



THE BUZZ

AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY



PERFORMANCE
READY | PRESTIGE,
RESPECT & VENUE

I DO THE FIRST
LECTURE AT THE
AMSTERDAM MAGIC
SOCIETY!



ADELEID HERRMANN
QUEEN OF MAGIC

June 2023

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This magazine is a production of the Amsterdam Magic Society. If you like to contribute, send this to our editor & designer, Frans de Groot: amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com

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DEAR READER

As I write this, the Eurovision Song Contest in Liverpool is well on its way. I watched the semi-final and some of the acts really stood out, both visually and musically. Israel, Czechia, and Finland, for example. Even though those genres of music are not typically my taste, they all shared one thing: the passion for music. You could see it in the interviews with the performers and hear it in their acts.

For me, this is the same in magic. There are so many types of magic and not all of them might be appealing to you personally. But I appreciate it when magic is performed correctly and with passion. You might not like magic for children or classic manipulation acts, but maybe you can admire certain aspects of that routine. And just as in the Eurovision Song Contest, what matters is the performers' passion for the art. So go out there and share the best magic that you can with the audience.



"Fritz"



DO TO MAKE OUR MAGIC POWERFUL WITH
DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

As beginners in magic, we are not thinking beyond performing for family and friends. Once we step out into the arena of professional presentation, Prestige becomes a big conversation and one which will become critical to our success.

When I first started performing, I worked in venues that were counterproductive when it came to a power play of Prestige – and rightly so. Experience is required, regular performance, learning our craft, dealing with tough audiences, winning the crowd, really LEARNING how to entertain an audience.

PRESTIGE, RESPECT & VENUE

This conversation has been on my mind for a number of years. Prestige, Respect & Venue. Would you believe, in my opinion, subjective as it may be, I truly believe all three relate to one another.

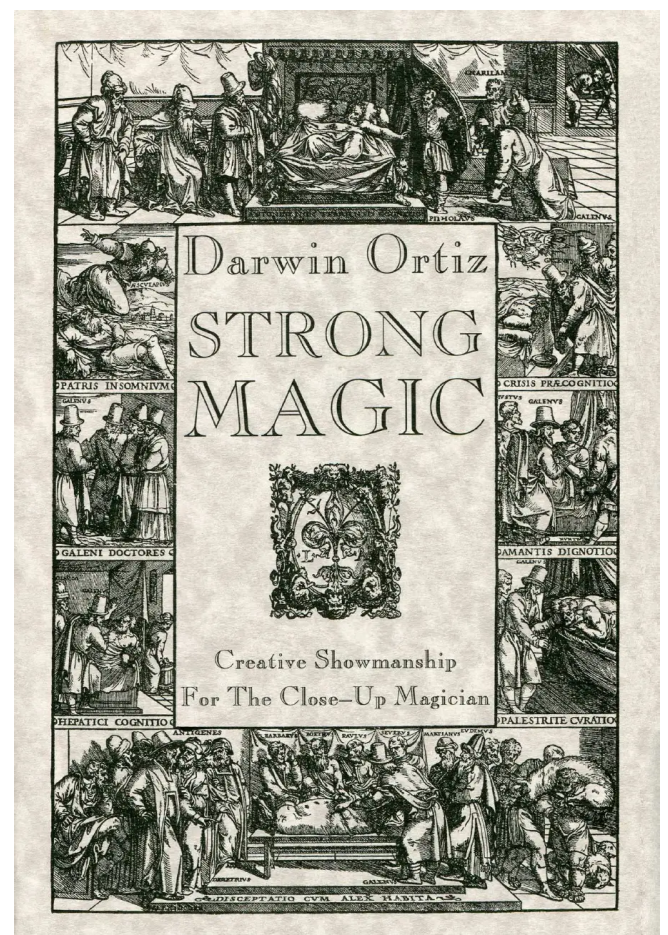
The Prestige of the Magician, the Respect he or she will get can take years to cultivate. It's a trial-and-error process. No matter the Venue, Prestige and Respect come first.

Let's deal with each matter separately and see how they all fit together perfectly.

FIRSTLY, PRESTIGE.

must confess, Prestige did not occur to me until I read about it in Strong Magic by Darwin Ortiz. In fact, Darwin Ortiz goes into great detail to impress upon us the importance, significance, and value of projecting an attitude of Prestige in our work, presence and marketing.

PRESTIGE IS THE FOUNDATION FOR EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS. IT SETS THE CONTEXT AND EXPECTATIONS FOR OUR AUDIENCE. WITHOUT IT, WE WILL BE FUMBLING IN THE DARK WONDERING WHAT ON EARTH WE HAVE TO



THIS IS WHAT PRESTIGE IS ALL ABOUT.

This is what Prestige is all about.

