

# I PRACTICE MAGAZINE

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ARGENTINA EDITION



### Introduction By Michael Vincent

The Latin Way  
Welcome to this very special edition.

I am thrilled to be writing these words because Argentina has my heart and love.

Two years ago, I was invited to Lecture and perform in Argentina. It turned out to be the highlight of my career. I say this because I truly felt a deep connection with The Argentinian Community of Magicians.

It all began with Rene Lavand. He inspired me like Slydini. The seed was planted.

My series of Lectures introduced me to different

areas of Buenos Aries: La Plata, Bocca and Tandil.

I engaged the people, the community and of course the magicians.

My personal experience of the magicians left me feeling over joyed. Every magician I met and saw perform where of the highest technical and artistic standard.

Allow me to mention a few names

- Fede Kaplun
- Martin Ringo
- Tomas "Second Deal" Sarquis
- Roberto Mansilla
- Ariel Dominguez
- Nacho Fosco
- Pablo Zanatta
- Herman Maccagno
- Henry Evans
- Rey Ben

- Adrien Guerra
- Guillermo Del Castillo
- Tomas Giammarco

Just a few names to introduce you to my friends. Yes, I made friends with these outstanding magicians. We enjoyed great food, fun times and stimulating conversations.

One thing significant hit me profoundly. While I was there, I had the strange feeling in my body which translated into a question. The question was, why does the magic in Argentina feel so different to the magic I have seen in Spain?

The influence of Spanish Magic in Argentina is very strong because of Juan Tamariz.

Argentina has become a very spiritual home for Juan Tamariz. I can understand why because my spirit feels very much at home there but for totally different reasons.

What I'm about to share with you became a stunning realisation for me on a personal level.

I was at the home of Roberto Mansilla and we were discussing The Spanish Way of Magic. During our conversation I mentioned Slydini.

And then it hit me, the penny dropped. Slydini was born in Foggia on the east coast of Italy. As teenager, he spent a few years in Buenos Aires. It was here in Argentina that he formulated his concepts of Misdirection before

heading to Boston, North America.

Magic in Argentina has a very interesting connection with Europe thanks to David Bamberg aka Fu Manchu.

His show is regarded as one of the most spectacular events ever. David Bamberg resided in Argentina for the rest of his life. His show toured the world, particularly Spain. A young Tamariz saw the show, a young Rene Lavand saw Fu Manchu also. They both spoke highly of Fu Manchu.

*Now get this.*

I said to my friends "I can understand why the Spanish Way is very strong here but I'd like you all to reconsider that the Span-

ish way and connection is a part of Latin Culture. This includes the use of the language, music, art, expressive communication, community. South America is very rich in all of these things which makes the magic so rich and diverse. In my opinion, I feel the magic of Argentina is completely different to The Spanish Way.

*Why do I say this?  
How can I say this?*

Listen carefully my friends, I had the privilege of studying with Slydini. I spent four days in the company of this great master. Now I am Caribbean not British. My family come from St. Lucia which is only a few thousand miles north of Buenos Aires. So there is

very little difference in the culture between Argentina and the Caribbean. For me, I feel very much at home here. Slydini inspired me with his Latin energy and temperament.

I feel the influence of Fu Manchu who was good friends with Dai Vernon and Slydini gave something very special to your community. This filtered down through the generations.

I feel it because all of you have a unique expression and identity. I see so much variety. All so very different than the magic in Spain.

The Latin Culture has infused itself into the magic I see here. In Spain, you could easily say the Latin culture is there but I feel it

has become more infused with European Culture - the Latin element is there. The influence of Juan Tamariz has had a powerful impact on the development of Spanish Magicians

So for me, I relate to the magic in Argentina as "The Latin Expression".

I mention all of this now because this edition of the magazine will introduce you to a very special Latin collective of magical artist.

I hope this edition will inspire you to travel and visit this amazing country. I have every intention of returning to Argentina.

I miss my friends.

*Michael Vincent*



*Michael Vincent and Pablo Zanatta*

# *Argentinian Card Magic*

*Written by: Roberto Mansilla*  
*Translated by: Al Berbel*

## Historic Context

In this section, I am going to focus on the most recent events of magic, and particularly card magic, in Argentina. Somehow, I try to join Pablo Zanatta's Panorama, speaking of TODAY's times to be more specific with the themes of this year's Conference. For that, I am going to focus on the last twenty years in order to illuminate a context in which we have developed my generation and the one that comes after.

To do this, I will refer, especially, to my memories and, even, I will do it in the first person although I am sure that just as I lived them, the rest of the magicians of my generation lived them too.

## 90'S

During the '90s there were a series of events that marked my generation and that was undoubtedly transcendental in the development of Argentinean magic (as always, unfortunately, when we talk about Argentina we are talking about Buenos Aires). Undoubtedly, the context of "economic bonanza" (the famous "one-to-one" of the peso equal to the dollar that was later charged for everything) contributed to making this possible.

### Buenos Aires Youth Tournaments

In 1992 the Buenos Aires Youth Tournaments was created, a series of cultural and sports competitions

that occupied the entire province of Buenos Aires. Tens of thousands of young people between the ages of 12 and 18 participated in this initiative which, without doubt, was the trigger for many careers and vocations. The competition had three stages: municipal, regional and provincial. The final was held in Mar del Plata, a coastal city par excellence, with which many boys not only found the place to perform in front-line theatres or play soccer on professional fields and meet the great figures of those disciplines, but also, for example, seeing the sea for the first time. In addition, the provincial winners received a trip to Europe as an award.

In 1993, the MAGIC category was added to the list

of activities, which was undoubtedly a very important milestone in the development of young magic at that time. The figure of Oscar Keller, once again, was central in this. Not only as one of the managers for the "Magic" category to be present, but above all in his concern to gather and connect all the magic fans during all the days that the competition lasted. Just as the Dance competitors could meet and have a return from artists of the stature of Eleonora Cassano or Julio Bocca, we magicians were able to get closer to the most important of Argentinean magic: Keller, Michel, Greco, Ricardo Martín, Carlos Molinari and, I would say, the entire Centro Mágico Platense that at that time - and why not now - brought together

the best of Argentinean magic.

So it was, for example, how I myself - born in Pehuajó, a city 460 km from the Federal Capital - when I was 13 years old, I performed magic for the first time in front of an audience that was not my family, like when I was 18 years old I could get on a plane for the first time and traveling to Spain and, above all, how I met those who left my magical godparents: Michel (with his knowledge, generosity, professionalism and immense library), Greco (with his tenderness, good advice, and good magic) and Keller (with his advice, do not stop studying; and his sincere love for the development of magic).

Salvador Sufrete, Iñaki Zabaletta, are other names that "emerged" or developed in those ranks.

We all know that one of the main objectives of a competition is the focus and concentration that compels the participant. Year after year we thought about what we could do in the next and how to improve. And although the focus was more on the development of musical acts and manipulation (it was there that I put together the act of manipulation that - more evolved - I continue to do), magic in general - including card magic - was greatly favoured.



## World champions

At the FISM in Yokohama, Japan, in 1994 Adrián Guerra (“Ramblar”) won the First Award in Card Magic. Without any doubt that was a fact that opened minds, could an Argentinean win the world award? It was unthinkable - at least for me, as a young man - and it had the impact it must have had for basketball lovers when Manu Ginobili went to play the NBA at the San Antonio Spurs. The fact that Adrián brought that award was a great encouragement to my generation: it was proof that you could think big. Adrián was a member of the Centro Mágico Platense and it was there that every Wednesday he reviewed the act over and over again under the watchful eye and con-

tribution of everyone and, above all, of the well-remembered Daniel Celma.

The impact of the news was not only for the magical atmosphere, but also that it had national repercussions in all the most important media in the country. Possibly - as Adrián commented in an interview at the time - the fact that Argentina had been eliminated from the soccer world cup and other similar sports defeats, contributed to its being central news. The highlight, without a doubt, was the cover of the newspaper Clarín, the most important media in Argentina. With that came a series of interviews and special reports in many, many magazines.

The person who played an important role in this diffusion was Marcelo Insúa (Tango Magic), at that time a Magic fan and press professional. Hours before leaving for their honeymoon, Insúa sent the press release and had the repercussion we talked about. Since then, and for approximately five years, Marcelo was Adrián's partner and representative, and, together, they set up the Bar Mágico, which I will talk about later.

It should not be forgotten that in the same congress in Japan, Henry Evans won the third award in Card Magic and Fantasio, the award in Comic Magic (with his Funtasio act). In 1997 Carlos Barragán brought the first award in Great Illusions from Dresden and in 2000,

Henry Evans the first in Card Magic from the FISM in Lisbon.

## Bar Mágico - Shows - TV Shows

In 1997, Argentine fans were in for a treat. That year David Copperfield visited Argentina for the first time, which was also something unthinkable. His television programs (strategically scheduled before his visit) were a prime-time success on the most important channel, and the news of his arrival was received with great enthusiasm. The Gran Rex Theatre, a theatre with 3,200 seats located on Buenos Aires' “Broadway”, was remodelled to receive him with Dreams and Nightmares, the show that achieved a historical record in the theatre: more

than thirty-two full-room performances.

