

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON
TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton



Highlighted Seminar Attendees

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[Chad Juros](#)

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MATT SCHICK

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By Simone Marron



Lance Burton.

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar has been educating and inspiring teens since 1994. It's been hosted at the I.B.M. Annual Convention since 2013. It is free to attend for teens between the ages of thirteen to nineteen during the two days prior to the start of the convention. Facilitators Jeff McBride and Larry Hass – Founder

and Dean, respectively, of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas – are always joined by surprise guests. In this series of articles, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants.

MATT SCHICK

Born January 9, 1992, in Robbinsville, New Jersey, Matt Schick attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar annually from 2008 to 2012. Matt is now the Senior Magic Producer of the truTV show *The Carbonaro Effect* and Co-Producer of Michael Carbonaro's live touring show. Matt has been on the road since graduating from college in May 2014, first shooting the television series in Atlanta before moving to Chicago, where it currently tapes. When they are not filming, they are on the road, having toured over one hundred thirty cities since April 2016.

Attending the seminar during his high school years, it was a challenge for Matt to take the time off from his studies, as it always fell during the school year. Now,



Matt Schick. PHOTO BY SUZETTE LUCAS



Michael Carbonaro (left) and Matt Schick working on set. PHOTO BY ROB BUCHWALD

being hosted by the I.B.M., that is not a problem for the attendees, as it always falls during summer vacation time.

When Matt was in high school, he performed four to five shows every weekend and never suspected the turn his career would take after attending the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. While in high school, Matt produced two benefit shows that raised \$29,000 for The Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania and brought in performers such as Mac King, Jason Bishop, and John Cassidy. Although Matt was a straight-A student, he was not convinced that he needed to attend college.

After all, his magic career was doing very well at the time. However, on the advice of Lance and Jeff, and all the facilitators in the room at the seminar, who advised that the teens study business or theater, Matt changed his mind.

Matt says, "The Lance Burton Teen Seminar was a huge driving force and pushed me to attend college and study business, which would prove to be very valuable in my career going forward." He went to Bentley University – a business school in Boston – and studied marketing with a media arts minor. During his free time, he found himself booking and producing shows with comedians and variety entertainers on campus.

Matt made many friends at the seminars, and even today, they are his best friends in magic. "I often call them up late at night to jam on new inspirations and ideas. So many important people in my life came from the conventions where I attended the seminar." Matt exclaimed, "I also met and befriended people like Lance Burton, Nathan Burton, and Michael Carbonaro, each of whom are hugely important in my life."

People who inspired Matt that he met at the seminars also include Eugene Burger, Jeff McBride, Johnny Thompson, and

Continued on page 101



Left: Early promotional photo. Right: Attendees of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar gather at Lance's home. Left to right: Matt Schick, Krystyn Lambert, Aaron Johnathon, Trigg Watson, Sterling Dietz, and Chad Juros.

Criss Angel. "The ability to bask in the generous advice and lessons from these magic legends was an invaluable moment in time for me," he reflects.

During his time in business school, Matt approached Nathan Burton, the Vegas headliner, to see about interning for him during summer vacation, rather than interning for a Fortune 500 business. Nathan initially turned him down, but Matt persisted until Nathan agreed. Matt tells us, "I continued to travel back to Vegas every summer and winter break during college. The lessons I learned from Nathan, such as establishing and maintaining relationships with ticket brokers, and how his self-produced show has survived for so many years, were priceless."

Matt has many fond memories of his time at the seminars and the hosting conventions. One of the highlights was finally being able to attend the Lance Burton show, after watching him years earlier on television.

When Matt was asked for advice that he would give to teen magicians, he said, "Beyond the magic tricks and performing tips that they are going to learn, they need to embrace the people around them, whether it be their fellow teens, Lance, Jeff, or any of the other professionals who donate their time. We are a part of this community that is so full of love, brotherhood, camaraderie, and sharing. These people will be their friends, colleagues, and family for the rest of their lives."

Lastly, Matt advises teens to ask questions and not to be afraid of the word "no." He says: "Whether you are looking for a mentor, or permission to perform another performer's piece, chase these things and be persistent. The worst thing that will happen is that you will hear 'no' and move on. Embrace that. Take the risk and ask."

Matt acknowledges the shortcomings he had. "I wasn't the best finger-flicker and certainly didn't have the best competition act," he remembers, "but the Teen Weekend allowed me to share what I was learning, which was a bit unconventional compared to the other teens in the program." The house of magic has many rooms, and Matt found the one he fitted in comfortably. Although he infrequently performs at the moment, his life is dedicated to magic, and he feels very grateful for all the opportunities he has been given. He exclaimed, "As a child, I never would have believed that my adult life would entirely revolve around magic. I'm very fortunate."

Simone Marron serves as International Secretary of the I.B.M. and webmaster at www.magician.org. Reach her by e-mail at ibmsecretary@magician.org.

DANNY COLE

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Current Danny Cole promotional photo.



Lance Burton.

articles, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants.

Danny Cole

Danny Cole is a two-time winner of the Stage Magician of the Year award from the Academy of Magical Arts, and he just fooled Penn & Teller on *Fool Us*. Danny was born and raised in Huntington Beach, California, and now calls Beverly Hills his home.

Danny participated twice in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar – in 1994 when it was part of the Desert Magic Seminar and again in 1996.

Danny recalls: “The seminar was bundled with a stage magic competition for teenagers. As a participant in the contest, we were also invited as guests to see Lance Burton’s and Siegfried and Roy’s shows, and given a backstage tour of the Hacienda theater where Lance was performing at that time. We were also invited to meet Siegfried and Roy and visit their dressing room at the Mirage.

“At the first seminar in 1994, the organizers of the event really pulled out all the



Lance Burton (left) with Danny Cole.

stops and treated the teenagers like VIPs. Stan Allen and Lance Burton gave talks, and they put on a luncheon for us that was attended by other stars from the world of magic like Channing Pollock and Fantasio.

"I'll never forget my time at the seminars. I aspired to be like these heroes of mine. It was thrilling to be around them."

Meeting his magic idols and hearing their thoughts and advice on magic gave Danny direction, and he began to understand the important aspects of his show, and where his attention needed to be focused to be successful.

Participating in the contest was the first time Danny had a chance to share his

magic with a large audience of magicians. It gave him confidence and encouraged him to continue working on his show.

When Danny returned to the seminar in 1996, he competed and won the contest. This led to Lance Burton inviting him to be a guest on his second television special. He recalls, "This was truly my big break in magic, and it opened the door to me to work as a magician for the rest of my life."

The seminar was also an important networking opportunity for him. "Not only did I meet the magic stars," Danny says, "I also got to meet other teens from around the country who shared a similar interest in magic. These friendships will last a lifetime."

Since Danny's time at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, he has pursued a career as a professional magician. He graduated from Pomona College in Claremont, California, in 2000, where he studied politics, philosophy, and economics. The act he developed as a result of participating in the teen contest continued to grow, and he has now performed it all over the world.

When asked what advice he would offer to today's seminar participants, Danny didn't hesitate to answer. "It is the same advice Lance Burton gave to us at the first Teen Seminar: Do as many shows as possible."



Left: Lance Burton, Danny Cole, Adrian Van Vactor, Ash Adams, and Melinda at the 1994 Lance Burton Teen Seminar. Right: Ashley Springer, Danny Cole, Lance Burton, Thomas Meier, and Dylan Ace at the 1996 Lance Burton Teen Seminar.



CHAD JUROS

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Owner of Captivate Entertainment LLC, Chad Juros was born in Toms River, New Jersey, but now lives in Egg Harbor Township, just outside of Atlantic City. Chad's story is inspirational. His childhood was not that of a normal child. At the age of three, he developed leukemia. He endured a long road to recovery, with him spending much of his childhood in the hospital where he practiced his magic for hours each day. At the age of nine, he was finally released from the hospital, only to have his father diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. He lost his father a short time later.

Current promotional photo.



Chad's first promotional photo.

Chad is a full-time motivational speaker. Along with running his entertainment company, he is also the founder of a non-profit organization called Spread the Magic Foundation. He told us, "My foundation helps raise funds and awareness for pediatric cancer in hope that the patients and their families can find the magic in their lives, like I did. Just recently, I was honored on *Good Morning America* for my non-profit work with David Copperfield."

Chad attended the Lance Burton Teen Weekend at the World Magic Seminar in 2007 and 2008. He says, "It gave me the

tools and knowledge to take my career in magic to the next level. Along with becoming a better entertainer, I met other young magicians who are still great friends today."

Along with creating lifelong friendships, Chad's favorite memory was getting to spend time with master magicians, like Lance Burton. Chad recalls, "We were all sponges, trying to absorb as much knowledge from the masters in our art. The time spent with the masters is priceless." Chad recommends that all teens with an interest in magic attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in Scottsdale. He says, "The experience will provide you with the ability and the motivation to become the best entertainer you can possibly be."

Chad recommends that today's participants of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar perform as much as possible. He explains, "You will learn something new from every performance, which will help you to become a stronger entertainer for all of your future performances." Chad feels that his life and career have been heavily influenced by his time with the weekend. He concludes by telling us, "I made amazing connections and friends, which helped further my magic technically and my career through the years."



Left: Chad Juros and Lance Burton, 2007. Right: Attending the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2007, left to right: Trigg Watson, Chad Juros, Bradley Mayhew, Leah Orleans, Jessica Jane Peterson, and Krystyn Lambert.

SHIN LIM

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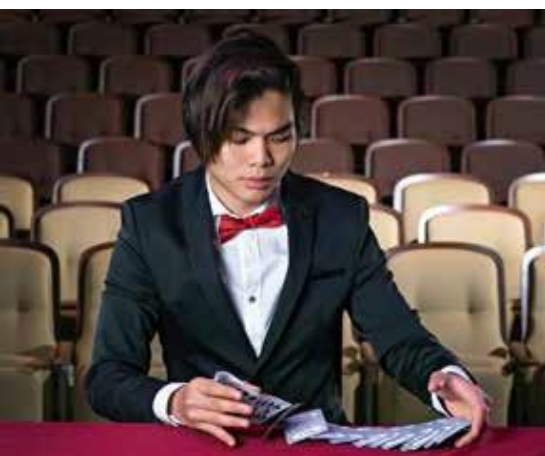


Photo of Shin Lim today.

Probably the most famous attendee is Shin Lim. He was born in September 1991 in Vancouver, Canada, and moved to Singapore when he was six years old. When he was eleven, he moved to Acton, Massachusetts, where he spent his teenage years.

Shin attended the Lance Burton Teen Weekend in 2010 when he was eighteen, and he had only been performing for less than three years. Also competing in the youth close-up contest at the World Magic Seminar, he took first place that year.

Shin remarks, "I got to meet so many magicians at the weekend and some of



Left: Shin Lim and Henry Vargas, 2010. Right: International President Shawn Farquhar presents Shin with First Place in Close-up at the 2015 I.B.M. Convention in Jacksonville, Florida.

my best friends, like Ben Jackson who won first place for adults when I took first place in the youth category. Other great friends I made there were Henry Vargas, Shogo Shimura, and Hiroki Hara, as well as Reuben Moreland, who I befriended at a previous I.B.M. Convention.”

Some of Lim’s favorite memories of the seminar were meeting Siegfried & Roy and Lance Burton, and of course the late-night jams – staying up late and hanging with great magicians and making life-long friends. Shin explains: “Here I was able to



Shin Lim with Siegfried & Roy, receiving the first place close-up award, 2010



2010 group teen seminar photo. Shin is second row from front, and second in from the right.

find people that did what I did, and appreciated the same style of magic, and I got to hang out with them. I barely slept at that convention.”

Shin took a little break from magic to attend college and focus on piano, but due to developing carpal tunnel syndrome, he had to abandon his love of music and returned to focus full-time on his other love – magic.

In 2013, Shin did a tour of China with his magic, and has never looked back. He had competed in 2009 at the I.B.M. Convention, where he took second place, but returned in 2014 to become the North American champion in close-up when he took first place at the I.B.M.-S.A.M. Combined Convention in St. Louis. This took him to FISM where he took first place in close-up in 2015 in Rimini, Italy. Just prior to FISM, Shin was awarded first place at the I.B.M. Close-up Contest in Jacksonville, Florida.

Shin fooled Penn & Teller on Fool Us in 2015, and then again in 2017, but of course he is now known best internationally for his 2018 first place win in America’s Got Talent – the pinnacle of all television contests. He recently headlined a series of America’s Got Talent shows on the Las Vegas Strip, and has just completed a five-week run on Broadway with The Illusionists.

Thanks to television and YouTube, the brilliant magic of Shin Lim has been viewed by more people than anyone in the history of magic. The numbers are staggering. His first appearance on Fool Us alone has over 54 million views and 6.3 Million views of his second appearance. He has seven million views of his appearance on Ellen; 3.8 million views on America’s Got Talent; and 7.1 million views of his 2015 FISM act – to say nothing of the viewing audiences of his television and public appearances.

Shin’s advice is for teens to attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. He tells us: “It’s such an amazing opportunity to learn from these great masters. Compete!

I strongly believe in competition. I think it's a great way to set goals and deadlines. It teaches you discipline. It helped me to improve and make better acts. If you want to be better at magic, you should go to the seminar."

Shin remembers that the Lance Burton teen event made him passionate about the magic community, as well as the art of magic. He continues, "I had never had so much fun and couldn't wait to return the following year. It was quite amazing and refreshing to be around so many like-minded people. For anyone who is living in an area where there are not many magicians, this is the place to go."

HUN LEE

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Left: Hun Lee. PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN KONOPIX
Right: Hun Lee's "Rewind" act.



Lance Burton.

Hun Lee was born in 1991. He grew up and still lives in Incheon, South Korea. He was a participant in what is now called the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in Las Vegas in 2008, 2009, and 2010. In 2008, he entered the WMS teen contest, and took first place, winning the Lance Burton Award. In 2011, he won the coveted SARMOTI award from Siegfried & Roy. In 2014, he took first place at the joint I.B.M.-S.A.M. Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, which enabled him to enter FISM the following summer in Rimini, Italy, where he was awarded third-place prize in General Magic with his "Rewind" act.



*Left: Hun Lee and Jeff McBride with the SARMOTI Award in 2011.
Right: Lance Burton and Hun Lee.*

Hun Lee talks about his Lance Burton Teen Weekend experience: “My first one was a shock to my life. I could see a lot of magicians in front of me who I had previously only seen on video. Unlike Asian culture, I got to hang with both young and senior magicians. I was surprised to see a relaxed Lance Burton hanging with us. I really enjoyed this program.”

Hun’s favorite memories were the pizza parties at Lance Burton’s home which many famous Las Vegas magicians attended. He particularly enjoyed competing and watching his new teen friends and other magicians performing in Vegas.

Until last year, Hun Lee worked with the Korean magic team “Snap,” a group of talented Korean magicians. They performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2016 where they won the Best Production award. You can see a clip from that show here: bit.ly/Snap2016Edinburgh. The show was produced by Grue Jarm Productions. The direct translation from Korean means “Any sleep briefly broken” – the starting point between reality and imagination.

In South Korea there is still conscription, and Hun has now left “Snap” as it is mandatory that he serve for two years

in the military. Hun explains, “There are two types of military service, the normal army and social work. I am in social work. During my service, I will work on new ideas, and in 2020 I will return to magic.”

Hun highly recommends the Lance Burton Teen Seminar for teens with an interest in magic. He explains, “I don’t think there are many programs out there for teens to learn and mix with other magicians. You will learn a lot about magic and relationships with teen friends who share your interest through the seminar. I made lifelong friends there.”

Hun believes that the event helped him achieve his major goal of winning a FISM prize. He understands that life as a magician can be difficult and takes a lot of work and commitment. He loves magic and his memories of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar give him strength to continue in his career. He tells us, “I know future participants will have a great experience with this program.”