It takes years of practice in front of different types of audiences to really learn what it means to entertain and win the crowd.

It is my firmly held belief that I can perform in a Pub, a Hotel, Buckingham Palace, The Magic Castle and my personal power, my Prestige comes with me...NOW.

My Prestige is the inner sense of knowing, confidence, power, presence, and purpose that creates the possibility that my show will win the crowd, no matter what the venue.

If I had to choose, I would always choose a classy joint over a dive of a venue and trust me, I have performed in some real shitholes.

EXCUSE MY LANGUAGE, I COULDN'T THINK OF A BETTER DESCRIPTION.

Let's think about Respect for a moment. I can only speak for myself.

Lay people will Respect our craft the minute they feel they are in the presence of someone who brings purpose, power, and passion to them. The performer brings respect to the venue, the performer brings his respect for his craft, you can smell it on him or her. This is a serious individual, you can feel it in they're being.

Last week, I had the pleasure of seeing my friend and mentor Darwin Ortiz present his Lecture. He was fantastic. He continues to present himself with class, power and a presence of personal dignity.

PURPOSE, POWER & PRESENCE

Darwin was presenting his Lecture at The Holiday Inn in Alexandria, he may as well have been at The White House, such was his command of the situation. I recently enjoyed two back to back performances at The Smoke & Mirrors Theatre of Magic. This is a wonderful



Venue for any Magician. Which brings me to my final point, VENUE.

AN AMAZING VENUE

The Venue where we work is the final piece of the puzzle. Right now, at this time, it is the big piece of the puzzle we are all trying to solve. Where can we perform and show off our finest work? For some of us, the Trade Show Hall is your stage, for others, it could be a restaurant, a pub, or a swanky hotel. All of these environments are just a space to work nothing more nothing less. The question is;

WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING TO THIS CONTEXT?

WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

WHAT WILL YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

Prestige and Respect should come with time, you cannot force the process. Just do your work with purpose and intention. As for the venue, guess what, wherever you find yourself. Play BIG. Use your power, energy, and passion to shift the energy of the place. This can transform a dive into a palace of mystery. When the time comes and you find yourself in an environment conducive to artistic self-expression, you will feel right at home.



MICHAŁ SKUBIDA

"The legend is that when he was born he held a deck of cards in one hand and a doughnut in the other - what disappeared first? It is a mystery."

What is for sure that Skubida will make you laugh and amaze with illusion at the same time - from the very first second of his show on Wednesday, June 14th at the Amsterdam Close-Up Magic Show in The Butcher Social Club in Amsterdam.

On Monday, June 12th Michał give a lecture on our club night in Mascini. This lecture is free for members and €5 for non-members, if you want to attend, you can send an email to:

AMSTERDAMMAGIC SOCIETY@GMAIL.COM

Michał has been performing all over Poland for several years, entertaining people, just as appearing in the Polish television.

However, his passion does not know borders – also took him to the Edinburgh Fringe, the largest art festival in the world, and several other European cities, including London, Prague, Berlin, Budapest – and now Amsterdam.

During the lecture, Michał will teach you a lot! He gave us a preview of the lecture.

MICHAŁ LECTURE

Skubi Two Card Monte

My handling for Classic „Be honest, where is it?“, also known as Two Card Monte with a great climax.

Zippo Locked

Card to impossible which you never seen before.

Train Trick

Clean version of how to know that a spectator is thinking of.

Coolectors

A really cool and clean version of Collectors.

ACASAAN (Any Card Any Ass at Any Number)

I show this trick to many famous magicians and all of them say that the name of the trick is better than the trick. But it is still a good trick.

4 aces cutting

My take on cutting 4 aces from a shuffled deck of cards.

Demo Control

Gambling demonstration where you show your ability to control cards

And Theory:

How to start performing magic on TikTok and why you should start doing it. Working for tips: from 2010-2015 I make my living only from performing magic in bars for tips and I earn a good amount of money. If you are wondering how to start performing for money, then magic for tips is the best start.

TEN QUESTIONS FOR MICHAL SKUBIDA

1) Most memorable show you performed at?

I used to perform at an English bar in Poland and a group of stag party enjoyed my show so much that the groom booked me for his wedding in London. That was my first show abroad. They booked my hotel, flight, and I was paid a few. This was so important to me because I always dreamed of performing worldwide. I remember when they sent me the confirmation of the booking, I was so happy that I screamed so loud my girlfriend thought something was wrong with me :)

2) What is one of your hobbies?

Watching TV series about a serial killer.

3) Favorite city?

I cannot choose just one. I will name three: Krakow because it's my hometown and I live there; London because every time I go there, I discover something new; and Amsterdam because...there are a lot of reasons.

4) We can wake you up in the middle of the night for...

...performing the Emsley Count.

