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"COMEDY MAGIC"

Preface.

WHAT IS COMEDY?

In some cases it is hard to put your fingers on the answer, but, in the majority of cases, set rules can be used. Naturally, it is impossible to get real laughs from a very small audience no matter how good your material. Usually the fellow that is funny for a few in the parlor falls flat in front of a crowd on a platform. One does not have to get belly laughs to have a successful comedy act, so long as he keeps the audience smiling throughout his show.

It is up to the individual to find what type of comedy is best suited for him. Do not take your friend's or relative's word; but try it out on shows. And, don't let the first show or two stop you, as you may be on the right track. Adding or taking away certain points will probably help the act immensely.

CASH IN on yourself. By that I mean that if you are small, cash in on it by getting the tallest men or boys in the audience to come up and assist you. If tall, get a real short man to help and act very awkward. I know of a case where a well known movie comedian who stuttered took advantage of it and is a hit in the movies due to the affliction. Any magician who stutters can take advantage of it in his patter. While on the subject of taking advantage, allow me to relate the following experience. Dr. Rockwell, now a big comedian, was formerly a Magician up in Providence, Rhode Island. His tricks always seemed to go wrong, and he discovered that the audience so much enjoyed his explanation of why they had not worked that he took up a talking act and gave up magic.

W.R. Williston of New York City works more club dates than any other Magician in that section, due to his fast, furious Magic act with fast and furious patter - shooting off guns, running up and down the aisle and what not. He keeps the folks on the edge of their seats as they do not know what he is going to do next. This happens to be the type of act that they like in clubs around New York.

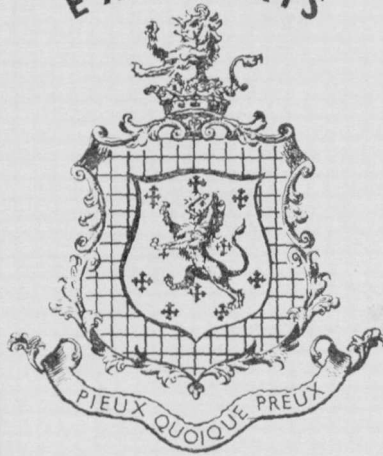
Dell O'Dell of New York City is another that gets all the "dates" due to her fast and smooth magic, with plenty of novelty and laughs. Both Dell O'Dell and Williston seem to vibrate energy the minute they step into a room or onto the stage, and the audience straightens up and knows that it is going to have fun and enjoy that Magic act.

In the movie comedies, there are also set rules. For example, a well dressed person falls and it is funny. A pie thrown into a person's face has always been funny.

In Magic, for the average Magician, comedy situations are usually the best and in Magic you can work out a great many of them along with sucker gags. Always try to make yourself the goat, rather than someone in the audience. Above all, be yourself, if possible.

Percy Abbott.

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λ FAT AND THIN LADY.

On a slate sketch out, roughly, in chalk a very thin woman and cover slate with a slate flap. Show a pill box and state that these are your latest patented pills. They make fat people thin, thin people fat, short people tall, tall people short. If you happen to be stocky, state that this morning you weighed only seventy-eight pounds, took on the the pills, and look at you now. If small, say that this morning you were six feet tall, took one of the pills, and came down to the show tonight for half fare. To prove how well these pills work, you pick up the slate and draw on same a very fat girl. Place slate on table, face down, while you reach for the box of pills. Then pick up slate, leaving flap on table, and keep drawing towards you. Pretend to give pill to girl, then turn slate around and show that the girl is now thin.

The above illustrates how you can take a trick, make a comedy of it, and make fun of your own size.

COMEDY CARD TRICK.

Under your belt at back of coat have concealed a Jumbo card. We will say that it is the ten of Spades. Take a regular deck, force a duplicate of that card, and have it shuffled back into the pack. Place pack behind the back, saying that you will locate card behind the back. Bring several cards out, one at a time, inquiring if that is the card -- and he is always wrong. Finally, in disgust, you try once more and bring out the large card, saying "IS THIS IT?" This is a surprise, and a surprise is always a laugh.

