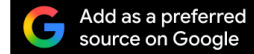


HAWAII NEWS



Maui-based Hotel Magic expands to Waikiki



By [Allison Schaefer](#)

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The Hawaii-based company Hotel Magic, which opened “The Magical Mystery Show” at the Fairmont Kea Lani three months ago, is a month out from opening its first magic show on Oahu. The venue will be at the Hilton Waikiki Beach Hotel on Kuhio Avenue. Bryan Lynx, vice president of hotel operations, left, and Hotel Magic President and CEO Jonathan Todd.

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Only a world-class magician could pull a magic show out of a pandemic.



Jonathan Todd, the Maui-based founder and CEO of Hotel Magic, is plucky enough to attempt to pull at least six magic shows out of a pandemic when many entertainment businesses are struggling across the globe.

Hotel Magic opened “The Magical Mystery Show” at the Fairmont Kea Lani in Wailea on Valentine’s Day, and its first show on Oahu is slated to open June 22 at the Hilton Waikiki Beach Hotel on Kuhio Avenue.

Todd wants to open another Oahu location by Christmas and two more after that. The Hawaii shows are set in the Victorian-era London of 1882, when people gathered in parlors to entertain themselves with collections of curiosities from all over the world.

He also plans to use Hawaii as the setting for a Victorian-style magic show opening in England in 2023. Longer term, Todd hopes to conjure about 20 venues worldwide, including locations in Vienna and Tokyo.

His latest venture started in the midst of [COVID-19](#) when he and fellow Shriners at the Grand Lodge of Masonry on Oahu began brainstorming to find pandemic-proof business strategies.

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“We started putting together a manifesto of what is the perfect COVID business that beats the COVID problem. Obviously, in entertainment everything big was dying,” he said.

Entertainment venues closed as the pandemic took hold, and the ones that managed to reopen erected Plexiglas dividers to separate patrons and greatly reduced occupancy to adhere to social distancing rules.

“Keep it small” was the first rule that emerged, according to Todd. The second rule was to look for a mutually beneficial venue.

“The people who really needed help were the hotels, because hotels had the space and they were half or more empty,” he said.

Todd recruited his longtime friend and fellow Shriner Brian Lynx from a leadership role at Outrigger Hospitality Group to become Hotel Magic’s vice president of hotel operations and corporate events.

“I’m pivoting from hotel management into entertainment management,” Lynx said. “It’s a time to bring laughter and togetherness back to hospitality. It’s been too long with people just separated from family, friends and colleagues.”

Lynx said he also values the show’s connection with Shriners Hospitals for Children, which receives a portion of every ticket sale.

“There is nothing finer than making kids smile,” he said. “Getting a new limb or a new wheelchair or a new life — nothing is more satisfying.”



Along with a startup team, they are building a business Todd has been preparing to run since childhood.

“I have the contacts in the magic world,” he said. “I’ve been doing this since I was literally 7 years old. I’ve run cruise lines. I have a huge background and past in marketing and selling entertainment, inclusive of magic.”

Todd’s connection to Hawaii came about 10 years ago when he helped Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Mick Fleetwood diversify his assets with the Lahaina opening of Fleetwood’s on Front Street, a Mick Fleetwood Restaurant & Bar.

Todd is a bit of a celebrity himself in the magic community. He is a performing member of the Magic Castle, a private clubhouse in Hollywood that houses the Academy of Magical Arts, a training ground for magicians. The relationship started in his teens when he was invited to test to become a member of the Magic Castle’s first Junior Society.

There, Todd said, he learned from illusionist Harry Blackstone and Dia Vernon and Charlie Miller, who were known for sleight-of-hand tricks.

Also gathering at the Magic Castle in the late 1970s were writer Issac Asimov, astronomer Carl Sagan and the magician known as The Amazing (James) Randi, who were forming the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, better known as CSICOP.

“I got into CSICOP early, and I’m hanging with these people that are household names,” Todd said. “They were fascinated by the magicians at the Magic Castle because it was the best in the world and they could cull from that group for investigations.”



But Todd said his love of magic goes back even further to his grandfather Julius A. Traum, a light manufacturer who partnered with Edwin H. Land, inventor of the Polaroid. The pair made a short film of Harry Houdini escaping from a straitjacket while atop a moving train.

“My grandfather was bit by the bug of magic by doing that,” Todd said. “By the time I was 5, I knew he was ‘Mr. Magic,’ and by the time I was 7, he was teaching me stuff.”

He gained a broader life perspective from his father, a financial arbitrageur who worked as head engineer for the Cheyenne Mountain Complex for the North American Aerospace Defense Command. His mother was a dance instructor who had been a ballerina with the New York City Ballet.

“By the time I was 13, I was doing (magic) at birthday parties,” Todd said.

By his college days Todd was performing magic at corporate events. From there he graduated to marketing and running corporations.

Now at 61, Todd said he’s finally found a career he really loves. Along with his wife, designer Ruth O’Keefe-Todd, he believes they’ve performed a magic trick of their own: transporting audiences in Hawaii to a Victorian-era London salon.

The evening’s entertainment starts as it might have back in Victorian times with a visit to The Curiosities and Oddities Museum, which includes a two-headed chicken and a Tesla coil. On the way to the show, there is also an experience with a vampire hunter kit, which requires hydraulics.



“Our whole story starts around King Kalakaua and his trip in 1882 around the world. His purpose was a marketing trip,” according to Todd. “He said, ‘I’m going to tell the world about our Hawaiian Islands.’ The lines between reality and fantasy are really totally blurred, and they forget about everything for a couple of hours.”

The story has been vetted by Hawaiian cultural advisers, while Todd himself has vetted the magicians.

“The magical talent being attracted through a local Maui company, Hotel-Magic LLC, is top-rated, and they have performed at venues such as the Magic Castle, the Magic Circle in London, have been on TV including Penn & Teller’s ‘Fool Us’ and AGT (America’s Got Talent),” said Henry Perez, general manager of the Hilton Waikiki Beach Hotel, in a statement.

The first Oahu headliner is David Parr, who has fooled Penn & Teller. Nathan Coe Marsh, who has headlined at the Fairmont Kea Lani and is known for his comedic style, will replace Parr on Oahu.

Tokyo-based Shoot Ogawa, who has performed magic on TV and won many Academy of Magical Arts awards, will become the Oahu venue’s resident magician later this year, conducting shows in English and Japanese.

The Oahu shows will be offered twice nightly at 5 and 7.30 p.m. throughout the week except Tuesdays. Shows seat 45 to 60 people. Tickets are for \$139 for adults, \$99 for kamaaina and guests staying at the venue’s resort, and \$39 per child.



Visit hotel-magic.com or oahumagic.com or the Hilton Waikiki Beach Hotel concierge desk for reservations and more information.

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