

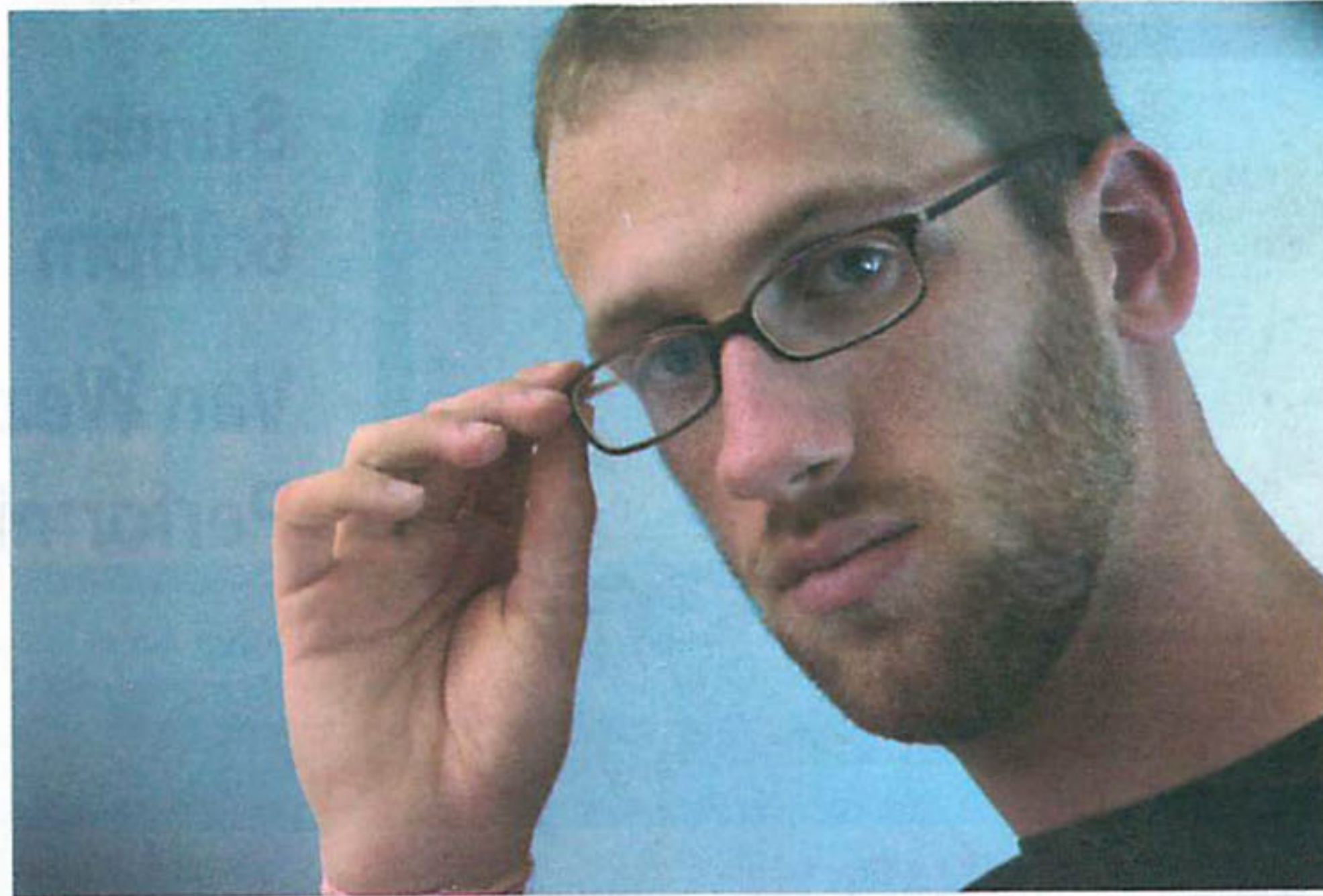
Everything is Magic for Rising Star Josh Corn

Fascinated by the magic that can occur on stage, Josh Corn, a University of Pennsylvania sophomore and Pine View School for the Gifted graduate, studied classical ballet by age four and quickly moved on to working behind-the-scenes at Players Theater in Sarasota. This self-described class clown "always enjoyed performing, entertaining, and making people happy."

By age 11, Corn's life was forever changed during a family dinner party when Elia Ilan Chesnoff, a young magician and guest of his cousin's from Miami, demonstrated his latest magic techniques for Corn's family. Delighted by the rare opportunity to see a magic production in his own home, Corn went to his bedroom to grab his video camera to record Chesnoff's performance. Most compelling perhaps for Corn was when Chesnoff, whom Corn called, "sort of a crazy guy," was able to produce doves "seemingly out of nowhere" by the swimming pool at the Corn's home.

Corn was hooked, and watched the recording of Chesnoff's hour-long impromptu show repeatedly so that he could try to master the tricks. Chesnoff, he says, made magic look easy, and he says, it "intrigued me so much that he could fool people."

Stumped by Chesnoff's technique, Corn visited a local magic store and invested in magic books to try to crack the impenetrable code. It was that level of motivation that has helped Corn ascend



the ranks to be named one of the "Top 51 Young Magicians" in the country by *Magic Magazine*.

Corn swiftly mastered the basics of classical magic, and, at 16, he reunited with the man who inspired his passion for magic. He shadowed Chesnoff, whose stage name is Ilan, and continued to perfect his talents. The two have continued to work together on their techniques and developing their theatrical personas. Ilan's is "serious and suave" and Corn's is "naïve," he says. Corn has developed a persona that "doesn't really know he's telling a joke, but he will. [He is] a little nervous on stage [to] create some tension," says Corn. His character is most reminiscent

of silent film star Charlie Chaplin.

"When you start learning magic, you feel like you have a power over people... you know things that other people don't," says Corn. However, he was more inspired by the prospect of entertaining others than a desire for dominion over them. "A magician," he says quoting Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin, who is known as the father of modern magic, "is really just an actor playing the part of a magician."

Corn explained that Houdini and David Copperfield followed the Robert-Houdin tradition of magic as storytelling, whereas, others, such as David Blaine and Criss Angel, are interested in cultivating a mystique that they have powers

enabling them to engage in super-human activities.

Although Corn says, "You have to know your audience," he loves the older style of magic. He says young people want to be shocked by big "urban, industrial" productions. As technology improves, it grows harder and harder to amaze jaded audiences.

In an effort to inspire a new breed of magicians, Corn and Chesnoff embarked on a venture together, founding Camp Cigma, which is held at Pine View. The two are "bringing back the classics" but "tweaking" them for sophisticated audiences with high expectations. They test out new routines on their young campers, who are delighted to learn the inner workings of magic shows.

Magic enthusiasts now have a home where they can find similarly minded young people. Corn was moved by one young kid who arrived, "hunched over, depressed and sad" and who by the end of camp was standing on stage performing for everyone.

Chesnoff and Corn had to teach themselves, but they hope that Camp Cigma will reinvigorate the field of magic and bring wonder and amazement back to young and old alike. To learn more about Camp Cigma, visit the web site at www.campcigma.com.

by **Bonnie Beth Greenball**

