

Roberto Giobbi's Secret Newsletter 4

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The Roberto Giobbi Secret Newsletter # 4

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Roberto Giobbi's Secret Newsletter



Secret Newsletter #4

Buongiorno a tutti (Italian greeting)!

I'm very pleased to know that a small "family" has formed who is reading this little newsletter of mine - we are now close to 800. Obviously, not being a dealer of things magical, I cannot send you one every week with lots of new stuff. I'm sure you are already receiving your share of that and don't need one more.

Therefore, in each of my posts, I focus on one subject or question sent in by readers and which I judge to be of general interest. How do I know what is of "general interest"? Easy: if I find it interesting, I assume many others will, too :-). That's also my way of choosing a gift for friends: I only give away things I would like to receive myself. Come to think of it, that might be the best philosophy of how to treat assisting spectators...

This reminds me of what Dan Harlan recently said in my latest video project "Penguin Live - The Act": "Roberto, what I like about you is that regardless of what subject we touch on, you find a philosophical implication." If you still did not buy "The Act" (download) from Penguin, please wait until I send you a special offer later this month: you'll pay less money, and I'll receive more than the meager percentage authors usually get for their work.

On to this month's topic:

Ask Roberto: Mentors in Magic & How to Practice Magic

Roger Curtis wrote in to ask *two* questions:

- 1. Most professionals refer to having had a mentor(s) in their formative years. How in the current climate would you suggest an amateur learns in the most effective way as whilst books are hugely informative, you still need someone to guide you along the right path?*
- 2. What is the most effective way to practice? How do professionals practice?*

These are two BIG questions if we consider all the implications, nonetheless I'll try to answer to the best of my capacities and within the limitations of this newsletter. And always remember: all you get is my opinion...

What's a Mentor And How to Find One

Almost 50 years ago, when I started out in magic, you needed mentors to provide you with information, nowadays there is an overabundance of information and (almost) all is available for (far too) little money, so you need mentors to steer you away from the unnecessary towards the essential.

What has remained the same, however, is that associating with people who know more than you and whom you admire is one of the best ways to advance, in any discipline. I had the enormous luck of meeting one of the very few "universal geniuses" in magic, Juan Tamariz, who became my mentor early in my life - that was in 1978, I was 19, and I had been into magic for 6 years. I still visit him every year for a week, and I learn (a lot!). Most mentors, though, are "specialist geniuses", a term I use most respectfully. It means that some are great inventors, others knowledgeable historians and collectors, other gifted technicians, still others blessed performer, but few are all of that and still fewer look at magic holistically. That's why you normally need several mentors.

Parallel to having mentors look for exchange of ideas with kindred spirits, people at your level whom you like personally. It's not necessary that they specialize in the same topics. If you're a card person, you can get together with a mentalist or a children's entertainer, provided your *ethos* is similar. Keep the group small, and get together physically, if possible, although the virtual world offers amazing new possibilities. Discuss all practical questions, and if you are in close-up always keep the instruments in your hands.

The first ten years are all about acquiring the basic skills, mastering the instrument, gaining virtuosity. It's fine and necessary to discuss philosophical and historical

issues, presentation, communication, misdirection, timing, and all these things, but most of all discuss tricks and techniques, for these are the most important things. Unfortunately, as yesterday so today, some believe a lousy trick barely adequately done can be compensated by "presentation". This has led to the (in my opinion) false belief that presentation is everything. But besides the person (not persona!!!), the most important things are a very good trick, plus an impeccable execution (see "Formula for Success in Magic", entry for 10th NOV in [Hidden Agenda](#)). Once you have that sorted out, the rest will follow. So do a lot of hands-on in these groups. I believe that we become what we do, and if all we do is mostly chatter (keep forum-time to a minimum), we won't progress humanly and artistically.

How do you find mentors? In the pre-Internet age I went to club meetings in my own city and wherever I travelled to, I attended all conventions near and far I could afford, and respectfully approached those I admired. If I went to a city for educational or vacational purposes, I'd immediately look up "magician" in the local phone book and call them asking if they would like to meet. In this way I met some wonderful people who are friends to this very day. I could write a book on this... And of course once you have one good mentor, he will introduce you to others. It obviously helps if you are polite, sincere and talented. But if you were not, you would not even ask this question!

