

INTERNATIONAL MAGIC MAGAZINE

# WANISH

JUNE  
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ISSUE 83



*Alexandra Duvivier*

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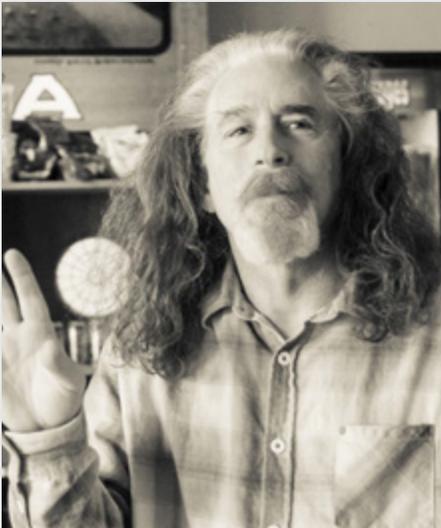
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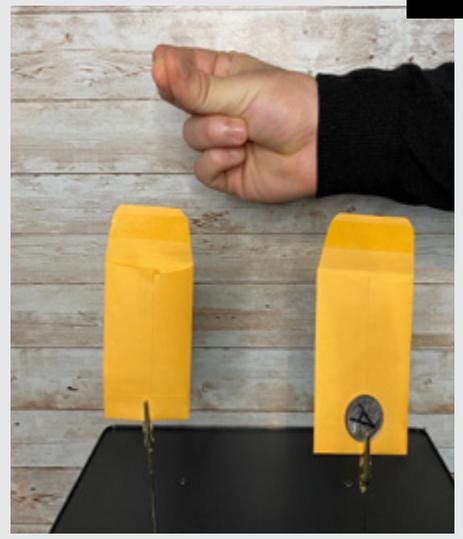


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# Alexandra Dumitrescu

BY CONNIE BOYD



PHOTO: JEAN-MARIE MARION

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a playing card, likely a heart. The hand is wearing a ring on the ring finger. A yellow graphic element, consisting of a vertical line on the left and a diagonal line extending from the bottom left towards the right, is overlaid on the image. The background is dark and out of focus.

**HER FATHER'S PERFORMANCE  
AT FISM IN 1988 WAS THE  
CATALYST FOR FIFTEEN-YEAR-  
OLD ALEXANDRA'S DECISION  
TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL  
MAGICIAN.**



PHOTO: DOUBLE FOND





Alexandra would like to thank David Jones for his help with her English

BY CONNIE BOYD

**A**lexandra Duvivier is the daughter of beloved and respected French magician, Dominique Duvivier. Growing up in a magic household, Alexandra had “inside access” and full emersion to the elite in the magic community. However that also came at a cost. Alexandra didn’t wish to fill her father’s shoes, but rather she wanted to design her own shoes. Choosing and leaning towards stylish stilettos and boots. She strove to create and perform magic that reflected her personally, to escape her father’s shadow and to establish herself as a professional magician with her own unique style, skills and performance.

She admits, “intensive exposure to all forms of magic from a young age gave me the opportunity to decide for myself what I personally enjoyed and what didn’t appeal to me. I did this unconsciously and it reflects my personal taste. I developed and built my own character, magic skills, preferences, artistic choices and knowledge to become a version of myself as an artist.”

Her father’s performance at FISM in 1988 was the catalyst for fifteen-year-old Alexandra’s decision to become a professional magician. She has great love and admiration for her father and looking back she realizes one of the reasons for her decision to become a magician was to be closer to her Dad.

Her father did not encourage Alexandra’s pursuit of magic. To start she studied a book on card magic written by her father in the 1970’s. Alexandra explains that her father was one of the first magicians to publish instructional magic books; making magic methods and techniques available to the general public in France. She was left to decipher the contents of the book alone without coaching and guidance. It was only after Alexandra had proven a true passion for magic and learned self-taught skills that her father helped her. “It was tough, but looking back, it was good training. Nothing was easily given to me, I had to do my own homework and that builds your character.”

Alexandra’s magic and performances are skilled, clever, witty, fun, ambitious and very attractive in a distinctive French manner that is alluring and charming. She appears to be in complete control



“ Intensive exposure to all forms of magic from a young age gave me the opportunity to decide for myself what I personally enjoyed and what didn’t appeal to me. ”



artistically and technically on stage and on screen. She effortlessly exudes confidence and superb magic skills. It's a bit of a surprise to learn that one of the obstacles Alexandra's had to overcome is stage fright and low self-confidence and what seems effortless has been honed.

