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SHOWMANSHIP and PRESENTATION

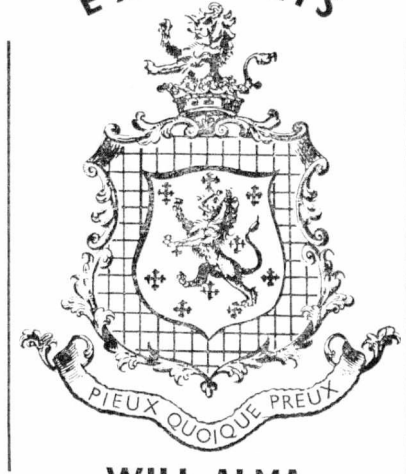
by

EDWARD
MAURICE



A GOODLIFFE PUBLICATION

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Edward Maurice

SHOWMANSHIP
..... and
PRESENTATION

BY

Edward Maurice

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Society*

INTRODUCTION BY

DR. H. PARK SHACKLETON, O.B.E.



A

GOODLIFFE
PUBLICATION

TO MY WIFE
G W E N D O L E N
without whose constructive criticism
and constant encouragement
much would never have been
accomplished.

First Published - - May, 1946
Second Edition - September, 1946
Third Edition - - May, 1948
(making in all 5,000 copies)

PRINTED IN ENGLAND
By the JOURNAL PRINTING OFFICES, Cannon Passage,
Birmingham.

Introduction

By DR. H. PARK SHACKLETON, O.B.E.

IT is now, thank goodness, many many years since I cared two hoots how a trick was done (*i.e.*, the actual secret which is of no importance). I am only interested in how it is presented (which is of vital importance).

When a man like Edward Maurice, who by his "practice" is so obviously entitled to "preach," writes on Showmanship and Presentation, every thinking magician must read it. He may not agree with all the views expressed—I don't myself—but be he a beginner or an advanced performer, he must benefit by a study of it, as the author is so obviously sincere, and so obviously knows what he is writing about. In fact, in my very large circle of magical friends, I cannot think of one who will read it without profit to himself.

Don't *read* this book. *Study* it. Keep its precepts ever in mind and build on it as a routine (possibly the most important word in the book), and I am convinced that you will be surprised at your own improvement. I mean YOU, and You, sir. You may even become another Edward Maurice.

Preface to the Third Edition

It would be strange indeed if I failed to derive a measure of personal satisfaction from the writing of this Preface to the Third Edition of "Showmanship and Presentation," and I feel I should first thank the fraternity for the interest it has shown in this modest work, as evinced by the sales of the book and the very numerous letters I have received from magicians of all ages.

It is not so many years ago that the two words incorporated in the title were only infrequently heard in connection with the performance of magic, but to-day one has only to scan magical catalogues and other literature to sense a growing awareness on the part of all concerned of the importance of this aspect of the art. This is all to the good, for modern entertainment is very competitive and the standard increasingly high.

The desire to hammer the subject home, particularly to the numerous newcomers to the art, was what caused me to produce this concise book, and though I do not pretend to have exhausted the subject, I do feel that the main essentials have been traversed. There could be no complete guide to the principles affecting presentation which would suit all performers equally, but anyone seeking a pointer on the most important aspects will, I think, find the guidance he requires between these covers.

Many requests for a further volume have reached me, and encouraged by these and the reception accorded to the present book, I am at the moment giving the question my active consideration.

In conclusion, I should like to renew my thanks to my good friend Dr. H. Park Shackleton for his kind Introduction, and express my indebtedness to Fabian (Literary and Technical Editor of *Abracadabra*) for his able sub-editing.

EDWARD MAURICE.

CROPTHORNE,
LODE LANE,
SOLIHULL, BIRMINGHAM.

March, 1948.

Showmanship by
and
Presentation EDWARD
MAURICE

WITH this book in mind, I asked a well-known magician what *he* understood by Showmanship as applied to Magic. He replied, rather cryptically, "Well, Laddie, you can say that showmanship is the difference between serving a carefully selected meal, daintily and tastefully cooked, on a silver salver, and just chucking some grub on a plate." A dictum full of meaning, no doubt, though it doesn't take us far.

Dunninger once replied to the same question: "Showmanship is that intangible necessity that takes an act out of the ordinary and pushes it up the ladder of success."

From John Booth comes another definition. "Showmanship," he has said, "may be defined as the ability to make a trick which might well be commonplace appear as a mighty accomplishment."

There you have three ways of saying much the same thing. I think it important that we should begin with a definition. For the purpose of this book, I propose to regard Showmanship as comprising the knowledge and practice of *all* the essentials which go to make a magical act *pleasing, acceptable and thoroughly entertaining*. "Presentation" resolves itself into the *manner* in which an effect is presented. Good presentation implies adequate dressing, skilful timing, perhaps the use of lighting or music, and a skilfully prepared routine, which,

blended with your projected personality, build the trick to an effective climax.

“ Presentation ” can also be extended to embrace the arrangement and routining of an act in its entirety, for a trick, although in itself flawlessly presented, can be weakened or even killed by its position in one’s programme.

There is my theme. What are my credentials ?

I should like to make it clear at the outset that I do not write in the spirit or with the thought that “ I know it all ” ; or that what I have to say is new or startlingly original ; or that I am presuming to be dogmatic, or Lay Down The Law on the matter in any way. Nevertheless, springing as I do from an old theatrical family, having been nurtured in what I hope were the best kind of stage traditions, and having also garnered more than thirty years’ experience as an entertainer in magic, I do feel that I have collected some ideas and convictions on the way that should enable me to give some measure of guidance to those who are less experienced.

Much of what I shall say has been said before, but one has only to attend a number of Magical Society shows to realise that performers still abound who are merely purveyors of tricks, with much to learn in the matter of showmanship and presentation. That being so, any book calculated to emphasise the importance of the subject cannot be entirely valueless.

Exhortation is not enough. It is fair to assume that the reader is already convinced of the subject’s importance ; otherwise he would have reached for the latest book of tricks. Instruction, I feel, is what is wanted. In these days of competition in the theatre, cinema, and elsewhere, and in view of higher entertainment standards everywhere, the magician who is a showman realises that he cannot afford to leave any stone unturned in order to polish his presentation and make it one hundred per cent. perfect.

That is the core of the matter. In the pages that follow I mean to deal as constructively as possible with those qualities that are likely to keep magic as the first-class entertainment which by its very nature it ought to be.

THE SCOPE OF THIS WORK

SHOWMANSHIP, I have already said, embraces "all the essentials which go to make a magical act pleasing, acceptable, and thoroughly entertaining." First, let us determine what these essentials are, and then let us sketch out an ideal short magical act for the *average* performer who presents miscellaneous magic. We must leave out the specialist for the moment.

In the first place, a performer must *look* right, being well and correctly dressed and properly groomed. His entrance should be made competently, and when he speaks it should be good King's English. All of his props should have a smart and well-cared-for appearance. The public has been schooled to expect these things, and if they are missing the first impression of the artist is not good.

The average member of the audience is there to be entertained with as little effort on his part as possible. Therefore, he should not be kept waiting; as quickly as possible, our performer should catch the interest and win the approbation of the audience. Once caught, it must be held. The various audience "appeals" are played upon in constant succession throughout the show, building up to a climax of a quality which is bound to excite enthusiasm.

As a formula, this appears to be very straightforward and simple. To apply it perfectly, however, one requires not only a good working knowledge of magic, not only a certain measure of natural ability, but also a comprehensive knowledge of stagecraft and some experience.

We cannot all aspire to the eminence of such finished performers as the late David Devant, or Dante, or Howard Thurston—to mention only three of the Masters—but we *can* at least set out in the right manner on the road to success, even if that success be limited to the production of a technically good, acceptable, and entertaining act of short duration.

Let us consider such an act in detail.