5) Who inspires you as a magician?

Dani DaOrtiz, Bill Malone, and Michael Vincent.

6) One magic move you cannot live without?

The Classic Force.

7) What trick are you working at the moment?

The Wild Card.

8) Bicycle or Phoenix?

Tally-Ho.

9) What country would you like to visit?

The USA.

10) One piece of advice you give to somebody who wants to become a fulltime magician.

Don't just think about money and don't forget to have fun!

FRITZ MET EEN Z



Mystery & History

Morgan



ADELAIDE HERRMANN, THE QUEEN OF MAGIC

Adelaide Herrmann is maybe one of the most famous magicians, you've never heard of – until now. At the peak of her career, Adelaide Herrmann was heralded as the Queen of Magic. For more than 25 years, she toured an enormously successful solo act, winning fame and adoration from audiences around the globe. Her skill was immense, and her approach

fearless; during her era she was one of only a few magicians (and the only woman) to perform the infamous bullet catch, a dangerous trick that could result in death on stage.

Before she became the Queen of Magic, Adelaide Herrmann was the wife and stage assistant of Alexander Herrmann (better known as Herrmann the Great.) Beginning as a prop assistant, she soon joined her husband on stage to assist with various illusions and stunts. Throughout the 1870s and '80s, Alexander's shows toured North America, Europe and South America with Adelaide playing a supporting role. A fearless performer and skilled dancer, she would often be fired out of cannon or ride a velocipede while balancing a woman above her head. At the time, she was also known for a dazzling dance number that used twirling red silks to imitate flames.

Even today, magic is something shared from one magician to another through mentorship. But during the Victorian Era, this tradition was heightened by the need to guard the secrets of the tricks, even from apprentices, who might steal them and strike out on their own. For the Herrmann's, they're trust allowed Alexander to mentor Adelaide, teaching her new skills and increasing her role in their act until she was a marquis member of the show. In 1896 Alexander died,

leaving Adelaide to carry on the Herrmann legacy. After a brief stint performing with Alexander's nephew, Adelaide struck out on her own using everything she'd learned to headline her solo tours.

Throughout her solo run Adelaide perfected a number of mystifying illusions, including the "Burning Witch," which featured a grizzled woman lighting herself on fire only to emerge from the flames as a beautiful dancer.

Adelaide's favorite illusion was reportedly the "Phantom Bride," which used levitation techniques to tell a compelling story of marriage and loss.

While her story may seem incredible – a woman magician stepping out from the shadows of her husband's fame – this narrative wasn't uncommon for women performers at the time. In general, Victorian sensibilities and values relegated women to the role of a lovely assistant or of a prop to be beheaded, levitated, or sawed in half. The



woman performers who transcended this stereotype were often (but not always) related to male magicians. This includes Kittie Baldwin and Suee Seen, the wife of performer Chung Ling Soo.

MAY 11 2023

Mark Bennett Lecture

Mark Bennett is a humorous magician who knows how to entertain his audience. He performed in the sold-out Amsterdam Magic Close-up Show and then gave a lecture in the upstairs room of Boom Chicago. This lecture was also the last one organized by the AMS there. The Amsterdam Magic Society is taking over this activity.

Mark started his career in 1992 with just three tricks; a card trick, a sponge ball routine, and a balloon dog. With that stuff, he knocked on the door of a nightclub in Portsmouth. And wonderfully he was hired there as the house magician and bartender. At that time, there was not much information on how to act in such an environment. His most crucial first lesson in a bar was never to let the spectator memorize a card. Because of the drinking, they immediately forget him, so let them sign the card (they often fail to remember the card, but not their own name!) Through trial and error, he learned the trade there and started his own Magic Bar 10 years later, and after that, he opened the "Smoke and Mirrors Bar" in Bristol (see also Michael Vincent's column in this issue). The tricks he taught to those present came from his repertoire. Regarding the question of where playing cards were made from (trees), he came up with a beaver (not a real one) who sawed down the trees for him and showed an "any card in an impossible location" with this. Extremely witty! An excellent "Three Card Monte" with regular cards and his Peek Wallet

was also unique with a lovely gag with an Apple Airtag.

Due to the coronation of King Charles the Third, he displayed "Kings Secret" a card routine with beautiful coins. As a closer, he showed "Get Smarties", a borrowed ring disappears and appears in a sealed box of smarties which is not yet commercially available but could be purchased on the



spot with all kinds of other tools and stuff and, of course, his "Drink Deck".

A very entertaining lecture which I remember this advice the most. "Keep your routines easy to perform and just start doing magic in front of a live audience" as he did in that nightclub in Portsmouth.





