



The 2023 Presentation of the Milbourne Christopher Awards: An Evening to Remember

By Rick Heath

The Garde Arts Center marquee.

On Saturday, September 16, 2023, the annual Milbourne Christopher Foundation Awards Presentation was held in the Oasis Room of the Garde Arts Center, the elegantly restored 1926 theatre that is the vibrant cultural hub of New London, Connecticut. This is the seventh consecutive year that the Christopher Awards, created to recognize deserving individuals for their outstanding achievements in the magical arts, have been presented at the Garde Arts Center.

Award recipients were chosen by a panel of judges, all of whom donate their services to

the Foundation. The 2023 Awards were presented in the categories of Illusionist, Close-up, Mentalist, Ambassador of Magic, Literary, Master's, and Lifetime Achievement.

The gala affair began with a 6:00 p.m. wine-and-hors d'oeuvres reception in the theatre's upper lobby. Pianist Sam Mayer once again provided music for the festivities. The attendees then adjourned to the Oasis Room where the presentation of the awards was hosted by Master of Ceremonies Tom Ewing, an esteemed magic historian and the recipient of the 2017 Literary Award.



(l to r): Milbourne Christopher Publicity Photo. • A young Milbourne Christopher performs for the legendary Howard Thurston. • Milbourne and Maureen Christopher.



Tom Ewing, Master of Ceremonies, at the podium.

Mr. Ewing thoroughly highlighted the backgrounds and accomplishments of the honorees. "This year's recipients represent the highest qualities in performance, literature, ambassadorship, and lifetime achievement that are the very core of the Christopher Foundation," said Mr. Ewing. "Congratulations to them all, and we are honored to recognize their achievements." As in previous years, each recipient received a handsome plaque bearing a likeness of the Foundation's namesake, a handcrafted wand with presentation case, and a specially minted commemorative coin.

The late Mrs. Maurine Christopher created the Milbourne Christopher Foundation as an independent charitable organization to perpetuate the memory of her husband's remarkable life and legacy. It is chaired by Mr. Santos Molina and ably administrated by Secretary and Treasurer Lorraine Anderson. The Foundation's continuing mission is to recognize excellence, originality, and leadership in the conjuring arts, and to promote magic as a true performing art.

Milbourne Christopher was magic's multi-talented standard bearer from the 1930s through the 1970s. He achieved international renown as an illusionist, author, lecturer, mentalist, inventor, and collector. He launched his career on the vaudeville stage and he entertained the troops during World War II. After

the war, he appeared on his own television specials, promoted magic on talk shows, and performed in theatres in both North and South America and on the Continent.

For many magicians, his *Illustrated History of Magic* provided an introduction to conjuring's storied past. Mr. Christopher wrote twenty-three other books about the presto trade, including *Houdini: The Untold Story*, and *Panorama of Magic*. He also contributed many articles to trade journals and lay publications, as well as to authoritative reference works such as the *Encyclopedia Americana*.

Milbourne Christopher, one of the mid-twentieth century's most accomplished and urbane conjurers, passed away in 1984 at the age of seventy. His biography, *Milbourne Christopher: The Man and his Magic*, by William V. Rauscher, is an in-depth portrayal of Christopher's life and celebrated career.

Illusionist Award: Jason Bishop



Jason Bishop and Kim Hess, Illusionist Award.

Award-winning illusionist Jason Bishop headlines his own *Jason Bishop Show*, a touring caravan of wonders that features dynamic, state-of-the-art illusions, enthusiastic audience participation, and skillful close-up magic displayed on large LCD screens, all performed to a contemporary soundtrack and laced with Jason's engaging sense of humor.

Jason's childhood interest in magic burgeoned in his mid-teens when he and a supportive friend teamed up to create an act in which the two young magicians shared the spotlight. Jason also credits Ed White, the proprietor of White Magic in Allentown, Pennsylvania, with being "incredibly encouraging" during his formative years, and for providing "tremendous advice that I still use to this day."

