

Practice Magazine

• August Edition 2021



Welcome!

Welcome to the magazine have a look around!

Make some coffee or tea and I'm sure it will be sound!

Jokes Aside though, welcome to the august edition of our magazine!

In this month's issue we will be focusing on three different subjects, on the surface these subjects might not seem related. However, If you take a deeper look you will find that everything in magic and live is connected with each other.

First we will join Fritz in his virtual insanity, where he discusses how to bring

your magic to zoom. This is important because it helps you to see how you can reframe your magic for different situations.

Next Aljaz will discuss the dreaded and not so popular question of wether we should teach magic to lay-people (NO DON'T THEY ARE OUR SECRETS!). I think it's an important and intersting idea to even teach magic to non magicians, but more on that in Aljaz's

essay.

Finally Alvaro discusses the importance of good magic books and how to make the bookst aht you already own even better.

Have a good time guys and if you have any questions or comments feel free to contact us.

-Sincerly your editor.

Virtual Insanity

A still life composition featuring a laptop with a blank white screen, a large shallow wooden bowl, a vase with dried flowers, and a white ceramic pot, all set against a green background.

Fritz Alkemade

*"It's a wonder men can eat at all
When things are big that should be small
Who can tell what magic spells we'll be doing for us
And I'm giving all my love to this world"*

These are the opening lyrics of "[Virtual Insanity](#)" by Jamiroquai from 1996.

It's amazing how the four sentences above can be applied to virtual magic:

"Magicians transitioning from in-person to virtual performances to put bread on the table. In a virtual space where close-up magic plays big.

With help of technology to accommodate virtual magic shows.

So that magicians can

share their magic to the world."

Don't worry, this is not an essay on music theory. Rather it's sharing my experience and discuss a few topics regarding virtual magic. I'll touch upon three subjects: timing, choosing material, and audience participation.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

While performing alongside comedians at comedy nights, I learned a lot about timing. It inspired me to add beats after certain moments in my act. Comedians tend to pause before a punchline or pause to accentuate a comedy element. Or they implement a dramatic pause for the laughter to die out, so the comedians can continue with their next joke.

In the early stages of me performing virtually, there was a delay in the response of the audience. I was so used to getting applause during certain build-in moments that the silence sometimes threw me off. However, my comedian friends were struggling more virtually be-

cause they react based on the audience's feedback. So when there is no response from your audience, the comedian doesn't know if the joke worked or bombed. To fill in those build-in moments I used to have sound effects (e.g. applause, cheering, etc.), but I felt it did not work for me. In the morning I enjoy watching late-night shows with a cup of coffee. One of my inspirations is [Late Night with Seth Meyers](#). Seth delivered the jokes with a different timing when he had to do the show remotely. Now one could argue that the performance is too fast-paced, that the performance is not breathing. However, there is no audi-



Seth Meyer's hosting Late Night

ence response, so he cannot gauge how effective the joke is. Therefore, he quickly moves to the next joke while we show a grin or do a quick lol behind our screens.

I practically do the same; I open with a joke or a strange question, establish the plot of a trick, and transition into the magic. Once I've finished the

trick, then I give the audience a few beats to applaud and quickly transition into the next routine.

Seth is now back in an audience-less studio and performs for the crew. You get to how he quickly moves from joke to joke but also reacts to the crew. When Seth does react to laughter to the group, he takes his time and reacts

accordingly. If you have time I recommend watching Seth's "A Closer Look", anyone from April 2020 and a recent one to study the differences in timing.

FOR ZOOM, OR NOT FOR ZOOM? THAT IS THE QUESTION

When performing virtually, are you standing or sitting? This will influence choosing your performance material. When performing virtually I prefer to stand. During a few shows, I did use a table but my face was not in frame. This is something that bothered me, so I decided to make the magic happen in the same frame as my face.

Therefore, a lot of tricks that I normally don't work virtually. For example, I

tried cups and balls but the misdirection doesn't work due to the unblinking eye that is the camera. I've also seen chop cup performed. But that also doesn't work the way in in-person performances. Fumbling of the jacket, the ball is hard to see and the magic happens in a very secluded area on the screen.

So how does one decide which tricks to use in the virtual space? Here's what I did.

Instead of acquiring new magic for this environment, I decided to look in my repertoire and see what could work virtually. I had three requirements: it needed to be visual, it has to have possibilities for audience participation, and it has to be performed at chest height.

