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lecture notes 2010

by Peter Wardell

These notes are just that - notes. They are however by no means complete. In fact they are missing a number of very important assets that would make them “good” notes:

- Illustrations and photographs are not included simply because I haven't got round to doing them - but they are coming and with them video, (maybe).
- Proper credits are absent. A sin I know, but they will make an appearance at some point. Until then “thanks everybody”.
- References are not referenced. Lets face it they take ages but yes I will do them - eventually

So why have I “shipped” the notes now? Because if I didn't then then the use of 2010 in the title would be misleading and that would simply be wrong.

Peter Wardell (May 2010)

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THE CUPS & BALLS

Introduction

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Final Loads

The cups & Balls is more about attitude and timing than it is about sleight of hand

The cups and balls is of course the oldest trick in the world and that means that it's had more written about it than probably any other trick. So what do I hope to add to the already expansive literature that's available? Not much really. Just a few bits that might make the routine work better for you and add a bit more magic.

The Cups & Balls is more about attitude and timing than it is about sleight of hand. With some basic skills the performer is able to deliver one of the most versatile pieces of magic possible and entertain any size of audience for 5 to 25 minutes.

The routine I used on the streets and I now use in cabaret is based on the Malini / Dai Vernon routine, just like so many routines are. I won't be describing the whole thing here, there's no point. I will say that I based my original performances of the trick on Gazzo's version and I was also strongly influenced by Cellini. Without these 2 incredible street magicians I would never have had the career on the street that I had and I owe them both a great deal.

Just PRETEND to put the ball in one hand but keep it in the other. Don't panic, postulate or pose - just PRETEND!

THE BASICS

The main move in any Cups & Balls routine is the vanish - if this isn't convincing then the you will miss the "magic" in the opening phases. There are literally hundreds of descriptions of the "Fake Transfer" in the literature and I don't want to muddy the waters with another one.

What I do want to discuss is the "non-magic" element of the vanish which takes place as the move is executed. This not when the magic takes place, so you don't have to suck your cheeks in and look mysterious at this point. Also please try to avoid using the French Drop, even if you do it very well. It looks like a move and that's fatal. You should try to perform the transfer as you look up at the audience but even that is a little contrived - it's such a non-move move.

Just PRETEND to put the ball in one hand but keep it in the other. Don't panic, postulate or pose - just PRETEND!

The magic happens when you open your hand and the ball is gone - now you can look like Mr Magic.

*The magic happens
when you open your
hand and the ball isn't
there anymore*

Of course you can mix up the vanishes that you use and I would recommend that you do, but the same thing applies: The magic happens when you open your hand and the ball isn't there any more. Not during wand spins, or other flourishes.

There are exceptions - In David Williamson's "Striking Vanish" the mechanics and the effect happen at the same time but that doesn't stop people making a meal out of the set-up. They shift position and signal that something is about to happen, then they make such huge motions with the wand that when they **THROW** the ball the effect is lost completely. Relax people!

You see the problem is that when the spectators know the ball "is in your other hand", any secret loading under the cup isn't secret anymore and the foundations of the routine are corroded.

In my humble opinion a great vanish is led by an attitude that disarms and creates "intrinsic misdirection" such that at the point of the effect you are home free.

THE STICK VANISHES

For the opening sequence of my routine I've always used the Michael Ammar production of the balls. As in the rest of these notes I won't describe it in details as you should read the original routine.

To get into the set-up for the ball production you need to end up with two cups loaded and two balls in your strongest hand. As in the Ammar routine I have two cups pre-loaded and the 3 cups stacked together. [Note - my cups are a little out of shape and stick together slightly, which is ideal as it means I can have the cups loaded and I don't have to worry about the balls rolling out in my bag. Nice!] The two additional balls are in my right hand jacket pocket and I have a Cellini style purse frame in my left jacket pocket. Oh yes and I have a stick which is the right length to perform the flip-stick with.

So that's what I do. I perform the flip stick behind my right arm and open my jacket at the moment the stick vanishes. This covers the stick and makes the vanish angle proof as well as strengthening the effect.