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Left: Group shot from the Seminar, left to right: Aaron Jonathan Rivkin, Krystyn Lambert, Bill Cook, Leah Orleans, Matt Schick, and Hun Lee. Right: Hun Lee receives the Lance Burton Teen Award in 2008. Left to right: Jeff McBride, Eugene Burger, Hun Lee, Lance Burton, and Nick St. Erne. PETE BIRO PHOTO



PAUL KERSH

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Promo shot while interning at Magic Live. PHOTO BY RICHARD FAVERTY

Paul Kersh was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1989 as Paul Kirsch. At age twenty-nine, he has just performed for the first time on the stage of the Palace Theater at the world-famous Magic Castle.

In 2009, he was a participant in the event now known as the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. Paul recalls how inspired he was to see young magicians performing for Eugene Burger, Lance Burton, Larry Hass, and Jeff McBride, and he feels that receiving their feedback on what would be necessary to get to the next level was invaluable. "Seeing those magicians interact with young magicians is something that I carry with me. It was the first time I got to perform the *Chaos to Order* effect for Eugene, and I felt that was an opportunity to show my skills. It led to me having lengthy discussions with Eugene."



Group shot at Lance Burton's house, 2009. Paul is third from the right in the back row. PHOTO BY PETE BIRO

Another favorite memory is of the bus ride to Lance Burton's house for the pizza party. "I sat with Hiroki Hara from Japan," he remembers, "and although we didn't speak the same language, we found that we both spoke the language of card manipulation. He was always trying to get us to do those circular fans."

Paul recalls, "The year I was there, Mac King was a guest lecturer. The rope routine that I do in my act now is a derivation of the rope routine that Mac taught at the seminar. His routine is a version of Shigeo Takagi's original routine." Paul learned from Eugene Burger to have a checklist of items that will make his routines more efficient. For example, he did not want to use a table in his rope routine for the scissors, and he figured out a way to make the scissors part of his costume, and to use that for misdirection.

After the seminar, Paul graduated from high school and spent the following year touring the East Coast with his magic. He then made the move to Las Vegas to be near more magicians and closer to high-caliber shows. He attended the University

of Nevada, Las Vegas for five years, where he studied French and Italian. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology. He now does a lot of work in the psychology field and volunteers at the Veteran's Affairs Hospital.

He has continued performing, and he worked with Jeff McBride for several years at Wonderground in different aspects of the show, including lights and stage managing.

Paul also worked for David Goldrake during his run at the Tropicana. He started originally as a script consultant. He then filled in as production manager, which resulted in him taking on the job for the remaining three months of the contract.

In January, he got the opportunity to perform three pieces in David Goldrake's show at the Magic Castle for twenty-six shows.

Paul's advice for today's teens is: "Prepare at least one scripted close-up magic effect that you can do for anyone, and get feedback from your peers and your teachers. Talk to everybody, and make as many connections as you can. Just do it – go to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar."

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Left top to bottom: Paul performing at the Magic Castle, January 2019. PHOTO BY TAYLOR WONG
Paul with the cast and crew from David Goldrake's Imaginarium on closing night, September 30, 2018.
Above: Paul Kersh and Jeff McBride, 2008.

KRYSTYN LAMBERT

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Krystyn Lambert was born in 1991 in Malibu California. She has lived both in Las Vegas and New York, and currently lives in Los Angeles.

Krystyn first participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2004. She continued attending every year until she was eighteen years old.

She says, "The Lance Burton Teen Seminar impacted my life in many lasting ways, primarily though the amazing bonds I created with other magicians throughout the years." She recalls, "When I first attended the seminar, it was my first time at a convention. I was nervous and overwhelmed, but Lance, Jeff, and Eugene welcomed me with such open arms. I spent a substantial amount of time with Eugene and Max Maven, who taught me a lot about interacting with my audiences and, as they put it, 'handling



Krystyn at a *Make BeLIEve* screening.



Krystyn's first time attending the Seminar in 2004. She is in the third row from the front, third from the left. PHOTO BY PETE BIRO

humans.'. I constantly draw on the advice they offered me when I was a teen."

In 2009, Krystyn met a documentary crew while attending the Junior Program at the Magic Castle. They went to the World Magic Seminar to follow Krystyn in the youth contest. Krystyn was featured in the award-winning film *Make Believe*, which followed her and five other teen magicians competing in the World Magic Seminar youth stage contest. Lambert tells us, "That definitely changed my life!"

Another fond memory Krystyn has is getting bit by the *Shell Game* bug thanks to Bob

Sheets. Lambert recalls, "I remember showing what I had learned to Jay Marshall, and he shared some of his own handlings with me that he hadn't even published. Because that's what you get with the Lance Burton Teen Seminar – to meet the amazing people that Lance and Jeff bring together. These people will introduce you to new avenues of thinking about magic, performance, and expanding your horizons in ways you would never expect."

Krystyn highly recommends that teen magicians attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. She explains, "You make friends with your peers and connect meaningfully with them. You have a deep love of magic in common, and it's a special thing. Meeting magic peers online may be important, but it can't replace the bond you'll build communing with other teen magicians. I made lifelong friends there, and I don't take that for granted. I feel so fortunate to have these amazing magicians in my life, who challenge me and engage with me on levels that no layman friend could."

Since attending the Seminar, Lambert has starred in Criss Angel's Spike TV show *BeLIEve*. She also had a nine-minute solo act in his live show at the Luxor in Las



Left top to bottom: Johnny Thompson, Krystyn, and Jami Ian Swiss. Ali Bongo, Krystyn, and Jay Marshall.

Vegas, and toured the country with *The Supernaturalists*. She is currently working on her newest live show, and has been consulting on magic TV projects.

When asked what her advice would be to teens in magic today, Krystyn advised, “Pay attention to the details of *why* things work, as opposed to just *how* things work, because ultimately that is the element that can apply to whatever it is that you’re working on, even if it’s in a completely different realm. You may think you’re only interested in a specific type of magic, but you may find a piece of information from a lecture about something totally different that resonates with you. Don’t be afraid to explore new ideas and new magic. It’s all about finding what works for you, and your artistic journey.”

At Krystyn’s first Seminar, Jamy Ian Swiss told her, “Magic is a means of self-expression.” And she applies that to everything that she creates and performs. She doesn’t want to just gratuitously do magic tricks, she wants to know how doing a trick in a certain way will communicate the point she’s trying to get across. She concludes by telling us, “The Lance Burton Teen Seminar helped to get me thinking about the way I present myself and my magic.”

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BEN NEMZER

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron

Join us for the 2019 Lance Burton Teen Seminar. If you are between the ages of 13-19 and registered to attend the I.B.M. Convention in Scottsdale, Arizona, you can attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar absolutely free! (A *huge* thank you goes to the I.B.M. Endowment and Development Fund for sponsoring this event.)

This year will be epic! The seminar will be facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass – the founder and dean, respectively, of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas. They will be joined by surprise guests you won't want to miss.

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In this series of articles, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants. Guest presenters are also always an exciting part of the seminar. Hundreds of teens have attended over the years and many have gone on to successful careers in magic. This column features the success stories of some of these attendees. This month we feature Ben Nemzer.



Ben Nemzer.

Ben was born and raised in Princeton, New Jersey. He moved to Manhattan fourteen years ago. In 2005 and 2006, Ben participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. "It was a great way to meet people," Ben tells us.

Nemzer has met a lot of his magic heroes over the years, and ironically has occasionally been *disillusioned*. This was not the case at the seminar. "Twelve years later," he says, "I'm still in awe of how personable and generous Lance Burton, Eugene Burger, Scott Hitchcock, and Jeff McBride were. Lance answered any questions we had, from match pulls to magic theory – nothing was off limits. Sometimes I meet people who have big egos, and I think, 'Lance was possibly the most successful and accomplished magician ever, yet he had so much humility.'"



Left: Eugene Burger, Ben Nemzer, Vinny Deponato, and Jeff McBride. Right: With Chad Juros.

Ben has many fond memories of the seminar, but some of his favorites are working with his roommate Vinny Deponato on his act, setting up a “card through window” (and getting a card on the outside window of the twentieth floor), learning a really cool coin trick from Eugene Burger, meeting Criss Angel, and jamming magic until the latest hours with his new friends.

Nemzer says, “I highly recommend the seminar to all teens. It’s an amazing opportunity to work with the foremost practitioners in our field and to develop magic in

a fun and creative environment, with people of similar age and interests.”

Ben studied theater in college, and when he wasn’t taking classes, he was the magic demonstrator at the world-famous FAO Schwarz on Fifth Avenue.

Before Nemzer was performing magic fulltime, he was a magic teacher, as well as consultant for film, television, and theater. He has had notable private students including Jim Axelrod from *CBS Nightly News* and teenage Nobel Peace Prize Winner Malala Yousafzai. He holds a teaching certification from New York State, K-12 with a special certification in Theater Education.

Since attending the seminar, Ben has made a living performing magic onstage around the world, and at sophisticated gatherings in Manhattan. In New York City, he has performed with *Magical Nights* at Feinstein’s at the Loews Regency Hotel for over three years, and regularly performs onstage in the longest running off-Broadway magic show, *Monday Night Magic*. He has been a staple at many New York locations, including Victorian Gardens Amusement Park, The Cutting Room NYC, Bryant Park, and even a secret underground ninja restaurant. He is a performing member of both The



Left top to bottom: At the seminar with Lance Burton. At the seminar with Max Maven and Scott Hitchcock.

New York Friar's Club, the Magic Castle in Hollywood, and has been an annual guest lecturer at Princeton University on *Magic and Showmanship*.

Ben's television credits include Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, Howcast, Netflix, Discovery, Fox Sports, and he was featured in the *New York Times* for his "magical" wedding.

Although best known for his private close-up performances for Manhattan's elite, he also regularly performs at resorts, casinos, colleges, and festivals. His long list of corporate clients includes AT&T, Shake Shack, Merrill Lynch, and Listerine. In the last year he has been performing on cruise ships including the Norwegian, Disney, and Carnival, lines.

Ben's advice to teens would be to make, and not to burn bridges. He tells us: "The friends you make at the seminar will become your colleagues. Don't be daunted by other people's skills. Try and surround yourself with people who are better than you. It will make you a better magician. Don't be afraid to admit what you don't know. Ask questions which will skyrocket your knowledge and skill."

You can follow Ben Nemzer on all social media platforms at @bennemzer. His website is www.bennemzer.com.

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DEREK McKEE

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

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Derek McKee

Derek was born and raised in Littleton, Colorado in June of 1994. He now calls Los Angeles his home. He participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar from the age of thirteen every year until he was seventeen.

Derek tells us, "The seminar was life-changing for me. It brought into my life a really great community of magicians that I didn't have back home in Colorado – an amazing group that allowed us to grow together, along with hands-on training from the best in the world. The seminar opened up a different perspective on what magic is, and how you can do it professionally."

Some of Derek's favorite memories were learning from Joshua Jay, Max Maven, Jeff McBride, Larry Hass, Eugene Burger, Jon Armstrong, and of course, spending time with Lance Burton, and taking guidance from him.



Above: Photo at Lance Burton's House of the 2010 group. Derek is in the back row, fourth from the right. PHOTO BY PETE BIRO. Right: 2010 participants. Derek McKee is front row, second from the right. PHOTO BY PETE BIRO



Top to bottom: Clay Tweel (Director of Make Believe), Krystyn Lambert, Bill Cook, Hiroki Hara, Lance Burton, Derek McKee and Steven Klein (Producer of Make Believe.) At the 2011 event, some of the participants demonstrate their dexterity with playing cards. Derek McKee is second from the right. Some of the Make Believe cast at the 2011 screening at the World Magic Seminar. Left to right: Jeff McBride, Eugene Burger, Krystyn Lambert, Derek McKee, Hiroki Hara, Bill Cook, Clay Tweel, and Lance Burton.

McKee highly recommends that teens attend the seminar, and tells us in his own words, "It gives teens an education and community that they can't get elsewhere. The best in the world are brought in to teach you magic. This is a place for any young magician, no matter how serious they are, to go and learn from the best."

Derek competed four times in the Teen Stage Contest at the World Magic Seminar, and feels that each time was a great learning experience for him. He tells us, "Competing gave me a goal. A goal is a dream with a deadline, as Jeff McBride would say."

Another wonderful opportunity that came about at the World Magic Seminar for McKee was the making of the movie *Make Believe*. This award-winning documentary followed Derek and five other teens through the Teen Contest. It afforded Derek the opportunity to travel to film festivals all around the world. The documentary can now be viewed on Amazon.

Derek feels that the Seminar also offered him the wherewithal to join the Junior Program at the Magic Castle in Hollywood, which led to him being able to perform there as a kid growing up. He tells us, "My first

seminar was eleven years ago, and I am still involved in magic. That's quite a remarkable feat.

Since McKee's time at the Seminar, he has travelled extensively, and also worked in Las Vegas for a period of time behind the scenes for *America's Got Talent* winner Mat Franco, as well as for Piff the Magic Dragon. During Derek's time in Las Vegas, he also was a talent scout for *America's Got Talent*.

Derek's career also took some different magic-related turns. He started his own playing card company and produced the Melies playing cards, as well as the Cherry Casino playing cards.

Derek would like to offer advice to the teens today. He tells us, "Be open to all of the advice that you get, and then follow your heart with what you think is right."

Nowadays Derek is involved in production working in the business side of entertainment. He is using his experience and love for magic to create unique opportunities for the next generation.

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STERLING

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

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Sterling and Kaylee's wedding photo from March 2019. PHOTO BY RAFAEL ALONSO FROM DIEGO URQUIZA PRODUCTIONS

Sterling was born and raised in Lynden, Washington, a small town near the Canadian border, on February 15, 1991. He was a participant in the teen seminar from 2006 until 2008. In 2006, he competed at the World Magic Seminar and took first place with an act comprised of the magic that he loved – card manipulation, Linking Rings, and a dancing cane. In 2007 he competed again with a different act and took second place. In 2007, he also entered the I.B.M. Stage Contest, Youth Category, and took first place, as well as the People's Choice Award.

Sterling graduated in 2009 from high school and took a year to set up contracts and get his work visa secured, and in 2010, he made the move to Mexico, where he now lives and has his show in



Sterling and Kaylee at their dinner theater.



Los Cabos. He has worked in many different places during his time there, and now performs a regular dinner theater show called *Dinner de los Muertos*.

Sterling spends September through June in Cabo, and returns to Washington during the summer to recharge. He has a little downtime while home, but he also books some gigs and teaches magic to kids at summer camps.

Sterling feels that his life was affected in many ways by the seminar. He says: "First, it encouraged me to come to Cabo. Both Jeff and Eugene advised to always perform as much as you could, and Lance Burton talked about "finding your Hamburg" and honing your skills like the Beatles did through repetition with different audiences. I couldn't find that in Washington, but out of high school, I had the opportunity to come to Cabo."

Sterling was shy growing up and feels he wasn't good in front of people. Magic taught him skills to engage with others. He remembers meeting and making many friends at the seminar. He says: "These are friends that you will keep for the rest of your life – people who all love the same thing and are there for the same reason. It was an amazing experience, and I would recommend it to

Left, top to bottom: Lance Burton with Sterling, 2006. Uri Geller (right) with former Lance Burton Teen Seminar participants Hiroki Hara, Sterling, Bill Cook, and Reuben Moreland during an Italian television taping in 2012. Jeff McBride, Sterling, and Eugene Burger in 2006. Sterling with Criss Angel.

anyone to have the fellowship with young magicians like themselves if they have the opportunity.”

