

The Dai Vernon Cups & Balls

An Analysis by Roberto Giobbi

One of the most difficult questions for anyone seriously interested in magic is: „*How can I improve my magic?*“ As always there may be many answers, but one of them is, I'm certain about this: „*Study the works of the great Masters until you mastered and understood all practical things, why the Master has created and interpreted them this way and no other way.*“

The Cups & Balls routine by Dai Vernon is in my opinion one of the great masterworks of sleight-of-hand magic - and of all of conjuring for that matter - that has ever been created. Whoever studies and practices it with hands, head and heart cannot help but learn practical and conceptional things, which will influence his magic and therefore also a part of his life.

I have studied this routine myself for over 20 years. Every year I have once or twice run through it, practiced individual phases, admired its internal and external beauty, being fascinated each time more by its simplicity, directness and sheer elegance, but have almost never performed it because it is such a difficult routine. However, a few years ago, I bought myself a hand engraved sterling silver set from Brett Sherwood, which is a near-facsimile of the Vernon Cups, and have put the routine into my active repertoire. I can assure you that this routine still has the impact its more rudimentary versions must have had thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt and I believe that there are only very, very few other tricks in the magician's repertoire with which a brilliantly executed Cups & Balls routine can be followed. Every act that closes with the Cups & Balls is a good act (OK – there's always the exception to the rule...).

In order to be an important magician, I feel it isn't enough to have been successful artistically and/or financially in one's own time, but one has to have a lasting influence over one's own time on magic in general and on magicians in particular. This certainly applies to Dai Vernon, and the Cups & Balls are the outstanding example. I don't know of any contemporary routine that wouldn't owe something – and in many cases almost all - to Dai Vernon. His techniques, effects, details of handling, loading sequence and construction, but above all the conceptual approach mark practically everybody who performs the Cups & Balls seriously today, even if some performers may not be aware of this. This routine is of timeless beauty and has the most elegant solutions to all problems I'm aware of in the Cups & Balls.

Like other classics, the Cups & Balls are made up of repetitions, which do, however, need to complement each other, so that various phenomena alternate (production, vanish, traveling, penetration, transformation etc.). The danger with repetitions is that we do too many of them and it takes courage and criteria to confine oneself to the essentials. This is particularly difficult for the beginner, who has learned so many beautiful variations and now would like to show them all. This means to put the Ego behind artistic content, something which requires maturity, experience and humbleness, things which are spread very sparingly. In his tapes *Revelations*, Dai Vernon gives some wonderful advice. Among many other things he says: „*You have to know when to stop. A painter knows when he has to stop painting. If he didn't, he would paint over his own painting.*“ In my opinion Dai Vernon's routine has the perfect length for a formal performance¹: Each phase elegantly merges into the next and introduces a new phenomenon. Each phase has a linear construction, so that even a small child could understand the effect, but not even the most astute spectator could penetrate its secret. The handling is exemplary for Dai Vernon's credo to „be natural“, for each action has a reason, each sleight is imbedded in an in-transit (secondary) action, each effect is carefully prepared. There is no doubt in the

mind of the audience what the performer wants to show, and still, if correctly executed, there is not even the slightest hint at how all of these miracles could have been done. There are no fast movements and there is no confusing word or action, everything seems transparent and crystal-clear, nonetheless every effect produces boundless amazement.

In my Homage to Dai Vernon I show the routine in a film clip performed by himself on Mark Wilson's „Magic Circus“ and then the version his contemporary John Scarne performed in a documentary. Although only a part of the routine is seen in the Scarne clip, one cannot help but notice that all the above mentioned points – dramatic and psychological construction, choice of technique and handling, misdirection, timing etc. – reflect a completely different approach and are comparatively crudely executed. Just the comparison between these two performers shows the paradigm shift Dai Vernon has introduced with his thinking and the resulting tricks, techniques and presentations and how these have meant a quantum leap for magic.

