



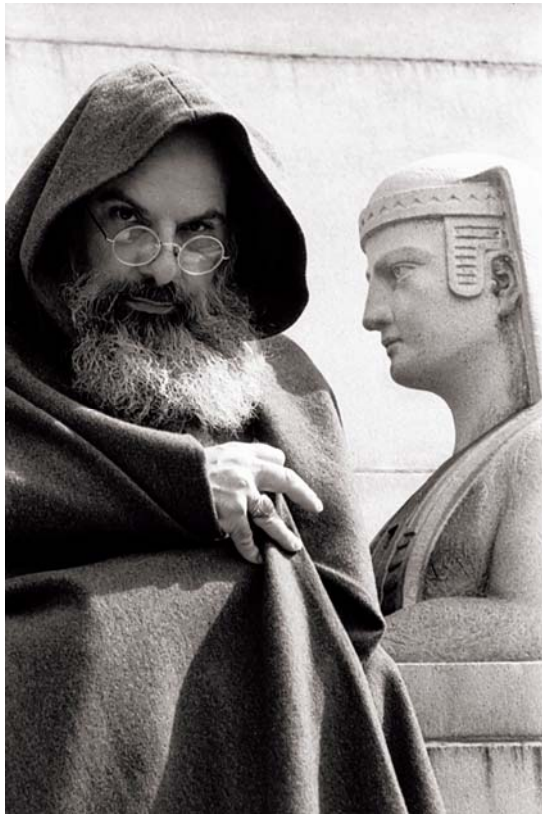
*Magicians open doors  
to worlds rarely seen*

# MAGICAL VISION

*Press Kit*

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*Cover design by Lara Marsh, Illustration by Michael Pajon*



## *A Magical Vision* /Long Synopsis

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*A Magical Vision* spotlights Eugene Burger, a far-sighted philosopher and magician who is considered one of the great teachers of the magical arts. Eugene has spent twenty-five years speaking to magicians, academics, and the general public about the experience of magic. Advocating a return to magic's shamanistic, healing traditions, Eugene's "magic tricks" seek to evoke feelings of awe and transcendence, and surpass the Las Vegas-style entertainment so many of us visualize when we think of magicians.

Mentors and colleagues have emerged throughout Eugene's globe-trotting career. Among them is Jeff McBride, a recognized innovator of contemporary magic, and Max Maven, a one-man-show who performs a unique brand of "mind magic" to audiences worldwide. Lawrence Hass created the world's first magic program in a liberal arts setting, where his seminar has attracted an impressive cast of thinkers and performers.

The film, however, is Eugene's journey. It began in 1940s Chicago, a city already renowned as the center of classic magic performance. Yale Divinity School followed, leading Eugene to the world of Asian mysticism. From there came the creation of *Hauntings*, a tribute to the spirit theatre of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the gore of the Bizarre Magick movement. Today Eugene's performances and lectures draw inspiration from the mythology of India to the Buddhism of magical theory.

On this stage, the magicians and thinkers open doors to an astounding world, a world that we rarely take time to see. *A Magical Vision* shines a small light on this magnificent vista.



## *A Magical Vision* /Short Synopsis

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Why is it that societies continue to need magicians to lie to them? It's a question magician and philosopher Eugene Burger addresses as the world-renowned 'Guru of Magic.' In 'A Magical Vision,' Eugene and a circle of other thoughtful magicians reveal why, from past to present, mystery is essential.



## *Director Bio* / Michael Caplan

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Michael Caplan is an independent film director and producer. Currently he is producing and directing a documentary entitled *Algren*, about the life and career of Nelson Algren, the National Book Award winning author of *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *A Walk on the Wild Side*. His most recently completed films are *A Magical Vision*, which spotlights Eugene Burger, a far-sighted philosopher and magician who is considered one of the great teachers of the magical arts, and *Stones from the Soil*, a personal documentary that aired on national PBS throughout 2005.

Caplan has produced three critically acclaimed feature films, including *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*, heralded by The New York Times as “praiseworthy, intense, frenetic, frank, and touching... preserving not just a performance but the spirit of a time”; *Peoria Babylon* starring Ann Cusack and David Drake, which the Chicago Tribune called “...wonderfully funny...charming all the way around”; and *The Windy City*, a favorite at the 1992 Black Harvest Film Festival. He has also directed and written several dramatic shorts, which have been screened on PBS in Chicago and film festivals nationwide.

