

# *The Renaissance*

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Haunted Illusions  
at the Renaissance  
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Magician David Caserta raises his assistant several feet on top of the State Theatre in Easton.

"I hope the magic you see in this current tour will bring you back to that childlike wonder that you experienced when you were growing up. If, for just a moment, you forget about any problems in your life and believe in magic once again, then I have been successful. I want to create the illusion of impossibility and entertain you at the same time. It is your enjoyment that I strive for."

- Magician David Caserta

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Harry Houdini

## The Most Famous Magician in History

There is no question that Houdini is the most famous magician in history. His name is synonymous with escapes; his ability to get out of seemingly impossible situations- and his knack for publicizing these events- made him a legend in his own time.

Background & Family: Harry Houdini was born Erich Weisz on March 24, 1874 in Budapest, Hungary. Immigrating to America when he was four years old, Houdini, like many immigrants at that time, was poorly educated. Though he stood a mere 5'5", he was extremely athletic and agile. His marriage to Wilhelmina Rahner, a Catholic, caused friction between he and his father Samuel, who was a rabbi.

Inspiration & Beginning: Houdini became fascinated with magic when he was a young boy, after seeing a traveling magician. He did not, as legend has it, run away with a circus, nor was he an apprentice to a locksmith. In reality, he turned to magic at age 17 as an alternative to factory work. He teamed up with Jack Hayman, a fellow magic enthusiast, to form the Houdini Brothers. (The name "Houdini" was used in tribute to Jean Eugene Robert-Houdini, the most famous magician of the era).

A Career in Magic: Surprising as it may seem, Houdini was not an instant success. For the first five years, he tried every type of magic, from card manipulations (billed as the "King of Cards") to illusions and run-of-the-mill box escapes. His one big success was the Needle Trick, a grisly effect involving the swallowing of dozens of needles and thread, then the regurgitation of the thread with all the needles neatly threaded on. This effect would be a cornerstone of his act throughout his life. By 1898, Houdini had come up with the Challenge Act, the act that would make him a legend. As the Handcuff King, Houdini would escape from any pair of handcuffs produced by the audience.

Houdini's Escapes: During a visit to a psychiatrist friend in Nova Scotia in 1896, Houdini saw his first strait jacket. Rather than be shocked by it, he was inspired to create an act around escaping from it. And Houdini didn't just escape from a strait jacket- he did it hanging upside down from his ankles, suspended yards above the ground.

*The above information is from: [www.magictricks.com/houdini/bio.htm](http://www.magictricks.com/houdini/bio.htm)*

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