

Title:

History Behind The Hat: The Story Of The Magician

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Summary:

The concept of magician as entertainer has its roots deep in human history, but mostly dates back to the sixteenth century. Prior to this time, those who practiced magic claimed to have supernatural powers. When this idea clashed with Christianity in the Western world, new magicians, who entertained audiences, emerged.

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Article Body:

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Chevalier Joseph Pinetti impressed audiences in the late 1700s with his tricks as an escapist and mentalist. Illusionists emerged in the nineteenth century, using devices to produce elaborate stage shows. One of the first magicians to use live animals was

"Hermann the Great," who performed disappearing acts and levitation tricks with the animals. Later, famous magicians Siegfried and Roy gained fame in part because of their elaborate show and tigers.

Harry Houdini, perhaps the most well known magician of all time, developed elaborate escape tricks including handcuffs and locked chambers in the early 1900s. His death on Halloween is now also known as "National Magic Day." Houdini also created grand illusions, some of which magician David Copperfield emulated. During Houdini's time, Vaudeville acts included and promoted magic tricks.

Over time, the interest in magic has come and gone, although it enjoyed a

revival in the 1970s that continues today. Many magicians, similar to other performers, develop a unique style or focus on a particular type of illusion. David Copperfield makes large objects disappear. Lance Burton employs many birds, and Penn and Teller are known for their unique style. Most recently, David Blaine gained fame for his street magic and outrageous stunts.

Magicians of all sorts keep their secrets very secret. The appeal of magic is trying to figure out how magicians accomplish those amazing feats. For those interested in learning magic, many sources are available for the entry-level magician. Some well-known tricks are "out in the open," and beginning magic kits can help a beginner learn the tricks of the trade. Many books and other resources are available for card tricks as well. Many stores carry magical wares as well.

For those who are serious about the craft, two organizations are devoted entirely to magic, both with headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. The Society of American Magicians and the International Brotherhood of Magicians have chapters throughout the world, provide information, and hold conferences. For those seeking information, these are good places to begin. Your local library is also a good place to find more information, as is the Internet. However, online sources in particular are varied in quality and information, so beginning with one of the organizations may be a better way to begin.

The allure of magic is very real. Throughout the past few decades, magicians have taken magic to a new level, with elaborate stunts and full-out entertainment spectacles. From amazing card tricks to large disappearing acts, magic will likely continue to enthrall audiences worldwide for years to come. It is a performance art unlike any other, and the mystery associated with magic adds a level of intrigue that does not exist with other performance arts.