"During these years magic and magicians come out of their seclusion at children's parties, weddings, and fifteenth birthdays, - said a magazine of the time - to get into adult hearts. Although this is not a new phenomenon in the United States, the media presence of David Copperfield ended up giving this art a massive appearance". (La Nación, April 27th, 1997)

And some of this happened: perhaps not so much from the real (that is, it is not that there was a revolution, a "Copperfield school", as it did with Tamariz in Argentina, for example), although it did from the media: greater at-

tention from the press, shows, etc.

In 1999, it was Copperfield's second visit (and fewer media, although just as successful) and it happened that in the same Corrientes street he was in one theatre and René Lavand in the other. From there arises a very "Lavandian" answer to a question from the Clarín newspaper of the time:

-What do you think of him?

-David Copperfield is a friend of mine. He came to see me in Lausanne, Switzerland, where I went - let me tell you- the great starlet. He was a total gentleman: he didn't spare a single applause. He was asking her for an opinion... I don't understand any-

thing he says, and his mechanical tricks don't interest me. I like it when he does sleight of hand. We are very different.

-What is the difference?

-He travels with three tons of luggage. Me with 30 grams: what a deck of card weights.

1997 was also the year that it was inaugurated Bar Mágico, a large house converted into a theatre. It was in that place - speaking now specifically of Card Magic - where a young Pablo Zanatta proposed to remain seated at a table in the internal courtyard so that, during the interval, those who wanted to, could sit and do magic. He insists, then, he said that they would do better and they set up what I al-

ways called ("Zanatta Theater") a space where Pablo would make magic Fridays and Saturdays all year long at the beginning of the programming and at the end. That is, four times a week, every day of the year. Years later, he changed the layout of the near room to an even better one: with tiers and better lighting. This year (2017) the Bar Mágico turned twenty and since then it has become a fundamental pillar in the development of Argentine magic and card magic.



### **Bazar de Magia - Vernet - New Conventions - TV Shows**

In 1994 Vernet, the famous factory of magic accessories and -especially- of the False Thumb, was activated again by the hand of Michel and Greco. In this way, a new world-renowned brand is added to the already recognized Fantasio (and later Tango Magic).

Before the purchase, Michel and Greco, along with their professional work as magicians, wrote monographic books on classical effects (The Magic Lesson, The Humber Wallet, to name a few) and manufactured and imported some tricks that they sold for some people.

Over the years, Michel and Greco achieved a total re-founding of the company: a new image, an international repositioning of the brand, a notable improvement in and above all, the incorporation of dozens of new effects and accessories.

That same year, the Bazar de Magia opened its doors and became one of the most important magic shops in Latin America. Martín Pacheco and Quique Marduk were responsible for opening the store and organizing one of the best magic conventions in the country for years.

In fact, my second magic convention was in 1995, at Bazar de Magia first Convención Mágica, where for the first time I was able

to see Juan Tamariz and René Lavand live - and many others like me. I remember that Juan did his legendary Five Magic Points lecture and his one-man show and René the same: his show and conference of which I remember experiencing what he tells in his books that happened with German magicians: stop taking notes because I was not interested nothing to know how he did what he did, he just wanted to keep seeing him. At the same congress was Gary Kurtz, Adrián Guerra presenting the act with which he had just won the award, Michel with his act of manipulation and the best of Latin American magic.

In those same years, cable television (especially from Gary Oullet) broadcast

magic specials of an astonishing level: The World Greatest Magic (I-V), Story of Magic, The Hidden Secret of Magic, and many others.

This time also seems to be the height of the magic schools (Bar Mágico, Bazar de Magia, Buenos Aires Mágicos - since long before - and others without counting private classes), so that the usual path of the self-taught ceases to be exclusive and the schools are also training fans.

In this decade of effervescence - in which I am not counting the usual national conventions, Flasoma conventions, and magic clubs - my generation began and developed.

## YEARS 2000

In these years the Internet and everything that it represents was totally established in the world. Magic conventions and events are now commonplace and you no longer have to wait for a special congress to arrive to see an international magician. During that first decade of 2000 (and not to mention in these years) magicians began to come regularly, without there being a congress, there are frequent sessions with a specific magician accompanied by other nationals. Today you almost have to enter Facebook to find out who is around. It is true that the risk of this is that of any oversupply: difficulty to summon, disinterest ("I'll see it next"), devaluation. However, in such a case, it

is an interesting problem to tackle.

As an example of this new era of magic (Internet), I would like to mention the creation of the Forum Nada en Esta Mano (Nothing in this Hand). In the mid-2000s a group of fans (Guillermo del Castillo, Manuel Campaña, Alejandro Zambianchi, and Nacho) set up a forum - still active - that for a couple of years became the center of the amateur world in our country (and Latin America). It is the point of contact for everyone, the place where you can find out about the latest news, the event's agenda, the space where you can debate (although anonymity does not always guarantee a healthy discussion), where you

can show magic and get in touch with the referents.

Nada en Esta Mano also stood out for holding top-notch events where fans of the time were able to meet the same old masters and new references and inspirations. In those events, the initiates of that time were introduced to Helder Guimaraes (who they brought in as soon as the

FISM won), Dani DaOrtiz, Miguel Ángel Gea, Luis Piedrahita, Román García, Kiko Pastur, and many others. Once again, the Spanish magic at the head of the influence.

As I said, the usual teachers also participated in these events. In fact, the most remembered Daniel Celma's last performance



was at a Forum event where he not only received special recognition, but also a standing ovation with his magnificent “Cup and Ball” that shocked all those who had already seen it and those who discovered it for the first time.

Today Argentine magic lives a very rich present. Marcelo Insúa's Tango Magic established itself as the first international brand, Insúa himself became a permanent guest at the great conventions and conferences (he has been invited to Blackpool for years, the same at 4F, he gave two conferences in the new place for Penguin Magic Lectures and one on At the Table by Murphy). In these years, new world awards came to Argentina (with all the

dissemination in the media that usually brings these issues): Marcelo Insúa and Semba won in the Invention category.

We live in a time where, fortunately, in Buenos Aires, it is possible to see magic (very good) almost all week and in which it is evident that there is a group of young people concerned about continuing to advance and creating new spaces for magic. Hopefully, this continues like this and even more so: hopefully more young people get closer to magic, hopefully, the teaching spaces teach from a program, the less, the more conscious and comprehensive; that this incipient search for new forms and expressivities that is perceived (at least from the “intention”) begins to

manifest itself and create new styles. May the love of magic expand and make us more united.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

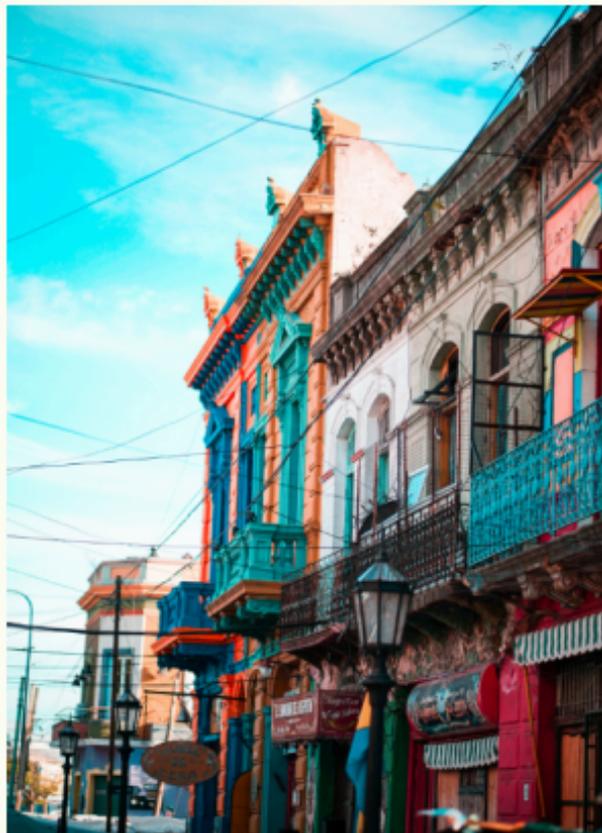
Beyond the infinity of lecture notes from all the magicians that we have mentioned, as well as DVDs, products, video downloads, which can be easily found, I would like to recommend two books that certainly concern the panorama of magic and card magic in Argentina.

The first is *Historia de la Magia y del Ilusionismo en Argentina (hasta el siglo XIX)* by Mauro Fernández "Fénix", who in a meticulous work-based especially on newspaper clippings of the time - traces the history of our art, highlighting the im-

portance of external influence in the development of our magic.

On the other hand, in 2016, the book *Ciclo de Conferencias de la Caja Mágica* (Ed. Páginas), was published, a compendium of articles, essays, effects, and profiles of a large number of Argentine magicians that certainly allow to account for the Argentine magic.

*Roberto Mansilla*





*On Miso Paste and How it Relates to TV Magic*

I really love cooking. While I do not think I am as good a cook as I am a card technique aficionado I do find myself making constant links between the two crafts, being the one I present to you today perhaps the most direct of them all.

Season one of PBS "Mind of a Chef" stars culinary extraordinaire and ramen fanatic David Chang. Co Founder of Momofuku Noodle Bar in NYC, David travels around the globe visiting some of the best chefs and discussing a particular topic on each episode, usually ending with him blowing your mind using the featured ingredient or technique in a way you did not think possible.

