

FISM 2015: Rimini, Italy

by Will Houstoun MIMC

This summer the competition that many view as the 'Olympics' of the magic world will take place in Rimini, Italy. As a Member Organisation of FISM The Magic Circle is involved in the convention and is able to send entrants for the competition. In addition the convention this year is presided over by Magic Circle Member Walter Rolfo AIMC. I spoke with Walter to discuss the process of organising such a large event and what his hopes and dreams for FISM are.

Will Houstoun: I know you are the President of FISM Italy. Can you tell me a little about yourself?

Walter Rolfo: I am 42 years old but live as if I am 26 and dream as if I am 16. I started to learn magic as a passion, I became a journalist to satisfy my desire to learn and I worked as a TV producer because no one else wanted to produce magic TV shows in Italy. Now, as FISM Italy's President I have realised a childhood dream: bringing the World Championship of Magic to Italy for the first time.

Will: How will your different areas of expertise contribute to the convention?

Walter: FISM is a big event, the most important in the world. I wish I could make it perfect for Magicians: the Congress which they always have dreamed of. But also a way to communicate magic to the world of non-magicians. I am aiming to make it known to a wider audience of non-magicians. As I produce FISM 2015, both sides of me work in harmony: as an expert on magic to create the largest, and best event for magicians ever, and, as a journalist, to promote the event to the world.

Will: Have you worked as a performing magician?

Walter: Yes, I did a lot for several years... and still do now, but only for special occasions or coaching sessions. In my career I have performed in all types of entertainment, from birthday parties to weddings, from major events in the cities to prime time television, I paid my dues. I did close-up and table-hopping shows, won major competitions on Italian television with a manipulation and dove act and I'm passionate about mentalism. I am a magician who loves magic. This is my first and true passion.

Will: Why did you decide to put in a bid to host the convention this year?

Walter: In Italy we are experiencing a new renaissance in magic and I like to think that the spark was ignited by Masters of Magic. In recent years, magic has returned to TV in Italy and there are more magic conventions, festivals and live performances. Today, in Italy, we have started doing magic in a new way and I am proud of this. Masters of Magic was at the forefront of this movement: the main programmes of magic in Italy were invented by me and produced by Masters of Magic; as well as the Masters of Magic festival which is considered one of the most important conventions of magic in the world is my own creation. FISM is the culmination of this journey: an event that I hope will contribute to the development and success of magic around the world.

Will: How long did it take to put the bid together?

Walter: More than two years! I wanted to have the support of all the Italian magicians and then I started to talk about our proposal to all the FISM Member Society presidents around the world. I wanted to understand what the world expected from a FISM in Italy. When I figured out that there was a way to realise something that many people desired then I decided to run....

Will: What is the process from deciding to bid for the convention to being declared the next host?

Walter: It is a long job... We prepared a proposal of over 180 pages in which we included copies of every supporting document: letters of support from Public Authorities and from the Italian magic societies, documents on the hotels and logistics, details of the budget and information on the programme. Basically we presented the entire convention in detail. This proposal was then sent to all the worldwide FISM Presidents to be screened. Finally, during FISM Blackpool, I had to condense everything into a fifteen-minute presentation and submit it to the General Assembly which then voted on the Hosting Country for the next FISM. In 2012 we beat really tough competition from Korea, a country that is having a great rise magically speaking.

Will: The Magic Circle is one of the Member organisations of FISM. Why do you think FISM is important to such organisations?

Walter: FISM is important for all organisations that work to create new forms of magic and new talents. FISM is primarily a competition, the most important competition on the planet. It is the starting point of new trends in magic. It is the starting point to launch new talents into the magic world. I think that FISM could be viewed as the showcase for all the good work organisations like The Magic Circle do in supporting new artists. FISM and The Circle are tied together – together they have the task of developing and promoting magic in the world.

Will: What have you done to try and make FISM Italy special?

Walter: On the day we won our bid for FISM I told Luis de Matos: "Now we have to do it, we have to create the best FISM ever." Before we won, the convention was an idea but suddenly it became the event that drives me, my staff and the International Consulting Committee that we set up for the convention. It is my pledge to create the best FISM ever: first of all, the competition. The most important and the best





competition in the world. Then I will create a convention with the largest number of artists, lectures, hours of magic, one-man shows, gala shows and, I hope, registered participants. Compared to the previous years, I want the attendants to be involved and I want to hear from everyone. If you have tips, ideas or suggestions then please, send them to me at walter.rolfo@fismitaly2015.com. Thanks to your advice, we are creating a participants' tailored FISM.

Will: Are you working with a team?

Walter: Absolutely. I have a fantastic, close-knit team, the Masters of Magic gang, that supports me and shares my passions, as well as a guardian angel who is giving me special help. A special thanks goes to all of my International Consulting Committee: Luis de Matos, Max Maven, Richard Kaufman, Ton Onosaka, Topas, Bimil Casa and Alessandro Marrazzo. I also have a great relationship with the FISM Board: Domenico Dante, Gerrit Bregman and Peter Din. Finally, of course, there are all my wonderful Italian magic friends who help me with their ideas and their passion.

