

Ex Libris by Joaquin M. Ayala de Cédoz, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for May 2026 (YIKES!) I hope everyone is doing well and enjoying the revival of life in the northern hemisphere!

This month I was feeling a tad nostalgic. When I was still performing magic full-time, one of my staples and my biggest upsell for my corporate clientele was doing private parlour shows for their employees, afterhours, at the trade shows. It is one of my favourite performance formats because it allows for a wide variety of effects while keeping the groups a little more intimate.

Since our club also performs parlour shows for the public on occasion, it reminded me of a most wonderful book that was released back in 2020, *Parlour Tricks* by **Rhys “Morgan” Jones** and **Robert “West” Tay (Morgan & West)**. It is a 356-page hardcover book and published by Vanishing, Inc. Magic. It is another luxurious book with a green leather cover, gilded titling and even comes with a handy sewn-in bookmark.

In this tome you will find quite the variety of material, all of which, in this case, comes from the show the duet performs in the real world. The material within is not something you will learn and then go out and perform in a show, especially not by yourself, without some work in making it fit the style and personality of your own duet. If you plan to perform these effects on a solo level, be prepared to do some work. I say this not to scare you away from this book, but just as something to be aware of.

First off, their style is that of a Victorian-era vaudeville-esque setting, and the effects are written so that the characters play off each other. There is plenty of by-play, and the philosophies and theories that the authors share is quite profound, based on their solo work and their working together as a duet.

That all being said, everything in this book can absolutely be updated and changed to fit any modern style and situation. There is some work on a costume quick change, a wonderful use of an Impossible Bottle (unfamiliar with this one? Look up Harry Eng Impossible Bottles), one of the best Cards Across solutions I have ever used, and some very clever two-person code work. I really appreciate their approach to creating theatricality, writing the audience into the show and some of their other thoughts on developing an act for a modern show, and all of this can be applied to you, whether you are a solo act, a close-up performer, a parlour performer or even part of a duet.

Many of you will be familiar with our own wonderful duet from the AAMC, **Bill and Karl Rabe** and one of their signature pieces is the *Multiplying Bottles*, which gets the Morgan & West treatment in this book as an opener called *The Restarting Bottle*, and the way they perform it reminds me of the playful nature that the Rabe duo exudes in their interpretation.

In TOCA (Thought of Cards Across), you see ten black cards and ten red cards; one person merely thinks of a card, and it travels across to the other pile. In this case, it requires a gaffed set of cards (the official set made by Card Shark, and only \$35.99/USD at the time of this writing) and it is super, super clean! There is a wonderful effect using a ribbon, a bag and a borrowed finger ring and a bunch of random rings with a startling finish. *The 40 Digit Hyperbrain Act* would especially be

enjoyed by our mathematical magic wizard, **Bob Goodwin**. There is even a very intriguing transposition between two people involving a waistcoat, a shoe...and a carrot!

As a bonus, this book includes a link to a live performance of Morgan & West showcasing the material in the book. Including this was a great idea because of the nature of the act and the effects it contains. It gives you a chance to see the magic come alive off the page, to see their interpretation of it, and to also give you a chance to see how you would have to change it to suit your own needs. In my own head, I can see performers like duos of Karl & Bill, **Don Oesterwind/Dan Jones** and for all the wonderful work he does, even solo performers like **Lincoln Stone** taking the material in here to all new heights and styles.

That is all for this month, so please join me again in June as we get ready for summer and get ready for another study assignment...the fun kind!

- *J.M.A.*