



# The Flash Paper

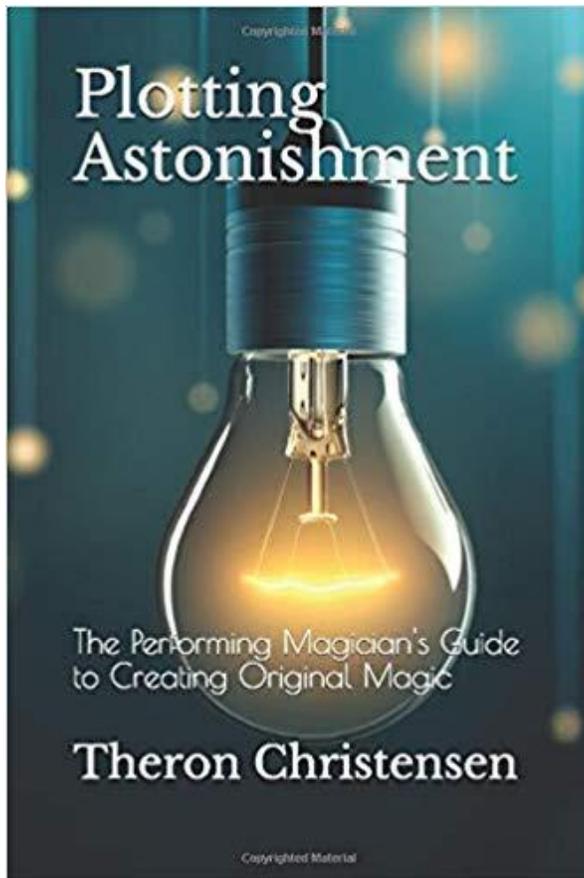
February, 2020

Bob Gehringer, Editor



## Presidential Ponderings

Our own member, **Theron Christensen's** first book *Plotting Astonishment* has just been published and is now available on Amazon. It was good for me to read it. I plan to read it again. I believe the insights he shares has the power to raise your own performances to yet another level. With his permission, I share a portion of the book's introduction with you.



## Introduction: The Effect

*"To produce a magical effect, of original conception, is a work of high art."* --Nevil Maskelyne

Dear reader, I hold my breath as you turn the pages of this book for the first time. I was hesitant to add this work to the vast cacophony of magic literature. I am not well-known among magicians, nor do I pretend to be any sort of expert; and to publish your knowledge and opinion is to invite the scorn and rebuttal of many. But too many of my close friends and the nudge of my conscience have pushed me to produce the work which you hold in your hands. To start out, I would like to explain my intentions.

When Maskelyne and Devant published *Our Magic* in 1911, they urged magicians to recognize the importance of being original in magic. "Without originality," they said, "no man can become a great artist." Their efforts paid off. Today, magicians almost universally accept the importance of originality.

Just as Maskelyne observed over one hundred years ago, magicians tend to seek after originality in one of three ways. Some magicians invest their creative energy in engineering more intricate and deceptive *methods* for magic. Others devote their imagination to authoring unique and engaging *presentations* for magic. But this book focuses on the third, far more fundamental and difficult pursuit of making the magic itself creative and original.

The goal of this book is to help you create original magical *effects*. But to fully understand the mission of this book, I need to offer a few definitions to guide our discussion. Modern magicians, for instance, use the term "effect" with unpredictable and subjective meanings, which makes it difficult to discuss the topic in depth. For the purposes of this book, I consider the effect to mean **the most basic elements of a piece of magic as**

**experienced by the audience.** Sometimes magicians will prefer calling the effect the “plot” of the trick, the trick’s “concept,” or the magical “phenomenon,” but we are referring to the same thing.

Creating original magical effects will require you to drive a conceptual wedge between an *effect* and the *method* used to accomplish it. Recognize that causing a signed bill to appear in a lemon is the same effect regardless of whether you use a thumb tip, a gimmicked knife, or a secret assistant to get the money in the fruit. Of course, some methods are more *deceptive* than others, and, as we will later explore, some methods allow the performer to more clearly convey her intended effect, but do not fall into the trap of believing that creating an original method implies that you have also created an original effect.