X EGG BAG.

Have a small boy step forward and show the bag -- empty, and then have the boy cackle like a hen. Much comedy can be had from this by inquiring of the boy whether or not he knows how a hen cackles, etc. Then produce the egg from the bag. Wrap the egg in a devil handkerchief, have the boy hold the bag, then have him kneel on his knees. Hold the covered egg in hank above the boys head; then decide it would be better for another boy to hold it. So get another boy and have him hold the covered egg over the kneeling boy's head. Say that at the count of three, he is to drop the egg. This does not sound funny, but it brings plenty of laughs. Merely the thought of an egg dropping on top of the boy's head -- squash! Finally, you walk over to hank, yank it out, -- egg is gone; then found in the bag.

PRODUCTION EGG BAG.

The large production egg bag is very good for producing various sized eggs from same. Performer cackles and gets a large egg. He has a man in the audience to cackle, and he gets a smaller egg; has a woman cackle, and gets one slightly smaller; has a small boy cackle and gets a teeny one; has a coloured boy cackle, and gets a black egg, etc.

X FUNNEL AND FOO CAN.

Pour water into the Foo Can, place a sheet of paper over top of Can and invert same. Then place the inverted Can, with paper, on top of boy's head, having him hold it down tightly so that water will not leak out. Then pull paper out from under Can, apparently leaving his head to hold the water. Place funnel under one arm along with glass, have a second boy pump his free arm up and down, and pump the water out of same. Then take Foo Can away and water is apparently gone from same.

MILK THROUGH HEAD.

Have a boy stop forward. Ask him to lean his head sideways. Place funnel under his lower ear. Have a second boy hold a glass under the funnel, in your free hand pick up the Abbott Exciting Milk Pitcher, and with this you get the illusion of pouring the milk into the top ear. Apparently the milk runs through the head, comes out of the funnel, and runs into the glass.

WATER AND FUNNEL.

Give a boy a drink of water and then whisper to him to pretend that he is sick. Take a funnel and place it over his open mouth. Lean him forward and pump the water out into a glass.

X CIGARETTES AND CIGARS.

Here is a cute surprise item used by Monk Watson. Do the regular cigarette, catching with the gimmick at back of hand, and pretend to throw it into the hat. Then, apparently catch another, etc. Finally turn hat over and out drop cigars. This surprise finish is a laugh. Naturally, the cigars were in the hat before you started.

A STRING OF BILLS.

Take several stage money bills and with the aid of rubber cement fasten them, end to end, so as to make a long string of bills. If you prefer, you may add some real bills at one end. Roll this string up with the real bills on the outside. Now have in your pocket a small pair of shears that have the blades soldered together. After someone helps you with a trick, mention that you always pay off your helpers, and hand shears to person, telling him to cut off any number of them. When he tries to cut with the shears, the shears will not budge.

X BIG MONEY.

Another good gag to use in pretending to pay off an assistant is to tell him that you always give your helpers "BIG" money. Take out one of the big bills and hand it to him. These "BIG" bills can be supplied by most dealers. Dell O'Dell had some printed especially

for her with her own name and picture on them. It makes a very good advertising medium.

SHOE LACE TRICK.

Take a black shoestring and cut off a short section of same. Have this concealed in the hand. Then spot someone in the audience with black shoestrings in his shoes. Have him step forward and place his foot up on a chair. You take off his shoestring, gather the centre of same in the hand, reach into the top of the hand, and, apparently pull centre of same up out of the top of the hand -- really pulling up the short extra piece. Cut this in the centre and keep trimming until short piece is cut all away. Then pull the string out, restored, and give back to the man, and have him go back to his seat with string in his hand and out of the shoe. It is very funny. Also, when you get him to place his foot up on the chair, you can get a laugh or two by mentioning his bring socks, etc. All in all, this makes a very novel, unusual trick.

