



Kevin Quantum feels the force

A Magical Season

Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre hosts the second Christmas MagicFest...

by CARRY FRASER

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL MAGIC FESTIVAL Christmas Special

As if Edinburgh, the festival city, didn't have enough to boast about, it can claim to be the only UK city to hold a magic festival at Christmas. MagicFest was founded in 2010 by the husband and wife team of Kevin and Svetlana McMahon, and since then they have produced regular summer magic festivals. Last year, however, they decided to run a further festival at Christmas – and such was its success, they had no hesitation in repeating the format this year.

"It is quite a rare festival because it's not funded by any of the main funding bodies," says Kevin, a professional magician who goes under the stage name of Kevin Quantum. "We try and run it as a business, as best we can, but we have to make certain concessions in areas that maybe sometimes you wouldn't have to if you were funded every year."

"We make it work through love and sheer force of will.

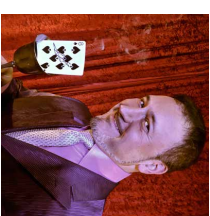
"That means we do it all – scripting, administration, booking, marketing, organising and performing. It's more a way of life, and not a career."

"We source magicians from all over the world. I travel a lot and when you are on the circuit you see a lot of acts from other parts of the world. Magic festivals and magic conventions are industry events – we go to all of these and you always get inundated with magicians who are proactive by pressing you into asking them to join you."

Kevin stumbled into the magic profession more or less by accident. When he was a research scientist doing a physics PhD, he took part in an episode of Channel 4's *Faking It*, which took someone from one job and trained them in four weeks in one they had never done before. Now there's no faking – it's all real.

"That was 12 years ago and it really changed my life. It was a real abracadabra moment, and since then magic has been my life, both in performing and promoting. However, I couldn't do it without Svetlana. She's the brains behind the operation."

Audiences of all ages are invited to attend MagicFest's The Secret Gift Christmas Special and enjoy performances from five magicians, Kevin will be joined on stage by two performers from Spain – David Bianco, aka The Honest



Right: David Bianco
Below: magical drama with Chris de Rosa



Deceiver, and Señor Perez. For Perez, think Christmas bubbles; not bubbles as he combines bubbles, smoke and magic for a demonstration that will delight the senses.

The two other UK representatives are Chris de Rosa, The Grand Illusionist, and magician Neil Kelso.

"There will be a pantomime feel," continues Kevin, "with audience participation but it will be more magic than a story. There's magic for adults and there's magic for kids. However, this will embrace both worlds and be very much a family show. And we are going to extend that magical feeling of Christmas for a few more days. Who says magic should finish on December 25?"

The show moves from its venue last year at an Edinburgh university campus to the more central Traxense Theatre, just off the city's Lothian Road.

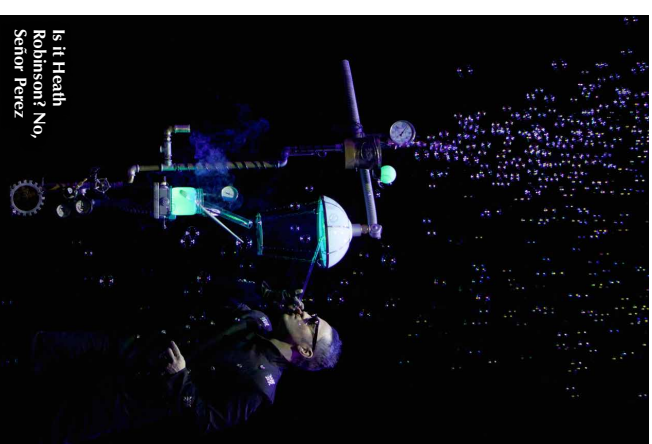
"We came to the table quite late last year but this year we've given ourselves more of a chance to organise things. Moving to the Traverse, one of my most favourite Edinburgh theatres, will help a lot as it is more central."

The Traverse is only a stone's throw from Princes Street where the main focus on Edinburgh's festive celebrations take place.

"We're knocking on the door of Edinburgh's Christmas," says Kevin. "One day, they might let us in!"

MagicFest Christmas runs in the Traverse Theatre, Cambridge Street, Edinburgh, from December 27-30. 📍

For more information go to www.magicfest.co.uk



Is it Heath Robinson? No, Señor Perez