This idea by the way comes from Cellini. In Cellini's original handling he would then reach into an inside right jacket pocket with his left hand to get the purse frame. I did it this way for years. Now I close the jacket and then reach across my body with my right arm (and stick), and grasp the left jacket side with my right hand so that my left hand can fetch the purse frame from the outside left jacket pocket. I feel that this covers the stick more as well as not leaving the "dirty hand/arm" out of action for too long.

Once the stick is removed from the purse frame I replace the frame in my outside right jacket pocket and pick up the two balls. Again this is not a "move" or a "steal", I just pick them up as my left hand taps the stick against the cups 1, 2, 3.

You're now in position to go with the Ammar ball production sequence. [Note - when you produce the 3rd ball on top of the cup in a cabaret or street situation move away from the table as you spin the wand. This puts distance between you and the appearance of the ball. The spectators have to literally look back to see the ball. It makes the appearance very powerful.]

..a great vanish that I learnt in Singapore from a man called Bob.

AN OPENING SEQUENCE

99% of the time the ball vanish sequence I use at the beginning of the Cups & Balls is pretty straight forward:

- 1 - Fake transfer
- 2 - Tip/load: Push through vanish
- 3 - Tip/load: Fake transfer (with ball in mouth gag).

Occasionally I will add a great vanish that I learnt in Singapore from a man called Bob - that's all I know. The vanish simulates a tip/load but only one ball is used. The ball that you tip from the top of the cup bounces off your hand straight back under the cup. Simple.

So now the sequence looks like this:

- 1 - Bobs vanish.
- 2 - Fake transfer
- 3 - Tip/load: Fake transfer (with ball in mouth gag).

...you can see me screw up in the Magic Circle Close-up Competition 2009.

The benefits are that you are “clean” for one extra vanish.

In addition to this I have used a weird ball appearance, (more of a “ball doesn’t vanish” really), that you can see me screw up in the Magic Circle Close-up Competition 2009. [Note - victory was still mine!] This move can be done as part of a one cup and ball routine as well.

With a ball in the right hand you perform Bob’s vanish and as you stand upright following the left hand which apparently holds a ball, you place the right hand ball on top of the cup. Keep your nerve because now you will vanish the ball that is apparently in your left hand, (use your favourite method), and it will reappear on top of the cup. Ta Da!

I use this in my one cup routine to explain the stages of a ball vanishing and reappearing under the cup:

- 1 - Ball vanishes and travels to the cup
- 2 - Ball passes through the top of the cup, (Miller Drop through).

2

CARDS & COINS

2 Tricks in one
Fastest Card to Wallet
Coins Across
The Last Coin

Sometimes when you combine two tricks together the result is a bit of a shambles.

2 TRICKS IN ONE

Sometimes when you combine two tricks together the result is a bit of a shambles, neither effect really appearing to be that strong. In this routine I've put together 2 effects that actually strengthen each other - the first is Roy Walton's "Smiling Mule" which I love but it never seemed to have enough to make it a set piece and the second is Michael Ammar's "Sandwich Trick" which is great but not very entertaining/funny!

You begin by having 2 cards selected. I use a spectator peek for both cards and side steal the second selection. The great thing here is that the first card doesn't need to be controlled due to the Walton routine. This means that you have less heat on you for the control/ side steal of the second card. I use a delayed side steal and make the steal as I ask the first spectator which colour aces they would like to use. So at this point you have 2 selections, the first is in the deck somewhere and the second is on the top. At this point you need to glimpse and remember the bottom card of the deck - now you perform Roy Walton's "Smiling Mule" trick. The only difference from the original is that you perform the second pass so that the bottom card you glimpsed ends up back on the bottom which brings the second selection back to the top.

Now you can perform the second trick which switches the chosen cards between the aces. [Note: Put the first spectator on your right and the second to your left, it helps with the controls and the flow of the effect.]

So why does this work as a routine?

- 🌀 The first phase has an initial “stupid” element to it which strengthens the magic in the second phase effect. There’s a change of intensity which adds interest and drama.
- 🌀 The “no-control” element of the first card helps to hide the control of the second card. Always good!
- 🌀 Moving from one spectator to another keeps the routine dynamic and provides plenty of “bigger movements” to hide the smaller ones.
- 🌀 Both tricks follow the same “theme” which means they flow well together.