You could also answer your question by looking at other disciplines. For instance ask: How would you progress in music if you played an instrument? No question, you would take lessons with a music teacher, at least that's the way it is taught here in Switzerland. You buy the instrument and the scores, you take a lesson, you practice, you take another lesson, you keep practicing, and so on. Same thing when you learn how to drive a car, boat, plane etc. In some disciplines you have to go through a specific curriculum that ends with an exam to be allowed to practice that particular occupation: medicine, engineering etc. Now, magic is as much a profession as any other, but there is no official, formal education. In spite of this, the craft (and art) itself is based on instruments and the basic mastery of it. I'm reminded of Dr. Jacob Daley who took lessons from Dai Vernon.

Big subject, food for thought.

How Professionals Practice

As for your second question, I will give you a number of things you can do when practicing magic, and refer you to sources for information, but I believe there is one thing that towers over all others, and it is enjoyment. There might be several important things when studying magic, but joy and passion will always be first. If you enjoy practicing, it will not be work, but will add to the quality of your life and become one of those things that make you grow as a person and an artist

and become one of those things that make you grow as a person and an artist. A joyful practice adds a new dimension to what you are doing and to who you are, and the total will be more than the sum of its parts. The ensuing enthusiasm that will emanate from your performance gives it that extra quality, which cannot be put into words, but is *seen and felt* by any intelligent audience. So, the very practical down-to-earth pieces of advice I'm about to give you now, should be understood in this larger context.

You ask how "professionals" practice. I never thought about this, I simply live magic the whole day, and I practice similarly as I did when magic was a hobby. But then I might not be your typical "professional". But one thing is clear: a professional focuses above all on performance material, maybe organized into an act, depending from the venues he performs, and then he will practice just that. Once he has the techniques, the construction and the text down, he will start to rehearse, i.e. to "practice holistically", as if he was performing for a real audience. René Lavand was a master of this. I've always found this difficult and have compensated by going through my performances mentally (sitting and listening to music, when traveling, in bed etc.).

You can do it the way described if you are not a professional, but you still want to perform. However, I insist, that you should only do it in this "efficient" way if you enjoy it: as an amateur you have the privilege that you do not need to make a living from magic! Do you really need to be "efficient"?

The Ten Secrets of Practice

However, I believe that a far more relevant implication of your question is that as an amateur, who wants to perform, you have very little time, as you have a job, maybe a family, and several other obligations. When a professional can devote the complete day to his activity, you may only have an hour per day, and that's a lot. Therefore, if you insist in being "efficient", here are my "Ten Suggestions for Effective Practice & Rehearsal":

1. Understand before you practice, and once you've understood practice. Only *correct* practice makes perfect.
2. Don't practice in one long session, but in shorter sets: 3 sets of 20 minutes are better than 1 hour. This is true for practicing techniques, as it is true for rehearsing an "act". If you are a very busy person, you might want to get up 20 minutes earlier, do one practice session, and then start into your day (what a great way to start a day). When you come home, do a "relaxation practice session" (what a great way to end a working day). If it doesn't work for you, do it differently.
3. Practice a specific set 5 days a week, and pause for 2 days. Practice for 3 weeks and pause for 1 week. Your subconscious will assimilate and help

- weeks, and pause for 1 week. Your subconscious will assimilate and help "install" the skill.
4. Organize techniques in "Katas", i.e. link similar techniques together and practice them as a sequence (search for "Katas" in [Ask Roberto](#) and [Introduction to Card Magic](#)).
 5. Organize tricks in sets of three. Not only will you remember more tricks better, you'll also make their performance more substantial and meaningful. As an example of how this can be done on a higher level see my DVD project [Favorites](#).
 6. If practicing a trick that requires a set-up, rather than keep resetting the same deck, have 3-5 decks ready already set up, and then use one after the other.
 7. If you want to practice e.g. a Double Lift, a Coin Vanish and a Rope Flourish Knot, rather than practicing each 10 times, us the "First Time Practice" strategy: pick up the deck, do the Double Lift *once*, and then set the deck back on the table. Pick up the coin, do the vanish *once*, and then set the coin down. Do the same with the rope, just *once*. Then start over again. This prepares you for the use of the technique in the real situation, where you have to "hit" the technique on the very first attempt.
 8. Once you've practiced enough and think you got it down correctly, go back to the original description (read or watch it again). If it is a good description from a Master, I guarantee you will find details you left out or you changed to the worse (I just went back to Ganson's description of "Twisting the Aces" in *More Inner Secrets of Card Magic* and found *two details* I had ignored for 30 years and that made me understand the trick better). This reminds me of Al Baker, who said, "Nothing ruins a trick more than so-called improvements." You can only improve on a Master when you have become a Master yourself. Don't underestimate yourself, but don't overestimate yourself either.
 9. Each time you practice or rehearse something, try to do it a little better than before. Beware, though, of over-improvement (see Secret #8).
 10. Use mental practice regularly. Relax, close your eyes, and then run through the flawless execution of a sleight, or of a trick, or of a complete act.
 11. Remember St. Exupéry who said, "Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." Or simply trust whoever said, "Less is more." Reread this once a day if you are on a convention organizing committee.