AGENDA

JUNE 2023

May 29 - June 4 - Münchner Zauberwoche

<http://www.magicmonday.info/zauberwoche.html>

June 1 - Amsterdam Magic Show, Boom

Chicago: <https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/>

June 3 - Central Illinois Magic Get-Together in Springfield, Illinois. <https://www.ring239.com/general-6>

June 6 - June 11 - Bochumer Zaubertage, Suite Magic Theater Bochum. <https://www.suite-magic.de/>

June 12 - Amsterdam Magic Society - Mascini - with a lecture of Michal Skubida.

Send an email to:

amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com

June 14 - Amsterdam Magic Close-up show

<https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/>

June 23-25 - Magische Sternfahrt Saalbach, Austria. <http://www.zaubern.at/magische-sternfahrt.phtml>

June 26 - July 1- Bryn Mawr College Campus, Philadelphia, PA - <https://www.tannens.com/pages/about-magic-camp>

June 26 - July 8 - Melbourne, Australia - Melbourne Magic Festival - <https://melbournemagicfestival.com/>

JULY 2023

July 6 - Amsterdam Magic Show,

ANNIVERSARY EDITION - Boom Chicago:

<https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/>



MASTERCLASS MARTIN HANSSON & LEIF OLBERIUS

It does feel great when everything falls into place perfectly. This is the feeling I had during the workshop given by Martin Hansson and Leif Olberius on the 3rd of May in the Q-factory. The next day the two gentlemen from Sweden were scheduled for a guest performance at the AMS in Boom-Chicago. But on the night before their performance, five members from the AMS were treated to a 4 hours masterclass and a good glass of wine. No sleight of hand was discussed nor was the art of misdirection. The theme of the evening was the skill of presentation.

Every second of our acts was examined. Seemingly simple actions such as entering the stage and making your very first contact with your audience need to be analyzed and rehearsed: how and what do you communicate with your body? What are your opening lines and how will you make them come across? Where do you look, while saying your first lines, and what will be the accompanying body movements if there are any? How do you use silence? All five of us had to do our entrance over and over again at least six times to get the right tone, so to speak.

Looking at yourself this way may feel awkward at first. But it's a necessary process if you want to be able to connect with your audience and make them understand every move you do. For instance, if you use a prop and you want to pick it up to do something with it, you first should look at the prop. Then you look at your audience. You look at your prop again and only then do you pick it up. This is the so-called Register-React-Act principle. Also, if you use a prop: give it an (emotional) meaning. Do not take it for granted or it will be a meaningless object for your audience. For example: when showing a book, this might be your treasured book filled with fabulous stuff you totally adore and you can't wait to share this with everyone.

From the moment you're on stage, everything you say and do matters.

This does remind me very much of being a musician (I am a violinist). In music, the same rules apply. All notes need to have meaning or an emotional value, and they all have to be well thought out when you play them. Playing in tune and on time is just not enough. As a musician, you put endless hours into literally every single note. It begins with being aware of all the choices you have to make, and how this will be perceived by the audience. Therefore, you need to be able to look and listen to yourself as objectively as possible to make any changes at all.

Your audience must believe that every note or action is made-up on the spot, even while you're performing the same piece for the gazillionth time.

These are powerful tools to elevate your act to a higher level and make it into a work of art.



Martin Hansson and Leif Olberius are two men out of a four-man Stockholm-based magic theatre group called 'Mystique'. The other members are Tom Stone and John-Henry Larsson. Each month, the ensemble creates a new show in two acts, always with new material created from scratch. Nothing is recycled from month to month. The group intends to see what happens when they are forced to push themselves out to uncharted territory. They sure pushed us!

WILLEM VAN DER WEIDE

Doomsday #12

An uncanny magicians gathering...



On May 5th and 6th in England, while King Charles III was being crowned in London, I took part in a bizarre magician's gathering in Derby for the twelfth edition of "Doomsday", the Bizarre Magic Convention! Not to plot against the King (though...) but to share in this unorthodox part of our art involves more ambiance in its presentation and aims for a deeply emotional experience for the audience through the spooky... the weird... the mysterious... all that got me into magic in the first place.

Bizarre Magic movement, which appeared in the late 60s with magicians like Tony Shield, Tony Andruzi, and then Eugene Burger, is on the outskirts of the Magic Art. To the point that some classic magicians may not even consider some bizarre magic acts as a magic show. This position at the fringe of our community makes the need to meet among magicians alike, essential. And let me tell you, it was indeed good to be together with the weirdos!

The lineup this year was amazing: Aiden Sainclair performed 'Fate & Futility', his long-running show at the Stanley Hotel famous for having been the set of the movie The Shinning... ER Perkins performed a Seance Show that for me was a masterclass of interpretation.