In 2014, Sterling faced emotional changes that impacted his life negatively. In one night, Hurricane Odile, destroyed relationships and contracts that he had built in the previous four years, along with much of the Baja peninsula. At the same time, his parents started heading for divorce, which hurt him deeply. His memories in magic were deeply rooted in his family unit. He tells us, “They were as much a part of the dream as magic itself.” He had to take a lot of time to repair his emotions and his life, but with therapy and the love of his wife, Kaylee, Sterling has managed to take huge strides in dealing with his depression and anxiety, and healing his career.

Sterling’s advice to the up-and-coming magicians of today? “Try and think about why you perform magic as opposed to just performing tricks for an audience. When the *why* is strong, the *how* is easy. Magic helps heal my heart. People tell me that my passion is evident on stage. I’m able to see the battle every day that people are living. My audience members have their own personal struggles they are going through every day. The hole I have in my chest every night is the fire that keeps me going. If that light can touch one person that night, then it’s worth it. I think providing magic for others is a worthy goal.”

Over the years Sterling performed and lectured at various conventions, but due to the changes he experienced, the last one he attended was PCAM in 2013. “I miss the fellowship I had during the Lance Burton Teen Seminar,” he says. He regrets distancing himself from the magic community and intends to do a better job of staying connected.

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BILL COOK

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar has been educating and mentoring teens since 1994, and for the past few years, it has been hosted at the International Brotherhood of Magicians Annual Convention. Thanks to the sponsorship of the I.B.M. Endowment and Development Fund, it is free for anyone age thirteen to nineteen who is registered for the convention. The seminar is facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass, the founder and dean of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas, and they are always joined by surprise guests. In this column, you will read about some of the success stories of the seminar's past participants.

Bill Cook was born on March 25, 1989, in a Chicago suburb. At thirty years old, he still resides in the Chicago area and has become a successful performing magician. He feels he owes much of his success to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

Bill first attended the seminar in 2006 and competed each of the following three years. In 2010, as he had passed the age limit for competing, he hosted the contest. He tells us, "Performing in the magic competitions forced me to think outside the box and work harder than I ever had. I learned that for every hour I practiced, someone else was working three. That knowledge made me hungry for success, and I found myself dreaming

about my competition act. Competing was such a big part of my pre-twenties. I really enjoyed that."

Over the years, Bill has become very proficient at inventing and building new props. Two of his competition acts were a home-built CD act and an iPod manipulation act.

Cook feels that attending the Lance Burton Teen Seminar was life-changing for him. The people he met during his time there became lifelong friends. The biggest impact on his career has come from working with and learning from Jeff McBride. He explains, "Jeff is the greatest living magician, teacher, and mentor. To be able to learn from him, pick his brain, and have hands-on interactions with



Bill performing his fall shows at the Pumpkin Farm.



Bill performing *Dancing Hank*.



him was worth the price of admission. Being able to learn from the other minds that came to lecture for us was the icing on the cake.”

When asked if he would recommend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar to kids today, he responded, “Would I recommend the LBTS? Resoundingly, yes! If there were a LBTS for adults, I’d recommend that, too!”

Since completing college, Cook chose to pursue a career in magic. He has toured the United States as a member of *Masters of Illusion Live!*, toured China with Jeff McBride twice, performed as a guest star on the *La Grande Magia: The Illusionist* on Italian TV, participated on an episode of *Wizard Wars*, appeared on *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*, and performed on *The Today Show*. He was also profiled in *Magic* magazine and is now a recurring star on the *Masters of Illusion* television show.

When Bill is home, he performs for senior centers and schools, but his favorite gig is the Pumpkin Farm. He works this festival every fall. He explains, “On the slowest day, 20,000 people come through their gates. I do eight shows, outdoors, every weekend from mid-September through Halloween. It’s during that time that I hone and refine new material and polish my regular performing repertoire.”

When Cook was asked what advice he would give to upcoming teen performers today, he said, “Listen to everyone, but trust your gut. I have surrounded myself with my

Left, top to bottom: Bill receives an award at the seminar with Siegfried. Bill and Lance Burton. Bill performs his iPod act. Bill Cook at two years old.

team (my family and close magic friends that I trust). Listen and be respectful whenever someone gives you a critique. You don't have to take it all to heart. Don't act on it right away. Take your time to think about it. Not all criticism is correct."

Bill also advises young performers to have good hygiene habits. Manicures, showers, and a clean look will help keep you working. He also suggests you keep your performing material clean and that you learn to say thank you. He explains, "Sometimes the only payment someone can give you is a compliment. When that happens, say thank you - even if you think you bombed. Keep your mouth shut and say thank you. It will make you come across better."

Nowadays, you can catch Bill headlining ships for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. Cook says, "I would not be who I am or the performer I have become if it hadn't been for the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. I owe so much of my career to the knowledge I learned and the

JOEL WARD

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Lance Burton.

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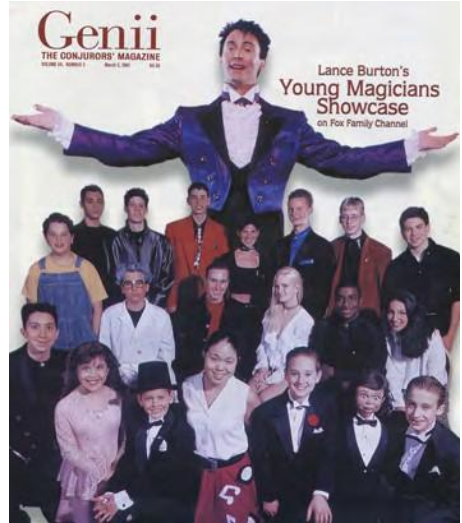
This month we meet Joel Ward. Born on September 27, 1983, Joel grew up in a little California beach town in San Diego County called Cardiff-by-the-Sea. His life and career currently have him living in Los Angeles, California.

Joel participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar from 1998 to 2002. Although he never competed at the seminar, he was invited to appear on one of Lance Burton's TV shows, *Lance Burton's Young Magicians Showcase*, in 1999 when he was just sixteen years old.



Joel Ward's current promo picture.

Joel tells us, "In 1999, I competed and took first place in the teen stage contest at the I.B.M. Convention in Little Rock, Arkansas. I had filmed my act and sent that to Lance. Later that year, I got a call from Lance, and he told me he wanted to put me on his TV show. I was thrilled. Sharing this performance with Lance was so exciting, and getting his approval on the routine meant so much to me. I was performing a dove act at the time, and this was a huge stepping-stone for my career. The exposure brought me a lot of work, and after that, I started performing at the Magic Castle. This is when my career really started gaining momentum."



Joel's Genii cover, 2001.

Ward's favorite memories from the Lance Burton Teen Seminar center on the opportunity the teens had to talk to professional magicians and ask them questions. He tells us, "We could ask our idols (like Lance Burton, Jeff McBride, Eugene Burger, Johnny Thompson, Mac King, and many others) serious magic questions. I remember Jeff McBride telling me, 'If you only want to go into magic for the money, then you should get out now.' I still think that was some of the best advice because it kept me focused on the magic and the impact it has on audiences."

Ward continues, "Having the opportunity to talk to professional magicians about the business is a valuable opportunity to grow and learn. Magic is passed down from generation to generation, and sometimes the best advice and learning comes from our mentors." Joel feels that he grew enormously by participating in the seminar. It motivated him, and he rehearsed his act every day. He was being creative and mentored and was also mentoring others. He tells us, "I learned that I could be a

Left, top to bottom: Joel's first promo picture, 1992. Thirteen-year-old Joel performing the Chop Cup, 1997. Joel and Lance Burton, 1999.

professional magician if I really wanted to.”

When asked what advice he would give kids today, Joel said, “I see a lot of kids getting into magic today so they can film short videos for social-media platforms. I think this is a wonderful avenue for exposure, but if you are serious about performing magic, you should learn how to do it live. Magic is best experienced live.” Ward advises that today’s kids should learn all they can about different types of magic and that they should not look for shortcuts. His final advice is to spend time practicing and perfecting sleight-of-hand. He relates, “It’s tedious, but once you get it, it’s the best feeling.”

After Joel participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, he went into magic full-time. He has been fully supporting himself since he was seventeen with magic, and to this day, it’s the only job he has ever had. He tells us, “I get to travel the world, meet amazing people, and do what I love doing.”

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NEIL CROSWELL

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Lance Burton.

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This month we focus on Neil Croswell, who was born on December 21, 1990, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Neil grew up there and still calls Toronto his home, although nowadays he spends much of his time on the road.

Croswell participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar from 2004, when he was only thirteen, until 2010, when he was nineteen. He tells us, "It was my favorite thing to look forward to all year. The only year I missed was 2008, which just so happened to be the year they filmed the *Make Believe* documentary."

Neil believes he wouldn't be where he is in his career today if it hadn't been for the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. He explains, "The amount of knowledge I obtained there has been unparalleled by any other convention I have ever attended. The opportunity to

learn from my heroes and some of the biggest names in magic gave me the knowledge, and more importantly, the inspiration to pursue magic full time. Many of the participants became my life-long friends, who also pursued magic fulltime, and many have gone on to do amazing things worldwide."

Croswell has many sweet memories from the seminar. He made many friends from all over the world that are still his friends to this day. He loves getting together with them and reminiscing about their time at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. He explains, "I am forever grateful to have had the opportunity to meet and learn from so many



Neil Croswell.



Neil Croswell.



incredible magicians. My favorite memory was the year we all got on a bus, but we weren't told where we were going. We went to Lance Burton's house! Not only that, there were tons of famous magicians waiting there for us. On that day, I met Siegfried, Criss Angel, Jeff McBride, Johnny Thompson, Nathan Burton, Mac King, and more."

Neil feels that the Teen Seminar gives teens the opportunity to receive one-on-one training due to the excellent teacher/student ratio. He adds, "The magicians you will learn from at the seminar are the most passionate and caring magicians in the world. They truly care about the future of magic and take the time to mentor youth to be the best magicians they can be and equip them with the knowledge needed to pursue magic as a career. Almost every successful magician from my generation was involved with the Lance Burton Teen Seminar at one point or another – and that alone speaks volumes."

Neil advises future participants of the seminar to take notes and ask as many questions as possible. He emphasizes, "The only stupid question is the question that is never asked."

Over the past decade since Neil attended the seminar, he has appeared worldwide on stage, cruise ships, and television across four continents, and he has won several awards in the field, including the gold medal at both the Canadian Championships of Magic and the Magic of China – International Magic

Left, top to bottom: Neil Croswell. Neil performing. Neil with Lance Burton. Neil as a child with his rabbit.

Championships held in Shenzhen, China. He has performed in France, Italy, Algeria, Thailand, China, Malaysia, the Bahamas, Sri Lanka, Las Vegas, Alaska, and all over Canada. He believes that he would not have received all these opportunities without the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

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ANDREW BASSO

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

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This month, we focus on another success story from a former teen participant at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, Andrew Basso. Andrew was born in October 1985 near Venice, Italy. In 2004, as soon as Andrew turned eighteen and was able to travel alone, he took all his savings from the shows he had been doing and, without being able to speak a word of English, flew to Las Vegas. He was selected to be one of the thirty teenagers to attend the seminar. He also attended in 2005 and 2006.

Coming from Italy where the magic community is very small and most kids are interested only in soccer, the opportunity to be part of an event with like-minded people of similar ages to himself on such a large scale was like a dream come true for Andrew. He immediately made friends with Martin Brock, a magician from Denmark, and many

others with the same passion as himself. He had found his magic family.



Andrew escaping the water torture cell.

Sergio was Andrew's mentor in Italy. To this day, Andrew calls Sergio "the key of his career." He tells us, "You can find tricks in books and online, but the special secrets about becoming a performer you can only learn from a mentor. I took private lessons from him every week for four years." At that time, Sergio told Andrew that he would benefit from working with teachers that had more knowledge than himself, and he suggested that Basso attend the seminar. Andrew continues, "Looking back, what I learned from Lance, Eugene, Jeff, and other teachers were the



Andrew's current promotional photo.



best lessons I ever had. And, it was free! What a gift!" He joked, "It was amazing. I'm going to fake my ID and do it again."

One of the big lessons that Basso learned at the seminar was that it is not all about the tricks and that focusing on the presentation and the story is extremely important to give a deeper meaning to your performance. He explains, "It's the difference between doing a *trick* and doing *magic*. It enables you to reach people's emotions and feelings."

At the time that Andrew attended the seminar, the Internet was just gaining popularity. Now, he gets extreme satisfaction from seeing the successes on social media of so many of the kids who were sitting next to him all those years ago.

In the three years Andrew was at the Seminar, and with constant communication with his new friends in the United States, Andrew was able to learn English. When he finished school, he was already making a living doing magic and able to support himself. He was successfully performing around Italy and doing some TV specials. However, he felt that Italy was too small for him, and he decided to start traveling to the United States where he thought that there would be many more opportunities.

In the United States, Basso did some performing and made some contacts, and in 2012, two producers found him and asked him to be part of a project as an escapologist. At the age of thirteen, Andrew had

Left, top to bottom: Andrew performs an escape on stage. Andrew Basso's promotional photo. The teens being taught by Jeff McBride. Lance Burton Teen Seminar 2004, group shot.

started doing escapology. He explains, “I was at the age when I started to have a fascination with danger, for the things that your mom would say, ‘Don’t do that!’” Six months later, Basso found himself working at the Sydney Opera House in Australia. This was the start of a journey that brought him to the Pantages Theater in Hollywood, Broadway, and the West End in London in a show called *The Illusionists*.

When Andrew was asked what advice he would give to kids in magic today, he replied, “Go to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. It will change your life. Many of us are human proof. I don’t think it is coincidence that so many of those of us who attended the LBTS have achieved so much success.”

Andrew moved to the United States five years ago when his career was exploding here. He currently lives in New York, but his career has him spending a lot of time in Los Angeles. He is on the road touring about ten months of the year, and during his down time, he returns to Italy.

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us in Pittsburgh where, if you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, and registered for the convention, you can attend the seminar for free July 6–8, 2020 and throughout the convention. To register, go to www.ibmconvention.com.

KRISTI TOGUCHI

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron

Join us for the 2020 Lance Burton Teen Seminar. If you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, and registered to attend the I.B.M. Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, you can attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar absolutely free! (A *huge* thank you goes to the I.B.M. Endowment and Development Fund for sponsoring this event.)

This year will be epic! The seminar will be facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass – the founder and dean, respectively, of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas. They will be joined by surprise guests you won't want to miss.

To learn more about the Lance Burton Teen Seminar taking place in Pittsburgh beginning on the evening of July 6 through lunch on July 8, 2019, and to register, go to www.ibmconvention.com/lance-burton-teen-seminar.

In this series of articles, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants. Guest presenters are also always an exciting part of the seminar. Hundreds of teens have attended over the years and many have gone on to successful careers in magic. This column features the success stories of some of these attendees. This month we feature Kristi Toguchi.

Kristi was born in 1982. Although raised on the beautiful island of Oahu in Hawaii, she has also lived in New York City and San Diego. She now calls Las Vegas home.



Kristi in a straitjacket PHOTO:
JEFF BOSTIC.

Kristi took part in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 1999 and 2000. She feels that being a part of this event grew her passion to pursue a career in magic. Her involvement resulted in her magic family being created from young magicians of similar ages. She tells us, "When I moved thousands of miles from my home in Hawaii to live in different cities, my magic family was always there for me."

Some of Kristi's favorite memories are meeting the "magic superstars." She explains, "I will never forget the special lecture that Lance did for the kids attending the seminar. He gave each of us his book, *Advice: An Honest Conversation About Starting a Career in Magic*. After



Kristi's Aerial Fitness students PHOTO: BECKETT STUDIOS.



Lance Burton on the Young Magicians Showcase, airing on Fox Family.



