

**BY DAVID BEN**



# "MAX MALINI BIGGER THAN LIFE

## Malini. Max Malini.

For many of us, particularly those of my generation who were introduced to Malini through the pages of the *Stars of Magic* and the works of Dai Vernon, the name Malini conjures up the image of a bold, brash, itinerant magician—the last of the mountebanks—who performed parlor magic and close-up magic par excellence. With an abundance of audacity, broken-English, and a guttural voice with an Eastern-European accent, Malini toured the world, performing for the rich and famous. Even more intriguing, Malini had few confidants and what we know of him, and his work, is primarily from the previously mentioned works, particularly those associated with Vernon and, in more recent years, from Charlie Miller and his protégé, John Thompson.





**MY OWN INTEREST AND UNDERSTANDING** of Malini, however, took a seismic shift when I embarked on the journey that is *Dai Vernon: A Biography*. Vernon, of course, acknowledged Malini as being of the utmost influence. Malini was the “M” in the “J.K.L. and M,” the four performers—Jarrow, Keane, Leipzig, and Malini—who had a profound effect on Vernon’s development and his understanding of what constituted magic—elegant sleight-of-hand performed naturally but with lasting impact.

As I sourced material for the Vernon biography I came across thousands of letters by and about Vernon, his influences, and his contemporaries. Malini became one of the sub-plots or threads that I followed. When I research a subject that I am particularly interested in, I make every effort to learn the magic (with objects in hand) that was associated with the subject, and in the order as best that I can determine that the subject learned it or was known to have presented it. I believe it is the best way to really understand how the subject developed as a person, performer, and artist. I am interested in what motivated them both personally and professionally.

With Malini, as I learned more about his material, I learned more about his life. I was then able to speak with more people who had had some connection to him, either through his material or his family. And, as more material made its way onto the Internet, I have been able to amass

a sizeable file on Malini and his magic. Hopefully, one day, someone will write a book about Malini. He certainly deserves a full treatment. In the interim, this article will outline the arc of his life, touch upon the source of much of his magic, and challenge some of the conventional wisdom we associate with the name Malini.

Let’s start there.

If I polled most magicians who had a passing interest in Malini, here is what they would probably say:

- Malini was a Polish-Jew who, as an immigrant to New York, learned magic from Prof. Seiden in 1880s, perfected those routines and developed the audacity to perform them while working the Lower East Side drinking establishment owned by Seiden.
- Malini was not a particularly refined man, his command of the English language was poor, and his greatest strength was self-confidence.
- Malini was a master of seeking out and obtaining publicity, most of which was generated by performing impromptu miracles in close quarters for the rich and famous.
- Malini traveled extensively throughout his career but generally considered, until he moved to Hawaii near the end of his life, New York, and the Waldorf Astoria, his home.
- Malini guarded his secrets jealously, disliked magicians, and rarely associated with them.
- Malini had, for a period of time, a manager named Eddie McGuire, who was also the confidant of Walter Scott, the Phantom of the Card Table.
- Malini had a son, Ozzie, who traveled with him and learned much of his magic. Malini also shared his secrets with Charles Miller.
- The secrets of his magic we do have are courtesy of Dai Vernon, who learned them from Malini and Eddie McGuire, the aforementioned manager of Malini.
- Malini died of a heart attack in Hawaii in 1942.

Let’s now try to separate fact from fiction.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID BEN  
PLAYING CARD COURTESY OF EDWIN DAWES



STANDARD, MONTREAL, CANADA.

## Rothschild's Work on Beh

### CLEVER CONJURER MYSTIFIES THE KING

**IT** PROBABLY the King was never so completely puzzled as he was a couple of weeks ago, while staying at Wel-

santest man I ever met in my life."

So highly does Mr. Malini value the honor of having performed to King Edward, that he is going to have the pack of cards with which he deceived the King framed in a gold frame, spread fan-wise under glass.

"And when I go back to Am-



"DON'T TAKE A CARD; MERELY THINK OF ONE."

M. Malini, a German sleight-of-hand man, performing an extraordinary card trick. It was this trick which so amused and mystified King Edward during a recent visit of M. Malini at Welbeck Abbey, the seat of the Duke and Duchess of Portland.

Copyright photograph "Illustrations Bureau," London and New York.

beck as the guest of the Duke of Portland. erica and perform before the President again," he said. "I sha"





COURTESY OF EDWIN DAWES

Although of Jewish descent, it appears as though Max Malini was Austrian, not Polish. He was born Max Katz on August 14, 1873 in Ostrov, which, at that time, was controlled by the Austrian government. Malini was therefore an Austrian Jew and, in fact, early newspaper accounts and reviews of his performances describe him as such.

It is believed that he immigrated with his father, Oser Katz, and two sisters, perhaps twins, to New York City in either 1887 or 1888. Malini would have been 14 or 15 years of age at the time. Another sibling, Mayer, may have been born in America around this time. As a teenager, Malini obtained employment at a bar in the Bowery owned by

Frank Seiden. (Seiden apparently had obtained ownership of the concern as satisfaction for a gambling debt.) Seiden had once worked as a magician, but was now earning a good living in other facets of the entertainment industry, and the saloon was just one of his business interests. There Malini worked as a waiter, tended bar on occasion, and did some acrobatics. He also learned a few magic tricks from Seiden that he performed for the patrons.

Between 1888 and 1890, however, Malini had an epiphany. He saw another magician, one that ignited his interest in magic to the point where he knew then and there that he, too, had to become a magician. (It happens!) That magician was Alexander Herrmann.

For me, discovering Malini's interest in Herrmann was itself an epiphany, as no one else that I know of—other than Malini—has suggested that Herrmann was his inspiration. Malini suggested such in an off-the-cuff interview he provided to Edward Philbrook in the March, 1920 issue of *The Magical Bulletin* (Vol.8, No.3). It was an "off-the-cuff" interview in the sense that Philbrook chatted with Harry Kellar and Malini while the two were visiting Floyd Thayer at his magic studio in Pasadena. Philbrook wrote,

An interesting little side light was thrown into the meeting of these two gentlemen [Kellar and Malini], when Malini told how he got his start. He was 10 years old when he saw Herrmann for the first time, and boy-like, and Malini-like, he went straight to the fountain of knowledge, he called upon Mr. Herrmann, and the great, big-hearted man took an interest in the embryo magician, who did not hesitate to show the Great Herrmann what he could do. The kindly pat on the back, and the encouraging word from this great man was the stimulating remembrance that kept him going through all the early fame. But oh, how he practiced, how he "rehearsed," how he dreamed night and day of ideals. And what is the answer? An artist of world-wide fame.

While I believe that much of Malini's comments regarding meeting Herrmann can be attributed to the poetic license accorded to showmen, I do believe that it was Herrmann who provided the spark. It is possible that Malini may have seen a Herrmann—Compars or Alexander—in Europe prior to emigrating with his family to New York, but it is more likely that Malini was smitten with the magic bug when Alexander Herrmann returned from a world tour and made America, and New York City in particular, his home, circa 1890.