THE OPENING EFFECT

IT has often been said that if your opening is good and your finish strong, the middle can take care of itself. This is not to be taken too literally, of course, but there is no doubt whatever that an audience is greatly influenced by a performer's entrance and the nature and quality of his first item. It follows that any time which is spent on making this as strong as possible will not be wasted.

Apart from the obvious desirability of making a good impression on the audience as *quickly* as possible, there is another angle. A performer of any experience is always aware of the moment where he first "registers," and from that time he usually works better in the knowledge that he has the audience with him—all to his advantage.

This brings us to the point of "making contact." If you open with a silent trick, see to it that during its presentation you look at *every* part of the audience. A glance here and there as you emphasise points, a look of surprise, and a smile directed *at* the audience as things happen—all these things "get over"; they take you across the footlights and enable you to make personal "contact" with those out front. If you look at the floor, into the air, at the apparatus, or beyond the audience, you will never succeed in doing this: the communications are down. With a patter trick the same applies, with the addition that you must look them "straight in the eye," and talk to them. Treat them as intimates, and they will respond readily; isolate yourself, and you will have to work much harder, because you are working alone. It is an established fact that a successful entertainment depends all the time on this reciprocal association between the stage and the auditorium. If, therefore, you can get going quickly, you have a manifest advantage over the performer who has to work through half his act before his audience shows signs of warming up. And the longer that moment of contact is delayed, the more difficult is the performer's task. Study music-hall artists of repute—not exclusively magicians; you will discover that they are all adepts at *getting over quickly*.

Regarding the *nature* of the opening effect, it is clearly impossible to lay down hard and fast rules. Some guiding

principles may, however, be indicated. Broadly speaking, a performer has to choose between a quick, flashy opening and a slower type of effect. The former is generally favoured, but while it suits many magicians and their acts, I have often seen these "wonderful openers" (*vide* dealers' catalogues) sadly misused. We have all at some time seen the not-always-adept performer who opens with the Stick-to-Silk, Gloves-to-Bouquet kind of thing, and then, regardless of rhythm or tempo, lapses into a long-drawn-out "experiment" which perhaps even shows signs of insufficient rehearsal. The effect on the audience can only remind one of the "pricked balloon," and at the conclusion of his second item, it is highly probable that the artist has still failed to register.

Should one be appearing on a concert bill, the competitive distraction of other artists has to be recognised. Here there is much to be said for the flashy opening, so long as it suits one's personality and so long as the tempo of the ensuing trick is studied. As the *only* artist at a function, you can afford to start "slow," as under these circumstances your advent in itself commands initial interest. For the average performer, the soundest and safest plan is to build up to a strong climax. The opener must still be good, of course, and under these conditions it is more than ever important to make early contact with the audience. My own favourite runs for four minutes—a length of time which is against the accepted rule of many performers; but the fact remains that I have long since proved the effectiveness of this opening so far as my own act is concerned.

It is essential that your first effect should fit your own personality, or the personality you adopt for your performance, and form a keynote to the general tone and impression you strive to create in your act. Do not introduce one personality or style of presentation to your audience and then radically change it later in your act. You can very easily drop into this pitfall if you use "ready-made" patter.

One quality which I consider to be absolutely essential to an opening effect is *surprise*. There is no better quality for securing interest, and if your opener does that, it serves its purpose.

Two further points need to be made before we pass on.

Your act really begins at the moment your number goes up, and if you are not content with merely a "chord on," remember to give the accompanist some definite instructions. He may not know your act, and if you are a "serious" type of magician, it will not be helpful to have to walk on to the strains of "Roll out the Barrel," or a similar refrain better suited to a chatty, humorous "deceiver."

Your appearance and bearing on making your entrance is equally important. Remember that at this stage the audience is ready to accept you at your own valuation. How great; then, must be the advantage of a pleasant and confident mien as you walk downstage and make your initial bow over those ever-alluring footlights!

THE SHOW CONTINUES . . .

ASSUMING that your opening has been successfully achieved, you should have the spectators in the palm of your hand, and your aim henceforward must be to keep them there. Obviously, the second effect must not lag, though this does not mean that exactly the same tempo need be maintained. What it may lack in speed can be compensated for by some strong feature of Audience Appeal. There must be no waiting, however; it must follow quickly. As an instance from my own work: "The Sympathetic Silks" is frequently my No. 2 item, and though I display no hurry, the first silk is in my hand in process of display before the applause has subsided. My second acknowledgment is made in that condition.

If there is a lag, the "emotional suspense" of the audience is temporarily lost, and with it the illusion of the Theatre (often referred to as "dramatic illusion"), which you must endeavour all the time to sustain and build up. It is particularly important at this stage of your act to *hold on* to the audience at all costs. This second effect should be one in which you can put over your own personality for all you are worth. Its end is to persuade the audience to confirm their initial impression that you are good.

"Emotional suspense" and "dramatic illusion" have been mentioned. Less experienced performers may have no

very clear conceptions of what these terms denote. Many definitions have been attempted, but I think we shall best understand the subject if we regard any theatrical or dramatic presentation (and this naturally includes a magical act) as a piece of stage mechanism or "make-believe" designed to produce Theatrical Illusion. The emotions of an audience, properly awakened, have to be kept in control or suspense if that dramatic illusion is to be maintained. The fluffing of a line, the falling of a piece of scenery, or (to return to our magus) an awkward pause as one turns to look for a prop, and the illusion is temporarily lost. Members of the audience escape mentally into the world of reality and "see the works." To the magician, this means that he has to set to work again to recover his hold, and has also, to some extent, lost the advantage of cumulative effect.

Assuming, however, that our performer has successfully negotiated this second hurdle and firmly established himself in the audience's favour, now is the time, I feel, to introduce the type of trick in which the audience can *relax* into complete and, in some cases, amused enjoyment. Here I have in mind the kind of thing which plays for some time and which often entails the help of someone from the audience, or the performer going into the audience. In my view, this trick in the ideal possesses amusing situations and calls for no great concentration on the spectators' part. It is broad in action, simple in effect, and in a sense "fills the theatre." The performer must dominate the effect, but need not always be the centre of attention. Further, there must be an *abundance* of *something*—magic, or spectacle, or humour, or what you will. My own particular preference is for humour, because it best suits my style. Other performers will have other preferences.

All being well, the audience should by this time be in a state of happy enthusiasm, and I feel that in this mood they should be brought back to concentrate on the performer himself by the inclusion of a clever (or apparently clever) effect which he can put over well. This prepares in them a good mental state for the reception of what might well be (in an act of short duration) the final effect. If you are to ring the bell, this final effect must be GOOD.

CLOSING

A PERUSAL of the programmes of many famous and well-established performers discloses some variation in taste so far as the final trick is concerned, with possibly a balance in favour of productions. It is definite, however, that the trick *must* be outstanding and a certain applause-getter. There should be nothing unfinished about it, and it should preferably be worked without assistants from the audience unless they can be dismissed before its conclusion.

It sometimes happens that a performer has somehow developed a trick which particularly suits his personality to the point of being a Masterpiece, and in this case he can probably score with it as a finale, although it would be outside the accepted rule for other performers. One would not describe the Thumb Tie or the Vanishing Bird Cage as a perfect closing effect, yet the former was successfully used in this position by De Biere and Frank Ducrot, and the latter by Fred Keating.

One might fairly safely confine his selection of the final trick to one or other of the following categories :—

“ Knock-outs ”

Productions

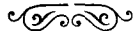
Highly Dramatic Effects

Highly Magical and Spectacular Effects.

Subject, as always, to exceptions, a production has been proved to be superior to a vanish.

One major point should always be kept in mind. Do arrange the routine so that your audience *knows* when you have finished. The onlookers should see the finish approaching, and should be left in no doubt whatever as to the moment of actual finality. You will not then have to bow and await a rather doubtful and perfunctory response.

I will refer to taking the curtain at a later stage.