The following analysis is based on the Dai Vernon Cups & Balls as it is described on p. 123 of Lewis Ganson's *The Dai Vernon Book of Magic* (available at L& L Publishing or your favorite dealer). I shall try to identify and to describe those aspects, which in my opinion make of the routine a masterpiece. He who has understood them, will not only be able to learn it more easily and perform it more competently, which would already be a lot, but will also be able to install the acquired principles, concepts and strategies in his whole work and in this process become a better magician

When studying the following text, it is of great help if you are familiar with Dai Vernon's routine, either because you have the book at hand or because you've watched the routine on a DVD or on YouTube². In each case I will first briefly describe the effect as the spectators experience it and then give my analysis of various aspects.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Prologue: Dai Vernon starts by dropping one cup through the other, i.e. he takes the first cup and apparently drops it through the second cup, then drops the second through the third cup (fig. 1&2). He then takes the third cup and does the “inside-deeper-than-outside” gag (fig. 3&4), but you could also do the well-known stunt, where the magic wand is pushed several times into the mouth of the cup and eventually seems to penetrate it. Finally he shows 3 balls and puts one on top of each cup that rest mouth downward in a row on the table (fig. 5).

Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



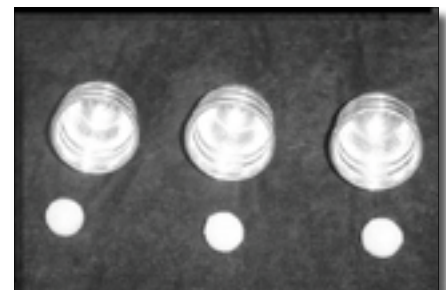
Analysis: René Lavand says in his remarkable lectures, that a good trick needs a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue introduces the plot, most of the time the instruments/props, and it makes the audience curious, so they say to themselves: „*Oh, I think this is worth watching.*“ That’s exactly what happens in the first phase of Dai Vernon’s Cups & Balls. But there is more to it: Arturo de Ascanio said that an effect is the contrast between an initial and a final situation. Therefore when the final loads appear inside the cups, this is only as astonishing as the conviction that the cups were empty to begin with. Whatever detracts or weakens this conviction will also diminish the climax. Many professionals and those who perform often, very often only care for the design of the finale, how the audience reacts, how to make them laugh and how to get the applause, but they neglect the initial situation, which before anything else is the most important premise for the finale.

Dai Vernon knew this and used this opening sequence to clearly show the cups empty – and at various moments of the routine he makes it a point to reinforce this fact. With this he lays the groundwork for a very strong finale.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the opening phase, the cups are placed with their opening upward onto the table, like real drinking cups, what they actually are, instead of starting by placing the cups mouth downward on the table right away as this is done in so many routine I’ve read and seen. This might make sense to the performer, because he needs them that way for his trick, but in the perception of the audience – and that’s always the first thing to consider – it might look as if the magician wanted to hide something beneath them, a fact which proves to be true most of the time...

The prologue is what in refined gastronomy is called „Amuse-Bouche“, an exquisite little starter which comes as a gift from the chef to tickle the guest’s appetite, or the overture in the opera which sets the mood, silences the audience and intrigues them.

Fig. 6



Phase 1: The 3 balls vanish one after the other only to reappear under each cup. To show this, the performer uses the wand to tip the cups backwards and reveal the balls – the situation now is as depicted in fig. 6. The audience can once more see the inside of the cups and that they are clearly empty.

Analysis: One of the reasons for the timeless popularity of the Cups and Balls is the fact that it contains almost all phenomena of sleight-of-hand magic: production, vanish, transportation, transformation, multiplication, penetration. This first phase introduces the instruments used – the cups, the balls and the wand – and the vanish and reproduction of the balls establish the plot.

The vanishing procedure is extremely cleverly constructed from a point of view of method and psychology. Each time a ball vanishes, the palmed ball is immediately loaded under the cup nearby, as the next ball is shown. Therefore the audience sees perfectly empty hands after each of the first two vanishes. After the third ball has vanished the hands cannot shown to be empty as there is one ball palmed in the right hand. But the sting is immediately taken out of the situation by showing each ball having arrived under its respective cup.