However, it was not David's innovation and

wits that impressed me the most but rather an experience documented on the episode dedicated to miso paste.

The place Chang visits the most is Japan and in this particular occasion an establishment in which miso paste was made like nowhere else.

After watching the extensive process of crafting the paste in question Chang has a profound experience as he finally gets to taste the result.

*"I wish people knew this is how miso paste should actually taste"*

David exclaims as he reflects on the poor quality miso people usually get on a regular basis.

Oddly enough I feel the same way about magic and how people usually get exposed to it. Laymen consume magic on TV and say magic seldom is as good as it could be. For example, instead of watching Fred kops pour endless amounts of salt from his hands they watch America's got Talent, TikTok or Youtube.

Do not get me wrong lovely readers for I am not blaming it entirely on the magicians but rather on the initial fault that lies in not considering the specificities of television as a media of communication before planning to go on the air and perform magic

We cannot behave the same way we would on stage due to the fact that we are quite simply not

working in the same circumstances. Our attention must be focused on the camera's eye rather than on the spectator's and we must use the way TV technically works to our advantage, even if it means cheating a little bit.

As a closing remark I would like to recommend Luis Piedrahita from Spain, whom I consider to be the authority on the subject.

Luis' performances at "El Hormiguero" are simply wonderful and his thoughts on the matter may be found at Dani Daortiz's magazine "El Manuscrito" as well as in his 2012 EMC talk,

Must dash now boys and girls, I hoped my insight was enjoyable.

*Tomas Giammarco*

## The different faces of Icarus

By Roberto Mansilla

Translated by Peter Cobb

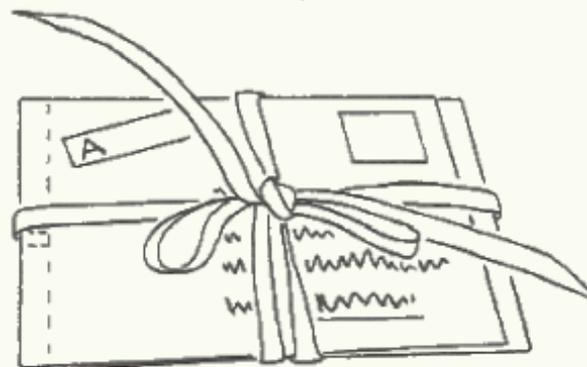
Extracted from “Naypes” edited by  
Vanishing Inc.

“It is only with the **denouement constantly in view** that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.”

Edgar Allan Poe - “Philosophy of Composition”

Sometimes it is a word, sometimes a gesture, others an object. Paul LePaul’s extraordinary “Cards in a sealed envelope” was always on my “I really need to do this trick list”, but I could never find the right twist to it, until I stumbled onto a brilliant idea in a set of Roberto Giobbi’s Lecture Notes (*Card College 5* hadn’t

been published yet). The LePaul envelopes presented as a selection of received letters, and not the place that where a chosen card would appear. A simple silk ribbon not only emphasizes the impossibility of something getting in, but gave me a motive, setting the theme for the presentation.



These days this effect is a mainstay of my professional repertoire and a clear example of how small things (a word, a gesture or an object) can contribute or change the meaning we want to generate.

And that is what I want to talk about in this article.

Magic, is in essence, an **act of communication** like all other forms of art. My studies in the area of Social Communication have made me reflect on this premise and helped me understand some of the elements we need to keep in mind if we are to communicate what we want to. In academic terms: **produce the meaning we want to produce**. For a

thing to communicate something it needs to have a meaning. A piece of paper, for example, on my study floor says nothing; the same thing at a crime scene could be an important clue. **Context** is what makes the difference here.

Let's apply our thought to illusions.

Making a coin disappear in the middle of a theatrical show can be very impactful, but doing the same thing in a coffee shop when the next table is "inadvertently" looking on, can be far more stronger. I know, for I regularly do this. I'll sit at a table, with a book and a deck of cards (who hasn't). If I see someone subtly looking on, I'll ignore them, but proceed to

cover the face card with my other hand and transform it into another one. Immediately, the unexpected spectator's face changes. His friend gets a dig in the ribs, and excited conversation ensues. And then... I do it again. Bam! Immense surprise. The reaction, as you understand, is not related to my magical prowess. The context is what makes this so powerful.

These people were talking about life, business or passing time and the person in the next booth suddenly made a coin vanish or a card transform. You expect these things at a party or show, not a coffee shop!

**Context** is but one of the elements that intervene in giving a magical effect

meaning. In my lectures I distinguish 4 others: **words, objects, gestures and technique.**

**Words** are possibly what we use most to give meaning: we explain what we are doing (*"I'm going to read your mind"*, *"this is a prediction"*), emphasize impossible conditions (*"I never touched"*, *"you shuffled"*, *"here at finger tips"*) and with the stories and background we shape the meaning we are trying to convey. Even purely descriptive patter gives a frame of reference. As my admired friend **Juan Esteban Varela** says *"when we verbalize an amazing cause for the effect, we are no more and no less building our spectators experience"*.

It is important to keep in mind that **gestures**, such as tension and relaxation, exaggerated movements, Tamariz's masterfully executed guilty look when reaching for the deck to finally allow the spectator to take it for himself, disarming clumsy movements, evidently open hands when we remove an object from a pocket, are more than eloquent when producing a magical effect and giving a meaning.

And **technique** as well. I want to say that technique, and methods in general, also have a great **expressive** value and contribute to give a certain meaning. Lurking in the shadows, our methods condition and allow us to do certain things that have a direct consequence on the external life of the effect. For

example, the choice of a card via a riffle force is not the same as using a one way forcing deck. The freedom of choice with a forcing deck is completely different, even if it means I need to switch in a deck and restricts showing the faces of the cards in that moment.

Lastly, returning to the importance of the **objects** we use, allow me to make reference to Derren Brown. You have surely seen his "Out of this world" with photographs. Brilliant. In his version the spectator doesn't separate red from black cards, but rather, people who are alive from others that are dead. And this is achieved simply by changing the object: a deck of cards replaced by a stack of photos.

If we go a bit further we can say objects have a **historical use**, a legitimate function, and on the other hand a **symbolical** side, something beyond function. A candle is used as a light source in a power cut, but also symbolizes mental or spiritual illumination. And that doesn't take into account there are different styles of candle, so a candle for a birthday cake is different from the ones used in a religious ceremony or the ones used in a formal banquet. **Fantasio's** famous *"Disappearing Candle"* has the aesthetics for a formal elegant banquet, and therefore it makes more sense in the hands of **Lance Burton** than in those of a scary clown.

So, having said all of this, which may seem obvious

in theory (although not always in practice) I'd like to focus on the most important thing of all: **we need to know what we want to say, what meaning we want to convey.**

### Points of view

When we say something is artistic because it has a personal message, it doesn't mean a "save the

whales" or "down with unitarian barbarians" kind of message. It could be, but what you really need is a **personal perspective.**

Let's see an example,

This painting depicts the exact moment in which Icarus, the mythological owner of wings made of wax and feathers, starts to fall having got too close to the sun. Beautiful, isn't it?



Let's look at **Pieter Brueghel's** take on Icarus's fall.



Can you find Icarus? Look well, there: next to the ship.

Marvelous, right?

The first artist represented the precise moment he starts to fall, the instant his ego collided with the implacable heat of the sun's rays. Brueghel, instead, apparently didn't only want to paint the moment



he fell and drowned, but also expressed the world's indifference to it happening. AS the Flemish proverb says: "No plough

stops for the death of a man”.

Let's us look at another example from one of my favorite artists: Henri Matisse. In the last years of his artistic life, he would cut out pieces of colored paper and compose them in what is, for me, a perfect synthesis of his work.

This Icarus was made in 1946 and we could say that it's point of view is more form than content. As in the first painting, it's the moment of the fall, but the strength is more in the composition and

the contrasts, than the motif. It's the how not the what.



If we take the context in which the collage was made, we can interpret more. World war II had just finished when Matisse completed it, and many coincide that this Icarus, actually, represents a falling aviator: yellow stars are burst of machine guns and the red spot, blood. Interesting, isn't it?

We have, three takes on the same theme, from different points of view.

In magic, we can see the same. One can emphasize the impossibility of finding the card, another may want the spectator to do it, another may use an object he likes (a knife, a blindfold...), another, as I tend to, may look to emphasize the aesthetics hidden in a magic effect. Whatever it is, it is important to under-

stand **what we want to say**.

It is all well and fine to understand the elements that give meaning to a magic effect, but that is mute if we are not clear in **what we want to emphasize of the effect**. Once that is established, we can use the best tools for the job. For example, if I want people to believe I'm reading minds when I guess a card, then I probably want to underplay my skill to avoid other explanations.

In "Eureka!", my card at a number effect, I want to present it as the result of **mysterious connections** amongst the people who take part (the people who shuffled, those who determined the card and those who determined the number). So I quote Borges

saying: “*We have executed an irreparable act, we have established a connection*”, before revealing the card.

But there are many options. **Telekinesis** (the power of moving the card to the position), as an **incredible coincidence**, or a **spectator’s prediction** (“Charles chose a card, you will tell me what number it is at”) just to mention a few.