You should also drive a conceptual wedge between a magical *effect* and its *presentation*. Presentation encompasses any scripting, staging, audience interaction, or storytelling that accompanies the magic you perform. An effect, on the other hand, can almost always be expressed in one sentence or less. Here are a few examples: “plucking dollar bills out of the sky,” “magically perceiving where in the audience someone has hidden a sewing needle,” or “walking through a spider web without damaging it—like Dracula.” If you find yourself describing an effect with more than one sentence, you are probably describing a presentation and not an effect.

Finally, it is imperative to understand what I mean by an *original* effect. As I hope to emphasize throughout this book, I believe that for a magical effect to be considered *original* it requires two complementary and counterbalancing characteristics: **novelty and meaning**, both of which I will explain in more detail later on.

*Part I* encourages you to formulate a unique perspective and understanding of what constitutes magic. This, in turn, will act as a compass as you set out to create original magic. *Part II* discusses the first element of originality (novelty). *Part III* introduces the inspiration problem (the difficulty of generating ideas for original effects), discusses the second element of originality (meaning), and offers five exercises to help you stimulate your own ideas for novel and meaningful effects. *Part IV* will briefly discuss the process of developing a method for your new magic. Lastly, *Part*

*V* discloses a few of my own effects, which I hope you will find both novel and meaningful.

So, this book is about creating original magic; but this book serves another purpose, too. After I had completed the first draft, I realized that much of the advice I offer for thinking up original magic is also sound advice for selecting material more generally. In other words, even if you have no interest in creating original magic, I believe you will still find this book valuable for selecting which published and marketed effects to add to your personal repertoire of mysteries.

Regardless of your individual intentions, I hope that your journey towards magical achievement will be accelerated because of your willingness to read a book.

## Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>

You're invited to a book release party for ***Plotting Astonishment*** by club member **Theron Christensen** along with his lecture and Q & A on the book's content.



OMS President **Dave Arch** will host the evening at his house ([2161 Broadwater Drive in Papillion](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2161+Broadwater+Drive+in+Papillion,+NE+68132/@42.86875,-100.015,15z)) from 6-9 PM. Cost is \$10 for OMS members and \$15 for non-members.



## February - David Stone

I feel as if it has been forever since we had our last meeting back in December! Due to the weather our January meeting was canceled, but we were able to kick off the year with a wonderful lecture by **David Stone**. **David Stone** is a famous French Magician who has done it all. He was the resident magician at the Eifel Tower Restaurant for many years, has competed in FISM, has toured all over the world performing and lecturing, and has been on several television shows displaying his skills. His quirky style and off-the-cuff humor made his lecture one of my favorites I have seen.

All of **David's** material was very well performed and easy to do. A huge thank you goes out to OMS member **Doug Taylor** who was kind enough to host our lecture at his business as the church was unavailable.



Jered applauds as yet another bottle appears.



Neil is amazed when his ring is found inside a tennis ball.



## Mentalism and Mental Magic

We will be kicking off this year's set of meetings with our February get together with one of my all-time favorite topics. We will be exploring the world of

Mentalism and Mental Magic. After a brief welcome and some OMS business, I will have a few discussion topics I would like to bring up with the group that pertains to mentalism, **Steve Nespor** will be sharing his thoughts on performing mentalism for children and has a routine that fits perfectly into that challenge, and I will be sharing a routine directly from one of my favorite mentalism books. We will, of course, be opening the floor for anyone wanting to perform a piece of magic as well. There will be plenty of time after the meeting to work on some of your close-up magic and jam with the other magicians, so bring your cards, coins, or whatever else you want to play around with. As always, a small group of us will go out to eat afterwards for further discussion and jamming and everyone is invited that would like to join. Can't wait to see you there! If you do want to perform at the meeting, please let **Dave Arch** or myself know ahead of time, so we can make sure to set aside some time for you to do so.