Caplan lives in Chicago where he received his Master of Fine Arts in film from Northwestern University. He is a full-time professor and Associate Chair at Columbia College Chicago in the Film and Video Department.



## *Key Production Personnel*

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### **Sharon Zurek, Editor**

Sharon Zurek owns Chicago's Black Cat Productions, which produces independent features, short films, and social issues documentaries. Her film and video experience includes producing, directing, and editing commercials, broadcast, corporate programs, and independent films. Most recently Sharon worked as the post production supervisor on *The Merry Gentleman*, the directorial debut of actor Michael Keaton which premiered at this year's Sundance Film Festival, and the feature films *Root of All Evil* and *Drunkboat*.

Sharon has also worked with Mike Meiners, producer and director of the soon-to-be-released, *The Trouble With Dee Dee*, and production team Jennifer Vincent, Christina Varotsis and director Bruce Terris on *Dirty Work*. Earlier feature film editing work includes *Runaway Divas*, *Stray Dogs*, *Constructing Mulligan's Stew*, *The Chameleon*, and the video mockumentary, *The Orphan Saint*.

### **Christopher Peppey, Cinematographer**

Christopher Peppey is an award-winning cinematographer. His work consists of commercials, industrials, features and documentaries. Since 1990 Chris Peppey has been directing for Chicago Film Works, which he also co-founded. From 1998 to 2006, he taught in the Film/Video Department and Graduate Division of Columbia College Chicago, where he also served as the Program Director for Post Production. In 2006 Chris returned to full-time filmmaking with Chicago Film Works. He has developed a successful political satire web site, is working on two documentaries, and developing several others.

### **Larry Kapson, Sound Engineer**

Larry Kapson has more than 30 years of sound recording experience, including music composition and performance. He has been working professionally in film and video sound production applications since 1997. In 2003 Larry began recording sound and video for the Stradivari Society in 2003, and the following year he started The Progressive Art Laboratory, a production company offering all aspects of audio and video services. His directing and producing credits include *Playing on my Precious Violin* (co-produced with the Stradivari Society), *The Music of Contemporary Chinese Composers*, and the documentaries *The Hands of Ricci: The Life and Times of Violin Virtuoso Ruggiero Ricci*, and *The Stradivari Society in Asia*, both in post production.



### **Bryan McHenry, Animation**

After earning a Master's Degree in Music from the University of Tennessee, Bryan McHenry sang for three seasons as an Artist in Residence at Opera Memphis before moving to Chicago to go to film school. While completing his graduate work at Columbia College Chicago, Bryan created many short films including *Drawing Girls*, *The Cucumber Chronicles*, *David and Goliath*, and *The Betsy Wetsy Time Bomb Effect*, all of which were screened in film festivals around the globe. He is currently a part-time faculty member in the film department at Columbia College and an independent film maker. Most recently he created the graphics and animation for Michael Caplan's documentary *A Magical Vision*, and is completing his upcoming feature film debut *Oblivion*.

### **Bradley Parker-Sparrow, Music**

Chicago-born and self-taught pianist, arranger and composer, Sparrow is the son of a share-cropper and auto mechanic from South Carolina. In 1977 he founded Sparrow Sound Design Recording Studio, and since has engineered and produced more than 200 recordings. He is also co-owner of Southport Records with partner and wife Joanie Pallatto. Spanning a range of musical forms, his CDs on Southport Records include *Canned Beer*, *We Are Not Machines*, *Fire with Von Freeman*, *If It Wasn't For Paul* featuring bassist Tatsu Aoki, *Solo*, *The Desert Rat Suite*, *AM/FM* and *Latin Black*. Sparrow was Composer-In-Residence for the City Of Chicago in 1979 and 1980, and has taught jazz for the NEA Jazz in Schools program, and orchestration at Columbia College in Chicago. He has scored four feature length films and various documentaries, and composed ballets for Joseph Holmes, MoMing and The Chicago Dance Medium. Sparrow's original music reflects a variety of influences, from Bartok to Jackie Gleason.

