

DESCRIPTIVE PROGRAM



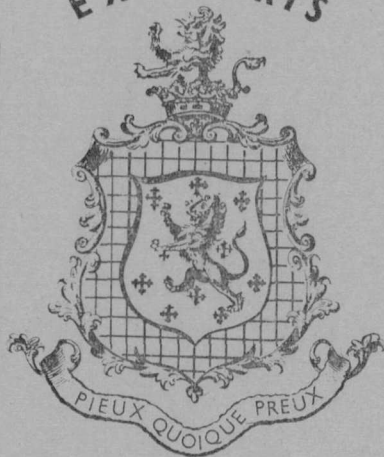
**DANTE'S**  
**"SIM SALA BIM"**



*By*

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## *Dante's* "SIM SALA BIM"

I have seen Dante's mystery spectacle "Sim Sala Bim" more than twenty times during the past two years. It is unfortunate that every magician in this country could not see him at least once. For, without question, he is the magic master who is most capably carrying on in the Herrmann - Kellar - Thurston manner.

How often have I wished that someone had written, and published, a brochure detailing the programs of the last three masters! Existing programs as published in the conjuring books tell little or nothing of their tricks or illusions. Too frequently there is just a listing of titles: titles which are wholly outlandish and which are, and purposely were, uninformative.

This train of thought has encouraged me to essay a complete, detailed account of a typical Dante performance. I shall attempt to set down sufficient detail to permit those who have never seen Dante to visualize his stage settings, his tricks and his style; to permit those who have had the pleasure of watching his work to freshen pleasant memories.

Dante's real name is Harry Jansen. He was born in Denmark but came to the United States when he was quite young. His life has been devoted to conjuring and he has functioned as a professional magician in almost every branch of show business. At one time he operated a magic supply house in the city of Chicago under the firm name of Halton and Jansen.

Later he became right hand man to the late Howard Thurston. When the latter decided to put a second show on the road he chose Dante to head the unit. This work concluded, Dante went abroad and for about twelve years played the finest theatres in the largest cities in the world with a big show and a large company of assistants. The outbreak of the second world war brought him back to the States.

How old is the man now? I can only guess. On the stage he occasionally quips "pretty good for an old guy of seventy". A close friend told me that he is sixty eight. My own idea is that he is about ten years younger than that.

Dante is of better than average build. He is well proportioned and carries himself with the grace of a trained athlete. On the street he affects double breasted grey suits, wide brimmed hats ( usually cocked up slightly in front ) and a cane. He is an imposing figure and commands attention wherever he is. Even in Hollywood he was outstanding.

On stage he is faultlessly groomed in full evening dress. He is tailored in the latest fashion. His shirts, collars, white ties and vests are always immaculate. He fluffs out his grey-white hair so that it slightly "bushes" at the sides. His moustache is slightly more dark; its ends are waxed . His Van Dyke beard, or to use a less elegant term, his "goatee" is normally the color of his hair. On stage he darkens it somewhat to make it stand out under the heavy lights in which he customarily does his work. His stage make-up gives him a healthy, ruddy color. Briefly, he looks like a healthy, well fed, friendly Devil who has come to earth for an evening just for a rollicking good time. And it is evident from his appearance and his manner that he intends to take others along with him on his mortal spree.



It is eight thirty. We are in the theatre. It's a good house and Dante will be pleased. Promptly the music begins: first, The Star Spangled Banner. Then a military march. This concluded, the orchestra goes into Dante's opening music: a tune that I cannot identify, but which is most appropriate for the approach of a great illusionist. It is not the "Pomp and Circumstance" of Harry Houdini. But it is similar, regal music.

The house curtains part to reveal a Chinese assistant standing, arms folded, at center stage. Behind him a red plush drop quickly ascends, revealing a yellow drop. Up it goes and a green drop is behind it. This continues until six fine colorful drops have been raised out of sight. Now the assistant exits, the last drop ascends, the music quickens ---- enter: Dante!

