

Names in the News

NEWS

MOVES

■ Jennifer Woznesensky has joined *Harper Grey LLP's* partnership. She is the vice-chair of the firm's insurance law group. Woznesensky's practice is focused on insurance defence and professional liability matters, including the defence of physicians, dentists, physiotherapists and insurance brokers. She is a director of the B.C. chapter of the Women In Insurance Cancer Crusade and is a member of the Canadian Defence Lawyers Association, the Medical Legal Society of B.C., the Trial Lawyers' Association of B.C. and the Vancouver Bar Association.

■ New partners at *Borden Ladner Gervais LLP* include: **Robyn Bourgeois**, **Jennifer Lamb** and **Scott McLeman** in Calgary; **Isabelle Desharnais**, **Christian Faribault** and **Emanuelle Rolland** in Montreal; **Nadia Effendi**, **John Melia** and **Kasim Salim** in Ottawa; **Jeff Barnes**, **Kara Beitel**, **Terence Lui** and **Paul Simon** in Toronto; and **Amy Davison**, **Serge Lakatos** and **Randy Morphy** in Vancouver.

■ In Montreal, **Philippe Vachon** has been appointed national managing director, business development, at BLG. Vachon is a partner in BLG's Montreal office with the labour and employment group.

APPOINTMENTS

■ Four lawyers were among the recent 54 appointees of the Order of Canada. **René Dussault** was named an officer of the Order of Canada for his contributions to the advancement of law and the promotion of equality, as a jurist, professor and senior public servant. **Harry Walsh** was named an officer of the Order of Canada for his dedication to criminal law in Canada for more than 70 years, and for his advocacy against the use of capital punishment. **Beth Symes** was named a member of the Order of Canada for her contributions as a champion of women's rights in the legal profession. **Paul Copeland** was named a member of the Order of Canada for his contributions as an advocate for human rights and social justice.

Tax lawyer transforms self into conjuror

MICHAEL RAPPAPORT

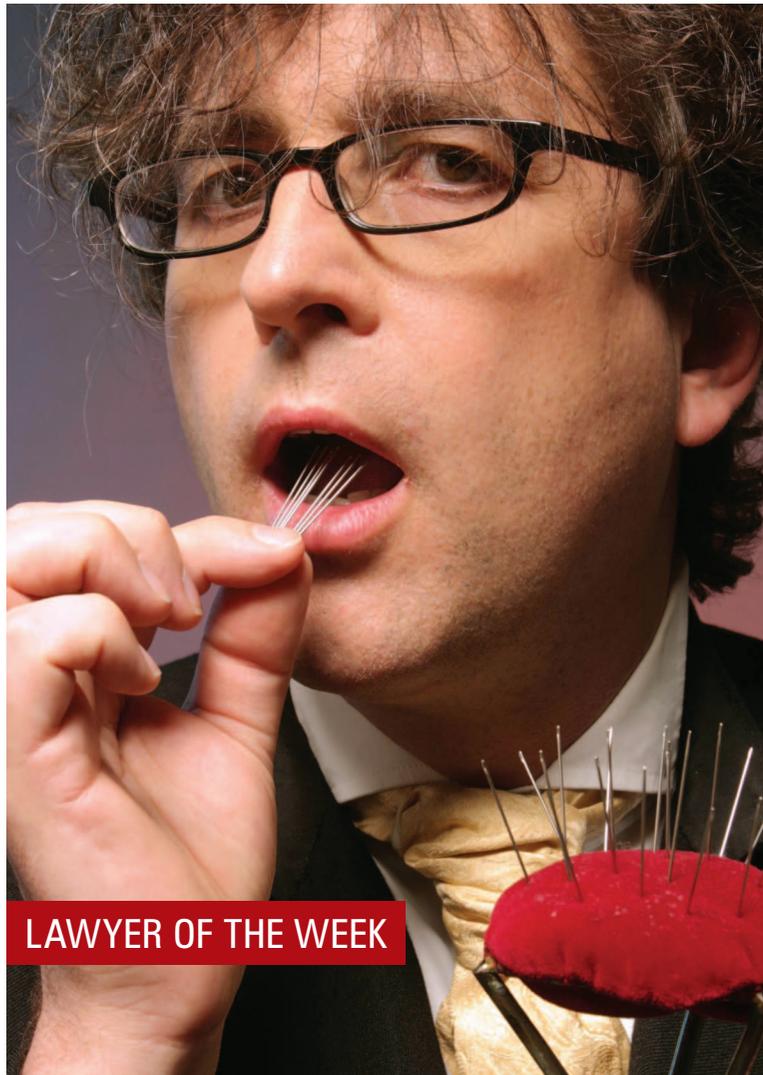
When David Ben, a corporate tax lawyer turned celebrated magician, who has performed throughout the U.S., Canada, England and Japan, dabbled in the dark arts of tax law, he couldn't wave a wand and make taxes disappear—though he could discover deductions and deferrals.

