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## NEWS

# Alexander Marshall: Renaissance Man, Sui Generis

Written by [Lisa Alvarado](#)  
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sui ge·ner·is

Pronunciation: "sü-E-'je-, -'ge- ner- is

Etymology: Latin

-- of its own kind: constituting a class alone.

Simply put, an illustration of sui generis could easily be a photo of Alexander "Sandy" Marshall, son of legendary magician, Jay Marshall. In this article, I'll be sharing information about Sandy, his upcoming Broadway-bound productions, and his take on his father's legacy.

We Chicagoans are lucky in that Sandy and his lovely wife, singer Susan Palmer Marshall (New Christy Minstrels), have been recently living in Chicago, due to Sandy's revamp of [Magic, Inc.](#), the nation's premiere magic store, previously owned by his father, Jay. Over the last few months, Sandy and Susan have been based here, strengthening the position of this piece of show business history.

[It's only in covering Magic, Inc., for BC](#), that I've been fortunate enough to spend time with Sandy and get a deeper understanding of the breadth and depth of his talent. He's been a writer, director, producer, and actor for over forty years. He won his first Emmy as Best Writer of an Entertainment Series for his nationally syndicated show, *The Madhouse Brigade*, and his second Emmy for writing, producing and directing *The Revenge of the Sons of the Desert*.

His Off Broadway credits include writing and directing the romantic comedy, *Crazy Arnold*, as well as directing Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and Edward Albee's *A Zoo Story*. Marshall was recently commissioned to write the book for the Broadway-bound musical version of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Someone else might choose to rest on their laurels, but not Sandy. He has two productions upcoming that will grace the Broadway firmament of stars, [And In the End](#), and *George & Ira*. *And In the End* is a drama that captures the last moments of John Lennon, which played to rave reviews throughout the UK and Australia.

*George & Ira* provides a window into the lives of those icons of American cultural life, the Gershwin brothers. It

portrays their relationship and what it meant to make glorious music that became part of the fabric of the 20th century. I'll share some information about the production later in this piece, but first, take a look at some of the love letters *And in the End* and Marshall's work have received from the UK and Australian press.

"5 stars. Hilarious and touching. The genuine article and a must for even the most casual Beatles observer." – Richard Purden, *Irish Post*

"4 stars. Alexander Marshall's breakneck script bristles with wit and humanity...Valentine Pelka is superb." – *Three Weeks*

"4 stars. Not some groovy magical mystery fluff, but rather a real attempt to get closer to Lennon's demons and motivations." – *Edinburgh Evening News*

"I saw the bloody fantastic Lennon play... *And In The End*... and feel like I now know his story... and a great job by the actor, Valentine Pelka, showing his own Liverpool roots...like watching the man himself... don't miss it!" – Billy Connolly, Actor/Comedian

"The script, by Alexander Marshall, who is also the director, is witty, interesting and detailed." – John McCallum, *The Australian*

In talking with Sandy about his creative process and the connection between Lennon and the Gershwin brothers, what he reveals is this: his creativity is jump started by excellence, wherever it is, regardless of discipline or genre. Though on the surface, Lennon and the brothers Gershwin may seem a universe apart, their musical genius left an indelible mark on American popular culture.

On the other hand, Sandy is not afraid to delve deep into the differences in the lives of these artists. *And In the End* focuses on the conflicts and the contradictions in Lennon's life and his personality, and *George & Ira* celebrates the Gershwin's seamless collaboration and the love the two brothers had for each other.

If these current productions aren't enough to impress you, Sandy is mounting those while re-instituting Magic, Inc., as the nation's #1 source for all things magical. Here's Sandy on the significance of the store and his father Jay:

My dad was a genius. I believe he had more magical knowledge than anyone in the English-speaking world. He was the Dean of the Society of American Magicians and the Vice-President of the Magic Circle in Great Britain (our spiritual home).

He was a collector (owned a million books), a printer, a pilot, a prankster, a ventriloquist, performed in Broadway shows, at the London Palladium, and in the Ziegfeld Follies. He toured the world doing his act and also appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show* fourteen times.

My own involvement in the elegant art of magic is really just inheriting a magic shop (which my dad and stepmother, Frances Ireland Marshall, ran for many years) and where all the guys who work there are far better magicians than I am.

Our store is one of the best and oldest, in business since 1926. We sell how-to DVDs and books, magician biographies, props (think top hats, silk scarves and magic wands), and thousands of tricks. Some are suitable for hobbyists, others meant for pros like Las Vegas showmen Penn & Teller, Mac King, and David Copperfield, all of whom have shopped here. Maintaining the shop is truly, for me, a labor of love.

Modest. Driven. Talented. Creative.

Alexander Marshall, sui generis.

[Lisa Alvarado](#) is a poet, novelist, and performance artist. She is the author of *The Housekeeper's Diary*, *Reclamo*, and *Sister Chicas*. In 2007, *Sister Chicas* was the 2nd place winner of the Mariposa/International Latino Book Award for Best 1st Novel in English. She also shares her views and literary criticism on La Bloga.

## Comments

