



Fred Roby & Angela Award

THE MUSEUM OF MAGIC IN CHERASCO

Article by Domenico Dante¹ published in Magia Moderna, No. 1, April 2024

As I already mentioned in the last issue of Magia moderna (No. 3, December 2023), Angela Roby entrusted me with the organisation and installation of all the equipment for Fred Roby & Angela, the famous Swiss ventriloquist of Italian origin who had forged a deep friendship with the Club Magico Italiano, as well as with many of us who had the good fortune to know him. Angela Roby has decided to give practical support to new talent in the world of magic through the very essence of the FISM Qualified Contest of the CMI in Abano, a qualifying competition designed to promote magic as an art form. An aspect that I will never stop talking about, as it represents not only the main objective of FISM but also that of all those who see magic as an artistic expression.

It's for this reason that I've made several visits to the Museum of Magic in Cherasco - other visits will be scheduled in the coming months. This circumstance gave me the opportunity to grasp aspects that escape the inattentive visitor. I discovered a world - and here I make my mea culpa - that I had never carefully assessed, not having been able to visit it previously. Over and above the curiosity that the museum can arouse in children and adults thanks to the fascination for mystery, the world of illusion and the "prestige games", aspects that are obviously very important because they awaken interest in our art on the part of future generations, I now realise that the concept of the Museum of Magic and all the activities linked to it is so undervalued. I think that in a concept of



FISM certificate of honour awarded to Angela Roby by Domenico Dante



The room dedicated to Fred Roby

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The Museum of Magic in Cherasco

popular culture, the museum is seen more as a place of entertainment rather than a place of deepening and study, which, in my opinion, should be predominant. I had the opportunity to talk about this at length with Don Silvio (Mago Sales), and what came out was a shared bitterness at the fact that few magicians are interested in the cultural heritage they can discover there. As a passionate collector, I've always been fascinated by the exhibits: rare, ancient, precious tricks from all over the world, tricks that have made and are making the history of the art of magic, tricks that allow us to reconstruct the trends and forms of magic shows in different eras. And what about the library of the museum, the second largest in the world, with its 22,000 books and 15,000 magazines! It's a great place to do research for a degree dissertation (true, not false!) from a prestigious university (true, not false!). I can't help smiling (not to cry) when I hear talk of a "University of Magic" where so-called credit is easily a fraud, and that's "magic", with promises of titles, "diplomas"



The plaque of honorary membership of the CMI presented to Angela Roby by Domenico Dante

and "prizes" that, in my opinion, are holding back the progress and the future of the Art of magic like a ball and chain. This is certainly not the case with artists like Walter Rolfo (who has a degree in engineering and also in psychology) or Alexandre, Elio De Grandi (who has a degree in medicine and also in psychology, and soon a 3rd). And I mention them not so much because they are very good friends, because they are from Turin and because they are linked to Mago Sales and the museum, but because they immediately reflect their solid magical culture (and not only that).

Far be it from me to think that a university degree is the key to success in magic, that it can distinguish a successful magician from another who is lost in the heterogeneous mass of magicians, that it guarantees a brilliant career in our world. I've always maintained that I have enormous respect and esteem for those who don't make a profession of it, for those who put on a show a few times a year. The problem is that in our world, all too often, indeed almost always, everything is left to 'do it yourself' in the (false) belief that the audience will like what is done anyway. Self-taught learning can work, but not always. It's true that there are no



The MC

real magic schools comparable to colleges or universities. Everything is based on lectures (although they are very interesting) and private workshops, where what you learn is a "grain of sand" compared to the cultural baggage that every magician should have. And it's in this light that I feel the Museum of Magic is undervalued. The magical world of Cherasco should be a source of learning, a place for reflection and open-mindedness, a place that offers a 360° view of everything that revolves around the Art of magic.

Some of the puppets created by Fred Roby and Angela for their shows



Micky

Coralie

Angelito



Fred Roby & Angela Award

THE CELESTINE PROPHECY

Article by Domenico Dante¹ published in *Magia Moderna*, No. 3, December 2023

In the 90s, when I became President of the Club Magico Italiano (CMI), Antonio Versini, who then called himself Marcel Achard, gave me a book just before he embarked on a dazzling professional career on cruise ships: *The Celestine Prophecy*, by James Redfield².

