

## **Manifest of the Escuela Mágica de Madrid (EMM)**

The undersigned, assembled, we agree (with respect to the subject of Illusionism-Magic<sup>2</sup>) to make plain certain facts, to propose group goals, and to use certain means to achieve them, thus creating a trend, a school that we will call *Escuela Mágica de Madrid*<sup>3</sup>, without this indicating that all its members reside or were born in Madrid, only that the school was organized here, and that it is based here. The primary purpose of the school will be magic: its improvement, study, profundity and establishing new ways and possibilities for it; an objective that - we admit - is ambitious, but which we will attempt to achieve in greater or lesser measure. And the mere existence of this manifest is proof of our ambitions and desires.

### **I. The Facts**

- It is clear and evident that Illusionism/Magic, as a form of scenic spectacle, is going through unfortunate, gloomy, and unappreciated times. The Grand Magic Extravaganza is practically extinct; Circus Magic is on the verge of disappearing; and Close-Up Magic is not yet properly accepted as a professional show (for television, hotels, etc.). Magic withers in the worst surroundings and the least appropriate settings imaginable: the cabaret and the nightclub act, requiring a short act (making it almost impossible to create the necessary magical atmosphere and frame of mind). Stage types are limited to arenas or thrust stages<sup>4</sup>, or one must present a show to an audience that is not concentrating nor predisposed to see a magic show (if not absolutely predisposed against seeing it), thereby missing many opportunities that Magic could have as a spectacle. As an event suggestive of mystery and excitement and even as an art, consider the self-limitation represented by the loss of patter if one has the intention to access an international audience. Magic has been struck dumb.

Such a depressing present contrasts sharply to earlier times, when Magic (less extended as a hobby), really met its primary purpose: to charm the audience, create illusion, help the audience, in a word, feel (in the sense of creating a «feeling», i.e.: an «emotion») the mystery.

- Studying and observing conjuring today and in bygone days, we are shocked to note that the History of Conjuring, unlike history of other branches of show business, is nothing but the history of the Conjurers. With few exceptions, there have been no trends,

---

2. Both words («illusionism» and «Magic») appear in the original text, to make clear that theatrical-artistic magic is meant, as opposed to sorcery-magic.

3. The name can be translated as «The Madrid School of Magic», where «school» means «school of thought», «a group of artists whose work and ideas are similar».

4. Most classical magic acts were designed for proscenium stages, in which spectators are only in front of you. In an arena, spectators are all around you. In a thrust stage spectators are in front of you and at your sides. This situation was most probably the result of converting most theatres that had the required proscenium stages into cinemas (TN).

schools, or groups of magicians who have, with at least minimal coherence, tested a theory of magic, a methodology, or even a style or different way of understanding magic.

Thus we corroborate with some grief that the direction imposed to close-up magic by Dai Vernon has practically not changed, not even in a few degrees, in more than half a century. Dai Vernon may still be the undisputed *Master of Magic Theory* today, as neither Slydini, with his studies of misdirection, nor any other type of magician, has been able to advance, expand, or evolve Vernon's concepts.

We find a similar panorama in stage magic. There is nothing new after Channing Pollock's *revolution* (?) (which consisted more in the introduction of the «dove production effect,» than in something more profound) or after the adaptation of Dai Vernon's style to this type of magic, mainly implemented by Fred Kaps. This adaptation continues to be state-of-the-art, twenty years after its introduction, without having to pioneer further advances). This represents very little progress in thirty years... awfully little.

- 1) This situation is the result of insufficient theoretical and applied research. The study of the possibilities of magic is neglected (and there is an excess of new tricks, which are always similar to old tricks). Knowledge of methods is inadequate. Magic lacks a genuine profound renewal. There is a lack of new ideas regarding its form, style, and procedures.

How long will we continue to see static manipulators wearing tails and causing billiard balls, cigarettes, and cards to appear? For how long will we see conjurors performing a few 'intriguing' tricks with silk handkerchiefs? How long will we see appearing canes that expand like a spring, productions of doves concealed about the magician's body, and zombie balls moved by the performer? Who, among today's audiences, can be amazed by this type of magic?