### **Michael Pajon, Illustrations**

Michael Pajon has been making art since his Grandma taught him how to cut out little paper airplanes with a pair of safety scissors. Since graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2003, he's exhibited in London, Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. He lives and works in Chicago with his wife and two cats, and enjoys pie rather than cake. His etchings have been described as "jewels" and in an Artnet article as "sharing in the spirit of Kafka — funny, and with a strange sickly vivacity." His collages conjure up an American roadmap that seems both imagined and real: a blending of artifact and artificial, past and present; moments of our collective history encased in amber. Michael can often be found slumped over his desk, an X-acto knife in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.



## *Michael Caplan / Filmography*

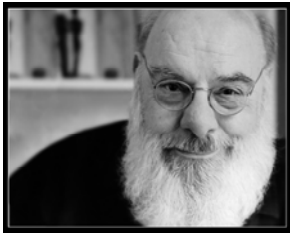
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### *Algren (In-production)—Director/Writer/Producer*



*Algren* is a feature documentary that will recast Nelson Algren, National Book Award-winning author of *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *A Walk on the Wild Side* (among others), as the under-celebrated voice for America's voiceless, and explore his life as an artist whose compassion for humanity—and the underdogs whom he regarded as the "true" America— is a message of universal relevance and timelessness.

### *A Magical Vision (2008)—Director/Writer/Producer*



*A Magical Vision* is a feature documentary spotlighting Eugene Burger, a far-sighted philosopher and magician considered one of the great teachers of the magical arts. Eugene and his peers have fostered a movement reviving the shamanistic roots of magic performance. Caplan traveled across the country to interview Eugene, Max Maven, Jeff McBride, Luna Shemada, Larry Hass, and other magicians and thinkers who have opened the doors to this astounding world. *A Magical Vision*, slated for release this summer, shines a light on this magnificent vista. (57 minutes).

### **Screenings**

Magic Chicago – October 2008

Gene Siskel Film Center – September 2008



***Stones from the Soil (2004)—Director/Writer/Producer***



*Stones from the Soil* is a personal documentary about a unique school in 1930's Germany, in which a small group of Jewish teenagers were trained to become the vanguard of a new society. One of those teenagers was the filmmaker's father, Rudolph Caplan. The school was called Gross Breesen and would eventually save Rudi's life and the lives of the 150 other students. The film blends traditional interviews with inventive visuals, historical photos with dream-like video, and social commentary with personal discovery. Ultimately, it is a tribute to a father, a reflection on memory and an important preservation of a formerly untold story of Jewish history from the Nazi era.

**Reviews**

Renowned photographer Shimon Attie, called *Stones from the Soil*, "a very moving and emotional piece" and Static Multimedia said it is "an intimate, tender, and often disturbing look at [Caplan's] heritage... poignant and entertaining." (57 minutes)

**Television**

National PBS Broadcast—May 2005. Broadcast on over 125 affiliates, including WNET in New York, WGBH in Boston, and WTTW in Chicago.

**Screenings**

DePaul University – 2007

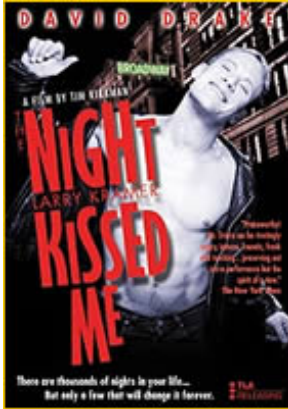
College of DuPage – 2005

Independent Feature Project—Midwest Film Conference—October 2003

American Anthropological Association conference—November 2003



***The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me (2000)—Producer***



This film interpretation of the one-man show performed and written by David Drake has played in over 75 cities in The United States and Canada. Featured in art-house theatres and over 50 film festivals throughout the world, this semi-autobiographical performance piece contains several poignant stories about growing up gay in the 1980s. From his opening monologue describing the impact playwright Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* had on him, to his riff on “Why I Go to the Gym,” Drake gives a unique, multi-character performance. Other segments include a vigil for friends and lovers he lost to AIDS, and his imaginative, idealized future where the plague is cured, and Matt and Ben remake *The Way We Were*.

