



SAMLETTER 181



Join us on **Thursday, May 2, 2019**, when our regular meeting will include a workshop by **Conrad Cologne**.

Conrad Cologne is one of New Jersey's premier family entertainers. Conrad specializes in bringing magical experiences to families. Whether an audience of kids, an audience of adults or an audience with both, each and every show is customized to suit its event. With his amazing magic, jaw-dropping balloons and family-friendly comedy Conrad is loved by families far and wide.

Following the workshop, we will open the stage to others to perform in our "No Judgment Zone", so bring something to share.

Society of American Magicians Assembly 181 of Hightstown meets the first Thursday of every month, September thru June at the First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Workshops start at 7:30 PM.

From the President

"Laughter is my greatest joy and compliment"

Bob Abdou



This newsletter will be about something that many of us wondered about, thought of, or toyed with the idea of using in our performances, which is namely whether to incorporate a puppet(s) in our show. Puppetry is a very ancient art form thought to have originated about 4,000 years ago. Just like in those ancient times puppets were used not only to convey stories and ideas but entertain as well.

So why I'm I all of a sudden wanting to do a newsletter on puppets? Like many of us, especially those interested in entertaining others, I've always had a fascination with puppets. That fascination with puppets has for many laid dormant or was overshadowed by the mystical nature of magic or the allure of mentalism. However, like a seed, it sat there waiting patiently for that tiny bit of inspiration to germinate its growth and cause it to sprout forth. For me, that inspiration came in the form of a puppeteer named Bob Abdou.

Bob Abdou is a consummate professional. Why I consider Bob Abdou a professional is not his skills as a puppeteer or ventriloquist. In fact, Bob Abdou is quite honest about his skill sets. He confesses right up front what he feels his strengths are and what his weaknesses are. What makes me feel Bob Abdou is a true professional is his ability to bring you into his world. Watching Bob Abdou perform not only brings you into his imaginary world where skeletons play the piano but he does more than just that, he shows you through his own love of sharing and giving how a true performer really should be.

I saw Bob Abdou give a lecture on puppetry in a local clowning club which meets near where I live. To my surprise, and everyone else's, Bob Abdou drew the largest attendance they have ever had. The lecture was true to its

advertisement which was to learn the basics of puppetry. As I sat there what inspired me was not his amazing skills but his desire to share and give. Bob Abdou has a fascinating life's story and through puppetry, he reached what many of us still struggle to find which is true happiness. It is that true happiness that Bob Abdou wants to share with the world. In the few moments, I spent with Bob Abdou he proved that he lives what he preaches. He is kind-hearted, generous and love filled. Thank you, Bob, for the time we spent together, although brief, and showing me how a professional truly behaves. This newsletter is dedicated not only to the art of puppetry but to my new friend and inspiration Bob Abdou "Mr. Puppet".



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All S.A.M. Assembly 181 videos are posted on our Vimeo channel at <https://vimeo.com/magicsam181>

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Last Month at SAM 181



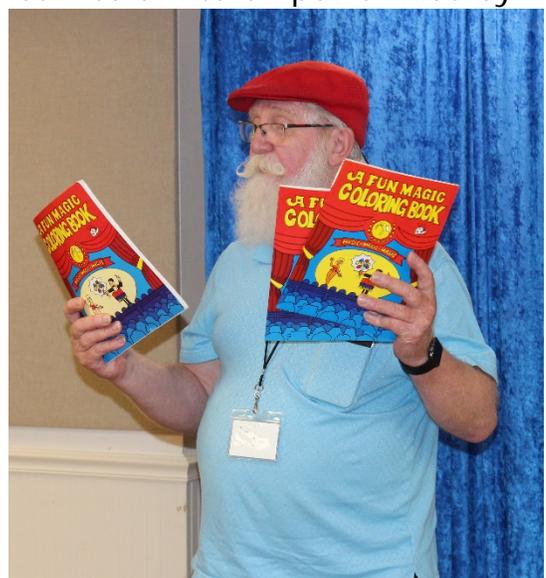
Our workshop in April was presented by Magic Mike Dziubas on tailoring your performance for your audience. Magic Mike's knowledge and experience belie his years. Starting with presentation and appearance, Magic Mike also covered selecting the proper routine and personality.