Dai Vernon also solves another problem prevalent in all classic – a feature that at the same time makes them such strong pieces – namely the problem of repetition of the same effect. In the case of this first phase a ball vanishes three times in a row. The first time it is a surprise, to which the spectator often reacts by saying: „*Wow! Can you do this again?*“ This justifies the second vanish that will baffle the spectator for good. But the third vanish doesn't add anything new. So how can it be made interesting? Well, by introducing a conflict that emotionally involves the spectator. In this case Dai Vernon takes the third ball in his left hand, using the same handling Gestalt as he did the first two times, and then briefly stops: „*Most people think the ball is already gone. But look, it's still here. It's all in the magic of the wand.*“ This interrupts the rhythm of the vanishes and introduces a conflict – the spectator now thinks: „*Oh, it's still there – I thought it had already gone. But how will he make it disappear now? That's impossible.*“ It's here where Dai Vernon uses Silent Mora's famous „Wand Spin Vanish“ to make the third ball go. The aesthetics of the flourish formally complements the vanish of the ball and thereby adds a real climax to the trilogy of vanishes. This dramatic and psychological construction is very good and should be applied to similar situations.

Phase 2: A ball is placed under each cup. The spectator chooses a cup. The performer „invisibly“ takes the ball from this cup and „throws“ it under another cup which is also freely selected by the spectator. The center cup is shown empty, assuming this was chosen first, and two balls are shown to have arrived under the cup on the performer's right, assuming this was the spectator's second choice (fig. 7).

Analysis: The instruments have been introduced and a vanish and reproduction has occurred three times. What can be done to increase the effect? Dai Vernon's answer: „*You involve the audience.*“ This starts the first interaction with the audience – the spectator chooses the cup from which a ball vanishes and also selects the cup, under which it will reappear. This is amazing and immediately leads to the next phase.

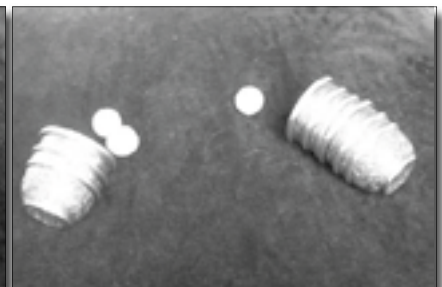
Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Phase 3: „*But what would have happened, if you had chosen the other cup?*“ The two balls are each replaced under their respective cups and the play repeated. The ball is „invisibly“ taken from the center cup and „thrown“ under the other cup on the performer's left, not previously selected (in our example) – fig. 8. Figure 9 shows the final situation of this phase.

Analysis: This is a wonderful augmentation of the effect, because having selected the cup on your right, the spectator will immediately wonder what would have happened, if he had selected the other cup. And that's precisely the question this phase answers. At its conclusion the cups rest again on the table with their mouths toward the audience, showing them once more empty. The audience sees three balls and cannot help but notice that the performer's hands are perfectly empty. It is important to unobtrusively prove from time to time during the routine that you are using 3 balls and 3 balls only, without mentioning it specifically.

In both phases 2 and 3 the cup under which the „invisible“ ball is to appear, is pushed forward with the magic wand. This serves two functions. First, it establishes a second plane *in which* the „invisible“ ball appears. This is in contrast to the first plane with the central cup *from*

where the ball vanishes. This anchors the two effects in space and makes for more clarity. Clarity is one of the hallmarks of Dai Vernon's magic, and he repeatedly said: „Confusion is not Magic.“

Second, the moving of the cup forward causes the two balls underneath to align in a horizontal configuration so that when the cup is lifted, the audience can clearly see both balls – this wouldn't bet he case if the balls were one behind the other. The constant preoccupation for this class of detail is one of the many things that distinguish the expert from the tyro. Taking such thinking as a model in the performance of our magic will serve us, the spectators and our effects well.

Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Phase 4: A cup is placed over 2 balls on the table, and a ball placed on top of this cup. The other two cups are stacked on top (fig. 10&11). A snap of the fingers and when the stack of three cups is lifted, the single ball is seen to have joined the other two (fig. 12).

Analysis: This is a „magical interlude“, a „sherbet“ in a longer menu that prepares the stomach for the main course. It is a „quickie“ that interrupts the rhythm of the performance for a moment and introduces a new phenomena, the penetration of a ball through a cup – up to now the balls vanished, reappeared and were transported with variations.

Phase 5: The cups are once again standing in a row on the table mouth downward and on top of each cup rests a ball. Each ball is taken and clearly placed under its respective cup. Suddenly the outer cups are lifted, the balls have vanished, and all three balls are seen under the central cup (fig. 13).

Fig. 13



Analysis: What on earth could you do now to hold the spectator's interest? Dai Vernon does it in the very best manner of the „old school of magic“ (in spite of being an innovator, he wasn't so stupid as to give up all that came before him!), by telling the audience: „Now, I'll make one more maneuver, then I will show you exactly how the trick is done.“ I have seen a video clip of him performing the Cups and Balls where he says “teach” instead of “show” and I actually think that “teach” is much better. Why? If you say „show“ it is like dropping the pants, it's exhibitionism, it's the “Masked Magician”, but if you say „I'm going to teach you how to do this“, then it is more like if you transferred your magic power to the spectator, metaphorically represented by God touching Adam's finger in the famous fresco by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel.

That's of course a strong thing – to teach the whole thing, that's hardly possible, but maybe? Of course that's just the beginning of a classic "sucker" phase, but done in a particularly intelligent way, as we will readily see.

But before getting to the „teaching“, there is this 5th phase, which is strong and very visual and which again introduces a new phenomenon, the *simultaneous* transportation of the balls from under the outer cups to the central cup, in a manner that leaves the uninitiated speechless. The procedure is technically and psychologically brilliant.

With the first ball a false transfer from the right into the left hand is used, the left hand apparently placing the ball under the cup on the left. The spectators can see how the empty hand comes out from under the cup. But maybe somebody thinks that you've retained the ball in the right hand, which is true. However, this solution is cancelled with the second ball, which is really transferred to the left hand along with the previously palmed ball – the right hand can casually be flashed after the transfer. The left hand then places both balls under the central cup, apparently only one ball, and can be shown empty when it comes back from under the cup. Both hands can now be seen to be empty. Both phases have complemented each other, canceling out possible solutions implicitly, never explicitly. The third ball is so to speak „casting out nines“, a sanity check proving that what they saw is what you did. The third ball is really transferred from the right hand into the left hand, which really places it under the cup – all is exactly as it should be and confirms that you did exactly this the previous two times. However, this time the ball secretly rolls into your right hand as the cup is apparently set on the ball. This entire phase is a jewel of constructivist magic. Nearly everybody I've seen use this phase has tried to "improve" or "simplify" it and has lost its beauty.

One could argue that this fifth phase isn't necessary, and actually I believe that one could pass from phase 4 directly to the final phase, if this was at all necessary or desirable, such as at a TV shooting, where every 10 seconds are like minutes. However, I feel that this phase is necessary and beautiful, not only because it introduces yet another phenomenon, the multiple transportation, which in itself would be enough to justify its inclusion, but because it is a phase of suspense that delays a little more the spectator's expectation in regard to the "teaching/explanation" – therefore this phase is dramatically speaking very sound. But what is more, it manifests the enthusiasm and the passion of the artist, who seems to be saying: „I have devoted my life to this. Please come into my workshop – I want to show you a few more of my favorite paintings.“ If you've endeared yourself to your audience, you simply owe them this phase.

