



The Last Greatest Magician in the World: Howard Thurston Versus Houdini & the Battles of the American Wizards

By Jim Steinmeyer

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Now in paperback, the acclaimed biography of the magician's magician, Howard Thurston.

“There is no greater expert on the history of stage magicians than Jim Steinmeyer. His deep knowledge of the subject, combined with a remarkable mastery of magical know-how, makes this book a smart, fantastic read. I can't recommend it enough!”

—Neil Patrick Harris

“Steinmeyer produces an engaging full-length biography of the man Orson Welles called ‘the master’ ...Steinmeyer recovers, from the shadows of his greatest rival, a figure whose grandiose productions were an American institution for almost 30 years.”

—Publishers Weekly

“Magician and author Jim Steinmeyer rescues a forgotten American icon from Houdini’s shadow.”

—AARP: The Magazine

“Thurston may have been forgotten, but **The Last Greatest Magician In The World** ably resurrects his legend and his awe-inspiring magic.”

—The Onion A.V. Club

“An erudite, challenging text full of difficult questions”

—Kirkus Reviews

Here is the seminal biography of the magician's magician, Howard Thurston, a

man who surpassed Houdini in the eyes of showmen and fans and set the standard for how stage magic is performed today.

Everyone knows Houdini—but who was Thurston? In this rich, vivid biography of the “greatest magician in the world,” celebrated historian of stage magic Jim Steinmeyer captures the career and controversies of the wonder-worker extraordinaire, Howard Thurston.

The public's fickleness over magicians has left Thurston all but forgotten today. Yet Steinmeyer shows how his story is one of the most remarkable in show business. During his life, from 1869 to 1936, Thurston successfully navigated the most dramatic changes in entertainment—from street performances to sideshows to wagon tours through America's still-Wild West to stage magic amid the glitter of grand theaters. Thurston became one of America's most renowned vaudeville stars, boldly performing an act with just a handful of playing cards, and then had the foresight to leave vaudeville, expanding his show into an extravaganza with more than forty tons of apparatus and costumes. His touring production was an American institution for nearly thirty years, and Thurston earned a brand name equal to Ziegfeld or Ringling Brothers.

Steinmeyer explores the stage and psychological rivalry between Thurston and Houdini during the first decades of the twentieth century—a contest that Thurston won. He won with a bigger show, a more successful reputation, and the title of America's greatest magician. In **The Last Greatest Magician in the World**, Thurston's magic show is revealed as the one that animates our collective memories.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Expanding on his chapters on Howard Thurston in his history of magic, *Hiding the Elephant*, Steinmeyer produces an engaging full-length biography of the man Orson Welles called ‘the master.’ While Houdini™s daring stunts were legendary, Steinmeyer says Thurston was the public™s favorite, captivating audiences with his ‘self-assured grandeur.’ Hailing from Columbus, Ohio, Thurston gained fame in the early part of the 20th century with his ‘Rising Card Trick,’ in which he levitated cards named by audience members. He successfully changed with the times, going from street performances to wagon tours through the West. He then became a top vaudeville star, but wisely left the vaudeville circuit to produce more ambitious spectacles involving 40 tons of magic apparatus and colorful costumes, a variety of animals, and more than two dozen assistants. Tracing the magician™s rise to fame, this volume neatly juggles his marriages and his magic with his triumphs, travails, showmanship, and marketing ballyhoo (‘The Wonder Show of the Universe’).

Steinmeyer recovers, from the shadows of his greatest rival, a figure whose grandiose productions were an American institution for almost 30 years. (Feb. 3)

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Review

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“Few historians of magic are as qualified as Jim Steinmeyer to bring Howard Thurston back onstage. **The Last Greatest Magician in the World** vividly conjures up Thurston’s troubled life and great illusions.”

—The Wall Street Journal

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"Jim Steinmeyer knows the outside-in world of magic from the inside; he is a celebrated 'invisible man' - inventor, designer and creative brain behind many of the great stage magicians of the last quarter-century... Steinmeyer writes about events a century ago as vividly as if he had been there; and in a sense, he has been... No author has ever better conveyed the way the love of conjuring consumes a magician's life with magic's joys, terrors and longings."

—**Teller (of Penn and Teller), *The New York Times Book Review***

"Steinmeyer's combination of enthusiasm and erudition is a joy."

—**Neil Gaiman**

About the Author

JIM STEINMEYER is one of today's most renowned historians of stage magic. He is the critically acclaimed author of *The Glorious Deception*, *Charles Fort*, and *Hiding the Elephant*, a *Los Angeles Times* bestseller. He lives in Los Angeles.

Users Review

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