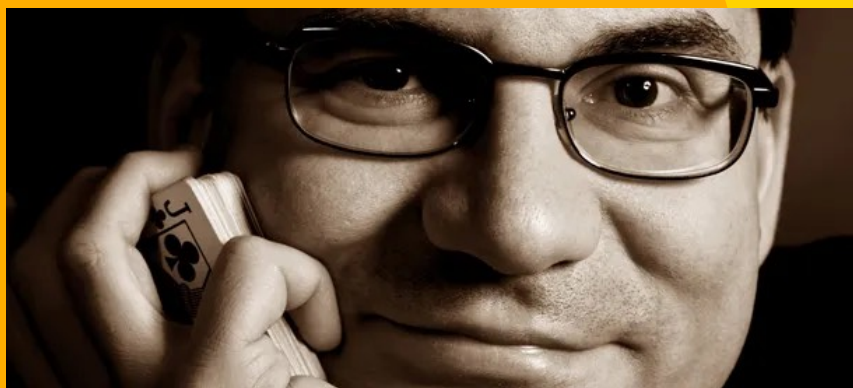
The second-day highlight was an on-point lecture by Ashton Carter titled "Confessions of a bizarre magician: ethical questions in unethical performance" and then one of my favorite mystery performers, Paul Voodini, presented his lecture on the Victorian spirit medium Florence Cook.

During the evening competition, six participants presented their act to win the gorgeous Doomsday trophy, designed and crafted by the event organizer himself Dan Baines. It was not like your regular magic convention: emphasis on direct performances, no tricks explained, lectures on topics and not on techniques, a dealer room which was more a place of discussion than of hard sale demonstration. It was great.



Next Doomsday will be May17th and 18th of 2024, will you be part of the happy weirdos with me?

TEXT: EDGAR BRUMAIRE
PHOTO'S: JOSHUA JOHNSON



ROBERTO GIOBBI

WHO IS AFRAID OF THE STAGE?

This essay is intended for all those among us who feel that they are not giving their best in a performance situation because of uncontrollable nervousness. It is also meant for those who do give excellent performances, but would like to feel better before they do so.

Curiously, nervousness not only concerns beginning performers, but almost everybody who performs, up to the most seasoned professional. I can honestly say that in my entire life I've met very few performers who were not nervous in some way before their shows, most notably Juan Tamariz, who keeps amazing me when—about 90 minutes before doing a show in a big theater for 800 people—he says to me: «Roberto, let's get a bite before the show—I need some energy.» Then we go to a restaurant and order a three-course meal! I've talked to many professionals about this issue and found that there doesn't seem to be one technique that works for everybody all of the time, but most performers have a personal strategy. I know of famous magicians who had stage fright their entire lives and either stayed with this feeling of malaise, or tried to overcome it with alcohol or drugs. However, in my opinion, none of this is necessary. Let's explore a few things about nervousness, so-called «stage fright,» and then let me help you find your own personal strategy—that's the ultimate point of this essay.

I remember exactly when I got hold of one of my very first magic books—it was in Italy, and the book written by Padre Ciuró. I must have been about 16 then and into magic for two years or so. In it, he gave some advice to his readers, and among other things he wrote that if you are overly nervous you should think about dropping magic and doing something else. This advice was as bad as the rest of the book. I'm glad I didn't follow it, because in the past 36 years I've been practicing magic as a hobbyist, amateur, and

eventually full-time professional (since 1988); magic has given me everything I need—a life, a career, and much more.

Comparatively little has been written on this subject, as you will have noticed if you have investigated the literature, and although I haven't written much about it myself, I've brought this complex subject up in most of my full-day seminars and private lessons. Here are a few thoughts in no particular order.

NATURAL STRESS MECHANISM

First of all be aware that our body and mind have been programmed by nature to be able to tap into extra resources whenever we need them. This reminds me of the famous quote, often heard from motivational speakers who want to sell us their ideas by trying to convince us that we can have a more fulfilled life if we buy their products: «We only use 10 percent of our potential.» Well, of course we do, how else? If we used 100 percent of our potential all of the time, we would kill ourselves. We'd be like a stereo system going at all times at full power. Or like a car that constantly goes full speed—in reality, however, you'll drive an average of maybe 30 mph, so you're just using a small percentage of the car's potential, which obviously doesn't mean that you are not able to access the other percentages. Because if you needed to pass another car or react in a dangerous situation, you could tap into its resources at any time and drive faster. I'm using this as an analogy for our human system. There is a natural stress mechanism that was given to our ancestors (and now to us) to survive: whenever something unusual happens, that could endanger us, our body instantly activates dozens of chemical and mental processes that are there to make us run, think, and generally react faster. This complex stress mechanism is also triggered when we perform. Therefore being «nervous» before going on is

something nature has given us to be at our best.

