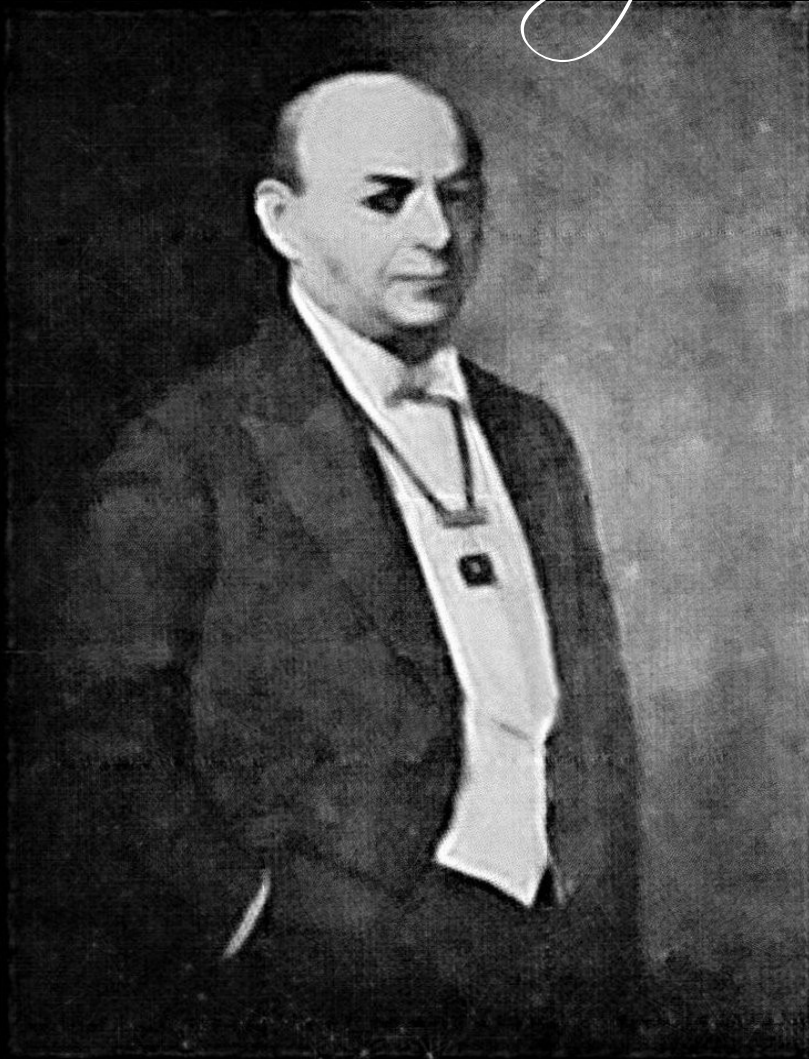


MALINI

And his magic



BY DAI VERNON

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**MALINI
AND HIS MAGIC
by
DAI VERNON**

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DENNIS PATTEN**

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FOREWORD

Max Malini was one of the most extraordinary personalities in the history of the performance of magic. In this book **Dai Vernon** shows how successfully Malini acted the role of magician, and explains the clever methods by which he entertained and mystified audiences all over the world. By being taken behind the scenes we are enabled to see why Malini became a legend.

Much of the material for this book was recorded on tape, with Dai Vernon speaking from detailed notes prepared in collaboration with **Faucett Ross**. The combination of Dai Vernon and Faucett Ross was ideal for compiling a book on Malini. Dai knew him over a long period, and by becoming as close to Malini as he would allow anyone to be, had been able to study the man and his magic. With an unequalled knowledge of magic, his inventive genius and supreme performing skill, Dai Vernon was able to understand every facet of Malini's magic. Faucett Ross, himself a top flight magician and close friend and confidante of Dai's, provided the initiative and drive required to assemble the facts and present them in chronological order.

Credit goes to **Charles Larkey**, one of the leading magicians in America's Midwest, for attending to the technical side of the recording and providing the necessary equipment.

The recordings were sent to **Harry Stanley** in London who played them back for **Mavis Murrell** to type. It was a long and painstaking task, but it provided me with the manuscript for editing.

On a recent tour of Australia, the well-known magician **Jay Marshall** met **Edwin A. Dearn**, an intimate friend of Max Malini. At Jay's suggestion, I wrote to Mr. Dearn, and he most kindly provided photographs and Maliniana from his collection. Additionally, his letters were of such interest that I have been able to compile a composite letter from the contents to form a chapter of the book.

Stanley Simpson of Southampton, kindly provided the actual cheque reproduced on page 87 and also lent me a copy of the book **OLD PINK'UN DAYS** by **J. B. Booth**, mentioned in Chapters One and Nine. Additionally, he drew my attention to the book **TWO GUN COHEN** by **Charles Drage**, in which Malini is mentioned. Morris (Two Gun) Cohen was one of London's East End Jewish boys who became a Chinese General—Malini was with him in Shanghai at one time, and his magical performance is mentioned on page 205 of the paper back edition (published by **Hamilton & Co.**).