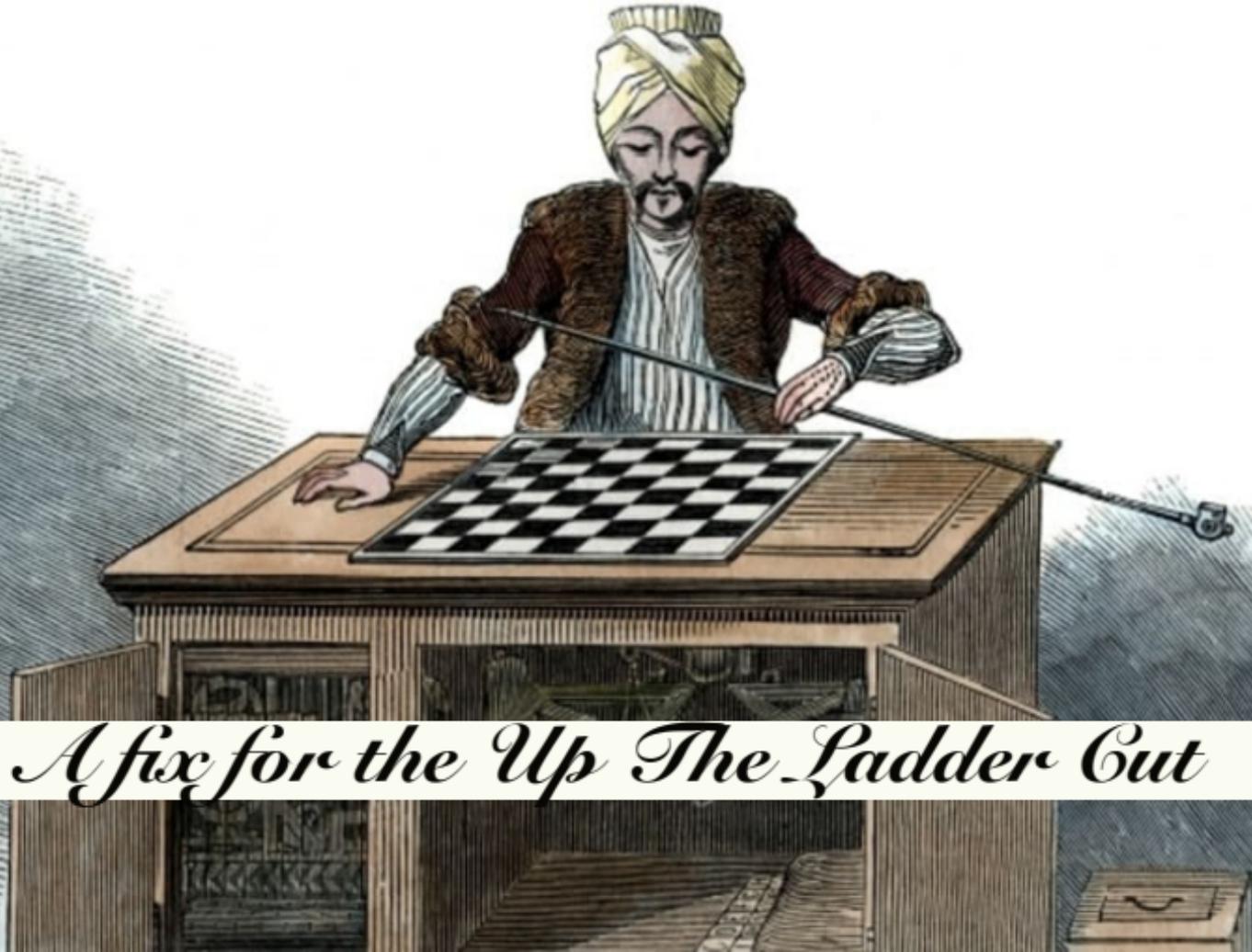
In this sense, a card and a number is very close to the philosophical concept of *tabula rasa*, a clean slate to be filled with meaning, a path awaiting for signposts to give directions. The effect is a selected card appears at a chosen number. But the meaning? **The one we choose to build or illuminate.**

When we have a clear perspective that we want to give an effect, or at least, know and agree with the perspective the effect is showing, we not only obtain clearer and sharper magic but we make our art grow. Each of us is different, so the possible points of view are endless. And for me, the precise definition of Presentation in magic is our own point of view led to action.

New questions and new ideas open personal and creative paths. The decisions we make are the ones that go on to define the message, shape our points of view and define us as artists.

*Roberto Mansilla*





*A fix for the Up The Ladder Cut*

## Introduction

Since its publication in 1940<sup>1</sup>, the Up The Ladder cut has become a staple in the technical repertoire of every cardmen who enjoys doing table work. Although published anonymously under the title of “Gambler’s False Cut”, it was introduced to the magic world by Charlie Miller<sup>2</sup> and it’s the primary choice among the cognoscenti to complement false shuffles such as the Strip-Out<sup>3</sup> or the Push Through<sup>4</sup>.

Despite its popularity, I had trouble understanding why everyone held it in such high regard and ultimately set it aside because I felt the maneuver was evident to the keen observer. The stepping of the packets and the interchange were rather obvious and didn’t look like a running cut at all. Even in the hands of people I consider experts, the move did not end up convincing me about its deceptiveness. With time I came to understand its tells and flaws and, in my humble opinion, most magicians don’t perform this move properly and probably did not learn it the right way.

1. *Expert Card Technique* (Jean Hugard & Frederick Braue, 1940), p. 78

2. Sadly, many uncredited items in ECT (e.g the push off DL, the Faro section, the strip out shuffle) actually belonged to Miller, and were shared privately to Braue who recorded and published them without his authorization. This raised many controversies, and an apology was extended in the forward to the Third Edition.

It was around a year ago when I decided to revisit the sleight and found my way through a more subtle approach, which I shall admit I’m very happy with. Albeit its initial praise around my inner circle of friends, I discovered I’m not the first to dwell in such affairs. Lo and behold, no other than Ed Marlo (what a surprise, right?) has described a similar concern on this particular matter in his renowned (but often overlooked) magazine as “Tip on the Up The Ladder Cut”<sup>5</sup>. For the sake of completeness, I highly recommend you to read Steve Forte’s thoughts on the subject (and any other topic regarding gambling legerdemain), which can be found in his newly published colossal book on card technique<sup>6</sup>,

All things considered, I’m not naive enough to claim any originality, as probably many cardmen and mechanics arrived at similar conclusions, but I’ll sleep comfortably knowing that I betray no confidence in

When asked about when he was going to write a book, Charlie used to reply: “I already have”, really, referring to this issue.

For further information, I may refer you to the MagicNewswire podcast ep. 336, where Miller’s protégés Bob White, Harry Riser and Johnny Thompson talk broadly about it.

3. *Supra* nota 1, p. 64

4. *Greater Magic* (John N. Hilliard, 1938), p. 172

5. *Marlo’s Magazine Vol. 6* (Ed Marlo, 1988), p. 121

6. *Gambling Sleight of Hand* (Steve Forte, 2020), p. 80

publishing this article, having only myself to thank for what I know<sup>7</sup>.

The following approach attempts to solve the three main issues I had with the technique in its more common handling, being (1) the wide stepping of the packet, rendering the end-jogged portion of the pack evident (2) the obvious interchange of packets, and (3) the lack of resemblance with an actual running cut, where all packets are stripped from the same place and the amount of cards held in the right hand diminishes as the packets are cut.

With the flaws pinpointed, the solution became more apparent. The key elements are a narrower step, a more fitting cover for the exchange of packets, and proper rhythm and choreography.

If you already do the move, I hope you find some value in the upcoming description.

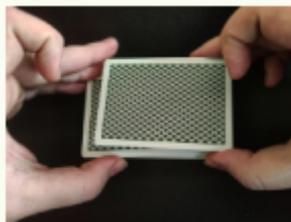
7. Erdnase dixit

If you are learning it for the first time, follow the explanation closely and take your time in understanding the mechanics of it.

The text presumes that your dominant hand is your right. If you are left-handed, reverse the description in a customary manner. I'll explain the basic concept first, and then discuss some variations. Grab your preferred deck of cards and follow along.

### **Basic Sequence**

Start with the deck tabled lengthwise. Your thumbs on the backside, index finger curled on top, middle and third finger on the ends, and pinkies resting on the side. Undercut about two-thirds of the deck to your right. As you place the first stripped packet down, your left third finger will subtly change its position. Instead of laying on the side, its pad will rest on top of the left upper corner (Photo 1). Replace the bottom packet held by your right hand in a sliding motion just as the left middle finger raises slightly forward out of the way. While the

*Photo 1**Photo 4**Photo 2**Photo 5**Photo 3**Photo 6*

right-hand packet comes back to complete the cut, you'll notice that your left third finger precludes the move to be finished, leaving the packet end-jogged about a centimeter to the right.