**Reviews**

*The New York Times* called it “Praiseworthy...preserving not just a performance, but the spirit of a time,” while the *Toronto Sun* said it was “Funny, moving and provocative....” *The Village Voice* said, “Drake sustains an impossible balance between mordant wit and articulate bewilderment.” It showed in over 60 cities internationally, in festivals and art houses. (90 minutes)

**Honors**

**FACETS VIDEO—*Must See/Must Own: Gay and Lesbian Cinema***

**Television**

**Here! TV—***The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me* was one of three movies chosen to run during the premiere week of this nationally broadcast Pay-per-View network in 2003.



### **Festivals** (selected representation)

Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival—February 2001

Michigan Lesbian & Gay Film Festival—January 2001

Chicago Lesbian and Gay Film Festival—October 2000

North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival—August 2000

Outfest—Los Angeles Lesbian and Gay Film Festival—July 2000

Provincetown International Film Festival—June 2000

New York Lesbian And Gay Film Festival—June 2000

Maryland Film Festival—May 2000

London Lesbian And Gay Film Festival—April 2000

### ***Peoria Babylon* (1996)—Producer**



Jon Ashe (David Drake, “Philadelphia”, “Longtime Companion”), needs more from life in Peoria ... the 20 gay men who live in the small town are tacky, boring, and unimaginative. Candy Dineen (Ann Cusack, “A League of Their Own”), is well-bred, blonde, and broke. Together they own two halves of a failing gallery. Their lives are depressed and glum until a hunky art stud reveals his talent for art forgery and publicity stunts. As the three conspire, they imagine a most successful venture: an Art Massacre that will destroy some of the world's most famous paintings... with a twist. The unbelievable art con gains fame, wealth, success, and all the problems that follow. In the end, what remains are the pleas of a lesbian-porn drag queen turned congresswoman, her angry lover’s Godfather, his disgruntled wife, and a snooty gallery director.

### **Reviews**

The *Chicago Tribune* gave it three stars and called it “wonderfully funny...charming all the way around,” while the *Chicago Sun-Times* said it was “wacky and witty.”



### **Festivals**

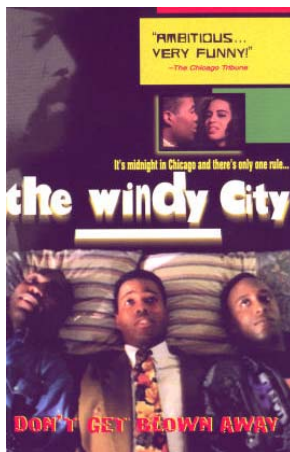
Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival—June 1998

Chicago Lesbian and Gay Film Festival—November 1997

Mardi Gras Film Festival, Sydney, Australia—February 1997

Texas Film Festival—February 1997

### ***The Windy City (1992)—Producer***



*The Windy City* is comic look at the reunion of four African-American friends the night before their 10th High School Reunion, starring Anthony Griffith (“Tales from the Hood”) and James Black (“The Don King Story”). (90 minutes)

### **Festivals**

Black Harvest Film Festival—October 1995



## *A Magical Vision* /Credit List

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### **Magicians and Scholars**

Eugene Burger  
Jeff McBride  
Max Maven  
Larry Hass  
Lee Siegel  
Bob Neale  
Luna Shemada  
Topas  
Losander  
Tony Andruzzi  
Jack Gould  
Crispin Sartwell

### **Editor**

Sharon Zurek/Black Cat Productions

### **Directors of Photography**

Chris Peppey  
Bruno George

### **Animation**

Bryan McHenry

### **Original Artwork**

Michael Pajon

### **All music composed/arranged/recorded/mixed/edited by**

Bradley Parker-Sparrow  
Vocals and additional recording/production-Joanie Pallatto  
Recorded at Sparrow Sound Design-Chicago 2007-2008

"Magic in the Air"

Composed and Recorded by RG Rhoades from the CD "Instrumental Magic --  
Signature Series, Volume Two"

Available from Blue Tram Music.