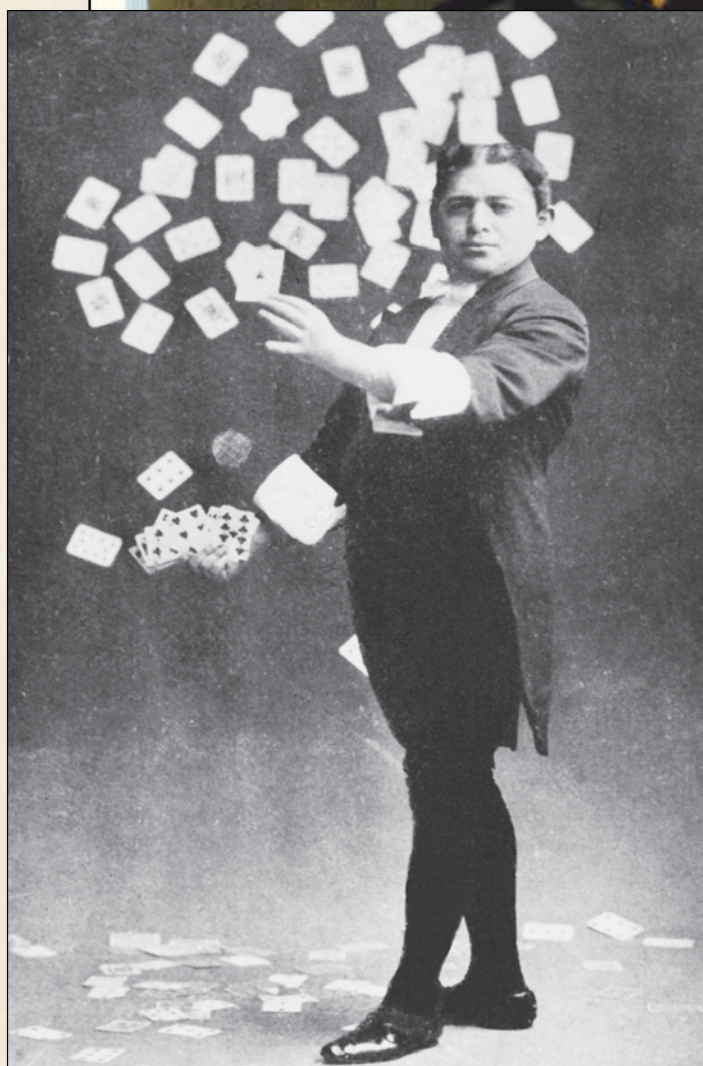
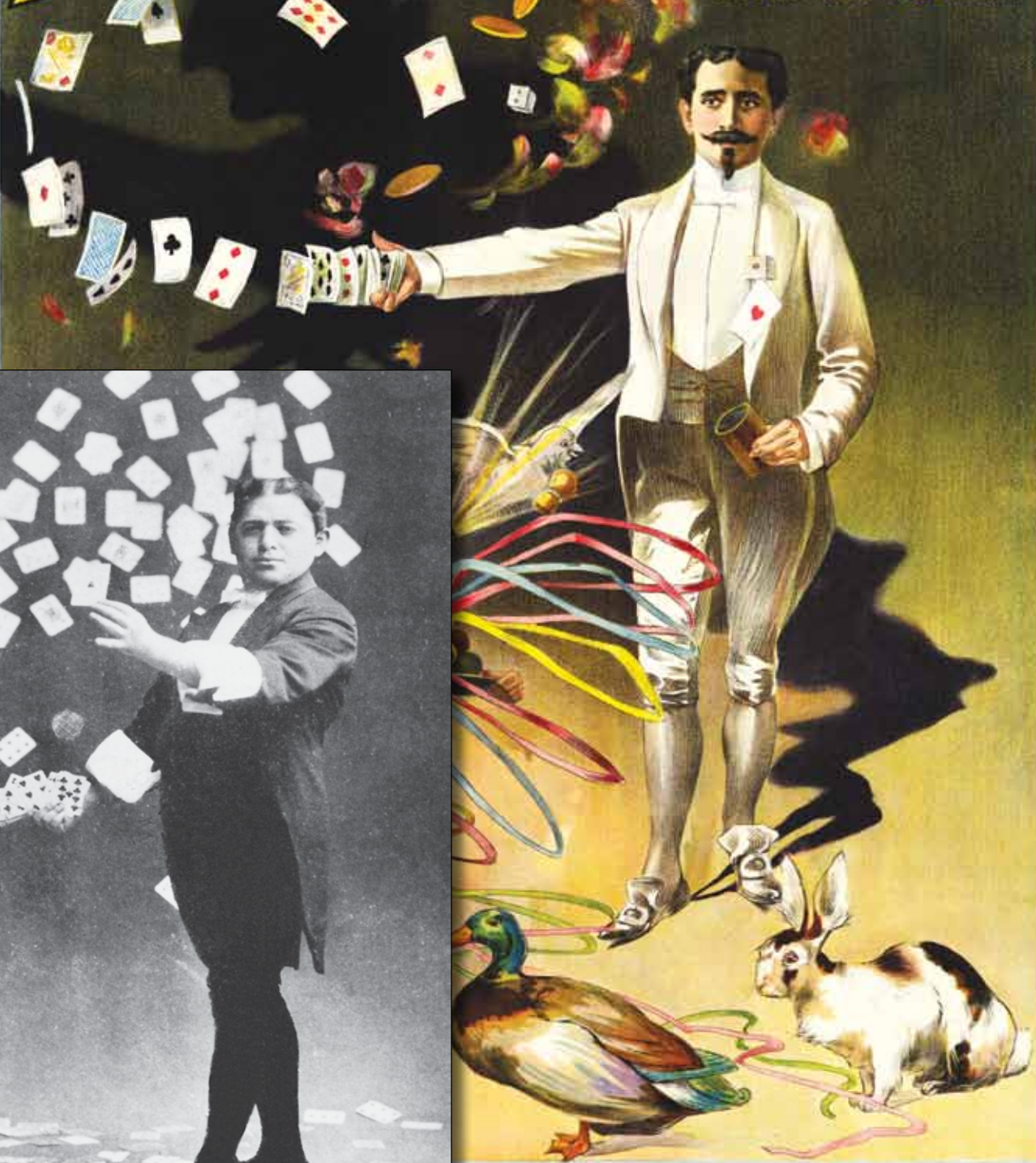
It is hard for the current generation of magicians to understand just how famous, how larger than life, Alexander Herrmann was at the time. His profile as the magic man with the goatee remains the archetype of the magician for all ages. Herrmann's exploits, both on-stage and off, were widely reported in the press. He performed all manner of magic, from the grandest illusions to the most sophisticated sleight-of-hand, on stage, in the marketplace, and at the dinner table. He toured the world, and had been decorated by the crowned heads of many states. His name was so famous that his posters and playbills simply had to carry his image or name, with no other



# HERRMANN

## THE GREAT

DIRECTION  
THURNAER & GORMAN



COURTESY OF EDWIN DAWES

COURTESY OF THE NIELSEN COLLECTION

OCTOBER 2012

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apparent connection or iconography related to magic, and the public knew what to expect—a glorious evening of mirth and magic.

James Hamilton, the scholar on all things Herrmann, recently told me that he had spent time with Malini's son, Oziar, and that Oziar mentioned that one of his father's fondest memories as a youth was seeing Alexander Herrmann make his entrance into New York's Central Park in a carriage pulled by four zebras. Herrmann was the man.

Now, if a young man wanted to emulate Herrmann, and perform his tricks, there were two ways he could go about doing so. He could, of course, walk up to Herrmann either at the stage door or at his home, which was then in Whitestone, Queens, and ask—which

Malini intimated in the piece in *The Magic Bulletin* he did, albeit at an earlier age—or he could learn the secrets, like most magicians at the time, from a book. The book, of course, would have been *Sleight of Hand*, by Edwin T. Sachs, which had been published in a "Second, and Greatly Enlarged Edition" in 1885.

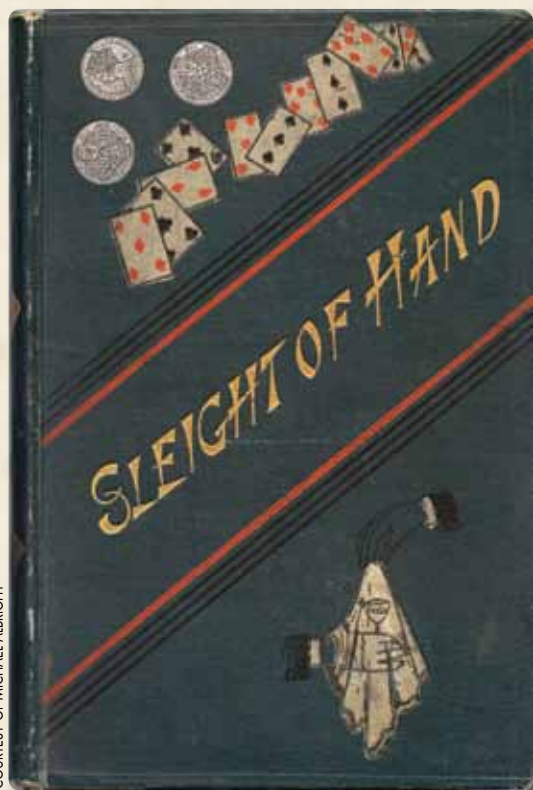
Just as Vernon used to say that if he had written book about card magic in the 1930s, that book would have been *Expert Card Technique* because much of the material was either his or shown by him to others, or because his work was the inspiration for others, so too would Alexander Herrmann have said that that *Sleight of Hand* was the book about *his* magic.

Paul Fleming, in the Preface to the Fourth Edition of the book, provided a thumbnail sketch of the author. Edwin Thomas Sachs was a sports writer for an English journal and learned magic initially from Cremer's *The Secret Out*. Sachs was inspired to study the art more closely after witnessing the performances of Alexander Herrmann during his run of 1,000 performances—a three-year engagement—at the fabled Egyptian Hall, later Maskelyne and Cooke's theater, and the Mecca of Magic, in London.



President Roosevelt and Malini.

Above is the cover of a very rare booklet produced by Malini. The entire booklet is reproduced here starting at the right and continuing on the next 8 pages.