He will work on a full stage, against a purple velvet back cloth bearing a huge gold initial "D". Center stage is the first "prop", ready to work. A male assistant, nattily attired in red livery, stands at each side of the apparatus. The program follows:

1. A Transparent Mystery. There is a deep frame on the stage which stands on its own legs. The two assistants clip a square board to the back, while Dante shows the board which is to form the front on both sides. This is placed on the frame and the ensemble wheeled about to show all sides. A small door in the front is opened and a number of pigeons suddenly produced. Three girl assistants enter and each is handed two pigeons which they carry off. The third girl is Moi-Yo Miller, Dante's leading lady, talented and beautiful. Invariably she is greeted with a round of applause when she enters. The frame is turned around and a door in the rear opened. From his door Dante draws forth yard squares of gaily colored silks. These are handed to girl assistants who, in turn, drape them over the outstretched arms of two male assistants. From one of the silks Dante produces two white ducks. He removes the silks from the assistants' arms and reveals beneath them two huge feather flower bouquets.

2. Chef's Surprise. This is the familiar duck pan. But it surprised magicians that the lid thereof was apparently so shallow. Dante shows the pan, clamps on the lid, lifts it to reveal the duck.

3. A Strange Nest. The assistants wheel on a tub-like affair with no bottom. Dante shows a large bottomless box to be empty and simultaneously two male assistants place a sort of floor over the tub-like vase. The box is placed on the floor so formed. He holds a large cloth in front of it for an instant, removes the cloth and reveals a bed of flowers. In the flower bed are found nesting several ducks.

4. Animal Tales. A huge box, built to resemble a book, is tipped up and its front and back covers opened to show that nothing is concealed therein. The book is tilted back, turned around and one end opened. Three ducks and a small goat are immediately produced.

5. Invisible Pigeons. An assistant tosses Dante a net on a long pole. Dante sweeps into the air and catches a pigeon in the net. This is tossed into a basket held by Miss Miller. She returns immediately with another basket and Dante catches a second pigeon.

6. Invisible Motion. An assistant hands Dante a sword on the tip of which Dante catches a silk handkerchief. This he places over the barrel of a revolver and shoots at a glass decanter. The handkerchief disappears from the gun and appears in the decanter. Dante reaches into the latter, removes the handkerchief and places it in a glass tumbler. Instantly it jumps out of the glass, back to the decanter.

7. A Shadeless Sunshade. Dante shows a top hat empty and produces six or eight different colored silks from it. Mio-Yo Miller brings forth a sunshade with a silk cover and a grass mat. Dante juggles the sunshade, closes it and wraps it in the mat, leaving the handle sticking out as though by way of after-thought. The silk handkerchiefs are placed in the hat and change into the cover of the sunshade. The latter is pulled out of the rolled mat and, upon being opened, it is seen that the silk handkerchiefs are attached to its ribs. Sunshade is replaced in the mat; handkerchiefs in the case return to the hat ----- silk cover to the sunshade. Dante juggles the sunshade again, by somersaulting it in the air. With that he grips the two sides of the four legged table which he has been using, tips it over and it turns into a suitcase. Dante exits carrying the sunshade over his shoulder in one hand, the suitcase in the other.

8. Dante's Cluck Cluck. Dante returns at once carrying a large felt bag with a net bottom. There is a small stand, like a pipe rack, on the table. A girl assistant enters and stands beside the table. Dante eyes her, then the bag and remarks, "Here I have an old bag". The girl does a "take". Dante announces that every time he says "cluck, cluck" an egg will appear in the bag. Thus he produces two normal size eggs which are removed from the bag and placed in the rack. He repeats the words, louder, and a much bigger egg is produced. Still louder: huge white egg. He asks the girl assistant to say the words. She does ----- almost inaudibly. Result: an egg about the size of a robin's egg appears. A second time she does no better. The audience shouts "cluck, cluck" and another huge egg is produced. The girl flounces off stage. Dante calls on George White, the great colored assistant, to aid him. George says "cluck, cluck". Result: a big black egg. ( I feel that mention should be made that George White was Thurston's chief assistant for many years. He has a big role in the Dante show. Throughout he wears a double breasted black tuxedo. ) George White exits to return with a megaphone through which he says "cluck, cluck". Dante takes it away from him. Then he turns a two panel screen about and places a top on it. The latter has a hole in it. The megaphone is set over the whole and then

raised to reveal an egg that is about two feet tall. A fez is placed on it and it is turned about to show that it is painted to represent the face of Mussolini. Says Dante, "What an egg that guy laid".