Many magicians have kindly supplied material which has enabled me to check information on Malini. I have been able to study a very long

letter, written in 1926 by **Edward G. McGuire** to the late **T. Nelson Downs**. At that period, Mr. McGuire was acting as business manager for Malini, and was consequently able to make an intimate study of the great magician's methods and technique. The letter gives a detailed account of Malini's programme and explains the methods he used. Incidentally Eddie (Tex) McGuire, a fine sleight of hand performer in his own right, is the author of that much sought after manuscript **The Phantom of the Card Table** which details the methods of the elusive card expert **Walter Scott**.

Ronald Bishop kindly supplied me with a copy of his article on Malini, published in the I.B.M. (British Ring) **Budget**—August, 1958. This contains an eye-witness account by the late **Eric de la Mare** of Malini's full evening show with interesting sidelights on the methods used. Additionally, Ronald Bishop himself met Malini and saw his show at the Brighton Pavilion, where he played for one week in the Throne Room. The pack of cards used by Malini for his **Card Stabbing** at one of the performances Mr. Bishop attended, is now in the **Magic Circle Museum**.

The 1955 September issue of **Peter Warlock's PENTAGRAM** contained an interesting article by Eric de la Mare on Malini, which told of his reputation in the East and leads up to an explanation of Eric de la Mare's own method for producing a brick from a hat—an effect used by Malini (but with a different method) and later adapted by him for producing a block of ice.

Gerald Kosky in Los Angeles and **Frederica** in Glasgow both sent articles they have written on Malini, which enabled me to check, confirm and add to the material supplied by Dai Vernon and Faucett Ross. **Jack Avis**, **Will Ayling** and **Fred Lowe** also aided me in the search for 'Maliniana'.

Other sources of information from which confirmation of information has been derived are **OKITO ON MAGIC**; **Vernon on Malini** from **THE STARS OF MAGIC**; **Stanley Collin's INCONSEQUENTIALITIES** from **THE LINKING RING 1948**; **Bill Woodfield's MAGICANA** (May, 1946)—**MALINI'S VANISH OF THE DECK** and an interesting article by **S. Leo Horowitz**—**NOTES ON MAX MALINI** from **THE SPHINX**.

After reading the manuscript prepared from the original recordings, **Andy Clements** kindly wrote a paper containing valuable suggestions as to the treatment of the material for presentation in book form.

Last, but certainly not the least worthy on the list of credits, is **Dennis Patten**, whose excellent illustrations tell so much more than words.

Our thanks to all these good people who have enabled a record to be preserved of the work of one of the world's greatest magicians—**MAX MALINI**.

LEWIS GANSON.



Photograph by Edwin A. Dearn.

CHAPTER ONE

MALINI, THE MAN

I understand that Max Malini's real name was **Max Katz Breit**, but have only little knowledge of his early background. Although, over the years, I have endeavoured to fill the gaps in the information on his childhood, it would seem that all that is known is that he was born in the town of Ostrov, on the borders of Poland and Austria, in the year 1873 and immigrated to New York with his family at a very early age.

At the age of twelve, Max became an acrobat, but three years later came under the spell of **Professor Seiden**, a magician, fire-eater and ventriloquist who kept a drinking saloon on the Bowery. Max was an apt pupil and Seiden taught him sleight of hand tricks including 'The Cups and Balls', which he featured later in his work. By his early twenties he was a fully fledged busker and saloon entertainer and there is no doubt that the experience he gained under these hard conditions enabled him to cope with any situation. He would walk into a saloon, make himself known by the name that he had adopted, then perform with everyday articles which were readily available; knives, glasses, matches, etc. His early associates were **Professor Walters** and the famous **Emile Jarro**, who later became one of vaudeville's greatest comedy magicians.

During his middle twenties, Malini began to move in different circles; he became a private entertainer and the reputation he acquired with his entertaining magic gained him entree into the most exclusive circles—financial and social, both in America and Europe. A list of prominent people entertained by Malini sounds almost fantastic. He presented performances before several American Presidents at the White House, and had many Command Performances for British Royalty at Buckingham Palace. He received decorations or gifts from almost every Monarch in Europe and Asia. Not only did he merely entertain royalty, but in many cases he became their intimate friend. At one time he spent a considerable time as the guest of the Duke of Windsor, who was then Prince of Wales. On special occasions Malini wore on his shirtfront a gorgeously jewelled ornament which was presented to him by the King of Siam.



pretended to take the button from between his lips, but actually pushed it into his mouth. He did this very neatly, making a perfect illusion of seemingly taking the button from his mouth, and apparently holding it between his fingers. Then he brought his fingers down over the blank space (the spot on the coat where the button was originally), and he slid his thumb off the original button. With first a rubbing motion, he then lifted his hand slowly, and there was the button as it was at first.

To read about it makes it seem like a very simple trick, but well acted, and acted up the way Malini did, it was a veritable miracle.

To prove the strength of Malini's button trick, it should be mentioned that in 1922, at a public reception at the White House, Malini apparently bit a button off the coat of the late President Warren G. Harding. The result was that the next day the Washington newspapers ran a front page story describing the event, and it was the talk of the whole town for long afterwards. This well demonstrates Malini's ability to gain publicity by doing simple tricks in a dramatic manner, at the right time, and for the right people.

Thank you for reading this preview of “Malini and His Magic”.

The full version is available at

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