One of the effects I changed to the virtual space is a Triumph with a time presentation, called [“Just in Time 2.0”](#). By modifying it and using the conditions to my benefits this routine ticked all three boxes:

1) it’s visual because you can clearly see face-up and face-down cards mixed and magically straighten out
2) there’s audience participation; after the effect, everybody is asked to look at

the time on their electronic devices
3) the trick is executed at chest height; all the moves and sleights happen in the same frame as my face



Performing Virtual “just in time”

Another point on choosing material for your virtual show is that micro magic plays big in the virtual space. Tricks like Paul Gertner’s “Unshuffled” or Dan Harlan’s “Card Toon” can now fill up the whole screen and can be seen by hundreds of people simultaneously. Even the ending of your Ambitious Card; a tight close-up on that Braue Pop-Up Card is

highly visual.

Once you’re comfortable performing your virtual magic, try to explore new

ideas. What about forced perspective, anamorphic images, or optical illusions? They all work well within this format.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Most people that participate in virtual meetings are used to listening and watching passively. Their screen image remains static and emotionless. Here is where we magicians can make a difference to include audience participation in your act.

For me, there’s a scale of audience participation. On one side there is no audience interaction; the magician just performs for the camera. I’ve seen this many times (even taped performances of magicians) and it’s a missed op-

portunity when you do not use the virtual space to your advantage.

On the other side of the scale, there is full audience participation. They were sent a box with props to them by mail or they need to assemble the items themselves before the show. Then during the performance, the audience follows the instructions of the magician to make the magic happen on their side of the screen.

My favorite interactive routines are the touch-the-

screen effects, popularized by David Copperfield. It's one of the first things I added to my virtual repertoire. I consider these effects in the middle of the audience participation scale; the audience is actively involved but no props are needed. The challenge is to hide the procedure and add layers of deception to make it feel that the audience makes all the decisions.

Other modes of audience interaction are verbal, physical, or mental participation. Giving suggestions for your spirit animal, put their finger on their camera, or think of a number between 1 and 1000. All these interactions make sure that the screen images of the audience are dynamic and contain emotions.

SO WHAT'S NEXT?

That's a good question. Of course, I hope we can all go back soon to performing close-up magic for big groups at corporate functions. But until that time comes, I'll keep a few things in mind from what I learned performing virtual magic.

First, the magic should happen more at chest height with your face in frame. Performing virtually has shown me the importance of this and I'll do my best to implement this in my close-up magic. Second, the venue influences your material. This is true for the virtual

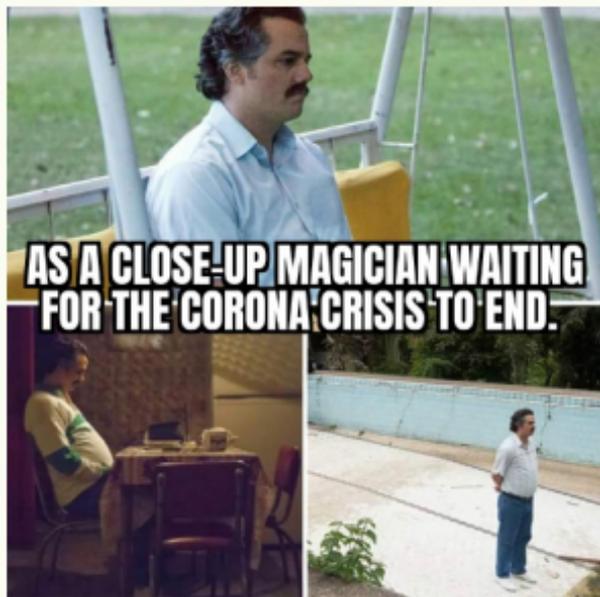


space. So for future in-person shows, I'll be more conscious of this. Finally, audience participation is the key to a successful magic show. Without an audience, magic simply cannot happen as the magic happens in the minds of the audience. I will try my best to vary the involvement of the audience with my magic. I wish you all the best with your in-person magic. And when doing virtual shows, good virtual sanity.

Fritz Alkemade

Further reading

- [Video Chat Magic](#) (2021) is a great [compilation](#) regarding performing [virtual magic](#).
- [Steve Martin on comedic timing](#).