9. Dante's \$50,000 Hands. This is an excellent demonstration of back and front palming, using about five cards and done against a small black contrast screen.

10. Roses. An usher brings Dante a bush, wrapped in tissue. Dante removes the tissue and reveals a bare bush. A card attached is read: "If you're a real magician, let's see you grow some roses on this". Which, thanks to Petrie and Lewis, Dante does. The real roses are cut off and tossed out to the spectators. Miss Miller always receives the first rose; "Mom" Dante gets the last one, which Dante goes down into the audience to give her. "Mom" is Mrs. Jansen and she and Dante have been married more than thirty years.

11. A Hat With A Silver Lining. The Miser's Dream: coins caught from the air are tossed into a hat. Superbly executed.

12. Rapid Transit. Getting a boy on the stage, Dante hands him a tray and counts eighteen coins thereon. He then removes six coins. The remaining twelve are poured from the tray into the boy's left hand. The six coins are wrapped in a handkerchief and placed in the boy's right hand. Dante apparently removes the six coins from the handkerchief, one by one, showing each one at the tip of a wand as he does so. At the finish the six coins are found to have joined the twelve in the lad's left hand. The handkerchief is empty. The boy is rewarded with a book of tricks for his good services.

13. Deft Demonstrations of Deceptive Dexterity. Billiard ball productions, multiplications, transfers and evanishments. The first ball is thrown to the floor to show its solidity. George White regains it and hands it to Dante who immediately causes it to multiply. Seven or eight balls are produced and placed in a novel stand for display purposes. Then all but the last three balls are vanished. These are tossed into the open drawer of a box. The drawer is shut, re-opened and a dove is found therein.

14. A Terrific Mess. Dante points to a wooden box hanging near the wings. "Here's a box that is over eighty years old..... So what? I just thought I'd mention it". Three rings are borrowed, bounded flat, loaded into a pistol, shot at the box and the rings appear tied to roses in the innermost box of a nest of six. In Dante's hands this very old effect is a charming, new sophisticated mystery.

15. The Un-Sevilled Barber. The curtain parts to reveal a barber shop interior. Dante is the barber. Miss Miller is seated at a small table: manicure girl. A porter is in attendance. A rustic character enters, obviously wanting a haircut. He flirts with Miss Miller and Dante hits him with a hammer. Rustic then dons a false head and false hands and is seated in the barber chair and covered with a cloth, false hands and head showing at all times. Dante puts on a pair of gloves and a different false head. He proceeds to lather the customer. Dante steps aside to wipe his hands, then removes his false head and proves to be the customer. The customer's head is removed --- it is Dante! The skit has a decidedly continental flavor. It is acted in pantomime to the accompaniment of most appropriate music.

16. A Barrel of Fun. An empty barrel is shown and placed in a rack. Dante forms a paper drum head over the end away from the audience and another at the front. ( Tearing away the bits of paper outside the metal rims he at this point indulges in a bit of by play with paper tearing. After a great deal of careful tearing he carefully tears everything to bits and tosses it into the orchestra pit. In other words, he does nothing --- and gets laughs and applause for doing it. ) A spigot is forced in the paper drumhead and about twenty large glasses of beer are poured out. These are passed to the audience by girl assistants. A spectator shouts "How about some beer back here?" Dante invites him to the stage. Two immense steins of beer are drawn and these are almost instantly quaffed by the spectator. Then Dante pours him a huge goblet of beer, which he is given to take back to his seat with him. Paper drums are broken and the barrel again shown to be empty.

17. A Treasure Chest. Mio-Yo Miller makes a rapid escape from a locked, canvas covered chest. It's all done in the twinkling of an eye and the gorgeous Miss Miller doesn't displace a hair. The chest and canvas cover is hauled into the aisle for examination by the audience during the intermission.

