

THE PARLOR OF MYSTERY celebrates THREE YEARS

By Mike Maione

"Welcome to the Parlor of Mystery and thank you for coming to our third anniversary show. I can't believe it's been three years. Considering the amount of work, it takes to produce these shows every month, it sure feels like we've been doing this a lot longer." Those were the first words spoken at the May Parlor of Mystery Third Anniversary Show, a milestone we never expected to achieve.

It all started on a cold Long Island day when I and a few magicians sat in a coffee shop sipping coffee and wondering what it would take to create a place to present parlor magic on a regular ongoing basis; a place where we could experiment with new material and present effects we never would perform at the family shows we do on most weekends and a place with an appreciative, paying, adult, lay

audience.

The answer: A dose of good luck, a talented pool of performers willing to work for next to nothing to promote the art, a community hungry for quality live entertainment, a strong commitment and a lot of work.

That coffee break turned into The Parlor of Mystery in Lindenhurst, New York, an intimate place where the magic is performed close to the audience. Contrary to the notion that parlor magic is old fashioned, what happens at the Parlor of Mystery is anything but old fashioned. The Parlor is modern. It's funny. It's grown-up. And it caters to grown-up audiences.

The Parlor of Mystery is the brain-child of five Long Island magicians who modeled the Parlor after similar

venues that are operating around the world. The magicians are: Terry Parrett, Ted Plezia, Joe Silkie, T.J. Tana and me, Mike Maione. Shows are produced monthly and each show features a new line-up of magicians from near and far and is hosted by one of the Parlor's originators. In addition to providing a space for the team to work, the goals of the Parlor are to showcase the talents of some of the region's best magicians, introduce visiting magicians to the Long Island community and provide a place to experiment.

Home for the Parlor of Mystery is South Shore Theatre Experience, a non-profit organization that produces original works and theatre classics as well as conducting acting classes and workshops. It is run by Ted and Deb Plezia. Much of the success the Parlor enjoys is due to the good fortune of



our home and to theatre managers Deb and Ted's who allow us to use the space for a small fraction of the cost instead of a set fee. An arrangement that keeps us from going under when attendance is below expectations and is only possible because Ted is one of the magicians who conceived of the Parlor and shares the passion for magic with the rest of the team.

The theatre is a black box. No proscenium, raised platform or curtain but, it is equipped with theatrical lighting, a sound system, backdrop, backstage and dressing room and tiered seating for 50. There are no bad angles; it is perfect for manipulators; even table top magic can be seen from every seat.

On the 4th Sunday of every month the Parlor of Mystery presents a show. Most follow the same format with two visiting magicians and one of the PoM team performing for about 20-30 minutes each. In the lobby during intermission a local magician performs close-up. Performers only get paid a



Kevin Nicholas



Alexander Boyce

cut of the door. It could be a little, or even less than a little. No one gets rich working at our venue. Not surprisingly, initially we had to rely on friends in the magic community to perform and family to fill the seats. At one point we even considered giving tickets away just to have an audience big enough to give the performers a reason to show up. We have been fortunate to have performers from all over agree to perform regardless of the substandard pay, just to support our mission.

It took nearly two years to develop a following and now many shows are sold out. The Parlor has had it's share of awarding-winning performers including several FISM competitors.

Because Lindenhurst, which is about an hour from Manhattan, is anything but a tourist destination, most of those who come to our shows are regulars. That is both a blessing and a curse. It means we can count on an audience every month, but it also means that from month to month each show must be different with different performers and different effects. Even team members who emcee and do a spot in the show are faced with presenting new material every time they perform. For some of us that means lots of work beforehand learning new tricks, developing new routines and lots of practice.

Nearly everyone who has performed at the Parlor has expressed interest in returning even if it means driving hours because the atmosphere and the audience are terrific. Fans who come to the Parlor come to have a good time. The performers don't have to compete with wait staff trying to push drinks or serve food. Audience members are happy to join on stage, pick a card and even suffer the indignation of a phrenological exam as was the case recently.

The work to produce shows seems never-ending. Talent needs to be secured, effects decided to avoid duplication (no one wants to see several versions of the linking rings in one show), planning music, writing introductions, doing publicity, maintaining a mailing list, designing posters, producing playbills, soliciting reviews afterward etc.; it all seems like a full-time job sometimes. But the satisfaction of a standing room only crowd is very gratifying even when you are not on stage.

We are only three, still in our infancy, but already we are the longest running magic show on Long Island. We are always looking for new performers and have a standing invitation to out-of-town magicians planning trips to NYC or vicinity to contact us to see if we have a spot in our show for them when they visit. Look for us at www.parlorofmystery.com.



Alain Nu



Eric De Camps

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Terry Parrett