**Assistant Editors**

Hannah David

Mike Shaw

Adam Kaplan

**16mm Transfer**

Astro/Filmworkers Club

**Colorist/Online Editor**

John Cavallino

**Title Design**

Bryan McHenry

**Audio Mix/Supervisor**

Diego Trejo

**Re-recording Engineer**

William L. Cox

**Sound Design**

Michael Fuller

Dan Stunkel

Jason Amor

**Location Audio/Audio Consultant**

Larry Kapson

**Animation Audio Design**

Gunner Jebsen

Katie Kirby

Matt Betlej

**Assistant to the Producer**

Lara Marsh

**Special Thanks**

Suzanne Evita Caplan—

Your support has never wavered.

Maximillian Caplan

Larry Hass

Muhlenberg College

Russell Porter

Dennis Keeling

Reid Brody

Nikola Vlahovich

Chris Peppey

Larry Kapson

Bruce Sheridan

The Michael Rabiger Documentary Center

Jeff Spitz

Mark Dial

Tom Weinberg

The Film and Video Department, Columbia College Chicago

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Columbia College Chicago.**

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*A Magical Vision / Magicians & Scholars*

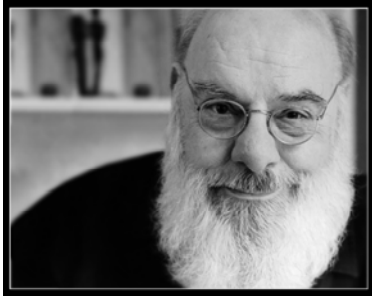
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## *Magicians & Scholars* / Eugene Burger

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Philosopher and Magician Eugene Burger is considered one of the great teachers of the magical arts. He has written fifteen best-selling books for the trade, starred in eight instructional videos, and lectured extensively to magicians' groups in over a dozen countries. His writings have been translated into several languages.

Eugene's deep understanding of the psychology and philosophy behind magic have won him international accolades, cover stories in conjuring magazines, and four awards from the famed Magic Castle in Hollywood.

But as much as he loves discussing magic with fellow performers, Eugene's true passion is bringing mystery and enchantment to the public. His special presence has led to numerous television appearances in Great Britain, Canada, Belgium, Finland and Japan, and on such highly acclaimed shows as *The Art of Magic* on PBS and *Mysteries of Magic* on The Learning Channel. He's been profiled twice on CNN.

During the past several years, Eugene has been a featured speaker for top executives of such major companies as Coca-Cola, Williams-Sonoma, Unisys and Pottery Barn, as well as top business schools including Wharton, and the graduate schools of business at the Universities of Chicago and Maryland. His talk, "How Magicians Think," applies his special understanding of deception and perception to the corporate world.



## *Magicians & Scholars* / Max Maven

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Mystery Performer Max Maven has performed his unique brand of mind magic to audiences in over two-dozen countries. His full-evening one-man show, *Thinking in Person*, had a critically acclaimed two-month run at the Beverly Hills Playhouse, and he has headlined nightclubs across the U.S., setting house records in over half of those venues.

Max has appeared on hundreds of television and radio programs and documentaries throughout the world, and acted on several comedy and dramatic shows including *Count DeClues' Mystery Castle*, the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, and *General Hospital*. As a consultant he has worked with David Copperfield, Siegfried & Roy, Doug Henning, Penn & Teller, Lance Burton, and many others.

Max is the author of *Max Maven's Book of Fortunetelling*. He is a Senior Research Consultant to the Center for Scientific Anomalies Research in Michigan, and on the Board of Advisors of the California ScienCenter in Los Angeles. Max Maven was the technical advisor for *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Magic* by Tom Ogden and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Improving Your Memory* by Michael Kurland and Richard Lupoff. He has also created "Maximize" seminars on mental efficiency and non-verbal communication for corporations.



## *Magicians & Scholars* / Jeff McBride

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Jeff McBride, a Magic Castle Magician of the Year, is recognized as a foremost innovator in contemporary magic. His signature fusion of mask, myth, drama and illusion reflects his lifelong study of magic's multi-cultural roots. He has appeared on several television series, and his first full-evening show, *Mask, Myth & Magic*, won acclaim Off-Broadway and on national tour, as well as at arts festivals in Barcelona (for the 1992 Olympics), London, Hong Kong, China, and Bangkok. Prior to going solo, Jeff was the opening act for Tina Turner, Diana Ross, and other top stars. He has been profiled in *Elle Magazine*, *Town & Country*, *Harpers*, and dozens of other publications worldwide.