Top, Middle: The first magic workshop to be taught in Mongolia. Bottom: Honolulu Magic Company Magic Camp at the Children's Discovery Center.

listening to him, I was ready to pursue my dream of becoming a professional magician."

Shortly after, Lance held a contest to search for the next future star of magic and created his television special, *Young Magician's Showcase*. Kristi was lucky enough to be selected as one of the young magicians to perform on stage with him live in Las Vegas at the Lance Burton Theatre at the Monte Carlo Casino. She tells us, "I had a once-in-a-lifetime experience that gave me a glimpse into Lance's life, and from that moment on, I was determined to make my dreams come true."

Kristi highly recommends the seminar. She feels it is a place to be inspired, make new magic friends, and learn new tools to become a better magician. She continues, "Magic is a special art form that can be very secretive. It is important for magicians to come together and create their magic family."

Growing up in Hawaii, there was a small community of young magicians, and I was the only girl in the magic club. It was so special to meet other girls and boys my age who shared my passion for magic. Many of them have become lifelong friends who have always supported and motivated me.”

After attending the LBTS, Kristi graduated from high school and moved to New York to pursue a career in dance. A year later, she moved to San Diego where she joined the Magic Castle Junior Program and created a magic show with another magician she had

LEAH ORLEANS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron

Breaking news! The I.B.M. Board of Trustees just voted to give free convention registrations all youth members! This means you can attend both the I.B.M. Convention and the Lance Burton Teen Seminar absolutely free! This means you can attend both the convention and the Lance Burton Teen Seminar absolutely free!

This year will be epic! The seminar will be facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass, the founder and dean, respectively, of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas. They will be joined by surprise guests you won't want to miss.

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In this series of articles, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants. Guest presenters are always an exciting part of the seminar. Hundreds of teens have attended over the years, and many have gone on to successful careers in magic. This column features the success stories of some of these attendees. This month we feature Leah Orleans.

Born in Chicago in 1995 to a family of entertainers, Leah Orleans is the daughter of magicians and mind-readers, Danny Orleans and Jan Rose. When Leah was nine years old, an exception was made, and she was permitted to attend the seminar as the youngest attendee ever. She went on to attend every year until she was fifteen.



Leah doing a backflip off her partner's shoulders during a show at the New York Renaissance Festival.

Leah tells us, "The Lance Burton Teen Seminar is absolutely why I have a career. The lessons we learned, the people we talked to, and how seriously we teens were taken and treated as adults caused us to take responsibility for our careers at a really young age. We were taught about the power of our reputations and making connections. A lot of the lessons transcended magic and branched out into the performing arts and life in general."

As a petite young lady, Leah has often had to struggle with people not taking her seriously. She joked, "Even



Above: Leah the contortionist. PHOTO BY DAVID TUFINO PHOTOGRAPHY. Right: Leah performing as "Stahr" with her partner, Etienne McGinley, during a show at the New York Renaissance



Leah performing in the Acrobatrix Show on the Princess Cruise Line.



Top, Leah wowing Chris Angel with a floating coin during the Teen Seminar in 2006. Middle: Leah and Jeff McBride at the Orleans Hotel during the Teen Seminar in 2006. Bottom: Leah performing as "Stahr" in the Acrobatrix show at the Maryland Renaissance Festival.

today, people often ask me, 'Where is your mom?' But at the seminar, even at nine years old, I felt that I was taken seriously and that my opinions mattered."

Leah has never claimed to be a magician, but the LBTS helped her find her way into the circus world, which was far more appealing to her. She adds, "At the teen seminars, I learned how to structure a show, a tour, and all the little things that there is not a school for." When Leah was sixteen, she attended circus school. After a few years, she created a seventy-minute comedy and acrobatic show that could be adapted to smaller shows, depending on venues and restrictions.

Leah loves that the friends that she made at the seminar are still her friends today, and she is still constantly in communication with them. She feels that she can meet up with any one of her peers from the seminar and pick up exactly where they left off, even years later.

One of Leah's favorite memories was bonding with Chad Juros over taking notes at a lecture by Chris Kenner, David Copperfield's executive producer. Another was a coming-of-age moment, when the teens were trusted to hang with their peers without their parents being around. Although Leah never competed herself, she has fond memories of helping and watching her new friends getting ready to compete and lending them her support. She explains, "I remember seeing the process: the struggles, the failures, and the successes. We all learned together."

Leah feels that the lessons she learned attending the seminars helped her to put together her own career. The seminar taught her all the business and technical basics which put her way ahead of the game on the road to her own personal success. She also learned how to talk to people professionally. She explains, "[The seminar] gave me a landing mat to jump onto, instilled confidence, and gave me the ability to reach out to a community of trusted friends for advice, who gave me the affirmation that I was not crazy to start a touring company at twenty years old."

Leah believes that if you want to have a career in the performing arts, the Lance Burton Teen Seminar is a great platform to advance your knowledge and skills and highly recommends it to teens who want to advance their goals to the next level. Leah advises that, if you are lucky enough to attend the seminar, be sure and take lots of written notes. She explains, "You are going to want to look back on them when brainstorming. I still have all my notes in binders. They are on a bookshelf in my parents' house. There's definitely something about the creative process that can be better achieved by putting a pen to paper."

Leah has worked festivals, cruise ships, colleges, and travelled extensively in Europe, Hawaii, and Alaska. Leah and her partner, Etienne, have a two-person acrobatic act called Acrobatrix. She spends her winters in Montreal, Canada, and Florida, where she and her partner train during the off season. They currently perform around 250-300 shows a year, mostly during the spring and summer.

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us in Pittsburgh, July 6-8, 2020. If you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, you can attend the seminar for free. All I.B.M. youth members may also attend the convention for free! To register, go to www.ibmconvention.com.

JESSICA JANE PETERSON

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Lance Burton.

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron

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Jessica Jane Peterson was born in August 1989 in the little town of Franklinville, New Jersey. Currently living in North Hollywood, California, Jessica attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2006 and 2007. She has come a long way since then, and in 2019, she even appeared on the cover of *The Linking Ring* magazine.

Jess tells us, "The seminar literally put me on a different path. Had I not gone to the Teen Seminar, I would probably not be performing magic, I wouldn't be on cruise ships, and I wouldn't have gone on this amazing adventure."

In 2006, after Jessica's parents divorced, she saw an advertisement in *Magic Magazine* for the seminar. She went to her dad and said, "Mom said that there is no way you'll take me." He replied, "Pack your bags, kid, we are going to Vegas." Jess's father was a huge Lance Burton fan, so it wasn't too hard to convince him.



PHOTO BY STACIE CARRIÈRE.

Jessica's mother was a magician's assistant, who went by the name of Jackie Peterson, and now, Jackie Roman. She worked with Jess's godfather, Al Belmont, for many years and for several years with John Bundy. Jessica's father is in heating and air conditioning but also designs magic.

Jessica will never forget walking into a room at the seminar and seeing Eugene Burger, Lance Burton, and Jeff McBride standing there. "Having them look at you as a magician and acknowledge you as a performer, that's huge! You don't get to have conversations with your idols, so being taught by them and having them sharing with you, that's amazing!"



*Above: Jessica with Alyson Hannigan on Penn & Teller: Fool Us.
Right: The Linking Ring cover. PHOTO BY MICHAEL MESSING.*



Jessica fire eating. PHOTO BY STACIE CARRIÈRE.



Top, Jessica and her tightrope. PHOTO BY MICHAEL MESSING. Middle: Jessica with her first book on magic, the one that started her collecting spree. PHOTO BY DANA WOLPERT. Bottom: Jess with Sterling Dietz, 2006.

Peterson's other favorite seminar memories are going to see Lance's show as a group, going to Lance's home, and making a whole new magic family. Her favorite memory of all was Eugene Burger gathering the group around a table and showing them fifteen minutes of magic out of his little box. "That changed my world." She explains, "I grew up around stage magic. To see close-up magic on that scale, with the storytelling, gave me a completely different perspective on performing." To this day, inspired by Eugene Burger, Jess performs Gypsy Thread using a little box which has Eugene's photo inside.

Jess continues, "The Teen Seminar gave me a set of rules that I perform and live by. I would not be successfully working today without everything I learned there." Lance Burton's advice book (which is still given to every attendee of the seminar) influenced Jessica greatly. It is her performance bible.

The teen weekend instilled great work ethics and taught Jess a lot about the business

of performing. She feels that the information and lessons from the seminar readied her for her career, and she would not be where she is today without this amazing experience.

Since the seminar, Jessica has had a wide and varied career. She joined the World of Wonders circus sideshow, where she learned fire eating and setting up and tearing down a circus tent. She performed in thousands of shows with Terry Evanswood in Pigeon Forge and spent several months assisting Ben Blaque in Europe. She worked in a comedy vaudeville theater, worked with Connie Boyd's production show, *Illusions*, on a ship in Europe for a year, and then opened her own show at the Sweet Fanny Adams Theatre in Gatlinburg for a year. She has appeared on *Penn & Teller: Fool Us* and performed at several conventions, including wowing the audience at the 2019 I.B.M. Convention in Scottsdale with her incredibly moving performance.

When Jessica performs, it comes from the heart. She has a beautiful voice, and she incorporates that into her act. Her audience members are often moved to tears with her touching and heartfelt performances. She lives her life by Karl Wallenda's quote, "Being on the tightrope is living. Everything else is waiting." Jessica explained, "The tightrope is what we live for, and my tightrope is magic."

Jessica already has half the year of 2020 booked with performances on cruise ships. She has other projects on the drawing board, which will undoubtedly ensure a bright and successful career. Again, Jessica stresses, none of this would have happened without the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

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JASON ANDREWS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

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I.B.M. member Jason Andrews was born in Merrillville, Indiana, in July 1986. He considers himself a Las Vegas native because he relocated to Las Vegas, with his older brother and mother, when he was three years old. His two earliest memories are throwing a baby toy out of the car window while driving through the desert and seeing the iconic waving neon cowboy upon arrival in downtown Vegas.

Andrews attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2004 at the age of seventeen and again in 2006. He tells us, “The Lance Burton Teen Seminar was my first real look into the world of magic. It was my very first time attending a magic convention. I looked at everything with wide eyes and interest. I knew a little about magic, but seeing the dealers’ room and the vast scope of learning were two things I could never have imagined.”

Although Jason grew up one block from the Las Vegas Strip, it did not enable him to get into the world of show business. None of his family or friends were in the industry, and he did not have access to stage craft. He explains, “The Lance Burton Teen Seminar was an access point to the inside world of magic for me. The camaraderie, creativity,

Continued on page 73



Above, left to right: Jason Andrews – living the dream! Jason’s magical aspirations began in his early years. Jason with his many trophies and awards.



Above, left to right: Lance and Jason at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. Jason Andrews.

and open sharing gave me the opportunity to have questions answered that would not have happened anywhere else. Without that kind of access to the magic community, becoming a full-time pro would have been a lot more challenging.”

Jason fondly remembers the feeling that everything in the magic world was suddenly accessible. Professional magicians that he had studied and seen on TV were right in front of him, sharing the tools that made them into the success stories they had become. Andrews explains, “It was unbelievably motivating. The one-on-one time with the professional magicians from a diverse range of backgrounds and markets and the break-out sessions where we would workshop and create new magic effects had the biggest impacts on me.”

Jason is excited that teens are still able to experience this program, and he recommends it highly. He explains, “We got to learn from top professionals who have taught and learned from working pros for the last twenty years. Not only did all that knowledge come together for one weekend, it was being passed on. Also, you make magic friendships that will last a lifetime.”

Andrews continues, “If I had to give advice to a teen in magic today, I would tell them to pick a point and start. Set a deadline, stick to it, and give it your very best. You will make progress, and at the very least you will figure out what *not* to do. I have been astounded at the amount of

knowledge I have learned while failing at a task, only to find that what I learned is actually useful on a completely different task years later. When you make your best effort, you make progress. Just start!”

After graduation from the Las Vegas Performing Arts Academy in 2004, Andrews was immediately hired by Coast Casinos as a lighting and stage technician. Over the years, Jason won many magic contests, and in San Diego in 2010, he won first place in both the I.B.M. Stage Contest and the People’s Choice Award. Six months later, he was hired to work at the Magic Castle and became a full-time performing magician.

He has worked strolling gigs, corporate events, TV shows, birthday parties, performing arts centers, retirement homes, amusement parks, and most recently, cruise ships. He was a featured variety act in *Crazy Horse Paris* on the Las Vegas Strip and has headlined arenas across Turkey. He tours his full-evening one-man show to small communities across the United States, and he is constantly focusing his attention on new material for new venues and markets.

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JOSHUA JAY

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

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I.B.M. member Joshua Jay was born in Canton, Ohio, in 1981. He has become well known in the world of magic, but what many are not aware of is that his early magical path guided him through the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

Joshua attended the seminar for three consecutive years, 1996-1998. He tells us, “The Lance Burton Teen Seminar was an amazing experience for me. Coming from Ohio, I didn’t know other young magicians, so this was my only sense of community. Lance was my favorite magician, and meeting him meant the world to me.”

Joshua competed in the teen contest, and in 1998, he took first place. That was one of his favorite memories of the seminar. The other was spending time with Lance Burton and Eugene Burger at one of the lectures. Joshua tells us, “It was so special to be sitting with two of my heroes.” He continues, “Winning the competition was huge for me. It put me on the international stage, and afterward, I was booked to perform at all sorts of conventions around the world. I was also asked to lecture, which was a great thrill.”

One of the common threads in this series of interviews with past participants of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar has been that the attendees made friendships that will last for the rest of their lives. Joshua’s experience was no different. He tells us, “The seminar gave us a



Above, left to right: Joshua Jay. PHOTO BY MATTHEW GILMORE. Joshua on stage at an early age. Lance Burton and Joshua Jay.



Above: Group photo from the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

Continued from page 61

chance to develop our skills, ask questions of quality people who knew the answers, and meet people you will be spending time with for the rest of your life.”

Last year at the 2019 I.B.M. Convention in Scottsdale, Joshua had the chance to speak to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar participants, and this is what he told them, “Look around! The people in this room—these kids—are going to be your friends for the rest of your life. Some will get out of magic, some won’t be full-time professionals, and some will! The one thing that is certain is that these people will be your friends forever.”

Joshua has some simple advice for young magicians: “People ask me what skills they need to advance in magic. The only real skill you need is passion. That may sound obvious, but it’s important. Is magic what drives you in this world? Is it the first and last thing you think about every day? There are much easier ways to make money. The people who go far in magic are people who can’t live without it in their lives.” He continues, “I see a lot of young magicians. Some who are wildly talented, but in many cases, it’s just a way to pass the time. You must have real passion for magic to go the distance. And if you do, buckle up, because it’s a wonderful, adventure-filled life.”

Joshua has achieved a fantastic level of success. After the Teen Seminar, he was asked to be on Lance Burton’s *Young Magician’s Showcase* television special. There he met Andi Gladwin, who became his business partner and best friend. He tells

us, “Truly, my life changed because of the Teen Seminar.”

Since that time, Joshua has been a full-time professional magician and has traveled the world sharing his art. He has appeared several times on television, fooling Penn & Teller on their *Fool Us*, and most recently, he’s appeared on both *Good Morning America* and *The Today Show*. He is the author of *MAGIC: The Complete Course*, *The Amazing Book of Cards*, and, for children, *Big Magic for Little Hands*. He has consulted on various illusions and television shows and has performed for U.S. presidents.

Along with his best friend Andi Gladwin, Jay owns *Vanishing Inc.*, one of the U.S.’s premier producers and suppliers of magic. He recently completed several successful runs of his intimate sold-out theater show in New York City, titled “Six Impossible Things.” The show was in a speakeasy style theater which followed a very unusual concept. This is a must-see, should it re-emerge.