In order to get a *line of approach* on the subject, I have sketched out the pattern of an average act for the average type of performer. I do not suggest that it is the only pattern, or the master pattern. Much must always depend

on conditions and on the particular artist's line and personality. The point I wish to emphasise, however, is that the act should *be* to a pattern—and to a carefully-thought-out pattern.

I witnessed once an act of miscellaneous magic which included a good exhibition of egg manipulation (employing what any average onlooker would consider skilful digitation). This egg routine concluded with a large and humorously handled production. Having acknowledged the applause, the performer straightway proceeded with the standard Egg Bag trick, inviting two members of the audience up to help. Note the "hold up"—and just to show something no better than, if as good as, what had gone before. Here, in my view, you have a good example of an excellent trick being discounted by its point of inclusion.

I know several performers who go to a show with about twenty effects in a bag and decide what to do when they get there. Anyone starting out in this way commences with a tremendous handicap. It might work in the case of seasoned performers, but that is only because, through long experience, they are able, almost unconsciously, to select a well-constructed act. Knowing the thought and experimentation that have gone into making the successful acts of many top-liners, I still feel the practice is unsatisfactory. I should never adopt it myself.

Assuming, therefore, that we *have* a properly-constructed act, let us consider a little more closely the factors which contribute to putting it over.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

It should hardly be necessary to reiterate that an artist's dress should always be correct. Nothing will cheapen him more in the eyes of many onlookers than incorrect attire, and he owes it to himself and to the profession to study this point.

On the stage, everything should be slightly "larger than life," and in the matter of dress most items should be somewhat exaggerated. The wings of the collar should be square-cut and ample, and the bow generous. For artistic smartness,

more cuff should be shown than in normal wear, so have your coat sleeves made a trifle short. If you affect a breast pocket handkerchief, then show it adequately.

Facial make-up of one degree or another I consider to be essential for most people if they are to appear at their best and (what is equally important) "put over" their facial expressions. It is generally agreed that make-up is necessary with stage lighting. I would go further than that and declare that it is advantageous even when working an after-dinner or floor show: In this case, it is merely a matter of improving on nature: a dry make-up—rouge and powder, with a little attention to eyes and mouth—is all that is necessary. I am prepared to concede that people with strongly-defined features and a good complexion may dispense with this, but a superficial make-up will certainly assist the majority, and since it only takes a couple of minutes to apply—why not?

I have seen some positively atrocious "straight" make-ups perpetrated by magicians, and I strongly recommend a study of the subject by those who are not already *au fait* with it. A natural make-up is simple, but it needs to be just right. Make-up books are not usually very helpful where magicians are concerned, as their emphasis is on characterisation. Because, to the best of my knowledge, the subject has never been adequately treated in magical literature, I give very full suggestions for both superficial and stage make-up in the appendix.

Without departing materially from a real "straight" make-up, certain improvements can quite easily be made to the performer's features. I have nothing elaborate in mind here, but it is wonderful what a touch of paint will do, in straightening the nose, filling out the cheek, etc., providing the touch is in the right place. For anyone who requires guidance here and who has no expert advice available, I should strongly recommend an investment of five shillings in "A Book of Make-up," by Eric Ward, published by Samuel French Ltd. An evening spent with this book and a few grease-paints should pay healthy dividends. In commercial selling it is accepted that the label on the box often sells the goods. May not the same be true of magic?

STAGE PERSONALITY

I BELIEVE stage personality to be one of the most important factors one has to consider. It is not given to everyone to be naturally pleasing and likeable, but that is just what you have to be if you are to make an instant appeal to your audience. Robert-Houdin's definition of a magician as an actor playing the part is very sound. I would only put forward the suggestion that you give the matter careful consideration and see that the *type* of Magician you seek to portray is becoming to you, and within the scope of your appearance and personality. If he is not, your performance of the part may not ring true.

What I feel I should like to emphasize to the performer of limited experience is that the polished stage personality of the successful Magician he probably so much admires is largely the result of study and much thought in nine cases out of ten. The beginner cannot expect to achieve the same result in five minutes.

For the average concert performer who cannot rely on spectacle, or elaborate stage effects, I feel that a likeable and pleasantly *impressive* personality is an asset of paramount value, and that he cannot go to too much trouble to develop it. In the ideal, as I see it, he should appear reasonably dignified, and his bearing should command respect by its obvious sincerity and goodwill. He should naturally avoid any suggestion of fawning on the audience, just as he should avoid an appearance of superiority or over-confidence which can easily look like conceit. There is nothing so calculated to ruin his standing with the audience as conceit.

Having given the matter very considerable thought, I have formed the opinion that this question of stage personality goes very deep, and that it is not always easy for an individual who is not naturally endowed with, or who has not developed, the ideal attitude of heart and mind towards his fellows, to act the part convincingly on the stage.

If any proof of this is needed, let us look around among the really successful performers of experience we know.

Many may have their little foibles and weaknesses (we all have these), but with few exceptions, these "good fellows" of the stage are also "good fellows" in private life. This may be largely due to the fact that in the beginning their natural characteristics found an outlet in Magic, and by its studied practice they have still further developed their personalities along truly likeable lines. At all events I give you the thought for what it is worth.

I have found that most thinking beginners have a leading performer in mind whom they wish to emulate, and I think this very sound in the early stages. They should, however, not hesitate to introduce an original touch as soon as they feel their feet, for it is by so doing that they develop individuality. They will have their little disappointments on the way, but by these we all learn.

Dale Carnegie, President of the Carnegie Institute of Effective Speaking and Human Relations, New York, has presented the world with an invaluable book entitled "How to Win Friends and Influence People," and the scope of the book, I may say, goes far beyond what is indicated by the title. I would like to suggest that anyone who feels he has anything to learn in the matter of personality-development—a term I use for want of a better—should procure and study this work. Incidentally, I had an opportunity recently of perusing for an hour or so Daniel Fitzkee's recent publication on "Showmanship" and was interested to note that he recommends the purchase of this book, which is not surprising, as in America the book is regarded almost as a "Bible" for Salesmen and others likely to find the contents of practical value. The title may seem to imply something artificial, but I can assure anyone who has not read the book that a proper study of its contents is calculated to develop the right attitude of mind towards one's fellows—and who could find this of more value than our budding Magician, who by the very nature of his Art depends upon a successful appeal to his fellow men? The price of this book used to be 7s. 6d., but if it were ten times the price, it would still be cheap.

I have dealt at some length with this question of stage personality, because I feel it is so overwhelmingly important.

On the legitimate stage personality must usually be subjugated to the part, but in "Vaudeville" the reverse applies, and I am not alone in declaring that the Magician is more important than his tricks.

AUDIENCE APPEAL

THE next angle of study might well be the general line and style of presentation. What we have in mind ultimately is to present our act in such a way that it will have strong and unquestionable audience appeal. It follows, therefore, that if we can learn what it is that audiences appreciate, *and why*, we have the key ready to hand. The best way to acquire this information is to obtain it first-hand by witnessing every successful act we can, and here I have in mind the ordinary Vaudeville acts and not only Magicians.

After seeing many top-line acts and making an analysis of their appeals, we shall gradually sense a lot that passes over the head of the ordinary Music Hall patron who doesn't go to analyze, but merely to be entertained. We shall see that this or that comedian, for instance, is not just a "born comic," but that in addition to his natural aptitude he is working to a species of formula and that there is a pattern to it all. His play on, and control of the audience through the act is calculated, as are the lines of his appeals, and the "build up" to the finish.

The same will apply to, say, a multiple dancing act. Here the appeals will be by way of artistry in colour, dress, and actual choreographic performance. Watch, however, for the little devices to draw applause and incite audience goodwill and approval, and note the changing tempo and other appeals leading to the finale "build up."

Success is achieved by system and not by chance, and a student will gradually sense it all, and will be able more quickly to appraise the values of a successful act and see immediately *why* it is successful. When he reaches this point he will begin to have a glimmering of what I always term the "Real Business of the Stage," and he will approach the

conception and routining of his magical act with a wealth of knowledge which should stand him in good stead.