THE FASTEST CARD TO WALLET

This is really the finish to a longer signed card routine. It's fast and really visual magic. What I really like about this is the timing and rhythm that make it work. This is best performed at a table in a formal setting although you can do it in the spectators hands but it helps if you're tall - I'm not. You need a card to wallet/envelope wallet (?) in your inside right jacket pocket.

The signed card is turned face up on the tabled face down deck and in the process you give it a slight tweak so that it is concave along its length. Not too much, it doesn't need to look like a section of guttering. Your hands turn palm up either side of the deck and rotate palm down as you pass your hands over the deck, with the right hand below the left. The right hand passes just over the left edge of the deck and as it travels back to the right you pick up the selected card into rear palm. This is kind of a side to side version of Marlo's "Rise, Rise, Rise" steal that can be found on the Bill Malone DVDs. It's a knack thing and the vanish is extremely visual.

A great addition to this is to switch the deck for the Omni-Deck gimmick and then the visual vanish becomes the vanish of a card and the rest of the deck!

Now with the card in rear palm you grab the right lapel of your jacket, inserting the card inside the jacket. The left hand then reaches inside the coat and steals the card carrying it into the wallet - sort of Kurtz “Cheeky Steal” meets Kelly-Ovette.

Heres the rhythm:

- 1 - Card vanishes
- 2 - Look up and raise the left hand.
- 3 - Right hand grabs the jacket.
- 4 - Left hand enters jacket and steals card, raise right hand.

If you are working on the table it helps as you will need to lean over to perform the vanish, this opens the jacket and makes the placement of the palmed card much easier. That’s why it helps to be tall when you do it in the spectators hands. Or pick a small spectator.

COINS ACROSS

I have used a number of different routines over the years of varying degrees of complexity and technical difficulty. Wherever possible I use Dollar sized coins although in walk about situations I use English Pennies as the shell I have is excellent.

My main reason for including coins across is to mention the Deep Back Clip Steal which is a move that scares the sh*t out of most magicians and it shouldn't. The problem is that most magicians treat it as a "steal" whereas I feel it should be a placement. Trying to pick up a coin in a back clip is difficult, putting a coin in back clip isn't as difficult.

So here's the basic routine: Start with 4 coins in your right hand, with the lowermost coin ready to classic palm. Rotate the hand palm down, palming that coin and allowing the three remaining coins to fall onto fingertip rest. Throw the top two coins into the left hand using the friction of the fingertips to hold back the other coin. Shake the left hand which apparently holds the 4 coins, (actually only 2), and put the coin on the right fingertips into deep backclip, then let the classic palmed coin to fall on to the base of the fingers covering any flash of the deep back clipped coin. The right hand is opened to show that one coin has travelled.

Alternatively you can place the last coin on your head and let it fall into their cupped fingers which is really strong - I'm short and bald so I don't do this much!

The second coin is revealed by popping it through from deep back-clip onto the fingers. You don't throw the coin up, but more drop the hand down - again it's a knack thing.

You now show 2 coins in each hand. As you close the left hand and turn it palm down you work one of it's coins into heel-grip. Now for the steal/placement. Your right hand is palm up and shows two coins at the base of the fingers. You gesture towards the left hand, tapping the back of the left hand with the back of the right hand fingers. While the right hand is still in place over the left hand, you rotate the left hand palm up and PUT the hell gripped coin in between the middle and third finger of the right hand, in deep back clip position. Don't try to grab the coin with your right hand, let the left hand do the work. Then move left hand away from the right and repeat the appearance of the back clipped coin.

Alternatively you can place the last coin on your head and let it fall into their cupped fingers which is really strong - I'm short and bald so I don't do this much!

For the 4th coin I very often just use the spectators cupped hands to perform a Han Ping Chen, adding the final coin before the spectator closes their hand.

THE LAST COIN

If you do a fingertip coins across routine you will be aware that the vanish of the last coin can be a problem. A single handed vanish of one coin that leaves you clean is never easy. The solutions I have come up with are based as much on the coins across as they are on the initial production of the three coins. I always use David Williamson's "Money Talks" to produce the coins and this allows for a couple of steals.