Everything that Joshua turns his hand to demonstrates the passion that he speaks about above. If you see his name on anything, it is sure to be top quality, and it is definitely worth checking out.

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ERIC GILLMAN

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

In this column, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, which is hosted by the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Eric Gilliam was born in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1991, and continued to live there until he was twenty-two years old. He has been living in Phoenix, Arizona, for the past seven years.

Eric Gilliam participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar each year from 2008 until 2011. Eric says, "Being with all the other teens, both national and international, and with Eugene, Jeff, Lance, Criss, and Johnny Thompson, gave me inspiration to be the best I could be." He continues, "One of my favorite memories was sitting in Lance's living room with all the pros and, of course, attending Lance's show. It was so inspiring to be around all these people that share your passion. Everyone had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered by their heroes."

Gilliam met his lifelong friends at the seminar and is grateful for that benefit. Whether or not they spoke English was not important as they all spoke the language of magic.

Gilliam recalls one of the classes that Jeff McBride taught about showmanship. What stuck with him was Jeff saying, "You shouldn't rely on too much technology in your show. Create a character and have great showmanship, and then you won't have to deal with the stress of the technology messing up." Eric also has fond memories of Eugene performing his Gypsy Thread. He tells us, "His story and his voice – that really inspired



Above, left to right: Eric Gilliam promo photo. Eric performing recently. Eric performing his orange act.



Above: A group photo from the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.



Top to bottom: Eli Portala, T.J. Tana, and Eric at the teen contest in 2011. Eric performing in Phoenix. Eric being presented with his first-place award from Siegfried and Roy.

me to incorporate storylines and a reason for talking in my show.”

Inspired by Jeff McBride’s silent routines, such as his masks and Miser’s Dream, Eric tries to focus more on visual and silent magic with audience interaction. He also works at having his act follow a storyline.

Eric highly recommends the seminar to any teens who are into magic. He explains, “I can’t think of any better resource for teens in magic to attend. It is exposure overload, but in a great way. Take lots of notes. I have a huge notebook of notes that I took all four years, and I still go through it and get many creative ideas. This will help you improve your magic.”

Gilliam has some advice for today’s teen magicians: “Start studying marketing, advertising, and business early. It will be invaluable to you. Learn about business management, negotiation, event planning, and writing contracts and invoices. When you become a full-time professional, that is half the battle.” Eric uses a company called Khan Academy that offers free business courses (www.khanacademy.org).

Eric also notes that audiences’ attention spans are shorter than they used to be. He advises, “It’s imperative to keep their interest and stop them from turning to their phones during your performance. When creating your show, find upbeat or emotional music and have your routines be fast, visual, and dramatic. You must keep

their attention. I use a lot of music with cues for blackouts or dramatic pauses. Jeff McBride really helped me with this.”

After high school, Eric performed part time at birthday parties and wherever else he could find work. He earned enough to keep things going, but the population in Anchorage is small, and Eric realized that, to advance his career, he needed to find a bigger city where he could find more work. In 2013, he decided to move to Phoenix, and he began to successfully perform magic full time. It was a great move for him.

Gilliam has collaborated with some of his former Lance Burton Teen Seminar peers on different projects, including a television show in Italy called *La Grande Magia* in 2012. Eric jokingly tells us, “It was like a Lance Burton Teen Seminar reunion.” He was also on a BBC production in which the last two winners of the teen contest were asked to perform a three-minute version of their winning acts.

Eric’s favorite type of magic is still manipulation, and he has broken up his orange act into smaller routines that he still incorporates in his current show. If you are in the Phoenix area, try and catch one of his shows. You can find him online at www.magiceric.com.

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TRIGG WATSON

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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Lance Burton.

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Trigg Watson was born in Townsville, Australia, in January 1990. At the age of eleven, his family moved to the United States and settled in New Orleans, Louisiana. Since then, Trigg moved to Dallas, Texas, and now calls Los Angeles, California his home.

Watson attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2007 and 2008. Attending the seminar gave him the confidence, friendships, and exposure he needed to seriously consider becoming a professional magician. He tells us, "Some of my closest friendships began with fellow teen magicians also attending the seminar. Competing and placing in the stage magic contest inspired me to continue developing my act for other larger competitions."

Trigg has many fond memories of participating in the teen contest, as well as attending several Las Vegas magic shows, including those of Mac King, Lance Burton, and David Copperfield. He highly recommends the seminar experience to all teens in magic, saying, "As magicians, we spend a lot of our time by ourselves. We spend hours practicing at home honing our craft. We rarely get the chance to meet other people that are as passionate about magic as we are. Suddenly, I was part of a community of young magicians that



Left: One of Trigg's first stage shows. Middle: Trigg promo photo. Right: Competition act, 2009.



Above, left: Lance Burton Teen Seminar 2008 at Lance's house. Left to right: Krystyn Lambert, Aaron Johnathan, Trigg Watson, Sterling Dietz, and Chad Juros. Above, right: On stage with Lance Burton, 2007.



Top: Trigg competing at FISM in Rimini, Italy, 2015. Middle: Trigg on the CW Network's Masters of Illusion. Bottom: Trigg in a recent performance.

pushed me to get better and who inspired me to be the best magician I could be."

After graduating from high school, Trigg moved to Dallas, Texas, to pursue double majors in business management and theater studies. When not studying, he performed magic professionally and continued competing in stage contests. After graduation, he worked for a business consulting firm that gave him the opportunity to travel all over the country, and he learned more about the corporate world. This proved invaluable to him in the pursuit of his career.

Two and a half years later, Trigg quit his "day job" and decided to pursue magic full time. Since then, he has competed at FISM and appeared on several TV shows, including *Don't Blink*, *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*, and *Masters of Illusion*. He continues to perform on cruise ships and at corporate events and college campuses throughout the country. Last year he worked as a creative consultant for Justin Willman's Netflix show, *Magic for Humans*.

Watson advises teens who wish to pursue a magic career to consider a theater major in college. He tells us, "That was the best thing I ever did for my magic career. Theater helps us realize that our own humanity will always be more captivating than any skill we can display. Theater taught me how to engage people emotionally, how to be vulnerable in front

of others, how to write a show, and how to be disciplined with my rehearsal and creative process.”

As Trigg reflects on his time at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, he realizes that he may not have been as successful as he is if he hadn’t participated in the seminar. He explains, “If it were not for the friends and connections that I made at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, I’m not sure I would have had the same career in magic. Attending gave me confidence in myself as a magician and inspired me to pursue a larger, more global audience.”

Over the years, Trigg has grown into an innovative performer, creating unique routines that reflect the magic of our times. To see some of his work, go to his YouTube channel at <https://bit.ly/TriggYT>.

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DAVE JOHNSON

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

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Dave Johnson was born in Modesto, California, in 1981 and is now a full-time performer in Las Vegas, where he lives with his talented balloon-artist wife, Ronnie.

He is a two-time attendee of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. He first attended in 2000, when he competed in the close-up contest. He attended again in 2001 and competed in the stage contest.

Competing on such a large scale was monumental for Dave. He tells us, "You prepare more to perform in front of your peers than you do for lay people because of their burden of knowledge. That work ethic has helped me to keep setting the bar higher and higher. If you continuously try to improve, you and the art both grow."

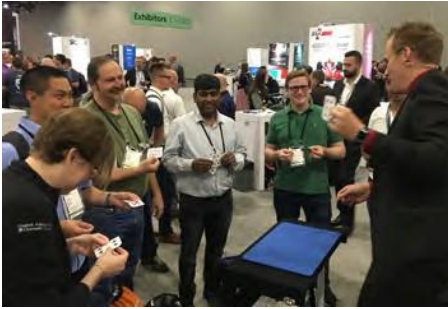
One of Johnson's favorite memories of the seminar is an experience that taught him how important backstage assistants are during competition. Hugo Wei, who was a frequent helper in the contests in the early



Dave at the teen seminar in 2000.

days of the seminar, saved the show. Dave tells us, "My assistant and I had rehearsed a ton before we got to Vegas, but we forgot to set the curtain for the sub-trunk. The curtains opened, and I appeared from the shadow box. I looked over, realized our mistake, and wondered what we could do. Right then, Hugo walked out with the curtain. It takes a true pro to think on your feet like that. Hugo passed a few years ago, but it seems like everyone who knew him had a Hugo story of him saving them in their time of need."

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar is a very positive experience, especially



Top to bottom: Dave accepts the Teen Contest Participation Award from Lance Burton in 2000. Dave working a trade show. Dave's first talent show at age five.

because of the camaraderie and long-lasting friendships that come out of it. Johnson explains, "You usually find adults at magic conventions. However, with the seminar, you find and mix with those that are your age. This really helps you relax and gain confidence and knowledge."

Since Dave's time at the seminar, he has moved to Vegas and become a respected and known performer at conventions and trade shows. More recently, with the pandemic, he jumped in early on the Zoom platform and performs shows regularly.



Entertaining with close-up magic at a corporate event.

Back in February, Dave had a mishap in the workshop and severed a chunk of his finger. Most magicians would have seen this as a career-ending event. Dave, on the other hand, embraced his situation and reinvented himself as "Nine Digit Dave." He has used this to his advantage and treated this unfortunate experience to show the positive side of what could have negatively impacted his life. Instead, he used it as a rebranding opportunity.

Johnson has gained much experience in the last two decades after his participation in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. He advises teens to relax and enjoy being their age, saying, "Social status in high school doesn't matter because as adults. You all have the same issues to deal with. This applies in the magic world, too. As a magician, you are responsible for making the impossible happen. You don't have to be perfect. Growing up and becoming famous is overrated. Don't rush it. The faster you become famous, the quicker it will fade away. Kim Kardashian became famous overnight, but Al Pacino won his first Oscar when he was in his mid-forties. Al Pacino will be remembered much longer than any of the Kardashians."

Johnson also advises teens to keep at it, not to give up, and never feel that they need to be the best in the class. Just keep going so you can make it until the end. Dave would like to see younger kids take the time to show older magicians some of the sleights and routines they have been

working on. As kids, you might not realize this, but adults are interested in what you are doing.

Johnson tells us how the seminar was life-changing for him, “We prepared for countless hours for the conference each year, with the idea that we would hopefully be selected to represent the teenage magicians. This gave us a good work ethic. At the seminar, there were some very cool experiences that steered us in the right direction for the rest of our performing careers. At that age, we got to hang out with the people we looked up to. This was an amazing opportunity. Those of us who respected this and did not take it for granted gained knowledge that would take us far in life.”

If you want to read more about “Nine Digit Dave,” go to www.ninedigitdave.com.

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TRAVIS MARRON

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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Lance Burton.

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Travis Marron is a Lifetime Member of the I.B.M. He was born in January 1995 in Jacksonville, Florida. Raised in Jacksonville Beach, he now lives in Winter Park, Florida, a town just north of Orlando. He participated in the seminar from 2008 to 2010, although he missed most of the 2009 one due to coming down with a sinus infection.

Marron tells us that the seminar positively affected his life, both with magic and life skills. “The seminar taught me about goals and the discipline of practice. Being around so many of my peers that had a passion for magic and performance arts, too, threw tinder on the already lit fire in my soul.” He has memories of Jeff McBride emphasizing the importance of practice and telling him that always having a coin in his hand would dramatically improve his classic palm. “He was correct,” says Travis.



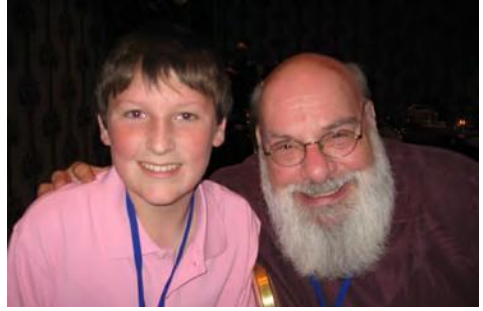
Travis's promo photo in 2014.

Marron has several great memories from the seminar. One was a huge card-throwing war one night in the session room. He tells us, “It was great fun – two groups of kids on opposite sides of the room teaching each other how to throw cards with power and finesse. The parents were warned of flying projectiles as they came to retrieve their children for the night. This was when I learned how to throw a card with accuracy.”

Travis also remembers attending Lance Burton's show at the Monte Carlo. It was not his first time. He explains, “I was chosen to disappear with Lance in his car when I was six years old. At the seminar,



Top to bottom: Travis opens for Charlie Frye and Gaetan Bloom after taking first place in the Junior Stage Competition at the Florida State Convention. Travis and other Ring 130 Members perform at a children's hospital in Jacksonville before the 2015 I.B.M. Convention (left to right): Dan Joubert, Keith Gwaltney, Bill Gillespie, Travis Marron, Scot Hood, and John Nolen. Travis and his cohost, Jen, broadcasting their radio show on WPRK. Lance Burton with Travis in 2008.



Travis with Eugene Burger at his first Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

it was the first time I had seen the show since I had disappeared with him, and to me, it was incredibly special to be there. Muhammad Ali sat across the aisle from us, and he received recognition from Lance along with the teens. This made the night even more memorable.”

As a teen, Marron often felt that he did not fit in with his school peers, and he used magic as an outlet. He explains, “My local I.B.M. Ring meetings were great for learning magic and meeting interesting people, but there was nothing like attending the seminar with like-minded teens and discussing the one thing that made sense to me – magic.”

Travis stayed in touch with some of the kids from the seminar, and he still sees many of them at annual conventions. He tells us, “The age of social media was dawning at that time, which enabled me to keep in touch with a group of friends that understood me in a way that my school friends could not. Having that outlet and those friends during that time in my life was priceless.”

Travis won the Florida State Junior Stage Competition three times and the Florida State Junior Close-up once. In 2008, he got to open for Charlie Frye and Gaetan Bloom on the Saturday Night Gala Show at the Daytona Festival of Magic. Through the remaining years of high school, Marron performed at kids’ parties, restaurants, and markets.

Travis tells us, “During high school, my love for magic sparked an interest

in the drama department, leading me to participate backstage during my high school productions.” This led to him working backstage at most of the I.B.M. Conventions between 2013 and 2019, the SAM convention in 2018, and the *Genii* convention in Orlando in 2015.

After high school, Travis worked for eight months at Universal Studios Orlando demonstrating magic. He tells us, “The money was not great, but it gave me the opportunity to perform twenty-plus shows a day and practice new material on live audiences. I also remembered to use a word that was drummed into me at the seminar – scripting.”

Currently, Travis is the lead installer for a staging company called Stages Plus in Orlando. This entails setting up staging, drape, lights, and sound around the state of Florida. He has set up stages and events for the Steve Miller Band, Garth Brooks, many private events, and recently the Vice President of the United States. He also does some balloon twisting and décor for corporate events, Disney housing, runs sound for political events, and is a cohost on the Psychedelic Rock Hour for WPRK-FM, servicing the greater Orlando area.

Along with his busy schedule, Travis is one year away from finishing his bachelor’s degree in psychology from Rollins College in Winter Park. He intends to pursue a doctorate in behavioral psychology to help those with addiction problems. He tells us, “It’s amazing how closely related psychology and magic are.” He continues, “The Lance Burton Teen Seminar is not only about the practice of magic. Larry Haas and Eugene Burger sparked my initial interest in psychology. They were able to give a completely different and socially scientific outlook on how to manipulate audiences. I soon realized that this was psychological manipulation. Magic and psychology are heavily intertwined, as without a proper understanding of the latter, your control over the audience will wane during performance.”

Marron recognizes that without this initial introduction into psychology, he probably would not have had the ambition to pursue his doctorate. He explains, “The psychology taught at the seminars on equivocation and simple misdirection lit a fire in me. Knowing how people behave is important to successful performance.”