"One day I told myself, you really need to choose: either you must become an artist and "control" your stage fright, or you must stop being an artist. I chose, finally, to overcome my fears and to stop making excuses and comfortable, safe choices"

That conscious decision and the painstaking determination to overcome her deep-rooted fears changed Alexandra's career. She works hard at her craft and is very disciplined. Her work ethic is stellar and she will do what it takes to master her craft, material and personal challenges.

In 2018 she performed a magic routine created by her father, for Penn & Teller's Fool Us televised show, taped in Las Vegas for the CW network. Not only did she spellbind Penn & Teller, she fooled them becoming the first French female to win a Penn & Teller Fool Us award.

It was a game changer and over-night Alexandra gained global exposure and respect. Perhaps even more importantly that win gave her a giant boost of self-confidence. Penn Jillette comments after her performance sum it up beautifully, "Your style is just fabulous, so much charm and so much class."

When I asked Alexandra what changed for her after the Penn & Teller win she explained,

"Everything changed, the Penn & Teller win was like a healing potion for me and it

dramatically changed how I was viewed as a magician. Although I had been performing magic shows for decades thanks to the worldwide exposure I received from Penn and Teller opportunities and new possibilities immediately opened for me."

One of the performers who inspired and motivated Alexandra's magic is Lisa Menna. "I will never stop saying that it's thanks to her that I realized that I could have a place in magic which was very much a man's world. Lisa was performing a very feminine brand of magic, very clever, very skilled and I love her for opening my eyes to the possibilities."

In addition to superb close-up magic technique and skill-sets another similarity between Lisa and Alexandra's performance is their use of comedy and humor to deliver their magic.

When she performs in English Alexandra states, "I work and prepare MORE. I want to be on-top of what I express and I want to be funny." She practices diligently on her own and takes English lessons with a woman who understands her humor and obsession to deliver entertaining dialogue in a language that is not her native tongue. She presents her magic with fun, natural scripting, it's very engaging to watch and it's very, very captivating.

For magic television appearances Alexandra shares that she asks the producers as many questions as necessary so she will be well prepared without unpleasant, unwelcome surprises before or during taping.

She admits to be influenced by good magic. There isn't a style or type of magic that she

prefers, instead what motivates & inspires her is great performance and execution.

Alexandra is very fortunate and grateful to her family, which has supported and encouraged her. They understood from experience the challenges of being a professional magician and where their help and support could benefit and allow Alexandra to truly focus on her work and magic. Alexandra says, "I could never thank them enough for that."

Alexandra genuinely has a true love and passion for magic. If she can inspire one person with her magic she is satisfied. She explains, "David Stone told me that it was my "Fool Us" performance that gave him the courage to perform on France/America's got Talent." I was so proud to inspire him and that my work might motivate people to push out of their comfort zones. To know that your work has inspired other artists in positive ways is very satisfying."

## **Le Double Fond: a Magic Legacy**

In 1988, Dominique and Alexandra created and established "Le Double Fond" which translates in English to "the false bottom." It's the only venue in France fully dedicated to magic and it's located in the heart of the



PHOTO: BERTRAND VACARISAS

“IF SHE CAN **INSPIRE** ONE  
**PERSON** WITH MAGIC SHE IS **SATISFIED**”



PHOTOS: Adeline Galland  
Bottom photo by David Stone



historical district in Paris offering authentic, warm Parisian charm.

At night it's a performance venue and bar, where families and friends can enjoy a bite, a beverage and delightful magic. By day, it's transformed into a school for magicians and since their opening, Le Double Fond has provided a duality of performance and magic education.

In 2018 Dominique and Alexandra performed an impossible historic feat and an international first when they received accreditation and status approval by the France Ministry of Labor for Le Double Fond to be an official magic academy and establishment for magic as an artform.

This certification elevated Le Double Fond to an institution recognized at the level of other performing arts schools in France and as a form of post high-school education.

Students who graduate Le Double Fond will receive a degree and certification. The degree, in magic arts, is the equivalent and holds the validity of a two-year university level degree in magic.

Graduates are entitled to public funding in France, consistent with other accredited artistic professions such as dance, music, cinema and circus.

It took over five years of dedicated and determined pursuit for Le Double Fond to receive the French Ministry accreditation. In Alexandra's words, "we are so proud of this achievement. It is the first time in the world that a degree in magic arts for magicians has been recognized by a government."

