

AMERICAN MAGIC

Gil Kofman

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Nigeria and raised in Kenya, Israel, and N Y C, Gil Kofman studied physics at Cornell before attending N Y U Graduate Film School, and later getting an M F A in playwriting from the Yale School of Drama.

In addition to AMERICAN MAGIC, Kofmans plays include ENTRIVISTA 187, which won a Dramalogue award in L A and was later produced at the Dallas Theater Center; THE REPORT and PHARMACOEPIA which were produced at the Evidence Room in L A; and others, produced at CBGBs, Workhouse Theater, Adobe Theater in N Y C plus other theaters in Canada and Chicago.

Gil has also published short fiction in Gordon Lish's *The Quarterly* and helped produce, edit and shoot the Sundance award winning documentary, *Derrida*. Most recently he wrote and directed a feature film, *The Memory Thief* which won the Digital Feature Award at the 21st Edmonton International Film Festival and the Grand Jury Prize at the Red Rock Film Festival. It played in festivals around the world and was called "morally audacious and intriguingly original" by the *New York Times*.

The original production of AMERICAN MAGIC was produced by Shock@Awe Productions at Altered Stages in N Y C in May 2003. It later moved to Los Angeles at 2100 Sq. Feet for June/July 2003 with same cast.

MANIndrajit Sarkar
RON Sonny Perez
DON Walter Murray
WOMAN Lyndsay Rose Kane
VOICE OF PRESIDENT Richard Foreman
DirectorMatthew Wilder
Music Lee Ranaldo

A more recent production was done at the Hen and Chickens Theater in London UK.

CHARACTERS & SETTING

MAN, *Indian mind reader*

RON, *Secret Service man, all business, short fuse at times*

DON, *Secret Service man, has a son, likes to meditate*

WOMAN, *Secret Service, at top of the power triangle, sultry,
calculating*

PRESIDENT'S VOICE, *only heard, never seen*

*Time: a time of fear, when the masses are easily swayed and
manipulated by convenient government alerts and easily
programmed xenophobia.*

dedicated to Amy Ziering
who believed even in doubt

Scene 1

(Spotlight on MAN in a fancy pair of silk pajamas, a colorful turban on his head. He mingles with audience as they enter. Very histrionic. A wild flourish of gestures. Exaggerated manner of speech. Felliniesque music)

(In background, inconspicuously holding trays with drinks and appetizers are—RON and DON—two government officials dressed up as waiters.)

MAN: *(To audience)* Ladies and Gentlemen:
Please. Don't be afraid. Come in. Sit down. Relax. If I eavesdrop on your thoughts, expose your well-guarded secrets it is only because you allow me to do so. You *want* me to do so. Like tuning into your favorite radio station I'll uncover the true frequency of your mind. Open a door to what you thought was forever closed. Shhh...I can feel it coming on now. Shhh! Can you feel it. Yes. *(Offstage, addressing someone in lighting booth)* Could we please bring the lights down on this festive occasion.

(House lights dim)

MAN: Thank you. Much better. Much. No doubt there are things that you are trying to hide from me in this darkness. But I can see them. *Hear* them. Your thoughts transparent like a window to my voice. A lost echo ahead of its source. Shhh. *(Pointing at audience member)* First row. Lady with the Prada purse. There's a cell phone in your purse. On it an important message urgently blinks. Something you need to hear in privacy, *without* your husband listening by your side. Am I right? Please sit down. And don't forget to turn off

your phone. (*He continues to circulate through audience.*) We all have secrets. Guard our thoughts as if they were exclusively ours. *Originated* inside us. But we know that's not true, is it...? This well-meaning *hubris* we call *thought*. To think our *own* thoughts. As if we could ever really *own* them with the language of our words. Thinking my thought is *this!* Saying *this* is my thought... my desire. (*Isolating another audience member*) Quick!! Man with beard. Fourth row from back. *You!* Yes you. Right now you are thinking about the babysitter you left with the kids so you could come here tonight... thinking Nadia— (Is that her name?) —thinking Nadia might have a soft spot for you the way she always stays late after you already pay her. Ah, if only it could be *you* she were putting to bed instead of those little brats? But no, you must be a gentleman and walk her to the car. (*Back to audience*) Ladies and Gentlemen! Tonight I will air out the mystery of your heart and set you free from the secrets that possess and chain you in their web of shame. Why...? *Because you want me to.* In the guise of tonight's entertainment you'll grow less inhibited and confess all your irresistible secrets to me... (*He now looks towards a designated spot in the balcony—if theater has one—and in a more deliberate manner begins addressing the unseen presidential couple.*) And now...Mister and Mrs President. (*He bows.*) Our esteemed host and hostess for this evening's party—if I may train my awesome powers on you for a brief and cherished moment, I will unwrap your most private thoughts like the cleverly wrapped birthday presents you are about to open oh beloved Mister President. (*Beat*) But wait! *Wait!* An *urgent* mental communiqué has just been intercepted... (*More focused, ominous*) *Beware, Mister President, beware.* The end is terrible. All there at the beginning. The beginning a foregone conclusion to the end. A public secret we're all aware of but trying to forget. Children starved for the sins of their parents. Parents punished

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by the orphans they create. Worldwide suffering, hunger...the globalization of pain in a new economy of shame. Will this be your legacy, Mister President? Will this be your legacy?! But wait! Wait! What's this I see? There is more. So much more! *Beware, Mister President, beware. No...no! No!!!*

(Spent and unsteady MAN collapses, as if in a trance. A huge explosion rocks the house. Lights flicker and go abruptly out.)