Fact: Scientific stress research showed that the two activities that cause most stress are a pilot in a test flight and an actor before he goes on stage. In a way I think that's fantastic to be at the top of the list. Years ago I read a survey where people were asked what they feared most. Very much to my surprise they didn't answer «going to a cemetery at night,» or «walking through a dark alley at night in a foreign city,» which were some of the options given, but «speaking in front of an audience.» So, you see, it is absolutely normal that we should be nervous before performing, as our situation as magical performers implies both realities of the actor and the person who speaks in front of others. Now the big issue is: how to let just enough of the stress mechanisms into our mind and body as to help us deliver an optimum performance, but get rid of those stress factors that keep us from performing at our best. So let's now look at how to avoid an «overreaction» of this stress mechanism we call «stage fright,» which is like an allergy that is also a kind of overreaction of our immune system.

The first insight to be gained from the above is that it is completely natural to be nervous before doing anything extraordinary—and performing is something extraordinary. Once understood, you can start making «nervousness» your ally, your hidden partner that helps you being your best. Begin by giving «nervousness» a new meaning, reframe it as «extra energy» which is necessary to:

- think on your feet if anything goes wrong
- activate your enthusiasm
- project yourself into the audience (I mean this in a figurative sense)
- create strong and permanent rapport during the whole show

The day you don't have this extra energy and you feel the same way performing as you feel in every other moment of life, in my opinion you're dead. In my case as a professional who works maybe eight shows a month (I mostly do corporate and private shows, occasionally some cultural events as well as intermittent lectures and workshops for magicians), I know that a «show day» feels different than a «regular day» (where I'm studying, practicing, reading, writing, etc.). I look forward to feeling different and I know that I need to feel like

that in order to have a successful performance. One state has been permanently linked to the other over many years now, and I can assure you that it feels perfectly okay, even great at times. As a result of the above, learn to identify how nervousness affects your mind and, most of all, your body. I'm not a doctor, but I've noticed that there are two categories of nervous people, the «stomach type» and the «heart type.» The stomach type will feel «butterflies in the stomach» with more trips to the bathroom than usual. The «heart type» has a heart-beat that speeds up, sweaty palms, and shakes. You will probably recognize yourself as one of these two types. So let's now look at a few ways of «mastering» nervousness.

PRACTICE

It is my experience that we as magicians simply don't practice and rehearse as much as people in other disciplines, like sports, music, and theater. One major reason for «stage fright» is that we are not sure what we are going to say and do and why we are saying and doing it. This can be radically changed by practicing and rehearsing better, more intelligently, and simply more often and for longer periods. You will see that each time you practice you will improve at least one little thing—make this a conscious habit and goal of each practice and rehearsal session. Find one little thing to improve or to learn every day and after a year has gone by you might be another person.

In order to gain even more self-confidence in what you say and why you say it, I recommend you try writing a script for just one or two of your presentations, learn it, rehearse it, and then go out and do it. You don't need special software to do this, simply write out what you say, that's it. You can make it a bit more professional by using two columns (I use Word's table mode with two columns): on the left write what you do (it is not necessary to go into details), on the right write exactly what you say. Don't be afraid of not sounding spontaneous anymore if you do this. You will soon forget the script and sound as spontaneous as before, however, with the great advantage that now you do it with more poise. By doing this you'll learn a strategy and implement it so it now becomes a tool you can permanently use.

MENTAL REHEARSAL OR MIND

BEFORE BODY

«Stage fright» is purely and exclusively a thing of the mind, although the symptoms will be physical—what you think is what your body will do. In my opinion this means one thing: we have to take

responsibility for our situation by the way we understand and do things. When Ascanio, my spiritual father in magic, first talked to me about mental rehearsal, it opened a huge door for me. He suggested books by Charles A. Garfield and Laurence Morehouse to me (details on p. 485 in Card College Volume 2). I remember preparing during many months for my FISM acts in 1988 and 1991, especially 1988, by going through my act first and last thing in the day. It worked very well for me and I suggest you try this (you don't need to participate at FISM, of course). You can do this either by sitting or laying comfortably and listening to blues or classical music (or whatever relaxes you) or in any situation in which you don't need to pay close attention to your surroundings (so don't do this while driving or operating a machine): mentally go through the performance of one or several tricks and try to imagine the situation as vividly as possible, hearing yourself talk, feeling the cards in your hands, maybe even smelling whatever you like to smell and above all imagining that you are doing all this in your very best way, relaxed and standing above everything, but also getting the best reaction that still feels natural from your audience (no need to overdo this). Do this a few times and note what it does for you—I'm sure you'll do this often. It really, really works and helps.