Will: What made you decide to work with these particular people?

Walter: The decision was a collective one. Each of these people has given me support and friendship throughout my professional life and supported the candidacy of Italy with tireless enthusiasm. And I cannot fail to say that they are all outstanding professional and amazing people from whom I learn something every day.

Will: As well as trying to innovate will you maintain some of the FISM traditions?

Walter: I am convinced that to create a legendary FISM you first should make a real FISM, and this is only possible by respecting traditions: a world-class competition, unforgettable performances, the best lectures...

On this solid foundation I will add many special features, honed over the years at the Masters of Magic Festival. I want all registrants to go home with at least 3 new tricks, 3 brilliant ideas to include in their shows and, most importantly, to feel satisfied by an unforgettable experience. The experience will make us become better artists, more skilled than before and more talented and creative as magicians. This FISM is a fusion between tradition and future.

Will: One of the main features of FISM is always the competition. Why do you think magicians want to enter it?

Walter: Because for magicians contests are fundamental. They are an important showcase, highlighting your work in front of your peers. Also, for yourself, they demonstrate a commitment to work, to train and to prepare a new act.

Will: Many people say that magic is too subjective to really judge a 'winner' of a competition. What do you think it means to win a magic competition?

Walter: It might be true. Subjectivity and objectivity in a judgement are the two sides of the same coin: and it is here that the feelings your performance evokes for the jury comes into play. This year, at FISM, we have tried to add famous stars and professionals to the jury who, despite being young, have years and years of experience. We could say that the jury can be subjective on low placings, or when there is not a true champion. But if the values are clear then there is no doubt. The victory of Yann Frisch or Yu Ho Jin last FISM was obvious, regardless of the jury's decision. We hope that our jury will be up to the task and that new champions will simplify their task.

Will: What are some of the more unusual events you have planned?

Walter: We have so many, let me tell you about just a few...

One-Man Shows

I love to travel the world to see artists working in real life. These shows reveal their real secrets, the ones that win over a lay audience and have made them famous. We will have an area called 'The Real Magic Life' that will be dedicated to showcasing some of the finest one-man shows.

Ultra Lecture

We will present a new type of lecture experience, the 'Ultra Lecture.' Ten major artists will have nine minutes each to tell their secrets, analysing a specific theme, which will investigate the magic they use in real life, their icebreaker and games to close their sessions of impromptu magic.

A new way to get the maximum from the time spent at the FISM.

Magic and Technology

More and more, magicians use their iPhones, smartphones, rather than their magic wands to do shows. We will talk about how to make a cell phone even more powerful – capable of creating magical emotions, surprises and amazement. We will even have a convention app allowing you to follow all the events at the convention in real time and ensuring you don't miss anything.

Tea Time

A great idea developed by Luis de Matos ... the possibility for everyone to have tea with the best artists in the world. An hour's exclusive interview with the great big world true legends. At the entrance of the room a tea and a tea on stage to make it more intimate, family, magic ...

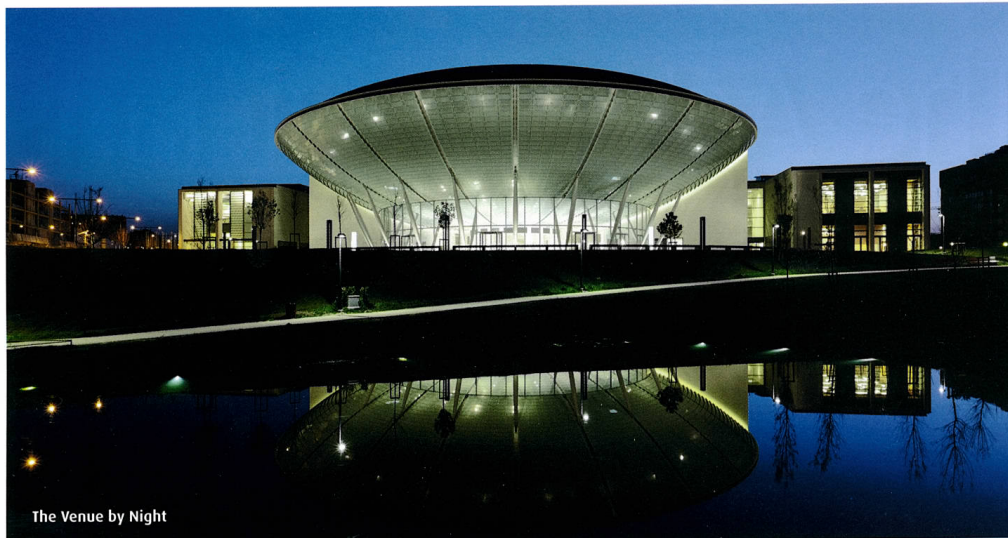
The Competition

Many do participate only to attend the competition, to be the first to discover new talents and new trends that subsequently will mark the magic world in the years to come. Of course this is not a new or unusual event but, for the first time in history, a major prize will be awarded to the winners of the Grand Prix. The prize is offered by Mr Waldimir Danilin who will present an prize of \$12,500 to the two Grand Prix winners.