ALEX RAMON

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

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Alex Ramon was born in April 1985 in Richmond, California, just outside of San Francisco. He now has homes in the Bay Area and Las Vegas. He attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar three times in Las Vegas, the first in 2003 at the Riviera Hotel. The second seminar he attended was in 2004, also held at the Riviera, and the attendees visited Jeff McBride's Wonderdome and, for the first time, Lance Burton's home. Alex's third seminar was in 2005, which took place at the Orleans Hotel and Casino.

Ramon competed the first year he attended, and for him, it was one of the most enlightening experiences he had as a teenager. He tells us, "I was seventeen years old, and it was a real eye-opener. It gave me the opportunity to compare what I was doing to what my peers were doing. It was my first major convention." In 2004, Alex took first place in the Lance Burton Teen Contest and was asked to come back and perform the following year.



Alex Ramon.



Lance Burton.

At nineteen, Alex performed on the huge Vegas stage at the Orleans.

Alex has fond memories from the seminar. He recalls that in 2004 he got to see Tommy Wonder and Max Maven recording for Japanese television. That was also the first time he went to Lance Burton's home. He explains, "The access to the superstars in magic was incredible. At Lance's, we got to ask questions of Criss Angel, Johnny Thompson, Mac King, and many others. I also met Lou Lancaster there, and we have stayed connected. We formed relationships with professional magicians, people who were doing what I wanted to do."



Top to bottom: Alex performs the egg sawing. Alex with Jeff McBride and Eugene Burger in 2004. Alex receives the Lance Burton Award for stage in 2004, and Nathan Gibson receives the award for close-up. Alex performs an underwater escape.



Alex Ramon promotional photo.

Ramon continues, “The value of the Teen Seminar is incalculable. We were not just learning new tricks. We had the ability to learn from professionals and ask for advice, which was far more valuable than learning a trick. My whole career can be boiled down to this seminar existing. It shook up my life and gave me the opportunity to compete.” Winning the contest led Alex to make many contacts that led him down the path to success. Marvyn Roy and Steve Daly are two people who became close friends. Steve connected him with some touring show productions that became the next stepping-stone in Alex’s career.

When asked why he would recommend the Teen Seminar to teens today, Ramon’s response was, “Why wouldn’t you recommend it? Nothing that I have done with my career would ever have happened without the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. It is valuable even if you don’t want to be a professional magician. Magic can turn into a wonderful and beautiful hobby, but the friendships and connections you will make will last you a lifetime. The facilitators just give you so much, as well as teaching you so many life lessons. One of the most

important was the skill set of communication, whether it be through the art form of magic or just speaking in front of people. You are working with people who want you to succeed.”

In 2014, Alex returned to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar at the joint I.B.M./S.A.M. Convention to talk to the teens. He was overwhelmed and inspired by the fact that he got to speak between Jeff McBride and Lance Burton.

Since the seminar, Ramon’s career has taken off. When he was twenty, Steve Daly put him in touch with Disney, who was putting together a tour with Feld Entertainment, who produced Siegfried & Roy’s show. He ended up touring with *Disney Live: Mickey’s Magic Show*, an illusion show. This was the first time Disney characters appeared on stage with a live person that was also a magician. It was an illusion show mixed with Disney magic, and characters such as Princess Jasmine were levitated. Alex toured all over the world with them for three years.

As soon as that tour was ending, the Feld family gave him his next opportunity. They were putting together a show with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey’s Circus with Alex in the starring role. He would be the second youngest ringmaster and the first magician to star and tour with their circus. At the age of twenty-three, Ramon signed a two-year contract to start, only two weeks after touring with Disney concluded.

Alex traveled all around the country on the circus train. He explained, “That was one of the most incredible adventures of my life. For me, Disney was college, and Ringling was graduate school. There were over a hundred people in the show, and I had thirty-five people working with me on my illusions.” He did thirty shows at Madison Square Garden with an audience of fifteen thousand people and said it was the best experience of his life at the helm of *The Greatest Show on Earth*.

While on the road for five years with Feld Entertainment, Ramon performed over 1,500 shows for over five million people, and he developed the skill set necessary to produce his own show. He also learned marketing with the help of the many television appearances he made to push ticket sales during his touring years. With all the shows and experience under his belt, it was time for Alex to produce his own show.

Six months later, Ramon signed a contract to open his own show at a casino in Tahoe to be performed six nights a week for two and a half years. After Tahoe, Alex toured primarily on the west coast and worked in casinos, theaters, and cruise ships. In 2016, he appeared on *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*.

Right before the pandemic, Alex had set up thirty-five shows in different cities in thirty-five days to celebrate his thirty-fifth birthday. It was canceled at the last minute with the shelter-at-home mandate, so he decided to do a completely different magic show each day online. Since then, he has performed over two hundred virtual shows, as well as online corporate events. After the pandemic, Ramon plans to continue doing a combination of online and live shows. He is currently constructing a mobile station so that he can easily perform online while on the road. He is also working on livestreaming a large production in December for which he will be selling tickets. If you can, see this charismatic young professional that owes his career to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

Alex’s advice to teen magicians is, “Love magic! Love performing and watching it. There is no competition between you and anyone else. Just love it!”

ELI PORTALA

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

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Born in May 1996 in Toledo, Ohio, to magician and I.B.M. member, Andrew, and his wife, Melissa, Eli Portala lives in Toledo in an apartment close to his family. Eli is also an I.B.M. member and won the I.B.M. Youth Stage Magician contest twice, in 2006 in Miami and in 2013 in Phoenix. Eli has a younger sister, Emma, who used to appear in his act as his assistant.

Eli attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2010 and won the Siegfried & Roy Tribute Award from the S&R North American Fan Club. In 2011, he achieved second place in the Teen Magic Stage Contest.

Eli tells us, “[The seminar] was great. I met and made so many friends that I stay in touch with. It was cool that so many people had things in common. Attending the Teen Seminar definitely made me a better magician.”



Eli's promotional photo.

While attending the seminar, Andrew Basso saw Eli and brought him and other LBTS participants to take part on *La Grande Magia: The Illusionist* on Italian TV. This was an unforgettable experience for Eli, and he realized it would never have happened had he not attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

Eli has some fun memories from the seminar. Many late nights were spent staying up, socializing, and working on magic, and on one occasion, the teens rode up the Strip in a limousine. At the 2013 I.B.M. Convention in Phoenix after the seminar, Eli got to spend some one-on-one time



Top: Recent photos of Eli performing. Bottom: Eli and Emma with Lance Burton in Las Vegas in 2006.



Top to bottom: Eli and Emma competing at the 2011 Teen Contest. Eli awarded first place in the Youth Stage Contest at the I.B.M. Annual Convention in Phoenix. Eli outside the theater where he was performing in 2019. Siegfried & Roy present Eli and Emma with their award.

with Lance Burton working on his dove act, a memory he will never forget.

What has really stuck with Eli is Jeff McBride telling him, “Always remember – magic first. The show starts when you pick up the phone.” He continues, “I learned so much from both Jeff and Eugene Burger.”

Although the Teen Seminar participants competed against each other, the friendships and camaraderie superseded the importance of winning the contest. In 2010, Eli lent his birds to Edward Hilsum, who was flying in from the United Kingdom to compete and not able to bring his own birds with him. Even though they were both competing with the birds in the same contest, Eli did not hesitate to come to the rescue, and this generous act was one of the reasons that he was awarded the S&R Fan Club Award, which stated, “In recognition of a promising young career in the Art of Magic.”

Eli highly recommends the seminar to today’s teens. He tells us, “It was everything to me. I looked forward to it so much each year. It was special. It wasn’t about competing against each other – it was about learning from each other. You

learned from and hung out with the top magicians and just did magic.”

On January 23, 2008, the Portala family was featured on an episode of ABC’s *Wife Swap*, in which Eli and Emma’s mom, Melissa, traded places for two weeks with a mother from another family in California. The episode is still available online. At the age of nineteen, Eli competed in China and took the bronze prize. He did television interviews there to publicize the event.

Since attending the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, Eli has been performing full time. He has been performing at county fairs, which he started doing when he was just ten years old with his dad. Now, he performs alone at county fairs and also performs at theaters, restaurants, and birthday parties. He performs locally in Ohio, but during the summer, he travels to perform. He had many performances lined up for the summer of 2020, but of course, they have all been canceled amid the pandemic.

Portala’s advice to teens in magic is, “Learn everything. Even if you don’t think it will be useful down the road, just learn it. If you have an idea that you believe in, stick with it. That has helped me the most throughout the years.”

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HENRY VARGAS

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Henry Vargas was born on December 11, 1991 in Belo Horizonte, the sixth largest city in Brazil, which is found in the state of Minas Gerais. He now lives three hundred fifty miles from his birth place in Sao Paulo, the most populous city in the Americas, and the fourth most populated globally.

Henry attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2010, won the stage contest, and was invited back to perform at the final 2011 World Magic Seminar. He says, "I remember crying backstage with Mike Caveney (whom I call El Gran Mago Mike) and Tina Lenert after I took first place in the Teen Stage Contest. They sponsored my participation at the LBTS and the World Magic Seminar. I will never forget that. They are the best. I am so thankful for Mike and Tina. They changed my life that year and are still a heavy influence on me."



Henry Vargas.

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar was a game changer for Henry. It inspired him to work harder on his magic routines, and it showed him that magic could be his real career. The hard work led to invitations to work all around the world. He explains, "An agent saw me at the World Magic Seminar, and because of that, I worked five consecutive years in China. I also was part of the Italian TV show, *La Grande Magia* after the WMS. The biggest change that year was in my mind. I decided magic would be my career."

Another of Henry's favorite memories is hanging out with all the great friends



Henry and Klauss on stage.



Top to bottom: Henry and Klauss outside the Magic Castle. Henry, Klauss, and Tina Lenert on stage at the Magic Castle. Henry Vargas, winner of the teen contest, pictured with Trevor and Lorena Waters, Winners of the Golden Lion Award. Henry and Klauss breaking the world record for levitating.

he made at the seminar – his “family in magic,” he says.

Henry would highly recommend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar for kids with an affinity toward magic. “It is a real dream,” he says. “You see great performers, you share your passion, and you learn a lot. It was life-changing for all of us who were there.”

Since the Lance Burton Teen Seminar Henry has spent much of his time studying magic and working – a lot. He tells us, “I found a partner in Brazil. His name is Klauss Duraes, and we work as a duo. Our company is called ILUSION, and we produce shows for corporate clients, TV shows, and touring shows. In 2019 we did one hundred and twenty shows. The Lance Burton Teen Seminar and the people we met there changed my life forever. I am really grateful.”

In September 2019, Henry and Klauss were televised levitating for over four hours on Avenida Paulista in Sao Paulo, which is known as the Times Square of Brazil. They drew huge crowds, and broke the previous levitation record of three hours and twenty minutes, which was set nine years earlier in Chile.

In 2015, Henry received the Allan Slaight Award and was named International Rising Star. He has also worked five weeks at the world-famous Magic Castle in Hollywood. The last time was in January 2020, when he shared the stage with his friends Mike Caveney and Tina Lenert.

His advice for teens in magic is, “Share your dreams, your fears, and your passion! All the best people in magic are there to help. If you do your part, your dream can come true.”

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar proved to Henry that he could make magic his life career. He elaborates: “I saw that I could learn a lot by watching all the great performances, and by listening to these amazing performers’ stories and advice. I still frequently go back to memories from the seminar to help me make decisions and plan my career. I would like to sincerely thank every person who made that seminar happen!”

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HIROKI HARA

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Hiroki Hara was born in 1990 in a small village in the Nara area of the Kansai region of the island of Honshu in Japan. Nara is about thirty miles south of the city of Kyoto, and the entire Nara area has a population of about three hundred and fifty thousand. He is now a resident of Tokyo, Japan's most heavily populated and capital city, with a population of over nine million.

Hara participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar for the first time in 2009 and returned in 2010 and 2011. The seminar was life changing for him. He explains, "It has been the biggest thing in my life so far. Before that, I was just a magic kid living deep in the mountains of Japan. I was practicing every day by myself at the community center in the village. My dream was to win that contest. I practiced so hard, but I didn't really believe that I would win. After I won, my life changed. I received ten offers immediately

around the world, and I traveled extensively."

Timing was perfect for Hiroki. In 2009, the Lance Burton Teen Seminar contest was the subject of the documentary film, *Make Believe*, directed by J. Clay Tweel. The film focused on the lives of six of the contestants and their friendly competitiveness as they strove to become the stage magic World Teen Champion. Hara achieved his dream and won the contest that year. He was heavily featured in the movie, which won Best Documentary awards at both the Austin Film Festival and the Los Angeles Film Festival.



Lance Burton.



Hiroki Hara



Hara performing.

Hiroki's favorite things from the seminar were the friendships he made with people from all over the world. He tells us, "I couldn't speak English well then, but we could communicate through the language of magic. Even now, these people are still my friends."

One of Hara's favorite memories was going to Lance Burton's home. He tells us, "I felt Lance's love and peace for the new generation, along with Jeff McBride and Mac King. In Asia, the masters don't help, so this was really special."

Hiroki feels that, although there are many magic schools around the world for the new generation of magicians, the Lance Burton Teen Seminar is the only one where young magicians can learn from superstars. He tells us, "Nowadays, too many kids learn from YouTube, where they may learn the moves but not how to perform. They don't have facial expressions and body movement, which is so important. I think that is the biggest thing I took away from the seminar. They can't learn that on YouTube."



Top to bottom: Hiroki and Lance Burton at Lance's home. Hiroki with videographer Rich Marcus and J. Clay Tweel, director of Make Believe in Japan. J. Clay Tweel (director), Krystyn Lambert, Bill Cook, Hiroki Hara, Lance Burton, Derek McKee, and Steve Klein (producer) at the Make Believe premiere. Hiroki and his Make Believe co-stars, Derek McKee, Bill Cook, and Krystyn Lambert, in New York for the movie premiere.

Shortly after the seminar, Hara was asked to perform at the world-famous Magic Castle in Hollywood. After returning to Japan, the story of the young Japanese magician winning a major contest in Las Vegas became headline news, and he was asked to make many television appearances. The success of *Make Believe* followed him to his homeland, and he attended the movie's premiere in New York City with Lance Burton and three of his co-stars.

Magic has been Hara's life since he started performing for pay when he was only seven years old. He has never had a different job. He recalls, "My first television appearance was on a prank magic show in Japan. I was dressed as a waiter who performed magic in a restaurant. I was more nervous being dressed as a waiter."

Hiroki changed his stage name to "Hara" right before he appeared on NBC's *America's Got Talent*. The *AGT* producer had seen *Make Believe* and reached out to Hara. At this point in his career, he had moved into a very visual type of stage magic using high tech and digital screens. He succeeded in wowing the judges and reached the quarterfinals.

Hara's advice for teens today would be to ask questions. He recognizes that many young magicians are shy, but he would encourage them to ask questions to learn all that they can. He tells us, "When I was at the Teen Seminar, I had so many questions, but my English was terrible. I made a list and asked my questions about being a success and a professional, and Mac, Jeff, and Joanie Spina answered me slowly so I could understand. They all gave me great advice. I especially want to thank Lance Burton. He changed my life. He continues to help me with so much."

Hara continues to perform illusions around the world. He has performed customized cutting-edge technology magic for international organizations such as Dior, Ferrari, and Toyota. He also owns a consulting company which has led to him working with many celebrities in many areas, including the music industry. To learn more about Hara, check out his website at www.hirokihara.com.

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us before the 2021 I.B.M. Annual Convention, scheduled for July 5–7 in Pittsburgh. If you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, you can attend the seminar for free. Also, if you are an I.B.M. member under the age of eighteen, you can register for the Convention for free!