THINK OF OUR AUDIENCE

Tamariz told me many times about his teacher and idol José Frakson, the world-famous cabaret magician. I met him twice in the Eighties and he always looked to me like a peaceful and very happy person. Frakson would stand behind the curtain, breath slowly in and out, put on a broad smile on his face and think about his audience: «I look very much forward to seeing you, my friends.» When he got older, Tamariz told me, he would think: «You are all my children.» Let's take this a little further: Do you remember an occasion when you were sitting in the audience and a magician—or any other performer or speaker for that matter—went on and was obviously nervous? I'm sure you can quickly remember one. Now remember how you felt? You felt a little bad, didn't you? The nervousness sort of jumped over to you. And you felt sorry for the performer, maybe even a little guilty that he was so nervous because of you and the rest of the audience. Now you wished that he might feel better, wondering why he should be so nervous, because if he wasn't, he could give the best of himself, and you would enjoy it, and he would enjoy it—everything would be much better for everybody. When you go on next time, remember that each and every person in your

audience is your friend or will become your friend during the performance and that they all want you to be as good as you really are, and that they want to enjoy the experience together with you. Yes, that's what a performance is, a communion ... the basis of all art and life. You have a passion, magic, you've spend hours, days, weeks, and years of your life studying and practicing magic, you've solved many problems, you've had ideas of your own, well, even though you might be «just a hobbyist» you have dedicated a part of your life, intelligence, and passion to studying what you are about to perform. You are actually sharing a small part of your life and of your inner self with some of your friends or some strangers that will in some sense gain an insight into your life and work. I'm sure you agree when I say: This is a wonderful moment for all involved and you have every reason in the world (and beyond) to do this as well as you can and to feel as good as you can because it's all a great, great pleasure.

INSIGHT

After many years of pondering the issue, I've come to the conclusion that the core problem of why we are afraid of failing has to do with the fact that we take ourselves too seriously. The higher the pedestal on which we put ourselves, the longer it takes to fall and the more it will hurt. But are any of us really that important? I recently went to the funeral of a «very important person.» I thought: «Well, now he's dead like all the other less important people.» When we come to our last moments we're really all the same. And measured with the billions of years the universe and life has existed and will maybe continue to exist, and measured with the tragedies of life—war, famine, torture, rape, cancer, death—millions of people go through every day, what importance would your and my failure in a card trick have? Compared to that it is ridiculous we even worry for an instant about anything, let alone a trivial failure when we are performing. This is so grotesque that it is certainly not worth worrying about, not even for a second. Of course this doesn't mean that one should care less about what he or she does, not at all. Personally I always try to strive for excellence, try to be the best I can. We might not be able to completely change ourselves, but we can always improve. I am the most important person in life for myself and what I do is important, otherwise I'd rather not do it, but all of this has to be kept in the right perspective, with modesty and humbleness, but with self-confidence, based on acquired knowledge and skill (otherwise it's arrogance). It's not worth worrying about—nobody cares.

And now for some thoughts especially aimed at all beginners or those who don't perform very often among my readership:

Before anything else, let me suggest what not to do: don't take any type of drugs, alcohol, or medication if at all possible. I know of a very famous amateur magician, who was very close to me, who used to take beta blockers before performing. And of another very famous professional magician who worked top night clubs who would drink a few whiskies before going on. If you start any of this, it might work at first. However, after a year you will need two glasses of whisky, and after two years three glasses, and so on. This is a cheap solution and therefore is not a solution. There are other and nobler ways to win over yourself. Let's look at some of them.

START SMALL

Even the longest journey starts with the first step, doesn't it? Start by performing for one or two spectators before going on to a larger group—do this for the next few months. When you have a successful experience, put it in your memory bank, if you have a less good experience, analyze why it was so, think about how to do it better next time, practice a bit more, then forget the bad experience and replace it with the next good experience that is certain to come. I remember it took me years before I had the confidence to perform in a parlor or even stage situation. Meanwhile, now I (almost) prefer a show on stage than doing close-up! So be aware that it will take time, but that you are going to enjoy that time enormously, and you will grow humanly and artistically—and it works.

PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Many of you have probably been interested in magic for a few years, purely as a hobbyist, performing for your own amusement, and would now like to do more performing. Great! Keep this inherent enthusiasm in mind before you go on and as you perform, at least at the beginning of the performance, because you'll see that once you start, most issues related to «nervousness» will take care of themselves. Become aware of why you're doing magic. Dare to ask the questions and find honest answers to them—and don't be afraid of the truth (most of us do it for similar reasons). Why is it that you do magic? What do you expect magic to do for you? If you do this—it might take days and weeks to find the answer, that's perfectly fine—you're ahead of most that have never bothered asking this question. And you'll find that

it will give you more peace of mind when you perform, because now you know the reasons (or at least some of them), why you practice and perform magic and this will make you stand above the game.

