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When Theatre Won't Help

Chloe Veltman · Thursday, August 18th, 2011

One thing that I am appreciating as I delve deeper into the worlds of magic, vaudeville and circus, is how much of a difference the ingredients of theatre — most obviously, narrative and character — make to what would otherwise probably be no more than skillful parlor tricks.

If a magician (or a circus performer) can find ways to build stories around their illusions and feats of physical prowess, the effect is often much more compelling. This, of course, is not a revelation. Cirque du Soleil's success since the 1980s has been built on combining extreme technical prowess of one kind or another with lavish narrative, scenery and at least the outlines of character.

There are times, however, when the ingredients of theatre simply don't work…

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