

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for September 2017! Was it just me or did the summer speed right by us? The school year is now upon us and that means a return to learning, which is something we should never stop doing anyhow. One set of books that will never cease to be a fountain of knowledge are ***The Magic of Ascanio Volumes 1-4*** by *Arturo de Ascanio y Navaz* and *Jesús Etcheverry*. This is a collection of four separate hardcover books published in Spain by Páginas and contains a whopping 1,148 pages!

Maestro Ascanio was a good friend and mentor of mine; he was a lawyer from Madrid and an amateur magician who became well-renowned for his theoretical thinking and creating various principles, sleights and effects over the years, many of which are considered classics and used as a measurement of standard today.

Volume One is subtitled ***“The Structural Conception of Magic”*** and it focuses on exactly that. It talks about how to construct a show/act, how to study magic, how to create good presentations, ways to get creative as well as a few interviews by Juan Tamariz and a biographical interview of the character of Ascanio. The meat of this book however is the section on his original Articles of Theory which cover concepts such as the Conception of the Magical Atmosphere (what kind of atmosphere do you create for your audiences?), Analysis of a Trick, Misdirection, Fundamentals of Timing, Knowing Yourself and the Psychology of Palming. This book is not going to teach you magic secrets, but it will teach you how to be a better performer, creator and thinker.

Volume Two is subtitled ***“Studies of Card Magic”*** and this book starts off with an in-depth exploration of all aspects related to the *Ascanio Spread*, which is a well-known way to hide a card among four openly displayed cards. It contains early versions of now-classic Ascanio effects as well as some of his personally favorite pieces, including some of those featured in his 1970 FISM act. Two of my favorite pieces here are *Aunt Enriqueta’s Aces* and *A Baroque Transposition*. This book also shows some of the theoretical concepts from Volume One in action, with the addition of one of his more famous concepts called an *In-Transit Action*. This is a solid concept that is very deceptive when used and it should be used liberally!

Volume Three is subtitled ***“More Studies of Card Magic”*** and this book delves even further into the FISM act that Ascanio presented in Amsterdam in 1970. The pieces herein are considered among his masterpieces and include such effects as the *Ascanio All-Backs Routine*, *Ten Cards Up the Sleeve*, *The Aces of My Exam*, *Stranger Ambitious Card* and the *Nudist Deck*. The closing piece of this book is a piece that Ascanio was most proud of and it is called *Black Days* and as he himself described it, it truly is a masterpiece of magical thinking.

Volume Four is subtitled ***“Knives and Color Blindness”*** and perhaps not surprisingly, the focus is one of the things Ascanio was very famous for: his work on the Color-Changing Knives. The depth, detail and precision with which the Paddle Move and the color change are studied herein is astounding; this volume not only covers the thinking behind the moves, but it teaches

the basics as well as the complete Ascanio routine with the knives. Even if you do not use the Color-Changing Knives yourself, the ideas and principles can be applied to other effects which use the Paddle Move.

That is all for this month folks! Study a good book (Ascanio will do nicely) and keep the magic alive! – **J. M. A.**