



Theater of Magic in Prater, Vienna



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It was in Hofzinsers "Salons" that he enabled a significance and popularity of the art of magic, that – mainly due to "debunking" videos on TV or tacky tutorials on YouTube – sadly vanished in recent year. English magician **Paul Daniels** was not wrong when he recently criticized, that nowadays the "art of magic" is in many cases not more than ornate card tricks and well-edited videos. Strangely, with greater technological development every year, people begin to believe in the "unexplainable" again. Back in the time of **Napoleon III.**, he took it on himself to ban **Douglas Holme** from his palace for confusing the female courtiers with Seances and mental tricks – nowadays we are confronted with an ever-growing number of self-proclaimed "mentalists", encompassing themselves with the so-called "veil of the supernatural". Where did we lose Hofzinsers aspiration, that *"everything should be devoted to intelligence and should be content with nature's way"*?

But let us focus on Vienna again: Here it was, that **Compara Herrmann** performed for the poor and unfortunate, and it was in Vienna that **Ottokar Fischer** (the director of **Kratky-Baschik-Theater**) established – with a variety of performances – Vienna as a great center of the art of magic. **Cornelius Hauer**, alias **C. H. Lurette**, enchanted Vienna with his dexterity, as did **Balzar**. Just a short time after that, **Valentino Graziadei** became famous throughout Europe, as "King of Cards with 52 assistants". **Alfred Kessler** with his full-length theatre performances, **Rolf Hansen** with his "1,000 Tricks in just 10 minutes" and finally the many variety-theatres of the

interwar years truly enchanted the hearts of the Viennese audience.

It was just in the 1960s, when the advent of the TV-age brought entertainment into the living rooms of the masses, that this boom began to slowly subside. Subsequently, it was due to regular performances by **Bobby Lugano** and his "Strolchi" on the children's programme of major TV stations, that people began to consider the art of magic as "something only for children". His famous sentence: *"Zaubern müsste man können"* ("Oh, how great it would be if one really could do magic") has legendary status. Furthermore, "Potpourri"-style shows ceased to exist, the sphere of activity began to shift to corporate events and trade events and at last to performances in small theatres with self-organized, full-length programs. Henceforth, the isolation of the local audience began and has reached a tragic peak with the advent of the internet some years ago.

Regardless of that rather sad development, the art of magic still exists and sprouts in Vienna, due to a growing range of activity of Vienna's several magic societies; In their own theatres, in private "Salons" or even in Vienna's many traditional cafes. I am proud to admit, that, mainly through my 6 "political magic-cabaret acts" since the mid-80's I was – and hope still am – able to contribute to the aspirations of young talents to organize and especially realize their own full-length performances.

Vienna always has been and will be a great soil for the art of magic!