Since Le Double Fond established the degree in magic arts program thirty students have graduated. It's a complex magic education curriculum including four final exams covering: the history of magic, the preparation of an act, the interpretation of an act and the comprehension, development and management of magic for a magician to succeed in business.

There is also one final exam in front of an examination board to demonstrate each student's practical skills and abilities in magic. Students are required to prepare a performance program of fifteen acts including the magic categories of card magic, close up magic, mentalism, magic for children and parlor magic.

Le Double Fond has received a lot of attention in the French media as a result of the Ministry's accreditation. All the major television and cable channels in France have interviewed and featured Alexandra & Dominique's journey and magical successes. It is a novel story, a real "Hogwarts" that exists in the center of Paris! In Alexandra's own words, "it's a great step forward for the magic community."



We can only hope that other countries will take the initiative and example set by France and begin to recognize magic performance, programming and education in order to establish magic as a true art form internationally.

**Double Fond TV – the Netflix of Magic** <https://doublefond.tv/fr/>

Alexandra and Dominique have not been idle during the pandemic. They've used their "down-time" wisely to create, organize and structure "Double Fond TV". In conjunction with their magic education programming and research within Le Double Fond school library they launched Double Fond TV this year with over five hundred videos available and new content uploads every week.

Content on Double Fond TV includes rare footage of over one thousand original magic creations by Dominique Duvivier and the complete works of the Magic of Gaetan Bloom.

In addition, they have instruction and performance videos with over thirty international magic stars including Eric Antoine, Alexandra Duvivier, Boris Wild, David Stone, Laurent Beretta, Paul Gertner, Howard Hamburg, Henry Evans, Michael Weber, Christian Engblom, Max Maven, Chad Long and Steve Beam.

There are stories (told by Howard Hamburg) on legends such as Dai Vernon, Charlie Miller and Michael Skinner. All this in addition to instructions, routines and tips on mentalism, close-up magic, card magic, coin magic, balloon modelling and more.

They offer three different monthly pricing structures to accommodate all levels of magic enthusiasts:

1. The Apprentice subscriber is ideal for someone with a new interest in magic looking to learn easy magic tricks and more about magic at 9.99 € a month
2. The Passionate subscriber can research original documents, archives of shows no longer performed and theories for 19.99 € a month
3. The Addict subscriber has full access to the entire library with fifty-plus categories on every aspect of magic imaginable. There's private access to a secret shop with exclusive, professional material and special offers, as well as rare documents and archives. All of the above for 28.99 € a month



## SECRETS REVEALED

1. I am not self-assured.
2. I love Calendrier de l'Avent : Christmas Advent Calendar
3. I LOVE chocolate
4. I am a BIG fan of musical comedy.

## FAVOURITE QUOTE

***"You don't become a champion in a gym. You become a champion because of what you feel; a desire, a dream, a vision. You have to have talent and technique. But the talent has to be stronger than the technique."*** MUHAMMAD ALI

## DREAM ENCOUNTER

**Barbra Streisand, Steven Spielberg, Jerry Lewis, Isabella Rossellini, Simone Veil, Madonna**

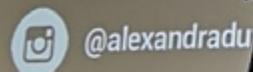
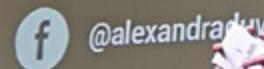
## FAVOURITE PHOTO

This picture illustrates perfectly the relationship I have with my Dad. I can lean on him at any time for anything... This is rare I know; it took time, but what we have created artistically and personally is unique...  
Photo by Benjamin Decoin