At all costs, when devising his act and method of presentation, he will avoid monotony. He must see that all the time something is in progress to hold the attention of the audience, and that whilst the pace changes occasionally (and it is right that it should) there is somehow a steady progressive rhythm throughout the act, which, taken as a whole, proceeds steadily and with growing appeal to its climax.

The various *appeals* should be played on in constant succession. We have touched on some of these, the first relating to the performer's appearance. The audience's interest in this will not continue long, so the performer sees to it that he gets moving quickly to capture "interest" in the early stage of his first effect: this being appeal No. 2. The next appeal might be "personality" secured by a wisecrack put over in a particularly intriguing or engaging manner—or it might be colour, or comedy, or obvious skill—and so on. The point is, that there must be no cessation in appeal of one form or another throughout. If there is, then suspense will be temporarily lost.

All this implies much thought and rehearsal, but any performer of experience knows that it is all worth while. Many of us to whom Magic is a hobby or part-time occupation have not as much time to devote to this preparation as we would wish, and tricks are often put into the act prematurely. We know that under these conditions we improve the presentation as we go along, but this teething period could be reduced quite a lot by just a little more initial thought along the proper lines.

STAGE TECHNIQUE

AND now a few words as to actual *Stage Technique and Movement*. This is a branch of the magician's art which is often sorely neglected.

The entrance should be rehearsed carefully, including the initial bow, which, by the way, should be made from the hips. Most of us work on stages of all sorts and sizes, and personally

I always try to go on the stage before my turn and get the feel of it. Also, it is as well to note the position of the foot-lights and batten lights (if there are any) and decide on the spot to work to ensure the best illumination. It is quite common to see a performer working without maximum light on his face because he is two or three feet too far forward. Also, some improvised stages are distinctly shaky here and there, and it is as well to know this in advance. A confident and cheery expression during your entrance can quite easily be jarred and altered somewhat by the feel of a loose board underfoot which perhaps also rocks your table.

Probably the best point of entrance is back centre, but otherwise entrance from the side as far back as possible is good; the performer moving diagonally to front centre before making his bow. To be correct, the first visible step on to the stage should be made with the up-stage foot. This is a small point of stage technique, perhaps, but it is a well-established rule, and there *is* something in it. Starting with the down-stage foot creates the optical illusion that the performer is walking clumsily, almost crossing his legs as he advances each foot in front of the other.

When standing still, the weight of the body should normally be on the balls of the feet. A graceful stance can be achieved by placing one foot slightly behind the other, the knee of the up-stage leg being slightly bent, thus :—



In this position, the weight can be allowed to distribute itself evenly on the forward foot and the ball of the up-stage foot. It is easy to make a move in any direction from this position, and moreover it conveys relaxation.

And this brings me to one of the most important points relating to stage presence—"Relaxation." Nothing is more trying to an audience than to have to watch a performer who appears to be in a state of either mental or physical disquiet or "Nerves," and who seems to have to move and shuffle about when movement is quite unnecessary. Therefore, cultivate "Relaxation" before you go on the stage, and convey "Relaxation" when you are on the stage. Some experienced performers have various ways of preparing for their entrance. My own formula is this:—

Before your arrival. Know exactly what you are going to do, and how your "props" and tables are to be disposed.

Allow yourself ample time for setting up and finally making-up.

Personally, I like to be completely ready about fifteen minutes before showing. I can then sit down and relax over a cigarette, and, if possible, I put my feet up.

I usually take a few deep breaths before setting foot on the stage, and to some extent "will" myself to relax.

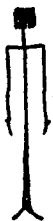
Some of the younger bloods might possibly dispense with these little pre-entrance preliminaries, but no one need think he is superior to them, for the owners of some of the biggest names in the Theatre, with many years of experience behind them, regularly resort to similar procedure. After all, we have to remember that it is up to us to put "all we've got" into that twenty minutes or so on the stage, and we should therefore do everything we can to improve or conserve our energy for the performance.

Now there is the question of hands.

What do I do with my hands? I have been asked this question more than once. I am sure you have all seen the individual making a public appearance who evidently finds his hands a problem. Not knowing just what to do with them, he washes them with invisible soap, or locks and interlocks his fingers, or eases his collar unnecessarily, or places his hand in his pocket only to take it out again—all evidence of restlessness and uncertainty, discounting his general appeal to the audience.

The answer, of course, is very simple. Our hands were placed on the end of our arms because it seemed the best place for them ; and as the *natural* place for our arms (when we are not using them for any specific purpose) is at our sides, it follows that the hands take their natural position there—and that's all there is to it !

Needless to say, the arms should hang loosely (or relaxed), elbows slightly away from sides. We do not want to stand to attention thus :—



not yet ostentatiously at ease, thus :—



but just easily, in this way :—

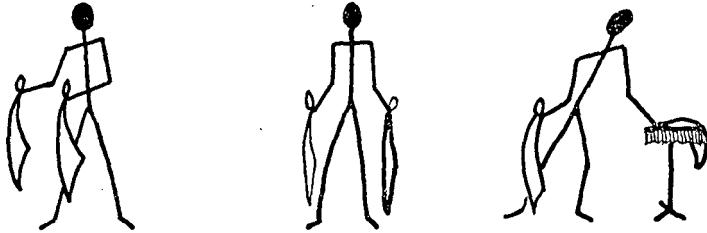


You may, of course, prefer to stand with one hand in pocket, or if you affect a monocle there is no reason why you should not hold it, but don't fiddle with it. Remember the golden

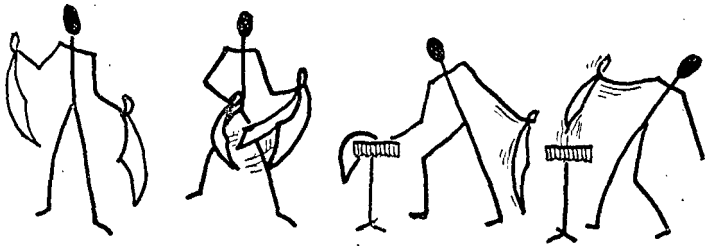
rule. Unless the action or patter calls for movement, *stand still*.

That is worth repeating in capitals. **UNLESS THE ACTION OR PATTERN CALLS FOR MOVEMENT, STAND STILL.**

I have already said in another connection that everything on the stage should be somewhat "larger than life." This applies with especial strength to movement and gesture. Take a natural gesture, and without altering its quality exaggerate it somewhat. Make it broad and bold. Limited movements have a way of looking stilted and mincing. Take as an example the Sympathetic Silks. How often we have seen it presented so that the pattern of display resembles this:—



And how much more drama and animation there is in this:—



Take care, too, that you retain a certain grace in your purely *incidental* actions. There are many ways of moving a chair, and it seems a pity that so many performers should

choose one of the wrong ones. If a chair has to be moved, don't, for Heaven's sake, take it up like this :—



You will find that, if you place the middle finger beneath the top of a chair-back and lift upwards and forward, so that the chair rests only on its two front legs, it can be drawn backwards quite easily and gracefully. Should the chair need to be placed forward or to one side, take it in the same way, actually lifting it from the floor, and place it in the desired position :—



The chair is shown sideways-on for clarity ; it should in fact be facing the same direction as performer.

One must learn, of course, to walk backwards and diagonally-backwards as well as forwards, thus making it easy to observe the rule of never turning your back on an audience.

Also, as a general practice, avoid talking when you are moving. It is much sounder theatre to talk and then move, or vice versa. Let us suppose that your next mystery requires the employment of a tumbler from the table. It is quite common to see a performer reach for and take up the tumbler, at the same time saying : " Now, here we have a glass." There may not seem to be anything *very* wrong in this—but try it this way. Standing to one side of the table, make an open-handed gesture of invitation with the appropriate arm saying : " May I direct your attention to this tumbler ? " Then take up the tumbler and proceed. Alternatively, take up the glass, look into it and then at the audience, and then,

holding it in one hand and gesturing with the other, say : " A tumbler—honest and transparent as the one who stands before you," etc. Tried it ? Better, isn't it ?

