



THE BUZZ

AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY

SUZY WANDAS, BORN
JEANNE VAN DYCK
(MARCH 5TH 1896 –
JULY 17TH 1986) IS
WITHOUT A DOUBT
BELGIAN'S BIGGEST
FEMALE MAGICIAN.



THE ADVENTURES OF
SOME MEMBERS OF THE
AMSTERDAM MAGIC
SHOW IN THE
PICTURESQUE CZECH
REPUBLIC.

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ISSUE 9

1/ FRITZ WITH A Z

As I write this, I am still buzzing (pun intended) about our last meeting. We had 20 members in! So much fun! I did a talk about a trick of mine called Just in Time and Zippo talked about card manipulation.

3 p.



4 p.

2/ SUZY WANDAS

KOBE VAN HERWEGEN

In 2019 father en son Christ and Kobe Van Herwegen published a book about Suzy Wandas. We are proud that they were willing to support us with exclusive publication of the chapter of Suzy's years in The Netherland during the Second World War.

3/ THE MERLIN AWARD SCAM

TOM STONE

A few years ago Tom received The Merlin Award for "Best Cabaret Act of the Decade". He got the award against his will. This is the last chapter.

10 p.



14 p.

4/

KOUZELNÝ KOKTEJL

JEFFREY VAN VLIET

Before embarking on our adventure to the picturesque Czech Republic, I'd like to introduce myself briefly.

This magazine is a production of the Amsterdam Magic Society. If you like to contribute, send this to our editor & designer, Frans de Groot: amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com

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DEAR READER

As I write this, I am still buzzing (pun intended) about our last meeting. We had 20 members in! So much fun! I did a talk about a trick of mine called [Just in Time](#) and [Zippo](#) talked about card manipulation.

Not only that, but I worked on [The Rose Seance Experiment](#) for a few months and it had its premiere. An immersive seance, so maybe we see some of you at Halloween.

The majority of you received your pins and certificate. We hope you wear your pin with pride and that you framed your certificate.

Congratulations to Omran and Olivier Henning for taking 3rd and 1st respectively at the national championships in Zeist! Also, congratulations to Rico who took 2nd place at the Magic Cocktail. Very proud of you three!

Speaking of the Magic Cocktail, in this issue you will read Jeffrey's experience of the Magic Cocktail convention. Plus you will learn about Suzy Wandas, a Belgian magician. Yes, that is her on the cover.

We have already started planning for 2024 and it will be an amazing year for the Society. If you want to become a member, visit our [website](#) and register. We look forward to welcoming you at one of our meetings.



"FRITZ"



Suzy Wandas, born Jeanne Van Dyck (March 5th 1896 – July 17th 1986) is without a doubt Belgian's biggest female magician. Born on the fairground she was awarded with the Performing Fellowship award from the Academy of Magical Arts in America. In 2019 father en son Christ and Kobe Van Herwegen published a book about her life after doing more than 6 years of research. We are proud that they were willing to support us with exclusive publication of the chapter of Suzy's years in The Netherland during the Second World War. One of the darkest chapters in our magic history.

The impressive Theater Carré building on the river Amstel in Amsterdam has long been the city's leading entertainment venue. Originally, the Carré circus family travelled the length and breadth of Europe with their spectacle. But when they stopped off in the Dutch capital in 1864, they received such a warm welcome that Oscar Carré promptly decided to stop travelling. Henceforth, he would show his equestrian routine in a fixed location. In 1887 the plans were ready and he had a stone circus in classicist style erected, with two stone horses adorning the front façade in tribute to his beloved animals. The majestic building was designed to host circus shows as well as variety spectacles. From 1 April 1940, Suzy Wandas stars in the Internationaal Variété show, she is fifth in the lineup. She could not wish for a finer venue to secure her breakthrough in the Netherlands.

The reviews are glowing. Within the Dutch world of magic, too, news of her exceptional talent spreads like wildfire. Nearly every show is attended by fellow magicians hoping to unravel Suzy's secrets. Among them is the 31-year-old Henk Vermeyden, a passionate magician and publisher who is determined to raise the art form



to a higher level in his country. Vermeyden was fascinated by magic from an early age, and worked his way up to become an assistant to magician Lurette. As well as a magician, Lurette is also the

owner of Goochelstudio Larette, 'The Netherlands distribution center for modern magic tricks', a magnet for aficionados of magic.



