



The Great Thorn

Born: *Moses Abraham Thorn* (later known professionally as **Chevalier Ernest Thorn**) on **September 23, 1853** in Jaroslau (then in Austrian Galicia; present-day Poland/Ukraine).

Died: Chevalier Ernest Thorn, a renowned magician known for his "An Hour in Dreamland" show, died in **Leipzig, Germany**, on May 21, 1928, at the age of 75.

He is buried beside his wife, Julia, in the **old Jewish Cemetery in Leipzig**. His grave is marked with the phrase "Rest here in Dreamland"

◆ **How He Became a Magician**

Ernest Thorn's interest in magic was sparked when he saw a performance by the magician **Simonelli** at about age ten.

By age sixteen he was touring the Austrian Empire on foot with his bag of tricks, apprenticing with senior magicians along the way and performing wherever he could, eventually bringing his own show to international audiences.

◆ **Influences**

- Thorn learned his craft by working with other magicians early in his career as he traveled — a common path for performers of that era.
- He absorbed styles and techniques from the **European magical and illusion** traditions of the late 19th century as he developed his own act. His younger brother Heinrich (sometimes billed separately) toured with him and contributed to their early act.

◆ What Type of Magic He Did

Thorn was known primarily as a **stage illusionist and conjurer**, presenting large-scale illusions and variety show acts. Typical elements of his repertoire included:

- **Visual illusions and legerdemain** (sleight-of-hand effects).
- **Transformation effects**, such as elegant routines involving objects like roses.
- Multi-part shows such as “**An Hour in Dreamland**” or fast-paced sequences of several illusions in under 20 minutes, which were featured in his vaudeville and theatre appearances around the world.

Thorn’s style was very much in the tradition of late Victorian and Edwardian illusionists, combining mystery, theatrical staging, and refined sleight-of-hand.

◆ Performance Career Span

Thorn began performing in his teens in the **late 1860s–1870s** (when he started touring Europe) and continued through the **late 19th and early 20th centuries**.

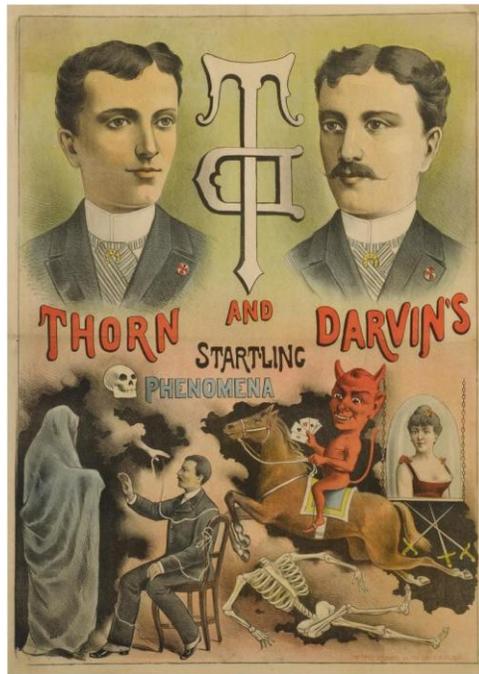
He achieved substantial international success by **1896**, performing in major exhibitions such as the Budapest Millennium Exhibition, and continued touring even after business setbacks.

His career spanned roughly from circa 1870 until at least the early 1920s — about **50 years** on stage.

◆ How He Died

Ernest Thorn **died in 1928** after a long performing career. Precise details of his death beyond that year are not widely recorded in surviving magic history sources

Thorn was one of the many **international touring illusionists of the late 19th century** whose theatrical shows helped establish magic as a staple of global variety entertainment. Posters of his shows such as “*Hour in Dreamland*” survive as reminders of his popularity in his time.



Signature Tricks, Illusions & Show Elements

1. *Cremation Illusion*

One of Thorn's original and dramatic creations — his assistant would *seem to vanish in flames* inside an asbestos curtain, a startling spectacle for audiences of the time.

2. *Noah's Ark*

A small model of Noah's Ark was shown **empty**, then opened again to reveal **animals and finally a woman** (presented as Noah's wife), making it a memorable visual transformation effect in his "Dreamland" show.

3. *The Sarcophagus*

A large themed illusion in which a figure would mysteriously appear, transform, or vanish from a sarcophagus prop — fitting with the mystical, exotic flavor of his repertoire.

4. *Floating Yogi*

An illusion with an Eastern or mystical theme in which a figure appeared to float or levitate, reflecting the "mysterious East" staging that Thorn often used in *An Hour in Dreamland*.



Signature Tricks, Illusions & Show Elements

5. *Caliph of Bagdad*

Another themed illusion piece presenting a magically-rich scene and likely dramatic appearances/vanishings tied to a richly costumed character.

6. *Spirit-Style Effects & Levitation*

Thorn billed parts of his act as feats like **levitation, conversing with the spirits, and duplicating spiritualistic effects** similar to routines by the Davenport Brothers, adding variety and mystery to his program.

7. *Mystery of Lahore / Casket of Cagliostro / Karma Sutra vs. Benares, etc.*

These were title illusions in his touring repertoire — evocative, themed productions that would typically involve elaborate staging, costume, and spectacle rather than simple sleight-of-hand.

8. *Rapid Transit / Travankor & Other Exotic Effects*

Part of his global stage repertoire showcasing exotic or adventure-themed illusions that entertained audiences on multiple continents.

These acts reflect Thorn's **theatrical, large-stage style** — blending spectacle, themed storytelling, and mechanical ingenuity. His *Hour in Dreamland* performance was well-known around the world and helped cement his reputation as an international illusionist in his era.