*Sleight of Hand* explains much of Herrmann's work, both close up and on stage. *Modern Magic*, a contemporary and more-widely circulated publication, may have achieved greater lasting fame, particularly among hobbyists, but *Sleight of Hand* is equally important and has a much more modern sensibility, mostly because much of the material is purloined from the repertoire of an active master magician—Alexander Herrmann—rather than from magicians of an earlier era. A close study of *Sleight of Hand* reveals Malini's principle repertoire, both up close and on the stage.

Equally important, if not more so, is the philosophy Sachs espouses regarding sleight of hand, and performing. He wrote,

Magic may be safely divided into two parts, drawing-room magic and stage magic. As it is in the family circle that every amateur conjurer mostly exhibits his attainments, I shall first treat of drawing room magic; indeed, it is absolutely necessary to be a master of that branch in order to undertake stage magic successfully. The success of the conjurer who can perform only on the stage, far removed from all inquisitorial interference, will be of but short duration.

And then, in his general remarks on Stage Magic, Sachs adds,

In what may aptly be termed "impromptu conjuring," the performer is greatly at the mercy of his audience, who may at any moment, if so disposed, seize upon him and wring from him his secrets. He is beset with difficulties on all sides, and must exhibit a total invulnerability. In stage performances, he has matters much more his own way ... So far stage conjuring possess its advantages; but, unless the conjurer has gone through a course of training such as has been set before him in the preceding chapters [Drawing Room Magic], he would be quite unable to avail himself of them. The performer, with a limited amount of skill in execution, could never succeed in true legerdemain on the stage, where it is far more difficult—in most cases, impossible—to cover a mistake or clumsy movement. Everything must be reduced to an absolute certainty.

Sachs also discloses one of the most, if not the most, important secrets of success:

To insure this, the learner must engrave on his mind the single but important word "preparation." Effective preparation is the great secret of success in stage conjuring of any magnitude: without it, things are tolerably certain to result in what is expressively termed a "bungle."

Preparation was certainly the secret of much of Malini's work.

So Malini set out to mirror the magic and life of Alexander Herrmann. He studied Sachs' book





To Max Malini  
 as a very slight  
 token of the admiration  
 I have for him as a  
 man who cannot  
 make Edna  
 start to practice  
 & do more

ARTIFICE  
 RUSE AND SUBTERFUGE  
 AT THE  
 CARD TABLE

*A Treatise on the Science and Art of  
 Manipulating Cards*

BY  
 E. W. ERDASE

*Embracing the whole Calendar of Tricks that are Employed  
 by the Gambler and Conjuror, illustrating with details  
 and illustrations every known expedient, maneuvering  
 and stratagem of the Expert Card Manipulator, with  
 over one hundred diagrams.*

WHO AND WHAT

*Malini*

IS

"A remarkable young man and a remarkable performance."

This is what Theodore Roosevelt, the President of the United States said of Malini the magician, in London this season for the first time.

Malini is an Austrian by birth, but an American by choice. He was born in Austria, twenty-six years ago, but ran away from home when but ten years old. He shifted for himself as best he could until he had accumulated sufficient funds to emigrate to America. He landed here without money and with scarcely any knowledge of English. He made many friends through his remarkable magnetism and winning personality. His skill in handling cards made him an attractive novelty wherever he went.

It is in no way remarkable that young Malini with all his talent should not have been heard of for so long. It is a characteristic of geniuses to be impractical. He needed



DOT'S A CLEVER DREEK





diligently, learning to perform impromptu magic before graduating to the platform or stage. He would have lived, breathed, and slept magic, taking time to refine work in the environment of Seiden's saloon, and under the watchful gaze of others such as Louis "Pop" Krieger. Krieger, a German Jew, immigrated to the United States in 1885 and, by the 1890s, had established himself as one of the premier performers for high society in and around New York. When it was time for Malini to make his mark, he left New York. This was in the late 1890s. He probably left out of deference to Krieger or because of the economic reality that Krieger was the dominant performer in the marketplace. It was at this time that Malini made Chicago his new home and it was there, on September 8, 1900, in a Cook County Courthouse, that Malini became an American citizen.

Chicago offered Malini a great deal. He most likely acquired a copy of *New Era Card Tricks*, written, published, and distributed by August Roterberg at his Chicago magic shop, as well as *Artifice, Ruse, and Subterfuge at the Card Table*, also known as *The Expert at the Card Table*, by the elusive S. W. Erdnase. Most of all, Chicago offered Malini the love of his life—Elizabeth Isaacs. The feeling was mutual.



AIN'T DOT FINE

a manager and found one. About four years ago he began to appear in drawing room entertainments. Since then he has refused many offers to go on the stage, believing that his talents were best adapted to private exhibitions. That he was right is shown by the fact that he was first the fad of Newport and then of Washington.

Malini has an unusual command of the English language, considering his lack of opportunity for study. It is due, no doubt, to the fact that during the past four years he has come in contact with the best people of America. This accounts also for his polished manner and dignified bearing. He has an accent, however, that is really delightful. He spent one whole season at Newport, another in Chicago, the third in Western cities, and comes to London this season fresh from an entire winter in Washington. There he not only met and performed before the President of the United States, but before the members of the President's Cabinet, as well as United States Senators and members of the Diplomatic Corps stationed at Washington.

Some of these notables before whom he appeared were: Secretary Loeb, the Secretary to the President; Secretary Shaw, of the Treasury Department; Secretary Cortelyou, of the Department of Commerce and Labor; Senator Hanna of Ohio, a power in American politics; Senator Hawley, of Connecticut; Senator Dubois, of Idaho; Count Cassini, of the Russian Lega-



CAN'T SEE 'EM



COURTESY OF STEVE COHEN

Born October 8, 1872 in Austria, Elizabeth moved with her family to Chicago at a very young age. Like Malini, she was also an Austrian Jew. The two fell in love and Malini asked Elizabeth's father, Samuel, for his daughter's hand in marriage. The father, however, refused to give his consent, believing that Malini, a magician, was not of sufficient social standing. Malini, determined to marry the woman he loved, vowed to prove to her father that he was a worthy suitor. He left Chicago to make his mark. But how?

Alexander Herrmann was the man Malini had admired most. Herrmann had traveled the world, made a large fortune (at least as far as Malini understood), and had been honored by presidents, kings, and queens. Perhaps, Malini thought, he could do the same, and that would prove to Samuel Isaacs that he was worthy enough to marry his daughter.



First, Malini set his sights on Washington, D.C. In the fall of 1902, Malini created such a sensation that his exploits were picked up on the newswire and reported in numerous newspapers around country: "Magician Malini Is Mystifying Washington Statesmen."

Ten weeks ago an Austrian magician short and stout and of a wholly unwizard like appearance dropped into Washington and began the practice of his art.

He was absolutely unknown and the mention of his name, Malini, was without significance.

It may be said that he is the most talked of person in a city of talked of personages, and stories of his queer doings with diplomats, cabinet members, senators, representatives and other great men who go to make up life at the national capital are dully rehearsed over the teacups of the fashionable.

He has fooled distinguished gentlemen without number for whom business in life it is to fool other folk.

He performed for virtually everyone of any importance, the most famous being Teddy Roosevelt, then President of the United States. Noted magic historian and Washington resident Henry R. Evans noted in *The Sphinx* (Vol.2, No.1, March 1903):

Malini, a genuine wizard with the pasteboards, obtained a three-minute interview with President Roosevelt, in order to show him a few tricks with cards. Arrangements for the interview were made by a journalistic friend of Malini, who knew the President. "I am awfully busy Mr. Malini," said the good-natured Roosevelt, "and can only accord you three-minutes." But the clever little Malini spun out the time to half-an-hour, so interested did the President become. Malini will now doubtless print on his cards, "Conjuror to President Roosevelt."

Then Malini set his sights on a foreign shore: England. There, parlaying his newfound U.S. credentials into a dinner with, and performance for, British dignitaries hosted by the American Embassy in London, Malini created yet another sensation. *The Penny Magazine* reported,

There are new things under the sun, after all.

London has a new sensation in the person of the young Austrian wonderworker Malini, who in less than one week succeeded in mystifying such royal personages and celebrities as the Prince and Princess of Wales, Sir Thomas Lipton, Mr. Balfour and the Cabinet, and the Lord Mayor of London.

Unheralded and unannounced as a performer, the young Austrian has won his way by sheer force of manner, coupled with a skill at once remarkable, and, truth to tell, a trifle uncanny.

He has no apparatus whatever—no concealed wire, batteries, or trick cabinets, and does his work in drawing-rooms with his audience around him.

The crowning achievement, however, was his appearance before the Prince and Princess of Wales and it was during this performance that Malini had a second epiphany. If the first was the discovery of Alexander Herrmann and Sachs' *Sleight of Hand*, the second was the response he generated not by his magic but by his use and abuse of the English language, for it was during his performance before the Prince and Princess of Wales that he realized that audiences laughed at his off-the cuff remarks and malapropisms, and that he should cultivate these, that is make them a regular part of his performing persona in a calculated way.