Vienna-born Cornel Hauer Larette does cigarette manipulations himself. Like no other, he appreciates the complexity of what

the Lady with the Fairy Fingers seems to be doing with the greatest ease. They had met before, in 1938, but it is clear that the beautiful blonde's act has evolved and matured since then. As one would expect, the three get on well. Suzy, Larette, and Henk Vermeyden, with their respective know-how, business savvy, and publishing clout, hatch a plan to publish a book about cigarette magic. Following her Dutch debut at Carré, Suzy travels on to the Rembrandt Theater in Arnhem, where she entertains audiences prior to film screenings. Back in Belgium, she calls at Liège and Brussels in April before the Germans invade the country on 10 May and all hell breaks loose.

In a series of barbaric attacks, German troops conquer Belgium for the second time in less than three decades. Their massive bombardments make short shrift of the Belgian air defences. Fort Eben-Emael, deemed to be impregnable, falls into German hands after a single day. Likewise, German glider-borne troops capture the bridges over the Albert Canal without much difficulty, thus clearing the way for the ground forces, which cross the Ardennes region and push straight through to the North Sea. Within the space of eighteen days, the Belgian army is trounced. They have no choice but to surrender, just like the Netherlands, which capitulated on 14 May.

To Suzy and her mother the spectre of World War I rears its head again. In a war economy



In 1938, during a performance in the ABC Théâtre in Paris, she receives the name 'the lady with the fairy fingers'.

in which scarcity and the maximisation of the war effort are key, it is no sinecure for an artist to find work. Bookings are few and far between, but Suzy consistently accepts them and performs in establishments such as the Moulin Rouge or Ancienne Belgique in Brussels. But the once crowded nightclubs are emptying out. When money is in short supply these kinds of diversions are the first to be dropped. Now the patrons frequenting the clubs are German soldiers seeking distraction.

One evening, when she sees only German soldiers in the audience, Suzy decides that enough is enough. She does not want to entertain the enemy and leaves straight after her performance instead of lingering among the guests. In the hope of reliving her glory days in the Netherlands she packs her suitcases and says a fond farewell to her

mother. It is Christmas Eve 1942, the last they spend together for some time to come.

On Christmas Day Suzy travels to Amsterdam by train. Three days later she registers with the country's immigration service. Under occupation she lists artist, under religion Roman Catholic. The clerk at the counter describes her as Aryan. She is safe, but from now on every step she takes will be very carefully monitored.



Although she has been in the Netherlands for three days, she is only able to register now. The minute she arrived she hopped in a taxi to the Tivoli Theater (This was and is Theater Tuchinski, The Jewish owners were fired in 1940 by the Nazis from their own company and were deported to

Auschwitz and Sobibor; all three were murdered by the Nazis in 1942) where she performed that same evening. Henk Vermeyden is in the audience again.



The logo of the magic magazine *Triks*.

In April 1941 he had launched a monthly magic magazine, *Triks*, a sixteen-page booklet full of reviews, trick reveals, news, and tips. It is very popular with amateur magicians.

'In Tivoli in Amsterdam I had the genuine pleasure of seeing Suzy Wandas, the phenomenal female manipulator, again after a long time.

Her routine, consisting of deftly executed manipulations with cigarettes, silks, and cards, was performed in the charming manner we have come to associate with her.' (*Triks*, February 1943)

It is no coincidence that Vermeyden is so complimentary about Suzy's cigarette manipulations. The publication of a book on the subject is still under discussion. But the plans have to be shelved. The March issue of *Triks*, the last of the second volume, is the magazine's final one until further notice. The Reich Commissariat, the Nazi administrative body in the Netherlands, tells Henk Vermeyden to cease publication with immediate effect. Reluctantly, he throws in the towel.

