

*“People need stories more than bread itself...  
they tell us how to live... and why.”*  
–1001 Arabian Nights–

## **Tales of Enchantment**

*The Art of Magic*

Preview From **Leaping Lizards Magic**  
**Walt Anthony**  
*Conjurer & Teller-of-Tales*

Spellbinder Entertainment  
*“spinning tales and weaving enchantment”*

**Tales of Enchantment  
The Art of Magic**

***Published Version***

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***Contents***

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Merlyn, The Enchanter *Illustration by Gustave Dore, 1868*



—Dedication—

*To Masters of the Past*

Servais LeRoy, Tobias "Okito" Bamberg, Karl Germain

*To Masters of My Day*

Robert E. Neale, Jay Marshall, Charlie Miller

*and*

To the Masters of Tomorrow...



Preview From **Leaping Lizards Magic**



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## FOREWORD

**Robert E. Neale**

What Walt does, as performer and teacher, he does very well. I have known him in these capacities for several decades. Very early on, I realized that I valued his elegance, distinctiveness and sense of mystery.

To witness Walt on stage is to experience a high level of comprehensive and thorough craftsmanship. He cares about perfecting the details of performance. Of course, this involves scripting and the mechanics of handling props. But so much more is apparent— appropriate apparel, unique design of the apparatus, physical movement, and creative attention to the tables and settings of the stage. The reader of this book will be reminded of all the ingredients involved in creating magic.

Perhaps artistry is a term more suggestive of Walt's elegance. The theme of his work on stage and in this book is theatre. The understanding of magic as theatre is all the rage these days and we are the better for it. Walt has lived this theme for many years. When he first appears before us, even in this book, his focus on both magic and theatre is striking. His opening essay, "Instructions to the Audience," makes it clear that the performer can guide people wisely into the theatrical experience of magic. This is not to say about elegance that one must only look good on stage, but relate well to the audience and stimulate respect for the mystery of our art.

Of course, Walt is Walt in a way that no one else can be. His stories are his, and his so very precise scripts are most surely his alone. But, we can be inspired to find or own stories or tell his tales in our own way. Further, we are prompted to do this by his essays on the art of our craft. When he writes about his goals for performance —*inform, inspire, enrich, empower*— he is not prescribing, but asking us to discover our own objectives, evaluate our achievement toward them, and explore new possibilities. Walt is distinctive as a performer. Maybe, as a teacher, he is distinctive too as one who gently and kindly affirms that we can grow as performers by growing in thoughtfulness about both our art and ourselves.

I cannot resist adding a few comments on stories. Some of us in the areas of bizarre and story-telling magic are long on story and short on magic. The story can be lengthy indeed. And the magic is reduced to a trick to be seen as a conclusion, like a punch line at best. Also, the repetition of tales can be numbing, as in a focus exclusively on sentimentality or horror. Note that Walt has great variety in the moods and themes of his plots and that the magic is integrated with the whole. Even more, where his elegance of style really triumphs, is in his brevity. He does not simply go on and on, but speaks more like a poet than a novelist. (*I avoid giving concrete negative examples of these problems from myself and my other friends.*) Storytelling has its own dangers. The fact that it is a fundamental human behavior does not protect it from abuse. Rather, it seems to allow one to assume that problems can be ignored. Simply connecting a *trick* and a *story* is not what Walt is about.

When Walt walks on stage or welcomes us in this book, we know instantly that he is an actor. It is equally obvious that his acting is about magic. For him, it is not about tricks or juggling. And it is certainly not a distraction from what is important. Fooling the audience or showing off skills have a place, but do not rule over the mystery of enchantment. Relief from our usual focus on crucial matters in our lives is necessary and laudable. And yes, it may well be that disenchantment has ruled in Western culture as the sociologists remind us, but theatre remains as one venue for its defeat by our human inclination to wonder about the meaning of our lives. Theatre is magic, and magicians offer this magic specifically on the theme of mystery. The task is not an easy one. When pluralism runs rampant, there is no conventional path for achieving an instant connection between magician and audience. Regardless, Walt tells stories, as he affirms: *Spinning Tales and Weaving Enchantment*.