COFFEE TRICK.

This is a very good combination and novelty with a little laugh as used by Howard Stricker, making use of the Abbott Exciting Milk Vanish. Take two Dixie hot drink cups and remove the bottom from one. Place this bottomless cup inside the regular cup. Then into the nest pour some coffee beans. Have some brown liquid in the milk pitcher and you are all set. Patter to the effect that you have found that in the morning you always have some coffee left that goes to waste and have discovered a new way of saving this formerly wasted coffee. Show the two cups nested and remove the inside cup and nest to the outside of the other cup. This proves that both cups are empty. Now remove this outside cup (the bottomless one) and with the aid of milk pitcher pretend to pour the liquid coffee into same. Then holding this cup, apparently with the coffee inside, mouth to mouth with other cup, pretend to pour the coffee into the other cup. Then turn the other cup over and out pours the coffee beans.

HARRY CECIL BLOCK EFFECT.

This makes a comedy method of working the penetrating block that was used to pass through a sheet of glass. Get a boy from the audience have him tip his head sideways and hold one tube under his head at lower part. At top side of his head and at the other ear position place the other tube. Drop block into this tube and it apparently passes through his head and drops out of the tube on the other side. This is really very funny.

BANANA GAG.

Harry Cecil's Zipper Banana, as made by Abbott, is a perfect comedy interlude. This is a cloth banana skin, lined with rubber, and with two zippers. Inside of this you have a real banana. During the course of your act remove this banana and zip it open. Take a couple of bits

re-zip it, and replace it in your pocket. Always a sure fire laugh.

PAPER HAT AND FAN.

In doing the torn and restored paper trick where the paper changes to a hat, it is a very good idea to give the helper two unprepared papers and have him tear as you tear. You fan yours O.K. Give him the fan to fan his, and the fan breaks. He opens his paper and it is still in pieces. You open yours and you have a hat.

DUCK TRICK.

Take one of the comedy spring ducks and put it into a dove pan. Break an egg into the pan. Place cover on it. Take cover off and up pops this funny spring duck. This duck, for some reason always brings a laugh.

A LONG REACH.

Take a steel spring ruler, the type that rolls inside the little holder. To the end of this rule tie a kitchen variety match. Reach into your pocket and remove this match, keeping the rule part concealed in your hand with just the match showing, and strike match on shoe. See that helper is at the other side of the stage (he needs a match to light a candle or something) REEL the rule out so that the match goes over to him and light the candle at a distance. Silly, but funny.

RAISE THY FOOT.

Another good gag with the kitchen variety match is to remove one from your pocket and look around for a place to strike same. Have helper lift his foot and you strike the match on the bottom of his shoe. This is good for a little laugh. These incidentals, by the way, go far to put any type of act over.

FLAP JACK TRICK.

Make up some imitation cloth flap jacks of brown cloth with padding between. Have this under your coat or vest. Borrow a hat from the audience and, on the way back to the front, load them into the hat. On the table have some eggs that (unknown to audience) are blown. Pretend to break the contents of the eggs into the hat by cracking them and parting the eggs. Just as you get them to the top edge of the hat go through the business of shaking the contents of the eggs into the hat. This is a perfect illusion if worked properly. Wave the wand over the hat and then pretend that the trick did not work. Read the magic book for the proper directions. Finally dump out the flap jack onto a plate. On the plate have some talcum powder and as the flap jacks hit the plate allow them to spray the powder, giving the effect of smoke or steam.

COMEDY ROPE TRICK.

Here are two or three minutes of real comedy. From a Magic dealer or novelty store, get a set of the prism specs. These glasses have a prism set into them to throw anyone's eyesight off at an angle of forty-five degrees. Get a person on the stage and tell him that you will put glasses on him so that he may see the trick better. Then take a rope and hand it to the person so that he may look it over. When he reaches for the rope, his hand will be way out of line for grasping the rope. You pull his hand over to the rope. Then you hold the rope at the centre and hand him the shears. He has trouble finding the shears. Then ask him to cut the rope in the centre and he can't find the loop which you are holding. Set his hand so that he can cut the rope. Take the shears back. Then again hand them to him. He reaches out of line for them and they fall to the floor. Tell him to pick them up from the floor, and he is all over the floor, trying to pick them up. Finish by restoring the rope.