In addition to his work as a performer, Jeff is a lecturer and workshop leader for clients including The Smithsonian, The Disney Institute, the International Brotherhood of Magicians, the Center for Symbolic Studies, and others. Jeff is founder of The Mystery School, an experiential retreat for magicians (and subject of a 1994 CBC-TV documentary hosted by Arthur Kent), and creator and co-founder of the WorldMagics™ Festivals, multi-cultural celebrations of the environment, or "enviro-magic." His video-taped series teaching "The Art of Card Manipulation" is among the best selling magic teaching videos of all time. With Eugene Burger, he has created and teaches regular sessions of "McBride's Master Class" at his home studio in Las Vegas, as well as semi-annual retreats for the further exploration of the magical arts.



## *Magicians & Scholars* / Larry Hass

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After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1991, Larry Hass, began teaching Philosophy at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania. His dissertation on the experiential features of perception was his gateway into magic. Recognizing that magicians were creating a type of perceptual and aesthetic experience that, to his knowledge, traditional philosophers had entirely ignored, Larry quickly began what was, in effect, a post-doctorate study of magic. Inspired by the writings of Eugene Burger, Larry plunged into great works in magic literature. His deep interest in both the scholarly study and performance of magic was the inspiration for the *Theory and Art of Magic* - his academic program that brings both sides of the art together.

Larry also has a national reputation for his scholarship in 20th Century European philosophy. He has recently finished a book on the great French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty entitled *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy* to be published in April 2008 by Indiana University Press. He also holds the executive position of Associate General Secretary for the International Merleau-Ponty Circle.

When Larry is not teaching magic performance or magic theory at Muhlenberg, he teaches a diverse array of philosophy courses, including "Philosophy and the Arts," "Phenomenology," "Being and Knowing," and "Postmodern Philosophy." He has received several distinguished awards for his teaching from both the University of Illinois and Muhlenberg College.



## *Magicians & Scholars* / Luna Shemada

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Luna Shemada has performed in top venues all over the world, including The Magic Castle, Caesar's Palace, the Moulin Rouge, the Chemaleon Variete, and more. Luna has been featured in television specials such as the PBS series' "Art of Magic", "Mysteries of Magic", and "Magic's Greatest Illusions", and on TLC's "Grand Illusions: The Story of Magic". She was recently awarded the Awarded Best Female Magician/Cabaret Artist at the World Magic Awards.

Luna Shemada is the daughter of legendary Japanese magician Shimada, and was just 8 years old when she began to assist him in all technical aspects of the show. At 12, she joined him as his on-stage assistant.



## *Magicians & Scholars* / Lee Siegel

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Lee Siegel is a magician, novelist and professor of religion at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In his non-fiction book *Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India*, Lee explores magic in India, from the low-caste Muslim street magicians to stage magicians who are descendents of royal court conjurers and seers.

In 1988 Siegel was a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow. He has received numerous fellowships and grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies, the Smithsonian Institute, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies. In addition Professor Siegel has been two Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching. He has been a scholar-in-residence at the Rockefeller Foundation, and twice at the Bellagio Study Center. He also was a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College of Oxford University, and is a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Siegel has published a number of novels including: *Who Wrote the Book of Love*, *Laughing Matters*, and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his novel, *Love in a Dead Language*. His most recent novel is *Love and the Incredibly Old Man* (2008).



## *Magicians & Scholars* / Crispin Sartwell

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With a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Virginia, Crispin Sartwell taught philosophy and the humanities at several universities before becoming the Chair of Humanities and Sciences at Maryland Institute College of Art.

In the 1980s, he worked as a copy editor and a freelance rock critic for magazines such as *High Fidelity* and *Melody Maker*. Crispin writes a weekly op-ed column distributed by Creators Syndicate, and which appears frequently on the op-ed pages of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. He has contributed opinion columns to the *The Washington Post* and *Harper's*, appeared several times on C-SPAN's *Washington Journal*, and written many scholarly articles.

Crispin is the author of a number of books, including *Six Names of Beauty* and *The Art of Living: Aesthetics of the Ordinary in World Spiritual Traditions*. He has also edited several books and given presentations on topics from "Teaching Primary Sources in Chinese and Indian Aesthetics" to "The Philosophy of Rap".