It is also important that assistants and others should not be moving when you are saying anything of importance, unless, of course, you require misdirection—which at once points the reason for this rule. In addressing assistants, keep them slightly downstage whenever practicable. You are in a much stronger position talking down to them than when constantly turning in profile, as you will have to do if they are in line with you. A small point, I know ; but one of the innumerable small points which go to the making or the marring of a show.

Avoid, if you can, working with one table, unless it is your practice to have the assistant bring your things on and carry them off at the beginning and end of each major effect. I recall that Robertson Keene—a performer of exemplary grace—brought out this point in a lecture he delivered some years ago. Working with one table, you find yourself chained to it throughout the performance, and all your stage movements are consequently difficult and awkward. Two side-tables are much better ; they facilitate your presentation, give a greater range to your actions, and enable you more adequately to fill the stage.

FILLING THE STAGE

HOW many budding magicians, I wonder, ever give the question of " filling the stage " a thought ?

There are many tricks which do not actually demand much movement, and which are not intrinsically of much value in the matter of display. Unless they are handled properly and with imagination, they cannot fail to be stilted in presentation and limited in appeal. Typical of this category of effects are the Boomerangs and the Torn and Restored Paper Strip ; small and virtually self-contained in themselves, they can be built up into feature effects, with wide audience appeal and plenty of movement.

Magically, there is nothing very outstanding about the Torn and Restored Strip, but in one version it was featured

on the No. 1 Halls by the late Nate Leipzig. I have a routine with the same item which is ten per cent. trick and ninety per cent. dressing, and because it demonstrates very effectively how a small trick (and I use the term quite literally) can be made into something of considerable proportions where entertainment value is concerned, I mean to analyse it here, move for move and appeal for appeal, in demonstration of my theme.

THE TORN AND RESTORED PAPER STRIP.

If one can "fill the stage" with so "slim" an effect as this, he has little to worry about; that is why I have chosen it for my illustration. It may, however, also serve as an example of a carefully-constructed routine (my own). I sincerely hope it will not be slavishly copied, as if that is all a reader can do having read this book, then so far as he is concerned my labour has been in vain.

It is interesting to recall, in passing, how that most accomplished performer, Oswald Williams, dressed this effect for full-stage presentation. Many will remember how he walked to centre-stage and worked in a spotlight. An assistant walked briskly on from the wings, carrying a small decorated box on a tray. Oswald opened the box, selected a strip, and the assistant retired. Tearing and restoration of the strip was then performed, after which the performer offered to explain how it was done. The assistant tripped on again with the box, another strip was selected, and the assistant again made her speedy exit. The usual denouement followed, and Oswald retired—opposite side—on a laugh.

Compare this with the performer who extracts a strip from his waistcoat pocket, goes through the routine rooted to a single spot on a fully-lighted stage (no spotlight used), makes his "explanation" with another strip taken from the same quarter as the first, and on the denouement places his hand in his pocket on no pretext whatever—really, of course, to dispose of the necessary. Well, well!

I always liked the little box idea; it helps in the matter of dressing and gives facilities which render the effect perfectly "clean." Of all the methods available for performing this effect, I prefer the thumb-tip. The box (as at one time

marketed by Davenports) offers by its clever design a ready means of acquiring the tip at the same time as the tissue strip, and of its ultimate disposal. I exploit its possibilities to the full in my routine. Before the performance, the box is loaded with the two tips and two coloured strips (with duplicates). Also in my box is another partially-folded strip of a different colour. The box is placed on a small pedestal table somewhat down-stage and well to the left of centre.

I use the trick as an "opener."

In the detailed patter and routine which follow, actions and observations are given in Roman characters and *patter in italics*. On first reading, you may ignore the numbers which appear in parentheses. They are references to a key which appears later. Better to get a picture of the routine first, and refer to the key on a second reading.

For many years it was my habit to open my positively wonderful performance (1) with an elaborate illusion, but I happened to run into a friend of mine recently—a very famous Vaudeville Magician—and he said, "You know, Maurice (2), you make a great mistake in opening with an illusion. What the modern sophisticated audience likes is a clever, subtle effect performed with the hands." Well, I don't mind telling you, I had a good look round before coming on (looking around) (3) and it's quite obvious that we have here to-night a very sophisticated audience. Yes. In fact, I don't think I have ever seen a more sophisticated, a more intelligent, refined, happy, handsome affluent audience in the whole of my experience. (Chord from piano). Tut-tut, my enthusiasm is running away with me. (On the laugh, take one step back, take up the box in the left hand and hold it at shoulder height.)



Joking apart, Ladies and Gentlemen (4), I should like to introduce for your entertainment one of the most intriguing little effects (5) (still holding up box) ever brought into the field of stage magic; and it's all in the little box. (Look from audience to box.)

I have said it is simple, and it could not in fact be more so. I use this strip of paper (extracting same from box, and replacing box on table), my two hands—and a certain amount of low cunning! (Show strip extended and hands clearly empty.)

This trick was shown me by an old Indian Fakir (commencing to tear). He showed me this, and I showed him exactly how to perform the Indian Rope Trick—and he has now gone back to India to do it. (Aside, to conductor or pianist: That's my story and I'm sticking to it.) (6).

Having torn up the strip, we squeeze the pieces. Have you noticed how conjurers are always prone to this squeezing business? I'm told it accounts for their popularity in certain quarters! (Walk to front centre of stage.) Now, all we have to do is to blow on the pieces to find . . . Oh, by the way, there may be some here who have seen me do this trick before (7). If so, I hope they will still find it entertaining, as it will be noticed that I have entirely redressed the effect—I always used green tissue-paper, and now it will be noticed that I use a brilliant shade of red! (8). I blow on the pieces—and we find that they are miraculously restored. (Display strip, hands obviously empty, fingers apart, thumb-tip just hidden by end of paper.) Isn't it wonderful?

This being a special occasion, and in view of your obvious enthusiasm, I propose to show you exactly how the audience—T R I C K—is done. (Retire to table and take box again in left hand.) In the first place, it must be admitted that you do have two strips of paper. (If this is pointed properly, you should get a laugh.) There is the one strip which the audience sees (placing the "restored" strip over the left arm), and the other strip which the audience does not see—or should not see. (Drop the used tip in the box and partly extract the strip of different-coloured paper, but as it is the wrong colour, leave it just hanging over the opened lid.) Of course, you require a strip of the same colour. (Take out the folded strip for working,

in the same action donning the second tip.) (9). (Now place the box on the table, lid open, "wrong colour" still draped over it.)

Now, before you come on the stage, the second strip is folded quite small and placed between the fingers of the left hand. I'll let you see it first. (The strip has been folded zig-zag fashion so that it can be quickly shown and refolded.) *Actually, you fold it smaller than this, but I am leaving it so that it will be obvious and you can follow all the moves. You are now all ready to perform the miracle. Remember, you must walk on to the stage full of confidence (smiling, and then changing expression)—or at least you must look full of confidence.* (10) (Saying this, you have walked confidently down to a position at the right front of stage.) *You now smile at the audience—it's marvellous what they will take in if you keep smiling. You tell the the tale of the old Fakir or anything similar, and just keep smiling nicely at them.* (You are meanwhile tearing the strip.)—*Oh, and another thing, a most important point: you can think what you like, but do frequently refer to them as Ladies and Gentlemen—you see, they like that (11), and besides, it lulls them into a false sense of security (12). Soon, they begin to like you, and you begin to think of the twenty guineas you are going to get when you go off.* (Look as though a thought had just struck you.) *Excuse me a moment.* (Make your way briskly across to the left wing, keeping the partially-torn strip well in view all the time. Call into the wings.) *It was twenty guineas, wasn't it?* (You apparently exchange a few remarks with someone off-stage, your expression undergoing a change. Then walk dejectedly back to the centre. *I'm sorry—slight mistake—one-and-ninepence!* (Time this for the laugh.)