COURTESY OF CARY AND JOSEPH HANOUSEK



tion; Mr. Wu, the Minister from China; Baron and Baroness Hengenmuller, of the Austrian Legation; Admiral Schley, of the Navy; the German Ambassador.

During his season at Newport, he played for the Vanderbilts in "The Breakers;" D. Pembroke Jones; the Leiters, of Chicago and Washington; the parents of Lady Curzon; Mrs. Westinghouse, of Washington; John R. Drexel, of Philadelphia, while Miss Alice Roosevelt, the daughter of the President, was a guest at their Newport cottage; the Duchess of Marlborough, the Grand of Russia; P. Belmont Astor, George Forest, H. Meyer, Oelrichs, Goelet, Baheim and Herr.



MALINI'S FAD

To have before such to have cession appeared people, and made a success every occasion stamps Malini as a young man of rare ability in his particular line. He comes to London with letters of introduction from nearly all the prominent people before whom he has appeared. Such is the record Malini made in America. Having been the society fad at Newport and in Washington, it is but reasonable to expect that Malini will repeat his success here.



COURTESY OF GABE FAJURI

Mr. MALIN'S  
FIRST PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT

Victoria Hall,  
Hotel Cecil,  
London.

FRIDAY EVENING, JULY TWENTY-SECOND,  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FOUR,  
AT EIGHT-THIRTY P.M.



## DOT'S A BIG HAND

His performance is different from any heard of or seen. He does everything immediately before your eyes. He does not have the benefit of the footlights between him and his audience nor the assistance of concealed wires, mirrors or trick cabinets. He does everything with his hands, and can do it anywhere and at any time.

**BIG HAND** In the White House at Washington, he took a pack of cards and after being blindfolded asked the President to take any card he wanted. He then passed the cards to Secretary Cortelyou, then to Secretary Loeb and then to Major Loeffler of the Army. He warned them not to let him see the cards but to place them back in the pack wherever they pleased. Then he asked Secretary Cortelyou to take the cards and shuffle them as much as he wished. Secretary Cortelyou complied. The cards were then thrown upon the floor and divided into three packs. Malini knelt down and asked the President for the loan of a penknife. The President handed him his pocket knife closed and Malini said:

"Now, if you please, Mr. President, open it."

The President did so and Malini, taking the penknife, scattered the cards all over the floor. He dug about with the knife for a while and finally he put one on the end of it and before turning it up said to the President:

"Mr. President, if you please what was your card?"



### WATCH ME CLOSELY

THE MORNING  
THE WIZARD OF THE WEST  
WHO

THE MORNING LEADER. LONDON. TH

**WALLIS in Moscow:** Wallis is the prince of warlike, the most enterprising who has become famous during this London season. He is an American by birth, but has lived in America for nearly twenty years. Two or three years ago he was introduced to American society, and has acquired quite a reputation in the drawing rooms of Washington, New York and Newport. Although he has been in London for a few weeks, Wallis has not met much success, and has acquired no party.

WHO HAS STAGGERED  
THE PRINCE OF WALES  
AND MR BALFOUR



He then said to her, "Would you be holding in your hand, if I am not of accident" and on the Princess told her to look more closely, and it was the dress of diamonds, and Prince and Princess on leaving she with Stalio, and said they had nothing like it.

At another party Mallot observed his tricky Mr. Baldwin, who, struggling to hold his own, said: "Oh, Mr. Americans are such big things it is a 25 note. I am philosophic man, and Mr. Baldwin a strong view in the disarranged of the present situation." "I appreciate values," was Mr. Baldwin's reply. "I look again," was the last he said. At this party he did not meet another Cabinet Minister, Gail

Malini Alindford impales on a knife in a shuffling pack previously picked by of the audience. (This mystified President Roosevelt.)



Marked 65 notes are produced apparently intact.

him. He hit a button off the Minister's with his teeth, dropped it to the ground, staggered in his Minister's hand, and put it back in its place, apparently unharmed.

At a manuscript's the other day, as he  
 leading he put into the palm of the  
 manuscript. "You are that!" said he. "Y  
 Well, keep it!" and he walked out.  
 I tried to look at it after he had g  
 out, and found the had only a sketch  
 instead of the signature.

Matal produces cards which several of the audience have selected unknown to him.

### A Clever Card Trick.

...taining also showed in the Prisoners in  
...card trucks. Holding a pack to her, the  
...prisoner asked her Royal Highness to look  
...at a card and remember it. He then placed  
...the pack in her hand, and asked whether  
...she would like her hand, and asked whether  
...it was the Prisoner said, "At the top of  
...the pack, not touching the cards, asked her  
...to take off the top card, which, sure enough,  
...was the ace of clubs, the dance of spiders.

### The Holidays

Before deciding where to go, send to "The Morning Leader" Holiday Bureau for information as to the best places to stay at, and also for an apartment list.

The character of Max Malini, both on stage and off, that is outside of the realm of his private life, would be that of the bold, brash foreigner, speaking in broken English, delivered with a guttural voice. It was a theatrical construct, pure and simple. (Privately, Malini was a cultured individual, well versed in the arts, who could speak several languages.) With his character and sleight-of-hand skills honed to a high degree, Malini continued to travel the world, ala Herrmann, collecting money, accolades and, more importantly, social standing that would put him, in his mind, in good standing with Samuel Isaacs.

About 1906, Malini returned to Chicago and asked Mr. Isaacs for permission to marry his daughter. Again Isaacs refused. Undeterred, Malini set out to earn more money and more accolades. He made a point of playing places



**Marriage License**

State of Illinois, ss. COOK COUNTY, ss.

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS**  
**To any Person Legally Authorized to Solemnize Marriage,**  
**GREETING:**

Marriage may be Celebrated between Mr. Max Katz of the age of 36 years, and  
 of Chicago, in the County of Cook and the State of Illinois, of the age of 35 years, and  
Miss Lizzie Herman of Chicago, in the County of Cook and  
 State of Illinois, of the age of 35 years.

Witness, ROBERT M. SWEITZER, County Clerk of the County of Cook, and the Seal thereof,  
 at my office in Chicago, this 1st day of May A. D. 1911  
Robert M. Sweitzer County Clerk.

STATE OF ILLINOIS, ss. COUNTY OF COOK, ss. I, John R. Newcomer (Name of person officiating),  
 hereby certify that Mr. Max Katz and Mrs. Lizzie Herman  
 were united in Marriage by me at Chicago in the County of Cook and State of Illinois,  
 on the 1st day of May 1911.  
John R. Newcomer (Signature and official title)

N. B.—This License, with certificate of marriage properly made, must (within 30 days) be ret-

where his credentials and press clippings would provide entrée into select society. The British colonies—Canada, Australia, Singapore, India, to name but a few—offered ample opportunity as they had private clubs and well-heeled hotels where his having performed for British royalty carried great weight. (Vernon, as a boy, first saw Malini perform at the Rideau Club, the premier private club in Ottawa.)

Malini returned to Chicago in 1911 to propose marriage once more. This time, however, he returned like Alexander Herrmann, advertised as the "Crowned King of Magic," having performed for the heads of numerous states. Again, the father rejected him. Only one course remained: elope.

Malini and Elizabeth, known as Lizzie, were married May 1, 1911 in Cook County, Chicago. By law, however, the marriage could not be considered valid because Elizabeth Isaacs used an assumed name: Lizzie Herman. The last name "Herman" was probably suggested by Malini and was inspired by his admiration for Alexander Herrmann. (Herrmann's name was frequently misspelled, both then and now.) The couple headed west, performing in private clubs and hotels along the U.S. west coast, then Hawaii, and then the world.

The President replied, "The ten of diamonds." Malini turned the card, and there it was, the ten of diamonds. It was then that the President said: "A remarkable young man and a remarkable performance."

His invitation to the White House came as an unusual compliment, and the fact that the President was so pleased, and made the remark just quoted, is sufficient evidence that the young man made a deep and profound impression upon the President.

Malini is a young man of very handsome and attractive personality. He is short of stature, has black sparkling eyes, a clear complexion, black hair and would be considered handsome among any body of men. He is as full of magnetism as a storage battery. He devotes most of his time to study and is so wrapped up in his art that he scarcely thinks of anything else. He loves literature. His one outdoor sport is automobiling. He has swell bachelor apartments in New York City, and is unmarried.





Malini was part of that rare breed of performer, the itinerant magician, and even rarer breed of magician in that he performed magic based on sleight-of-hand rather than large illusions. (It made traveling much easier.) He created audience not with posters or playbills, but through the word of mouth he generated with the performance of apparently impromptu miracles: these were really his best work. It was the tried and true method of attracting a paying public, and was described as such by none other than the father of modern magic in his *The Secrets of Conjuring and Magic*, or at least in the original French edition.

