

“Be Seen, Not Heard”

12th World Deaf Magicians Festival Riverside, California U.S.A. April 6-13, 2008

by Steven T. Longacre and Dr. Simon J. Carmel

During the week of April 6-13, 2008, deaf magicians from throughout the world gathered in Riverside, California, to socialize and compete in the art of magic. Contestants and foreign tourists alike spent a week at the California School for the Deaf at Riverside. In addition to their stay in the Riverside area, side trips were taken to the Magic Castle in Hollywood, a walk along the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and a visit to the Hollywood Magic Shop. A full day visit was dedicated to Disneyland, the “world’s most magical place” in Anaheim. Some even took a side trip at the conclusion of the festival to Las Vegas, Nevada, “the magic capitol of the world.”

Participants in the 12th World Deaf Magicians Festival came from ten different countries: Cyprus, England, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, the Ukraine, and U.S.A. This is the second time that the United States has sponsored the international festival for deaf magicians having previously taken place in Rochester, New York in 1996. At the Riverside festival, a total of 48 deaf magicians participated while an additional 28 foreign tourists joined in the festivities. Deaf magicians were comprised of men, women, and children.

During the festival week, three deaf magicians Andrew Truffa, of Italy, Simon Carmel, of Florida, USA, and Gennaro Trevisan, also of Italy, gave a hands-on magic workshop utilizing coins, cards, paper, mental magic, and rope tricks. The lecturers rotated amongst three groups of deaf magicians and tourists alike presenting their ideas in 15-20 minutes time intervals. Steve Longacre, of California, also contributed some ideas.

The next day, on Friday morning, the leader-delegates from ten countries attended the 9th Congress meeting of the Society of World Deaf Magicians. The topics included the delegates’ reports on deaf magicians and magic activities in their respective countries;

discussion on some festival competition rules; report of the 2010 international festival in Cattolica, Italy; proposal for the 2012 festival to be held in one of the Scandinavian countries; and agreement to retain the festival run every two years. Lastly, the Society officers—John Gapp of England, president; Anatoly Reznik of Ukraine, vice president; and Simon Carmel, secretary-general—were unanimously re-elected for the next two years.

The culminating Gala event on Friday evening, showcased the award-winning deaf magicians at the elegant California Baptist University Theater. The theater was packed with over 350 deaf and hearing spectators. Two world renowned hearing professional magicians, Tina Lenert and Danny Cole, as well as the twice-Grand Prix deaf Festival winner, Matthew Morgan of Wisconsin, gave their outstanding performances as well. At the end of the Gala program, the festival winners were announced and received their “Oscar-award” trophies. The list of festival winners’ names and categories won are listed below. The judges for the competition were comprised of three hearing magician-judges: Belinda Kaesler, Kevin Brown, and Monte Julian. The other two judges were deaf: Gennaro Trevisan, a long-time Italian deaf magician, and Mel Carter, a popular deaf man of Palm Springs, California. An achievement award was given by the officers of the Society of World Deaf Magicians who awarded beautiful “cards in hand” trophies to the following four people: (1) Anatoly Reznik of Zaporozhe, Ukraine, who has manufactured many home-made magic props and tricks and sold them to both deaf and hearing magicians in Russia, Europe and the U.S. Mr. Reznik has also been a leader for the Ukrainian deaf magicians for the past 20 years. (2) Gennaro Trevisan of Italy, has performed magic shows all over Italy and other countries and has won the top competition places from the 1960s through the 1980s; (3) Samuel Ruiz, Jr. of Riverside, California, U.S.A., as an outstanding deaf master magic teacher who has taught and worked with young deaf students at the California State School for the Deaf at Riverside for the past 5 years. His deaf magic group, known as the “Extreme Magicians,” have traveled in and out of the state of California. This is the first club of its kind in the history of deaf education; and (4) Danny Johnson, of Lake Worth, Florida, U.S.A., had previously performed between 400-500 shows per year in schools around the country for about ten years. He

was a very well known comedy magician who had performed in some national magic conventions along with hearing competitors during the 1950s-70s. Mr. Johnson had also influenced a great number of hearing magicians who perform comedy magic. Lastly, the Society gave the highest award, a very large beautiful plaque, to Horst Bormann of Leipzig, Germany. Mr. Bormann is credited for founding the very first international festival for deaf magicians in Leipzig in 1986. The Society is forever grateful for Mr. Horst's efforts and accomplishments.

Following the successful gala show, deaf magicians ventured up to the nearby city of Pomona to provide entertainment at the annual DeafNation Expo. Ten magicians performed their award-winning acts in front of nearly 3,000 deaf individuals who were in attendance at the all-day exposition.

Of special note, Dr. Simon J. Carmel announced and sold copies of his newly released book called, *Silent Magic: Biographies of [59] Deaf Magicians in the United States from the 19th to 21st Centuries*, to festival participants. He has plans to write another book which will include the biographies of international deaf magicians from around the world.

The international deaf magicians festival is held every two years. The next festival will be hosted by Italy in the spring of 2010. Additional information regarding this upcoming festival can be obtained by visiting the following website: www.2010wdmf.com. Previous festivals have been held in the countries of Germany, England, India, Russia, Ukraine, and the United States. This year's festival was organized by Samuel Ruiz, Jr. and his wife Lele, both of Riverside, California, under the support of the U.S. Deaf Magicians Society. Sponsors who made this even possible were Hands on Video Relay Services, Inc.; Sorenson Communications, Inc; CSD Video Relay Service (CSDVRS); International Brotherhood of Magicians (IBM) for donating 80 magic videocassettes to the festival participants; IBM Ring 313 Club (Irvine, California); DeafNation Expo; Starbucks Coffee Company; Yum Yum Donut Shop; Harris Communications; DawnSignPress; Center on Deafness-Inland Empire (CODIE); and the City of Riverside.

Magic is such a great visual medium and transcends all language/communication barriers. Most people think that sign language communication is universal throughout the

world. However, that is far from the truth. Almost every country has its own sign language system. But, when deaf individuals get together, they quickly assimilate and utilize international signs along with gestures and pantomime to fill in the gaps. Therefore, when it comes to working with magic, deaf magicians just need their eyes. That's why deaf magicians prefer to "*be seen, not heard!*"

Winners of 12th World Deaf Magicians Festival

Riverside, California – USA

Illusion Magic

1. Sammy Ruiz - USA
2. Franz Paulus - Germany
3. Ioannis Ioannou - Cyprus

Stage Magic

1. Vadim Kiruykhin - Russia
2. Kamizuru Nobuo - Japan
3. Andrew Truffa - Italy

Comedy Magic

1. Vadim Kiruykhin - Russia
2. (Tie) Petelin Dmytro/ Nemyrovchenko Antoliy - Ukraine
2. (Tie) John Gapp - England
3. (Tie) Steve Longacre/Greg Koppel - USA
3. (Tie) Ravi Chandra - India

Merlin Stage Magic

1. John Gapp - England
2. Ricky Rowray - USA
3. Morton Feldman - USA

Women Stage Magic

1. Elena Evstratova/Anastasia Volnova - Russia
2. Maikop Oleksandra/Kirash Olga - Ukraine
3. Kim Olena - Ukraine

Micro Magic

1. Nemyrovchenko Antoliy - Ukraine
2. Vadim Kiruykhin - Russia
3. Andreij Turin - Russia

Children Stage Magic

1. Tyler Berdy - USA
2. Artem Turin - Russia
3. Dalton Kramer – USA