Not every tale we witness or read will appeal automatically, if at all. Some may seem too foreign— from the other worlds of different cultures, historical periods or developmental ages of individuals. Of course, he does it so well that we may be enticed anyway by the sheer beauty and meaning offered. I suspect that this is more likely to happen when Walt is performing on stage rather than on paper. So the challenge for the reader is to read adventuresomely, allowing the script to invade our sensibilities. Even if you

~x~

remain uninvolved, consider how you would tell the tale differently, change the story and/or prop to something more reflective of your own self and understanding of the world. I'd even proclaim: *Take the presentation that involves you least and require yourself to reflect on how you would handle it yourself.* I believe that Walt, in his own gentle way, is asking us to become more clear on who we are, what we care about, and why we respect enchantment.

I admire Walt's elegance, distinctiveness, and sense of mystery. I cannot duplicate it. But I cannot only admire it. I have been, and continue to be, stimulated by him to become more of what I want to be too— a weaver of enchantment. I hope that this book will stimulate you as well. There is no way for me to communicate the mystery that Walt inspires. It happens in his presence and can happen for us when we engage with his writing. The best I can say is that he can move us beyond the stalemate of belief and disbelief into the enriching experience of make-believe.

*Vermont, 2010*

## Preview From Leaping Lizards Magic

## INTRODUCTION

### **Kostya Kimlat**

Walt has a gift for giving magic. He gives it to his audiences when he performs. Each performance piece has been beautifully wrapped and the ribbon tied into an elegant bow on top. The magic experience is a gift the audience gets to unwrap, savoring every moment. And with this book, you've been given a gift as well.

Thirteen years ago, Walt became my coast-to-coast mentor without ever meeting me in person. His gifts of magic came to me via the post office and over the telephone. While the magicians I sessioned with in my home town guided me to study Ed Marlo and Derek Dingle, Walt sent me the works of Uta Hagen and Lao Tzu. He also designed and printed my very first business cards and never hesitated to give me practical advice on how I could further my path in the art, craft and business of magic. I am forever grateful to Walt for his efforts and I am now overjoyed that magicians around the world can be inspired by his magical creativity.

### **Preview From Leaping Lizards Magic**

Walt's objectives for his performances have permeated effortlessly through the pages of this book. As you read, you will find practical advice that will inform you; creative presentations that will inspire you; you'll further a deeper understanding that will enrich your magic; and if you're willing to stretch your magical abilities you'll be empowered to elevate the mystery and meaning of your magic. All of this while discovering wonderful examples of what can be achieved when one pays attention to detail and follows one's own vision. When Walt says that "We may never know the impact of our work, but if we do it with integrity and intention it may have consequences we can't even imagine," he is, I'm hoping, foreshadowing the effects of this book on the magicians of the future, young and old.

How young and how old? Well, I don't believe that age should be an issue when it comes to learning. As a teenager, I started writing my first magic "electronic newsletter" very shortly after I read the Tarbell course, and before I knew how little I really knew. Thankfully technology wasn't evolved enough to let me embarrass myself through video and I could only fashion a

ten page e-mail more often filled, luckily, with the writings of other, more experienced individuals that wanted to contribute. At a time when my 2600Hz modem would screech before the e-mail would be sent, Walt was one of my two-hundred and twenty subscribers online, and he was, at the time I shut it down because the impending start of high-school would derail my efforts, one of the few that took me seriously. While I received hate mail from people disturbed that they had listened to some punk kid, Walt saw a passion that needed to be ignited, or at least to be shown where the fire was hiding. That's when he became a mentor, and that's when I received my first glimpse of what magic could be.

This personal anecdote is shared not just because I am grateful to Walt, but because in his heart is his willingness to teach and inspire anyone he meets. More importantly, this passion is balanced equally by the burning desire to learn, both from the young and the old, and to evoke discussions and provoke thought. To the young generation of magicians, both Robert Neale and Walt should be taken as fine examples that one can continue learning for the rest of one's life. And as a reader, no matter your age, I hope you'll find something in these pages that both meets your expectations and turns them upside down. Be sure to empty your cup before asking for a refill.

### Preview From *Leaping Lizards Magic*

Just as you have now, everyone picks up a magic book for a different reason. And at different ages, we pick up different books. Lucky are the old that read the children's comics, as are the young that read the dusty classics. Creating something new is best when coupled with learning something old. And so, while the tricks in this book are considered classics, the magic that is created is undoubtedly fresh and different. While the story calls back to old myths and tales, the magic exists in the here and now.

