

A Vaudevillian at Heart: Lefty Conveys Character

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Magic is a Mainstay for Comedic Sidekick Douglas Leferovich

It has been said that laughter is the best medicine. Look at comedy legends Bob Hope, George Burns and Phyllis Diller. The men laughed their way gleefully past the century mark and Diller is right behind them.

Comedy and magic go top hat in hand: Puppets and props make up a lot of the humor. Lost in most of today's surreal stage settings is the old-fashioned vaudeville appeal to two basic human emotions: laughter and tears. Or so I thought until I caught the Murray (SawChuck) show at the Laugh Factory in the Tropicana Hotel.

Murray's sidekick, "Lefty" (Douglas Leferovich), has facial expressions poignantly reminiscent of vaudeville character actors who, with the arch of an eyebrow, conveyed a variety of emotions: In this case, a not-so-bright, gentle and harmless giant of a handyman secretly yearns, without envy or rancor, to claim the spotlight for himself—if only in his dreams or in the solitude of his workshop.



In a recent interview Leferovich discussed this aspect of his performance. "I'm one of the few performers who love to study themselves on video. It's very educational. Because I'm not speaking, I take away one of the senses of the audience. I have to be very animated to convey my emotions through my character. On stage I have to let go of my fear. The more ridiculous I act, the funnier my character is. You have to realize it's not *you* they are laughing at, it's the character."

Characters are what Leferovich is all about. Magic has been his mainstay since he was four years old. "I was four when I did my first trick. It was my mother's idea to think up a hobby my brother and I could do with my dad. When he (dad) was young, a counselor at a summer camp did magic and he was fascinated with it. We three performed for family and friends at holidays. Word spread and we did birthdays, weddings and corporate picnics."

So magic wasn't exactly an inherited gene passed down from father to son? "My dad was a lawyer. Similar to magic—he did trickery," Leferovich deadpanned. "He didn't make a lot of money at the magic, but my brother and I did."

The word "vaudeville" conjures up images of the inimitable Charlie Chaplin. Famous for his role in silent films such as *The Tramp*, Chaplin blended pathos with comedy and knockabout slapstick. In 1995, Leferovich (Lefty) and a partner, Seth (Sly) Yudof, created the zoot-suited, visual comedy team, "The Gamesters."

"We created magic outside the box. Physical comedy. We made hats and shoes disappear and reappear. We toured overseas and did TV shows. One of the goals of not speaking, we realized early on, was it was easier to tour the world when there wasn't a language barrier. Body language is somewhat universal."

These days, "Lefty" isn't touring. He's busy with Murray six nights a week at the Laugh Factory. "We are our own show. Our relationship on stage defines our characters. So many magicians take themselves too seriously, but Murray gets it. He's a seasoned performer. He's the "Dennis the Menace" of comedy."

"When something goes wrong on stage we don't react to the situation, we react to the characters. If a mistake gets a huge laugh, we try to figure out how to make it permanent."

While many shows in Las Vegas aren't always permanent, Murray and Lefty will be at the Laugh Factory for 22 consecutive weeks. Their brand of humor isn't narrowed by profanity. It's suitable for ages seven through seventy, with just the right touch of mild adult innuendo.



Some critics have said Vegas really doesn't need another magic act. I say we could all use a little "Dennis the Menace" and more vaudeville in our hearts. After all, laughter *is* the best medicine. – *Christine McKellar*

Who: Murray and Lefty

Show Time: Saturday-Thursday, 7pm

Venue: Laugh Factory Las Vegas, located on the Mezzanine level, Paradise Tower

Admission: General \$31.90, VIP \$49.45

For tickets and more information, please

visit: <http://www.troplv.com/entertainment/events/murray-sawchuck>