According to S.H. Sharpe, Robert-Houdini included in the first edition of *Confidences D'un Prestidigitateur* (Chapter XVIa, p.238)—not included in the English translations of the work—a text-book step-by-step description of how to wander into a town, generate tremendous word-of-mouth by performing intimate miracles and retelling worn stories, rent a hall, and stage the show. The key for an itinerant magician, according to Robert-Houdini, was to lure the patrons into the hall by performing your best tricks for the press, the hotel staff, in the private clubs—anywhere there might be an audience—before the show. The

itinerant performer should only be concerned with getting the public to buy tickets. It did not matter if the show that they paid for was worse than the one they had seen for free or had heard about from friends. As Robert-Houdin wrote, "These tricks [the intimate miracles] are better than those in my performance, but what of it? The most difficult thing, and I know it by experience, is not to amuse the public when they have arrived at the show, it is to get them to come." So Malini would lure the patrons in with his intimate magic, then stage a platform show in a more formal setting. Lizzie was there, of course, collecting the money at the door.

While on tour, Lizzie gave birth to their son, Ozar, on May 22, 1913 in Manila, the Philippines. For the next five years, the Malini's—Max, Lizzie, and Ozar—made Australia their principle residence. Max performed extensive engagements in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide. Although Malini generated some wonderful press—and reviews—for his appearances, Charles Waller provided a more restrained review. In Waller's book, *Magical Nights at the Theatre*, published posthumously, Waller had this to say of Malini's appearance at the Assembly Hall in Melbourne, Australia in 1916:

Having climbed a staircase, I found myself on a landing where stood a ticket box, with little Mrs. Malini in occupation. As Max was a celebrity I paid the top price. Afterwards I had reason to congratulate myself on this extravagance—I should not have seen much had I been well back in the hall.

Max, wearing a court costume, strolled from the auditorium just as I was entering. He did not

## What the American Press Has to Say of Malini.

Malini, the prestidigitateur, has been startling all Washington with his tricks.—*New York Herald*.

Malini is a wonder worker.—*Cleveland Leader*.

Malini, a wonder worker and sleight of hand artist, gave an astonishing exhibition of his art.—*New York World*.

Malini, the prestidigitateur, completely mystified every one.—*The Washington Post*.

Malini came to town unheralded, but now is the reigning sensation. He is entitled to rank with, if not go ahead of, the world's foremost workers of magic. He is greater than Hermann.—*Washington Times*.

Washington has gone wild over Malini.—*Philadelphia Press*.

COURTESY OF KEN KLOSTERMAN







COURTESY OF BILL MULLINS

bother much about the conventions of public performances.

This small hall possessed no proper stage, but only the uncurtained platform characteristic of Sunday schools. The room was already well filled by an audience of prosperous looking people. Many of those in the front seemed already to have some acquaintance with Max. It was plain that, knowing him for the personality he was, they were treating him with both affection and admiration. His previous appearance in Melbourne at Menzies Hotel, must have helped in establishing these friendships

Interestingly, Waller relates a comment that Malini made while performing The Chinese Rings,

In connection with the last named classic, he claimed that the rings used formerly belonged to the late Alexander Herrmann. "Mrs. Herrmann gave them to me," said Max, "because she said that I had done them best."

According to Waller, Malini did not perform the trick particularly well. Waller stated,

Really, his material was neither sufficient nor big enough for public display. The drawing rooms and the lounges of good hotels were his fields. However, after he had been in a community for a while, he became so much the topic of conversation, that he could always fill a hall at high prices for a night or so.

By 1919, having performed primarily in Australia and in the Orient for seven years, Malini and family returned to the United States, and to Chicago. Max and Lizzie, now in their

40s, were expecting their second child. A daughter, Bernice Lois Katz, was born on August 22, 1919 in Cook County, Chicago. A different couple, however, were listed on the birth certificate as the girl's father and mother.

The father was listed as Mayer Katz, 31 years of age, born originally in Orange, New Jersey. It would appear that Malini and Lizzie, knowing the difficulty of touring with a child in tow, let alone two, made the heart-wrenching decision to place their newborn in foster care. The man listed on the birth certificate as the father may have been, in fact, Malini's younger brother or other family relation.

By the fall, Max, Lizzie, and Ozia were back on the west coast, and made San Francisco home. A review from the November 20, 1919 *San Francisco Chronicle* also notes that Ozia, now six, was part of the act.

Three score members of San Francisco's smart set locked up their valuables to attend the performance given by Malini in the Colonial ballroom of the Hotel St. Francis. Malini is the magician whose feats with cards and glasses have startled a greater part of the world.

Malini is different from any other conjurer who has

His tricks executed under one's eyes "the closer the better," as he says, while executing his various tricks, are the best yet presented here or anywhere else.—*Newport Herald*.

Malini a new wizard, is creating sensations at private entertainments by his marvelous tricks.—*Philadelphia Press*.

Malini, an Austrian wizard, has set all Washington by the ear — *Baltimore-American*.

This little Austrian wizard, Malini, is the talk of the capital. Society has taken him up in a way that might well turn the head of any but an extraordinary wizard, but this particular one is modest and unassuming with it all.—*Pittsburg Leader*.

Secretary Shaw was made to wonder whether or not he possessed the financial qualifications to retain his place by Malini the magician.—*Cincinnati Enquirer*.





visited this city during the past several years. He is unlike Carter, who works principally with great stage illusions. Malini devotes his time to performing tricks with cards, glasses and bowls, in an astonishing fashion. Assisted by his young son, Ozier [sic] Malini, a clever mind-reading act was introduced as a feature of the evening.

Malini performed at the Hotel St. Francis for the better part of a month. He also made appearances up and down the west coast, appearing in Los Angeles where he had many friends, before returning to San Francisco. Interestingly, Malini and Lizzie were enumerated in the 1920 U.S. Census, San Francisco Assembly District 33, but under the name Max K. Malisi and Lizzie K. Malisi, an obvious misspelling of the name Malini. Malini's occupation was listed as "magician." And then, shortly after, Lizzie took ill.

The family returned to Chicago in November of 1920, and took up residence at the Congress Hotel while Lizzie obtained medical treatment. Unfortunately, it was not enough. Lizzie died in Presbyterian Hospital on February 26, 1921. The cause was cancer. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* carried her obituary the following day:

Magician Max Malini's Wife Dies in Chicago  
Mrs. Lizzie Katz Malini, wife of Max Malini, died yesterday at the Presbyterian hospital. She was born near Budapest, Oct. 8, 1872. At an early age she came to this city and had resided here since. On April 11, 1911, she was married to Max Katz Malini. She is survived by her husband, a son, Ozier, and a daughter, Bernice.

She was interred at B'Nai Abraham Cemetery.

Malini was devastated. The woman he cherished, for whom he traveled the world, and who had given him two children, was gone. Malini, now 48, was left to care for Ozier, now seven, while still earning his livelihood as an itinerant magician. It was the end of one era and the beginning of another, one performed under the weight of great personal loss and hardship.

After a period of mourning, and the shifting of his base to New York, Malini met and then married Mrs. Minnie Kay, a widow 15 years his junior. Family was important to Malini and perhaps he thought that Ozier needed a mother figure. The couple married on January 10, 1922, but in Washington, D.C., the site of his initial success. Malini was still known well enough in the Capitol that the *Washington Post* carried news of the nuptials: "Magician Takes A Bride—Malini, Who

Since his arrival in England

## .. MALINI ..

has appeared successfully before

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ALEXANDER.

THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES.

H.R.H. PRINCESS VICTORIA.

H.I.H. GRAND DUKE BORIS.

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

THE EARL OF ROSEBURY.

THE COUNTESS OF GARNARVON.

THE COUNTESS OF DERBY.

THE COUNTESS DE GREY.

THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK.

LORD STANLEY.

THE RT. HON. A. J. BALFOUR.

Mr. J. H. CHOATE (American Ambassador).

COUNT MENSDOERFF (German Ambassador).

SIR THOMAS LIPTON, BART.

SIR EDWARD AND LADY COLEBROOKE.

SIR ALFRED COOPER.

BARON AND BARONESS ALFRED DE ROTHSCHILD.

MR. AND MRS. LEOPOLD DE ROTHSCHILD.

MRS. KEPPEL.

COL. LEGGE.

MRS. ARTHUR PAGET.

HON. MRS. RONALDS.

&C., &C.



Where Has Malini Gone?









Mystified White House Party, Weds New York Woman." Malini and Minnie then returned to New York.

