

'CARD TRICKS FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T DO CARD TRICKS ...and some for those who do!'

Conjuring is perhaps the only human endeavor where the ends totally justify the means. In the words of Nate Leipzig, "It makes no difference how the audience is mystified." As Vernon put it, "Sleights and methods are merely the tools." There are those who will argue that an effect based on sleight-of-hand alone is "better" than one which duplicates the illusion by way of gimmicks. While it is true that a gimmicked method may call for you to carry around some extra piece of equipment, while the sleight method may be completely impromptu, these are considerations before and after the fact. While the trick is being performed, the M.O. is meaningless. It is the manner in which the effect is presented, and thus the manner in which it is perceived, that matters. Nothing else.

I am not dismissing sleight-of-hand. It is a cornerstone of our art. But, in the words of Theo Bamberg, "One is not a musician simply because he has mastered his scales." Any magic trick must both mystify and entertain. Method, then, is simply the specific means one uses to bring about this mystifying entertainment. There are only four basic elements of method.

1. Natural Law Disguised
2. Secret Activity
3. Secretly Prepared Materials
4. Psychology

An example of the first element can be found in the "Vested Power" routine explained in this set of notes. The simple mathematics behind the trick are disguised with spelling, patter, and the use of a false cut. A host of other natural principles such as friction and gravity are exploited in our art, without our spectators being aware of it.

By "Secret Activity", I am primarily referring to the various sleights we use. When a card is palmed out of a deck, this is a straight-forward action - removing a card - done in secret.

"Secretly Prepared Materials" is a fancy way of describing gimmicked items. Fakes are created to look like innocent materials, when in fact they are prepared in some manner unknown to the audience.

The final element on the list is by far the most important. Psychology is the only element that is absolutely essential to the performance of magic. There are tricks which do not involve sleights, and those without gimmicks, and those to which natural law is only incidental, but in every single case it is necessary to establish some psychological foundation on which to build. Ironically, it is this very element that is most ignored in our work, and it is as a result of this that so many potentially good tricks fail to go over the way they should.

The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Therefore, when moving from one point to another, the most logical route to travel is that straight line. The weak link in most magic tricks - and particularly in most card tricks - is that, for a number of reasons related to method, during the course of the presentation the performer must veer away from the most direct path from action to action. In doing this, the magician is threatening the spectator's own sense of reason.

When the spectator's sense of reason is threatened, he will react! It is as simple as that. He may react consciously, or subconsciously...but in either case this reaction will manifest itself as doubt. Once this happens, the magician is placed in a very unstable (even defensive) position. Doubt causes the spectator to take his attention away from what the magician wants him to focus on. At least some portion of the spectator's interest will be shifted to work on trying to figure out just what the magician is trying to do by acting illogically. Whether the spectator is successful at this or not; whether his reaction is intense or mild; whether he is even aware of his own doubt - all of this is immaterial...for at this point, ENTERTAINMENT value has diminished.

Obviously, then, it is in the performer's best interests to avoid this conflict between himself and his audience. This is why psychology is so very important, for it is through the use of psychology in the form of misdirection, timing, implication, nuance, etc. etc. that we can establish a contextual

that we can establish a contextual premise for any given effect. In so doing, we can create the illusion of logical activity, and in turn create the illusion of ...Magic.