This January I decided to visit a relative of mine that I had never met before. Timing worked out perfectly for my trip. I flew into Cleveland, Ohio on Monday to visit my great Uncle Bernum for a few days and saw many of the sights throughout Cleveland. I visited the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, found as many of the Cleveland landmark signs as I could, toured through the theater district with the world's largest chandelier, visited the house and set for A Christmas Story and got to hear stories from my Great Uncle's life and times as an inventor and a WWII vet. After my trip to Cleveland I took a bus to Columbus Thursday afternoon. Every year



approximately one thousand magicians come to **Columbus, Ohio** to attend America's oldest and longest running magic convention, **Magifest!** This year was my first time attending this action packed 3-day event. Vanishing Inc. owners, **Joshua Jay** and **Andi Gladwin**, have put together several magic conventions over the years but took over **Magifest** about 10 years ago as attendance was starting to dwindle. They have slowly grown this convention from a dying get together to one of the most talked about and exciting conventions around. The convention is known for its jam sessions, non-stop magic, celebrity lecturers, and giant dealer's room. We enjoyed lectures and performances by **Peter Clifford, Avner the Eccentric, Chris Capehart, Karl Hein, Wolfgang Moser, David Stone, Morgan & West, Ben Hart, Dani Daortiz**, and the guest of honor **David Williamson**. This heavy hitting line up did not disappoint. One of my all-time favorite magicians is **David Williamson**, and it was a true pleasure to get to see him perform, lecture, and jam with him in the hallway. All of the lecturers, well known or not, were more than willing to sit with any of the attendees and talk magic. On the last day of the convention they offered a discount if you booked your ticket for next year, I enjoyed the convention so much that I decided to jump on the deal. If you have never been, I highly recommend it... Maybe I will see you there! – **David Fox**



Members of **S.Y.M. #144** did such a great job performing their annual show in December that we've decided to make things a little more challenging for them. Denny and I are teaching them the classic "Professor's Nightmare", a trick that should be in every magician's toolbox. We're hoping that they learn that through skill and practice, they can perform a minor miracle with just three ordinary ropes.

We also talked to the members and asked what they'd like to learn in the coming year. The answers were wide-ranging. Everything from card tricks to stage illusions. Denny and I are going to try our best to deliver a well-rounded curriculum for 2020. Some of what we teach will be easy, some will be challenging, but it's all going to be fun! - **Jeff Sikora**



## OMS Junior Magicians

by **Steve Nespor**

Last month our OMS President, **Dave Arch**, spoke of fostering enthusiastic mentoring between adults and interested young people and announced that the board had designated 2020 as "**The Year of Youth.**" To that end, we expanded our youth offerings so that we now offer weekly magic classes for those ages 7-17. In addition to the **SYM** meetings that have taken place on the first and third Monday nights of the month, now on the second and fourth Monday nights we have the **OMS Junior Magicians** using the Discover Magic™ program which was designed by acclaimed magic teacher, **Michael Ammar** for children. This comprehensive four-year program brings a student through three levels of performance proficiency and then into a mentoring relationship with a younger student. I am pleased to say that **Steve Lindeman, Amjad Alawimari, and Patrice Fisher** will be joining me to help with this exciting new group.



The **OMS Junior Magicians** is separate from the **SYM**, and they are under the guidance of the OMS Board. The two groups will have some shared students, but now youth can come on any given Monday night to learn some great magic. Also new this year, whenever there's a fifth Monday night in a month, we will be hosting **Learning Magic Tricks with Families** where entire families can come together to learn magic tricks. This is a great opportunity for our members to invite family members who might be too young to join the other groups to come experience magic and learn alongside parents. That inaugural session will be March 30, but more on that next month. Looking forward to the coming year. If you know of a young person that might be interested in learning magic, be sure to let us know so we can reach out to them and send them an invitation to join us.