In New York, Malini picked up private work. Occasionally he would also make the rounds of the magic clubs. He attended, for example, the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Conjurers' Association and then, on June 22—shortly before setting sail on the *America* with Minnie for England, Malini entertained the magicians and their special guests at the Society of American Magicians' Eighteenth Annual Banquet, held at the Hotel McAlpin. The guest list was a who's who of New York including: Adolph Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*, Edwin Morgan, postmaster of New York, Mr. Anderson, the director of the New York Library, Bernard Gimbel of Gimbel Bros department store, W.H. Donaldson, owner of *The Billboard*, Sophia Leb and Harriet Underhill of the *New York Tribune*, *New York World* and *New York American*, J.J. Murcoch of the Keith Circuit, and Melville Stone, described as "the father of the Associated Press, one of if not the greatest newspaper man alive." The principal guest of honor, however, was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Clinton Burgess, "Official Representative at Large," reported on the evening in the June 1922 issue of *The Sphinx*. Malini closed the show, a show that included appearances by, among others, Howard Thurston and Horace Goldin. Raymond Hitchcock, the master of ceremonies, introduced Malini as "the greatest card manipulator in the world," and Malini did not disappoint. He focused particular attention on Doyle and closed with his famous "Card Stabbing." Burgess wrote, "Malini received great applause throughout his truly marvelous exhibition, and at 1:50 Saturday morning closed a show that will long remain in the minds of those who saw it as a most delightful magical soiree."

Max and Minnie then departed for England where Malini staged numerous performances in and around London. The couple returned to New York on the *America* on November 4, 1922, just in time to see "a new magical vaudeville production, 'Tearing a Woman Apart'," presented by Horace Goldin at Henderson's Music Hall, Coney Island. Goldin's illusion, of course, changed the course of magic, and with it, the expectations of the public. It ushered in a new era of illusion and pace of performance, one that was very different than the Herrmann-inspired repertoire and performance style of Malini. Max,

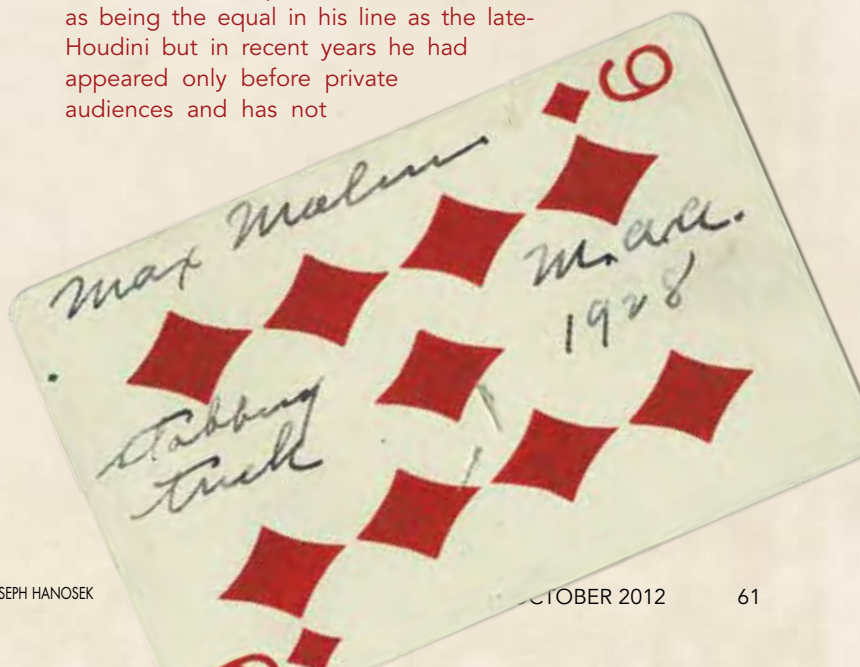
of course, was still an itinerant performer at heart, and would obtain work and perform in the manner that he always had. It was the only way he knew. E.E. Wood Nichols, reporting in the March 1923 issue of *The Sphinx* on Malini's appearance in Indianapolis, wrote:

Max Malini stopped off in Indianapolis on his way to the coast long enough to give two shows in the auditorium of the Claypool Hotel. Owing to engagements I was unable to catch his show, but the papers were very flattering and his audiences were made up of distinguished citizens from the Governor down. Max is a very fine chap to know, a good entertainer and a hound for publicity. For two weeks he had a free story every day in one or more of our papers. He has cartoons of himself drawn by the late Caruso and letters from royalty all over the world. While here he received a personal letter from President Harding thanking him for the pleasure he had afforded him with his magic while in Washington.

While it was evident that Malini could still muster the magic, the publicity, and the money, he could not manage the marriage to Minnie. Lizzie was his one true love. Still, he tried. To ease some of the burden, Max enrolled Oziar, on the advice of General John J. Pershing, into the Manlius Boarding School in Syracuse New York in the fall of 1926. The *Syracuse Herald* of December 20, 1926 noted that Oziar had inherited many of his father's gifts, particularly his gift for magic. It added that Malini was picking up his son to spend Christmas in New York, but not before performing a few shows in and around Syracuse. Oziar would then return to the school after Christmas so Malini and Minnie could depart for a tour of South America. Malini did tour South America, but solo. Minnie had had enough; she filed for divorce in January 1927; the couple was in Reno, Nevada, at the time. The *Reno Evening Gazette* carried the news in its February 3, 1927 edition.

#### Noted Magician Divorced Here

Max Malini, known throughout the world as a magician, whose real name is Max K. Katz, was divorced in Judge Bartlett's court this morning by Mrs. Minnie Kaye Katz. Malini had the reputation throughout the world as being the equal in his line as the late-Houdini but in recent years he had appeared only before private audiences and has not





been seen on the vaudeville stage for so long that his work there is only a memory.

Private audiences spoiled Malini, his wife told the court, and she said that he would drink to excess at these appearances and return home and abuse her. Malini has been an occasional visitor to Reno, but is not known ever to have appeared on the stage here. His specialty was sleight of hand work and card tricks.

Mrs. Katz was given permission to resume her maiden name of Minnie Kaye.

After the divorce, Malini embarked on a trying tour of South America. The work created by his impromptu promotions, and his book of press clippings and testimonial letters, kept him above water, but just barely. He found himself frequently performing just to make ends meet. Part of the problem was that Malini's drinking had also become, as Minnie had testified, excessive. When Malini performed at the Teatro Casino in Rio de Janeiro, for example, it was noted that he was performing while drunk during all 10 of his shows. This is not surprising given his personal circumstance. Life on the road could be harsh, Malini was much older, and the novelty of his magic and personality had waned. More significantly, the death of his wife, the placement of his daughter into foster care, the absence of Ozia, and a failed second marriage were difficult to deal with. Although the disease that is alcoholism would be with him for the rest of his life, he started to find comfort and companionship through an ever-expanding circle of friends—magicians.

Interestingly, today magicians still believe that Malini was very secretive and would rarely socialize with other magicians. Certainly by today's standards, Malini did not readily tip his work or handling of classic effects to the rank and file. Few professional magicians of that era did. The magic lecture circuit and convention scene had not really developed, and professionals rarely contributed their bread and butter material to magic magazines or publications. The dictates of his profession also made it difficult. He was after all an itinerant magician and more importantly, was family-minded. He didn't have the time. Like most professionals, however, Malini was an amateur at heart. He loved magic, and when time would permit, would associate with magicians. There are numerous accounts of him frequenting magic shops in the United States and abroad as well as entries in *The Sphinx* documenting his appearances, and performances at magic clubs, both the Parent Assembly in New York, and those in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, to name just a few.

Malini also took time to mentor others, both informally and formally. Whether it was Al Flosso being allowed to "carry his bags" at the suggestion of Pop Krieger, or a magic-obsessed young man named Eddie McGuire being allowed to act as a production assistant, really an errand boy, for Malini during his performances in Rhode Island, Malini knew that these young men were trying to absorb everything he did. While McGuire would exaggerate his role and association with Malini—he stated he was his manager in order to elevate his standing within the magic



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MARVEL  
YOU WILL BE  
THRILLED

MALINI  
The Master Magician

Has had the honour of appearing before the following notables:

IN THE UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA

The Late President McKinley  
The Late President Roosevelt  
The Late President Harding  
The Late President Coolidge  
The Late John D. Rockefeller  
J. Pierpont Morgan  
Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt  
John Jacob Astor  
John J. Pershing  
And Many Others

IN EUROPE AND OTHER  
COUNTRIES

King Edward VII, England  
The Late King George V, England  
Baron De Rothschild, England  
The Duke of Windsor, England  
Yuan Shih-K'ai, President of China  
House of Peers, Japan  
President Machado, Cuba  
President Ibanex, Chili  
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community and gain access to so-called Inner Circles; others like S. Leo Horowitz were much more respectful. Malini shared many of his handlings with Horowitz, and Horowitz would later help preserve the Malini legacy by outlining the finer points of "Chink-A-Chink," a favorite routine of Malini's ever since he first read it in Sachs' *Sleight of Hand*, in the *Stars of Magic*. Horowitz would also later write a warm tribute to Malini that appeared in *The Sphinx*, one that was reprinted just a few years ago in *Genii*.