As soon as you feel the right-hand packet hit your left third finger, undercut approximately half of the end-jogged cards with your right thumb, middle and third finger. Your hand should move forward in a slightly diagonal motion, always close to the table. As you pull this third packet forward, raise your thumb a bit upwards, tilting the stripped packet forward and thus elevating the end-jogged packet a couple of millimeters. (Photo 2). At the exact moment you pull the packet out completely, two things will occur at the same time. The raised end-jogged packet will collapse onto the deck, and the stripped packet in your right hand will pop forward a little bit. The collapsing of the end-jogged packet visibly reinforces that the packet is falling onto the deck. The tilted packet on your right hand should be directly in front of the right-side step, hiding it completely (Photo 3). Once this has happened, slide the

Pictures 1,2,3 Show the performers point of view.  
 Pictures 4,5, 6 Show the audiences point of view

packet on your right hand back to complete the cut, aligning its left end with the left end of the deck. If you kept your hand close to the table and your fingers together, the jogged packet remained invisible throughout this procedure. In a continuous action, grasp the remaining jogged cards with your thumb and third finger (depending on your hand size, you may also use the pinky) and once again pull it forward (tilting it slightly as you did with the previous packet) and complete the cut.

Apparently, you just did a running cut but in reality, the pack has been cut, retaining its cyclical order. Although it may seem complex, the full sequence takes just a few seconds to conclude.

### **Retaining the full deck**

Our previous description does a full cut on the deck and it's the one we use after a false shuffle. We prefer to use the Up the Ladder cut as a part of a sequence, but for

those who wish to use it as a full deck false cut, I may suggest some ideas.

The most obvious one is perhaps to cut the deck obtaining a break and then performing the Up The Ladder bringing the top half to its original position. The problem with that particular sequence is that it is not logical to begin a running cut by first cutting the deck. A legitimate strip is a series of running cuts in a continuous action, so there's no logical reason to start with a cut and then strip. Only magicians will attempt it, but as I stated before we should always try to make the false moves as close as possible to the true actions. I'm aware that some may think I'm splitting hairs and this level of finesse is irrelevant to a magic audience, but I truly believe that the intricacies of sleight of hand do make a difference and are worth studying (and probably so do you, as you are reading an 26-page article on a relatively easy false cut).

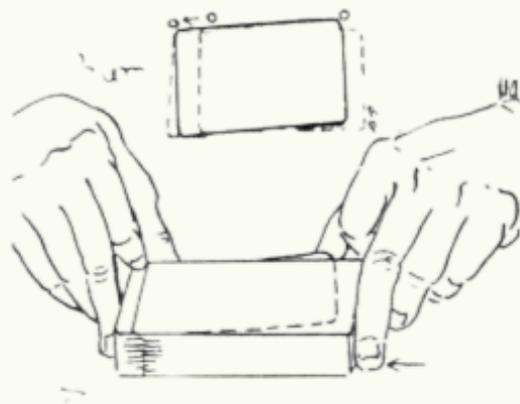
A solution may be to perform a double undercut and then the Up The Ladder, emulating a 6-packet strip, but

I believe there are more interesting options to experiment with.

### **Full 5-strip sequence**

Another classic option is to start the cut, and then switch the packet on the table (the original top half with the original bottom half held by the right hand (returning each pile to its original position) and then executing the Up the Ladder maneuver. If this procedure is favored, keep in mind the following pointers.

First of all, always start the sequence by undercutting more than half the deck to maintain the logic of the cut, so after the exchange the tabled packet is bigger than the one you are holding in the right hand. Also, make sure to use the same protected position we discussed earlier (keeping your hands close to the table in a resting position) in order to avoid exposing the stepping of the packets. The exchange needs to be performed smoothly and at a consistent pace so there's no visual discrepancy between the strips.



Also, I wouldn't recommend extending the sequence to more than five strip actions (the initial exchange plus one up the ladder sequence). If the move is adeptly executed, more cuts will only make it more suspicious, in the same way, a false overhand shuffle can be ruined by shuffling too much. You are emulating a running cut, which usually consists of 4-6 cuts, so your false cut shouldn't last longer than that.

### Scrape cut

This variation combines the mechanics of the Up the Ladder with a false cut that is often associated with Dai Vernon<sup>8</sup>, the Scrape Cut. Also known as base cutting, the basic sleight consists of stripping a packet from the bottom as if it came from the top, to then complete the false cut.

The sequence starts with the deck being held by the right hand a little bit offset outwards, rather than in the

tabled position for a shuffle. As your right arm swings inwards to start the stripping action, your left hand will cut about a third of the pack from the bottom. As soon as the left-hand packet hits the table, the right hand (holding the top portion of the pack) will start the Up the Ladder sequence. Once again, this simulates a 4-strip action and avoids the need for interchanging packets in the beginning. With the proper cover and rhythm, the resemblance with the true action makes it a great full deck false cut.

### Center cut

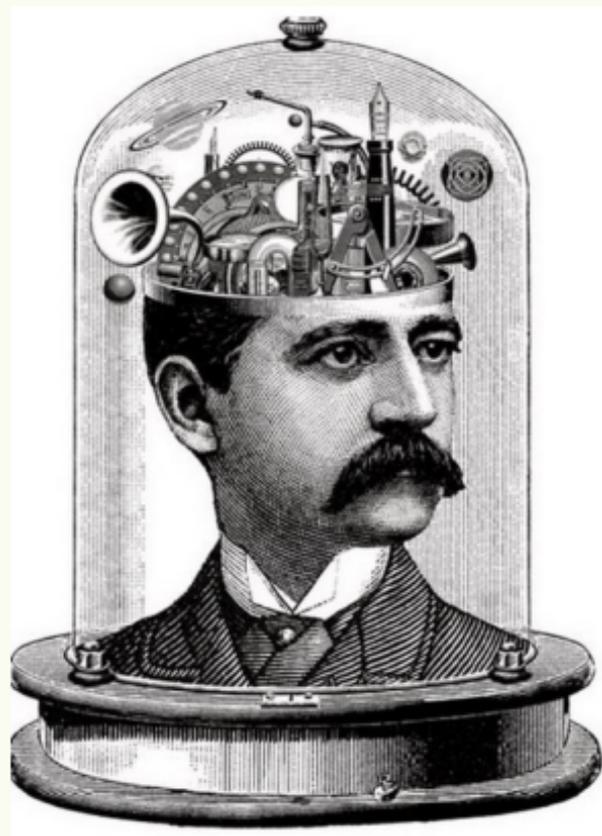
The following concept is actually one of the oldest false cuts in the gambling literature<sup>9</sup>, which I first saw performed by no other than John Scarne<sup>10</sup> in a gambling exposé which featured several demonstrations of sleight of hand, parts of which can be found today on Youtube.

The cut involves cutting a portion from the center of the deck, to then interchange it with the original top

8. *The Vernon Chronicles Vol. 1* (Stephen Minch, 1987), p. 41

9. *How Gamblers Win or The Secrets of Advantage Play Exposed* (Gerrit M. Evans, 1865), p. 46.

10. *Cheating in Gambling* (Universal-International Films, 1949)



packet, emulating center cuts. If you think about it, it's the same as the previous variation with a step removed. Instead of exchanging packets or starting with a scrape cut, we will shorten the sequence by just executing the mechanics of the Up the Ladder once.

To do so, start with the pack in a tabled shuffle position. Your right thumb will lift the top half of the deck and it will start to slide the packet to the right. As soon as it starts moving, your left middle finger and thumb will retain a top portion of the right-hand packet, leaving it stepped about a centimeter to the right. Meanwhile the right-hand carries forward the center packet. From now on, the mechanics, rhythm, and cover are the same as the Up the Ladder. The right hand will slap the center packet on top, and strip forward the original top packet with the thumb and fourth finger to complete the cut.

The key to make it deceptive is to hide the fact that you are cutting twice from the center. When performed properly, it looks like a quick double cut. The sequence consists of a noticeably shorter strip compared to the

previously described variations, so it emulates a more casual-looking cut, instead of a running cut.

### **Obtaining a break and cutting forward**

One of the most overlooked features of the Up the Ladder, is the possibility of obtaining a break between the two halves once the sequence is complete. If you pay attention, as you strip the last packet of the series, a gap is created in the left side that facilitates the procurement of a break by the right thumb.

This opens many possibilities. For example, you could do a 4-strip action with an Up the Ladder, securing a break with your thumb, and then execute a false shuffle. If the shuffle involves a cut (a strip out, e.g.) the full sequence is a running cut, a shuffle, and a cut. If you combine it with an Oeink or a Shank shuffle, it is a running cut followed by a shuffle.

Another option is to finish the Up the Ladder sequence by cutting forward the top half, completely restoring the order of the pack. It can be done immediately after

the running cut, or you can keep the break and pause for a bit before cutting the deck.

Someone may argue that is a bit illogical to finish a running cut by carrying the cut forward, but if you made it this far is an option well worth your attention, especially considering that the context of a magic performance is less restricted than the fixed procedures of a gambling table.

### **Darwin Ortiz's variation**

To make this treatment rigorous and comprehensive, I can't fail to mention the last variation developed by Darwin Ortiz. I shall not explain it, since it's not mine to share, but I urge you to take a look and judge it by yourself. It can be found in his book *Darwin Ortiz At The Card Table*<sup>11</sup>, and you can see him perform it at the very beginning of one of his appearances on the Paul Daniels show<sup>12</sup>.

11. *Darwin Ortiz At The Card Table* (Darwin Ortiz, 1988), p. 75

12. *The Paul Daniels Magic Show* (BBC, aired on the 9th January, 1993)

### **Further Considerations** **Naturalness**

The first of all the sequences described above is the move in its more rudimentary form, purposely so in order to highlight the main aspects of the technique: the finger stop, the tilting during the strip, and the proper cover.

