

MAGIC OF LYN STUDY GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

This study guide has been prepared for educators who, along with their students will be attending the performances of ILLUSIONIST LYN DILLIES. Lyn is a self-taught illusionist who captivates audiences across the United States with her unique style of choreographed, high energy magic. Teachers will find an interesting history of magic and also simple magic tricks to teach to their students. In 2007, Lyn released an award winning DVD, called Learn Magic With Lyn. Lyn uses ordinary objects to teach beginner's magic to children. There is also a bibliography for additional magic books which give expanded information and magic tricks for beginning students.

This guide is written for the teacher. It is hoped that each teacher will be inspired to reinterpret the enclosed information for their appropriate grade level so that whether teaching primary grades or upper level students, teachers will have the opportunity to investigate, along with their students, new, educational and exciting projects and activities.

Magic can be very therapeutic for a child. Especially for a student prone to shyness, magic can be empowering. Learning how to do a trick and being trusted with the secret can teach a child a sense of responsibility. They must learn the trick and do it well. The result of their efforts is shown by the spectator being amazed at his or her magic.

THE MAGIC OF LYN

From the grand stages of New York City's Lincoln Center to the glitter of Hollywood, Lyn Dillies has captivated audiences of all ages with her spellbinding powers of prestidigitation. She has been hailed as the finest female magician in the land as well as one of America's top illusionists winning the 2009 Merlin Award for Female Illusionist of The Year from the International Magician's Society. Lyn's show is filled with eye-defying illusions, hypnotic lighting, hot music, and most magical of all, the enchanting personality of Lyn Dillies.

A METAMORPHOSIS THROUGH TIME

Many years ago, a shy girl sat before her television set, mesmerized by a man and his magic. Every week, she would study what she saw: the escapes, the adventures, the illusion of it all. So intrigued was she by Bill Bixby's portrayal of The Magician that she set out to capture a bit of the fantasy for herself. The girl bought some pocket tricks, practiced a lot, then tried her hand at dazzling her family and friends. They applauded her magical talents, and soon she found herself dreaming of bigger audiences and better illusions. More than twenty years and countless shows later, Lyn Dillies still amazes audiences around the country with her magnificent illusions. Whether it's performing with a full symphony orchestra or making elephants appear, Lyn's dream remains the same: to share her love of magic with the world.

This study guide is divided into 5 sections:

1. An introduction to theatrical magic
2. A brief history of social and theatrical magic with profiles of some famous magicians
3. Basic bio on Lyn and her show
4. Magic tricks that can be done at home
5. Bibliography

It is a brief survey for use in preparing classes for their assembly to The Magic Of Lyn. The topic of magic throughout the world cultures and in theatrical history is very vast. For more detailed histories and information, see the bibliography.

MAGIC! The word conjures up different meanings for different people - sorcery, witchcraft, the occult, superstition, mystery, religion, entertainment. This guide deals primarily with theatrical magic, that is, conjuring and illusion performed for entertainment by a magician. It also includes some background on non-theatrical or social magic in different cultures and historic periods.

STYLES OF MAGIC

1. **CLOSE UP MAGIC** - this is intimate magic, often using sleight of hand (manual dexterity or legerdemain from the French.) Performed for small groups or one on one, either on a table top or as the magician strolls through a gathering, it involves manipulation of small objects; coins, cards, dice, rubber bands, etc.
2. **PARLOUR MAGIC** - so named because it was performed in the parlours of living rooms in homes. The magician stands before an audience, perhaps with a side table or two, and manipulates hand held props.
3. **STAGE MAGIC** - the magician performs on a stage, usually for a large audience. The performance can consist of a) illusions using large free-standing apparatus like Lyn uses; b) manipulation with doves, cards, balls and other props; and c) mentalist, or magic of the mind, such as telepathy, mind reading, predictions and other psychic phenomena.

CATEGORIES OF TRICKS AND ILLUSIONS

Although there are thousands of different tricks and illusions, all of them (except for mentalist) fall into eight general categories.

1. Production/Vanish - Objects, animals and people are made to appear and/or disappear. Examples: A coin vanishes from the hand; a dove appears from a balloon.

2. Restoration - An object or person is damaged or destroyed, then restored to its original state. Examples: a newspaper is torn, then stored; a person is cut into several pieces, then restored.