Ladies and Gentlemen (point this for the laugh), *we now squeeze the pieces and that is where the diddling begins. During the squeezing, you change the pieces for the concealed strip, like this.* (You also, of course, perform the orthodox move.) *Cunning, isn't it? Unfold the strip, and the audience, by now literally agog with excitement, is completely flabberbasted! Now comes the more difficult part—getting rid of these confounded pieces. If you were a real magician, you would be able to blow on them like this, and restore them. But the difficulty is (as the*

“pieces” are unfolded “restored”) *that you have to be a real magician to do that!* (13) (Display “restored” strip as first described, throw out to audience, step back to box, lift the “wrong”-coloured strip over the lid and drop it in box together with the tip to be disposed of and close and replace the box quickly. As the applause subsides, come forward and say: *I'm really sorry about that!* (14).

KEY TO THE ROUTINE.

1. Properly put over, this discloses a humorous “tongue in cheek” modesty which audiences like.

2. That you are on friendly terms with the top-notchers in the profession has a good sound. Notice that you unobtrusively bring out your own name—always worth doing.

3. This is the type of leg-pulling which audiences like. This line of patter offers you marvellous opportunities of “making contact” with every part of the audience and selling your personality.

4. You return to a note of sincerity—a personality appeal.

5. By directing attention to the box, you create another appeal—interest.

6. A hackneyed gag; but here it conveys ease and relaxation. If you can have a quiet, humorous “aside” with the conductor at this early stage in your show, you can't be very worried about anything. The audience will react favourably to this.

7. This is the desirable “suspense” factor before the climax.

8. The gag is timed and pointed carefully. It produces a laugh just before the climax—useful in an effect of this kind.

9. Apart from the main reason for producing the wrong-coloured strip (the disposal, later on, of the second tip), this move does suggest that the box is a normal receptacle for carrying a good supply of papers.

10. All this provides you with a logical reason for the move to the right “third” of the stage for working the second part of the trick. You have already used the left third and the centre.

11. You can get “personality” into putting this over—and you will get a laugh.

12. Timing is important to get a quick follow-up laugh on this.

13. You must convey "sincerity" immediately preceding this *denouement* to secure the full effect of "surprise."

14. Put over with a smile, this final remark secures goodwill. There are some people who do not like being "suckers," and you may as well aim to please *all* the customers

It may seem to some that the above goes a long way round to put over a simple effect. I can only say that it suits me personally, is always good entertainment, and has never failed to put me on good terms with any type of adult audience. Why? Well, look at the picture as the audience sees it. Every part of the audience is well "contacted"—every important part of the stage being used—there is plenty of humour throughout—the conductor or pianist in the auditorium is brought into the picture, together with someone off-stage—and the centre of it all, pleasingly self-assured and successful to the end, the Performer.

Think it over!

THE BOOMERANGS.

Rather more briefly, I should like to give here my presentation of the Boomerangs trick. The effect is well known: two curved pieces of coloured plywood of similar length are shown to be of different lengths when one is held above the other—a purely optical illusion. There is nothing here calculated to pulverise the audience, but when properly presented it is a very useful little item, and completely deceptive. I regret to say that on more than one occasion I have seen it positively murdered.

In my presentation, I bring the boomerangs to the front-centre, and show them one in each hand, the arms extended at the sides, then slap them together (proving that they are wood, and not some elastic material—a "solution" that has been advanced more than once!)

I then introduce a little patter in a suitably humorous vein, and ultimately demonstrate the "stretching" process with the red one by giving it a "pull." By keeping one end of the boomerang behind the arm and sliding the hand along during the action, the illusion is good, and is complete when the

boomerang is brought up for comparison with the other. I then "push it back" by reversing the action, and place it with the other to show that it has reverted to its original size.

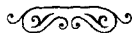
This series of actions is repeated with the yellow boomerang, the whole being performed centre-stage to the accompaniment of such remarks as, "Marvellous, isn't it?" "What a trick!" etc.

Affecting to see a gentleman on my left in the front row looking "doubtful," I walk across to that side of the stage, reaching the red boomerang out for him to pull "so that he can see how easy it is to do them—IT." I return centre-stage to show, by comparison, how successful his efforts have been, and then "push" the boomerang back to normal. The expression of a gentleman (or a lady, if suitable) over to the right seems now to suggest that the thing is "not quite straight," and the same routine is gone through on that side of the stage. Back to the centre again for the comparison.

I conclude with a little stunt which produces an unexpected finish to the trick, and a laugh—a desirable climax.

Notice how, by exercising a little thought, a small and self-contained effect has "filled the stage," being played in the centre and on each side in turn, and giving the performer opportunity to "contact" the audience in every section. The effect is utterly simple, but it has been made both entertaining and deceptive.

As to the latter, there is no doubt. More than once, promoters of shows have approached me while I have been packing, referred to the trick as a mystery, and asked if the boomerangs *are* just plywood. I usually hand them one (only one) to look at as I pack, and they are clearly puzzled. Yet I have seen the trick performed in such a manner that the solution has been obvious. This has happened when the performer has merely "shuffled" the boomerangs, and then made an immediate comparison, alternating both. If the effect of doing this is watched in a mirror, it will be apparent that none but an idiot would fail to detect the "how." It follows that in this event the entertainment value is nil, and the "magician" immediately loses the regard of the audience.



These two routines have been dealt with in detail for two reasons. First, in the hope that useful thought should be engendered on the very neglected question of filling the stage. Under most circumstances, centre-stage is the strongest position, and is the position to hold for suspense or climax, but do not neglect the left and right " thirds." The routines also serve to indicate the inestimable value of a carefully-conceived routine in ensuring a continuing sequence of audience-appeals.

THE PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE

It is essential, in my view, that your programme should include at least one " Knock-out " or " Masterpiece " of mystery. A consistently good show with no outstanding feature will not get you talked about afterwards. It is as well to finish with this effect, unless you propose also to feature a spectacular production. In this case, it could more profitably be last-but-one.

Just a point here, in passing. If your last trick can possibly go wrong—no matter how remote the chance—see that you have another (preferably short and humorous) trick on the table so that you can at least avoid retiring on a failure. I have carried that spare trick for at least fifteen years, and only just recently I had recourse to use it for the first time. The fault was not mine, but I am sure you will appreciate with what a sense of relief I was able to pick up and run through the " stand-by."

OBITER DICTA

It is an excellent thing, I have found, to employ effects which evoke different responses from different members of the audience, and which play on varying emotions. Some tricks make the avoidance of monotony easy, and, moreover, they keep the audience in an elastic state of mind. In one way or another, they appeal to practically every section of the audience. For these reasons, they are particularly useful with difficult audiences.

When performing the Torn Strip I always look very much *at* the audience. Some of them are most meticulously following every move of the " explanation "; others are

smiling in a way which clearly indicates that they know they are being done, but enjoying it; others, again, are just wondering whether they are going to be let into the secret or not. But *all are interested*.

With an audience inclined to be unresponsive, the type of effect which is clean-cut and plays on only one frame of mind does not always give the performer quite the same chance of breaking down resistance, getting his personality over, and securing *audience collaboration*. It is possible for a good trick to become monotonous, and also for an act built up of good tricks to suffer from the same defect. This should be prevented at all costs. It is a good rule to study the various audience appeals and to see that the tricks are fitted into a routine which plays on one appeal or another successively. For this reason, I am a firm believer in alternating humorous effects with those of a more serious order.