Once these principles are understood and the knack obtained, the overall appearance of the cut improves greatly and further variations may be explored. Even if it seems subtle, each element is there by design and has a specific purpose.

The finger stop action allows a much narrower step, which is accomplished solely by a sense of touch, allowing the performer to execute the move without having to look at his hands.

The slight tilting of the stripped packet, although probably the least noticeable (especially when the cut is performed rapidly), is there to reinforce the illusion of a packet falling onto the deck, resembling the true action of a running cut.

The cover provided first by the cards and then by the hand hides the step from almost every possible angle and disguises the interchange of packets completely.

All this nuance ultimately serves one purpose only, that the up the ladder cut (a false action) mimics perfectly our running cut (a true action). As the Scriptures (Uniformity of Action 2:14) say:

“The inviolable rule of the professional is uniformity of action. Any departure from his customary manner of holding, shuffling, cutting, or dealing the cards may be noticed, and is consequently avoided ... The manner of holding the deck will always be the same, whether the action is to be true or “blind.” ... In cutting the rule holds good, and the true cut is made with the same movements as the “blind.” Whether the procedure is true or “blind” the same apparent action is maintained throughout.”<sup>13</sup>

*13. The Expert At The Card Table (S.W. Erdnase, 1902), p. 22*

### Practice

As you familiarize yourself with this approach, I'll recommend that you practice the move as slow as possible until you are acquainted with its mechanics.

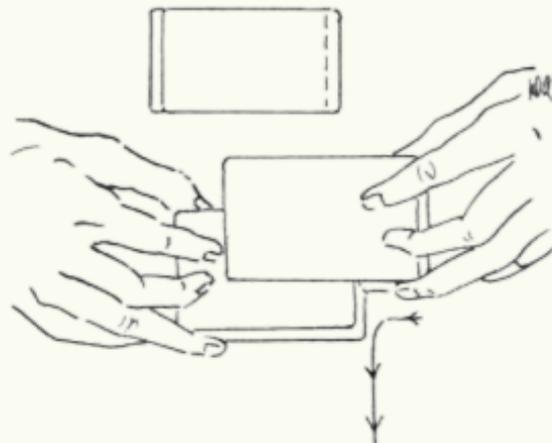
Focus your effort on understanding and getting your fingers accustomed to every single action. Once you get it down, you can progressively increase speed, but even more important is to keep the rhythm consistent throughout the process.

The only way to properly understand your natural pace and bring both the "blind" and the true action is to practice them together.

Analyze first the way you do an honest running cut, then try to match it with the overall look of your Up the Ladder, and finally alternate between one another. This advice holds true for practice in general and will greatly improve your overall card handling.

"You will never find a better way to bring the true and false actions closer together relative to action, rhythm, pace, and detail than alternating true and false moves."<sup>14</sup>

*-Steve Forte.*



<sup>14</sup> *Supra nota 6, pp. 37*

## Speed

Finding the proper pace to execute the move may not be as easy as it seems. Usually, in the hands of bona fide gambling experts, such as Steve Forte or Damian Nieman, we see strip cuts and general card handling done at a very fast rhythm, but keep in mind they are emulating the context of a casino dealer.

As in the old tale of the Tortoise and the Hare, faster does not always win the race.

Before focusing on speed, aim to keep the pace during each strip consistent so the cut looks like one smooth stripping action, perhaps with the exception of the last packet which can be gently slapped or tossed for punctuation.

For those of you who want to go the extra mile, I have a somewhat unusual piece of advice that I learned from the Spanish Maestro Juan Tamariz: practicing with a metronome<sup>15 16</sup>.

15. I learned this from a video of Tamariz lecturing in London in 1990. He used the metronome to explain the concept of timing, demonstrating both the Emsley and Hamman count. Unsurprisingly, the idea of practicing with a metronome is very old and can be found in print as early as 1897.

As impractical as it was to carry a metronome or even acquiring one if you were not a musician decades ago, in this technological era we are living you are already carrying one with you all the time in your pocket.

There are countless free apps and online metronomes, and even if you search the word “metronome” Google will supply you with one. During your practice sessions, a metronome will allow you to play with different rhythms while staying consistent.

Start around 50-60 BPM and work your way up to 120-130 BPM, which is a nice “real speed” pace for the move. If you are brave, keep going up to 150 BPM in the same way a runner puts weights on his feet when

16. As an interesting piece of trivia, the metronome was invented in 1814 by the German inventor Dietrich Nikolaus Winkel who developed a “musical chronometer”, but ultimately failed to patent the device.

In 1816, Johann Nepomak Maelzel copied Winkel’s design, licenced it and renamed it as “Maelzel’s Metronome”. Beethoven was among the first to use it. The reason I’m telling you the story is because in 1804, Maelzel became the proud owner of “The Turk”, a chess playing automaton created by Wolfgang von Kempelen. The 18th century machine that captivated the imagination of Kings and Emperors and defeated personalities like Benjamin Franklin, had its most famous game under Maelzel’s ownership against Napoleon Bonaparte. Maelzel brought it to the US in 1826 and toured with the Turk until his passing in 1838. Many speculated with its secrets, including mentions in *The Memoirs of Robert Houdin* and an essay by Edgar Allan Poe, *Maelzel’s Chess Player*, destroyed in a fire in 1854. The Turk remained somewhat forgotten until magic engineer John Gaughan brought it back to life (even including the original chessboard that survived the fire) at the Los

Angeles Magic Conference in 1989. You can see it in action in documentaries such as History Channel’s *Lost Magic Decoded* and *Mysteries of Magic 2: Impossible Made Possible*. I find the story (and automatons in general) fascinating, especially since it predated Deep Blue and its notorious match against Garry Kasparov by more than 200 years.

training. If you can do the move consistently at higher speeds, a more natural pace should be easier.

It is also a precise way to track your progress and a little creativity will give you many practice drills. On a good practice session, I can get up to 180 BPM, which is fun to practice but would be ridiculous in performance.

Many moves at the card table benefit from being done rapidly, but you will notice that even done slowly the move is still deceptive. Adeptness will allow you to make the artistic decision of choosing the pace at which to perform the move, adjusting its speed, and allowing for moments of punctuation or emphasis that would get glossed over if executed as fast as possible.

From the many things we could learn from the world of card flourishing, perhaps my favorite is the following, stated by Singaporean Cardistry star Daren Yeow:

“Smoothness creates the illusion of speed.”

### **Final Words**

As we conclude this dissertation, I hoped to have ignited at least a sparkle of interest to revisit this technique. Many of the remarks made during this analysis can be extrapolated to different aspects of sleight of hand, so I am optimistic that you found something useful among these lines. Instead of ending with a grandiloquent denouement or a predictable quote on the importance of attention to detail, I shall thank you deeply for making it this far along. Needless to say, feel free to contact me if anything is unclear or if I may be helpful in any way. Any comments, information, missing credits, or reviews are also more than welcomed.

I am a true amateur of this art-form (as Rene Lavand used to remark, from the Latin amateur, lover) and nothing pleases me more than exploring and ultimately sharing the subtleties and complexities of the pasteboards with any member of the Brotherhood of the Wand.

With nothing else left to say, I shall share with you two last ideas: an application and a practice drill.

### **An Application**

One of the most practical applications of the Up The Ladder cut happens in combination with one if not the oldest principle in card magic, the Key Card<sup>17</sup>. Instead of placing a key by simply cutting, an Up The Ladder can be done instead, apparently mixing the cards further and throwing off anyone familiar with the basic principle. If instead of a key we use a locator card such as a crimp, the range of possibilities widens. To my surprise, this idea has not been mentioned until very modern times. Perhaps it seemed too obvious to be hinted at and therefore omitted in the literature, but as far as my research went the first to touch upon this was Martin Nash<sup>18</sup> while discussing the work on his remarkable Infinity Crimp.

A refinement of this idea is the notion that, if you need to control just a slug instead of the full deck, you can use the Up the Ladder to set the crimp in place and then blend it with the true action of a running cut. With a slug on top and a crimp on the bottom, you can undercut half the deck to the right, do an Up the Ladder once, and then strip two or three more packets normally. Your stock will end in the middle right next to your crimp, waiting to be retrieved. You can square the pack, pause for as long as you prefer, and then cut or shuffle your desired cards back to the top. The first appearance of this concept in print that I could find is by Harry Levine, who used it as the core method for a cutting the aces sequence he called Climbing the Aces<sup>19</sup>.

### **A practice drill**

Lastly, as the title implies, I want to share with you a practice drill that I use all the time, not only because it allows me to practice two techniques I use a lot, it also improves the handling of both, by alternating a true and a “blind” action as we discussed previously.

17. Whilst the mind that first thought of it is lost to history, the earliest reference in print is *De subtilitate* (Girolamo Cardano, 1550)

18. *Infinity and Beyond* (A-1 Magical Media, 1999)

19. *The Trapdoor Magazine, Issue 69* (Steve Beam, 1998), p. 1428.

20. *Supra nota* 6, p. 95

The way I practice is by combining the Up the Ladder with Steve Forte's F-Strip<sup>20</sup>.

