

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ***MAGICIANS ON SCREEN* FILM SERIES EXPLORES MAGIC AND THE MOVIES THROUGH SCREENINGS, LIVE MAGIC SHOW, TALKS ABOUT EARLY CINEMA, AND FAMILY WORKSHOPS**

***Series includes screenings of Harry Houdini's Haldane of the Secret Service, Orson Welles's magic show and other television programs, cult classic The Wizard of Gore; talks about Georges Méliès, Buster Keaton, and more; and a magic show by Ben Robinson***

**December 10, 2011–January 1, 2012**

Magic and movies are popular art forms based on make-believe. Magicians were once the world's most popular entertainers—but once cinema supplanted them, magicians quickly embraced the moving image, using it to create astonishing new illusions. From December 10, 2011, through January 1, 2012, Museum of the Moving Image presents *Magicians on Screen*, an enchanting series of screenings, illustrated talks, and workshops that explore the intertwined history of magic and the movies. Although the invention of the moving image may have ended one chapter in the history of magic, it gave magicians new life on screen. Martin Scorsese's new film, *Hugo*, with magician-turned-filmmaker Georges Méliès as one of the key characters, is the latest example of a movie that is both about magic and full of its own distinct magic.

The series has been guest curated by JoAnn Hanley, the Museum's founding director of programs. "This is a wonderfully entertaining and illuminating series that sheds light on the enduring relationship between magic and movies," said the Museum's Chief Curator, David Schwartz.

*Magicians on Screen* includes seven feature films, ranging from silent movies with live music to contemporary Hollywood and Hong Kong movies, many accompanied by cartoons; rare television programs; presentations by film scholar Matthew Solomon and magician Ben Robinson; and a live magic show by Robinson. Among the film highlights are *Haldane of the Secret Service*, a silent feature directed and produced by, and starring, Harry Houdini (presented in a new 35mm preservation print from the George Eastman House), accompanied by live music by Donald Sosin; a rare screening of episodes from *The Orson Welles Magic Show*, a television series in which the towering film auteur performed magic (the footage was restored by the Munich

Filmmuseum); *The Mad Magician* (1954), featuring Vincent Price; Herschell Gordon Lewis's 1970 cult hit *The Wizard of Gore*; and Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige*.

Just in time for the holiday season, this series includes a number of programs that will appeal to family audiences. These include a live magic show presented by internationally acclaimed master magician Ben Robinson on December 10. Many screenings will also be appropriate for families: *Ernie Kovacs' Festival of Magic*, the first televised magic special; *The Magic Land of Allakazam*, the first network television series created by magician Mark Wilson; and *A-Haunting We Will Go*, the classic 1942 comedy starring Laurel and Hardy, presented with a Disney short *Magician Mickey*. During the winter holidays, the Museum will also present a holiday week workshop "Magic and the Movies," in which children will first watch early magic shorts and learn about the special effects techniques used in the films, before creating their own magic-show movie. All details for programs are included in the schedule below.

### **SCHEDULE FOR 'MAGICIANS ON SCREEN,' DECEMBER 10, 2011–JANUARY 1, 2012**

All screenings and events take place at Museum of the Moving Image (36-01 35 Avenue, Astoria, NY). Tickets are free with museum admission unless otherwise noted.

#### **Disappearing Tricks: Early Film and Magic: A presentation by Matthew Solomon**

Saturday, December 10, 3:00 p.m.

Film historian Matthew Solomon shows how early cinema was shaped by magicians, who were ubiquitous figures in popular entertainment and became some of the first film exhibitors, performers, and makers. Solomon will show short films by Georges Méliès, Segundo de Chomón, and others, and scenes from the silent films of Harry Houdini. The program will include some beautifully restored archival prints of hand-colored films.

#### **Live Magic Show by Ben Robinson**

Saturday, December 10, 4:30 p.m.

Ben Robinson is an internationally acclaimed master magician noted for his ability to entertain adults and children simultaneously. His engagement at Hollywood's famous Magic Castle was reviewed as "comedy magic at its finest." This delightful and amazing half-hour program is presented free of charge with Museum admission. Recommended for ages 8+

#### ***Haldane of the Secret Service***

**With live music by Donald Sosin**

**Preceded by *The Talking Tea Kettle***

Saturday, December 10, 5:30 p.m.

Dir. Harry Houdini. 1923, 88 mins. New 35mm preservation print provided by George Eastman House, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. With Houdini, Gladys Leslie. Internationally famed escape artist Harry Houdini directed, produced, and starred in this silent feature. After his detective father is murdered, Haldane dedicates himself to tracking down the

villains. Trapped in ropes, chains and strongboxes, our hero wriggles out of his predicaments with the skill of—Houdini.

Preceded by ***The Talking Tea Kettle***. Dir. Terese Svoboda. 2011, 7 mins. Video artist Terese Svoboda explores Harry Houdini's and magician David P. Abbott's battles against fraudulent mediums in the early years of the twentieth century.

### ***Magic Boy and The Orson Welles Magic Show***

Sunday, December 11, 7:00 p.m.

***The Orson Welles Magic Show***. Dir. Orson Welles. 1979–1985, 30 mins. The director and actor Orson Welles, who was also an accomplished magician, worked to develop a television series in which he performed magic. This fascinating and fragmentary work is a compilation of material from the project, combining some of Welles's best magic tricks and elements of autobiography and history. The footage was restored by the Munich Filmmuseum.

