Performing Arts Center, 3801 Mission Inn Avenue  
Riverside, CA



**19**  
APR **4/19 MAGIC SHOW & CRAFT SPIRIT TASTING HIATUS...**  
Sat, 6:30 – 8:00 PM  
Hiatus Craft House, 4045 Via Pescador Suite D  
Camarillo, CA



**4**  
APR **Shock Illusionist Dan Sperry: Anti-Conjuror**  
Fri, Apr 4 – Sat, Apr 5  
National Lampoon The Yellow Door, 701 Fifth Ave 3rd Floor  
San Diego, CA



**30**  
APR **Champions Of Magic**  
Wed, 7:30 – 9:00 PM  
Fox Performing Arts Center, 3801 Mission Inn Avenue  
Riverside, CA



**5**  
APR **Magician Dan Sperry: Shock Illusionist @ National...**  
Sat, 8:30 – 10:00 PM  
National Lampoon The Yellow Door, 701 Fifth Ave 3rd Floor  
San Diego, CA



**11**  
APR **Día de los niños: Christopher T. Magician**  
Fri, 5:30 – 6:30 PM  
1850 CA-78  
Julian, CA



**24**  
APR **Mingle & Magic: Experience the Magic with Joel Ward**  
Thu, 1 – 4 PM  
Encinitas Community and Senior Center, 1140 Oakcrest Park Dr  
Encinitas, CA



# MAGIC RESOURCES AND MORE LINKS

## OTHER LOCAL RINGS

RING 280 SANTA CLARITA  
[www.ibmring280.com](http://www.ibmring280.com)

RING 313 ORANGE COUNTY  
[ring313.org](http://ring313.org)

RING 96 LONG BEACH  
<https://www.ring96.com/>

## OTHER LOCAL MAGIC MEETINGS

SAM 291 WEST LA  
[www.westsidewizards.org](http://www.westsidewizards.org)

SAM ASSEMBLY 22. DUARTE  
<https://sites.google.com/view/magicsam22/home>

Orange County Magic Club  
[theocmc.com](http://theocmc.com)

## MAGIC LEARNINGS

THE MAGIC APPLE-magic shop  
11390 Ventura Blvd  
Studio City, CA 91604  
Also order online:  
[www.themagicapple.com](http://www.themagicapple.com)

MAGIC ON THE GO  
Magic instruction by Steve Valentine  
<https://magiconthego.vhx.tv/>

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## SHOWS

The Magic Castle  
7001 Franklin Avenue  
Hollywood, CA 90028  
[www.magiccastle.com](http://www.magiccastle.com)  
(323) 851-3313

Illusion Magic Lounge -  
[Santa Monica Click here for their website](#)

## PERFORMANCES ONLINE

Lex The Illusionist performs an excellent Anniversary Waltz: <https://youtu.be/PuAwD2PukLE>

Michael Larkin: Ninja ring Daryl coin routine  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bShYQju5Zqk>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyUg-UGhGIw>

Karl Johnson and daughter give a fun performance:[https://youtu.be/mkKwufGLB\\_Q](https://youtu.be/mkKwufGLB_Q)

Don Kinney: Short hilarious interview at Kingsley Manor.<https://fpkingsleymanor.oneday.com/Video/E3B7436B42>

Jim Richardson: A fun card trick & longest card trick:<https://youtu.be/TptMf-XKe30>  
<https://youtu.be/Mri2yvZMBCK>

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