X FAMOUS BULLET CATCHING.

Howard Strickler's Bullet Catching is very funny. In your mouth have a LARGE steel ball bearing. Before loading this tell in secret of the danger of your next trick, bullet catching -- how several Magicians have been killed while they were performing this stunt, etc. Open a large revolver case and from this case take one of the novelty charm miniature pistols (Sold by Magic dealers and novelty stores and shoots a real miniature blank which gives a very loud report) Load the gun and give it to a person in the audience. On the way back to the front, secretly load steel back into the mouth. Stand facing the audience and hold a glass below the mouth (cheap thin shell bottom glass) When you drop your hand, the person fires and you let the ball drop out of your mouth and into the glass. You will find that it will break the bottom of the glass and fall to the floor with a clunk. This is a big laugh.

X WIDE OPEN SPACES.

When you have a boy from the audience help you with a trick, or even a man, whisper to him to leave his mouth open. You look at him and go over and push his mouth shut, at the same time whispering to him to do it again. This can be done four or five times and is very funny.

HYPNOTIC GAG.

Another good gag along this line is to hypnotize a boy who comes up to help. As you make passes, whisper to the boy to close his eyes and keep them closed. Leave him there for a time, while you work some trick. Then go over and, apparently, wake him up and ask him how he like that last trick.

X EGG AND GLASS TRICK.

A great gag with one of your own assistants is the following. While you are doing some trick with an egg, such as the egg and fan or the sucke' egg trick, have the assistant walk into the room with a glass on the palm of his hand (a bottomless glass) Break the egg into the glass, and as you take the glass off his hand, there is the broken egg in his hand. This is a BIG laugh.

A SURE SHOT.

Have one of the spring ducks off stage and in the hands of an assistant. Have a spectator fire at some piece of apparatus where an article is to appear. AS he fires, the assistant tosses the duck into the air. Apparently, the duck falls onto the stage from the air. It gives the audience the impression that the man was a poor shot and shot a duck instead.

BURSTING A BAG.

For an opening stunt, you walk onto the stage with a paper bag. Go through the business of opening same and proving it empty. Then blow same up and burst it, saying "This gives you an idea of the type of act that you are about to see."

A CARD IS HOOKED.

Have a card with a hook on it, similar to a hook coin. As you wave it up and down in the air in order to vanish same, hook it to your trouser at the side which is away from the audience. The card has vanished. Now, as you turn to pick up the next trick, they see the card hooked to your trouser. This is one of Percy Abbott's gags.

EGG SHAMPOO.

Borrow a hat and, on the way back to the front, load it with a comedy red wig. Have some blown eggs on a plate and pretend to break the eggs into the hat. First get a bald-headed man up onto the stage and tell him about your new shampoo to restore hair. After breaking the eggs into the hat, quickly clamp the mouth of the hat onto his head - the business of an egg seeping out from under the rim of the hat. Finally, lift the hat and show the wig on his head.

STRIP-TEASE VANISH.

Have the comedy assistant behind a screen (with audience unaware) Talk about vanishing your beautiful strip-tease girl during this evening and inquire of person behind screen if she is ready. Pretend to hear answer that she will be right out. Then assistant throws over the top of the screen girl's clothes, undies, stockings etc. Then the screen tips over --- and there is your comedy assistant, fully dressed.

QUICK CHANGE.

Another gag is to have an extra suit of clothes behind a screen and patter about your quick changing ability. Step behind a screen and throw the extra clothes over the top. Then walk out dressed the same as before, and go into your next trick.

UP-STAIRS AND DOWN.