# ALEXANDRA DUVIVIER

Magicienne, comédienne et formatrice

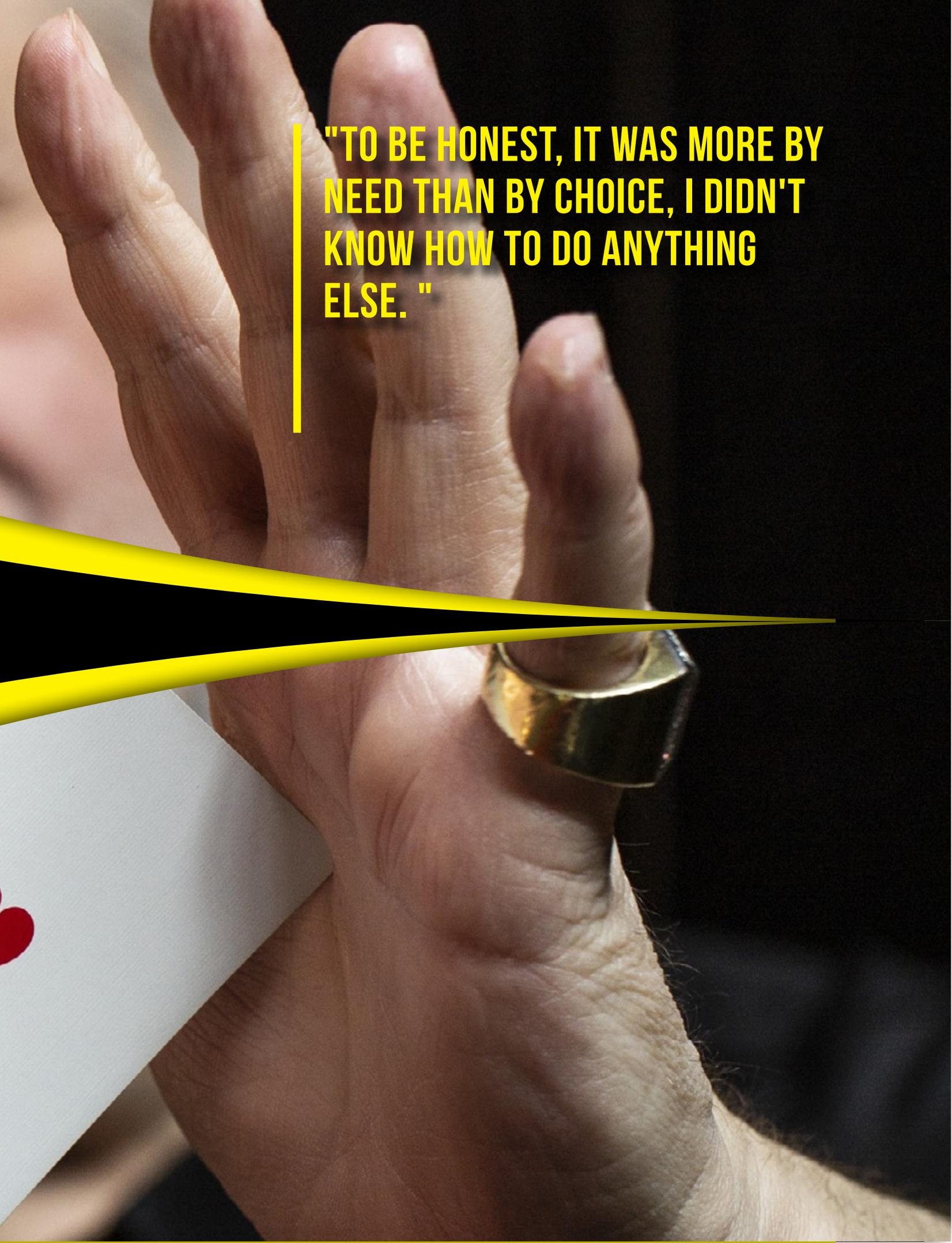




*Dominique  
Duvivier*

BY SÉBASTIEN BAZOU

PHOTO: JEAN-MARIE MARION



**"TO BE HONEST, IT WAS MORE BY  
NEED THAN BY CHOICE, I DIDN'T  
KNOW HOW TO DO ANYTHING  
ELSE. "**

# Dominique DUMIVIER



BY SÉBASTIEN BAZOU

PHOTO: Harcourt

1

**What attracted you to magic? How did you start & when did you become a professional?**

At the age of eight, I saw a scene of card players in Fritz Lang's movie *M le Maudit* on television (in the Ciné-club program). I was fascinated and inspired by the card players and I asked my grandmother for a deck of cards. Soon after that, I asked my mother to take me to the Mayette Magie store in Paris, which is the oldest magic shop in the world. Thirty years later I would purchase Mayette Magie.

As fate would have it as a child I lived in Cours de Vincennes in Paris, and Renélys, a famous hawker magician, performed at a magic stand during the annual Foire du Trône (Throne Fair).

My very protective Sicilian mother allowed me to go onto the street alone, to see my magician friend, Renélys, because she could keep a close eye on me through the window. Also, during the fair the busy street was transformed into a pedestrian walkway and filled with strolling people. It was fate, magic was literally at my doorstep. Of course, I didn't know then that magic would be my livelihood and I would dedicate my life to magic, but the attraction was real from childhood.