EDWARD HILSUM

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar has been educating and mentoring teens since 1994. For the past few years, it has been hosted at the International Brotherhood of Magicians Annual Convention. It is free to attend for teens between the ages of thirteen and nineteen during the two days prior to the start of the convention. It is facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass, the Founder and Dean of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas. They are always joined by surprise guests. In this column, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants in the magic community.

Edward Hilsum was born in October 1991 in Kent, England. He still lives there today with his family and his nineteen doves. Hilsum took part in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2010. He had seen Lance Burton perform his flawless dove magic on TV. At that lifechanging moment, he knew what he wanted his profession to be. He tells us, "I had met Lance once before, after his show at the Monte Carlo, and I couldn't believe how generous and down to earth he was. The prospect of spending some more time with Lance and other great magicians at the seminar was a no-brainer!"

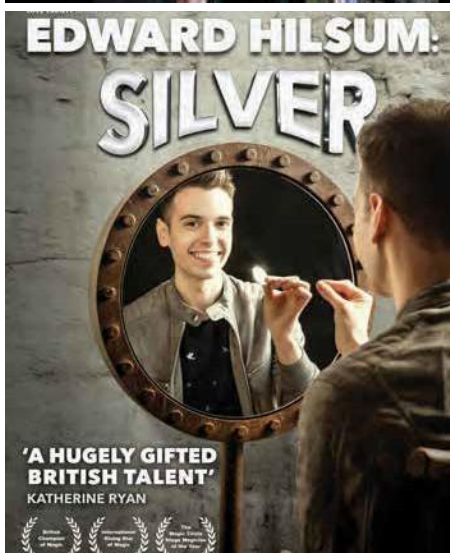
Edward entered the Teen Contest that year with his dove act and explains, "It opened my eyes to the challenges and joys of traveling with my magic. The inspiration and generosity I received from heroes of mine and new friends is something I will never forget.



Dove production at The Magic Circle. PHOTO BY MARK HESKETH-JENNINGS

In addition to the lessons and words of wisdom I learned, magicians lent me props that I needed to perform my act but were too big for me to bring with me. They even lent me doves so I could compete. It felt like I had joined a family, and I'm happy to say I'm still friends with many of these people today."

Although it has been eleven years since Hilsum attended the seminar, he has many fond memories. He tells us, "It was a huge adventure with my amazing mum. I have the best mum in the world, and she has always been incredibly supportive. Also, standing on the stage at the competition finals is one of those moments I will never



Top to bottom: Edward's show, Silver. PHOTO BY HOMER LIWAG. Edward performs his dove act on Champions of Magic. Edward's first meeting with Lance Burton after Lance's show at the Monte Carlo in 2008.

Top to bottom: Performing the show, Silver, to close the 2019 I.B.M. British Ring Convention. PHOTO BY JEMMA TYNAN. Poster advertising Edward's show, Silver. Edward receives the 2020 Magic Circle Close-Up Magician of the Year Award, presented by President Noel Britten. PHOTO BY MARK HESKETH-JENNINGS

forget. Before that, I had only performed on small stages with basic technology. Being on a Las Vegas stage with full production and awesome lighting was a dream come true!" Edward continues, "The pizza party at Lance Burton's house was insane!

Siegfried, Johnny Thompson, and Mac King were there, and many more. There were magical heroes everywhere."

Another highlight was meeting Joanie Spina, and Hilsum is most grateful for this. Joanie was one of the judges of the Teen Contest and became a generous mentor and friend to him. He explains, "She transformed me and my magic, and although I still miss her, I feel so lucky to have her voice in my head whenever I step on stage or work on a show." Edward highly recommends that teens attend the seminar if they

get the opportunity so that they too can join a family of amazing mentors and make friends from all over the world.

Edward followed Lance's advice of getting a good education. He graduated from university with a psychology degree. Straight after graduating, he toured with *Champions of Magic* and enjoyed performing throughout the United Kingdom and North America until 2018.

Since then, Hilsum has created two one-man shows which he performed at the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival. He also cowrote and directed a handful of shows, including one which transferred to London's West End, England's equivalent to Broadway.

Recently, Edward became The Magic Circle Triple Crown Champion. He tells us, "I was the first person to win all The Magic Circle's competitions, and it was a huge honor to be awarded that title."

When asked for a piece of advice that he would give to the teens of today, he said, "Meet your heroes. Get in touch with those who inspire you, but remember to be respectful. Ask them questions, and most of all, listen to their advice."

Additionally, Hilsum wants the readers to know that, beyond the lifelong friendships he made, the inspiration and generosity he received at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar has stayed with him, and it is something he tries to pass on to others whenever he can.

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us on Zoom July 6 – 7. If you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, you can attend the seminar for *free*. Also, if you are an I.B.M. member under the age of eighteen, you can register for the online I.B.M. Convention for *free*!

PAIGE THOMPSON

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Lance Burton.

By Simone Marron

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Paige Thompson was born in 1986 in Redondo Beach, California. She grew up in Byron, a tiny town with a population of just over one thousand people, about sixty miles from San Francisco.

Thompson was one of the early participants of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. She tells us, “I was a participant for at least three years of the Teen Seminar. It may have been four. I know I was there for the first time in 2001 or 2002, and then I went back until I reached the maximum age.”

When Paige started attending the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, it was before the days of social media, and she only had dial-up Internet. She tells us, “I didn’t know many magicians my age, so being able to spend a weekend with my magic peers and learn from my idols was a dream come true! I couldn’t believe Jeff McBride and Eugene Burger



Paige at the Chicago Magic Lounge, 2020.
PHOTO BY JAMES MURPHY

were the teachers. Having the experience at the Seminar helped me grow so much.” Paige continues, “I was quiet and nervous around everyone, but the Seminar really helped me overcome a lot of my shyness. Everyone was so welcoming and helpful.”

Thompson loved having the opportunity to compete. She was able to move her magic routines forward, and getting feedback from the judges and other magicians was invaluable and meant the world to her. Paige adds, “Having a deadline to work on my act was so helpful, and it was gratifying to see how my magic improved each year.”



Top to bottom: Performing in the 654 Club Close-Up Gallery at the Chicago Magic Lounge, 2019. PHOTO BY JAMES MURPHY. Paige competing in the Teen Contest at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, 2004. Paige at the 2004 LBTS Teen Contest Award Ceremony with Lance Burton.

Top to bottom: Paige performing strolling magic at the Chicago Magic Lounge, 2019. PHOTO BY JAMES MURPHY. Paige competing in the Teen Contest at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, 2004. Early promotional shots taken in San Francisco, 2003.

Paige has many great memories from the Seminar. "The teen lunch was such an amazing experience. My idols like Lance Burton, Siegfried & Roy, and Penn & Teller were sitting and chatting with me. It was truly a dream come true. Being quiet, I absorbed all the advice they gave

me. Looking back now, it seems crazy how many of my friends from that time have become so successful and talented."

Paige has loved magic her whole life, but after high school while attending night school, she found herself having to get "real" jobs. She had many talented friends in magic that she felt were so much further along in their magic careers than she was, and many were already so successful, that for a while she began to doubt her own ability to be successful herself.

Paige moved to Las Vegas for a few years, and at the age of twenty-seven, she moved to Branson, Missouri, where she was given the opportunity to perform magic every night. She finally realized, “Maybe I can do this.” After gaining stage time in Branson, which was not her favorite place, Paige made the move to Chicago. She tells us, “I decided to give Chicago a try. I’ve been there for four years now and love it, except for the fact it’s a frozen tundra in the winter.”

Paige highly recommends the Lance Burton Teen Seminar for budding young magic lovers. She explains, “This experience is so amazing. Having the opportunity to ask some of the best in the world of magic absolutely anything, how could you pass that up? Being amongst other teens who are also trying to improve their skills and knowledge of magic is super beneficial. I don’t know if I would have ever had the confidence to keep trying to improve my magic without the Seminar. It was so overwhelming for me when I was young. Having my peers encourage me and always cheer me on truly helped me believe in myself.”

Paige’s advice for teens today would be to attend the Seminar, take it all in, write everything down, and really get to know the other teens. She explains, “You will be growing up with them and seeing their progression. It’s amazing to be a part of a community like that.”

Paige is now one of the resident house magicians at the Chicago Magic Lounge. She tells us, “I’ve gotten so many opportunities from being a part of this community, including getting to perform at The Magic Castle in Hollywood and on the CW’s *Masters of Illusion*. Performing so often at the Chicago Magic Lounge has taught me so much and has made me improve beyond belief. The magicians in this community are so helpful, and I truly couldn’t be happier.”

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CODY SANDERS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron



Lance Burton.

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Cody Sanders was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and is twenty-eight years old. Born into a military family, Sanders moved every three years, until his family settled in San Antonio, Texas.

Cody participated in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2011. He tells us, “Up to that point, I had been performing at all the major resorts in San Antonio with a one-hour comedy show. I had never competed, and never attended any seminars or meetings other than my local I.B.M. Ring and S.A.M. Assembly.”

Cody performed a fun upbeat routine with his assistant Patty in the teen contest, and was presented with the Siegfried & Roy Congeniality Award, which reflects his sunny disposition.



Promotional photo, 2013.

Sanders grew up obsessed with Lance Burton. When he got his first cellphone capable of connecting to YouTube, the first video he watched was Lance Burton’s FISM routine. He explains, “Lance was my hero. I wanted to become a Las Vegas performer just like him. I knew that attending the teen seminar with Lance Burton would change my life. It isn’t often people get to actually meet their heroes, and when they do, it is often a handshake and a picture. With Lance, he was patient and present. We had pizza at his house, and we got to listen to his stories, and learn about his life.” Aside from learning about magic, the teen seminar taught Cody about kind-



Top to bottom: Promotional photo, 2013. Cody performing in the 2011 teen contest. A group from the teen seminar having fun and renting a limo for the evening in Vegas.

ness, giving, and remaining humble. He continues, “Here was a successful magician who let me into his home and offered feedback and advice. I think the teen seminar taught me a lot about how to be a good human.”

The pizza party at Lance Burton’s house and getting to see him perform at the Monte Carlo are Cody’s favorite memo-



Top to bottom: Teen Stage Contest lineup, 2011. Cody with his assistant Patty and Jeff McBride at the 2011 seminar. Group shot taken at Lance Burton’s home.

ries of that time, along with the variety of lectures and tips for improving performance. Cody adds, “There was so much time and attention put into the programming, and I really felt like everyone there cared about my development as a performer. I would recommend this seminar to anyone aspiring to take their magic to the next level, to network with others, and to build friendship and camaraderie among your fellow performers.”

Now, after living in Dallas, Texas, for the last seven years or so, Cody has largely moved away from magic, and turned his focus to his intense interest in psychology

and counseling. He tells us, "I am currently a therapist working in private practice in the Dallas metroplex. I specialize in LGBTQIA+ therapies as well as treatment for chronic self-harm and suicide ideation." He still uses magic to connect with his younger clients and build a rapport. He continues, "Magic is an art that gives so much, and the teen seminar solidified this idea for me."

Cody highly recommends today's magically inclined teens to snap up the opportunity of attending the Lance Burton Teen Seminar and advises attendees to go in ready to listen. He wants to let the youth of today know, "You are being given the opportunity to learn from masters like Jeff McBride and Lance Burton. Hang on to every word they say, and be sure to take the time to go back to your hotel room, and think about how you can apply their wisdom to your craft. Also drink lots of coffee! I remember lots of long nights hanging with other teens from the seminar!"

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us on Zoom July 6 and 7, where if you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, you can attend the seminar for *free*. Go to www.IBMConvention.com for more details. Also, if you are an I.B.M. member under the age of eighteen, you can register for the online I.B.M. Convention for *free*!

JAY MATTOU

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron



Lance Burton.

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I.B.M. member Jay Mattioli was born in 1981 in New Rochelle, just outside New York City. At the age of twelve, Jay and his family moved to the Poconos in Northeast Pennsylvania. He remained there through college and then moved to northern Virginia, where he lives with his wife and two sons today.

Mattioli took part in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar in 2001 after convincing his family to make the trip to Las Vegas so he could attend. At the age of nineteen, he knew it was his last opportunity as he would exceed the age limit the following year. Jay competed in the teen contest and took second place.

In 1999, Jay auditioned to be one of several teen magicians who would be a part of a Lance Burton primetime television special on NBC. Jay was successful, and Lance



Jay Mattioli Promotional photo.

produced his television special featuring fifteen kid magicians. Mattioli explains, "Lance paid for us all to come to Vegas while his show at the Monte Carlo was dark, and the proceeds of the show went to charity. I made many friends, and a year later, many of us returned to attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar together."

Having no entertainment ties in his family, Mattioli found this opportunity to come to Vegas and perform on a large stage lifechanging. He tells us, "This was the biggest thing to happen to me. Performing on the stage at the Rio in Las Vegas in front of Lance Burton and the "Who's Who" of magic was a huge confidence



Top to bottom: Jay in the early days. Jay with Lance Burton at the 2001 teen seminar. Jay appears in Genii Magazine with Lance Burton in the "Young Magicians Showcase."

builder. Competing gave me a goal and motivated me. I sneaked my doves into my dorm room at college so I could rehearse. It taught me that, as an entertainer, I would have to go above and beyond what anyone would think you would have to do to make this all happen."

Jay has many memories from the seminar, but one of his favorites was being



Top to bottom: Jay levitating. Jay with Johnny Thompson at the 2001 teen seminar.

backstage and standing six feet away from Shimada as he was setting up his act. He remembered Shimada's assistant hazing the stage with smoke from fireworks. Mattioli remembers, "The contest was my big priority, and bringing the birds on the plane was stressful."

Jay highly recommends the seminar for teens today. He explains, "Just being around and getting advice from these people that have already done it all is invaluable. Getting feedback from the professionals in the business, like Lance Burton, Johnny Thompson, and Jeff McBride, will make them better magicians."

In the twenty years since Jay attended the seminar, he has done over one

thousand kids' birthday parties and performed on many cruise ships and at fairs, school assemblies, colleges, corporate events, and fundraisers. He also produces magic props that he builds, customizes, and sells for other magicians. In addition, he works as a consultant.

In 2000, Jay took first place in the I.B.M. Adult Stage Contest at just eighteen years old. In 2009, Mattioli was a quarterfinalist on NBC's *America's Got Talent*, and in 2018, he appeared on FOX's *Showtime at the Apollo*. He has also had many smaller local television appearances.

One piece of advice that Jay would give to teens today is to try everything. He explains, "Make yourself as universal as possible. If you are looking to make a career in magic, have enough magic material so you can adapt to perform in any performing environment – whether it be for adults or kids, working inside or outside, in a restaurant or a big theater. I am working about ninety percent of the time because I am adaptable. I have even done over one hundred and fifty virtual shows in the past year." Jay also advises young performers to get out and do as many shows as possible. Do kids' shows, library programs, or performances at senior centers, but just get out there and perform as much as possible. Even if they don't have much of a budget, get the performing time in."

Jay is already returning to some in-person shows. He has been fortunate to keep busy with online and outdoor shows during the past year, but he has loved being home and spending time with his wife and young sons. He expects to get back on the road to his usual hundred fifty to two hundred days a year soon, but he also looks forward to the days when he can spend more time at home with his family.

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us on Zoom July 6–7 for the I.B.M. Virtual Annual Convention. If you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, you can attend the seminar for free. Go to www.IBMConvention.com for more details. Also, if you are an I.B.M. member under the age of eighteen, you can register for the online I.B.M. Convention for free!

PHILLIP KAISER

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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Phillip Kaiser was raised in Columbus, Ohio. He jokes, “I was born in 1981, a few months before Lance Burton appeared on *The Tonight Show* for the first time. Coincidence? Absolutely!

Teens, trust nothing I say.”