This is an old burlesque gag that can be worked in with a Comedy Magic Act. From the side wing have extending a piece of cardboard, or scenery to represent a subway entrance. Everytime that you go off the stage for a trick, you go behind this scenery and as you do, you keep lowering the knees to give the appearance that you are going down stairs. The last time that you do this, the assistant slips a small step ladder behind this scenery and this last time you walk up-stairs instead of down.

THE ELUSIVE LADY.

Have a lady's silk stocking in your trouser pocket. Get a boy onto the stage, vanish any item, and pretend to sneak same into pocket. Then let him go to your pocket and find it. He pulls out the silk stocking.

X A MOUSE TRAP.

A good gag, along the above line, to work with your own assistant -- he goes to your pocket for something secretly, and his hand comes out with a mouse trap on same.

WINTER IS HERE.

In doing the coat, tapes and rings trick with man's coat where he is wearing the coat -- as you remove the items from the rear, secretly fasten to ropes a miniature pair of red flannels and, as the ropes are pulled clear of his body, his red flannels are hanging on them.

SPRING IS HERE.

A good running gag is to have all sorts of spring goods in various pockets and during the act keep pulling one out and throwing it to one side as if it bothered you. In this way, at the finish, you have a whole pile of items on the stage which appear impossible to have had on the person.

A STRANGE CASE.

When doing a card act, enter with a violin case. They expect a musical act. Open the case and remove a deck of cards.

THAT'S FUNNY.

Inquire if audience would like to see something funny. Then remove a funny paper from the pocket and throw it into the audience.

BIRD CAGE GAG.

Have a pair of pants planted in the audience. Vanish the bird cage and throw your coat into the audience for examination. Ask for it back and plant throws back a pair of pants.

A REPORT.

When doing a silk production, throw one of the silks off stage. It lands with a heavy thud, due to the fact that the assistant, off stage, drops a noisy item on the floor as you throw the silk off the stage.

IT BOUNDS.

Produce a silk from a box or something. Inside it have fastened a rubber ball. Throw silk on floor and it bounds back up to hand.

X DANGER vs LAUGHS.

A very funny piece of business that is used in the Author's Blue Ribbon Combination is done with a wand. Have a boy help and tell him to hold the wand as you are about to shoot, and tell him that anytime that he thinks that anything is going to happen he is to wave the wand over his head for safety. As you set him whisper to him to wave the wand over his head when you aim at him. You walk over to the other side of the stage and take aim and he waves wand. You stop, go over to set him again, and whisper to him to do it again. This can be repeated many times and is a big laugh.

A HEAVY WAND.

One of Percy Abbott's perfectly funny gags with a kid is to hand him a wand and, as you do, whisper for him to drop it. Pick it up and repeat again and again. Then put both his hands on the wand and still he drops it. Get another boy to help him hold it. They hold it with four hands and all is O.K. The audience will be of the opinion that you have a special wand which they can't hold.

BE CAREFUL.

This funny gag is used by Heaney the Magician and is a riot. Have palmed a few silks and a silk stocking. Go into a boy's

side trouser pocket. As you do so, have one of your fingers poke out the pocket. As you do so, have one of your fingers poke out the pocket. At the same time whisper for him to grab finger through the trouser. He does and this brings roars. Take his hand away and repeat this several times. Each time he grabs your finger from outside of trousers. Finish by picking the items out of his pocket.

HOW IT'S DONE.

Have a confetti cup inside a hat. Walk over to the hat and pour water into the hat. Then go on to explain that you will expose how Magicians do this sort of thing without injuring a hat. Reach into the hat and bring out cup and saucer which were there to catch the liquid. Walk forward and lunge the cup toward the audience and out flies confetti.

X HARD OF HEARING.

When working a trick, pretend that you are of the opinion that a certain man in the front row is deaf. After saying something you walk over to the man and repeat it very loudly for his benefit. Do this with all the patter for any one trick. It is very funny. This is used with big success by Russell Swann, Dell O'Dell and W.R. Williston.

LEMON-ADE.