Malini's relationship with Vernon also deserves special mention. As noted earlier, Malini made a lasting impression on Vernon when he saw him perform at the Rideau Club in Ottawa. Vernon would spend the next few decades collecting, analyzing, experimenting, and performing magic inspired by or associated with Malini and it would be primarily Vernon who would keep the name Malini, and the tenor of his magic, alive for future generations.

Although Malini and Vernon met on several occasions, they did not spend much time together and, as I wrote in *Dai Vernon: A Biography*, the last time did not end well. Vernon and Malini were both performing in Miami but at different hotels. Vernon made a beeline after each performance to see Malini's set. Malini did not mind that Vernon attended each show and, in fact, even invited Vernon on stage during several key routines so that Vernon could observe and learn the technique up close during an actual performance. Malini was disappointed, however, when



Vernon, whose own engagement was extended, inserted the "Card Stabbing" into his repertoire, albeit it with three selections rather than the eight to 10 cards Malini habitually employed. Malini took Vernon to task on this. It was not that Malini minded Vernon doing the trick, but Vernon should not have added it to his repertoire at the same time and place, Miami, where Malini was performing. It breached a protocol between professionals.

In the mid-1930s, Malini took in what can only be described as, other than his son Oziar, a formal student—Charles Earle Miller. Born in 1909, Miller was 36 years Malini's junior. (He was only a few years older than Oziar.) Miller became interested in magic in 1916, age seven, when he witnessed his brother perform a simple trick. It became his all-consuming interest around age 14 and, by the time that Miller met Vernon in 1932, through the introductions provided by Charles Maly and Faucett Ross, Miller was well on his way to being considered an expert. After his initial encounter with Miller, Vernon wrote Horowitz that Miller was "the best I've met in years."

Vernon introduced Miller, however, to a completely new level of magic, one dominated by Vernon's interest in Erdnase, gambling secrets, the so-called Inner Circle of magicians in New York, and the work and philosophy of J.K.L and M, the "M" being Malini. So when Miller, who was somewhat of an itinerant traveler himself, was in Los Angeles in 1935, and had the opportunity to meet Malini, he did not hesitate. With Judson Brown by his side, Miller made an unscheduled appearance at Malini's hotel room door. Malini was impressed by Miller's devotion to magic, his obvious technical skill and, just as important, the close relationship Miller had with his mother. (Vernon often described Miller as "a kind of mother's boy.") For Miller, Malini represented a father figure, both in and out of magic. For Malini, Miller's close relationship with his mother probably kindled memories of his own family, and the close relationship he and Oziar had had with Lizzie. Malini was also at the point in his career that it was perhaps time to pass on what he knew to another generation, and in Miller he found the perfect vessel.

Malini allowed Miller to accompany him for eight months, day in and day out, as he attended to his business. He taught Miller to perform his core repertoire, and a whole new approach to magic, one that focuses on perfecting select items to perfection, but for performance. Miller could hardly contain himself. He wrote to Faucett Ross:

Don't you know, Faucett, that it is the man—not his methods—that makes him famous. He is

really in a class by himself when it comes to this. Really Faucett, I have come to the conclusion that Max is absolutely right when he says to work any effect in the simplest cleanest manner possible. He can make the most barefaced trick seem like a dream in his hands. I wish that I could have a personal talk with you. I could tell you some of the things that he has taught me that would seem so natural that one wonders why they can't do them. Max is one of the dandiest fellows I have ever met in my life and I owe him a lot. I owe him a lot for he has really taught me how to make a small effect seem like a masterpiece to the spectators. For nearly eight months I saw him nearly every day. We took several trips to different places together. He certainly is a wonderful fellow, and I wish that he were here now. Malini gave me a marvelous introduction the other night at a party given him by Frank Fewins. And what is more he made a beautiful speech about Mother, and believe me, it certainly made me happy. I have come to the conclusion that it is better to do just six effects perfectly than to do several more. Malini says that he can do but six tricks. He says the other things are just fooling the people. I am lining up some real nice dates now, although there isn't much money in them. Keep this strictly to yourself, as I don't want anyone to hear it. I am indebted to Malini for "breaking me in." He got me a cheap date in a cocktail bar where I worked one evening doing just close-up stuff.

The show I do now is almost the same as that given by Malini, with the exception that I have added several effects. Once, I had to give the same program that Max worked. I ran out of material. He says it's all right, so I don't feel bad about it, and I give him credit in several of his tricks. As I stated before: I gave a program similar to Malini's and you would be surprised at the impression it makes. I have been trying to locate a good agent but it is about like trying to invent an invisible shift. Yes, Dai wanted all the data on Max. Now tell that guy not to eat Jewish food just so he can do his tricks.

When Malini left Miller in Los Angeles, he embarked on another extended tour, advertised as a "Farewell Tour," with Oziar, now in his mid-20s, along for the ride. The two visited the homes, hotels, and haunts where Malini had much of his early success. Malini was also able to spend time with various friends, some of who, like Arthur Dearn in Shanghai, had an interest in magic and whom he had known



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for decades. The reviews of the actual performances, however, were polite. The critics often recounted the impression that Malini had made earlier in his career more than the current show itself (which was really the same as the old show), and they afforded him the respect he deserved as a master magician and friend of their club or community. It was, as it had been for the past decade or so, a hard road for Malini to travel. Malini, both as a performer and character, was a throw back to an earlier age, one that a new generation was less familiar with. Malini really was “the last of the itinerant mountebanks.”

Malini returned to a home he had established in Hawaii, the group of islands where he had enjoyed great success as a performer, and the port of call from which he had set sail for so many exotic destinations. Travel to and from the islands, however, became more problematic as much of the world was occupied by the war in Europe and the East. Malini, now weak with age and the undisclosed onslaught of cancer, had retired, mustering the energy and strength to perform for troops stationed on the islands, his last performance being conducted while seated in a chair.

He died on October 3, 1942, at the age of 69, not of a heart attack as has been described by others, but of lung cancer. Not surprising in some regards given the amount of cigars he had smoked throughout the course of his career. He was cremated. The daughter, Beatrice, he gave up to foster care 22 years earlier, had his ashes brought back to Chicago. They were interned with Lizzie, his first wife whom he loved so much at a funeral held on July 26, 1943.

So, now we know:

- Malini was an Austrian-Jew who became inspired to become a magician by seeing Alexander Herrmann. Malini learned much of his magic—his core repertoire—from Sachs’ *Sleight of Hand*.
- Malini had superb skill and a light touch, one that he juxtaposed consciously against a theatrical construct of the persona of a somewhat loud, misspoken immigrant.
- Malini was a master of seeking out and obtaining publicity, most of which was generated by performing impromptu miracles in close quarters for the rich and famous, the *modus operandi* required of the itinerant magician.

