



I Believe in Magic

Northern Virginia's only ongoing magic show dazzles audiences!

By Linda Bogaczyk

Photo credit: Jerri Wiseman

The theatre is buzzing with excitement before each performance of Sly's Magic show as audience members anticipate a wonder-filled evening. Then the "curtain rises" and the show begins. The thing is though, there's no actual curtain. So the audience sees everything.

Or do they?

StageCoach Theatre is proud to add a monthly show filled with comedy and magic to its slate of entertainment offerings, in a production that is packing in audiences. No matter where you sit in the small theatre you are up close to the magic performances and have an intimate connection to what's going on on stage. You can also volunteer to participate in acts, which only adds to your fun.

The show is named for its headliner, Alec Negri, who goes by the stage name "Sly." Hence, Sly's Magic.

It is composed of a troupe of six professional magicians who are members of the Society of American Magicians (SAM) and the International Brotherhood of Magicians (IBM) and who share their decades of experience in a full-length Vegas-style show filled with comedy and unbelievable magic. Be aware: this show is not kid's magic. It is a sophisticated show designed for adults and older children ages 10 and up.

How Did Sly's Magic Come About?

"A couple of years ago, an audience member recommended that a magic show would be a good addition to our slate of performances," explains Jerri Wiseman, co-owner of StageCoach Theatre. "We liked the idea since we try to encompass all the performing arts. Magic is one of those."



Sly (Alec Negri) with Magic Show volunteers

Because the theatre is adamant about offering only the highest-quality entertainment, Wiseman had Sly interview with all the owners and give a few sample shows. They and the audiences loved it. From there, the show began to grow in both length and popularity. Other magicians were added, along with professional props, backdrops, music and lighting. Under Sly's leadership and vision, it has evolved into an actual Vegas-style show. It is the only ongoing magic show in Northern Virginia.

Prior to the pandemic, shows were sold out long in advance, and Sly's Magic was selected as one of the "Top 10 Things to Do in Northern Virginia" by *Northern Virginia* magazine. Now, the audiences are building again, so advance reservations are recommended. Tickets are available at the door if the show is not sold out, and the show is live-streamed as well. For dates, information, tickets and reservations, visit <https://www.stagecoachtc.com/slys-magic/>.

The show follows a format in two acts. And although it may not be totally different each time, there are always fresh things to experience. You might see new tricks, alternate magicians or themed shows, for example, and the audience's reactions are always different. Their responses can affect the magicians' performances, making each show totally unique.

Meet the Troupe

Alec Negri, or Sly, began performing magic at the age of seven after receiving a magic kit as a gift. His first paid performance was at age 12 for a seven-year-old's birthday party. For more than 30 years, he has performed thousands of shows ranging from home parties to Fortune 500 companies, bringing his unique combination of magic, mentalism and humor to audiences across the DMV. Sly closes the show with a feature-length performance that spans the full range of magic effects. He'll have you laughing one minute, gasping in awe the next, and jumping out of your seat with delight.

The five other troupe magicians perform throughout the first half of the show:

Magician Bob Ellis, performing as MisterE, started performing magic during his career as a science teacher, using it to demonstrate scientific principles like gravity to incentivize middle schoolers to learn. You'll see how he uses science to influence his act and wonder, "How is that possible?"

Grand stage illusions—like levitation or making people appear or disappear—is the specialty of magician Greg Clements, who generally works with magician's assistant Vicky Ting. His dramatic flair grabs your attention from the moment he steps onto the stage until you let out your last sigh of relief when all goes well.



Greg Clements in straightjacket.



Photo credit: Jerri Wiseman

SIGN UP FOR MAGIC CLASSES

With the show's popularity, StageCoach Theatre is expanding its magical offerings with a series of master classes in magic, taught by Sly. Both children's and adults' classes are scheduled. To sign up, contact the theatre.



Sly and Mister E



Sunnier Sun



Photo credit: Jerri Wiseman

Magician Sunnier Sun is the latest addition to Sly's Magic. As the 2022 winner of Magician of the Year in IBM's National Capital Ring, his performance is nothing short of dazzling. He performs his entire act like a ballet set to music—without words. Don't take your eyes away for a second or you'll miss something!

Rounding out the company is magician Linda Barrett, who serves as host to introduce acts, add a bit of humor, and tie the performances together.

How the Audience Adds to the Amazement

"I find there are two types of people who come to a magic show: those who want to watch and be astonished, and those who desperately try to figure out what you are doing," Clements described. "It's great when the audience lets themselves be engrossed in the magic and enjoy being amazed by what they are seeing."

Some audience members come simply to be entertained and awed. Those familiar with magic keep a close eye on the magicians hoping to catch them in some of the basic principles like misdirection, steals, loads and ditches. I say good luck. Even after watching the show numerous times, you won't figure out how they do it. They're that good!

"What's fun for me is seeing the surprise on peoples' faces, and hearing them laugh and gasp in awe," Negri said. "That's the experience of performing—hearing and watching their reactions. My goal is to give a unique experience they'll remember for a long time."

"A live magic show will keep you on the edge of your seat," Ellis added. "Watching something on TV is nothing like a live show where anything can happen—and does." And yes, they do mess up from time to time. That's the fun and beauty of live theatre. "The sharing of the magic is wonderful, it involves you and the human experience, and captures a sense of wonder."

When you're looking for something different to do on the weekend, check out Sly's Magic at StageCoach Theatre. Believe me, you'll be talking about what you see—or don't see—for weeks to come!

Sly's Magic

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