A top-down view of various vintage items scattered on a dark wooden surface. In the upper left is a portable radio in a tan carrying case with a speaker grille and a tuning dial. To its right are several brass bullets and a spent shell casing. In the center is a black vintage camera with its lens open. To the right of the camera is a wooden rifle, a folding pocket knife with a yellow handle, and a black fountain pen. In the lower left is a glass of amber liquid, possibly whiskey, next to a leather-bound book or folder. In the lower right, several newspapers are visible, with headlines in Hungarian. The text 'Aljaz Son' is overlaid in the upper right, and a large orange script title is overlaid across the bottom.

Aljaz Son

Magic Up To The Critical Mass

Rádió-
1938. április 1

KATOLIK
ESTIN AN
A britanniások
VILÉ
Hozzájárulni SUPRA GIZA DE
ment az illetményadó végrehajtást
készültségben
közönségi csapatok
készül Izrael ellen

"Some day, however, we hope that even the man in the street will have learned the fact that so-called "secrets" are, to the magician, little more than are, to the actor, the wigs, grease-paints and other "make-ups" with which he prepares himself for appearance before the public. The art of the magician, like that of the actor, depends upon matters far higher than mere appliances and processes."

- Nevil Maskelyne & David Devant
(Our Magic, 1911 published by E.P. Dutton)

As you read the above quote, notice the publishing date and think about the fact that, 110 years have passed and the "man in the streets" is still not much more aware of the fact that the secrets are just the tools with which we can express ourselves and are more like having the ability to produce sounds out of a musical instrument, than some secret

technique of producing said sounds. One would argue that we are in an even worse state and that between 1911 and 2021 the populous is even more disillusioned by believing that indeed there is nothing else to magic and mystery but secrets, principles and procedures the audience is not aware of. The frightening reason why the majority of magi-

cians do not want laymen to know magic shops exist, is because they think these laymen will then "know" that everyone can perform magic. That cannot be further from the truth. Indeed, the industry seems to be pushing this same narrative with selling points like "Easy to do! Packs Small Plays Big!" and points along those lines. When the fact of the matter is... Magic, like any other skill and craft you want to take seriously and be good/effective at, takes a lot of time, practice and dedication. Now don't get me wrong, I am not against the magic market and its commercialization at all. Why would I be? After all, I do have a minuscule presence in it and would like the public to buy original material from me and the ma-

gicians that have decided to choose AllJazz Originals as their platform. The only thing I am questioning here is... why is magic being shared and taught almost exclusively on a commercial level? Why is magic, as a craft, art and science, not being shared through the school system? Or at least in the After School Activity programs like the one I have been lucky to be a part of in The European School of The Hague since 2018? I urge any and all magicians who are passionate about magic, are knowledgeable about the craft to a decent degree AND have a great desire to pass on their knowledge and experience in magic, to contact your local schools and see if they have an after school activity program. I will tell you my approach, maybe

this will work for you... if not, please find other ways to share magic with the community around you.

In 2015, I started contacting international school in The Hague, as my Dutch language skills are basic at best, twice a year. Once before the end of a school year and second time two weeks before the beginning of a new school year. My proposal was to start a Magic Club ASA program for different age groups and made a clear statement that while we are going to be learning fun magic tricks to practice and perform for family and friends, we are also going to take learning this craft seriously (with performances after each semester) and my goal is to teach the children a variety of skills that will bene-

fit them in life such as problem solving, emotional intelligence, public speaking, persistence in attaining a goal, understanding how our brains work in perceiving our realities, etc. After about 3 years, I got a call back from The ESH saying that one space opened up and off I went. The activity starter as a trial run with one group of 5 students and quickly grew to 6 groups in two different locations in the city (Primary and Secondary School) with a bit over 50 students. Unfortunately, the whole world shut down by then and we were all forced to get by online and my whole project diminished quite a bit as the real value was the physical interaction with the students.



Why am I telling you all this and why would anyone want the public at large to know at least the basics of magic and how much practice and dedication you have to give before seeing real results? Think about this... when you watch a great guitarist play and you have never played the guitar, you might be under the impression that it is easy to do as he is playing so effortlessly. However, most of us have been made aware through growing up into a person, that music is not easy to make. First of all you need some sort of talent and predispositions for music or a specific instrument AND then, as most of us know, you need YEARS of practice to be able to learn the basic tools of expressing yourself musically through the

instrument. Why is the public at large not aware of this about magic? Why most hobbyists, that represent a HUGE chunk of the magic market, think that you can just buy a bunch of magic props and just be a magician?