***Magic Boy***. Dir. Adam Wong. 2007, 88 mins. With Anjo Leung, Tsui Tin Yau. Magic comes to the streets of Hong Kong in this youth romance about a love triangle between two amateur magicians and a salesgirl. Young star Anjo Leung, a real-life apprentice of Hong Kong magic guru Harry Wong, handles the film's many illusions with showmanship and panache.

### **Magic and the Silent Clowns: A Presentation by Ben Robinson**

Saturday, December 17, 3:00 p.m.

There is a strong link between some of cinema's great comedians and magic. Performers such as Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and Harpo Marx started out in the world of vaudeville; many of their finest gags grew directly out of their love of magic. Magician and author Ben Robinson will show scenes from such movies as *Grandma's Boy*, *Sherlock Jr.*, *The Circus*, and *Duck Soup* to examine this important connection between magic, comedy, and cinema.

### ***Chandu the Magician***

**Preceded by *Felix Monkeys with Magic***

Saturday, December 17, 5:00 p.m.

Dirs. William Cameron Menzies, Marcel Varnel. 1932, 71 mins. With Edmund Lowe, Irene Ware, Bela Lugosi. Magician/yogi Chandu battles the evil Roxor, who attempts to dominate the world using his death-ray machine. Menzies's fabled design enhances this fantasy/adventure, which was photographed by James Wong Howe. Preceded by ***Felix Monkeys with Magic***. Dir. Otto Mesmer. 1925, 10 mins. Felix the Cat's master, a magician, constantly plays tricks on Felix, until Felix decides to make some magic and mischief of his own.

### ***The Mad Magician***

Saturday, December 17, 6:30 p.m.

Dir. John Brahm. 1954, 72 mins. With Vincent Price, Eva Gabor. Double-crossed by his manager and dumped by his wife, a turn-of-the-century illusionist seeks revenge. Not recommended for children.

***Ernie Kovacs's Festival of Magic***

**Introduced by Ben Robinson**

Sunday, December 18, 3:00 p.m.

1957, 75 mins. The first magic special on network television was hosted by Ernie Kovacs for NBC and was presented live, with performances by the Great Cardini, Milbourne Christopher, P. C. Sorcar, Robert Harbin, and many others. Magician Ben Robinson will introduce the screening. Recommended for ages 8+

***The Magic Land of Allakazam***

Sunday, December 18, 5:00 p.m.

Created by Mark Wilson. 1960–65. Master magician Mark Wilson created *The Magic Land of Allakazam*, the first network television magic series ever. The shows were taped with a live studio audience of children and included sleight of hand sequences, audience participation, magical commercials, and major illusions. Greg Wilson (Mark Wilson's son) has selected rare archival copies of some of the most important episodes. Recommended for ages 8+

***The Wizard of Gore***

**Preceded by *Morto the Magician***

Sunday, December 18, 7:00 p.m.

Dir. Herschell Gordon Lewis. 1970, 95 mins. With Ray Sager, Judy Cler. "Is it magic or wholesale slaughter?" asks a tagline for this outrageous cult masterpiece. A television talk-show hostess investigates a magician who attempts to use his mind-bending powers to control his audience's perceptions, in order to stage gory, Grand Guignol onstage illusions. Preceded by ***Morto the Magician***. 2010, 5 mins. Steve Martin's webtoon about a decidedly untalented illusionist. Not recommended for children.

***A-Haunting We Will Go***

**Preceded by *Magician Mickey***

Saturday, December 24, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. Alfred L. Werker. 1942, 68 mins. With Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Dante the Magician. After being kicked out of town, Laurel and Hardy have to take a not-so-dead body to Dayton, where they discover that the coffin has been swapped with one used by the real-life world famous magician Dante in his stage show. The boys then become Dante's assistants, with hilarious consequences. Preceded by ***Magician Mickey***. Dir. David Hand. 1937, 8 mins. Mickey Mouse is a stage magician, Goofy is the stagehand, and Donald, of course, is the heckler. Recommended for ages 8+.

***The Great Buck Howard***

Saturday, December 31, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. Sean McGinly. 2008, 87 mins. With John Malkovich, Colin Hanks. In this offbeat comedy, a law student quits school to become the apprentice of a cantankerous illusionist who is taking his show on the road in an attempt to revive his fading career.

## ***The Prestige***

Sunday, January 1, 3:00 p.m.

Dir. Christopher Nolan. 2006, 130 mins. With Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Scarlett Johansson. Rival magicians attempt to outdo each another with increasingly elaborate (and dangerous) tricks and offstage deceptions. This leads to seduction, murder, the involvement of mysterious scientist Nikola Tesla (David Bowie), and a particularly delightful climax.

## FAMILY WORKSHOP

### **Magic and Movies Workshop**

Saturday, December 24, 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Daily from Monday, December 26–Monday, January 2, 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.

Participants will watch clips from some innovative early films and learn how the special effects in the films were achieved. Then, using a variety of live-action and animation techniques, they will produce a magic-show movie starring themselves. Recommended for ages 10+  
\$5 materials fee / Free for Red Carpet Kids members. Register upon arrival at the Museum.

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## **MUSEUM INFORMATION**

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. **Holiday hours:** The Museum will be open on Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. December 26 and January 2. On Christmas Eve (Dec. 24) and New Year's Eve (Dec. 31), the galleries will close at 5:00 p.m. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving (Nov. 24) and Christmas Day (Dec. 25).

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled.

Museum Admission: \$12.00 for adults; \$9.00 for persons over 65 and for students with ID; \$6.00 for children ages 3-18. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free.

Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance by phone at 718 777 6800 or online.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. Q (weekdays only) or N to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us)

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit [movingimage.us](http://movingimage.us).

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