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# NoHo Artists Honor Entertainment Industry Pioneers at the Motion Picture & Television Fund's Retirement Village

Written by Nancy Bianconi - Editor

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NoHo resident actors, magicians, jugglers, producers and writers, the Actors Forum Theatre, The Magic Castle Outreach Committee and the Cool Cups Outreach Team came together to support, honor and entertain the community of entertainment industry legends and pioneers now residing at the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) retirement village in Woodland Hills, CA.

In a collective gesture of bringing fun and amazement to all, an evening of magic and vaudeville filled with fun and amazement was staged at the MPTF's Louis B Mayer Theatre. The event was produced by Brandon Scott and Harry Evry to a packed house of residents and community members.

The MPTF was created by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith who realized the need for reaching out to those in the entertainment industry who fell upon hard times. In 1921, the Motion Picture Relief Fund was incorporated with a benevolent spirit intent on providing assistance to those in the entertainment industry who were in need.



(Picture Left) Billy Revel, Larry Lederman, Bryan Sapphire , Brandon Scott, Julie Barry and Jonathan Pendragon performed on the Louis. B. Mayer main stage.

A heartfelt inspiration of entertainment industry visionaries, the MPTF began with a simple coin box in Hollywood where industry workers would deposit spare change for their fellow colleagues. Right from the start their mission was to protect and preserve the health and quality of life of those who devote so much of their lives to a career in the entertainment industry. "We Take Care of Our Own."

MPTF recreation therapist Wilson Wong, who helps coordinate entertainment and events on the campus. shared his appreciation: "We are really grateful that we have people here from the community to come and show their skills and connect with the older groups here. I want to thank the Magic Castle, the Actors Forum Theatre from NoHo and Cool Cups for sponsoring this memorable event."

At 5:00pm on a hot summer day peeking at 106 degrees, the entertainment began. Magic Castle magicians, Jack Medlevine, Gerald Shiller, Brian Markenson and Elton Kelly visited the hospital and three different dining rooms to perform strolling, close up magic. "We had a pretty good crowd and everyone was really receptive," Jack Medlevine told us after his shows. "They are great people. It was nice to not only do magic, but also to get to talk and connect."

Brandon Scott met Martin Sideman in one of the dining rooms. Mr. Sideman is a ninety-nine year old resident who was both a magician and a manufacturer of magic in the early 1900s! Martin proudly shared some of his stories about the 1920s and 30s when Harry Blackstone Sr. would stop in his store. "I'm coming to the magic show," Martin told the visiting entertainers. "I wouldn't miss it for anything."

Martin will be 100 next 4th of July. Every week he gets flowers from the market and walks a six-mile route to give flowers to the woman on the MPTF campus.

Brandon Scott was touched by the warm welcome performers received and said, "It is heartwarming to be part of this event and meet a prior generation who pioneered not only the entertainment industry but life as we know it today. We live in a world where some tend to ignore their elders. Many forget that it is the older generation that has been the one to provide everything we have inherited. When we make an effort to connect with those who have retired, we are giving them an opportunity to connect to us, the younger generations. It's a win-win exchange. One day, we will be the elders and I think this has been a great opportunity for us to inspire younger generations to honor their parents, grandparents and aging members of our society. For me this will be a cherished memory I will never forget."

At 6:30pm more than 100 residents made their way to the gorgeous Louis B. Mayer Theatre on Spielberg Drive, where they were greeted by magician Stephen M Levine, who performed in the lobby. Residents, family members and members of the community were treated to free Cool Cups and got to play the Cool World Challenge Eco Arcade games lead by the Cool Cups Outreach Team: Cool Cups CEO-Tom Mosk, Artistic Director-Dennis Carmichael and writer Janice Jordan. Janice is the granddaughter of Fibber McGee and

Molly, and daughter of motion picture and television actress Peggy Knudson, who also once lived and was treated at the MPTF. Janice gave a walking tour throughout the hallways naming and describing most of the celebrity pictures and movie memorabilia on the walls, marveling that some of those iconic personalities are residing right on this campus.

At 7:00pm The Magical Musical Vaudeville show began. Bob Beitcher, CEO of MPTF introduced the evening with a very funny joke, getting the audience ready. Billy Revel, composer and arranger from the Actors Forum Theater, opened the show with a magnificent piano concerto and movie theme songs. Master of Ceremonies Brandon Scott had the entire audience laughing and singing, and performed his comedy and magic, musical theater style, accompanied by Mr. Revel.

Harry Evry, innovated creative visionary and member of the Magic Castle, shared his thoughts: "Speaking on behalf of myself and everyone who all came together to make this happen, I want to thank all the performers, who were just incredible, and especially give my appreciation to the audience who invited us to be here and who allowed us to come and give back to these people who really are heroes to all of us. The entire media and entertainment world that we know was shaped by the very people we got to perform for today. I hope we can do this again very soon. On a personal note both my Godparents lived and eventually died here, its a real personal honor for me to be here and be part of a show that really helps give back and rewards these wonderful people."

Actors Forum Theatre's members Larry Lederman performed some improv with Brandon Scott and sang one of his favorite showtime songs. Singing to the accompaniment of Billy Revel, Julie Berry paid a special tribute to Marvin Hamlisch in honor of his passing two days before. Donning top hat and tuxedo, Bryan Sapphire defied gravity with his juggling antics featuring the cigar box routine made famous in the days of Vaudeville by W.C. Fields. Jonathan Pendragon, winner of the prestigious AMA Stage Magician of the Year Award amazed the audience with his famous Linking Rings, his beautiful fan and butterfly effect, and had great fun with the participating audience members. "I really wanted to do this one because in my life I have had two professions. I was a Hollywood stunt man and a magician," commented Pendragon. "Getting to perform for the actors home was a big thrill and honor for me because these people love magic and they have given their entire lives to the related arts. So for me to be here is a double honor. Thank you!"

The day after the event, Bob Beitcher, CEO for the Motion Picture Television Fund, sent a note to the producers and talent: "The residents were still buzzing all day Thursday about the show. They really enjoyed it and appreciated everyone coming to the campus to entertain them. I even saw a few of them sitting outside in the morning eating their Cool Cups. They needed them. By mid morning it was over 100 degrees."

#### **About the Volunteer Organizations:**

The Actors Forum Theatre is a non-profit organization established by Audrey Singer that has been active in Los Angeles for over thirty-five years and has its theatre in North Hollywood in the NOHO Arts District.

#### **The Magic Castle's Outreach Committee**

"Extending our Magic into the Community" The Magic Castle's Outreach Committee has been proudly bringing magic to the deserving, the less fortunate, the hospitalized children, veterans and elderly for over a decade.

Cool Cups, the All Natural Gelatin-Free Dessert, sponsored the event. Cool Cups is active year round raising funds and supporting environmental and community causes such as The Magic Castle's Outreach Committee, the MTVF and Heal the Bay. Cool Cups sponsors events to help bring entertainment, educational and recreational opportunities to children, veterans and the elderly.

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