My proposal is simple. Let's start teaching magic to as many children and young adults as possible. Let them choose and have an option to learn that not everybody can be a magician and that it is not all about the secret and that once you know you have two choices... either be a magician (even if just a hobbyist) and treat it with respect and Practice, take it serious (but not too serious) OR you decide magic is not for you and from now on, you will enjoy a magicians performance by

letting go, being in the moment and forgetting everything you know about magic. Eventually you will, but the respect of knowing will hopefully stay with you.

"That's just it! At first we aren't sure. According to the Manuscript, we are beginning to glimpse an alternative kind of experience... Could this ancient document be correct? Have we been slowly building, in spite of our denial and cynicism, a Critical Mass of people conscious of these...?"

- A quote from a fictional novel by James Redfield (1997, published by Grand Central Publishing)

ALJAZSON

A photograph of a library aisle. The shelves are filled with books, and the lighting is warm and soft, coming from hanging pendant lights. The text "Good magic books" is overlaid in a white, elegant script font.

Good magic books

AL Berbel

It is said that when you read a good magic book, you are reading the book in question and the books the author read. I like to think that it is so.

Throughout my career as an illusionist (especially in these last years in which I am immersed in study and research), I have realized that I value very positively finding works that are well written and that include all possible references around the subject to be discussed. This passion for references - almost a fetish - is due to the fact that it has been very useful for me to find clues that help me follow a line of investigation. I still remember the mixture of satisfaction and emotion that I felt reading "Sonata" or "Symphony in Mnemonic Major" by Juan Tama-

riz; Those books were full of references, ideas, footnotes, stories about creative processes ... those books made me see magical literature in a different way.

Over time I began to do something that was a huge job but that helped me a lot to organize ideas and knowledge and that, over time, I have found very useful for teaching. I began to reread and write in pencil in the margins of those books in which I knew that they were missing references or that they were simply misquoted. It is true that the process was slow at first and that it forced me to spend a lot of my life on a task that seemed to have no results. However, as I reread the books with the annotations, I realized that

the ideas were organized and made sense as I progressed. I realized that reading the book "Stars of Magic" with my notes had become an act of love and truth. Reading Vernon's travelers knowing that "the palm of the top card in the left hand" was not from Vernon, nor was it from Hugard or Braue, but from Professor Morris Loewy, it made me understand that the connection had to be older than "the travelers" for the type of grip of the deck. I realized that this connection came from some typical grips of parlor/stand-up card magic, since it was an old card magic in which decks were used without indexes and forced the magician to always have the decks at the tips of the fingers.

I also realized the immense number of exam-

ples in magical literature of what my friend Eduardo Coffman calls "authorship by omission." The default authorship consists of not saying that the idea is yours but also not mentioning the real author, so the reader understands that the idea belongs to the person who published it. Marlo, is an author who greatly benefited from the use of this practice.

I really enjoyed discovering stories like "Hofzinger's top change" by Larry Jennings, who, due to a mistake in the interpretation of a movement, named one of David Williamson's favorite techniques. From Larry Jennings, I also discovered the most jealous side of him regarding his ideas, his apparent conflict with

Marlo for the “theft” of the “convincing control” idea; anecdote that Richard Kaufman tells and clarifies in the book “Jennings ‘67”. Another detail that Kaufman tells is the relationship that “The Professor”, Dai Vernon, had with his disciples Jennings and Cervon, and the rivalry of the latter two.

I could go on mentioning examples and stories, such as those referring to the “invisible pass” and “Herrman's pass”, or “Tamariz turnover” of Tamariz ... or Bruce ... or both ... The examples are infinite. My claim with this allegation is none other than to convey the need to be honest in the texts and to do a good job of references to facilitate the work of “bookish” and researchers and to honor the memory

of those who preceded us. A book with good annotations, citations, and a coherent text can only benefit the author. Many magicians think that the more “original” ideas they publish, the better their book will be; I think that the more careful, worked and honest the text is, the better. We never know who will read our book and the impact it will have on our readers, for that reason we should give them the necessary tools so that they can go to the original publications if they wish. I still remember when I read the lecture notes “Reflections” by Helder Guimaraes and write down each and every one of the books that he cited and look for the titles in all the magic shops in search of the ideas, pieces, and techniques that he had



mentioned. In addition, I remember that it was a turning point in my magic education since I understood that Helder brought together qualities and knowledge channeled and acquired through the works of Tamariz, Ascanio, Vernon, and Giobbi, combined with an aesthetic and scenic concern typical of Carroll and Hofzinsler. Without those wonderful references, without those annotations, who knows if I would have written an essay like this today.