I may at this point refer to the subject of questionable patter. There are more than two opinions on this matter, but I have no hesitation whatever in saying, "Cut it out." If a performer is blessed with a personality and style which enable him occasionally to convey, "I could be quite cheeky if I weren't here," and suggest this subtly in any of his quips by a quick expression, a twinkle of the eye, and so on, I think it can be invaluable, but beyond that—No. It must be remembered all the time that you are selling the audience *yourself*, so it is well to ensure that nothing occurs which is likely to detract from your prestige. You may, on rare occasions, lose a stag-party date to a performer who is not quite so particular, but you will be more than compensated by the dates you will get because you are "safe" to put on.

Just a few words about "silent acts" which in recent years have been on the increase. The successful ones have produced many imitators. Perhaps the strongest demonstration we can give of the argument that this form of entertainment is not easy is to show that there have been very few *successful* imitators.

To be successful in this field, the performer must be smooth as silk and highly accomplished. He must be "produced" to the *n*th degree. His tricks must be right, and his personality and stage technique 100 per cent. Panto-

mime consists of a great deal more than performing actions without words. By its very nature, a silent act places the performer more aloof from the audience, and much of the valuable factors of direct appeal and constant contact are lost. Only a few appear to be sufficiently gifted to make the right appeal by expression, pointing, and appropriate gesture. Music, of course, plays a most important part in such an act—indeed, in any act—and should never be left to chance.

Whilst on this subject, I think it a great pity that music and lighting should be so neglected by amateurs and semi-professional magicians—in professional shows they receive the same meticulous care as anything else. It is silly to leave anything to chance, and it is not enough to give a hurried word to pianist and “lights” just before the curtains part. The proper use of lights and music creates an additional “appeal” and a great asset.

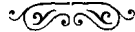
No amount of general advice on this subject could be half as valuable as the lessons learnt by observation and experience. Observe the lighting effects and the musical “build-ups” in professional acts, and ask yourself *why* they are employed. When you have devised some ideas for your own use, submit them to the local expert for comment and advice. Explore the possibilities of modern lighting facilities and ideas. Many of them can profitably be used to increase the magical quality of your work—a point so far little exploited.

There is much else that may be learnt by watching professional acts. The novice especially should realise that the art of *magical entertainment* embraces a great deal more than a working knowledge of a few tricks. I have known “performers” of six months’ experience getting to work with letter-heads, etc., and advertising for (and obtaining) paid engagements. This procedure has doubtless been the cause of many professional performers expressing the view that magical societies have done more harm than good. One can spend a whole lifetime in learning all there is to know about magical entertaining, and a beginner—even if he has the natural potentialities of a Howard Thurston—cannot in a few months acquire the necessary knowledge and polish to present a sound show. As in the case of any other calling, he must *learn the business*, meantime mastering a few effects

and trying them out on his friends, and at small social gatherings. His friends will be kind, often too kind, and he must realise this. Many a person has regretted accepting a friend's assurance that "he is as good as So-and-so at the Hippodrome, and should be in the profession."

A premature start harms the performer personally and magic generally. If this little treatise succeeds only in driving this point home, it will have served a good purpose.

In early rehearsals, I recommend the use of a long mirror : it gives you an opportunity of studying your broader movements and your stance as well as the actions of your hands. Get away from the mirror, however, as soon as you feel competent to do so ; otherwise you will miss it when out before an audience. I once heard that very eminent performer Col Ling Soo suggest that a convex mirror should be used to enable the artist to see the complete scene as it will appear to the audience. An excellent tip—especially when you are concerned with the question of complementary colours and display in your act.



We are nearing the end now, and probably this is the point where a long list of "Don'ts" should be tabulated. Instead, not much liking negative advice myself, I append a few "Do's."

Let the part you play be suitable to your personality, and stick to tricks of a type and tempo which suit *you*.

Avoid any line of presentation or patter which is "cheap." It will detract from your own prestige and cheapen magic generally. It is better to think : "I am performing veritable miracles"—and try to put *that* over.

Be original, at least in your line of presentation. You cannot hope successfully to assume another person's personality, so develop your own. Also, keep your patter crisp and topical, and avoid the hackneyed conjurers' jokes.

Remember that in every performance you have an obligation to other magicians as well as to yourself. A flat, incompetent show or an unwitting exposure harms you, and harms magic.

If you are in magic as a business, remember to be always a good showman. Bring the unique and personal note into your literature. Let all be in good taste and

your conduct before and after the show above reproach.

Develop your stage presence for all you are worth. A good presence is of inestimable value. If I mention the name "Dante," need I say more?

Rehearse and rehearse again, going through your complete act using gesture, facial expressions and vocal inflexions.

Look happy in your work—the audience will respond to that mood.

See that your act is well produced, with all faults and awkward moves eliminated.

Try to build the act up to an *applause-getting climax*. It is well known that magical acts, however good, do not normally win the same degree of final applause as other acts. There is much food for thought in this.

Study and practise taking the curtain, for apart from anything else it is your last appearance. The number of curtains you take depends to some extent on you. Don't wait too long between your acknowledgments, or you will lose the applause—and never come on once it has flagged. I hope your curtains will be many.

In an article published in 1924, David Devant wrote :—
"The great public of the future will want something more than magic at a magical entertainment. Even now, the cry is for entertainment—Amuse us—Take us out of ourselves. The magician who can do this finds that the public do not care greatly if the tricks are costly, cheap, complicated or simple, as long as the performer is really entertaining. I imagine that audiences of the future will be even more exacting in their demands in this matter of entertainment than the audiences of to-day, and that the magician who fails to recognise that fact will go under. Progression in the art of magic there must be, there will be, but I imagine that the improvements will not be solely in magic itself, but in the manner in which the magician presents his mysteries to the audience."

How true that prophecy has proved to be! Devant foresaw over twenty years ago the need for improved showmanship and modernised presentation as dictated by the public taste of to-day. If any magician needs a pointer to direct his active attention to the subject of presentation—could he possibly wish for a better?

I leave you with that thought.

Appendix

“ STRAIGHT ” MAKE-UP

(NOTE.— *All grease paint references relate to paints of Leichner's manufacture.*)

SUPERFICIAL MAKE-UP.

There are many occasions when conditions or lighting do not call for a full stage make-up. The following simple and rapid procedure will then be satisfactory :—

REQUISITES.

- Leichner “ Sun-tan ” or “ Summer-Tan ” Powder.
- Colgates “ Brushless ” Shaving Cream.
- *Blue Liner (Medium) No. 326.
- Black Liner No. 42 or Brown Liner No. 28.
- Stick of Carmine 2.
- Lambs Wool Pad (for applying Powder).
- Rouge (Cherry or Garnet 2).
- Small Towel.
- “ Rachel ” Shade Face Powder, and Puff, if desired.

(1) Apply Shaving Cream sparingly, and smooth out completely to cover face. (“ Vanishing cream ” can be used if preferred, but it is more expensive, and no better for the purpose). Then clean off *well* with towel. This leaves pores filled, and a slight “ key ” for the powder.

(2) Powder well with “ Sun-tan ” or “ Summer-Tan ” powder by rubbing over, with lambs wool pad, taking well round *under* chin and jaws to avoid appearance of “ mask ” which in profile is most undesirable. Also carry powder well up to hair, and finish off without leaving excess.

(3) Apply Rouge *sparingly*, shading out well over cheek-bones and up sides of cheeks to just above eye level. A suggestion of colour under the eyebrows and on the eyelid and extending slightly outwards will give size and improve appearance of eyes, but do not overdo this. Ensure that Rouge is well shaded out after application. This can be achieved with the lambs wool pad. (NOTE.—For a very light make-up, Rouge can be partially or totally eliminated.)

*It is important that you stipulate the shade indicated.

(4) Apply light "shadow" line of Blue along edge of upper eyelid and extend line more definitely to something less than half an inch outwards from corner of each eye. The tendency of this extension should be slightly downwards. Apply similar light line along edge of lower lid to meet top lid line at outer corner of the eye. These "shadow" lines on the lids should be close to lashes and not too pronounced. It is often an advantage to "smooth" along them with little finger. Fade off the end of the "extension" line with finger.