Fortunately, too, the Kutztown, Pennsylvania, library supplied Jason with biographies of legendary conjurors, such as Kellar, Thurston and Houdini, who transcended their humble beginnings and mounted opulent stage magic productions. "Reading them," recalled Jason, "made me think, *'This is possible for me.'*"

"Illusion shows are a big undertaking," said Jason. "When I began my career, the illusions I saw on television were impressive and theatrical. It was a practical decision to perform large illusions. They are highly visible and are appreciated by audiences. Performing larger magic was successful, so I continued in that direction."

As Jason toured professionally, his show expanded. He commissioned and premiered four new Jim Steinmeyer illusions, including Teleportation, The Cage Levitation, Smithereens, and The New Million Dollar Mystery. "That fooled a lot of magicians when my partner Kim and I performed it in New York," said Jason. "Also, we were among the first illusionists to perform Through a Jail Window, The Travel, Puppet Theater, and Op Art."

"Our show has taken us to over forty countries and to scores of theaters and performing arts centers in forty-nine of the fifty states. We've worked for the Celebrity, Royal, and Disney Cruises lines. We have appeared on *The Today Show* and *CBS Sunday Morning*, and have twice appeared on *Cabaret du Monde* in Paris." In addition, Jason has headlined at the Magic Castle multiple times, and his performances in The Big Apple have included two successful runs at the New Victory Theater on 42nd Street and an engagement at Caroline's on Broadway.

"He does the big, impressive illusions," said

Jim Steinmeyer. "He does intimate sleight of hand. He's funny and chatty on stage. And, in bringing all of these things together, he's made magic feel hip again. People see his show and think, 'This guy is cool.'"

"I'm honored to be this year's recipient of the Illusionist Award," said Jason. "Receiving this award from a foundation charged with upholding the ideals of a successful American illusionist is as meaningful an honor as I could receive. Also, to be included among recipients like my heroes David Copperfield, Lance Burton, and Jim Steinmeyer is truly surreal. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Foundation and its board members for this honor. My partner Kim and I deeply appreciate your acknowledgment of our work."

Kim Hess, a talented dancer, gymnast, world-class baton twirler, and Jason's steadfast and indispensable partner for twenty-five years, reflected, "I am so happy Jason is receiving this award. He is truly deserving of the recognition. He has worked hard to build the show we perform today. He has a unique personality that audiences really appreciate – and I do, too! I am so proud of him and have always been one of his biggest supporters."

Close-Up Award: Bernardo Sedlacek



Bernardo Sedlacek, Close-up Award.

Originally from Rio de Janeiro, and now living in São Paulo, Brazil, Bernardo, who

has achieved worldwide renown for his ability to transform mere “card tricks” into miracles, developed a keen and enduring interest in magic by age seven. When not in school, and in between classes, he thoroughly immersed himself in his own “parallel curriculum” of card magic. Why cards, specifically? “Cards were easy to carry around, and only one deck can do *so* much,” said Bernardo.

At age thirteen, he attended his first magic convention and met Spain’s master of card magic, Dani DaOrtiz. “I was so blown away and filled with emotions I’d never felt, that I decided, on that day in November 2010, I would only do card magic professionally. I know it was the right choice.”

Bernardo began an intensive study of the philosophy, psychology, and theory of the art that led to the development of his own ideas, to the collaboration with many of conjuring’s acknowledged masters, and to presentations of his masterful artistry in countries like Mexico, Finland, Uruguay, Spain, Australia, and Guatemala. It also resulted in the development of his own personable and vibrant style that reflects his enjoyment for sharing his passion with others. Bernardo’s card magic becomes a shared celebration, rather than an individual “performance.”

Bernardo is fluent in Spanish, English, and his native Portuguese, and he is universally praised for his originality, creativity, and technical mastery by his peers, who, without hesitation, characterize his approach as “unique,” “absolutely amazing,” “full of cleverness and subtleties,” and “card conjuring at its finest.”

He has lectured and performed in over a hundred cities in more than twenty countries on five continents. His many credits include lecturing for University of São Paulo psychologists, performing for a gathering of the world’s most renowned scientists at Princeton University, serving as a judge at FISM Latin America, and, in 2022, being the first Brazilian to lecture and conduct a workshop at the FISM World Championships of Magic. He is also a consultant to some of the top magicians in Brazil and around the globe.