In our opinion, the highest point magicians typically reach today (and we are talking about the best magicians) consists of obtaining a certain type of intellectual admiration (which is, for this reason, a cold type of admiration), for their dexterous hands, intriguing effects or perhaps because of their showy props and accessories...

But, is a single spectator of a magician's performance experiencing the thrill of the unknown, the atmosphere of mystery? Who gives a thought about the things he saw, and speaks with genuine admiration of them? In short, what is the reach of magic today? We believe that magic reaches only the level of intelligence (not the level of emotions) and, even in these cases, it merely «reaches» that level. It cannot «penetrate» that level and therefore will not settle in it.

- 2) A continual deterioration of the audiences for magic shows is also a patent fact. Magic is more and more relegated to the category of entertainment for children or uneducated audiences. Magic is, in a word, underrated (if not despised) as entertainment for the vast majority of adults.

### II. The Goals

EMM has two types of goals. They are described summarily in the following section.

1. Work for a better-quality magic (which implies the following specific goals):
  - a) Theoretical and applied research. Experiments. Search of a new methodology. Profound study of Magic's artistic presentation and its fundamental psychological principles.
  - b) Interrelation of theory and practice: Every research paper and every theoretical idea will be tested in practice. And every idea, every subtlety, every practical invention will be integrated into the theory; giving it accuracy, profundity and consistency. Every theory must be applicable to practical procedures. Every practical procedure must be founded in theory.
  - c) Search for new audiences for practical exhibitions of magic. These audiences must be more knowledgeable, more interested, and more appreciative of Magic. They must be capable of recognizing the value of magic and its importance both as a form of art, a spectacle, and a product of human intelligence. In order to achieve this, our second goal consists in...
2. Working to develop a more adult magic (which implies the following specific goals):

Produce theoretical research papers and essays, both from members of the EMM and collaborators of the EMM (magicians and non-magicians), on the subject of Magic in relation to its cultural environment (relations between Theater and Magic, Magic and the Paranormal, Magic and Movies, the Psychology of Magic applied to other areas of activity, Poetry and Magic ...).

### III. Means to accomplish the proposed goals

A Laboratory of Magic, equipped with the necessary devices for visual and audio production (tape recorder, filming & photography equipment, etc.), the Magic Library, containing more than 500 volumes of the best books and magic magazines worldwide, an Archive of magicians and tricks and a collection of Magic films consisting in about half a hundred films of the acts of some of the best magicians in the world.

Direct communication with dedicated magicians and students of magic, exchange of new ideas, and personal attendance to the most important national and international congresses of Magic.

Regular sessions for different types of audience in which the various experimental ideas, presentation styles, etc, typical of the EMM to be presented.

Publication of results and studies carried out by the EMM in Spanish and international journals, as well as lectures and conferences (on these topics) during competitions and national

and international congresses, so that the Magic Fraternity may have a better knowledge of the results of EMM's endeavors. The annual Madrid Magic Competition shall be the main channel for this special relationship with other magicians.

Creation of a magical milieu or, at least, a milieu conducive to magic among lay people, by means of cycles of informative talks, personally or having recourse to the newspapers, radio, and TV; not with the goal of generating new amateur magicians, but with the goal of generating new aficionados willing to see, understand, feel, and taste artistic and adult Magic.

#### **IV. Final Considerations**

The program described above is ample, complex, and ambitious; and we are well aware of it. Will we succeed? To what extent? Is ours a reasonable plan?

The answers to these questions are uncertain and problematic. But the greater the moral and material support (ideas, collaborations, etc.) from all magicians who read this Manifest (a manifest of desires, attitudes and accomplishments) the more positive the answers to these questions will be. This is for sure.

Is Magic worth this endeavor? Our emphatic affirmative answer is, without a doubt, the engine that drives us. And this engine runs on illusion and our essential love for Magic.

Madrid, June 1971

Juan Antón  
Arturo de Ascanio  
Ricardo Marré  
José Puchol  
Juan Tamariz  
Ramón Varela  
Camilo Vázquez