Depending on the kind of magician you are, somewhere along the way you may laugh and think "I would never do that for my audience!" And that's precisely when you get to ask yourself: what would I do instead? Among the plurality of presentations herein you'll find playfulness and imagination; you'll find dreams, wishes, life, death and leprechauns. My two favorite pieces of magic are the ones Walt himself dismisses as "frivolous whimsy," so opinions will vary. Whereas most magic books create copy-cat magicians; this book will inspire creativity and get each of us to be our better selves, before, during, and after our performances.

As for the essays, I can tell you that at some point in the last decade Walt has frustratingly made me think, doubt, and re-think the many important questions he brings up in the book. The introspective process is sometimes discouraging, because we like to feel confident in our thoughts and actions. But nothing good comes easy, and a little doubt and discomfort are integral to artistic growth. Knowing Walt and talking to him about all aspects of our art has helped my magic. Reading this book has for me reawakened and reenergized that endless pursuit for becoming even better. I hope it does the same for you.

Along with the urge to expand our understanding of our art, to treat magic the way the greatest authors, painters, and playwrights have treated their arts, in these pages you'll find not just theoretical or pragmatic advice, but you'll find plenty of the practical. Walt writes about the bookends that start and end your show, and then he shows you in action what he has done with his. Even the individual pieces have their own bookends. While most magicians are happy to end with the magical climax, big smile, hands spread to receive applause, notice how the magic in this book usually ends: with a concluding remark or a parting thought. By giving each piece its own space, the audience has the opportunity to catch their breath and take in everything they just witnessed. Instead of rushing to put the props away and grab the next ones, Walt stands there, looks them in the eyes, and gives them a few final thoughts worth waiting for. When you look at the poetic scripts, notice how much verbal thought and care is taken to ease the audience back into reality. Remember that holding a lady's hand as she walks off stage is not just polite, but is a gesture that is noticed and appreciated by the entire audience. Your audience deserves care, both verbal and physical. The little details are exactly what they notice.

For Walt, a master of the details, magic isn't about the trickery, it's about the experience. Whether it's a line from a poem or a final point to ponder, there's simply much more to Walt's performance than the magic tricks that are at its core. There's passion, momentum, and the exchange of energy between performer and audience. As another poet, also named Walt, once wrote, "All things please the soul – but these please the soul well."

I hope this book will be, for you, a gift that keeps on giving. I am forever grateful for the gifts that Walt passed on to me, for the fire that he helped ignite. Walt knows that as we grow in magic, we must continue to be inspired; we must continue to face the unknown, the uncomfortable, the uneasy. Because that is the only way we can deliver; not by wishing for I hope this book will be, for you, a gift that keeps on giving. I am forever grateful for the gifts that Walt passed on to me, for the fire that he helped ignite. Walt knows that as we grow in magic, we must continue to be inspired; we must continue to face the unknown, the uncomfortable, the uneasy. Because that is the only way we can deliver; not by wishing for something, but by taking the time to discover and do what it takes to get there. I know that I can never perform the magic in this book the way Walt performs it, but his thinking has inspired me to write my own scripts and get me thinking about my own magic. And that's your responsibility (forget that word, that's too serious – it's your pure luck) now, as well. You'll hear Walt say: "Magic is a performance art, and magic consigned to the written page or a bottom drawer is meaningless." So now it's your turn. Unwrap this gift and let it inspire you. Let your mind flow with unlimited possibilities. Then pay it forward to your audience and give them the gift of magic they deserve.

Preview From *Leaping Lizards Magic* Florida, 2010

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I've been considering the idea of *Legacy* lately. What we leave behind that is of value and substance. If one is not afforded the legacy of heirs, what does one leave for the greater good that can enrich or inspire? After experiencing a few minor strokes last year, not only did the concept of legacy keep returning for me, but an urgency of "if not now when" which has led to more earnest intent on the gestation and birth of this book.

If my work is unique and practical it is because it has been audience-tested again and again, so I know my pieces appeal to lay audiences. Each has been shaped and honed during actual performance. My devotion to specializing in parlor and platform magic also sets my work apart from the larger canon of bizarre and storytelling magic, which leans heavily on close-up performance.

If I leave anything to ponder, it is the importance of *The Story* to emotionally support the magical happening, in tandem with equal importance of *The Magic* to sustain the story being told. My premise is that an evocative story can propel your audience into a place of make-believe so a theatrical suspension-of-disbelief occurs, replacing a curiosity about the methods you employ to execute your magic.

I hope this book rests in the hands of both dyed-in-the-wool Bizarrists, as well as the hands of more traditional magicians looking to expand their thinking and be more challenged by their magic. My hope is that young magicians, just formulating who they are and where they're heading on their magical journey, will read these pages and take to heart some of my theories and suggestions.

