



# SOULPEPPER

MAGICANA IN ASSOCIATION  
WITH SOULPEPPER PRESENTS.



# HOCUS POCUS

WRITTEN BY DAVID BEN  
AND PATRICK WATSON



APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 80 MINUTES  
THERE WILL BE NO INTERMISSION

## FRAGMENTS OF THE IMAGINATION

The third time, so they say, is the charm. We certainly hope so for this, our third production at Soulpepper. Actually, charm and fragments of my imagination. I say 'fragments of my imagination' because that is what the show contains, fourteen fragments – pieces – that reflect who I am, where I've been, and where I'm going, at least creatively.

It is hard to believe that I've been at this now for forty years. It feels as though I started yesterday. One thing is for certain, my understanding of magic as a performing art has certainly evolved. As I now understand it, magic has much more in common with music and visual art than it does with work dependent on dialogue such as drama or storytelling. Sure I love a good story, just as much as the next person, and *Hocus Pocus* will have one or two. But really, magic, particularly sleight-of-hand, is based on movement and the orchestration of visual imagery. Each trick – or, as I prefer to call them, piece – is a collage of

mixed media combining movement, illusion, colour, sound, text, video and human interaction in a three-dimensional space that happens to be in a theatre.

Unlike most magicians, my primary goal is not to fool the audience – although that may be a by-product of the visceral experience. Rather, my goal is to engage the mind and the eye with ideas that have the potential to transform; that is, to get each person – young and old – to look at the world in new ways.

These pieces, these fragments of my imagination, then become yours.

Now that's real magic!

DAVID BEN,

*Artistic Director of Magicana*

## ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES: HOCUS POCUS

### DAVID BEN – CO-WRITER, PERFORMER, DIRECTOR.

David Ben has co-written and appeared in numerous productions including *Tricks*, *The Conjuror*, *The Conjuror's Suite*, *Natural Magick* and *Card Table Artifice*. His books include *Advantage Play*, *Tricks*, *Dai Vernon: Artist, Magician, Muse*, *Zarrow*, *Slaight: Off Hand* and *The Experts at the Card Table*. He has consulted on several stage productions including, for Souleppper, *Of Human Bondage*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Travesties*. For the Shaw Festival, *Ragtime* and *One Touch of Venus*; and for Stratford, *The Lion*, *The Witch and the Wardrobe*, and *Possible Worlds*. He is also the co-founder of *Magicana* and serves as its Artistic Director.

**PATRICK WATSON – CO-WRITER.** As actor, author, producer and director, Patrick Watson is one of Canada's most celebrated broadcasters. In the 1960s he became a familiar face as the host of CBC's ground-breaking series *This Hour Has Seven Days*. His work also included being the host and producer of the series *Democracy*, the creative director of *The Heritage Minuter*, and the chairman of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His published work includes his autobiography *This Hour Has Seven Decades*. A devoted amateur magician, his magic touch can be found in *The Conjuror*, *The Conjuror's Suite*, *Tricks*, and *Natural Magick*. He is a co-founder and Chairman Emeritus of *Magicana*. Patrick is a Companion of the Order of Canada.

**JOHN LANG – COMPOSER.** John Lang has worked extensively in modern dance (National Ballet's Blue Snake), theatre (Equity Theatre's *Mother's Courage*), film and television (Jackie Burroughs's provocative *A Winter Tan*, Paul Carriere's *Bonne Fete Maman*, Roxana Spicer's *Arthur Currie*, and Norfflicks' series *Conversations* with Jean Vanier). He works with electronic media both live and in the studio. With fellow composer Aaron Davis, he has created scores for several productions

including Clement Virgo's feature film *Rude*. The pair has received a Gemini Award for Richard Nielsen's *No Price Too High*. A second Gemini was awarded for their work on Rik Binstock's *Ebola: Inside an Outbreak*. They received their third Gemini in 2007 for their work on Daniel Zuckerbrot's *Einstein*.

### GLENN DAVIDSON – SET DESIGNER & STAGE MANAGER.

Glenn has been designing sets and lighting for over 35 years. Recent credits include: *Stuff Happens* (National Arts Centre); *Les Zinspirés* (Théâtre français de Toronto); *Circle of Creation*, *The Galileo Project* and *House of Dreams* (Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra); *Card Table Artifice* (*Magicana*); and *The Dog and the Angel* (Common Boots Theatre). His work has garnered two Dora Awards, the Pauline McGibbon Award and a Harold Award. Other projects include display lighting for the Bata Shoe Museum and environment design for the Casa Loma escape game series.

**SIMON ROSSITER – LIGHTING DESIGNER.** Simon Rossiter is a Toronto-based lighting and scenic designer and has created more than 150 original lighting designs for a variety of theatre and dance companies including works for Coleman Lemieux & Compagnie (*Les Paradis Perdus*; *#lovesexbrahms*; *Elvis & the Man in Black*; *From the House of Mirth*); Souleppper (*Frankly*, *Sinatra*; *The Dead*; *The Thirst of Hearts*); Sudbury Theatre Centre (*In Piazza San Domenico*); Théâtre français de Toronto (*Les Précieuses Ridicules*; *Les Zinspirés*; *Le Fa Le Dô*); Theatre New Brunswick (*Frankenstein*); Toronto Dance Theatre (*Burpee/Chin*; *Eleven Accords*; *Rivers*). Simon has received two Dora Awards for outstanding lighting design, is a graduate of the Ryerson Theatre School and is a member of the Associated Designers of Canada.

