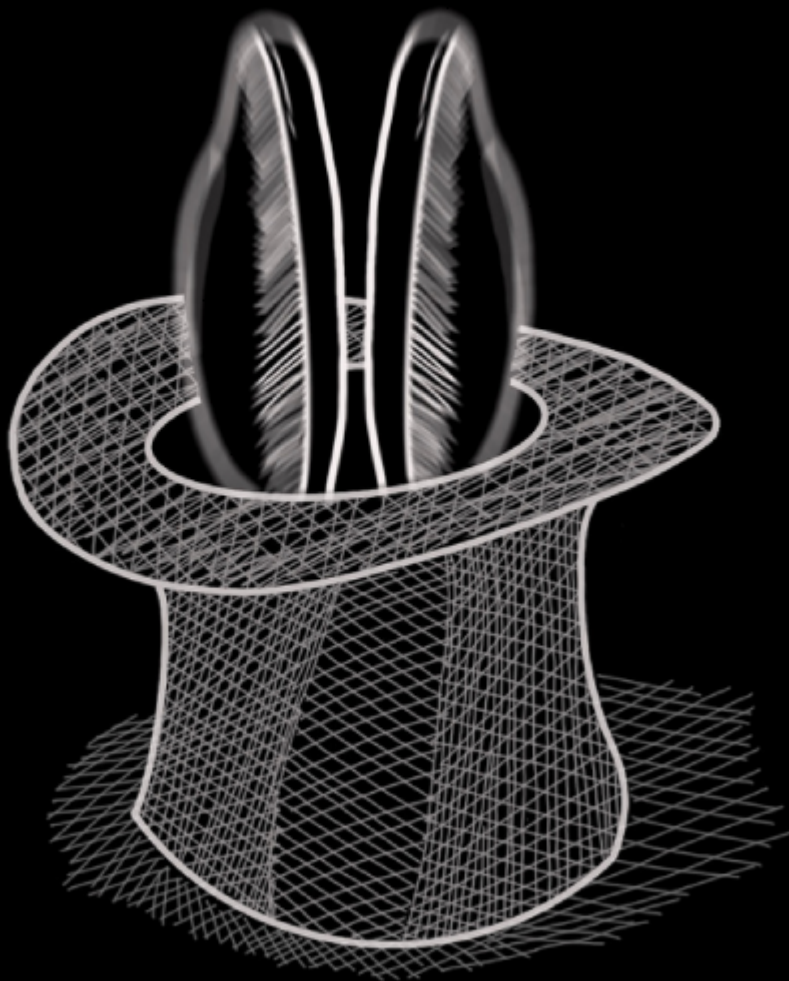


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ALEXANDRA DUVIVIER



WITH A COFFEE ON THE TABLE

One of the very few female members of the magic arts, Alexandra Duvivier has been the winner of the *Mandrake d'Or* in France and the first French female magician to fool **Penn and Teller** in their famous American television show "*Fool Us*" ☐.

The daughter of **Dominique Duvivier**, a living legend in

magic, she faced a double challenge: to make a name for herself under the shadow of her illustrious father and to become a highly respected artist in the predominantly masculine world of magic. Unlike many children who grow up with a talented and famous parent, her father didn't push her to become a magician like himself. As a child he never showed her any tricks: it was only at the age of 15 that Alexandra decided to



become, little by little, the worthy heiress of her father's empire.

She has become a favourite artist of the biggest brands for their private events (*Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, L'Oréal...*), has been a hand double for some of the most famous names in the cinema, she has no less than eight shows to her credit: three solo stage shows, three shows performed as a double act with her father, a children's show and a show performed entirely in English. With her sharp humour, her pure and engaging magic, her natural empathy with both young and old, she charms and amuses herever-increasing audiences.

Beyond her artistic talents, **Alexandra** is also a trainer and a business speaker (innovative methods of

communication using magic) and an instructor for the first ever diploma in magic recognized by the *Ministry of Labour* in France.

In 2021, she and her father created the streaming channel www.doublefond.tv the Netflix of magic.

This interview was conducted on the 7th of May.

Ezequiel: For the magicians who don't know you, who are you?