3. Penetration - A solid object passes through another solid object without damage to either object. Examples: A pencil is pushed through the center of a half dollar; a magician pushes a needle through a balloon.

4. Invulnerability - An object is made to appear indestructible. Examples: A flame that cannot be blown out; a piece of paper which cannot burn. Invulnerability is sometimes also called "penetration".

5. Transportation and Transposition - An object changes position or place magically. Examples: A penny is placed in the right hand, a dime in the left. When the hands are opened, the two coins have changed places; A person enters a box on one side of the stage and emerges from another box on the opposite side of the stage.

6. Transformation - An object is altered from one size, shape, or color to another. Examples: A glass of red liquid turns blue; a rabbit turns into a man; a queen of hearts turns into the king of spades.

7. Levitation or Suspension - A person or object defies the laws of gravity and floats in the air without any visible means of support. Examples: A handkerchief dances in mid-air; a member of the audience is suspended onstage in mid-air.

8. Animation - Related to levitation; an inanimate object is made to move. Examples: A cane dances around the magician; A table rolls by itself across the stage.

A SHORT HISTORY OF MAGIC

ANCIENT AND PRIMITIVE MAGIC

Nobody knows what the first magic trick was. We do know that magic and illusions were used in ancient times. On the wall of the burial chamber of Beni Hassan, who lived around 2500 BC is an illustration which Egyptologists claim is an early version of the “cup and balls” trick, a trick still performed today, and one frequently illustrated in paintings and prints.

Nearly 4500 years ago, scribes recorded one of the first descriptions of a magic trick. It can be found in papyrus dating from the reign of the Egyptian monarch King Cheops, builder of the Great Pyramid at Giza (c. 2600 B.C.). The description tells of a magician called Dedi. Hearing of Dedi's amazing powers, King Cheops requested a command performance. Standing before a king and his court, Dedi cut off the heads of a goose and an ox, then brought these animals back to life with their heads restored. This illusion introduced a theme popular throughout the history of magic - the use of the macabre effect. The impact of this illusion has been remarkable, it is still in the magic repertoire today.

Much ancient magic was not intended primarily as entertainment. The priests, shamen, and magicians of antiquity had two major areas of concern: controlling the weather and controlling disease. These ancient magicians developed rites and rituals that appeared to cause the desired effects, and used their rites to instill followers with confidence in their magical powers.

In Greek temples, the priests of the past used the sciences of acoustics, optics and hydraulics to produce apparent miracles which astounded their followers. Imagine this scene: A fire is lit upon the alter, the priest incants some prayers, and the great doors of the temple slowly and mysteriously open. This effect was accomplished through a sophisticated mechanism, documented by Hero of Alexandria around 62 A.D. The fire was lit on the alter, sending the hot, expanded air below through a tube into a bucket. As the bucket filled, it pulled a rope attached by a pulley to two spindles, turning the spindles. The spindles were attached to the doors, when the spindle turned, the door opened.

Thus, in these early “mysteries”, apparent miracles were produced using engineering processes which applied the laws of natural science. The followers of these priests were usually less educated, less familiar with such processes. The illusions were created to accord with the followers' mythology and religion, and were accepted by most as miracles rather than applied physics.

In many cultures around the world, magic involved belief in supernatural forces, particularly *animism*, the belief that a spirit or force resides in every animate and inanimate object - even in dreams and ideas.

The *shaman's* activities protected humans from malevolent spirits by rendering the spirits harmless. Among tribal peoples, such as Siberians, Native Americans, Eskimos, Southeast Asians, and those in Oceania, shamans were given positions of power. To this day, shamans play significant roles in many societies.

Although practitioners of these forms of magic often used the techniques of conjurers, we must distinguish their activities from magic used for entertainment.

MAGIC IN INDIA

In India, magic has played an important part in society from ancient times. Many classic theatrical magic effects performed today have origins in ancient Indian magic. Of these the "Indian Rope Trick" is the most famous.

The original Indian Rope Trick consisted of a *fakir* (an itinerant Moslem beggar who claimed to perform miracles), who caused a long rope to become rigid and rise into the air. His assistant, usually a young boy, would then climb the rope as the fakir followed brandishing a large sword. Pieces of the boy's body would fall into the horrified crowd, but when the fakir climbed down, the boy would appear from the audience unharmed.