The Germans are clearly gaining ground. Swastika flags dominate the streetscape and all Jews are forced to wear a Star of David on their clothes. Millions of them are transported to concentration camps. What exactly happens inside those is still a mystery to many at that point. Suzy, now forty-seven, accepts every booking in the Netherlands. During her rare free time she



Colourful picture in the middle of the Second World War.

travels back and forth by train to see her mother in Brussels. Then, to her delight, she is contracted to appear in a touring variety show for an extended period of time. At long last, she has some job security. However hard the war tries to chip away at morale, it appears that there is still a need for recreation and entertainment. The colourful posters advertising the Vroolijk Variété-festijn are dotted around the cities where the 'Jolly Variety Extravaganza' can be seen. First off, the revue visits the Arena Theater in Rotterdam, before calling at Cinema Royal in Amsterdam.



Cover of the program for Suzy's performance at Cinema Royal

So far both theaters have been spared in this war, unlike the capital's Rembrandt Theater, which has gone up in flames following an act of resistance.

Accompanied by a live orchestra led by Henk Neef, Suzy appears fifth on the bill, just ahead of Coos Speenhoff Jr., whose smiling face on the poster is a big crowd puller. The show is so successful that it travels on to the Scala Theater in The Hague. In the audience one night is seventeen-year-old Bram Bongers, painstakingly jotting down every effect Suzy demonstrates. She starts by cutting in half a piece of rope, which she then magically restores again, and follows it with the production of silks and card tricks. Then she picks up her Chinese rings, and in conclusion she performs her cigarette manipulations. This final trick is of particular interest to Bram. As an amateur magician he specialises in manipulations, and does pretty

well out of them. Still, at this point there is nothing to suggest that later in life, under the name Fred Kaps, he will become a three-time world champion of magic.

The streets of Amsterdam are full of German soldiers. So too Willemsparkweg, where Larette's magic shop has its premises at number 128. The address is listed in German publication *Die Magie*, which may be why some curious soldiers are peeking in. When they spot Larette who's listening to the English news radio, the magician panics. His parents were of Jewish descent, and although they converted to Catholicism this does not put his mind at ease. Fearful, Larette sneaks to the back room and picks up the gun he keeps there, just in case. And so it happens that on 14 May 1943, among the colourful magic props in the shop, a loud bang can be heard. His wife Johanna rushes into the room, followed by the two German soldiers. They find the 54-year-old Larette on the floor in a large pool of blood. He could see no other way of keeping out of German hands.

Two months earlier, Louis Lam, who had helped to set up *Triks* magazine, had been deported to the Sobibor extermination camp, where he lost his life on 20 March. Michel Velleman, who is quite successful as magician Ben Ali Libi, is arrested during a raid in June and sent to transit camp Westerbork. He eventually dies in Sobibor. Amateur magician Coniglio is executed by firing squad and magicians Maurice and Don José de Blasini both die in one of the many bombardments. This and other such horrible news reaches Suzy on an almost daily basis. It leaves her devastated. Her hopes of being safe in the Netherlands prove unfounded. But luckily she can still pick up work here, unlike in Belgium.

The Rembrandt Cinema in Arnhem, Lido Theater in Leiden, concert hall *De Vereeniging* and *Elverding* Theater in Nijmegen, *Metropool* Theater in

Amsterdam: Suzy's diary is pretty full. The visits to her mother in Belgium are now few and far between.



Suzy started her career playing the violin and walking on a wire as Suzy White Flower.

During a ceremony at the Stadsschouwburg, the municipal theater, in The Hague on 30 May 1942, the German occupiers declare the Dutch Chamber of Culture officially opened.

It set out to maintain strict control over the press and the art world and, where necessary, to exercise censorship. Although application for membership is not compulsory, those who do not register are no longer allowed to work. Suzy has no choice. She needs to earn a crust. On 21 January 1944 she registers.

'Suzy Wandas was announced as the act with the question marks. And what Suzy presented was indeed a big question mark. If we men could conjure with cigarettes the way she does, we would surely have no more need for coupons. Such incredible

sleight of hand and where was she hiding those cigarettes, cards, and silks?'
Dutch newspaper, 5 February 1944

For some time now, there has been talk in military circles of Operation Overlord, the code name for the liberation of occupied Western Europe. In the early hours of 6 June 1944, the British, Canadian, and American allies launch their offensive with landings on the beaches of Normandy: D-day.



