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ALAIN IANNONE

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MAGIC AROUND THE WORLD

By Rachel Strnad

His slogan is “Class and Magic.” He performs in business-casual black. He puts wonder in people’s hands. Alain Iannone has been a self-taught magician for over twenty years, performing in restaurants, casinos, on television, and in venues throughout Europe. He has contributed to publications such as *Qui Magia*, *The Linking Ring*, and *Genii*. His conference series is much sought after by those interested in close-up magic, as well as the philosophy behind magic performance.

Born in Milan, Italy, in 1968, Alain spent his youth in Rome and Nice, France. When he was seven, a friend shared a magic kit he’d received for his birthday. Alain liked it so much that he asked his parents for one for Christmas. Thus, the seeds were planted for what would later become his life passion. When he turned twelve, another friend introduced him to his brother who was studying magic, who in turn introduced Alain to the local magic club – and his passion fully bloomed.

Although he began studying all branches of the art, from the beginning he was drawn particularly to mentalism and close-up magic with a focus on audience

participation. “I’ve always been fascinated by the fact that people are so amazed when the magic happens in their hands under their noses.” He began reading magic books. Alain studied these so thoroughly that he has come to look on their authors as friends, even though he hasn’t met most of them. Through frequent visits to his local magic shops and clubs, he also began to meet and share ideas with fellow magicians. Soon, he developed his own philosophy of magic, as well as a uniquely elegant and minimalist style.

In 1989, he joined his local I.B.M. Ring as well as Club Magico Italiano (C.M.I.) as a way to connect with other magi-



PHOTO BY MARCO SCICHLONE

cians. "Being a member of a magic club was the only way to be connected to the magic world," he said. "There was no Internet."

In the same year that he joined the I.B.M., he entered the IV Congress' regional competition in Rome, hosted by the Italian Magic Club (C.M.I.) and walked away with the first prize. Afterward, an agent approached him about performing publicly, and thus began a ten-year stint of nightly close-up performances in restaurants. He continues to perform in this venue, though not as regularly, making this the longest-running part of his magic career.

During the day, he worked as a salesman in an airport duty-free area, then as a hotel concierge. For some years, he also sold magic supplies, both retail and wholesale, though he never considered himself a good salesman.

Meanwhile, he continued to enter magic contests as he refined his act. His first international competition was on the French Riviera, where he took second place. The next year, he took fourth place, and the Colombe d'Or hired him to lecture on restaurant magic for their convention and to perform for their gala at the Eden Casino.

It wasn't until 1994 that he decided to make the leap and turn what was once

PHOTO BY MARCO SCICHLONE



just something he did for the joy of it into a full-time career. Alain worked his way up to performing about forty shows a month, making connections throughout the magic world and building relationships. One such connection was Tony Binarelli, editor of *Qui Magia*, who invited Alain to write some articles for the publication. They were so well received that some of his effects made it into *Genii*. Binarelli decided to plan a lecture tour for the twenty-one-year-old Alain to share his ideas and experience in restaurant magic with a wider audience. One difficulty of lecturers is that often the ideas are more theoretical than practical. “This is not the case of Alain Iannone,” said Binarelli.

Alain has shared his knowledge and expertise with colleagues all over Italy – from Milan, to Rome, to Naples. He has spoken in The Magic Circles of Geneva, Paris, London, Los Angeles, and many others. “I love to share my magic and my point of view with other magicians,” he said, “because the cross-pollination of different points of view is the only way to grow.” Alain’s elegant performance techniques, coupled with theories derived from real-world work experience, make his lectures highly sought after. What began as a one-lecture tour has grown into four separate workshops.

Each workshop is split into two parts: demonstration and explanation of his



Alain lectures at The Magic Circle (London).

magic effects, and discussion of his philosophy. “The most important part of a lecture is to understand not the ‘how you do,’ but the ‘why you do’ that: the philosophy behind the magic, the theory of the actions, and so on.”

His first lecture, *Restaurant Magic*, covers specific effects that are adaptable to most any venue. The theoretical section discusses his Ten Commandments of



Left: Alain’s 2009 lecture in Turin. Right: Performing at Club Magico Italiano in Rome, 2009.

Working in Restaurants, which include subjects such as choice of effects for specific venues, what position one takes at a table, relationships with patrons, relationships with the management, and possible difficulties of working in restaurants.

Some years after creating this lecture, he added *Impromptu Magic*, which explores the constant demand on a magician to perform. The lectures cover both the dynamics of requests from those interested in magic, and practical tools and effects that will amaze any audience at any moment in any place.

