

## *Ex Libris* by **Joaquin M. Ayala, Ph.D.**

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for August 2018! I hope everyone is having a great summer full of sun, splashing and magic! As I write this article I am on a train just leaving my beloved city of Chicago, a city that I will consider a second home (or technically, third, after Barcelona and where I currently live in Michigan). In every way imaginable, I have always felt a deep connection with the city of Chicago – but perhaps especially in the magic sense.

One of my favorite magical dynasty families has a connection to the city and they are the Bambergs, specifically **Theo Bamberg**, a.k.a., "**Okito**". In fact, the book we are going to focus on this month is called *Okito on Magic* by Theo Bamberg and Robert Parrish. This edition is a 216-page hardcover book originally published in 1952 by **Edward O. Drane**, commonly known as **Enardoe**. The book was illustrated by Robert Johnstone.

The book begins with a description of the career, thoughts and theories on magic of Okito himself. This is probably one of my favorite parts about this book, though in comparison to the rest of the book it is a relatively short portion. There are many stories about other performers that he was great friends with, others he was a great admirer of and others still that greatly inspired him and his work. He talks about various performers that he saw and worked with over the years, including from his youth. He also reminisces about beautiful old theaters where he saw magic acts performed and where he himself was a performer as well.

Part Two is a selection of effects which cover the gamut of close-up and platform effects with some stage effects thrown in for good measure. These are all, at the time this book was written, considered strong and classical effects in magic – the Cups & Balls, the change of a playing card, cigar and cigarette magic, silk magic and it even discusses things like vanishing cloths (cloths used to vanish objects) and hat loading devices. He also talks a bit about Slydini – a very interesting tidbit if I do say so.

This is followed by a sub-section on small magic – magic that is all about close-up work, including work from **Max Malini** like his *Button Biting Trick* and his *Brick Trick*, along with the very first and original handling of the Okito Box, of which Theo Bamberg was the creator. This part is followed by a section of medium sized magic, which is magic best suited to the parlor or small stage and includes effects such as the *Bill in Lemon*, *L'Homme Masque*, *Rising Cards*, *An Egg and a Canary*, *The Enchanted Rice* and another Okito

original called *Linkage* in which a number of individual (loose) chain links are placed into a container, a mystical pass is made and when they are dumped out of the container, they are all linked into one long chain!

This, in turn, is followed by a section on large magic – magic suitable for a larger stage and contains classic items such as *Multum in Parvo*, *Where do the Ducks Come From* and *Vanishing Bowl of Water*. This edition of the book is rounded out with four effects aimed at magic with living (hopefully!) people.

There was a second, expanded edition of this book published by Magic Inc. in Chicago in 1973. It contains a fifth section of 25 additional pages (for a total of 241 pages) with the subsection titled “Additional Okito Originals”. It details seven effects that did not appear in the original book, among them is the *Impossible Lit Cigarette Vanish*, *Ringer* (which is an ungimmicked Ring Off Ribbon) and *Oho!*

Well that is all for this month folks – if you like to read short biographies and books with a good variety of effects which require little to no adjustments to be relevant today, give this book a try! Join me again next month when we will discuss a book that will help you get ready for the Halloween season! –

**J. M. A.**