Final Phase: The balls under the outer cups are placed in the pocket and only one ball remains under the center cup. Suddenly a ball reappears under the cup on the right. The performer explains how he only seemingly puts the ball away, but in reality retains it in his hand and drops it under the cup when he lifts it – he demonstrates this with the cup on his left. Before the audience starts to really believe that this is the whole secret to this wonderful trick, the performer puts one ball away, and to everybody's surprise, all three balls reappear under the center cup. Eventually all three balls are placed away together. But when the cups are checked, instead of finding the balls once more under them, the balls are seen to have transformed into a lemon, an onion and a tomato – and upon checking the center cup once more, there is an apple!

Analysis: This phase, where large balls or pieces of fruit appear under the cups, is the climax of the routine. Before Dai Vernon, the final loads came from a „Gibecière“, the street performer's pouch, or from a servant attached to the table. To my knowledge Pops Krieger (1851-1934), a German who immigrated to the USA, was the first to directly load from the pockets of his dress rather than from a pouch or servant. Other sources indicate Max Malini. However, it can certainly be said that it was Dai Vernon with his routine who made this procedure popular.

In my opinion his construction and handling is one of the most beautiful and important contributions in all of magic – I hope to be able to show this in the following analysis.

When it comes to the final loads, experts hold different opinions. Some maintain that it should look as if the small balls transformed into large balls and therefore advocate the use of large balls that look similar to the small balls. This makes sense to me, furthermore balls are much easier to carry than fruit and won't rot – you buy them once and you're done. I have tried balls as well as fruit in my performances and obtained similar results. Nonetheless I prefer fruit and use a potato, a tomato, and a tangerine. There are nowadays artificial pieces of fruit that look very realistic and with which one can travel easily. As a forth optional load I use garlic like Juan Antón, but also an onion or a lemon cause amusing reactions. There are fruits that are inherently funnier than others – somehow an apple or a pear gets less of a reaction than a lemon or an onion (listen to Vernon's comments on the *Revelations* DVD). The loads are placed in the left trousers hip pocket. In case this is too small, you will have to make it larger, or you can hang a small bag on your belt.

It was only recently that I realized the full genius of this final loading sequence. Thomas Stauss, a friend who doesn't practice magic, but has one of the largest collections of old magic books, came to visit and I performed for him the Dai Vernon Cups & Balls routine. He was totally amazed; especially the final loads caused greatest astonishment. This surprised me, because I knew that he had read his books and in almost all of them there is a cups & balls routine. However, he only collects books until 1850, where the trick was performed using a gibecière or a servant. After the performance he immediately stood up from his chair and walked around the table. When I asked what he was looking for, he answered: „*Where is the servant?*“ I gave him a few hints that the loads might come from somewhere else, I even mentioned the fact that I was wearing a jacket, which I usually wouldn't at home, to which he replied to my greatest surprise „*Yes, I thought of your pockets, but you never went to the pockets.*“ This kept me awake the whole night wondering: How is it possible, that an intelligent person, who even has some background knowledge, doesn't remember that I went to the pockets five (!) times? The answer: In Dai Vernon's final phase of the cups and balls the levels of psychological and dramatical construction are superbly married with method and handling as marriage brokers, all at the highest level. Let's look at this in detail:

Effect: At the conclusion of phase 5 there are 3 cups and 3 balls on the table, while the fourth ball is palmed in your right hand. You're about to place a ball under each cup. This initial situation, to which the final situation of the load production will contrast, must be crystal clear. The audience has to once more be made aware that the cups are empty, that you are using 3 balls and 3 balls only, and that your hands are empty.

Here is a procedure that is not in the Ganson description, but which Dai Vernon apparently used all the time – you can see it for instance in his performance on Mark Wilson's „*Magic Circus*“: the balls are placed in a row on the table and the cups are leaned with their rims on the balls as depicted in figure 14. With the wand, which is held in the right hand to help conceal the palmed ball, each cup is tipped over each ball. There is not the shadow of a doubt that there is one ball under each cup and that everything is as it appears.