After each workshop, we turn the stage over to performances by the attendees. George Hann loves card tricks and so he started the show with Brother John Hamman's Gemini Twins. Jeff Carson was next with a magazine test. Often the challenge in a magazine test is how to get the first letter and Jeff had a unique solution to that.

Silly Reba showed Cereal Brainwave, which uses pictures of cereal boxes instead of card faces, and I am sure it is in her children's show. Reba followed with a very old, cute pocket trick, called Grandma's Necklace. Only Grandma knows how the beads remain in the spectator's hand.

Adam and Erin taught an effect straight from the Discover Magic curriculum. For the past 12 years, they have been running magic camps all across the state of New Jersey using the Discover Magic curriculum to empower kids by teaching them the art of magic.

Our two resident vendors demonstrated effects they have created using popular marketed products. First, Jimmy Brown did his Coloring Book Monte which uses three of the standard magic coloring books. Every kid has probably seen the coloring book routine in a magic show, but not the way Jimmy does it. Jimmy also taught how to construct a coloring book that flips into a real magazine at the end of the routine.



Then, Coco showed a bank night effect using six ungimmicked pouches. Coco taught the handling so that you can perform this effect impromptu.

This meeting included a new feature for our meetings, the Judgment Zone. Members who signup can perform a full routine and option to pass out index cards for peers to write critiques and suggestions on. The cards are collected and the performers can learn from what others have written.

First up, Mike Gutman performing a cards across routine. Ten cards in each spectators hand. Three cards are selected. Suddenly, there are only seven cards remaining in one spectator's hand while thirteen are now in the other spectator's hand. Not just three more cards, but the three selected cards.

Finishing the night, Conrad Cologne performed the Invisible Card routine from his professional act. I sure both of these performers got passing grades from their peer reviewers.



Psycho Path - Magic for the Mentalist



Mentalism is difficult enough, let alone performing mentalism for children. Bill Abbott solved that dilemma by creating a fantastic routine called Chico The Mind Reading Chimp. Chico The Mind Reading Chimp is a good 15 minutes of fun, laughs and surprises for the audience. The best thing about the routine is that you don't have to know ventriloquism to perform this. The puppet which is quite shy only speaks to its owner.

What you are purchasing is a well-orchestrated and thoughtfully put-together professional package with built-in laughs over years of refinement. Whether you adopt this routine as is, or inject your own personal touches, you will be receiving a truly perfect little piece of comedy, magic, and theatre that appeals to a wide age range. The original routine came as a complete package with all the props needed to perform. In this configuration, the cost of the routine was quite steep which was \$500. Even at that price those who were dedicated to learning all the nuances definitely got their money's worth. After a while, Bill Abbott released Chico The Light Package. Chico The Light Package gave you all the video instructions, music and graphics on two DVDs. The performer who purchased this package was required to assemble all the props necessary for the routine and print out all of the graphics as well as doing all the "arts and crafts" required. Currently, the "light" package is the only one available. From Bill Abbott Magic it is only available as a download for \$99 but a quick search online brought me to a couple of online magic dealers that have the DVD version for as low as \$75.

Most of the props can be found at small toy stores or dollar stores. If you want the original "Chico" the good news is that he is made by Folkamanis Puppets under the title Monkey # 2123. The most difficult prop to search for I discovered is the Fez hat that is worn by Chico. When I searched for props for my set, the hat was difficult to find. I was lucky to get the last ones online. Since then I have not seen it available. Chico The Mind Reading Chimp is a great closer for any children's show. I highly recommend this if you are willing to put the effort into memorizing the entire script and routine.

Tricks are for Kids - Magic for the children's performer

Portable Puppetry - Puppets aren't the most portable objects to carry around especially if you are just going about your day to day routine. If you have that urge to entertain where ever you may find yourself and puppetry is your thing consider these options.