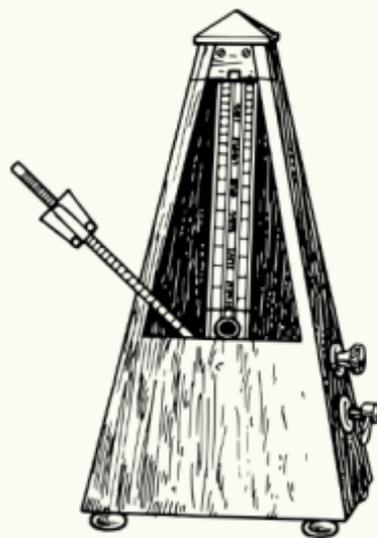
For those who are not familiar with it, it's a way of obtaining a break above a stock after a series of strip cuts. It can be found in his book *Gambling Sleight of Hand* (see reference below) and you can see the Master himself demonstrate and expose the technique in his famous TV appearance<sup>21</sup>, which is readily available online. It's a very useful technique and it's perfect to be practiced along with the Up the Ladder.

I start with a slug on top, and then intercalate between both techniques. After the F-Strip, you will have a break above the slug which will be brought back to the top with the Up the Ladder, and the sequence can be repeated ad nauseam. Not only both are based on strip cuts and a jog, but for both, I use the finger stop already discussed. So you are not only practicing the finger stop, reducing the length of the jog, but also the pace of the strips.

Since one involves real strips and the other a switch, it's perfect to bring the rhythm and the look of both actions

as close as possible. Ultimately, both sequences should look the same and to the untrained eye, it will look as if you were simply cutting the deck over and over again.

*Alan Muickey*



<sup>21</sup>*Hidden Secrets of Magic* (NBC, 1996)

*Why Magic?*

A top-down view of a wooden table. In the upper right, a glass of beer with a thick head of foam sits on a dark coaster. A pair of glasses with silver frames and clear lenses is positioned above a pair of glasses with orange frames and yellow-tinted lenses. In the lower right, a deck of playing cards with a red and white floral pattern on the back is fanned out. The text "Why Magic?" is written in a white, elegant cursive font across the center of the image.

## Why magic?

When I was asked by one of my best friends in magic to write something for the Argentinian edition of I.P. magazine, I asked him what he'd like me to write about, and he told me I had complete freedom. That's quite a responsibility. And I figured that my other colleges are already sharing great magic with you, so I thought maybe I could write about something I came to realize over the years. If you think about it, it's quite obvious, always taken for granted, and rarely mentioned in theory articles, lectures or books. And it is:

**why magic?** This is something I began reflecting about after watching a

Lang Lang piano masterclass. Whenever he asked his students why did they start in music or playing the piano, the most frequent answers were along the lines of: "because I want to be like you", "because I want to travel the world giving concerts", "because I want to win every competition", "because my parents wanted me to be a musician", and so on. He said all those answers were ok (perhaps not the latter), but almost none of them ever said what he was hoping to hear. I thought this question was applicable to all art forms and disciplines, and I'll reveal to you what that answer was further along. But first let me tell you a little story of mine.

It was the early 2000's, I had recently won the na-

tional championship in the category of card magic. Needless to say, lots of admiration from my peers and fellow magicians and respect earned from the old masters. I was on the top, giving lectures, asked to perform at magic conventions and all those nice things that came with fame; you know, a proud 19-year-old, that hasn't realized that still has a long way to go and has only experienced the ups but not the downs. It didn't took very long either. Three years later I entered the Latin American F.I.S.M., again in the card magic category. Being a national champion, I was in for the gold and wouldn't take any less. So I did my routine, a flawless performance, and as you may realize I had very high expectations on

me from my colleagues as well as myself. And so came the time for the announcements for card magic and, guess what? ...nothing. Not even a "participation award". It hit me really hard, you can figure, my great big ego to the floor. After the storm passed, I stopped to think calmly about what went wrong or what I could have done differently. I realized that besides the routine, the magic, and all that, **I was doing magic for the wrong reason.** I still loved it but my **focus** was completely off. I was practicing to win prizes, to be "better than..." things that felt great and grew my self-esteem but weren't real at all. So, I stepped aside from the magic community for a while to do some serious

thinking and rejoin myself with my life's passion.

And there's my story, and you may be already wondering what does that have to do with anything? Let's go back to that Lang Lang masterclass I told you about earlier. When he asked the students why they played the piano, Lang Lang was looking for a very specific answer, and it is... **"Because I love it"**. That should always come first, and here's where my point emerges.

When you start in magic, of course you start because you like it, and then, maybe, you even fall in love with it. In any case, there is true enjoyment and fun in the practice. But the deeper you go, the further

you get into it, eventually you might find yourself doing magic for a reason that is not really fulfilling, although you believe it is. It can be anything, maybe you want to have many shows and gigs, or maybe because you want to give lectures, or win competitions, travel the world, be on TV, etc., and that is all fine. But there are many things that do come along at the expense of being successful, and there is no point in going through it all if you are not going to have fun and enjoy the ride. In other words, it's not enough to just be interested in magic. You must love it, and if you do, then it's worth it. Remember, art is a completely useless thing and it has no practical purpose at all. It only serves the spirit of the artist, so if



there is no real fun, no real love, you might consider either choosing a different path or finding a way to re-connect with your artistic self.

I've been in magic for almost 30 years now and it has been quite a ride. I realize now how important it is to really love and enjoy each step of the way. When

a new student comes along, no matter how long they tell me they've been in magic, I always start by asking them why they chose to do it. Its key for me to know why are they doing magic in the first place, because that tells not only how far they'll go, but also if they are in it for the right reason. And sometimes they do say "because I love magic" and some-

times they don't, in that case I'd ask them if they do love it and then they'd say yes. Nevertheless, I always remind them. Because it doesn't matter if you do magic as a pro or an amateur, magic is really fun but also very complex, as any other discipline, and the only way to keep your enthusiasm, to keep on practicing, to keep performing, is being passionate about

it. As Beethoven once said *"Playing a wrong note is insignificant, playing without passion is inexcusable"*.

In conclusion, I hope you found reading this as much fun as I did writing it. Maybe you think this is too obvious, or too cliché, but believe me it is something to always have in mind. It



will keep you focused and honest about your practice, and also truly motivated. Reminding ourselves every now and then that we do magic simply because we love it will always keep us on the right track and rest assured, our audiences will be thankful for that. They will feel that true passion in each and every one of our performances. So my friends, I'll say goodbye for now and I'll finish by answering the title question: Why magic? ***Because we love it!***

Keep in motion.

*SB.*





*On how the Goldberg Machine aids in the understanding of Darwin  
Ortiz's contributions to the construction of a magical effect or quite  
simply OHTGMAITPUDOCITTCOTMEOZS*

This essay was first published by Professor Thomas Moriarty on the blog "Things of Thomas Moriarty".

Those of you lovely readers who happen to be in the luck of calling yourselves friends of yours truly are aware of at least one of the following two things:

First of all, I am a devoted student of Darwin Ortiz and what I call the "Strong Magic Paradigm" named so dearly after Darwin's stellar book on the theory of presentational strategies. However, there is a newer book on construction of the magical effect considered to be the underdog of Darwin's vast contributions to this craft we all know and love,

"Designing Miracles". While this second book is more recent and considerably shorter than its predecessor, I think it encapsulates the real work on Effect Design.

In both "Strong Magic" and "Designing Miracles" Darwin explains his approach to methodology by posing an interesting axiom that constitutes one of his so called "Darwin's Laws", it goes something like this:

"If the spectators cannot figure out the when, they will never spot the how"

Have you ever heard of a Goldberg machine? Well, allow me to retort:

"...A Rube Goldberg machine is a contraption, invention, device or appara-

tus that is deliberately over-engineered or over-done to perform a very simple task in a very complicated fashion, usually including a chain reaction. The expression is named after American cartoonist and inventor Rube Goldberg (1883–1970)..."

It is not by mere chance that I first teased you with the quote from Darwin's book. It refers to methodology in quite a revolutionary albeit controversial way.

What is really fantastic about Darwin is that he thinks from the spectator's point of view when creating an effect and from a magician's point of view when technique is concerned. I truly believe this to be the reason why he is quite simply the best effect constructor at present,

especially but by no means exclusively when it comes to gambling flavored routines.

Spectators have a rather linear way of solving problems or seeking plausible explanations to an impossible effect, Darwin states. In order to prevent the spectators from finding said solutions he employs an indirect methodology in the form of various devices of both manipulative and psychological nature.

This change of paradigm demands a higher level of technical ability from the performer which I find quite convenient since I absolutely love difficult and unorthodox sleight of hand, even more so when I can apply it to my magic.

Magicians often opt for a direct methodology result-

ing from their inability to differentiate the effect from the method.

Having clarified that, I do think that the best effects are often simple and direct while having quite indirect inner workings, just like the Goldberg machine!

In an attempt to wrap up I would like to mention one of Darwin's most controversial statements about the methodological directness of Vernon's travelers and Michael Vincent's solution to the problem entitled "The Ultimate Travelers". In this routine, Mike manages to get to the true meaning of Darwin's law and use time displacement to achieve a cleaner version of the effect that ends up with the deck in the box and the magician reaching with empty hands to re-

move the four aces from the pockets, because they are already there.

