MAGIC has played a leading role in her life for as long as Julie Eng, BCom ’95, can remember.

“The story goes that I wasn’t delivered by the stork,” the Toronto-based Eng says. “I was pulled out of the hat.”

She learned her first magic trick from her magician father, Tony Eng, when she was just a toddler. He later shared the stage with their dad. But Tony Eng, who grew up in Sidney and performed magic tricks at his parents’ Beacon Cafe as a child, also passed the entrepreneurial bug along to his daughter. Aside from the trick and joke shop, he ran a wholesale business and a bartending school.

Growing up, Julie, alongside her mother and her younger sister, often grew up in that world of magic as an injury rehabilitation and confidence-building technique. “Something that magicians know better than most is that you can’t always believe your eyes,” says Eng at the beginning of the episode. Magicians have to be expert audience managers, manipulating quirks of human cognition to influence viewers.

Throughout these programs, Eng has taught children to perform their own magic to explore cognition and quirks of human cognition to influence viewers.

For example, the lessons proved invaluable in her role as executive director of Toronto-based Magicana, a non-profit organization that, according to its mission statement, is “dedicated to the study, exploration and advancement of magic as a performing art.”

Founded in 2000 by magician David Ben and others, Magicana offers programs like My Magic Hands, a magic-teaching program designed for at-risk youth, and Senior Sorcery, which brings live magic to retirement homes and care facilities. Through these programs, Eng has brought imagination and delight to thousands of Canadians, and has also taught children to perform their own magic as an injury rehabilitation and confidence-building technique.

Over the course of her 30-plus-year career as a magician, Eng has appeared on many notable stages, most recently on the set of CBC’s The Nature of Things.

In the episode entitled “The Science of Magic,” Eng joins researchers in neurobiology and psychology as they use magic to explore cognition and consciousness. “Something that magicians know better than most is that you can’t always believe your eyes,” says Eng at the beginning of the episode. Magicians have to be expert audience managers, manipulating quirks of human cognition to influence viewers.

“It was a wonderful opportunity and I’m dying for the chance to do more stuff like that,” Eng says. Eng pours her heart and soul into the magic industry, and she feels the rewards of community and career have repaid this amply.

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