Bernardo is also the first and only Brazilian to be invited to a number of the most prestigious, invitation-only conventions such as Numisminds (forty of the world’s best coin magicians), the FFFF Convention (an annual gathering of two hundred and fifty of the world’s top close-up magicians), and Jornadas Cartomagicas del Escorial (fifty of the world’s best card magicians). “Jornadas Cartomagicas del Escorial,” said Bernardo, “is a legendary annual convention organized by Juan Tamariz since 1974. You need to be invited by Juan himself to be there, and it gathers around fifty of the best card magicians in the world.”

Bernardo is currently working on a production called *Assumptions*. “The idea of the show,” he confided, “is that everything you assume will happen, will not.” Five years in the making, the four-hour immersive experience draws from Bernardo’s many interests, and is planned to open in 2024 in São Paulo, Brazil.

“Receiving the Milbourne Christopher Award is a huge honor for me,” said Bernardo. “Not because I care about awards, but because I’m the very first Brazilian to receive such an award. It makes me so proud to bring this incredible prize to Brazil. I hope it will inspire more Brazilian magicians to work harder, study more, and practice more.”

Mentalist Award: Brian Curry



Brian Curry, Mentalist Award.

Brian Curry is the creator and star of his popular one-man show, *The Good Liar*, playing at the swank Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. Brian, dubbed “DC’s Most Honest Con Man,” has mounted a production having “more twists than a Hitchcock film.”

Brian opens by informing his audience, “Tonight, I’m going to lie to you.” Subsequently, he demonstrates what appears to be an uncanny ability to read audience members’ minds, to reveal intimate details about their lives, to divine what they are thinking, and to unlock their mobile phones. Brian states, “My goal is to get them to believe me.” Yet, he also challenges the audience to determine whether or not his apparent psychic powers are real.

Brian has been a successful “professional deceiver” for over twenty years. Though he now holds audiences spellbound, he was once a shy youngster who, while growing up in Paris and Tokyo, struggled to make friends.

Brian began studying magic stateside at age thirteen. In high school, he began making a weekly pilgrimage to Baltimore, Maryland, to study sleight of hand in the back of the Denny & Lee Magic Shop. “I was greeted by a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig,” Brian recalled. “And, I would leave covered in layers of smoke that, for years, wafted from the books I brought home.” In those smoke-filled confines, he received an invaluable education from seasoned professionals.

Brian also credits majoring in Theatre Arts at James Madison University as being excellent preparation for his current venture. After graduating, he booked a steady stream of corporate gigs and cruise ships engagements that allowed him, accompanied by his wife, Becca, to perform on all seven continents.

Brian writes his own material and creates his own shows. He freely acknowledges that studying with a professional card cheat, a mind reader, and a comedian created the impetus to incorporate a strong sense of deception in his productions. “I’ve always loved the reactions that mentalism receives,” said Brian. “But, I became fascinated with the ethics of being a fake mind reader. It seemed

wrong to pretend to use ‘real’ psychic powers. I asked myself, ‘Is it ethical to have audiences believe that I have almost superhuman psychological abilities?’ I decided that was not the way I wished to conduct my career. So, I come clean in my show and call myself a liar.”

Of his professional odyssey to date, Brian said, “I figured I would do this until I failed. I’m still waiting for that shoe to drop.” It didn’t, and *The Washington City Paper* voted Brian its 2022 Best of DC Award as “Performance Artist of the Year.”

Said Brian about being honored with the 2023 Mentalist Award, “When I heard I was receiving this award, I even had to look myself up. Getting this award is an incredible honor, and I’m beyond grateful.”

Ambassador of Magic Award: John Cox



John Cox, Ambassador of Magic Award.

To say that John Cox is “wild about Harry” is perhaps the understatement of the century. John’s fascination with Houdini began in late 1975 after seeing the 1953 Tony Curtis *Houdini* biopic. “I was ten years old and it bewitched me!” said John. “I decided then and there I needed to learn as much about this man Houdini as I could. I’m still learning!”

Early on, John immersed himself in Walter B. Gibson's *Houdini on Magic* and William Lindsey Gresham's *Houdini: The Man Who Walked Through Walls*. He became "hooked on Houdini" for the rest of his life.