Many fine artists supported my magical interests and growth when I was in my formative years, and many more helped pave my way as I grew as an adult entertainer. It is only right that with this book I try to "pay it forward" and share some of the passion I feel for the arts, thus encouraging future entertainers to seek quality over convenience.

I know many magicians use books only as reference materials, flipping through and finding this or that piece that may be of interest to them. I've worked with my editors to structure this book so it flows more like nonfiction than a textbook. My intent is that readers will start at the beginning and wend their way down the path of my magical thinking their first time through, and only then look back at the essays and pieces which that made them pause on the journey.

I was clear in my intention when I asked Bob and Kostya if they would be kind enough to contribute my *Forward* and *Introduction*, for in these friends I see the archetypes of the wise mature Wizard and the young questing Hero. They both have much to offer from their respective vantage points of maturity and youth, as well as their diverse perspectives on our craft of magic. I invite you to explore more of their work, for I can't think of two more worthy colleagues to emulate.

This book contains the bulk of my discoveries along my magical path, but this is not the whole story; one day I would like to add *The Craft of Magic* and *The Business of Magic* to this volume's focus on *The Art of Magic*, offering a rounded account of what magic demands of us if we wish to successfully pursue it as a career.

Why do I practice this *Art of Magic*, and why do I feel it is important at this point in my career to share my journey towards an eventual mastery of our craft? For a clue to my motivations I invite you to open your Internet browser and search for the Dylan Thomas poem *In my craft or sullen art* – there you may find the seeds of my inspiration.

*radha soami...*

## What Is Story Magic?

Since ancient days,  
people clustered in groups and invented stories to explain the unexplainable  
—*the Seasons, the Elements, the Stars.*

The Stories, Fables, and Myths that arose were filled with  
*Wonder, Magic, and Healing,*  
and provided a foundation upon which a people explored their beliefs.

Shaman Priests, Druid Teachers, and Wise Women  
all understood the power of the Spoken Word  
—*while in our time “entertainment” is epitomized by canned-comedy on television—*  
the gulf has widened between our amusements and our inner truths.

At *Spellbinder Entertainment* we recognize the necessity of re-introducing  
these ancient forms of amusement in a new guise.

Why can a movie, with plot-twists and special-effects,  
move us so deeply when most live entertainers move us only to laughter  
—*if they elicit any emotional response at all?*

### Preview From *Leaping Lizards Magic*

As a contemporary conjurer, *Walt Anthony* combines  
the *Art of Magic* and the *Art of Storytelling*  
to evoke for today's audience a sense of  
Astonishment, Emotional Intensity, and Wonder  
—*things lost to many of us since childhood.*

The united powers of *Myth and Magic*  
can take us on a kaleidoscopic journey of feelings and experiences.  
They hold a mirror to our mind,  
and reflect the truth of the *Human Experience*  
in the form of entertainment.

Our presentations transport our audience to another world  
—called *Imagination*—  
and on this journey reveal the Truths of the Heart,  
while Magically entertaining the senses!



## Journey of a Mage

As a shy boy growing up in Chicago (like so many shy boys) I discovered magic at about seven years of age. My father saw magic as a way to have me pay my own way through college so he became my first eager manager and encouraged me to perform publically.

I joined the *Junior Magicians Circle* at the *Ireland Magic Company* (that was transitioning into *Magic, Inc.*) not realizing for many years that I was lucky to be in the midst of Chicago's magical renaissance, being mentored by some of the world's best entertainers including the gregarious Jay Marshall, the affable Jack Gwynne, and the surprisingly stern Charlie Miller.

By my early teen years manager/dad was booking me into a constant flurry of Blue and Gold dinners, Rotary clubs, Masonic lodges, and Shriner holiday banquets. I remember feeling utterly humiliated in the few painful months of shows performed while my voice was changing from boy-soprano to baritone, although the audiences thought it was part of my act.

My life changed forever in my mid-teens when I discovered the theatre and began acting in local plays, I could not guess that the future held more than two-decades of working as a professional union actor and director. The odd thing was I never explored the now obvious connection between *magic* technique and *theatre* technique.

I *did* earn my way through college with my magic. I had developed into a competent, interesting, but fairly standard comedy magician, with far too many brightly painted props and far too flashy costumes (in my defense that *was* the disco era).