How about carrying around the *Mr. Mouth Pocket Puppet Coin Purse*. *Mr. Mouth* is a lightweight rubber coin purse with a cute face printed on it. The slot for the coins is the mouth of the puppet. Ever handy and taking up little space he is always ready to come out and play. The coin purse is almost ridiculously cheap considering it is a magic prop. Imagine the giggles you would get when *Mr. Mouth* starts to talk. A clever puppeteer could probably incorporate some hidden object inside the purse such as a silk streamer for a finale.



You probably seen these around for quite some time now. It usually is a giveaway at birthday parties and all kinds of children's events. However, the original concept was designed by a professional puppeteer named Hobe Ford. Hobe Ford actually designed this for personal use to get his children to eat. Little did he know how popular it would become. What is great about Peeper Puppets is that there doesn't need to be a script to use this puppet. Miming and silent action is all that is required to entertain children with this simple prop. The original peepers are made here in the USA and of course, the quality is superb.

<http://www.peeperspuppet.com/what.shtml>



There are also various sock puppets out there you can keep in your pocket. A cute set of puppets which are endearing to kids. Do you really have to know ventriloquism? Not really, there are scripts available to help the non-ventriloquist performer put on a fairly decent performance. The interesting thing about children is that they endow the puppet with its own life and they will talk to the puppet even though you are doing all the talking. Take a look around in Barnes and Nobles and Dollar Stores.

Finger puppets, sock puppets, and similar items can be used to bring fun to an ordinary event.

Do you believe in magic? - Magic for the general magician



Robert Baxt, a well-known comedy magician and TV personality, developed an offbeat trick based on the venerable *Vanishing Bandana* trick called *Red Bull*. If you aren't familiar with the *Vanishing Bandana* trick it is a comedy magic routine where the performer "tries out" the trick he just received in the mail from the "trick of the month club".

Unfortunately, the magician mistakes the phrase bandana and banana which ultimately leads to some very funny by play. The *Vanishing Bandana* trick has become a classic because of its appeal to audiences of all ages. Some

magicians have considered this routine as played out because of its one-time popularity.

Many performers have attempted to modernize this routine by reconstructing a similar type of act with newer themes. Many have fallen short though. The difficulty lies in the fact that the bandana/banana routine set such a high bar to exceed that not many have come close. I can recall the first time I saw the *Vanishing Bandana* routine in Scout Camp. I laughed so hard I practically fell off my chair. However, as difficult of a task this is Robert Baxt developed his *Red Bull* routine. The idea is similar to the Bandana / Banana trick. The magician receives a trick in the mail and demonstrates to the audience the learning process that a magician goes through in learning a trick. The audio CD is played (it may come as an MP3 now) and the magician follows along. The premise in *Red Bull* is that the confusion arises due to the language barrier between the instructor and the performer. Since so much magic is made abroad in China the instructions are given by an "English" speaking Chinese woman. Hence the confusion with what "Red Bull" she is referring to on the CD.

When you order *Red Bull* from Robert Baxt you will get everything you need to perform the trick including a Red Bull mascot puppet which you cannot find anywhere else. The only item you would have to purchase is a can of Red Bull energy drink which you can buy just about anywhere. The trick is cute if you feel compelled to include a puppet in your act. My only reservation is that after actually seeing a great performance of the *Vanishing Bandana*, I'm not sure this would have as much universal appeal.

To watch the trailer for *Red Bull* click below:

<https://www.robertbaxt.com/red-bull/>

Bob Abdou - AKA Mr. Puppet

Bob started in Atlanta, and it is where he got his stage name "Mr. Puppet". As a new ventriloquist, he was very privileged to have many professional ventriloquists and puppeteers as friends and mentors early in his career.

In Atlanta, his career took off, and he became a regular at schools and birthday parties and made many special relationships there.



In 2002, Bob married his best friend, June Wilkins and moved to Philadelphia when June was still in seminary. Working in Philadelphia was just as successful as Atlanta and living on the East Coast, Bob became an even bigger Mets fan.