### Intermission

( Between acts let me tell you something about Dante's "bow". He doesn't. Neither does he bend from the hips, rush to the wings and hang coyly on the drapes ---- says he, "I did that for many years. In fact I wore out three sets of drapes hanging there ---- waiting". Instead, when a trick is through, Dante ascends a tiny platform. He raises his hands, palms downward, fingers of each hand pointed at the fingers of the other, and slowly brings his hands apart and down. He states that this gesture



means "a thousand thanks". If he raises his hands a bit higher "two thousand thanks". If way up, "five thousand thanks". Immediately prior to the intermission Dante, personally, plugs his trick books. It would cheapen any other performer. Not Dante! His showmanship is such that his audience is entertained, amused and laughing even when he is pitching a twenty five cent brochure. The books reveal a few simple tricks with common objects. There are also pictures of magicians, Dante's biography and horoscopes. "Those who believe in astrology will find these horoscopes helpful. To others", says Dante, "they are funny". )

### Second Act

18. Aerial Fishing. Three goldfish are caught on a hook and line and dropped into a bowl. The latter is known to the profession as a Stull type bowl. It is effectively done. At the finish an assistant passes into the audience with the bowl that the spectators may ascertain that the fish are the real thing.

19. Black and White. This is, very probably, Dante's greatest illusion. On a bare stage, devoid of cabinets or boxes of any sort are seen a Chinese girl and a white girl. The former carries a pole on which is a black placard bearing the figure 1. The white girl carries a white placard bearing the figure 2. Chinese girl is wrapped in a cloth and the placard projects above her. Likewise with the white girl. Dante intones "Sim --- Sala --- Bim". The girls are unwrapped, and they have changed places! Neither girl ever approaches the wings of the stage.

20. Backstage With A Magician. Dante announces that he will show how a trick looks from back stage. The curtain parts to reveal Dante and his troupe getting ready for the show. Dante is being combed and brushed. Miss Miller is hiding behind two illusion boxes. The orchestra begins. The curtains, way at the back, part revealing a backdrop painted to look like an audience. Dante does the illusion, back to the real audience, and the latter see Miss Miller deftly sneak into the nested illusion boxes. But, when the latter are opened, Miss Miller is gone and a Chinese girl has taken her place. Thus the real audience learns nothing. Dante takes his Sim Sala Bim bow before the painted audience and, just as the curtain closes, one of the latter is seen, and heard, applauding loudly.

21. Sport Of Magic. Sport in this case is croquet. Miss Miller and Dante cause a mallet head and three croquet balls to change places beneath tin tubes.

22. Magician's Rehearsal. We are asked to imagine that it is ten o'clock in the morning. The orchestra is practicing. Dante enters wearing hat and top-coat. There's a new illusion that needs rehearsal. George White is already there. Dante examines the two cabinets. "Nice props" he grunts, "who built 'em?" "You did", answers George. Dante has advertised for assistants. The stage manager ushers in three. Dante hires two, a boy and a girl. The second girl is dismissed but not until Dante has had George White secure her name and phone number. The fun begins. Girl is placed in one cabinet; boy in the other. They change places. That's wrong. Both appear in one cabinet. Wrong. Both in the other cabinet. Still wrong. Boy is wrapped in one cloth. Girl in the other. Girl is found where boy was. But where the girl was ---- there is a Chinese girl. Dante tears up the script and leaves the stage ---- mumbling.

23. The Lazy Magician. In one. Dante enters wearing a top hat at a rakish angle; smoking a cigar. Blonde assistant and Mio-Yo Miller bring on two long ropes and four silk scarves. Dante seats himself in a chair, which he narrowly retrieves from the ever dilligent George White, who was just about to take it away and would have had Dante not been hanging on to it. He, Dante, ties the ropes about his walking stick. The girls hold the ends of the rope. Dante beckons the girls to come closer, and go back, as he ties the silk scarves about the ropes. As Miss Miller approaches him he ogles her even more than he did the blonde. Puffing furiously on his cigar ---- Miss Miller coughs --- and the orchestra comes in with "Smoke Gets In My Eyes". Finally, the knotted scarves are magically removes from the ropes, after the walking stick has been pulled free of the knot. At the finish, Dante shoves the walking stick into Miss Miller's shoulder and it vanishes. This entire routine is a masterpiece in Dante's hands, and no magician should ever attempt to copy it in any way.