As a teen, John dabbled with escape magic, penned articles about Houdini for his school newspapers, and haunted bookshops for Houdini rarities. Inspired by his idol's mastery of self-promotion, John garnered newspaper coverage for his escapes and for his growing Houdini collection that now includes over five hundred books and more than two thousand individual items.

John is a 1990 graduate of the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, where, unsurprisingly, one of his projects was a Houdini documentary. And, when John became a member of the Magic Castle on his twenty-first birthday, the celebration was held in the Houdini Seance Room!

After college graduation, John launched his career as a professional screenwriter, landing jobs with all the major Hollywood studios. "When that began to dry up," said John, "I got a 'real' job and put all my creative energy into Houdini. I now work a part-time quality control job in digital cinema. I watch movies on behalf of the studios as they are mastered into standard digital format for worldwide exhibition. I enjoy movies, and it's a dream job to be paid to watch them."

For over four decades, John has tirelessly endeavored to present the legend of Houdini to members of the conjuring community and to the public at large. He gives illustrated lectures on Houdini's life and career, writes articles about Houdini for magic journals, and consults on various Houdini projects for film, radio, and television.

John's research is ever-continuing. He is currently compiling a definitive chronology of Houdini's life as part of his envisioned comprehensive biographical and chronological masterwork, "The Ultimate Houdini."

And, he is working on detailed annotations for Houdini's first travel diary. "I think it will be a remarkable book and a really in-

teresting way to tell the story of this fascinating period, from 1897-1899, of Houdini's early career, before he became famous."

Said John, "Milbourne Christopher has always been my hero and guide, and I've long harbored a secret dream that one day I might be considered for a Christopher Award. However, I figured that would take many years and many books, if at all. That's why I'm so stunned and honored to have receive this magnificent award. I now plan to work twice as hard to be worthy of it."

Literary Award: James Hagy



James Hagy, Literary Award.

Jim Hagy's professional resume is extraordinarily impressive. He is Distinguished Lecturer in Residence at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. He taught for many years at New York Law School, Case Western Reserve University School of Law, and as an Affiliated Transnational Professor at Peking University School of Transnational Law. His national and international recognition as one of the world's leading real estate lawyers is the result of forty-five years of exceptional service in, and knowledge of, the real estate industry. In addition, Jim was the Founder and Director of The Rooftops Project. From

its inception in 2010 to its conclusion in May 2023, The Rooftops Project offered conferences, workshops, research, and resources that provided real estate strategies for not-for-profit organizations.

Remarkably, Jim, who is a Member of the Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star of The Magic Circle of London, has sustained an avid interest in conjuring history for more than five decades. He writes and speaks regularly on the history and theory of performance magic, and he has written extensively about nineteenth and early twentieth-century performers, including biographies of James Savren, Henry Evanion, William Henry Young, and Edwin Dearn.

Jim's literary credits include a new and enlarged 2020 edition of his ground-breaking 1985 publication, *Early English Conjuring Collectors: James Savren and Henry Evanion*. It contains rich, full-biographical accounts of two early English magic collectors whose collections were ultimately acquired by Harry Houdini.

The well-received *Early English Conjuring Collectors* followed the 2019 release of *Fair Tricks: The Magicians at the Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, co-authored with his wife Sage. *Fair Tricks* emerged from their fascination with this monumental event, also known as the Chicago World's Fair, where, notably, two then-unknown magicians appeared – a young Howard Thurston and an even younger Harry Houdini!

Secrets Magicians Could Tell: The Art of Presenting ... You! was released in 2021. In an unsolicited testimonial, Canadian magician and historian David Ben, the recipient of the 2013 Christopher Foundation's Master's Award, stated, "James Hagy, well-known in magic history circles, has just written the best book I have ever read related to the performance of magic as it relates to actually making a living. It is, in essence, all the tips one needs for connecting with an audience, and staging a performance – regardless of the scale."

In addition, from 1983 to 2005, Jim was the dedicated editor and publisher of *The Perennial Mystics*, a periodical devoted to

conjuring history, literature and collecting, as was its predecessor publication, *Mystics Quarterly*, that ran from 1976 until 1981.