A. Duvivier: I'm a magician, I started when I was 15 years old, and I've been doing mainly close-up magic for 35 years now. So, if you make the calculations, you know I've been around for a while ! Magic is my passion, I have the luck and the luxury to do my passion as a job. I'm having a blast. I love my job. On the Instagram I often use



the hashtag “I love my job”, I really mean it, because it allows me to see so many different types of people, and I study many subjects that I don’t know of. I think one of the best qualities a magician or an artist should have is curiosity. If you aren’t curious in life, it’s going to be tougher for you to just tell stories, communicate with people and so on.

So, I love my job sincerely, and Magic is only a mean to communicate with people.

Ezequiel: I agree with that, it is a mean and not the end goal.

A. Duvivier: Above all I love Magic, my desk here is filled with magic props, books, gimmicks, ideas of potential tricks. But I also have a toys, a newspaper article, from neuroscience, different things

to stimulate my mind. Magic is everywhere !

And Magic is only an excuse to have things to share with the audience. But the most important thing for me is to tell stories, because let us face it, when you go to the movies what are you going to see? A movie right, but a story first, when you go to see paintings in the museum, you go and see Degas, saying “I love dancers I’ve painted some beautiful dancers” (at this moment Alexandra shows to me a statuette of a ballerina) for instance like this one. This Statue tells a story.

I think magicians are obliged to give us experiences and some don’t do that, so they are missing something. Please understand me, it doesn’t mean if you are telling stories, you are a good magician, but if you tell stories, you have more chances to, educate, elevate,



engage, and entertain your audiences.

Ezequiel: Is the real-life Alexandra the same as the one on stage?

A. Duvivier: Yes, I think so. There are some comedians, some people who, on stage are a different character, are just taking the suit of a character, but I'm not that type, I wish I could, but I don't know how to do it. So, I am simply myself, but tuning up the nob. I just push the energy, the stories, everything up when being on stage, but I am really the same person.

Ezequiel: There aren't many girls, women in Magic, and it's hard to be one in Magic, do you think there is a reason for it?

A. Duvivier: There always have

been women in Magic, but we don't talk enough about them.

For instance,

Suzy Wandas

was very well known. Who was the first magician to perform in Las Vegas, do you know it?

It was Gloria Dea, so it is a woman who starts the magic scene in Vegas. It's not that there weren't many women in Magic, it's more that they weren't advertised as much as men. Also the magician assistant isn't a role that a little girl would see and say "this is what I want to be when I grow up", also, I don't know how it is in Portugal, but the last time we had a lady Prime Minister was 30 years ago, there is a gap in between, waiting for Elisabeth Borne... things are changing, we have





more women in politics and in many other areas of employment. And Magic is not an exception, we have more and more, I've just come back from a USA trip a few days ago, and I saw more women into Magic, that is great!

Ezequiel: Do you think you have something to do with it, that you are a role model?

A. Duvivier: I wish, and I love when I am a role model, because when some people say after seeing me on stage, "I want to be a magician", I can't be happier. For instance **David Stone**, he went to see my one-woman show and after he said, "You just made me cry, I want to do a show like you, strong and emotional magic", and now is doing is one man show at the Double Fond and he has made more than a hundred shows there.

And to answer your question, how I started in Magic, you will say "your dad", obviously, of course, but the real thing is in 1988, my dad was booked at F.I.S.M. in Den Haag, Holland, he was doing his *Cups and Balls* routine, the fourth cup appeared, standing ovation and I said to myself "*this is great, because Magic can create these kind of emotions on the audience, I love it, I want to do this*", and the second click I had on that same convention was seeing **Lisa Menna**, an American magician, still working today, that inspired me so much because I was able to identify myself with a lady in Magic, because until then, my father was surrounded by men, his students, colleagues, friends but only men, so I wasn't able to say to myself "*Oh I can do that too*", but seeing Lisa Menna did just that, it meant that there was a place for me



too. I think the more exposure we give to women in Magic, the more it will inspire them to go into it.

Ezequiel: Recently you were inducted to the F.F.F.F which it's not an easy task to do, due to its restrictions.