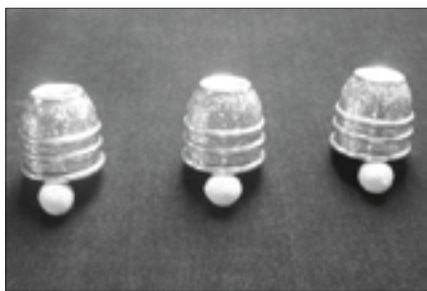


Fig. 14

This is where the actual final phase starts and which Dai Vernon introduces with the following words: „I'm going to do it so simply that any small child could understand it.“ First, the balls under the outer cups are apparently placed into the pocket and one ball is shown under the central cup. In reality the balls are loaded back and there is now a ball under each cup and the left hand has secretly obtained a piece of fruit, ready to be loaded under the right cup.

Analysis: Rather than saying *I put this ball in my pocket* I would suggest saying *I put this ball away/aside*. This avoids the image of the pocket to be produced in the spectator's mind at all, since it's very difficult to delete an image once it has been created.

The placing of the first ball in the pocket is an action that Ascanio called “conditioned naturalness”. Although there is a false transfer involved, the left hand comes out of the pocket “clean”. This conditions the audience that there is nothing in the hand when it comes out of the pocket. By using this innocent action first, the all subsequent loads hidden in the left hand will become “invisible”.

Effect: The right hand lifts the cup on the right and reveals that the ball, which was apparently put away, has returned.

Analysis: To a lay audience this is a great surprise – transportation from such a distance hasn't occurred up to now. It is an ideal misdirection and it is used to load the fruit under this cup. Although the loading technique is taught by Ganson, it was Johnny Thompson, one of the last Masters of the classic school of magic, who showed me how his friend and mentor Charlie Miller did it and this is also how Dai Vernon used to do it. Let's call the technique the “pendulum” – imagine that the left hand, which holds the load, moves like a pendulum with the back of the hand always toward the audience. This keeps the left hand from following the natural desire to turn slightly outward at the moment the cup is seized and “flash” the load.

The right hand lifts the cup and then transfers it to the *left hand which remains almost motionless*, moving just slightly to meet the cup. The mouth of the cup is set from above and from the right in the fork of the thumb, i.e. into the opening between thumb and forefinger. This opening shows to the right and a bit upwards, not outward as the hand would intuitively like to do – always keep the image of the pendulum in mind where the back of the hand is at all times showing toward the audience.

The handing over of the cup from the right to the left hand should be interpreted as an in-transit action, i.e. a secondary action necessary for the main action, which is the right hand pointing to the ball that just appeared under the cup – the transfer was necessary to free the right hand, which then goes into the pointing. To get the right timing imagine the transfer of the cup to be a half note and the pointing of the right forefinger a full note, so it's TA (transfer) and TAAA (pointing). Whoever understands and implements this, will perform a more deceptive magic from now on. Figures 15, 16 & 17 show these actions from the audience's view.

Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



There are now two possibilities and Dai Vernon apparently used both at various times. The Ganson description says to transfer the loaded cup to the right hand that then places it on

the table as the left hand seizes the ball. On the video Dai Vernon takes the ball with his right hand (this being in this case the main action rather than the pointing) and the left hand places the loaded cup on the table. I prefer to transfer the cup to the other hand and then place it on the table as the left hand picks up the ball, because each action with the cup thus becomes an in-transit action and gets less attention.

Effect: „Of course you wonder how this ball got there.“ With this Dai Vernon comes back to his initial promise to teach them how it is done. „The reason for that is very simple – I swindle. You see I only pretend to take it in this hand – that’s called misdirection – I only pretend to put it in my pocket. I bring it down to my little finger and drop it behind the cup.“

Analysis: This is where Dai Vernon exposes the tourniquet, without of course calling it that way, and it is the only moment most magicians I’ve spoken with don’t like. Here’s an alternative handling: Offer to teach them how to do this. Move the left hand with the ball toward your left hip pocket as your body naturally turns a bit to the left. Immediately the left hand openly throws the ball into the right hand – figures 18 & 19 are audience’s views: „If I do this slowly, you can see it...“ Immediately follow up by apparently transferring the ball back to the left hand, really retaining it secretly in your right hand, then make a throwing movement with the left hand and instantly produce the ball at the right fingertips: „But if I do it quickly, nobody can see it.“ This looks very magical and at the same time makes the explanation believable.

Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Repeat the transfer and open throw back: „Now very slowly...“ Continue as per Ganson’s description, i.e. go to the pocket with the left hand and get the next load. Simultaneously the right hand lifts the cup on your left and apparently exposes the ball just dropped behind, in reality you keep the ball palmed in your right hand and simply show the ball that you had reloaded previously.

This false explanation is absolutely realistic and coherent so that everybody will believe it. In many years of experience I can confirm that the reaction here is very strong, almost as if all the secrets of magic had been explained by this exposure. In any case the misdirection is so strong that you could load an elephant under the cup – we’re happy with a piece of fruit and do it as described above using the “pendulum” technique.

Effect: Proceed as in the book by really putting the ball away in the pocket and seize the third piece of fruit, while the right hand lifts the central cup to show that all three balls have reappeared under it.

Analysis: This is an important effect since it cancels the previously given „sucker explanation“, but „it’s all done with kindness“. The audience understands that magicians can’t reveal their secrets, like a doctor or a Swiss banker, and that they have been teased in a friendly way. Furthermore you show yet once more, like the philosophers do, that things are not as they appear. This moment also re-establishes the performer’s authority in a theatrical-artistic sense.

Effect: Finally all three balls are put away together in the pocket and a piece of fruit is revealed under each cup.

Analysis: That's the version in *The Dai Vernon Book of Magic*. On the video Dai Vernon says, as he puts the three balls away: „If I put these three balls away and there is one under this cup, then I must be using a fourth. Well, I'm an honest magician – I use a fourth and it is over here, but it is a little larger, and there is one over here, and one over here and the last one is there.“ He now shows a load under each cup, in a steady, even rhythm, with a fourth load under the center cup that was stolen when the three balls were put away together. The order the loads are revealed is: first the center cup, loading it with the fourth load as it is again set down, then the lateral loads and eventually the fourth load, again under the center cup.

The beginner will have a tendency to wait after the first load has been revealed and accept the applause. Since the audience's reaction to the first load is so overwhelming, the performer's ego would like to repeat this success at least two more times with the next two loads. But unfortunately that's not how it works, because each load, if revealed in a delayed manner, will be weaker and the curve of interest drops instead of going up. Dai Vernon pointed out several times that the loads should be revealed one after the other, with maybe pausing one or two beats before producing the fourth load.

In the 35 years (as of 2008), in which I have been practicing magic, I have read and seen countless versions of the Cups and Balls. As far as I know the first description can be found in Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (584), the next in *Hocus Pocus Junior* (1635), and then almost all important works following these two, such as Ozanam, Guyot etc. have a version. I have studied and practiced most of these routines as well as dozens contemporary versions and have reached the conclusion that the routine by Dai Vernon is by far the best when it comes to dramatic and psychological construction as well as method. There might have been and there might still be performers who perform their version of the Cups & Balls in a very entertaining manner, but there is nobody that I know of who has a routine with more magical quality.

I strongly recommend you read the original description of the routine, where author Lewis Ganson also discusses which cups and balls to use as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

Footnotes

¹ I'm not talking about so-called „Table Hopping“, which meanwhile I have come to consider as a profession of its own and the lowest form of magic. Get me right: I'm neither saying that there is no quality behind it nor that it is easy to do, not at all, but in the same way as I look at MacDonald's (and similar) as the lowest form of gastronomy, I see „Table Hopping“ – what an ugly term – as the lowest form of magic. But that's another story.

² You can find a film clip from Mark Wilson's „Magic Circus“ in excellent quality as a bonus on Michael Ammar's DVD *The Complete Cups & Balls*, on Mark Wilson's recently released *Magic Circus* DVD (it's a separate menu item there) or you can enter „Dai Vernon Cups and Balls“ in the search field of www.YouTube.com, where you'll find various versions in differing qualities.