(5) Apply a Carmine spot level with and about one-eighth of an inch away from the inner corner of each eye. (This can be done conveniently with a paper stump or a match first touched on the Carmine paint.)

(6) Slightly darken the eyebrows with Black or Brown Liner, according to general colouring. In most cases colour should be applied to the hair only, and should not go through to the flesh.

(7) The colour of the lips should now be slightly heightened with Carmine, following the natural contour.

The make-up is now complete. The depth of colouring and lining can be varied to meet a long range of conditions, and the process when run through a few times will be found rapid and effective. My time for this make-up is three to four minutes.

IMPORTANT. A most satisfactory facial finish and appearance can be obtained for fairly intimate work by limiting the process to: (a) Powder, (b) Eye extensions (no lid lines), (c) Carmine spots, and (d) slight lip treatment. Varying degrees between this, and the full make-up described, applicable to all circumstances, will readily suggest themselves after a little experience.

It sometimes happens that due to perspiration, before appearance or during a long show, it is desired to "freshen" the make-up after completion. This is best achieved with "Rachel" shade face powder applied preferably with a swansdown puff. Personally, I have a small bag puff which is charged with a little powder when completing my make-up, and retained in the pocket. This facilitates "freshening" the make-up if necessary immediately before appearance, when it may not be convenient to return to the make-up box. This suggestion applies equally to the grease paint make-up described later.

REMOVAL of make-up. Wash with warm water and soap.

STAGE MAKE-UP

Where circumstances demand a complete make-up, as in the case of a well-lighted stage in a large hall, there is nothing to equal grease paint, although some very good liquid materials for the "foundation" have been introduced in recent years and are favoured by some.

There is no doubt that the most artistic base or foundation can be secured by judiciously blending paints No. 5 and No. 9, varying the tone to emphasize or subdue certain features as may be thought desirable. This however, to be successful, needs experience, and is perhaps outside the scope of the average magician's requirements, which should adequately be met by the following :—

REQUISITES.

No. 3 or 3½ for foundation (for Fair and Dark respectively).

No. 9, and Carmine 2.

*Blue Liner, Medium (No. 326).

*Grey Liner, Dark (No. 32).

Lake Liner (No. 25).

Black Liner (No. 42) or Brown Liner (No. 28).

"Rachel" Shade Powder, and Puff.

Grease paint Removing Cream, or Cold Cream.

Towels.

Procedure.

The face should first be smeared all over with either grease referred to above and then well wiped with towel *until the skin is almost dry*. The latter is most important, as if the point is not observed a "greasy" make-up will result. Owing to this danger (and it can be for no other reason) many make-up experts advise against this initial preparation, but personally I strongly favour it, as the application to follow "works" better, ultimate removal is somewhat facilitated, and the skin benefits.

Having completed this preparation, "streak" the face over with No. 3 or 3½ (do not completely cover the face or application will be excessive) and smooth out the colour with the fingers completely to cover the face evenly. Take care to carry the colour well down under jaw bone and chin, fading it off into the neck. This avoids a "mask." Apply what remains on the hands, to the ears. In the process, see that the nose is adequately treated as if it is left lighter than the remainder of the face it will attain prominence, which may not be desirable.

*It is important that you stipulate the shade indicated.

The goal to achieve in applying this foundation is just to obtain complete obliteration of the natural complexion.

The Cheeks should next receive attention, the colour being heightened by Carmine 2, No. 9, or a blend of the two, according to general colouring. In the case of a fair person, the Carmine should predominate with an increasing proportion of No. 9 for darker subjects.

The colour should be applied to the cheekbone and "smoothed out" to blend imperceptibly with the base, keeping it well up and over to the sides of the cheeks. Generally speaking, the higher the cheek colouring the more youthful will be the appearance. Apply colour remaining on the fingers to the upper orbits (or hollows) of the eyes, carrying this well to the outer extremity of the orbit and slightly beyond. This tinge of colour will add brilliance and size to the eyes.

The Ears should also receive a touch of Carmine, particularly the lobes, and a slight touch to the chin will improve appearance, unless it recedes, when it is best left alone.

The Eyes should now be dealt with. The lower part of the upper lid should be lightly shaded with Blue, smoothed out with the finger, and a Blue line should be drawn along the edge and extended from outer corner to the extent of half an inch. Extension should slope slightly downwards, and the end should be "faded off" with the fingers. A Grey line should be drawn under the lashes of the lower lid, and should meet the upper lid line at the outer corner of the eye. A thin line of Carmine or Lake is then applied from the outer corner of each eye just under the top lid line extension, and is slightly blended into the edge of the latter with the finger and "faded off" at the end. A Carmine spot is placed near the inner corner of each eye. This helps to brighten the eye, and in effect balances the outward extension.

The eye treatment should be carried out carefully and with some little initial experiment, as it can seriously influence the success or otherwise of the completed make-up.

Generally speaking, hard strong lines should be avoided, and a few trials will evince to the individual the most suitable depth of shading and lines to employ. Naturally, the larger the hall and the stronger the lighting, the heavier the make-up required.

The Eyebrows will require darkening with the Brown liner, or Black in the case of a very dark individual. The latter should, however, be used with discretion. Much can sometimes be done to improve appearance by slightly altering the shape or extending or modifying the eyebrows, and here again a little experiment will often return a good dividend.

The Lips should be treated with Carmine, not too heavily applied, and Lake should be blended on the top lip. If when applying the initial "foundation" to the face a little is smeared on the bottom lip, it can readily be blended with the Carmine, and will assist in keeping the lower lip somewhat lighter than the top lip—a desirable feature of a good make-up. Avoid this, however, if the lower lip is over-full or prominent. Much can often be done after experience to improve or alter the expression and contours of the mouth, but the novice is advised merely to follow the natural contours of the lips.

It now only remains to finish and "fix" the make-up by the application of Powder. I have recommended "Rachel" shade as being ideal. Many old professionals favour a white powder, and this at one time was very generally used. There were reasons for this with which we are not immediately concerned, but the majority of make-up artists to-day favour the shade I recommend, and certainly for our specific purpose it is excellent. The powder should be applied very generously and then lightly dusted off.

I am prompted to mention the hair, as the style of hair-dressing has a considerable influence on appearance and is worth studying. In any event, see that it is properly dressed. The lock which looks coy, or the unkempt style which passes muster as "individual" in private life can look appalling on the Stage and perhaps completely spoil an otherwise well-groomed appearance.

The Hands. The meticulous artist will certainly attend to his hands, which never look their best under stage lighting. I particularly recommend any manipulative performer, who naturally exhibits his hands, to treat them with "wet white." This material can be purchased ready for use, or it can be made for a fraction of the cost—for a few coppers, in fact—very simply. In case the formula I use is of interest, here it is:—

1½ ozs. Oxide of Zinc (obtainable at chemists).

½-pint of Water (mix when warm, after boiling).

A dessertspoonful of Golden Syrup.

A pinch of Yellow Ochre (obtainable at drysalters).

Other binders, such as Glucose, can be used in place of Syrup, but the latter is ideal, and usually handy. The Yellow Ochre gives the mixture a slightly "off-white" colour which is just right, but remember—a pinch. The correct method of applying is to pour a little of the mixture (after shaking) on to a small pad of towelling, rub over the hands (mainly the backs) and then smooth over and dry off by rubbing the hands together, as in the act of washing. The whole operation takes a few moments.

Reverting to facial make-up, I must point out that no two faces are identical, and it follows that one make-up will not achieve complete perfection on every face. After some experience, an artist will possibly introduce small variations with advantage. The make-up I give, however, is safe for the average individual and usual conditions, and may be adopted with confidence.

REMOVAL. Apply Removing Cream to face, and wipe with towel, repeating this operation. Then thoroughly wash with warm water and soap. Those with sensitive skins can, with advantage (particularly in winter) finish with slight application of Cold Cream.



A Parting Word

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