It was only after my military service at age twenty that I decided to seriously pursue magic. To be honest, it was more by need than by choice, I didn't know how to do anything else. I was a poor, dreamy student and I left school at sixteen without any practical profession. No

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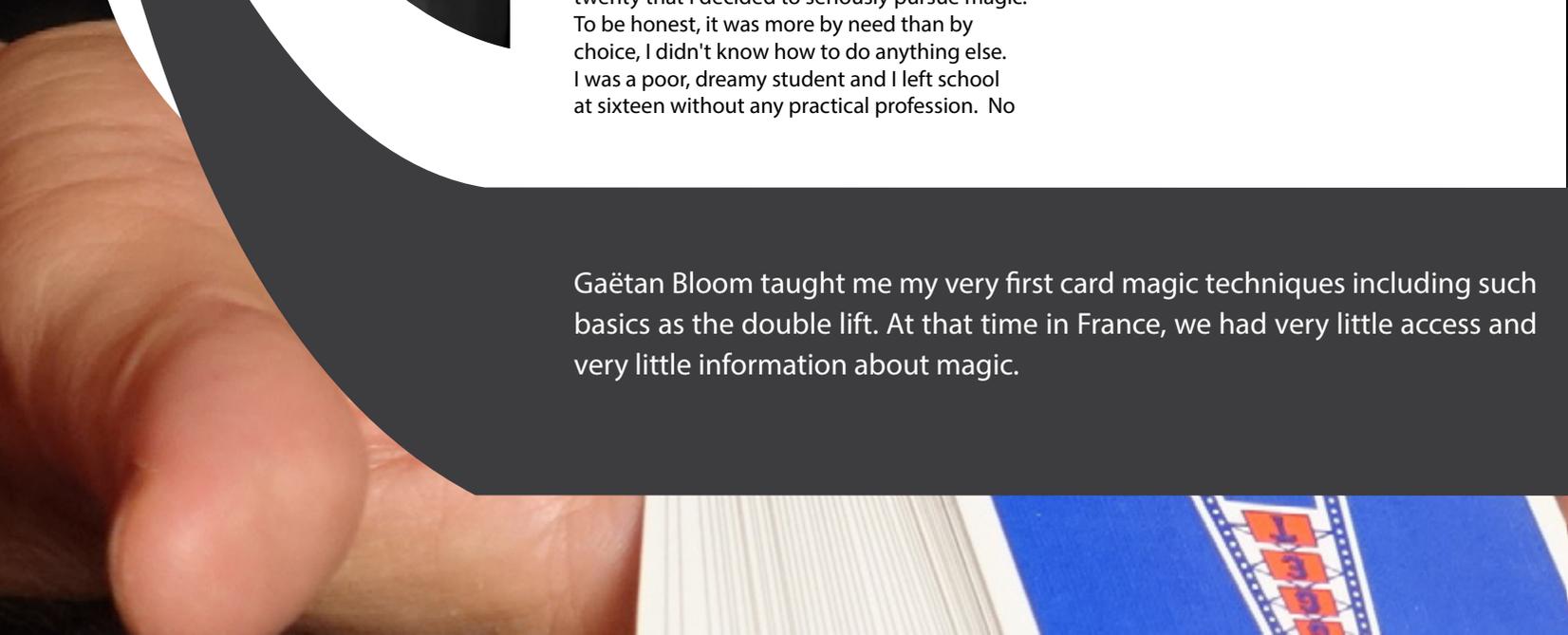
**How did you learn and what has magic taught you about people?**

Gaëtan Bloom taught me my very first card magic techniques including such basics as the double lift. At that time in France, we had very little access and very little information about magic. There was no internet, no videos or DVDs, there were few books on magic in French and many of the books on magic were in English, a language I didn't understand or speak. To start I was forced to create my own methods and techniques, to work out how to make my magic and ideas come to life. I trained and created in an inventive, self-taught way. It was only later I discovered masters like Ernest Pancrazi, Brother John Hamman, Fred Kaps, Larry Jennings, Ricky Jay, and Albert Goshman, all of whom inspired me very much. Magic is my whole life, so, magic has taught me life, in a way.

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PHOTO: Bertrand Vacarisas





PHOTOS BY Benjamin Decoin and Double Fond





PHOTO :Benjamin Decoin

### 3

#### **What are the opportunities or people who have helped you and what stopped you ?**

Overall, it was my passion and determination that carried me forward, plus the unwavering support of my relatives.