In an egg bag have a glass of lemon-ade with a rubber cover. Show the bag empty. Then say that you will cause a lemon to appear in same. Have a boy squeeze one corner of the bag to prove it empty. Pretend that he squeezed it too hard; reach into the bag and bring out the glass of lemon-ade.

WATER-WATER.

Have about a one and one-half inch rubber ball, punch a hole in one side, and fill it with water ala water gun. This can be palmed anytime and much funny business can be had by squeezing the boy's ear, knee, arm or hand -- spout of water comes out. This can be built up to be very funny.

BEADS OF PERSPIRATION.

This makes a good lead up to the Arabian Bead Trick or can be used just as a gag by itself. Have a string of beads rolled up in your hand and say "It seems to be warm around here this evening." Go through motion of wiping the perspiration from your head. Then shake your hand and the string of beads dangle from your hand -- at the same time saying "Beads of Perspiration."

A QUIZ

During some trick that takes time, such as rolling paper for the Fir Tree, run a sort of a quiz. For example, ask who wears the biggest hat in the army. Then tell them that it is the man with the biggest head. Ask them why they call him Major George. Answer that it is because his name is George...etc. You can work out many funny quiz questions.

THAT'S RIGHT.

When calling attention to silks being used call each one by the wrong colour.

BREAD PLEASE.

For the reproduction of a ring, watch, etc, have a toy or real rabbit in a loaf of sliced bread and wrapped in cellophane. Open cellophane and remove slices, one at a time, until you get down to the rabbit. Then make a man from the audience who helped you take all the slices of bread back to his seat with him.

CORRECT TIME.

Have a prop radio on the stage and apparently tune in for the name of a previously selected card. The voice is really from behind the curtain or screen. Then apparently have the announcer come in on the radio and announce the correct time. As he does, you turn to the radio and say, "What time" Radio answers you and repeats the correct time.

A PULL GAG.

This is a funny gag to use when Magicians are in the audience. In any stunt where you have to procure the pull from under your coat to vanish a silk, to get it openly, you say that you are about to vanish the silk. And you say that most magicians, when they vanish a silk, have a little clip on a rubber band that goes over here under the coat. As you say this, you illustrate by placing your hand under the coat, at the same time getting the pull. Bring your hand out and at the same time say "I don't use one; I merely poke the silk into my hand and it vanishes."

NUTS.

In using the candle tube, have the candle full of peanuts. Place alighted candle in the tube. Then take off the cover and pour the peanuts onto a plate, at the same time saying. "NUTS TO YOU"

THE ORANGE BOUNDS.

For any stunt where you use a prop orange, have a rubber ball

painted to look like an orange. Pick it up and say "Here I have an Orange." Then bound it on the floor. The surprise and give away is a real laugh.

A DRINK.

Any trick, as I have said previously, that has an unexpected finish is good comedy. That is, no doubt, why the Abbott Wizzer Hank goes over so well. As you pick up a hank, show both sides, gather up the four corners and pour out a glass of liquid-- which is the last thing in the world you would expect to find in a handkerchief.

TIME TO GO.

Have an alarm clock set for the time you want to close your act. At this time the alarm goes off and you stop and walk off with the ringing alarm clock.

SLIGHT DELAY.

Here is a good entrance. Load your sleeves with silverware and keep arms bent so that it will not fall out. Walk on and announce that you are sorry that you are late but was detained because of having dinner with a friend at (best local hotel). Then, as you start into first trick, let your arms down and the silverware falls out of sleeves onto the stage.

THE PICK-UP ARTISTE.

Have a knife in inside breast pocket. When working some trick, say "I worked this trick at a hotel last night. It was a big hit -- the hotel was -----." You can't seem to remember the name of the hotel, reach into pocket, bring out a knife, look at the writing on the handle of the knife, then name well known hotel in that section.

HOW-DEE.

This is extra good if you are bald or have little hair. Have a wig on loosely and enter. As you take the bow the wig falls off onto the floor.

---,The End ---