Nevertheless, Ben—who hails from Toronto and has a second residence in New York—sees many parallels between his former and current professions. "In law, as in magic, you're always looking for the loophole," Ben says. Waxing poetic about the *Income Tax Act*, he described it as "a palette with many colors, in which you dab your paint brush to create the desired effect."

Ben first performed a magic trick when he was only 12-years-old, but he did not begin to take magic seriously until his later teens. At a conference for magicians in Niagara, Ont., Ben was introduced to Ross Bertram, one of the greatest sleight-of-hand artists of the 20th century. Although Ben was only 17 and Bertram was 70, the older master magician took the young aspiring magician under his wing as his protégé. Ben spent about one day a week for six years learning the art of magic from his mentor.

After earning a B.A. in film from the University of Toronto, Ben decided to study law, since he was told that if he wanted to be a successful film and theatre producer, he would need to know about tax law, copyright law and contract law. Ben enrolled in law school at the University of Western Ontario, where he juggled performing magic shows with attending classes—occasionally even performing shows between exams. After graduating with an LLB in 1987, Ben earned a masters in international tax law from the London School of Economics.

After only one year working as a corporate tax lawyer at Goodmans LLP, however, Ben decided to leave the law to pursue his



LAWYER OF THE WEEK

David Ben

dream of being a magician. "I did not want to practise law for twenty years and always wonder what if I had followed my passion instead?" Ben explains.

Ben's first major production, *The Conjuror*, debut at the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake, Ont. in 1996. The production was also Ben's first collaboration with Patrick Watson, the former head of the CBC, and they have since developed other shows together including *The Conjuror's Suite and Tricks*.

While Ben is a master of sleight of hand with a wide repertoire of card tricks, he has also performed many classic illusions on stage. He can swallow half a dozen needles and spit them out threaded, he can pass his bound hands back and

forth seemingly through the blade of a Japanese Samurai sword and he can make a silver ball appear to float on stage.

Even a master illusionist occasionally has mishaps, however. Ben has never accidentally cut someone in half, swallowed a needle or caused someone to disappear whom he could not make reappear. But when his assistant discovered that his elegant Chinese silk costume was stolen from his dressing room at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) a mere 10 minutes before he had to appear on stage, Ben had to rely on his quick wits to do the show on his own. Decrying the lack of security at the ROM, Ben recalls: "My heart was racing. I had to

Name

David Ben

Law school

University of Western Ontario

Called to the Bar:

1989

Career highlights:

1996 First major production, *The Conjuror*, made its debut at the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake, Ont.

2002 Co-founded Magicana, a non-profit organization, dedicated to increasing the public's understanding of the art of magic

perform the show which normally required two people, all by myself. I had to literally improvise and reconstruct in real time the entire program."

Beyond performing magic for audiences worldwide, Ben has done corporate events, speaking engagements and acted as a consultant. He has co-founded Magicana, a non-profit organization, dedicated to increasing the public understanding of magic, which runs outreach programs for disadvantaged youth and seniors living in residences. And Ben has written books on magic and biographies of magicians. Somehow, he's also found time to raise two sons, aged 19 and 21, with his wife and take them to hockey practices and games three times a week.

As for the enduring appeal of magic for audiences both young and old, Ben offers the following explanation: "For adults it rekindles a sense of wonder, for kids it reveals that the world is big and mysterious." ■

» Got news?

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