When asked about his sustained interest in magic history, Jim explained, "My central fascination has always been with magicians' life stories and the cultural context in which they worked; I am what my academic colleagues might call a 'social historian.' In the vaudeville era, for example, it is said that more than four thousand magicians competed with an endless number of other variety performers in the hope they might be that next Harry Houdini, W.C. Fields, or Buster Keaton. Yet even many greats, like Alexander and Adelaide Herrmann and Howard Thurston, struggled financially through much of their lives."

"In my latest book, *The Instant Illusionist and The Cleveland Bunch: Dreams of a Vaudeville Life*, I trace the aspirations of an amazing number of Clevelanders – more than thirty – who all dedicated themselves for a time to chasing that fame and success before settling for other careers or as a local talent. This interest in their stories, rather than their tricks and methods, is something I feel was shared by Milbourne Christopher and can be seen in his historical writing, as well as by others like my close friend, the late Bob Lund, the Founder and Curator of the American Museum of Magic, who was passionate about celebrating the plights, as well as the successes, of those who created 'wonders.'"

Jim elaborated on the role Milbourne Christopher played in his life. "The privilege of being recognized for this award is especially welcome because of its association with the legacy of Milbourne Christopher. My first invitation to visit him and his library for an afternoon was as an enthusiastic magic history buff on a trip to New York at age fourteen. From that point onward he remained an always kind and highly valued friend, corresponding regularly, sharing his wisdom and enthusiasm for our art, and contributing essays for my periodicals through the rest of his life."

Master's Award: Paul Lembo



Paul Lembo, Master's Award.

Paul Lembo has been building and restoring magic illusions and vintage magic apparatus for over sixty years. He bills himself, with his characteristic sense of modesty, as “The Trash Man of Magic.” However, when magic’s top performers have illusions that “need fixing,” and when magic’s most discerning collectors have valued pieces that need restoration, Paul is their “go-to” expert.

Paul’s foray into the world of magic began in 1952, over seven decades ago. Every Saturday, he visited New York City’s Martinka and Co. magic shop, where Al Flosso, the vaudeville-era magician and famed Coney Island Fakir, gave him his first lessons. When Paul proved his mettle, he was invited to Martinka’s fabled “Back Room,” the gathering spot for the foremost magicians of the era, and the repository for a treasure-trove of antique magic apparatus – a true rite of passage in his uncommon magical education. Paul was also the youngest member of the Harry Roz-On Ring 26 where he received personal instruction from Harry Blackstone, Sr.

As Paul’s passion burgeoned, he became known as “The Amazing Lembo,” not only for his hundreds of stage and close-up performances, but equally for his magnanimous nature, for his participation in many service

organizations, and for his fund-raising shows for charitable causes.

From 1956 to 1973, Paul was employed by the Grumman Aircraft Corporation where he led a talented team that would fulfill President John F. Kennedy’s promise to send a man to the moon. NASA commissioned Grumman to construct a craft that would land an astronaut on the lunar surface and return him safely back to a command module.

Such a feat had never been attempted, so Paul and his team built the lunar landing module from scratch! One colleague considered Paul an excellent motivator and “a great problem solver, always thinking outside the box.” Another said Paul had “a great mind for building things.” Paul understood failure was not an option – the lives of the astronauts were at stake.

Following his stint with Grumman, and after heading a successful Texas construction company, Paul settled in Tampa, Florida, where he created his own fully equipped workshop. The skills he acquired at Grumman and as a builder were transferable to his work in magic.

In 2017, Paul relocated to western North Carolina, where he works in his new shop. Although his first love is illusion building, when repairing a humble piece or a priceless relic, no matter how complex the task, Paul firmly believes, “If a man made it, a man can fix it!”

Paul now offers a Master Class in the restoration and preservation of magic apparatus at his School of Vintage Magic Restoration. Todd Harris, a magic collector and host of *The Magic Attic*, said, “The five-day course was a magnificent learning experience. Paul seamlessly covered the most needed and useful material about prop building and restoration – secrets and tips-of-the-trade, including hands-on practice for each topic that made this a never-to-forget experience . . . Paul is a powerhouse of ideas, creative skills, and knowledge, and he can teach like nobody else I know.”