24. An Uncanny Manifestation. The Kellar rope tie. Four spectators are invited on stage. Dante, seemingly, hypnotizes two of them, with the aid of a gargantuan crystal ball. Dante's hands are tied, but not before he has borrowed a volunteer's coat, which he, Dante, slips on. Behind a screen there is immediately a "show of hands". Dante emerges, his hands still tied, the coat off! An assistant hands the volunteer his coat. Dante takes his own and issues a challenge: "I'll get back into my coat faster than you get back into your coat. My hands are tied; yours are untied. If you get into yours first, you buy me a bottle of champagne. If I get into mine first, you buy me a bottle of champagne".

Dante wins. And one of the reasons is that he has most thoughtfully turned the volunteer's coat sleeve inside out. Finally Dante frees himself of his ties in a split second. It's all a good laugh from start to finish.

25. Cabaret De La Mort. Bells ring, tambourines play, a couple of stools are tossed about, wooden shoes do a Dutch dance ---- a gay gambol of ghosts and stooges in a big black art type cabinet. Dante puts on a Death's Head, sits in the cabinet and is decapitated.

26. A Knotty Problem. The cut and restored rope. Dante cuts and restores the rope but twice. Dante does the trick exceedingly well, but, for my money, it could be omitted. He encores with a large version of the Devil's Pillars, wherein a cord, threaded between two pillars of wood, is cut and then restored.

27. The Mysterious Globe. This is the floating ball. I think Dante does this as well, if not better, than did the late Howard Thurston. I can accord no greater praise. However, a Hollywood costumer could do wonders with the turban that Dante affects. It is simply not becoming to him. Also, the work with the ball on the "run-down" should be eliminated. It adds nothing and, therefore, isn't necessary. And the added movement distracts from the great illusion that Dante has already created. I would fain voice this criticism were it not that I have had the same opinion expressed to me by at least a dozen well informed magicians.

28. Dante's Original Floating Princess. The girl is hypnotized, goes "rigid", and is placed on a table. Covered with a sheet she rises ---- then vanishes. I like a line he formerly used, and now has forgotten. As the gal rests in space, Dante would approach the audience and say, "We must now have absolute quiet --- for now she's on the air". It got a big laugh and I can't quite understand why the line has been deleted from recent shows. The illusion has always been technically bad. But Dante covers the weak points better than has any of his predecessors. The Levitation of Princess Karnac in the Thurston show, sans vanish, is still tops in levitations for this writer. Dante probably has it, and could well substitute it for the foregoing item.

29. A Light Affair. A red, a white and a blue silk are produced from a split metal tube ( Geni Tube ). Three blazing candles are wrapped in a piece of paper and given to an assistant to hold. The three silk handkerchiefs are shoved into a paper cone. They vanish. Paper wrapped can-

les vanish and the handkerchiefs appear in their stead.

30. The Great Invisible Flight. Mio-Yo Miller appears in a glass lined trunk. She is placed in a box which is covered with a cloth and hoisted to stage ceiling. Throughout the show a square trunk has remained suspended in the dome of the theatre, above the audience. Dante fires a gun at the box which holds Miss Miller ----- box, Miss Miller and all vanish. The suspended trunk is lowered to the stage. The box is opened, and another box taken therefrom. This is unlocked, and a very small box taken from it, The latter box is opened ----- and, in it ---- is Miss Mio-Yo Miller. It's the last trick of the evening, and leaves laymen muttering.

The audience applauds. Dante seems to take no interest. The applause dies down. Dante steps down stage---- he mounts the little platform ----- his hands are raised for "a thousand thanks" ---- the applause swells. Not a spectator tries to depart, though all are standing. It is tribute to the ---- MASTER. His hands come higher ---

FIVE THOUSAND THANKS TO YOU

SIM SALA BIM

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