A. Duvivier: It's completely restricted because, you can only go by invitation, you have to be sponsored to be there, it's not an open convention, you need to be invited. And Obie O'Brien himself sponsored me ! The FFFF convention is restricted yes, but I think there is one F missing from it, it's missing an F for Family, because they are a big family of magicians who gather each year, they know each other very well, and of course there are new ones coming every year, and it's a great venue for close-up

magic, which is really rare, the truth is, that it isn't that well represented at conventions. Even though it's hard to represent close-up magic, things now are changing.

Ezequiel: So you talked about F.I.S.M., what do you think when it comes to the close-up performance, where you have the optimal conditions to perform, just with the camera on?

A. Duvivier: So let's take a random example, Le Double Fond, the theatre that my father have created in 1988, you can do close-up magic in "normal conditions" at our place for 35 years now, because my dad is someone who goes all the way until he reaches his goal, and he had that dream of, you know, you can go to a theatre and see comedians, to watch a theatre play, a music concert but you



couldn't go and watch a Magic show, so that was the reason why he created the Double Fond which means the Double Bottom, and you can see close-up magic, or you can even call it a bit Parlour Magic because you can fit up to 50 people there, and you can see Magic all year round.

But to answer your question about the FISM conditions are the best you can have, you are watching a screen, yes, but when you are judging you are doing it up close to the performer, this is for the judges.

Ezequiel: So for the judges is close-up but for the rest of us not so much.

A. Duvivier: Obviously not, in FISM there are at least 2 thousand people, so having the giant screens it's important, because without

them we couldn't see anything, we would have to do 100 close-up shows so that everyone could see it. And we also have, as close-up artists, a task to fit as much as possible to these conditions, our job as magicians is to adapt to any kind of conditions. When you go and work on a wedding, if the table is really long, you have to adapt, the same if it's a kid's party you need to adapt the repertoire, because I can't do the same thing with the same joke, and so on.

This is a profession where adaptability is a key word, and this is a great mental exercise, to solve the problems that you face in your work, because you are always out of your comfort zone.

Ezequiel: You talked about *Double Fond*, and you also have *Mayette Magie*...



A. Duvivier: The magic shop *Mayette Magie*, that my father bought in 1991 which is the oldest magic shop in the world, since 1808.



Ezequiel: But there is a specific thing that I want to talk about the *Double Fond*, which is its Magic Program, that grants you with a diploma.

A. Duvivier: This is a great subject, and we are so proud of it. It took us 5 years to settle this diploma so that the Art of Magic is recognised. My dad always thought magic should be taught in school, like you have music or drawing

classes, so why not magic classes. Because Magic allows you to develop your skills technique but also how to express yourself, creation, because you write your own scripts, you need to connect with the audience, so eye contact is important, and many other things. So my dad is a lover, even the word lover is not strong enough to define the passion that my dad has for Magic. He always thought that Magic is an Art, and now, since 2018 we are able to grant a diploma, a 2 year university equivalent degree recognized by the Ministry of Labour to our students that become magicians, to be able to work, because when laymen type magician, they will find that they have a diploma, and that is an added bonus, because they will only book magicians with a diploma. So having the possibility to have this degree is great for the Art



of Magic, and we are the first in France doing it, and that is ok, we are very proud of it, but what makes us even more proud is that we are the first in the world, we want and deeply hope that we are opening a little door and that everyone will follow, because we have to be recognised, Magic is at the same level as dance, art, music, so why can't we, as magicians, be at the same level, it's a bit of work but of course we can.

Ezequiel: Because when I read it, and realized it was an university degree, I came to the conclusion that it was something really big.

A. Duvivier: Something big in the world of work, it's not just a paper, I got my certificate form FFFF, I'm happy, thrilled and fortunate, I love to have it, but in the real world of work,

in the business world it doesn't mean anything. Our diploma makes the difference, because you can be booked more easily, and you know, United States should do this, they have the most known magicians on the planet, **David Copperfield** is known worldwide, they should have done it already, but that's ok. It's great France was the first to have done it, because **Robert-Houdin** is the father of Modern Magic, and now we have this diploma, it's kind of thank you to **Robert-Houdin**, that open the path and that *Double Fond* as shown the way.

Ezequiel: This subject was also one of the reasons I wanted to make this interview with you, because I feel it is a really important topic.