“I was speechless when I learned I would receive the Master’s Award,” said Paul. “To even be considered for inclusion with the past recipients would be an honor. I am both

honored and humbled, and the Milbourne Christopher Foundation's Master's Award is truly and definitely a highlight in my life of magic."

Lifetime Achievement Award: Craig Diamond



Craig Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award, and his wife Dolores.

To persevere as a magician for the greater portion one's lifetime is a formidable achievement. For the irrepressible Craig Diamond, performing has truly been a lifelong labor of love. Craig considers the stage his "second home," and he has performed on some of the finest in the world.

Craig comes from a hard-working family of poultry farmers who also owned a campground by the Millersburg Ferry on the Susquehanna River in Central Pennsylvania. The importance of the campground in Craig's life cannot be underestimated. "I met an old vaudeville magician at the campground one summer," said Craig. "That's where I got my start!"

As with many other young conjurers-in-the-making, Craig was mesmerized by the exploits of Harry Houdini. "In my youth," said Craig, "my paperback copy of Milbourne Christopher's *Houdini: The Untold Story* literally fell apart from repeated reading and looking at the pictures."

By age eleven, Craig had created a forty-five-minute parlor act. Two years later, he was

performing stage illusions as well as a masterful billiard ball routine. And, by age fourteen, he was winning magic competitions at regional conventions. In high school, Craig mounted his own show called *The World of Illusions*. He revived it in 1981, and has recently performed it during his cruise ship engagements. And, throughout his formative years, he was learning from magicians in his local I.B.M. Ring and S.A.M. Assembly.

Craig has performed internationally at major casino resorts, on luxury cruise lines, at Fortune 500 company events, on all the major television networks, and in venues in more than a hundred and thirty-five countries. He has entertained presidents, prime ministers, dignitaries, and stars. Yet, his greatest accomplishment may be making the world a better place by putting smiles on the faces of the more than two million people who have enjoyed his award-winning magic, world-class comedy, and dynamic personality.

His stage act includes illusion, comedy, sleight-of-hand, mentalism, and yes, plate spinning! Craig brings boundless enthusiasm to every performance, knowing full-well from decades of experience, that "it's all about entertainment."

During his lifetime in magic, Craig has seen dramatic changes in the world of show business. He performed in New York's Catskill and Pennsylvania's Pocono resorts during the twilight years of the once-popular vacation spots for leisure-starved city dwellers. He was a featured attraction on luxury liners when formal dress was *de rigueur* for passengers, and full orchestras provided music for the performers. He has entertained and become friends with a "Who's Who" of celebrities. And, when good fortune smiled on Craig in 1985, on one of his hundreds of cruise ship engagements, he met his wife Dolores. They billed themselves as The Diamonds and their performing partnership continued for twenty years. They remain married to this day.

When commenting of being honored, Craig said, "As a budding young magician, I was mesmerized by Milbourne Christopher, the suave, eloquent, debonair illusionist, and one of magicdom's greatest historians, au-

thors, and collectors – a twentieth century giant of magic, in all its forms. When the Christopher Foundation and its awards were created, I never imagined that I would receive the Lifetime Achievement Award, its highest honor. I am grateful, honored, and humbled to be in such legendary company. A heartfelt ‘Thank you’ to the Milbourne Christopher Foundation and its board members.”

Special Award: David Haversat



David Haversat, Special Award for his Dedication to the Work of the Foundation.

Periodically, the Christopher Foundation creates a special award for a deserving individual. In a surprise presentation, David Haversat was honored “For his Dedication to the Work of the Foundation.”

David’s relationship with the Christopher family and the Foundation began when, as an eighth-grader writing a book report on *Houdini: The Untold Story*, he met Maurine Christopher. Years later, he arranged for the proper disposition of her late husband’s illusions, and, in 2011, he brought rare and historic pieces from Christopher’s monumental collection of magic memorabilia to auction where they commanded record-breaking prices. Though Maurine Christopher passed

away in 2013, David continues to remain steadfastly dedicated to the Foundation she created.