**CAMERON DAVIS – PROJECTION DESIGNER.** For *Magicana: Tricks, Card Table Artifice, Natural Magick*. Other credits include: Projection Designer: *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Pacific Opera Victoria), *Domesticated* (Company Theatre); *Sweet Charity, You Never Can Tell* (Shaw Festival); *Life, Death, and the Blues* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *Watching Glory Die* (Canadian Rep Theatre); *Six Essential Questions, Every Letter Counts* (Factory Theatre); *The Gay Heritage Project* (Buddies in Bad Times); *Yukonstyle, Cruel and Tender* (Canadian Stage); *CRASH* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *Beyond the Farm Show, The Book of Esther* (Blyth Festival); *Feng Yi Ting* (Spoleto Festival USA/Lincoln Center Festival/Luminato Festival); *Rock 'n' Roll* (Canadian Stage/Citadel); *Dance Marathon* (bluemouth inc); Cameron also teaches and mentors projection design at the National Theatre School of Canada.

**LAURA WARREN – ASSOCIATE PROJECTION DESIGNER.** For *Magicana: Tricks*. Other credits include Projection Design: *Secrets of a Black Boy* (PLAYINGwithCRAYONS/Theatre Passe Muraille), *No Strings* (Attached) (Pink Pluto/Eventual Ashes/Buddies in Bad Times), *Love's Labour's Lost, Guys and Dolls* (Nightwood Theatre); Lighting & Projection Design: *Situational Anarchy* (Pressgang Theatre/Pandemic Theatre); Assistant Projection Design *Alice in Wonderland* (Shaw Festival), *Niagara: A Pan-American Story* (Panamania/Propeller Arts Projects); *Squawk and Sidewalk Chalk* (Geordie Theatre); Collaborator/Designer: *Mars One* (Ghost River Theatre's Devised Production Intensive). Laura is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's production program.

**LA-VANE KELLY – SPOKEN WORD POET.** La-Vane is a Toronto-based performance and spoken word poet. He is also a writer, teacher, speaker and student. Words and poetry are his passion. La-Vane is currently engaged with a not-for-profit organization, Art Starts, where he teaches poetry in classes and workshops to youth throughout Toronto. He views himself as a student of life and is constantly writing and refining his work, growing and sharing his art. Credits include: *Dead Silence* poetry initiative; *Unarmed Verses* (documentary); poetry workshops with ArtStarts; performances for Unity Festival, Get Lit, and Empire; Shameka Flakes production of *Nowhere*; opening for Saul Williams; ArtStarts; and *R.I.S.E.*

**JULIE ENG – PERFORMER.** Julie has appeared with David Ben in *The Conjuror, Natural Magick, and Tricks*. Julie has also performed magic across Canada and the United States, and developed her own show, *Piff Paff Poof*, for young audiences. Julie is also the Executive Director of *Magicana*, and is responsible for, among other things, its outreach programs including *My Magic Hands* and *Senior Sorcery*. She is also a photographer and book designer, her most recent work being *The Experts at the Card Table* (*Magicana*, 2015).

**SULEYMAN FATTAH – MYSTERIOUS FIGURE.** Suleyman has assisted David Ben on stage (*The Conjuror*) and off for 25 years. He remains a mysterious figure.

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## BACKGROUND NOTES

David Ben is a born collaborator. He may appear on stage alone, but his shows are always intricate collaborations with many other artists, including those in the storied lineage of master magicians and illusionists. Ben studies their work and reconstructs famous tricks from written descriptions, entering long gone magicians' minds through their art. He's also a bit of a daredevil. More than half of the pieces in *Hocus Pocus* are new, meaning he has never performed them before. So reactions and timing will be adjusted through the run: you in the audience today can affect how an illusion is performed tomorrow. Ben's shows evolve – a paradox given that everything is worked and reworked, words timed to particular moments in the music, everything – light, video, music, speech – constructed to carry you away, to feed your mind with mystery.

Energy, rhythm, flow, and intimacy contribute to how he does it. He risks an up-close relationship with his audience. He dares to project images that explain the workings of

certain illusions. He invites each spectator to choose where they place their focus in every moment of the show. Video and live content offer a range of tempting options. Instead of trying to fool you, David Ben wants to fill you with wonder, he wants to turn magic into visual art.

Woven throughout is the original music of Ben's longtime composer John Lang, who crafted each composition to amplify the feel and mood of the stage action. *Hocus Pocus* is a roller coaster ride of sensation and feeling, bringing together a broad range of influences, tastes and talents. We hope you will be carried away by the magic that unfolds in your mind as you watch the show.