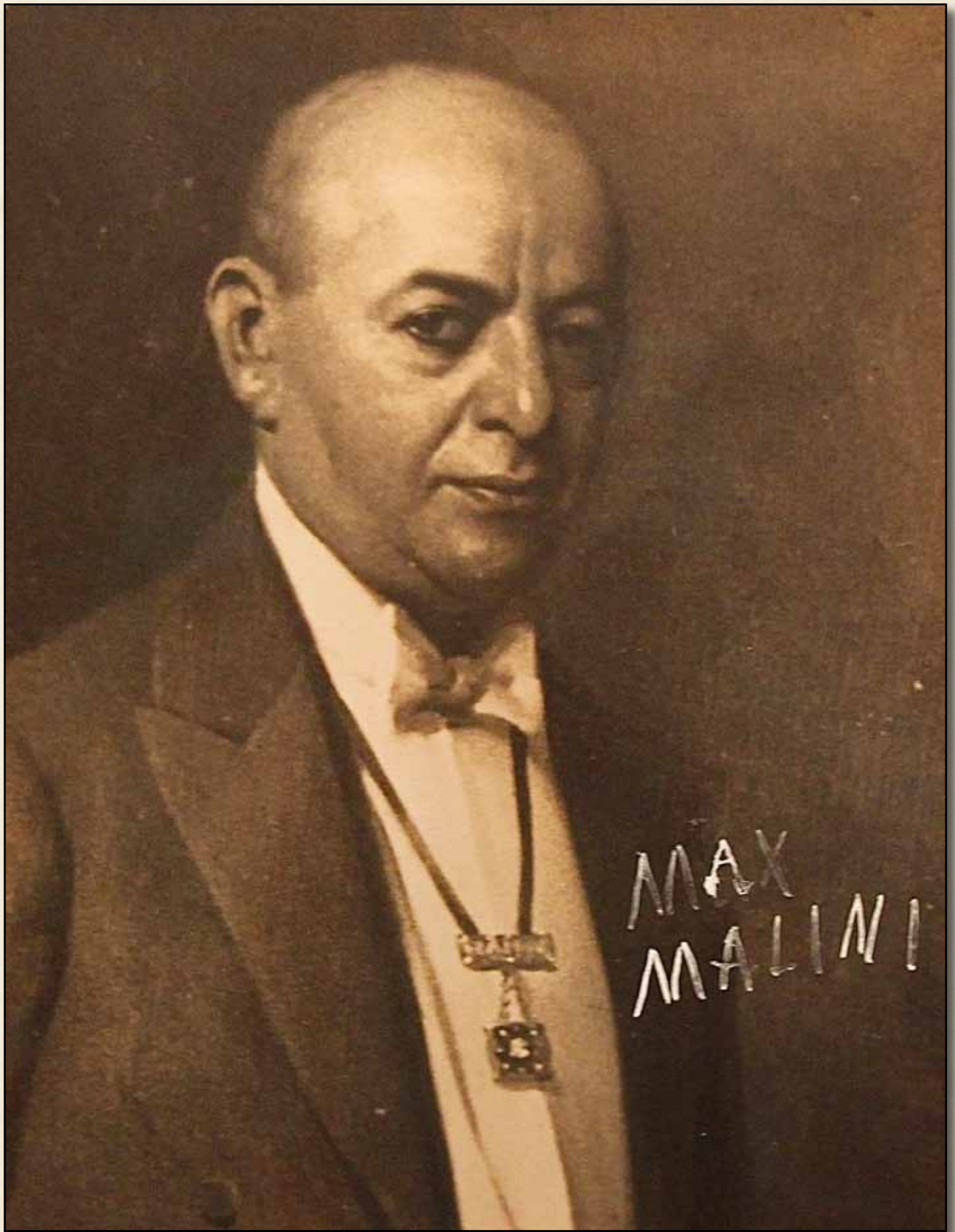
- Malini traveled extensively throughout his career but generally considered, until he moved to Hawaii near the end of his life, Chicago his real home.
- Malini did not guard his secrets jealously, dislike magicians, or rarely associate with them. He not only shared his secrets but also taught some of his most celebrated routines to others. He also had friends—both amateur and professional—in the magic community.
- Malini was his own manager. Eddie McGuire appropriated that billing for his own purposes.
- Malini had a son, Oziar, who traveled with him and learned much of his magic. Malini also shared his secrets with Charles Miller. Both Oziar and Miller, in turned, shared many of Malini’s secrets—handlings really—with others. Hopefully, those people will realize, as Charles Miller did, that “it is the man—not the methods—that made him famous,” and fill in the many more details that are missing from the present picture of Malini and his magic.
- Malini died in Hawaii not from a heart attack, but from lung cancer, in 1942.

Malini’s narrative is a love story, and like all love stories, it is filled with as much heartbreak as it is happiness. In the end, however, I am sure that Malini would be pleased to know that he has inspired as many, if not more, magicians than were inspired by Alexander Herrmann. The cycle, one hopes, will continue.

*Many magicians and friends have contributed directly and indirectly to my understanding of Malini. I would like to thank, in particular, Mark Mitton, Dr. Gene Matsuura, Johnny Thompson, Harry Riser, Eddie Dawes, Max Maven, William Pack, Bill Mullins, and Dustin Stinett. A special thank you to all of the collectors who have opened up their files to share stories, articles, memorabilia, and, for this issue of Genii, images from their collection and to Julie Eng for keeping everything, and me, in order.*









Programme of MAX MALINI, at the Gloucester Hotel. Hong Kong. *Nov 1936*

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Time approx. 1½ hours, together with 3 intervals. 1st 10 minutes, and last two 5 minutes each.

---

Performer enters with full evening dress, cloak, and top hat. Laying these aside, he takes a 14" red silk handkerchief and shows same. Tucks this into left hand and it emerges as Union Jack. A wave of the hand and he is seen holding the "Stars & Stripes" and original red silk.  
(Obtained from left vest pocket)

2 tumblers inverted on table. 2 table <sup>knives</sup> laid thereon. One knife in each hand simultaneously levitated. (Finger tip method as described in Tricks for Everyone by Devant.) Next cigar borrowed. Multiplied into two, and both levitated. Lady in audience removed one from his fingertips. (Was seen to obtain something from coat pocket while borrowing first cigar, and also moisten his fingers before levitation. Method doubtful) Both cigars returned to person who loaned the first cigar.

① Tumblers "passed" through each other. (Cups & Balls move) One tumbler thrown into air and caught. Thrown again and it vanished. Recovered from lady's dress. (Actually retained in left hand)

Card work now followed;

1. Discovery of a chosen card. (Simply brought to top, and assistant asked to remove top card.)

2. Thought of a card (forced by riffle stopping slightly at one point) Wrong? card found, and bottom changed for the correct one.

X  
② 3. 10 cards chosen and 3 cards noted by lifting corner. (Flesh grip location.) The 10 cards were retained by audience yet Malini named them, and also the noted cards except the 13th; this <sup>he</sup> palmed off, rolled ~~it~~ into a ball and produced same from mouth.

4. Six packs of cards opened and shuffled by members of audience, then returned to table. Now 6 assistants called on stage. Malini had each one take a card from each pack. That is one card from each pack. Each had taken the Queen of Hearts. (Assume packs had been steamed open, Queen made into a short card for location purposes and pack resealed, and after the shuffle each queen was forced.)

③ 5. "Ladies looking glass" trick next worked. Everyone taking same card. This effect is well known and sometimes called Metamorphosis or the Ubiquitous Card.

---

INTERVAL of 10 minutes.

---

Second part opened with Egg Bag, very well worked. After showing "How various conjurers were cheaters" and only pretend to put the egg in the bag, and in reality palmed or vested it, he worked it in the usual manner. (He did this amongst the audience, and whilst egg was supposed to have vanished a Lady said she could feel something hard still in the bag. He turned bag quickly inside out and extracted the egg secretly from pocket and vested it right under their nose, this in spite of having just previously shown them the move. He had bag once more examined and then carried on with the effect in the standard manner. (Note; The bag was examined before the trick commenced and he did not change the bag.



as switch was looked for. Assume bag was as usual with pocket right down to bottom, and release thread to make same into "standard bag". (His get out whilst in a tight corner, by vesting the egg was very cleverly put over.)

Next 10 cards freely selected, and replaced into pack and discovered by blindfold? stabbing with borrowed penknife. (Apparently he used a locator card; either a thick card or a short.) The blindfold consisted of two cards folded in half and placed over his eyes, and then covered with two borrowed handkerchiefs. After the effect he worked the vanishing knots with the blindfold. Hanks then returned to owners.

The next effect was where he <sup>took</sup> borrowed two hanks? or I am not certain if he used his own, and in them he wrapped two 5 dollar bills; one in each. Two assistants from audience held same. He now produced a lemon, and pulled away one hank from assistant. Lemon cut open, and vanished note from hanky was found in lemon. The other note was vanished in a like manner, and found inside an egg, which he broke in his hands by means of a small nickle plated wand by tapping egg. The wand was apparently mechanical. The notes were borrowed and numbers taken, before the experiment commenced. (Note; Subtle misdirection in working with the borrowed hanks, as at the time of writing this I cannot state for certain whether he borrowed the hanks or used his own for the lemon and egg effect although I am prepared to say that at least 99 of audience would swear that he used borrowed hanks. See press report )

Now a cut and restored ribbon using the turban method, and also as cut and restored string in Modern Magic.

### 2nd Interval.

He returned changed into dinner jacket, and worked torn and restored paper with pretended exposure. Next was apparently <sup>gone</sup> his reason for changing into the dinner jacket. It was none other than the vanish of a tumbler under cover of a sheet of newspaper, & using a silver dollar for misdirection. (As in Tricks for everyone. Tricks at the dinner table) He worked it standing up and "pocketed the tumbler. The dollar he produced from an assistant in audience and this enabled him to get possession of the tumbler from pocket, and produce same from assistants elbow. He then again worked the throwing into the air vanish of tumbler. A member of the audience who happened to be in evening dress had a button "bitten off" his dinner jacket, and finally replaced. He finally concluded with the juggling effect of 5 eggs and five tumblers on a tray, and 5 cards rolled to support the eggs; Tumblers stood on table, tray on tumblers. On tray the rolled cards supported the eggs. Tray knocked away and the eggs fell into tumblers. (Only 4 of the eggs found their mark, he missed with one.)

Finis.

WU LING.

The Magical Mandarin.