Fakirs, who still practice today, are also known for performing such supernatural stunts as walking on burning coals, piercing their tongues with needles, or being buried alive.

MAGIC IN THE MIDDLE AGES

In the Middle Ages, magic was pursued in three different but related ways: Wandering magicians, traveling with troupes of acrobats, jugglers, and mimes, moved from town to town, entertaining with slight of hand or small mechanical props. Other magicians continued the tradition of ancient Greece and Rome, pseudo-religious illusionists claiming the assistance of the devil and other demons. Still other charlatans used the magician's skills to defraud people. The Middle Ages also brings us the legend of Merlin, fabled sorcerer and friend of King Arthur. The medieval Church rejected entertainment, particularly magic. Magicians were banished from towns and countries, often accused of practicing witchcraft. In the fifteenth century, a young girl in Germany was charged with practicing witchcraft after she tore and restored a handkerchief; in France, a performer of card tricks was jailed on a similar charge. The Church persecuted witches in Europe from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

MAGIC IN AMERICA

Little is known about the first magicians on our continent, but early settlers were not friendly toward them or other entertainers; indeed all such performers were banned from Jamestown in 1512. Again magic was associated with witchcraft, and in 1692, twenty people were executed as witches in Salem, Massachusetts.

However, magicians continued to practice and perform their art. Colonial records tell of George Washington enjoying performances of magic. Richard Potter (1783-1835) was the first native-born American to achieve success as a magician. A mulatto, Potter performed in New England and neighboring states for over twenty years.

FAMOUS THEATRICAL MAGICIANS

JEAN EUGENE ROBERT-HOUDIN is considered the Father of Modern Conjuring. Born in 1805 in France, Houdin combined mathematical and mechanical skills with conjuring to create effects that stagger the imagination. The son of a watchmaker and mechanic, he used the skills learned from his father with great ingenuity. His "Mysterious Clock", for example, had a completely transparent dial and no visible mechanism, yet kept perfect time.

Houdin constructed wonderful automata (mechanical human figures). One of his most famous, "The Writer", could write answers to questions it was asked, or draw pictures as requested. His reputation as an inventor was enabling him to perpetuate an incredible hoax: a chess-playing automaton which toured Europe, beating many great players. Houdin would open the door under the figure to show spectators the complex machinery. What they didn't see, was the human chess master hidden behind the machinery, maneuvering the pieces!

Robert-Houdin's magical inventions included the "Inexhaustible Bottle" which poured any drink requested by spectators, the "Light and Heavy Chest" a box lifted by a spectator which then magically became too heavy to lift and the "Gun Trick" in which a marked bullet was caught in an apple Houdin held in front of his chest.

CHING LING FOO, the most famous Chinese magician, was born in Peking in 1854. After a five-year apprenticeship, he acquired such skill that he challenged magicians around the world to match his talents. When one magician in New York discovered the “challenge” was really a publicity stunt he stole Ching’s act and went on to fame and fortune as CHUN LING SOO. One of Ching’s most celebrated feats involved swallowing some bran. Soon puffs of smoke and balls of fire emerged from his mouth, followed by yards of colored ribbon, more smoke and fire and finally a fifteen foot pole.

HERRMANN was the surname of a family of European magicians. Samuel, the father, was followed by his sons, Carl and Alexander. Carl won international fame with an act that used few or no props, while Alexander’s act used huge illusions - levitation and decapitations. Alexander, nicknamed “Herrmann the Great”, was succeeded after his death, by his wife, Adelaide, who toured internationally for thirty years as “The Queen of Magic.”

HARRY HOUDINI, considered the world’s greatest magician, certainly the best known magician in history, was born Ehrich Weiss in 1874. Houdini renamed himself after Robert-Houdin, whom he later denounced. He gained fame because he did so many different things so well, with such showmanship.

Houdini is best known as a great escape artist. He challenged the world to dream up ways to handcuff, chain, and otherwise bind him - and he always escaped. He was once locked in a prison and not only escaped but moved the real prisoners into different cells. He escaped from a straight jacket while suspended by his ankles hundreds of feet above the streets of New York. Houdini invented the “Water Torture Cell” in which he was chained, suspended by his ankles, and dropped into a large tank of water, from which he escaped. Houdini also created some grand stage illusions. The most popular include the disappearance of an elephant onstage, and “Metamorphosis” which Lyn features in her show.