DON'T COMPETE WITH OTHERS

Don't compare yourself to others. Study the subject of magic as well as you can, understand why you are doing and saying this and that, then do it. Afterward look at your performance, keep the good things, improve the rest, and next time you perform you're going to be better. Try to be just a little bit better than last time, add or eliminate a little thing, and before you know it, you've traveled the road to personal excellence and success.

A FEW TECHNIQUES

- Breathing in and out slowly and listening to your breath is, since time immemorial, considered to be one of the simplest and best ways of mastering stage fright. Inhale slowly through your nose counting to ten. Hold your breath counting to three. Now don't forget to exhale through your mouth ... slowly counting again to ten. Repeat several times. You can adapt this to your own rhythm, of course.
- Find a set of simple vocal exercises to go through, such as Ammmmm, Emmmm, Immmm, Ommmmm, Ummmmm, sort of humming the vowels A, E, I, O, U for about 10 seconds each as you slowly breath out. You'll find that the vibrations caused by the humming will calm you almost instantly. It is assumed that the purring of a cat has the same function (for the cat).
- If you are the dynamic type who can't sit still before a show, simply walk around. That's what I do and it is perfectly okay and works. I walk miles (well, it seems like miles) before a show. If you have a little time before your show and the environment allows it, go for a short walk and run through the performance mentally (see mental training above).
- You can make the above ideas—and more if you like—into a short routine that could become your ritual before performing, either during the day or shortly before going on. Each success will encourage your mind to associate the ritual with it, so that by starting the ritual you automatically trigger your «success mode.»
- Try out specific things like Autogenetic Training, Yoga, Tai-Chi, etc. Personally I've tried all of this plus Transcendental Meditation, Self-Hypnosis, NLP, Transactional Analysis, and many more. I've never made a religion out of any of these ideas

and techniques, but have used the information and insight gained to build a tool box and I'm the sole craftsman, responsible for how I'm going to use it—I suggest you look at it this way.

- I'll give you one last technique, and if you try it, it'll work wonders for you—I use this all the time. They call it the Circle of Excellence and it was the best thing I learned in a course of Syntonic Reading, a sort of esoteric speed-reading (that doesn't work for me). You'll need about five minutes in which you don't want to be disturbed. Silence or music you like is okay. Draw a large imaginary circle on the floor, big enough that you can stand in it. Now stand upright next to the circle. Close your eyes and think of a situation in your life where you've been at your best, where you've surpassed yourself and did everything right. We all have such moments. Start to vividly imagine the scene, hear, smell, feel, and involve all your senses. It might take 15 seconds or a minute or two, don't worry. At the moment you feel the situation is at its peak, step into the Circle of Excellence, keep the feeling and immediately perform a discrete gesture, such as forming your right hand into a fist and turning it 90 degrees clockwise, or anything else. You can also pronounce a specific word in your mind at the same time you do the gesture (this will become your «mantra»). This will associate the gesture and the word with the feeling of accomplishment and success. Stand in the circle as long as the feeling lasts. When you sense the feeling is diminishing, step out of the circle. You've done it. Next time you need access to this resource, take an imperceptible step aside (making sure you don't fall down the stairs or into a hole), repeat your gesture and mantra and you'll feel the power you've anchored in the initial exercise will come back to you. Don't laugh, do it.

OUT

Have a «disaster script» for your tricks. What can go wrong and what do you do in such a situation? That's a huge help in mastering stage fright, believe me. And here's the ultimate out if you tremble during the performance of a trick. Simply say: «Don't worry about my trembling, that's part of the trick—I've practiced it in winter.» This will create a guaranteed laugh that will sooth you and instantly stop your trembling.

BOOKS

I recommend you read one or two books on the subject, for example: • Gallwey, Timothy, The

Inner Game of Tennis, ISBN 0-553-27372-8. • Millman, Dan, Way of the Peaceful Warrior, ISBN 0-915811-00-6. But also:

- Gelb, Michael, Present Yourself, ISBN 0-915190-51-6

You can find more book suggestions in Card College Volume 2, in the theory section, where I recommend books after each theory essay. Nowadays you can navigate the internet and will quickly find other interesting texts when you search on the terms «stage fright,» «nervousness,» etc.

And even if all of this should fail, which I doubt very much, you can keep magic as (in my opinion) the most complex and wonderful hobby there is, just studying and practicing magic for yourself, as thousands of other people in this world are doing, without the pressure of ever performing except on a few occasions for friends or for other fellow magicians who feel like you. As an amateur you don't need to perform, and just this very thought and feeling will free you of your nervous luggage right now.

I'm confident that this has been of some help to you and I predict that your next performance will be a better experience for you and your audience just as you finish reading these words.

This essay was inspired by an answer to a question by John Holt at Ask Roberto, a very unusual virtual publication that has stopped after 52 questions and 52 exhaustive answers.

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