Since 2016, when the Awards Presentation was first hosted at the Garde Arts Center, David has worked “behind the scenes” promoting the event, serving as registrar, securing the venue, booking hotel reservations for the awardees, working with the caterer, and overseeing the welcoming reception. He also designed the souvenir program.

David is a leading collector and purveyor of conjuring memorabilia and a former two-term President of the New England Magic Collectors Association. He owns the Petrie-Lewis Magic Manufacturing Company, and continues to produce selected P & L items. He also owns Silk King Studios and manufactures the fine Rice Brand of silks. His publishing company, the 1878 Press, has issued over twenty books on magic history, including *The Herrmann Chronicles*, *Houdini: A Pictorial Life*, *Milbourne Christopher: The Man and his Magic*, and the deluxe edition of *Houdini: The Untold Story*.

“The award certainly was a surprise!” said David. “When my name was announced, after what I thought was the last award for the evening, I was absolutely shocked. My work on the Foundation was a promise I made to Maurine Christopher before she passed away; a commitment I made to assist with the continual efforts to promote excellence in magic and with the overall charge of the Foundation. To be recognized for those efforts is greatly appreciated, but unexpected. I was humbled to receive the award along with such a fine group of talented and most deserving recipients.”

Featured Entertainer: Tim Wright

Following the presentations, Tim Wright, the award-winning sleight of hand artist with a captivating comic touch, performed his “Deceptive Entertainment that is Delightfully Wright” on the Oasis Room stage. And it *was* deceptive, delightful, and thoroughly entertaining.

Growing up during what he characterized as “the heyday of magic,” Tim began working at the Abbott Magic Company in 1971 where he was befriended by magicians such as Neil

Foster, Monk Watson, Mike Miller, and Jerry Conklin. His further pursuit of his passion earned him the Gold Seal Diploma from the Marion Chavez Course of Prestidigitation and Magic.



Tim Wright, the evening's featured performer, presented a seamless blend of strong magic and delightful comedy.

Tim opened with an original act inspired by his Abbott's experiences – a “mesmerizing” sales pitch extolling the virtues of using the Abbott's line of magic to produce a six-figure income. “Abbott's can change your life,” said Tim, as he played the part of a savvy, smooth-talking salesman who proceeded to perform a succession of classic Abbott illusions. “You, too,” assured Tim, “can become wealthy, happy, and beloved by the multitudes by using the Abbott Magic Company plan for success!”

After a brief interlude, Tim returned to center stage as Skildini, the worldly, accomplished, yet somewhat bumbling sleight-of-hand performer. Skildini's combination of difficult sleights and his unwavering persis-

tence despite a series of mishaps has earned Tim a considerable amount of well-deserved recognition, as well as the appreciation of the Christopher Awards audience.

From his opening pitch on how to attain success the Abbott's way, to Skildini's attempts to triumph over the unseen forces that seemed to conspire against him, Tim graced the stage with just the right blend of engaging magic and sophisticated comedy.

When asked about performing at the Awards Presentation, Tim said, “An award ceremony that supports originality and excellence in conjuring is one that I am delighted to participate in. Our art needs collaboration with all fields of performance: music, voice, movement, costume, effects, lighting, character, and story. These fundamental building blocks, combined with our ‘tricks of the trade,’ can bring forth a pleasing display, and in that pursuit, I support the Christopher Awards.”

An Evening to Remember

The 2015 recipient of the Ambassador of Magic Award, Adele Friel Rhindress, who performed and toured the country with Blackstone, Sr., and his *Show of 1001 Wonders* from 1947 through 1950, offered the following comment on what was, for all in attendance, an evening to remember. “I've been attending the Christopher Awards since 2007,” said Adele. “Year after year, it is wonderful to see folks I know and have known, such as Marvyn Roy, Bev Bergeron, Ray Goulet, Mike Miller, Norm Nielsen, Gay Blackstone, Phil Schwartz, Gary Frank, the Gustafsons, and many others, receive their prestigious awards. The Christopher Awards Presentation is a happy, wonderful, fantastic night that I truly enjoy. I hope I can be there in person for many, many more!”

May there be many, many more, and may Adele's wish come true!