## What's Your Magic?

by

**Patrice Fisher**

So, who is this month's interviewee? **Mr. Who**, that's who! He is very recognizable for his gilded vest, bow tie and fedora, and, of course, his inviting smile.

Mr. Who's first name is **Amjad**. He was born in Oman, an Arab country along the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Its closest neighbors are the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Oman is an absolute monarchy with many restrictions, which include prohibiting the practice of magic tricks in public. However, Amjad's grandfather was quite the trickster in the privacy of their home. He amazed his young grandson by placing three grains of rice in his mouth and magically turning them into a mouthful of rice! **Amjad** was hooked, and to this day attributes his magic practice to his beloved grandfather. For **Amjad Alawimari**, "magic was the art of happiness."



In essence, magic was freedom, and in order to study it as well as attend university, **Amjad** had to leave his country. He was allowed to study in the U.S. but had no idea where to go in this vast country of ours. So, he put a map of the U.S. on the table, closed his eyes, and let his pointed finger land where it may. His finger landed

directly on Omaha. Maybe this was some kind of fate that he was from Oman and would be moving to Omaha? Thus, at 18 years of age, **Amjad** gained entrance to UNO to study architectural engineering.



In addition to **Amjad's** classes, his practice of magic flourished. One night while exploring the Old Market, **Amjad** met **Ryan Chandler, the Old Market Magician**, who has become a friend and mentor.

The **Mr. Who** persona was born out of great respect for old school magicians, and his name is from his favorite show, Dr. Who. Actually, **Mr. Who** is more than just a persona, but as **Amjad** explained to me, "Magic is in my soul and **Mr. Who** is not merely a character, but part of my soul." As a student of architectural engineering, Amjad is constantly the architect of new and original tricks using cards, food, and other props for his sleight of hand. In fact, in 2019, he and another magician, **Shayden Olson**, won our annual **War of the Wizards** competition!

Perhaps I buried the lead in the article because **Amjad** is not only a relatively new and active member of OMS, but he is our new 2020 Sergeant-at-Arms. Please congratulate this young magician, **Mr. Who**, when you see him next. I guarantee you will enjoy his company.



## New York City

One of my best friends in magic (**Clint Runge**) and I had been planning an extended weekend trip to Chicago for several months.

The main goal of our trip was

to spend a magical night at the Chicago Magic Lounge and geek out over some magic. While there we wanted to visit some magic shops and explore the city, and maybe even find some occult type stores (because why not). We wanted the total magical experience. Time was approaching for us to book our flights and make final plans when an idea hit me. I told Clint that the Chicago Magic Lounge will be there for several more years, but there is something that we both would enjoy going to that won't be around much longer. **Derren Brown** was on Broadway starring in his show "Secrets" and it was going to close at the end of December. So I proposed that we postpone our trip to Chicago, spend some extra money, and go to NYC to see **Derren** in mid-November! We are both huge fans of mentalism and massive fans of **Derren**, so the stars aligned, and we booked our 3-day trip.

**Day 1** - I was on my own in the city. I flew into New Jersey and took the NJ transit into Penn Station. On the train I decided that I had made it in time to book a ticket to the notorious Off-Broadway Show "**Monday Night Magic**". After arriving at Penn Station, I walked a few blocks to my hotel, dropped off my luggage, and took off to walk around the city before seeing the show. I lived in NYC for several years (about 8 years ago) and had to reacquaint myself with my favorite areas in town. After a nice dinner on my own I found my way to the theater in Greenwich Village. I walked into the theater, scanned my ticket from my phone, and then received a very unexpected surprise. The gentleman that was running lights and sound for the show was an old theater friend from Kearney, NE! **Spencer Wolfe** and I chatted and caught up before the show. Monday Night Magic is a cabaret based magic show with a variety of performers taking the stage to perform their routines. The second half of the show is primarily performed by that night's headliner, who takes the stage for about 45 minutes.