I didn't receive encouragement and support from magic colleagues. I was developing new, different magic and as is often the case with new ideas others tried to put "sticks in the wheels" and block my progress.

Rather than be discouraged, it actually encouraged and boosted my determination. I fought to create my own opportunities. For example, I could not secure a publisher for my work, so I created my own publishing company in the 1970's and I was one of the first magicians in France to publish magic instruction, methods and techniques. I could not convince anyone to produce close-up shows as I envisioned them, so in 1988 I created Le Double Fond which was and is the only theatre in France dedicated to magic and where magic is performed as I visualized it many years ago.

Nobody saw the value of my Imprimerie

(Printing) or Tempête sous un crane (Nervous Breakdown) tricks in the magic market. I decided I needed to have a venue to sell my magic and in 1991 I bought the Mayette Magie shop, to be free to offer and sell magic that I believed in! Today those two magic tricks are among the biggest best-sellers in the world. Most recently, when everyone believed it was impossible, I created and received accreditation, along with my daughter and team, for Le Double Fond to be the first officially recognized school offering a diploma in magic arts to graduates. It is the only accreditation of its kind in the world, recognized by the state, acknowledging magic as an artform.

# OPPORTUNITIES

Overall, it was my passion and determination that carried me forward, plus the unwavering support of my relatives.



PHOTO: Aldo Sperber



PHOTO: Benjamin Decoin



PHOTO: Adeline Galland

## PERFORM

## PRACTICE

## REHEARSE

4

**Which setting do you prefer to perform in ?**

Undeniably, I prefer to perform "live" at Le Double Fond, in my own theater. For me magic is about the experience of a "live" show, the magic is "alive" and real. Virtual shows don't have much meaning for me.

I am very comfortable in my theater, it's my personal design of ideal close-up performance conditions and an intimate setting that does not exceed fifty people.

The audience are primarily adults, my magic is not for children and that form of magic doesn't appeal to me, personally. Audiences enter a space devoted entirely to magic; they are there because they wish to witness good magic and they do, in a well-equipped, well designed theater.

I work with an excellent team whom I consider as my family and who have the same vision and artistic direction as I do. It is my home.

5

**Do you have a performer or magicians or artists who have inspired you or that you admire greatly ?**

Yes, a lot. I've already mentioned Ernest Pancrazi, Brother John Hamman, Fred Kaps, Larry Jennings, Ricky Jay and Albert Goshman, but I also want to mention Ali Bongo, David Williamson, Henry Evans, Derek DelGaudio, Michael Weber, Persi Diaconis, Mac King, Tommy Wonder, Woody Aragon... I know I have forgotten many, but these are the magicians that come to mind!

6

**How did you feel about your daughter pursuing a magic career ?**

It is the most beautiful gift we share. Moreover, I did not encourage or push Alexandra into magic. When she was a child, I never showed her tricks. When, around the age of fifteen, she insisted that I teach her, I did not make it

7

**What is Alexandra's biggest ability ?**

easy for her. I insisted she worked on her own and it wasn't until I saw that she was really determined that I started to help her.

Empathy, generosity and humility. She's the type of artist that I love: someone who lives and breathes her art, who gives meaning to everything she does. She is not an artist motivated by fame, rather she expresses and shares her experiences and magic with her audience. Alexandra is a beautiful person who brings warmth and light, as the sun, to those around her.

8

**What guidance or advice would you provide for a beginner magician ?**

Work! Practice and rehearse, tirelessly. Keep going, especially when it becomes difficult. Perform in front of real audience every opportunity you have.



PHOTO: Olivier Pistol

9

**What is your view on current magic ?**

Magic has never been so present or so needed everywhere as now. I find that wonderful. This popularity creates a very positive emulation and energy.

10

**What would you like to see change in magic ?**  
Nothing. I believe the evolution is very good.

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**Anything else you'd like to add ?**

I am immensely proud of my daughter Alexandra.

## SECRETS REVEALED

- I am very anxious.
- It was the martial arts that inspired my magic.
- I hate vacations and I don't like to travel.
- I am a bulimic movie buff.

## FAVOURITE QUOTE

*"THE MAGIC IS NOT IN THE MAGICIAN'S HAND, BUT IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER."* - ALBERT GOSMAN

## DREAM ENCOUNTER

IDEAL DINNER : Stanley Kubrick, Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino and Robin Williams.

## FAVOURITE PHOTO

Ricky Jay



PHOTO: Double Fond



PHOTO: Aldo Sperber

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*Dominique Duvivier*