A. Duvivier: But that's really important, the more we talk about it, the more things will move.

Ezequiel: yes, I've seen it from magician friends, that the government recognition is non-existent.

A. Duvivier: For us being the first is great, yes, but that's not the goal, it's that it opens doors for other countries, we need to have magic recognized, in the U.S. is big, they are working a lot, always busy. When I go to the Magic Chicago Lounge it's packed, the same with the Rhapsody Theatre, so there is an interest worldwide so let us work for this diploma in every countries !

Ezequiel: Changing subjects... there are in Magic. a lot of

magic conceptions, do you think French magic has that? That it has a specific style to it?

A. Duvivier: Definitely there is a Spanish way of doing things, that's for sure, **Juan Tamariz** has help develop such great talents like **Dani Daortiz**, **Woody Aragon**, **Bernardo Sedlacek** (and so many others) strong performer, but I don't know if in France there is, what you would call a "French Stamp", it's magic and humour, because we have a huge celebrity here in France, **Eric Antoine**, he is a star, not as big as **Copperfield** but he has TV shows, and I was with him last month, because we were celebrating *Double Fond* 35th anniversary and he granted us with his presence, and made a show here at the *Double Fond*, a small venue, which was great, and he told me he has 22 prime time



shows coming soon, non-magical prime times, that to say that he is BIG in France, so I think he is emulating, in a way that, finally in France when you speak about magic you don't think about a rabbit coming out of a hat, or has being just for kids, they realize that Magic is humour, funny, comedic and of course, magical, all of that thanks to **Eric Antoine**. That's what we do at the Double Fond, Eric came here to see his first show when he was around 13 years old, that's what we do here at the *Double Fond* with 50 people per show, and Eric is doing it in the scale of the thousands. My dad always did Magic in a funny way, to entertain, but I'm not sure that we have a "*French Stamp*" of Magic.

Ezequiel: I personally would say it has, specifically it has to

do with the type of French comedy, which is very specific and not everyone's cup of tea, let's take as an example the movie "*Brice de Nice*".

A. Duvivier: Yes, that is very French.

Ezequiel: I see traces of that type of comedy in your father's magic, **Bebel**, **Gaetan Bloom**...

Alexandra: Sure, of course, it's cultural, I think we are absorbing that.



Ezequiel: Talking about the French style of magic, are you acquainted with South American magic?



A. Duvivier: Not really, but I love any type of Magic, I was thinking of **Bernardo Sedlacek**, he is a Brazilian magician, he is a very talented magician, **Daniel Mormina**, **Henry Evans** who is a master, **George Iglesias** a very commercial magician, but in a good way, I don't know many but being curious I love to see Magic, good Magic if possible!

Ezequiel: Quick question, *Magie Nouvelle*, what do you think about it?

A. Duvivier: You know, the more we talk about Magic the better it is for the Art. I really mean it, they really do strong magic shows, it's different, still magic, so that's good, you want to call yourself "Magie Nouvelle", that's great, I come back to what I've said, the more we talk about magic the

better it is. There is room for everyone in the magic world. I'm happy that *Magie Nouvelle* appeared, they see magic in a more theatrical way and that is good.

Ezequiel: And now for our last question, what is next in your magic life, or personal life, as a project, that you are willing to share of course?

A. Duvivier: Many, I have already done three one woman shows, of one hour and a half each and they were completely different and I would like to do my fourth one, I would also love to turn just a bit more towards parlour, not stage magic, it's not my cup of tea if it means to do "sawing a woman in half", that's not me, but being on stage being in front of seven hundred people and doing my kind of close-up thing on stage, I have a blast doing that so I want to develop



that more. I'm not like **Eric Antoine**, thousands of people, my biggest venue was nine hundred, that was good. It's great because it still allows you to create that link with the audience, I think that is important. Also, my children are really important to me, as I said to you, I love my job, my life but my children are a big part of who I am, and if I don't see them for a few days I start to feel less punchy, less happy, I need to see and be with them to get that boost of energy. Apart from that, I still want to do shows, I want to create.

Ezequiel: I would like to thank you very much for granting us with this interview I'm happy that you accepted the invitation.

A. Duvivier: It was my pleasure, thank you for having

me, I'm very happy to be able to participate in your magazine.