June graduated and got called to a church in Austin, Texas and they moved there in 2003. Living in Austin is both fun and hot, and gave Bob the opportunity to bring great puppetry to the Lone Star State. His goal has always been to prove that puppets and ventriloquism can be entertainment for all ages - not just the little kiddies.

After 8 wonderful years in Texas and making puppetry a success, June and Bob have moved to Columbus, Ohio. They are now in their new location and with their puppets are continuing to bring laughter and fun.

Bob Abdou has now been a full-time entertainer since 1996. His career has allowed him to meet wonderful people and has taken him to some of the most beautiful places on earth. Bob has performed in many different states and countries, including Hawaii and Tokyo at the Japanese Ventriloquist Convention in 2006.

Bob knows that he owes a debt of gratitude to the folks who nurtured him. He remembers the schools and families that hired him when he was just starting out, and to them, Mr. Puppet says, "Thank you."



Some puppetry links to get you started:

<http://www.peeperspuppet.com/what.shtml>

<https://www.czechmarionettes.com/en/>

<http://www.pelhampuppets.uk.com/>

<http://www.thepuppetmall.com/>

http://wolfvents.com/Wolf_Vents_Home.html

<http://www.creativemin.com/>

<https://www.puppetresources.com/#sthash.CJqPI93p.lqGCbhHz.dpbs>

<https://puppetbuilder.com/info/index.html>

<https://www.outoftheboxpuppets.com/>

<https://puppetpelts.com/>

<http://www.stevetaylor.com/products.html/index.htm>

<https://www.puppetry.info/building/index.html>

<http://www.axtell.com/vent.html>

<https://www.puppetsandprops.com/>

<https://www.folkmanis.com/146/home.htm>

MAGIC CALENDAR

	THUR MAY 2	S.A.M. Assembly 181 meeting and on Thursday, May 2, 2019, at the First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Doors open at 7:00, Workshop by Conrad Colon at 7:30 PM. http://magicsam181.com
	THU MAY 9	Delaware Knights of Magic meeting is on Thursday, May 9, 2019, a Cokesbury Village, 726 Loveville Rd, Hockessin, DE 19707 at 7:30 PM
	MON MAY 13	S.A.M. Assembly 161 meets on the second Monday of each month. May 13, 2019, at the Stoney Brook Grille, 1285 Easton Turnpike in Branchburg, NJ 08876. https://www.facebook.com/groups/SAM161CALENDAR/about/
	MON MAY 13	I.B.M. Ring 6 , The Delaware Valley Conjurers Club regularly meets every 2nd Monday, with a meeting on Monday, May 13, 2019, at the Hancock United Methodist Church, 542 Wesley Road, Springfield, PA.
	TUE MAY 14	I.B.M. Ring 200 meets on Tuesday, May 14, 2019, 7:00 PM (Doors open at 6:30 PM) at the Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Edison, New Jersey.
	THUR MAY 16	S.A.M. Assembly 4 will be meeting on Thursday, May 16, 2019, at the Polish Home, 9150 Academy Road, Philadelphia, PA 19114, doors open at 6:30 PM.
	SAT MAY 18	The Amazing Kreskin at Randy Now's Man Cave, 134 Farnsworth Ave, Bordentown, New Jersey 08505, Saturday, May 18, 2019, at 8 PM. Tickets: \$25. http://www.mancavenj.com/
	SUN MAY 19	The Amazing Kreskin at Randy Now's Man Cave, 134 Farnsworth Ave, Bordentown, New Jersey 08505, Sunday, May 19, 2019, at 6:30 PM. Tickets: \$25. http://www.mancavenj.com/
	THUR MAY 23	The Association of Children's Entertainers is meeting on Thursday, May 23, 2019, at the United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Meetings start at 7:30 PM.
	THUR JUN 6	S.A.M. Assembly 181 meeting and on Thursday, June 6, 2019, at the First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Doors open at 7:00, Workshop at 7:30 PM. http://magicsam181.com

Visit the Magic Calendar on our SAM 181 website at http://magicsam181.com/?page_id=95