At this point Suzy is working only sporadically; every now and then she does a star turn in the once so popular variety programs. It is becoming more and more of a challenge just to survive. That winter the western Netherlands is in the grip of such severe hunger that people are reduced to eating tulip bulbs. In search of work and food, Suzy places an advertisement in Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf:

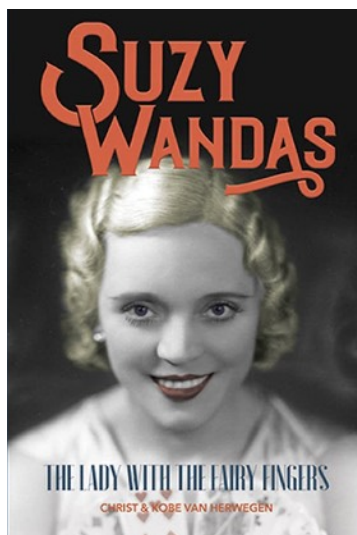
'Suzy Wandas, 134 Amstel, modern magic, for family and children's parties.'
De Telegraaf, 2 January 1945

To make ends meet, Suzy now also works as a children's party entertainer, doing rope tricks, 'The Miser's Dream', which sees her producing coins from behind the children's ears, and her umbrella trick. After rolling an umbrella in a newspaper, she stuffs nine colourful silks into a bag. When all the children yell a magic formula together, the silks in the bag have been turned into the umbrella cover. And once unwrapped from the newspaper, the umbrella has all the vanished silks rather than the cover dangling from it. Suzy is going through one of the darkest periods in her life. It is hard just to keep one's head above water. Luckily, the reports of imminent liberation give her something to cling to. Slowly but surely, the allies are advancing and the Germans are losing ground. And when Hitler takes his own life on 30 April 1945 the war in Europe is finally over.

'Exactly two-and-a-half years after the involuntary closure of our trade magazine I can once again address you from this familiar place. Let me start by looking back. Needless to say, it was a bitter pill when, just as the third volume of Triks was due to go to print, the Reich Commissariat told me, in no uncertain terms, to cease publication of our trade magazine. At the time I spared no effort to get this decision overturned. But when it emerged that I had exhausted all the then legal means, I turned to you illegally. I felt it was my duty to keep in touch with you. The many letters I had the pleasure of receiving shortly after our liberation, in response to the announcement that Triks would be appearing again, clearly show that the strong communal spirit of the friends of Triks has not weakened during the temporary disappearance of our magazine. What matters is this, TRIKS is back, TRIKS is here, and TRIKS is here to stay!' J.H. Vermeyden, Triks, October 1945



CHRIST EN KOBE VAN HERWEGEN



Suzy Wandas came from the humblest of beginnings. Nothing about her entry into the world was auspicious, nor did it portend to her future as a star on the stages of Europe, England, or America.

Instead, Jeanne

Van Dyck was born in the back of a fairground wagon in Brussels in 1896.

Yet in the male-dominated world of magic, under the stage name Suzy Wandas, her light - her star - shone as one of the brightest in the firmament. An innovative sleight-of-hand artist who developed and refined her own remarkable techniques, Suzy became one of the most revered and sought-after acts of her generation.

Her rise to fame sometimes contrasted sharply with hard work and bitter poverty. Amidst the turmoil of two world wars and personal tragedies, her upward trajectory remained nearly uninterrupted. From fairground theater to the largest variety stages, she conquered every venue in which she performed.

The Lady with the Fairy Fingers is the incredible true story of Suzy Wandas, a woman who persevered against a backdrop of cultural turmoil, international strife, family tragedy, and a male-dominated profession to achieve worldwide success on her own terms. It is also the history of variety entertainment in the twentieth century, a personal view of women's rights, and a story of true love and pure magic.

Hardbound, 204 pages in full color, illustrated with never-before-seen posters, photographs, and ephemera. Limited edition to 700.

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Or buy it from your favourite magic dealer!