The first is very straight forward - I produce the coins, placing them into the spectators hands and as I place the wand away into my inside right jacket pocket, the right hand steals a shell for the silver dollars. I then place the shell over one of the dollars as I collect the coins. The coins are on the base of the right hand fingers with the shell coin at the bottom. The left hand then picks up the top two coins and the shell, leaving a coin hidden in finger palm of the right hand. The left fingers fan the "3" coins, the shell being at the top and closest to the body. You are set for a "3-fly" effect. Throughout the effect the shell never moves, until the final vanish.

The vanish I use for the last coin with the shell is pretty much the same as outlined in the Kenner book, however I eliminate the “throw” action. With the coin held in French drop position and the hand palm up, you simply rotate the hand palm down and drop the coin into finger palm at the same time. It vanishes! You can add an additional rotate palm down / palm up to help create the illusion that the coin simply dissolves.

Second Method: As I said I produce the coins using the “Money Talks” sequence which has the coins appear at the left elbow, left knee & right knee. If you are set with a coin attached to a momentum pull on the inside left of your jacket then as you produce the final coin from the right knee the coin on the pull will virtually fall into your left hand. You now have your extra coin, which again doesn’t move during the routine but as it is on a pull can be vanished really cleanly at the end.

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SILKS

Introduction
A Watch Steal
Picking Pockets

INTRODUCTION

One of my favourite tricks is the routine commonly known as the Slydini Silks. The trick is simple as far as effect and the method are concerned but it is a hard trick to “sell” which is probably why very few magicians do it. As with the rest of the notes I’m not going to describe in detail the mechanics of the routine as they are written up in great details elsewhere, but I will outline one of the spin-offs of performing this effect - Dipping

The routine provides one of the best set-ups for stealing a leather strap watch and not only can you steal watches but the cover provided by the fabric of the silks and the general “physicality” of the routine enables you to dip pretty much every pocket.

A Watch Steal: One of the key phases of the knots is when a genuine square knot is tied between the two silks. This knot can be rigorously tested by a spectator and pulled tighter and yet you are able to upset the knot and separate the silks. During this testing of the knots you have the perfect motivation and misdirection to hold the spectators wrists and steal their watch.

I always ask the spectator who is going to test the knot to extend their arms out in front for two reasons:

- 1) They will be unable to apply too much force on the knot, (I once had a Ukranian Bodybuilder actually rip the knot off one of the silks before I started using this technique.)
- 2) It draws back their sleeves and exposes their watch.

Picking Pockets: In my opinion Picking Pockets is one of the easiest things to do in theory but one of the hardest to do in practice. It requires real nerve and confidence and it still makes me nervous when I do it.

My main issue has always been finding a reason to touch the spectator and I can't bear the virtual assaults I see some performers use to dip their spectators - I often think they would be better with a ski mask and baseball bat. The silks do however provide the perfect cover.

Outside Breast Pocket: If you drape the silk over the spectators shoulder you can take the pocket contents in the act or you can wait until you remove the silk to make the steal. Either way your hand is by the pocket for a reason.

Outside Jacket Pocket: The easiest pocket and you can take from these as the spectator is occupied pulling the silks. If their arms are extended out in front then their jacket will be lifted away from the body and the steal is even easier.

Trouser Pocket: I love this! Lift the spectators trouser leg fabric, (I use the excuse of looking at the knot in their shoelaces), with the hand holding the silks resting by the pocket opening with two fingers actually inside the pocket itself. The lifting of the trouser actually brings the pocket contents into your waiting fingers and the silks cover their removal - perfect

Inside Jacket Pocket: Based on a steal in the Jim Ravel book. You should be standing on the spectators left and this steal uses the phase from the routine that calls for the spectator to hold what they believe is the knot in their right hand. You reach across their body with your right arm, passing the silks to their right hand. Your left hand can then reach under your right arm and dip their inside left jacket pocket.

So there you are, that's your lot.

Magic is very often a derivative art and although the ideas in these notes are mine many of the methods are not. I was going to put a creative commons license on these notes but for the reason just mentioned I haven't. Feel free to use / abuse what's mine but please make the effort to seek out the original sources, even though I haven't always stated clearly what they are. You should still make the effort!

If you have any comments, moans, cheers, etc. please let me know I'm willing to learn.