



by Andrea Bonetti, ABB AB, Sweden

The Magic Curtain

It is an interesting feeling when you meet someone at a conference or standardization working group, and you know that there is something special about that person. This is where Google helps, when you do a search on “Andrea Bonnetti” some unexpected information pops-up...



Andrea Bonetti, The Bonnie Kids, preparing for the ABB arena performance

Engineering and Magic

My interest in magic started around 1982-1983. My first magic shows in front of real audiences took place with my younger brother in 1983.

It is not easy to be a magician: in order to be allowed to join a magic circle, you must prove your real interest in the art and show that you are able to perform some magic tricks. However if you do not join a magic circle, it is difficult to learn to perform magic tricks! The city of Rome gave me the possibility to manage this Catch-22 situation. Firstly, a magic shop in one of the old city centers (near the Pantheon) provided me with the superb opportunity to buy some simple tricks and books. Subsequently, I managed to join the local magic organization affiliated to the largest magician organization in the world, the International Brotherhood of Magicians (IBM). What triggered such an interest in magic? Probably Silvan - the most famous Italian

magician in the 1980's although TV certainly played a role. The 'magical' part of the art was certainly the major attraction and the belief that I really could make things appear and disappear. However, this was subsequently accompanied by the frustration that it wasn't really like that. Even after all these years, I still experience the frustration and disappointment of 'destroying the magical effect' when learning how to perform a new trick, because knowledge of the intricacies of the trick destroys the magical illusion to the performer.

A magician is like a juggler insofar as both need to dedicate hours of training to master the art. The difference is that the juggler entertains you by explicitly showing how good he is whereas a magician must hide his skill to entertain you in a different way.

My family and friends fondly remember "Andrea the Magician" who doggedly tried to master the different branches of magic: ma-

A magician is like a juggler - both need to dedicate hours of training to master the art!

nipulation (ask my poor teachers about coins falling every 10 minutes on the classroom floor), pick pocketing (wallets, pens, glasses etc. stolen from my friends' bodies resulting in positive and negative reactions) and going to school on the unicycle (every magician can juggle a little and vice-versa).

My parents were tired and bored of seeing the same tricks each day and this caused me to question my capability at performing the tricks until I got a sign. This happened when, after a small private Christmas show, my father confessed that he had sneaked into my secret room while I was sleeping to find out as he described in his own words, "how the hell you pulled out all that stuff from the box!" At that moment I realized that I had attained a certain level of skill in magic.

My motive for being a magician was never about making money – I simply wanted to be a magician and never dreamed that I would earn money from it. However word spread quickly about me and my magical act, Bonnie Kids (the name came about in 1989), and magic ended up paying my way through

university years, providing me with economic independence at a young age and financing my summer vacations, my car, etc.

While the original idea was to be a magician for adult audience (mainly manipulation like cards, billiard balls and cigarettes or general magic like silks, flowers etc. ... typical theater stuff!), one day my mother's friend asked me if I could entertain at a children's birthday party.

"Entertaining kids?!? !?!"

I am a magician, not a baby sitter!" was my initial reaction. I really did not like the idea at all! Nevertheless, I did the birthday party show and discovered two things that I had never considered before, namely, that it was much more difficult with children but I had lots of fun. Why more difficult? Because, no matter how young you think you are, you are not a child. Their body language is different to ours, their expectations are different. They do not look where you want to or as predicted when performing for adults. If you say to a child, "Pick up a card from the deck, ANY card, look at it, show it to your friends,

DO NOT tell it to me..., put it back in the deck, shuffle the deck.... Now I'll say the magic word... Sim Sala Bim... here is your card!", the child's reaction is "of course you found my card, you are a magician. Can you show me something funny now?". This task is not easy to achieve.

So where did the name for the magical act come from? Our surname is Bonetti, Bonnie Bunny Magic Rabbit, then Kids (myself and my brother Marco were young and we were also performing for kids) hence the name:

The Bonnie Kids

It sounded logical to us and in November 1989, two weeks after the Berlin Wall fell, the name Bonnie Kids was born, together with the associated logo, the magic rabbit, the business cards etc.