Further Reading

- You'll find a lot of information regarding the practice and study of magic in both of my Agendas, [Secret Agenda](#) and [Hidden Agenda](#) (e.g. entry for 1st SEPT "Practice"). [Secret Agenda](#) is also available as a PDF-Ebook, which is fantastic, as you can search for "practice" or any other term you need; it is available [BY CLICKING HERE](#).

- See [Secret Twitter](#), a PDF-Ebook with lots of information about the subject.
- in [Ask Roberto](#), available as a printed book and as a PDF-Ebook, I devote several lengthy essays to the subject (p. 16 "How to Study", p. 20 "Fear of Starting to Perform", p. 101 "Why Do Magic?", p. 115 "Practice", and several more)
- And possibly the most important of all these: read my essay titled "The Study of Card Conjuring", Chapter 27 "Theory" of [Card College Volume 2](#), p. 476-485.

Besides this month's topic, here are a few bits of information you might also be interested in:

Card College Facebook Group

Reader Patrick Humeniuk from Canada wrote in to let me know that he and a group of friends have created what they've called "The Sunday Card College" on Facebook. Here is the link, if you want to see what this is about, and if you want to join: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2290954474354088/> It's obviously an excellent idea, as similarly minded people can meet and motivate each other in the serious and dedicated study of card magic. See my deliberations above!

Want a book signed to you personally?

When you order a book or DVD from me, you can ask it to be signed to your name, but you must mention this in the "comment" field of the order form, please. I do not automatically sign, as I never know who eventually gets the book/DVD.

Table of Content for Card College 1&2 - Personal Instruction

I'm glad to see that the 4-DVD-Set [Card College 1&2 - Personal Instruction](#), which is now available as a download at a fraction of the original price, seems to be very popular and helps many to get on track when it comes to card magic. The 23 lessons are self-contained and reflect [Card College volumes 1&2](#), but they are also a great complement to the books: the book gives far more details that can be put on a video, but the video shows you that what's in the book is feasible, and that's the motivational kick many need. A friend from Australia, aka EndersGame, kindly sent in a table of contents, which many of you will find useful. The first 2 pages are a pure table of contents, followed by a detailed commented table of content. This is an incredible piece of work, and I cannot thank EndersGame enough. To download the [PDF CLICK HERE](#).

Table of Content for Card Magic Masterclass

The 5-DVD-Set [Card Magic Masterclass](#) is the follow-up to [Card College 1&2 - Personal Instruction](#), and for those who already have it, as well as for those who want to know what is in it, [here you can download the Table of Content as a PDF](#).

Personal Coaching Live or via Skype

If you are interested to receive personal advice on anything related to your magic, or if you merely want to ask me questions or chat with me, you can take personal coaching lessons at my studio in MuttENZ, Switzerland, or via Skype. For details contact me [HERE](#).

Coming soon...

Many keep asking when *The Art of Switching Decks - A Guide for the Beginner and the Expert*, my monograph on the subject of deck switches, is back. Well, my publisher, Penguin Magic, promises this will happen this year... I'll let you know through the Secret Newsletter.

The Missing Link

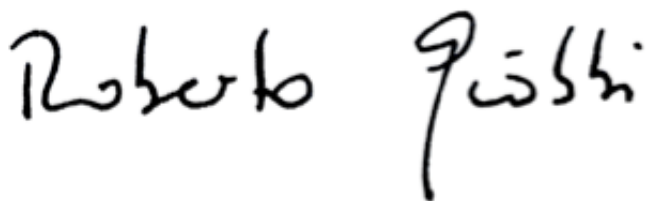
Under this heading I propose one unusual web-link, which you'll hopefully find inspiring, and if nothing else simply amusing. This one is about "illusions" in a very original, modern sense. Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJh-GV-RUY&feature=youtu.be>

For suggestions of how to use such information in a magic performance, see the entry "Film Clip Prologue" for February 20 in my *Hidden Agenda*— to a professional who uses this idea, this alone is worth many times the price of the book.

Let your friends know, please

If you believe that this newsletter (and those before) could be of interest to your friends, please forward this Secret Newsletter to them. To get it directly, they simply have to want to sign up for it [HERE](#).

More on the next occasion - take care!



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