I have often referred to this text, and still do, because the author describes, through nine 'prophecies', nine 'illuminations', a life journey leading to the awareness and knowledge that nothing happens 'by chance'.

I strongly recommend reading this book for the simple reason that it encourages us to analyse more carefully aspects of our lives that we too often neglect because of the frenetic pace in which we are caught up. Prophecies, illuminations that are sometimes banal, but that nevertheless make us think, as it happened to me in Abano³ when, during a discussion about an event, pseudo-prophets were dispensing their science with comments and assessments that were far away from a realistic analysis of the facts. Nothing important, I grant you, but it helped me to understand human aspects that had escaped me or to which I hadn't given due importance: what an enlightenment! How could I not have realised this before! I had before me the 'first prophecy' which, according to Redfield, is fulfilled when we become aware of the coincidences in our lives.

Apart from the meeting with the pseudo-prophets, I think there were other, much more important coincidences that occurred during the Abano Convention. The most important was undoubtedly the collaboration I established with Angela



FISM "Scholarship holder" Certificate



Angela Roby and Domenico Dante with the winners 2023 Vadim & Elena (left) and Sergi (right)

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² American author and lecturer, best known for his first best-selling book *The Celestine Prophecy* published in 1993, which was also adapted for the cinema in 2006. The theme of this book is synchronicity, which, according to Carl Jung, reveals the meaning of our lives.

³ Host city for the CMI Annual International Magic Convention



The « Fred Roby & Angela Award »
(ventriloquist)



Competitors and jury



The Prize at the welcome desk of the CMI
Convention at Abano

Roby, the wife and assistant of the great Swiss ventriloquist Fred Roby (he also presented his show at our congress in Abano in 2011). It's no coincidence that the result of this collaboration has led to the decision to establish a major annual prize: the Fred Roby & Angela Award, which is presented to one of the young competitors at Abano who is able to demonstrate excellence in creativity and professional skills. Two thousand five hundred euros every year! For the moment, for ten years, but with the intention of continuing thereafter. This is Angela Roby's donation, already in the CMI's coffers, which will enable us to provide practical help to promising young magicians and, consequently, to enhance and confirm the excellent performance that the CMI achieves with the help of Abano at an international level too. It's also no coincidence that every year young artists from South Korea pay for their own travel, food, hotel and convention registration to come to Abano. Personally, on behalf of the CMI, I'm very proud of everything our club does to promote Italian magic art on a worldwide level. Even this doesn't happen by chance, and as never before we can say here: deeds, not words! In my capacity as FISM International Advisor, I proposed, again with the aim of promoting the name and memory of Fred Roby & Angela at world level, to create a "Fred Roby & Angela Fund for Young Magicians" to enable young artists under the age of 26 to take part in the FISM World Championships. Angela Roby enthusiastically welcomed this proposal and has already offered FISM the considerable sum of ten thousand euros for each of the next three World Championships (2025 - 2028 - 2031). The money will be distributed fairly to the competitors entitled to it. FISM will issue each competitor with a 'scholarship holder' certificate similar to the one shown in the photo. I don't think it's necessary to point out the importance of such a contribution for a young person preparing to compete at a FISM world congress.

Another coincidence was that Angela Roby appointed me as her 'representative' to choose a museum in which to organize and install all Fred Roby's material. I chose the Museum of Magic in Cherasco (Italy), with its curator Mago Sales as the person responsible, for planning, coordinating and implementing the

exhibition, as it seemed to me the most appropriate and qualified for such an initiative. It will be my duty to ensure that the Fred Roby & Angela Award also strengthens the collaboration, the relationship of trust and the esteem between Mrs Angela Roby, the Club Magico Italiano, FISM and Italian magic.



The awards ceremony



Angela Roby with Domenico Dante and the recipients of the « Fred Roby & Angela Award »