

## *Ex Libris* by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for August 2016! I hope everyone has enjoyed the summer – we have just a couple of weeks before schools are back in session and we start to head into the transitional season of Fall. This month we are going to focus on **Hofzinsler's Card Conjuring** by Ottokar Fischer. The book focuses on the card magic of Johan Nepomuk Hofzinsler, considered by many to be the father of modern card magic.

The book was originally written in German in 1910 and was titled *Kartenkünste*. Now this book is interesting for a number of reasons. First it was limited to 500 copies but when the Germans blitzed London in October 1940, the bookbinders lost their building and 80 of the 500 were destroyed. Secondly, Hofzinsler had nothing to do with writing the book; he died in 1875 and Fischer took interest in his work much later, so he relied solely on descriptions of the friends and students of Hofzinsler.

Fischer was not a particularly good writer and with the second-hand sources and the English translation, the material differed greatly from its original source making it difficult to follow and understand at times, which caused problems with reconstructing the sleights and effect. Despite that it is because of this book, however poorly written, that we have a record of Hofzinsler and his body of work. Without it he and his work may well have been lost in the mists of time.

The book contains a number of effects using normal cards, duplicate cards, double sided (as in double faced and double backed cards), partial deck stacks and even some effects using mechanical props and apparatus. Without a doubt two of the effects for which Hofzinsler is most famous are *Remember and Forget* and perhaps more famously, *Everywhere and Nowhere* are both described with multiple methods for each. These are very strong pieces of card magic and if performed properly they are still very commercial and viable today. Another curiosity that many have never heard of are his Transparent Cards; if you are not familiar with those, you show the back of a playing card to an audience member with a strong light behind it and they see that it is a black card, because of course the light is coming through the card. It turns out not to be their card, but when you snap your fingers and turn the card over, it is a red spot card – their selection! Various ideas are given for the use of these cards.

There are many different sleights and singular effects that are attributed to Hofzinsler, such as the Hofzinsler Pass (which is sometimes called the Hoffmann Pass), the Hofzinsler Spread Force, Magnetic Cards, the Slip Force and the Top Change, among many others.

This book is a great source of information if you can find a copy and as far as I am aware, it is not even available in e-book format. There are other books available with regards to Hofzinsler, the two which come to mind are *Non Plus Ultra Volumes 1 & 2* by Magic Christian (only comes in a set) and available through the Conjuring Arts Research Center, and the other book is *The Magic of J.N. Hofzinsler* by Ottokar Fischer (translated by Richard Hatch). Both sets run north of

\$200/USD but are worth every penny, especially if you are interested in the history of card and stage magic and the effects that are now considered to be classics.

That is all for this month everyone, and I look forward to 'seeing' you all here again next month when we take a look at yet another classic tome in magic. Stay tuned to find out what it is and have a magical month!

-J.M.A.