His third lecture, *Silvan vs. Harry Potter*, is possibly his most theoretical lecture series, exploring the contrast between an audience's image and expectations of a magician and what magicians actually do.

His fourth lecture harkens back to one of the reasons he was drawn to mentalism and close-up magic: the deeply personal connection a performer can make with his audience. "From my point of view, close-up magic and mentalism are the best ways to share emotions and feelings with people," he said. This lecture explores ways to incite deep emotions in one's audience.



Clockwise from top: 1996 publicity photo. First professional photo shoot, 1990, after winning first place in a magic competition in Rome. Monte Carlo, 1999.



Above: On stage at the Colombe D'or magic convention organized by Ring 350 in 2011. Right: A comedic moment at The Magic Circle (London), December 2016.

Alain has not only performed live but also appeared on various Italian television shows. He has been a guest on *Serata d'Onore*, hosted by Pippo Baudo, and *Unomattina Estate* with Amedeo Gloria. He also made an appearance on the twelfth episode of *Masters of Magic*, where he performed a variation on the classic Pick-a-Card effect involving a paper bag and a butterfly knife. "I was scared," Alain remembered, "because they told me 'you must do your act in four minutes.' But I did." Alain also played an imprisoned pocket magician for an Italian anthology show, but after the star's character met with a mortal accident, the story changed so most of his scenes were cut.

Over the past decade, Alain has branched out from close-up performances. By 2007 he finally indulged his love of mentalism by developing his own show. Mentalism, like close-up magic, requires limited props and can be adapted to any



Alain's 2016 appearance at the Magic Castle.



stage size. However, unlike the "wiz-bang" wonder of close-up magic, mentalism taps an entirely different human desire: the desire to touch the ethereal. In a paradoxically simple yet complex act, Alain's mind-reading show gives audiences a glimpse into "real magic." He is also exploring the philosophical end of mentalism for a fifth lecture series, though his ideas are not yet ready to share with the public.

In the last few years, Alain also fell into working as Master of Ceremonies. "Some magician friends and an organizer found me original and funny on stage," he said. He began as the M.C. for the forty-fourth French Magic Convention's opening and closing galas at the Paris Disneyland resort and found he enjoyed it. The audience seemed to enjoy his funny personality as well. He has since been the M.C. twice for Colombe d'Or, twice for the International Congress of Italian Magic's opening dinner in Abano Terme, and once for the Italian gala at the 2016 4F Convention in Buffalo, New York.

Amidst all these experiences, there are two that stand out to him most. Last year, Alain was invited to perform close-up magic for a week at the Magic Castle in



Los Angeles and to give a lecture to members of the club the following Sunday. He described it as an “unforgettable experience that I recommend to every magician. We have terrible audiences [in Rome]! U.S. spectators are more quiet and inclined to have fun. The Magic Castle is the best place to perform for any magician. I hope to go there again as soon as possible.”

The other great souvenir in Alain’s memory is his time at the Princess Grace Theater in Monte Carlo during his 1999 European lecture tour. Prince Rainier and the royal family love international events, such as the Monte Carlo Grand



Slovenian national magic conference, 2016.



Above: Lecturing in Slovenia, November 2016. Left: 2005 publicity photo for Alain’s mind reading act.

Prix and the Monte Carlo Circus. For the past twenty years, they have hosted the International Magic Festival, now known as the Monte Carlo Magic Stars. Alain was invited to participate, performing close-up magic in the Princess Grace Theater every night of the festival. “I was with Kevin James, Scott and Miss Muriel, Jorge Blass, and many others. A magical experience.”

Alain Iannone currently lives in Rome. He performs between eighty to a hundred shows a year, mostly for the public. He continues to offer close-up magic as a table-hopping act for events such as weddings, soirees, and corporate conventions. Although he has done some cold tarot reading and mentalism effects as part of a close-up performance, most of his mentalist act is in his mind-reading show. The show is billed as a flexible act that can be adapted to fit any stage size from an auditorium to a small parlor setting. Alain’s multi-language fluency allows him to perform all his acts in either Italian, English, or French. A smaller portion of his time is spent doing “magic for magicians” – shows at magic conventions, lectures, workshops, and lessons.

His advice to young and aspiring magicians? “Study! Books and good videos. Rehearse a lot. Find, as soon as possible, your personal style and character, and be original.” Alain can be found online at his website, www.alainiannone.com, where he posts news and videos for his upcoming events. He can also be reached through e-mail at info@alainiannone.com.