A friend once told me that magicians claim ego authorship and that it only helps fuel a competitive attitude that does not benefit the wizarding community. I refuted this idea by saying that I would not care to replace the author's

name with a serial number, but that I would like to continue to know the origin of these ideas. Also, in other guilds, even in science, authorship is as important or more as the idea itself because it helped to better understand the idea itself. Knowing the origin of things not only dignifies the individual, but also the discipline.

Finally, I would like to share a couple of ideas that I have developed over the years that I think may be useful to those who want to publish a work and want to do a good job of references:

* Use a database like "Conjuring Archive" by Denis Behr.

* Ask magicians who know more than you and who have a good library.

* Ask different people to review the content of the work. Of course, writing and grammar and spelling check are necessary, but also one regarding the contents. It is necessary that different people, from outside, without emotional involvement with the work, assess said content and the treatment given before the publication of the work.

* If you do not know the origin of an idea or technique, and you cannot find a way to give a clear reference, leave said "lack" in writing. It is enough to give information about what you know about this technique, "I learned it from such a magician", "I

saw it in a performance by a magician but neither of us knows the origin", "I don't remember if I read it or they taught it to me"... As time goes by you will realize that it is a victory. Surely someone reads the book and knows the origin of this idea and will contact you to share the reference. That day, you will have learned something new.

* Leave contact information so that readers can contact you, it is the only way that someone, one day, will tell you "this idea can be read in such a book".

* If you are not sure of a reference then describe from whom you learned it or where you read it but do not grant solemn authorship.

* When you share an idea of your own, try to use a language that implies that it is a solution that you have reached and that it is known that you are the architect, but do not proclaim yourself as the sole "owner and lord" of said idea. It is possible that someone has already come up with the same solution or that the idea is so small and insignificant that it is ridiculous to beg for authorship.

* Avoid names that steal the essence of a technique; I explain. It is very common to read books in which techniques are mentioned with pompous names that, in many cases, do not even refer to the movement itself. And it turns out that when reading the movement, the technique turns out to be a

reinterpretation of "the Elmsley count" or "the palm", for example. In those cases, it is better to call the technique by its name and then add the surnames. For example: "the Elmsley count", "Tamariz's Perpendicular Control", "Stuart Gordon's turnover"...

I could go on mentioning more guidelines in this regard but I think that with the ones mentioned above there is more than enough. I hope that these reflections encourage readers to care more about the authorship and origin of the content that is shared in magic books, and in this way help them to continue learning and growing as magicians.

Meanwhile, I will continue working and re-

searching, in this case, on the translation of my book "Chelsea", the first volume of the trilogy "The

Book", and on the writing of the second volume, which will surely take me a couple of years.

Al Berbel



Bio Fritz

Fritz with a Z is a professional comedy magician in the Amsterdam area in the Netherlands. The busiest Dutch magician on Zoom and currently the only Dutch magician to have performed on all continents. Fritz has performed at the Magic Circle and the Magic Castle. His magic effects have appeared in magazines, such as MAGIC, GENII, and Vanish. Furthermore, Fritz released several lecture notes and instructional DVDs. You can find Fritz on Instagram (@fritzwithaz) where you can message him about his magic products. His essay on improv first appeared in his 2020 lecture notes.

Bio Aljaz

Aljaz is a world renowned Magic performer, inventor and author with over 10 years of professional experience. His mission is bringing ASTONISHMENT back to everyday lives of as many people as possible. Astonishment and Wonder are catalysts for human CURIOUSITY, so Aljaz uses them to engage his audience in critical thinking. At the same time he likes to have a lot of fun and brings PASSION for Life and Magic to every event where he performs. You can find aljaz at www.aljazson.com

Where you can also get a nice discount for Rico Weelands project with Coupon code: **GVRETQ5P**



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](https://www.instagram.com/Alvaroberbel)



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With Invisible Practice we are trying to create a community of dedicated magician who care about magic.

We are about to discover a new way of magic together and at the same time we are discovering what made the old way of magic so good.

Where is magic going? What should magic be? What inspires us to keep going and create amazing magic?

Honestly, we don't know. We only think that we know we

know, but we don't really.

However, this is a goal that we can discover together.

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