I hope that through the use of the comparison between the Goldberg Machine and Darwin's approach to methodology I may indirect you (pun intended) towards a better way of thinking about methods when it comes to constructing magical effects and fooling the hell out of your audiences.

*Tomas Gianmarco*

A hand holding a crystal ball over a sunset ocean. The text "Predicted Cancellation" is arched over the crystal ball.

Predicted Cancellation

**Effect:**

The magician removes two prediction cards from a previously shuffled deck and lays them face down on the table. He begins dealing the cards in a face up pile as he asks a spectator to call out stop. When the spectator stops him, the magician deals a card face down on top of the first prediction. The actions are repeated for the second one and the magician then reveals that the predictions match the cards the spectators stopped at.

**Method:**

After the spectator shuffles, spread the cards with the faces towards you and memorize both the color and the value of the first and the eight cards from the top, these are the cards you'll force on the spectators using a psychic stop force and a switch. Let's suppose the cards are a black ace and a red five. Take out the matching black ace and the matching red five and place them on top of the face down deck.

The order from the top of the face down at this point should be: red five, black ace, black ace, x card, x card, x card, x card, x card, x card, red five.

With the deck face down in your left hand dealing grip, spread the top two cards in your right hand, at the same time getting a fourth finger break under the former third card from the top, now the top card. In an in transit action, square the top two cards in your left and let them coalesce with the other card on top of your break. Lift off everything above the break squared in your right hand's end grip and table the deck with the left hand.

The left hand peels the top card and holds it in dealers grip. get a left fourth finger break above this card as your right hand squares its double on top and the break



is converted to a right thumb break as your hold everything in your right hand.

Moving towards the right side of the mat, we will now perform a double laydown of three cards as two that is based off of Paul Wilson's tabled double lift.

The right thumb lets the card below the break and closest to the table snap off as the right index finger moves backwards and meets the thumb at the inner end of the double. The pressure that is exerted by the right thumb, the nail of the right index finger and the tip of the right index finger will allow you to let go of the double by relaxing the pressure and pushing forwards with the right thumb slightly (you'll know you're doing it right when the double springs forwards a little bit as it glides on the table behaving as a single card would)

Since the card closest to you is a single and it sometimes doesn't fully separate from the double, you can slide it backwards with your right index finger separating the predictions without fear of the double card splitting.

The key with this laydown is to not make it look or feel flourishy, it should seem just like a casual gesture.

Take the deck face down in your left hand and start dealing cards face up, forming a pile in the left side of

the close up mat. If you want to, you can perform an overhand jog shuffle controlling the top seven cards at this point as you explain to the spectators what's about to happen.

Deal the cards softly and don't lay them down with a snapping sound since it will create a discrepancy later on if you do.

At the same time, look at the first spectator and perform a Psychic Stop Force of the seventh card from the top, the one that matches the first prediction. It's important to clarify to the spectator that the card they will stop you should be a face down card and that once he or she does stop you, you'll lay the card down on top of your prediction.

As far as the actual forcing procedure is concerned, do it casually but with a sense of urgency. I usually deal three cards and then instruct the spectator to stop me as I deal the fourth. If you stay silent, the spectator will stop you right as you're dealing the seventh card, that is to say he or she will let you deal three or four cards and then feel the urge to stop you.

If they go past the seventh card, start second dealing, keeping the force card on top. This seldom happens since the stop force is very effective if done casually and with a sense of urgency. It may not feel like the

freest of procedures but the second phase will cancel this out method wise.

One way or another, leave the force card and the spectators stop you face down on top of the first prediction, the single red five. Remember to drop it softly instead of snapping it.

Last but not least, face the second spectator and instruct him or her to stop you as you keep dealing face up cards on top of the ones you dealt for the first phase. When the spectator calls out stop, offer him or her the chance to change. Once they settle on a card, you'll pretend to deal it on top of the second prediction. In reality, you'll retract the top card of the face down deck and come away with nothing as the right hand moves towards the tabled double and splits it. Though it may seem counter intuitive, the technique is most deceptive the slower you perform it and the farther the distance between the deck and the tabled double card.

All that is left to do is to drop the remainder of the deck face up on top of the discard pile and to split the prediction cards from the spectator's selections. Reveal the predictions first and then show that the selections match. Before you reveal the second one, remind the spectator whether or not he or she changed the card.

## Final Commentary

I first came up with this effect after studying the Paul Wilson Tabled Double laydown and watching Magick Balay perform a similar routine in which he uses two double cards instead of just one. Justin Miller also told me that the basic prediction effect using the splitting of a tabled double card actually belongs to Hippié Torrales.

My contribution to the plot and the reason why I chose to publish the effect has to do with the combination of a manipulative technique and a psychological force. It allows us to ask the second spectator if he or she wants to change the card stopped at. The use of a force and a switch makes the methods cancel each other out.

If for any reason (humidity, old cards, the spectators' line of sight, etc.) you feel unsure about the double card splitting, you can use a subtlety by Gabi Pareras and leave the card case on top of the double. Before fake dealing the second stopped at selection, use your right hand to snap the card case forwards, the cards won't split.

On a final note, I'd like to thank my friend Ignacio López for his valuable suggestions when I first showed him this effect. He was the one that pointed out the

sound discrepancy between the first phase and the second one.

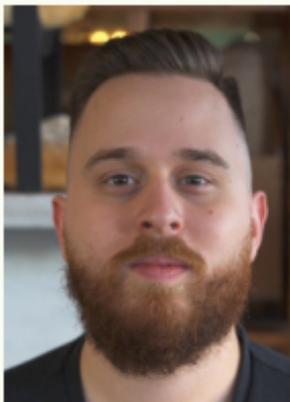
*Tomas Giammarco*

## Credits

“Wilson Tabled Double”, 2001, R. Paul Wilson, “Crash Course in Brain Surgery”, page 16.

Magic Ballay performed and explained his take on the routine at his Penguin Live Lecture.

“Torrales Bounce”, 1997, Hippié Torrales, “Trapdoor, Volume Number Three (Issue 63)”, page 1228.



### Bio Alan

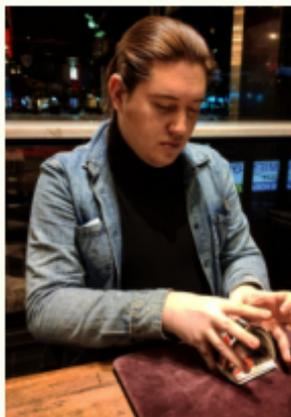
Alan Muickey is a cool mother-fucker. That's all you need to know about him.

At least that is what he wanted me to write about him.

Alan has a great mind for magic and for details. He is honest, skillful and has amazing concepts. I'm happy and proud to call you my friend, love you buddy!

### Bio Tomas

Tomas Giammarco is a card magician and a sleight of hand instructor from Buenos Aires. He's been studying and performing magic for over ten years, and has recently started giving specialised seminars teaching students from all over the country. At the moment he's working on the translation of his book "Variations" to the english language. He also hosts a weekly virtual magic show called [@demagiav-decerca](#).



### Bio Lucas

Lucas Biota, aka L.B, is a magician, pianist, choreographer and dancer from Argentina. Although he loves every aspect of the craft, he specialises in sleight of hand with cards, which led to winning the Argentinian National Award in Card Magic. Since then he's been giving lectures, workshops, seminars and private lessons, sharing his knowledge and experience of over 20 years in the field. You can find him at [@lucasbiota](#).



### Bio Alvaro

Alvaro is the Co-founder of Invisible-Practice, the home of the wonderful magazine you are reading.

He has won multiple national and international prizes such as the: Nordic Countries international award, the Second National Award for Card Magic in Spain and many more. Alvaro is currently spending his time working on his trilogy "The book" this starts with Chelsea that is soon to be released.

Alvaro is a wonderful thinker, creator and philosopher of magic and you can find out more about him right here: [@Alvaroberbel](#)





### Find Roberto At

- <https://mansilla.com/>
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## Bio Roberto

I'm Roberto Mansilla, I'm an illusionist and Social Communicator, and in some ways, everything I do is crossed by both disciplines. It is from there that I teach, I write books, I consult to professional magicians and fundamentally it is from there that I perform.

I consider myself a "militant of good magic". I do this because I need it and... I want it and when someone feels something good because of that, it means that we have established a connection. The feeling of that is incredible.

As an Illusionist I can't think in terms of "this can't be done" instead I begin with: "how can I build the way to make it possible". That's what I do, I create the impossible and make it fascinating.

For 25 years I have passionately dedicated myself to studying the mechanisms of the impossible and putting them into practice through my favourite tools: the deck and the word. From that place I perform and give conferences in different countries, I write in the most important specialised media, I work as a speaker and consultant for some companies and I advise professional illusionists from all over Latin America.

## Bio Mike

Michael Vincent is an UK based professional magician, teacher, student and pioneer.

Michael is one of the patrons of the classic school of magic and he will make you see the most wonderful things with just a deck of cards..

This man really needs no introduction, however, what some of you might not know is that Michael makes photographs that are just as beautiful as his magic. You will find a truly authentic expression in everything that Michael does.

To Follow Michael you can find him on instagram with [@michaelvincentmagic](https://www.instagram.com/michaelvincentmagic)



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