A magician must not simply learn some magic tricks but must also learn how to present the tricks in an entertaining manner. You cannot proceed to this step if you do not have years of practice behind you. Investing in those years of practice requires love for the art. Those who have money as their motivation do not enter the profession on the right track. As a magician, you have to promote the art, so you have to share the secrets with other possible future magicians (amateur, professionals or semi-pro). You must be able to identify and encourage new potential magicians among the huge

2 Andrea's first magician card: IBM - International Brotherhood of Magicians



number of people that just want to know "how to". This is not an easy task. In any case, I think I have done my part as two Italian magicians took up the art because of my influence. Their parents were not so happy at the time, fearing that they would prefer to practice their magic instead of preparing for university exams. However, not only have they continued until this day to be in the magic society, they also graduated from university.

As a magician you must adhere to strong ethics which are mainly based on the following two principles:

- keep the secret
- give credits

The first principle is obvious but the second is more subtle since the "how to" and the presentation of a trick are the most important things in producing a magical effect, and most of them are not patentable. The magic community demonstrates respect for the inventor of a magic trick/effect by:

- always buying original tricks (no rip-offs);
- always mentioning the source of the magical inspiration or giving

credit in a few words.

As a magician, you have to promote yourself, you are your own boss (although customer satisfaction is your ultimate boss) and you are 100% responsible for your own actions. This is something I like about being a magician

The magician, a.k.a. me, graduated in electrical engineering in 1993 from La Sapienza University in Rome, Italy (so I was first a magician and then an engineer!). I subsequently joined ABB in Rome and moved to Sweden in 1998 to work for ABB Relays in Västerås.

I was invited to write something about my magic activity and I think I have done this in the previous sections. However, I was also asked to write something on how the "magician" interacts with the "engineer" and vice-versa. I have done it but in a more subtle way which you may have missed.

I have concerns about the lack of ethics in today's working life. Failure to meet or even attempting to meet promised deadlines or failure to give credit to work that has been inspired by others are examples of actions that concern me. Ethics was

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the main topic in the university rector's speech at my graduation. As a magician, I know from experience that it is possible to perform well while adhering to strong ethics. Surely, this is also possible in everyday life?

Consider the example of pirate software and counterfeit products in engineering and considered what would happen if the same principle was adopted by magicians. There would not be any more magicians if

3 December 2005: Magic Show at Vasteras Theather, Sweden



secrets were not kept and due credit given to inventors of new magical effects/tricks. Today's magic literature is rich in examples of credit being given to the original inventor of magic effects/tricks. Acknowledgements such as "I got the idea after having seen Slydini's show in Paris in 2000. I have slightly modified the 'Slydini move' and changed the presentation etc" are very common in the magic community's books and magazines. Shouldn't we try to adopt the same principle in everyday life?

The conjugation of magician/engineer has worked fine for me so far. Clearly, I have to give priority to my work as an engineer and this has influenced the direction my life (e.g. my move to Sweden etc.). The magician comes 'after' the engineer so I have to plan carefully my magic shows to avoid conflicts with my day job. I keep the magic shows to the minimum - one or two shows a month.

Do I do it for money? No. When you reach a certain level as a magician, you cannot train in front of the mirror anymore. You practice while performing so without

performances you are no longer a magician. Money come anyway, and the economical aspect must be considered, in respect to magicians that do live out of their art!

Who gives more to whom - the magician to the engineer or the engineer to the magician? Probably the magician gives more to the engineer. Audience control, understanding the body language, preparing a speech where people do not fall asleep, using fantasy, inventing something instead of doing 'copy/paste', all of these are used by the engineer but it comes from the magician within. Nonetheless, the engineer provides the magician with economic independence and the luxury of choosing the shows that he prefers in terms of prestige and money.

It is funny when an engineer exits the ABB door in the evening and enters the same door in the morning as a magician. This can occur at 'open house' days in my company or perhaps at the launch of new products when I sometimes perform a magic show.

ABB is a big company. I once ended up participating in the of-

ficial opening of the Ice Hockey Arena in Västerås, sponsored by ABB (it is called ABB Arena). I was the magician and a lot of ABB employees who were present at the opening thought perhaps they had already seen me somewhere else... maybe dressed differently... who knows? In any case, I was there as a magician!

Since the relay engineering community is very small, smaller than the magic community for sure, it is probable that one day we will meet somewhere. Then if you think that I am crazy, you will at least now understand why!



The purpose of this article was to entertain you. If you have managed to read this far, I have hopefully achieved this so I am happy.

www.magician.org/member/thebonniekids

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4 The Bonnie Kids Logo



5 Kids don't hide their emotions