Everything shifted when I moved to San Francisco during my thirties. There was very little work for union actors and I almost completely retired from theatre, except for occasional coaching, directing, or drama critic gigs. Without a creative and emotionally satisfying outlet, my magic felt lackluster, uninspired, and unfulfilling.

I began to guess that if I were to bring the dramatic, plot-driven, emotionally rich aspects of theatre to my magic, it would benefit me and my audiences. I re-read Dr. Gene Gloye's *Theatrical Magic*, Henning Nelms *Magic and Showmanship*, then the *Dariel Fitzkee Trilogy*. As the puzzle pieces began to come together, my transition period was a sight to behold, I was neither fish-nor-fowl, not a *traditional* magician and not a *bizarre* magician, I'm quite thankful that I did not work a lot during that period.

At first I felt I was the only performer making this difficult journey of discovery and rebirth, and was overjoyed to begin hearing about the work done at a *Mystery School* where like-minded magicians gathered once a year to experiment with the process of bringing "meaning" to their magic. Most wonderful of all I discovered *Magic and Meaning* by Robert E. Neale and Eugene Burger (with whom I'd actually crossed paths back in our youth). That book changed my life as well as my magic. Today I still consider it to be the must have bible for magical entertainers.

My fire and passion for magic was reignited, and I was off to meet Jeff McBride and the gang at *Mystery School!* I had chills the first time I met Bob Neale (cloaked and guarding a bridge at an initiation ceremony) I felt I'd found my long lost magical uncle. As the *Mystery School* conferences drew to a close my attitude and act had done a complete turnaround. I plummeted deeper down the rabbit hole by joining the online *Shadow Digest*, being invited into the *Inner Circle of Bizarre Magick*, and befriending the gloriously mad Gene Poinc, the scholarly Ed Solomon (DeNomolos) and the generous Carl Herron (Brother Shadow) who helped foster and deepen my artistic commitment.

I was totally terrified, however, fearing that no one would ever pay me to perform this style of magic in public. I was thankful to be proved very wrong during the next several years. A *Wizards and Dragons* show I had

developed for pre-teen events, led to my being one of only two performers nationwide sanctioned to create authorized limited *Harry Potter* shows based upon the actual books' content, although those permissions ended when *Warner Bros.* purchased the film rights.

I was also booking a thought-provoking motivational show called *Mirror of the Mind* for corporate clients, that to my surprise kept getting me both new and repeat gigs. I'm grateful to a number of clients including Bear Stearns, Borders, Time-Life, and United Way, who took a chance and bought into my vision, then brought me back for more. Then I was fortunate to be hired by a prestigious international publisher, to debut their A-list titles at public relations and author events, book conferences and conventions. I worked with them in an ideal *Masterpiece Theatre* style booth setting for almost a decade.

By blending my acting and theatre experience with my magical technique, I found that I could create original material with an emotional arc, that would take my audience on a structured journey to a place of wonder and enchantment and safely back again. I had developed a singular, commercial style that was well respected and in demand.

## Preview From *Leaping Lizards Magic*

Perhaps you have noticed that most *bizarre magick* is close-up in nature? As my focus became cabaret and stage size performances, I had to do quite a lot of pioneering to build a repertoire that was suitable to those platform venues.

In my early years I did close-up, cabaret, stage, slight-of-hand, illusions, adult shows, children shows, business shows— I tried to be everything to everyone. I later realized that there is just too much depth to the craft and art of magic to try to do it all.

Today I have a comfortable niche that I nurture and develop: I perform the *classic effects* of magic within the context of *theatrical storytelling* for parlor/platform sized audiences of twelve to two hundred people, at upscale corporate events and private celebrations. That's more than enough to manage in one lifetime, and it allows me to be a specialist rather than a generalist— You'll find that most of the work in this book has this focus.

I began to develop workshops and lectures which I've given for magical colleagues on both coasts of the United States and in Europe. I've had presentations and articles published in the *Linking Ring*, *MUM*, *Genii*, *Alter Flame*, *Beyond the Smoke and Mirrors*, *The Oracle*, and the *Shadow Digest Grymoires*. The pages that follow contain much from that body of work, along with the word-for-word, audience-tested pieces that over the course of a dozen years I've developed to entertain, enlighten, and earn a living as a *Conjurer & Teller-of-Tales*.

And above all,  
watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you,  
because the greatest secrets  
are always hidden in the most unlikely places.  
Those who don't believe in Magic  
will never find it.

—Roald Dahl, *The Minpins*—