Contrary to popular belief, Houdini did not die during his Water Torture Cell Illusion. On October 22, 1926, while playing an engagement in Montreal, Houdini was punched in the stomach by a student who asked if the magician knew how to sustain a blow to his abdomen without injury. Houdini answered that he could, but before he could brace himself, the boy struck. Just over a week later the great Houdini died after doctors were unable to stop the peritonitis that followed a ruptured appendix caused by the blow. It was October 31 - Halloween - and it has since become National Magic Day in America.

HARRY BLACKSTONE - his career stretched from vaudeville and stage magic to television. While he often performed magic invented by others, his unique showmanship set him apart. He adorned his stage with beautiful women dressed in elaborate costumes. But they weren't just for decoration. Blackstone levitated them, sawed them in half and made them disappear. Despite his loves of grandeur, one of his most famous routines involved a simple handkerchief, borrowed from someone in the audience. While the orchestra played some mysterious music, the handkerchief seemed to come to life, dancing around Blackstone and the stage.

JOHN SCARNE - was an example of a close-up magician who achieved international recognition as an expert on gambling, using cards and dice as his only props. He wrote many books on gambling, card games, magic and used his skills to debunk gambling. Scarne's skill was so great, that many feats attributed to him may well be impossible. Scarne is in an apartment several stories above the ground. He asks his host for a deck of cards and then lets someone choose a card, sign his name to it, and shuffle it back into the deck. Scarne then takes the deck (for the first time) and tosses the cards against the living-room window. As the cards flutter to the floor, one card is seen to be stuck to the window. It is the card that was signed by the spectator! Scarne asks the spectator to retrieve the card and verify his signature. When the spectator goes for the card, he is astounded to find that it is stuck to the window from the outside.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT LYN AND HER SHOW

Appearing on numerous television shows, Lyn has shared the stage with such notable entertainers as Marvin Hamlisch, Jeff Dunham, Bill Engval, Crystal Gayle, and Mikhail Baryshnikov. Using an original concept that took years of planning, Lyn performs her "*Magic At The Symphony*" program live with symphonies all around the country including several performances at Lincoln Center. This program combines the majesty of classical music with Lyn's breathtaking illusions encouraging children to discover the magic of classical music while experiencing the harmony of her illusions. Some of the symphonies she has performed with include the San Diego Symphony, Virginia Symphony, San Antonio Symphony and the Utah Symphony. A television special is in the works integrating "*Magic At The Symphony*" with an educational component introducing the symphony and classical music to children.

One of the proudest moments of Lyn's career was when she became the first illusionist in magic history to make two live Asian elephants, Ruth and Emily, appear in succession. The event was held outdoors in front of a live audience for the grand opening of the Buttonwood Park Zoo in her hometown of New Bedford, MA. It took eight months to prepare for this incredible spectacle and required more than 5,000 square feet of fabric, 300 feet of truss, two cases of red seedless grapes (the pachyderms' favorite treat) and a little sleight of trunk!

The Society of American Magicians deemed this illusion such an unprecedented event that it is documented in the organization's national archives. A return engagement with the elephants marked another magic milestone when Lyn successfully predicted a week in advance what Ruth and Emily would paint on a large canvas with paintbrushes held by their trunks.

Recently Lyn produced "Learn Magic with Lyn," the first in a line of DVDs aimed at empowering children to perform their own illusions for friends and families. The 53 minute live-action DVD features eleven uncomplicated but impressive tricks any child can learn within minutes using ordinary, everyday household items. "Learn Magic with Lyn" has received several awards from national organizations that honor the best in children's entertainment and educational products.

In 2008, Lyn wanted to give something back to her country that has provided her with such marvelous opportunities. She created and produced Your Vote Is Magic, a public service campaign to promote voter awareness for the Presidential Election. As the finale for her year long endeavor, with her message being "You Don't Have To Be A Magician To Create Change, No Matter Who You Choose - Your Vote Is Magic! Lyn produced a donkey and an elephant, the two live mascots of each political party. She received a citation for making a

significant difference in voter registration in Southcoast Massachusetts.