After the performance, Spencer invited me out to a diner where all of the magicians go after the show for dessert. I graciously accepted and attended the little get together. After a long evening with magicians jamming to the odd hours of the morning and some amazing discussion, I was offered a ride back to my hotel by none other than **Ken Weber**, the author of **Maximum Entertainment**. We hit it off and he gave me a copy of his newest publication, Maximum Entertainment 2.0. After getting back to the hotel, I hit the bed hard and crashed immediately!



**Day 2** - I woke up and headed off for an early lunch at my all-time favorite burger place, ShakeShack. Clint was to get into the hotel at 11:30, so I met him there. "Secrets" started at 7:30, so we had about 5 hours to explore before dinner and a show. We visited the main three brick-and-mortar magic shops in NYC; **Abracadabra**, **Fantasma Magic**, and my favorite **Tannen's**. Abracadabra had a small magic section inside but was mostly filled with costumes and Halloween props. **Fantasma Magic** is not only a magic shop, but a wonderful **Houdini Museum** filled with artifacts and props used by Houdini himself. Tannen's is a great little magic shop with a modern twist, they had two or three people behind the counter demonstrating tricks and selling magic. They were all very knowledgeable and had a great selection of books. I walked away with a slightly lighter wallet and more pages to add to my ever-growing magic library.



That night we attended **Derren Brown's** fantastic show, which was a compilation of all his previous shows that he had done in the West End in London. The show truly made the entire trip worth it. After the show, we headed to a bar across from the theater to have a drink and discuss the show. After Clint and I talked our way through the entire show, in walks **Derren** and his director and best friend in magic, **Andy Nieman**. They took over a table in the corner to chat in the basically deserted bar. When we finally decided to retire back to our hotel, I had to go over and pay Derren and Andy my compliments on their show and their contributions to our artform and take a photo with both of them.



David, Derren Brown & Andy Nieman

**Day 3** - Our flight home took off at around 2:00, so we had just enough time to go check out one last “magical thing” in the morning... So, we decided to check out the KGB Spy Museum. We saw all sorts of gizmos and gadgets that the “real” slight-of-hand artist have used to alter the course of history. From secret compartments in shoes, to cyanide capsule teeth, to risen poisoning umbrellas the museum did not disappoint. We concluded our trip after the museum, heading directly to the airport.

This was one of the most jam-packed trips I have ever taken and have many more detailed stories from the trip that couldn't fit into this little retelling of my journey. I look forward to my next magical and whimsical trip with close friends in the future. I am already looking forward to a trip to Chicago to visit the Chicago Magic lounge, Magic Island will be opening before too long in Texas... and FISM is going to be in North America next year. If finances and work permits, I am sure I will be writing you all again to tell you of another fantastic journey soon! - **David Fox**



In keeping with best practices for our organization's soon-to-be non-profit (501C3) status, the OMS board is recommending several amendments to our club's constitution at our regular monthly meeting on Monday, February 17th. OMS members will then vote on adopting the amendments at our March regular monthly meeting on Monday, March 16th.

### 2020 OMS Officers

- President** – Dave Arch .....([dave@sandler.com](mailto:dave@sandler.com))
- Vice President** – David Fox.....([Dfox1902@gmail.com](mailto:Dfox1902@gmail.com))
- Treasurer** – Bob Gehringer.....([gehringerr@cox.net](mailto:gehringerr@cox.net))
- Secretary** – Steve Nesor .....([omahamagician55@gmail.com](mailto:omahamagician55@gmail.com))
- Sgt.-at-Arms** – Amjad Alawimari .....([mrwho.magic@gmail.com](mailto:mrwho.magic@gmail.com))



Plans are already in the works for the OMS first annual **Pete Petrashek Stage Competition in early 2021** with three audition times to be scheduled yet in 2020. We are now searching the Omaha area for a theater in which to hold the competition. We would like a full stage with curtains and lighting as well as raked seating for the audience. I don't suppose you'd know of a place? If so, please let our **President Dave Arch** know of your thoughts.

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