



Adelaide Herrmann

The Queen of Magic

Born: 1853 (as *Adelaide Scarcez/Sclaims*, in London, England)

Died: February 19, 1932 in New York City at age 79.

◆ How She Became a Magician

Adelaide began her performing life not as a magician but as a **dancer and aerial acrobat** in England, and later performed trick riding and dance in the U.S. in the 1870s. She entered the world of magic when she became the **stage assistant** to her future husband, magician **Alexander Herrmann** (*Herrmann the Great*), whom she married in 1875. Working closely with him, she learned magic performance and illusion techniques.

◆ Influences

Adelaide's early magic influences came primarily through:

- **Alexander Herrmann**, who mentored her in the art of stage magic and illusion.
- The larger **Victorian magic and vaudeville world**, which blended theatricality, dance, and spectacle into magic shows.

Her work also intersected with prominent magicians of the era — for example, contemporary magicians like **Harry Houdini** admired her craft and supported her after setbacks in her career.



◆ What Type of Magic She Did

Adelaide Herrmann was a **stage illusionist and vaudeville performer** whose act included:

- **Large-scale illusions** (often with sets and animals), such as “Noah’s Ark.”
- **Suspense and spectacle effects**, including levitation and dramatic escapes.
- The dangerous **bullet catch trick**, which she famously performed even after her husband’s death — possibly the only female magician of her time to do so.
- Favorite theatrical illusions such as “**The Phantom Bride**”, involving levitation and vanishings.

Her shows blended **theatricality, music, illusion, and spectacle**, and she often performed *without speaking*, letting the music and staging carry the performance.

◆ How Long She Performed

After Alexander’s death in **1896**, Adelaide took over his show and — after briefly touring with her husband’s nephew — **launched her solo career**. She debuted in vaudeville as a headlining magician in **1899** and continued performing internationally for **over 25 years**, often into her 70s. She retired around **1928**, after a fire destroyed much of her show’s apparatus; she continued briefly with a pared-down act before ending her career.

◆ How She Died

Adelaide Herrmann died on **February 19, 1932** of **pneumonia** in New York City. She is buried at **Woodlawn Cemetery** in New York.



Here's a **quick list of Adelaide Herrmann's most famous magic tricks and illusions** — the spectacular acts that helped earn her the nickname **“The Queen of Magic.”**

Signature Tricks & Stage Effects

1. The Phantom Bride

One of Adelaide's *favorite and most memorable illusions*: a **bride's body draped in white silk appears to levitate**, a hoop is passed around it to show no wires, and then when the silk is pulled away, **the bride has vanished**. This illusion had themes of marriage, loss, and mystery and was a centerpiece of her act.

2. Bullet Catch Trick

Adelaide was one of the *few magicians of her time — and possibly the only woman — to perform the dangerous bullet catch illusion* where shots are fired at her onstage and she appears to catch them. Shortly after her husband's death, she continued his version of this stunt in major venues.

3. Noah's Ark Illusion

A crowd-pleasing spectacle in her solo career: an *empty ark is shown onstage*, then **“flooded,”** after which **animals appear** (cats, birds, even staged exotic creatures) and finally a woman in white emerges from the ark, closing the dramatic illusion.



4. The Witch / Cremation Illusions

In “**The Witch**,” she’d enter dressed as an old woman, seemingly be consumed by fire onstage, and then **emerge reborn and youthful** — a dramatic transformation that thrilled audiences.

5. Suspension & Aerial Feats

Adelaide also performed **levitation/suspension effects** — such as aerial suspension of a broom or herself — combining grace and daring to make it look like she floated or defied gravity.

6. Dancing & Visual Spectacles

Before her solo headlining years, and continuing after, she incorporated *dance and theatrical movement* into her magic — swirling red silk routines, trick cycling, and other physical elements that blended illusion with choreography.

These illusions show how Adelaide Herrmann’s performances combined **grandeur, danger, theatrical storytelling, and spectacle** — making her one of the most admired and distinctive magicians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.