For Lyn's show, depending on the venue, it takes between six to twelve hours to set up. Approximately 6 tons of equipment are used. Lyn loves to drive her own truck but does share the driving with her crew when traveling long distances. Some of the illusions in her show have taken a few years to perfect. A lot of thought and planning go into putting a new illusion into the show.

A. The Concept - Lyn is always dreaming up new ideas but a lot of careful thought has to be given to where the illusion can fit into the show, never mind Lyn's truck! Lyn meets with one of her customized illusion builders and discusses her idea and how they can bring it to fruition. Then, a blueprint is sometimes drawn up and the design and materials are discussed.

B. The Presentation - As Lyn says, "A new illusion is putty in our hands". There are so many ways to present an illusion. It's like working with a blank canvas. She and her team decide if it will be performed in a mysterious, lighthearted, comical or dramatic way

C. Choreography - Either Lyn and Marc work out the choreography for the routine or a professional choreographer is brought in. Sometimes the choreography is worked out before the music and sometimes the music is composed and then the choreography is worked out.

D. The Music - After Lyn has worked with the illusion for a while and gets the outline of the routine laid out, she has it videotaped and her music composer scores it like a film.

E. Costuming - Lyn works with her costume designer to come up with a design that will work for the illusion. This process can take between two to four months. Careful attention is given to the type of material used and the actual design of the costume. Some illusions place limitations on what kind of costuming Lyn can wear and there are some illusions that require a costume that is integral to the illusion.

F. Lighting - Once the illusion has been nearly perfected with all of its theatrical elements, it is set-up on stage and the lighting plot is designed by Lyn's assistant,, Marc LeBlanc, who is also her lighting and visual designer

MAGIC TRICKS

The tricks in this section are intended for students; teachers, however, may have fun with them, too. Before we start, let's quickly review the three cardinal rules of magic:

1. Never tell the secret. Being a magician is like belonging to a great secret society and only those within can learn and share the secrets. If you tell a secret, not only do you ruin the enjoyment for the spectator, but you also ruin the trick for other magicians.

2. Practice, practice, practice! Like anything in life, practice makes perfect. A magician doesn't want to look bad performing a trick in a clumsy style or revealing how it's done during a performance. Many magicians practice in front of a mirror or for other magicians. Some like Lyn use videotape.

3. Never do the same trick for the same audience. Part of the effectiveness in magic is surprise; when an audience sees the same trick twice, the surprise element is lost. The audience has a better chance of figuring out how the trick is done.

BEGINNER'S TRICK

A really good beginner's trick to learn is restoring a broken toothpick. It's easy, but effective.

A toothpick is worked into the hem along one corner of the handkerchief, and the cloth is smoothed out so that the preparation is not obvious.

First, remove the prepared handkerchief from your pocket, spread it out onto the table top and place the toothpick at the center of the cloth square. Then fold over the corners to the center, with the prepared corner going first. The smaller square thus formed is folded over again twice, first from the top and then from right to left. Now pick up the folded handkerchief firmly at the edge, which permits the loose toothpick to drop to an inner edge. Then grip the duplicate in the hem, its form clearly visible, and ask a spectator to break it into several pieces, through the cloth. The snap of the wood is audible, and the feel of the breaking wood is unmistakable.

Next, put the folded handkerchief back on top of the table and slowly unfold it, revealing the restored toothpick. Now flip it onto the table for examination and put the handkerchief into your pocket. Don't let anyone examine the handkerchief. It's a great little trick. Have fun!

RUBBING A PENNY INTO YOUR ELBOW

You've seen Lyn vanish animals and people; here's how you can vanish a penny in a simple yet mystifying way. Please follow these directions closely. Place your left hand behind your neck and show a penny in your right hand, saying that you're going to rub it into your left elbow. Rub the penny against your elbow and "accidentally" drop it (make this look convincing). Pick the penny up with your *left* hand and transfer it to your right. Do the above one more time. This time, when you pick up the penny with your left hand, make believe you're placing it into your right hand, but instead, secretly keep it in your left hand. After you place your left hand (with the penny) behind your neck, make believe you're rubbing the penny with the right hand into your left elbow. Drop the penny down the back of your collar (make sure your shirt is tucked in) and show both hands empty; you've just rubbed the penny into your elbow!

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