After Night Magic Fest

You will be able to spend late evenings with your magic idols, who will explain techniques that you have not thoroughly understood. What a priceless opportunity! The artists from our shows will mix with you informally, socialise and help with aspects of their magic that you do not understand. In Italy we are famous for our entertainment so there will also be magical themed nights with dancing, discos and leisure time to socialise with friends.





The Venue by Night

Will: Did you aim to book established names or new talent that people will not have heard of before?

Walter: I think the perfect cast is a mix of all this. You need legends, magicians who have written the history of magic around the planet. You need the FISM faces, that always guarantee, with their presence, the quality to FISM. You need new talents, those who are still not very well known but are beginning to be appreciated and famous. Then, I like to propose new unknown talents. The ones that people do not even read in the programme but then go crazy when they discover them.

So that you can see the bookings I am making here are some of the names of the cast... and this is just the beginning. Every week, at www.fismitaly2015.com you will discover a new surprise in the cast. For now, however, we have: Armando Lucero, Franz Harary, Marco Tempest, Matt Franco, Paul Daniels, Lee Eun Gyeol, Michael Moschen, Finn Jon, Dani DaOrtiz, Miguel Angel Gea, Christian Engblom, Paul Wilson, David Williamson, James More, David Kaplan, Magus Utopia, Luke Jermy, Christian Schenk, Raymond Crowe, Rob Zabrecky, Xavier Mortimer, Yan Yan Ma, Tony Frebourg, Gaetan Bloom, Otto Wessely, Michael Moschen, Juliana Chen, Eugene Burger, Danny Orleans, Dan Sperry, Craig Filicetti, Yigal Mesika, Guy Hollingworth, Simon Pierro, Tony Montana, Topas, Max Maven, Luis de Matos.

Will: Do you have plans for after the convention?

Walter: The convention is not only a point of arrival but also a point of departure, a starting point for me and for all those like me who love

magic. FISM will be a wonderful experience which reinforces the importance of our art. I would like FISM to show the people of the world that magic is an art that is majestic, incredible and creative. I would like FISM to be a catalyst for strong emotions. When I tell someone I am a magician I don't want them to look at me with wide eyes, I want them to say: "How wonderful! When's the next show?" And then I will continue to propose and develop the Masters of Magic convention ... with even more experience and passion.

Will: Why did you chose Rimini as the convention's location?

Walter: The city of Rimini is a perfect location for an event of this magnitude. It is home to the largest convention centre in Italy, an ideal location for this event. In the centre there is a theater for 4,800 people, an amphitheatre with 1,600 seats, bars, restaurants, conference rooms and a magnificent social space. It is the ideal place to reside for six days of uninterrupted magic – 144 hours of feeling like you're at a magical home away from home. In addition, this city is a very popular holiday destination, has an enviable artistic and cultural heritage and the food is some of the most famous in Italy. So Rimini is the ideal city for magicians but also for their wives and children who will accompany them: during the day, sea and beach or tours to nearby Venice, Rome, Florence and during the night, magic and shows all together in the family.

Will: Do you still have registrations for the convention available and how can readers find out more about the event?

Walter: Yes we do. The Venue in Rimini can accommodate up to 10,000 people at once. The theatre alone has 4,800 seats and the whole venue is for FISM. All the news about the event can be found on the official website: www.fismitaly2015.com where it is possible to register directly online.

Will: Why has Italy not hosted FISM before?

Walter: There was an opportunity in 1991 but unfortunately Professor Sitta, who wanted to organise that FISM convention, died and the eighteenth FISM convention was hosted by the Swiss magicians. As a child, I heard about the idea of hosting FISM as an unattainable dream. My teacher, Victor Balli, spoke with tears in his eyes about his passion for the idea and it has remained in my heart. I believe that no one thought there would be another Italian candidate to host FISM after the death of Sitta, so the idea was set aside in the hearts of Italians, as something never to be experienced in our country.

In fact, I think we all were waiting for a madman to throw himself, heart and soul, into this adventure ... and I arrived! After the success of Masters of Magic Festival and the broadcast of many magic shows on TV in Italy, people began to think once more about hosting FISM. I had produced six Masters of Magic Festivals, seven major TV shows and more than 500 episodes of prime time magic shows. This FISM is the culmination of this experience, combining my professional life and my childhood dreams. Finally, in 2015, FISM Italy is becoming a reality. ●