

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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'Poetic illusion'

Bloomfield Hills magician takes his artistry to Paris

By Victor E. Swanson
special writer

MAGIC IS ART. Or that's the belief of magicians in America, such as Todd Karr, 23, formerly of Bloomfield Hills, now in Paris, France.

What is magic in France? "It's not 'considered art,'" said Karr at his parents' home in Bloomfield Hills, where he recently was vacationing and doing research. "It's like juggling . . . When someone talks about juggling, you don't think of a great artist."

"When you think of magic here, you don't automatically think of a great artist, but you recognize the fact that, hey, there have been hour-long specials on magic on TV, magicians have given performances around the country. It's a sport. It's not existed yet. And there's no respect for it."

"It's not very sophisticated."

"They're using props that are real, chunky and unstreamlined. And their performances style isn't very with it."

KARR IS WELL-QUALIFIED to make such a statement, for he's a magician in France who began entertaining the French and others by giving street magic shows in Paris about two years ago — the only work he could get as a magician without a permit to work. (He was there studying French for one year as a student of the University of Southern California.)

Working the street magic shows was fun. He remembers what he would say after a show: "Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I've added a bit of magic to your evening. I hope you'll add a bit of money to my hat."

Then, he would walk through the crowd holding a beret and, at times he came upon Americans who would stop very quickly, hoping he would understand. "You were very good," His answer was usually, "Thanks a lot."

"They'd be really disappointed," Karr said. "They thought they were helping a starving Frenchman with his art."

After the stint in France, he went back to USC and received a bachelor

'I do a little of everything, so I can't classify myself. I'm like a general practitioner of magic.'

— Todd Karr

of arts degree in journalism and even worked as an intern for the Los Angeles Times. The experience of the internship made him give up a writing career and seriously take up the magic career.

In mid-1980, he went back to France, the best place to go, since his love, Claire, a French yoga instructor, was there. They were married and are expecting their first child in June.

"I'VE HAD TO change my material, really improve it — really all of my illusions — so that the visual part is so strong that it doesn't matter if verbally it's a little weak. All of my tricks go into the miracle category because I have to compete with all these French magicians, who are very glib and very funny and stuff."

"I get along great with the French magicians. The problem there — one of the problems I'm running into, though — is that the French magic community is kind of . . . very paraded. In the states, there's a really healthy atmosphere among magicians."

"They trade, they exchange secrets, they help each other and share ideas and things. In France . . . they don't share anything . . . they're really closed-minded."

Karr believes magicians should talk and share because it allows the art of magic to flourish and grow.

Many magicians were talking to talk and share their art with Karr when he was growing up. However, it was a school friend at Detroit Country Day who got Karr, then 9, interested in magic.

The friend also was interested in magic, and one day he took Karr on a trip to visit a magic store in Fernside. After that first visit, Karr's mother often drove him to the shop so he could spend a few hours talking

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THAT RULE Karr learned more than a decade ago. It took him through the days of giving magic shows at children's birthday parties and local restaurants and the days of displaying his art on the streets of Paris. It's a rule he follows today, making performances at such places as wonderful European chateaus.

Today, he calls his magic "poetic illusion."

"It uses principles of magic, like technique . . . and the idea of the impossible, along with different techniques of the theater, whether it be choreography or music or whatever, to evoke emotion. I do a little

Breakfast was never like this. Magician Todd

Karr makes a croissant float in the air, while he

STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer



Breakfast was never like this. Magician Todd

Karr makes a croissant float in the air, while he

ar menu offerings from previous Lundi Gras dinners. First course will be a seafood cocktail of seafood and shellfish, followed by a palate-refreshing ice of grapefruit and raspberry puree. Main course is a tasty medallion of veal with truffle, veal, forest mushroom forcemeat encrouté, with five peppercorn sauce. The different vegetable is kolrabi stuffed with puree of Sutton and celeriac. Potatoes also will be on the dinner plate. Fourth course is an eye appealing salad of miniature

Dining awards

Machus Red Fox in Bloomfield Township, the Lark in West Bloomfield and the Golden Mushroom in Southfield are among Michigan restaurants honored as recipients of the

1980 Travel/Holiday magazine Fine Dining Awards. Others include the Caucus Club, Joe Muer's Restaurant, London Chop House, Opus One, Ponchartrain Wine Cellars, Robert Lawrence Balzer, the magazine's food and beverage editor, was originally scheduled to present the awards at Schuler's, during a three-day trip to visit Detroit-area restaurants. His trip was canceled due to illness. — Ethel Simmons

greens tossed with orange walnut vinaigrette, along with selected cheese and fresh fruit. Dessert is a chocolate-lover's dream: a plate of chocolate delicacies, centered by a Miniature Sce de Bonbons. The black-tie event at \$185 per person benefits the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. For more information, contact the Whitney at 832-5700.

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