Growing up with the Columbus Magifest in his backyard, Kaiser attended many conventions around the Midwest and began competing in magic contests. Phillip attended Jeff McBride’s first Master Class in 1998 and there interacted with Jeff, Lance, Eugene Burger, and many other magicians. As a result, his perspective of the professional magician was refreshed. He tells us, “I consulted with Jeff on my manipulation act, I had a



Phillip’s promotional picture. PHOTO BY GLOBAL IMAGE CREATION, JEREMY MASON McGRAW

VIP backstage experience with Lance, and I added to my experiences with mentors back home.”

In 2001, Phillip attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar and entered the Teen Contest. He relates, “I competed with a ton of talented peers. My performance went well, and I was honored to receive the Lance Burton Award for Stage Magic.”

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar provided Kaiser with an opportunity to befriend talented peers and study with professional idols. He explains, “For me, spending time at conventions and competing provided deadlines to speed act development, alternate ways of approaching the craft, fun



Top to bottom: LBTS teen contestants, 2001. PHOTO BY PETE BIRO. Now You See It stage show on the Freedom of the Seas. PHOTO BY GLOBAL IMAGE CREATION, JEREMY MASON McGRAW. Phillip at Ohio State in 2005. PHOTO CREDIT: JILL BONNOUGH.

Top to bottom: The Freedom of the Seas theater in 2009. PHOTO BY GLOBAL IMAGE CREATION, JEREMY MASON McGRAW. Phillip with Lance Burton in 1998. PHOTO BY KATHRYN KAISER

interactions with like-minded kids, and a platform to showcase my work.”

Some of Phillip’s favorite memories are of hanging with convention buddies in the lobbies of hotels and performing on the Samba stage at the Rio, after which he got to meet Shimada. He adds, “Outside my competition experience, Lance Burton’s luncheon was worth the trip, if only for the

fact that he gave us all his exclusive booklet, *Advice*.”

Kaiser strongly advises teens with a passion for magic to attend future seminars. He explains, “If you are passionate about magic as an art, business, and lifestyle, meeting other teens from around the globe who care just as much as you do will bring lifelong friendships. Learning from professionals who have come before you will help you develop your own path. Lance Burton and Jeff McBride care deeply about the new generation of magicians, and they give them the best training and advice possible.”

After attending the seminar, Kaiser continued developing his stage work and expanded from his bird act to grand

illusion. Throughout college, he spent his summers performing at Six Flags parks, and after, he did shows in Japan, Branson, and China, which led to a nine-year run headlining an illusion show on Royal Caribbean's *Freedom of the Seas*.

Fifteen years ago, Phillip moved to Orlando, Florida, where he still resides. He tells us, "I was a consulting member of *The Magic Estate* brand headed by Jeff Kaylor and Anton James with mentorship from Michael Ammar. Today, my business is largely focused on producing shows in the corporate market – from high-end close-up gigs to stage presentations." Kaiser also consults and designs and fabricates illusions for clients such as Drew Thomas, Jay Mattioli, 20 Penny Circus, Anton James, Bill Abbott, and Universal Orlando.

For a short time, Kaiser was Piff the Magic Dragon's tour manager. He also held the title of Magic Architect for Drew Thomas Magic's finalist run on NBC's *America's Got Talent*. He tells us, "My life is blessed. I set out to make magic my life, and opportunities arose that allowed that to happen. It hasn't been without sacrifice, and at times, it has been a challenge, but all paths have twists, and most roads have bumps."

Kaiser has some great advice for today's teens. "Perform as much as you can. Try different things to discover your strengths. Work diligently at becoming your best. Failure is at first inevitable if you are stretching beyond your comfort zone. It is better to fail quickly, and to learn what not to do, which will help lead to your success. Listen to your audience. They will tell you what is working. Remember, magic performance is about serving them."

Phillip feels that his time spent with Lance Burton and Jeff McBride helped focus his development on an act that won thirteen awards and opened doors to professional work in theme parks. This in turn allowed further career development and helped build relationships with many of his peers that are strong to this day.

Kaiser concludes, "Not everyone becomes a professional entertainer. There is no shame in that. The performer's life is often difficult. The struggles are myriad, but the rewards are fantastic. Do you! Do good! Attend the Lance Burton Teen Seminar!"

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MATT STANLEY

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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By Simone Marron



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Matt Stanley was born in October 1985 in Dayton, Ohio. He still calls Dayton his home base, and he lives there with his awesome and supportive wife Michelle.

Matt attended the seminar in 2003, 2004, and 2005, when it was still part of the World Magic Seminar in Las Vegas. He tells us, “It was an awesome experience getting to participate in such a great event led by Jeff McBride and Eugene Burger, Bill and Becki Wells, with appearances by Lance Burton and many other big names in the magic world.”

In 2003, Matt won the “Lance Burton Award.” This led to many opportunities for him, including getting his act booked at several magic conventions across the country, as well as a week-long run in a show in Anchorage, Alaska, and doing a pre-show for David

Copperfield. He explains, “It was a real turning point in my career as a magician and opened so many doors.”

One of Matt’s favorite memories of the seminar was the camaraderie that he experienced with so many other teen magicians. He says, “Outside of magic conventions and events, it’s hard to find others your age with the same interest in magic. At the LBTS, a large group of us with the same level of passion and enthusiasm came together. It was great to be able to bounce ideas off of one another.”

Matt also remembers how great it was getting advice about ideas he was working on from Jeff, Eugene, and Lance. He had



Pre-show at The Chicago Magic Lounge.



Left to right: Cruise ship in Saint Thomas, 2019. Matt and his wife Michelle at Abbott's Magic Get-together, 2019. In Ensenada, Mexico, while performing on Carnival's Imagination in 2019.



Left: Matt around age thirteen with his Umbrella Cockatoo, Bobby. Right: Lance Burton presents Matt with "The Lance Burton Award."



Top: Same kid, same car, thirty years apart with his 1975 Corvette Stingray left to Matt by his grandfather. Bottom: The "laundry" entrance to Chicago Magic Lounge. Right: Pirate act promo shot.

looked up to them for years. He recalls, "These guys didn't hold anything back, and they gave us all a real look behind the curtain on the ins and outs of performing professionally."

Two other highlights and favorite memories for Matt were touring Jeff's warehouse and theater, where he learned how to pack and travel with props and equipment in the

most economical way, and the luncheon with Johnny and Pam Thompson, Fielding West, Gary Darwin, Billy McComb, and others.

Matt recommends the seminar for today's teens. "It is a great place to meet and network with other like-minded individuals," he says. "I met and bonded with

some who are now my dearest friends in magic. It is a great place to help you become a better magician.”

The pirate-themed bird act that Matt competed with at the 2003 convention opened many doors for him. His act included productions of six doves, an umbrella cockatoo, and a blue and gold macaw. As it became increasingly difficult to travel with livestock – particularly on planes, he transitioned into comedy magic and discovered that he had a natural timing for comedy.

Matt began to do a lot of private parties, the occasional corporate event, and open mic nights with comedy and magic. Before long, he left the bird act and was being booked in comedy clubs as a feature act. Within a few years, he was a headliner and a regular in clubs on the national circuit, and even scored three separate two-week runs at the Atlantis Resort in the Bahamas.

Over the past fifteen years, Matt has stayed busy in the private, corporate, and comedy club markets. “I get to perform at the occasional magic convention, which I always enjoy,” he says. “In 2019, I started performing on cruise ships and got to do several before the world shut down. Comedy clubs and corporate events have steadily started to make a comeback, and I am anxiously awaiting the full return of cruising.”

Advice that Matt would like to give to teen magicians is, “Do everything in your power to be prepared for when opportunity knocks. There are a million excuses we can come up with on why *not* to take an opportunity. As long as it isn’t illegal, unethical, or against your personal or religious beliefs, don’t be afraid to say *yes!* If you are prepared, the opportunities will come. Learn as much as you can – not just about magic, but about theater, and more importantly business and marketing. You never know when the phone might ring, and it can change your life. Don’t procrastinate about getting ready – *be ready!*”

At the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, Lance provides the attending teens with his very valuable “Advice” book. Matt tells us, “I take things that I learned all those years ago at the seminar and still use them today. Lance’s ‘Advice’ book has become a sort of bible that I reread at least once a year.”

JAY TEMAAT

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron



Lance Burton.

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar is hosted at the International Brotherhood of Magicians Annual Convention. It is free to attend for teens between the ages of thirteen and nineteen during the two days prior to the start of the Convention. It is facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass, the Founder and Dean of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas. They are always joined by surprise guests. In this column, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants in the magic community.

Jay Temaat was born in May 1995 in the city of Oakley in Western Kansas. He attended the Lance Burton Teen Seminar for three years in 2009, 2010, and 2011. In 2011, he competed and was awarded a scholarship to the McBride Magic & Mystery School.

The seminar changed Jay's life dramatically. He explains, "Everything became about magic. The camaraderie and the lifelong friendships that were built changed my life. Some of the people that stayed in magic, like Hiroki Hara and Bill Cook, are still my friends today. I know people all around the world now that I can pick up with like it was yesterday."

Temaat's favorite memories from that time are walking through the hotel after the sessions and picking up pizza slices which he took upstairs and ate while he mingled with



Jay at his State Farm office in Kansas.

his new friends. He practiced his dancing canes in the Convention lobby area and helped younger kids while he learned from his new friends. He tells us, "It was easy to make friends. These people all had the same interest as me, and we clicked immediately."

Temaat advises the teens that attend the seminar to stay up late and cultivate those peer relationships. He tells us, "Don't go to sleep. Do lots of magic and build these friendships. Take lots of photos, connect with your new friends on social media, and don't lose touch with them."



Left: Jay's State Farm office. Middle: Assisting a younger child with the dancing cane. Right: LBTSS group shot at Lance's house, 2011.



Left: Jay with Criss Angel at Lance Burton's home Right: Jay with Lance at his home.



Top: Jay at one of the teaching sessions at the seminar. Middle: Jay being awarded the Magic & Mystery School scholarship in 2011 Bottom: Performing the sword box in his traveling show.



Jay performing his traveling show.

After school, Jay moved to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, where he worked with the Smoky Mountain Opry with the Fee Hendrick Family Entertainment Group for nine months.

After leaving Pigeon Forge, Jay moved away from magic and transplanted to Daytona Beach, where he opened Florida Senior Financial Services, a life insurance

and estate planning company. He remained in Florida for five years, and then two years ago, he moved home to Pittsburg, Kansas.

In September 2019, Jay opened his own State Farm agency in Kansas, and State Farm gave him a provisional one-year contract. He hit all the metrics and was able

to sign his permanent contract. He hired his mother, who is his best friend, to be his office manager, and she is Stacey in the office and Mom at home. Jay is extremely happy working and living close to his family, and he is also in the process of opening a mortgage company which will be run out of the same building.

Jay credits much of his success to the Lance Burton Teen Seminar. He explains, “The seminar was one of the most influential times of my life. It helped me become the person I am today. It taught me to see things differently – to not be afraid to go up to strangers and introduce myself. It gave me confidence, and it taught me not to be afraid of failure.”

Although Jay has not remained in the entertainment field, he has become very happy and successful in his chosen career, and he feels that much of this is due to his experiences at the Lance Burton Teen Seminar.

BILLY HSEUH

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST LANCE BURTON TEEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

By Simone Marron



Lance Burton.

The Lance Burton Teen Seminar has been educating and mentoring teens since 1994, and for the past few years, it has been hosted at the International Brotherhood of Magicians Annual Convention. It is free to attend for teens between the ages of thirteen and nineteen during the two days prior to the start of the Convention. It is facilitated by Jeff McBride and Larry Hass, the Founder and Dean of the Magic & Mystery School in Las Vegas. They are always joined by surprise guests. In this column, you will read about some of the success stories of past participants in the magic community.

Billy Hsueh is currently the International President-Elect of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, and in July of 2022, he will be the first past participant of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar to be installed as International President of this organization. After three years and featuring thirty-six past seminar participants, this brings this column to a fitting close.

Hsueh was born in Taipei, Taiwan, in 1994. His family moved to British Columbia, Canada, when he was five, and he currently lives in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver.

In 2013, the I.B.M. adopted the Lance Burton Teen Seminar into its family at the Phoenix, Arizona, Convention, and Billy attended it for the first time. He attended the



Billy wins the Ray Gamble Trophy at I.B.M. Ring 92, The Vancouver Magic Circle.

seminar for a second time at the 2014 joint I.B.M./S.A.M. convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

Attending the seminar changed Billy's life. He explains, "The seminar gave me a different perspective on magic. I had been doing magic for about ten years, and it taught me that magic was so much more than just tricks. You could weave stories and put meaning behind your magic – and make people feel it. It pushed me towards a direction that I probably would not have found on my own. It one hundred percent changed my career and direction."



Left: Performing at Bacio Rosso, Vancouver's Gourmet Cabaret Cirque. Middle: Performing the Nankin Tamasudare at the Vancouver Magic Circle's seventy-fifth anniversary. Right: Learning at the 2013 Lance Burton Teen Seminar in Phoenix. PHOTO: Rebecca C. Wells



Above, Left: Creativity abounds with an extra shot of espresso as Billy competes with his Starbucks routine at PCAM/CAM. Above, Right: Performing at the Wizardz Magic Theatre in Florida.



Top: Billy and PIP Shawn Farquhar on closing night after a five-month run of the cabaret Cirque Show at Bacio Rosso in Vancouver. Middle: Jam session at the LBTS. PHOTO: Rebecca C. Wells. Bottom: LBTS 2013 group shot. PHOTO: Rebecca C. Wells



Top: Billy in the doorway of the first Hidden Wonders location. Bottom: Billy and Lance Burton at the Seminar.

One of Hsueh's favorite memories from the seminar was showing Jeff McBride a routine. Jeff asked to see it two more times. A realization came to Billy that he just may have fooled the great Jeff McBride! Another favorite memory was Jeff teaching the kids how to shoot silks

from their elbows and seeing red silks flying all around the room.

Around the time of high school graduation, many magicians in the area were selecting one color around which to theme their performances. Billy wanted to adopt green and endeavored to find a green suit for his prom and graduation. He was unable to find green and settled for gold. Later, he found his green suit, and this has now become his signature look.

Billy highly recommends the seminar for teens today. He tells us, "Not only do you get to experience learning directly from people that you look up to, but you can ask them any burning questions you may have, and they will answer because all they want is to help you to grow. Look over the past articles in this column and see how much past attendees have accomplished. Look at what you have the potential to be."

Billy's advice for today's attendees is to go in with an open mind, as you have no conception of what you will get out of it. He advises, "Listen, learn, and be like a sponge, and soak it all in as fast as you can." He continues, "Meet people and realize that some of the people around you will end up being your closest friends. That is what happened to me."

Since being at the seminar, Hsueh attended school and studied hospitality management, which besides magic, is his expertise. About ten years ago, he worked as a Starbucks barista. His first routine developed from that employment, and it is still a work in progress.

Billy has served on the I.B.M. Board for the past five years, and he's also served on the Convention Committee. He assisted in producing the 2020 Pacific Coast Association of Magicians' convention online and produced the Three of Clubs convention through the Vancouver Magic Circle. He is currently the President of PCAM.

Billy was awarded second place in close-up for the Canadian Association of Magicians, and he won awards in both parlor and close-up at PCAM. For six months, he worked at the Bacio Rosso circus-style dinner theater in Vancouver, and he has run front of house and opened for Past International President Shawn Farquhar's *Hidden Wonders* since its inception.

If you want to participate in the Lance Burton Teen Seminar, join us in Atlanta in July 2022. If you are between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, you can attend the seminar for *free*. The first forty youth I.B.M. members to register for the Convention will also receive that for free. We are celebrating one hundred years of the I.B.M., so be sure to come to Atlanta and watch the first past participant of the Lance Burton Teen Seminar be inducted as International President. Keep watching www.ibmconvention.com for details.



ARE YOU NEXT?