



Anthony Darkstone Brook In Conversation With Ozlen Tuncer

Ozlen Tuncer is well known by many Magicians around the world. He is also known by his Stage name of Dr. Tora. Although he has not personally met them all, he is known . This is due in great part to his skill as an excellent Communicator.

Furthermore, the Laws of the Universe have decreed that the social media of Skype, Facebook and emails should play a role in making his name familiar to many of Magic's leading names. His photo and reports often appears in issues of The Linking Ring.

Within the International Magic community he is known as a Mentalist but to label him as such is not enough. He possesses a great mind and has the ability to think on several levels simultaneously. He has a Ph.D in Psychology which he puts to good use in his performances.

Over the years we have got to know each other and he has generously shared his time and thoughts with me.

www.magictora.com

ADB: Greetings Ozlen. Thank you for taking the time to converse.

OT: Thank you Tony. It is really a pleasure for me.

ADB: You once told me that Magic is not a hobby for you, nor is it a job, but a passion ... share with us in full what you mean by that ...

OT: Yes that is right. I really don't know how to express it fully in words - Magic is not a hobby, is not a profession for me... It is a passion. It is a passion that I have had since I was born . Seems a bit strange saying I was a Magician from the day I was born but that is the best way I can describe it. I was born as a magician. Magic is my life style.

Although I have had considerable success in Industrial Design, by and large, people did not accept me as an "Industrial Designer doing magic" but " A Magician who also is an Industrial Designer". I run my own company, OBA Design & Organisation Ltd. Co. since 1993. I design and organizing related events.

I have been on many television shows and finally I had my own TV Program named as Telegiz (meaning Tele-mystery). And then I moved to another documentary program showing the mystical and mysterious places of Turkey named as Telegezi (meaning Tele-Travel). I have won awards with my TV programs. I had also had columns in the Yeni Asir Daily for almost 7 years. I have also been awarded for my work in my columns and special news.

ADB: Give us a little bit about the background that created this passion ...

OT: I, am also known as Dr.Tora, but my family name is Tuncer; I was born in Izmir, Turkey. I was fortunate to have attended many of the best schools in Turkey; primarily in Bornova Anadolu Lisesi

and in the Middle East Technical University. My first Bachelors degree was from the Department of Industrial Design, by the Faculty of Architecture at M.E.T.U. And I have some more degrees: Bachelor of Journalism, Master of Archeology, and Doctor of Psychology. By the way, I had all my education in English which made me to be classified as bilingual.

During my university years I used to earn my living from the stage. It was November 1982, when I first stepped out onto the stage.. In 1989, I founded the METU Magic School. With this little step, I became the first magician who formally taught magic at a University in Turkey. Nevertheless, neither the Club nor the School survived after my graduation.

ADB: But you have a burning desire to elevate the Art of Magic to a University Degree course...

OT: It is indeed so; it is part of the great passion I feel for the Art. Not many people view it as an art. I know you do and I also know many others who also view it as such ..but , to many more it is just tricks. My passion, my desire..... is to teach Magic, to form a Department within a University that encompasses all the true elements of the Art of Magic.

My belief is that the Art of Magic can also stand alongside History, Geography, Industrial Design, Economics etc . We have degrees in Performing Arts and Theatre. My question is :- Why not a full degree in The Art of Magic?

ADB: I agree wholeheartedly. Why not indeed? There is much within the Art that is of great value and I would go further and say of greater value than some of the fore-mentioned ... there are Circus Schools in China, Russia & elsewhere devoted to The Art of Circus ..why not Magic ? The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London is a great example of an Institution for the study of Theatre and Acting... so, why not an establishment of the Art of Magic School?

OT: Yes indeed. Why not? I think that often we Magicians are the ones to blame ... all too often, as I'm sure you, and all those serious about the Art will agree, Magic is perceived differently by lay people than it is perceived by true Magicians. I have a dream. I dream about founding a Department of Magic in a University. I will do my best in order to achieve this. I have already prepared an Academic Curriculum for a magic department. Soon, in the near future I will hopefully actual use it !

Today for anyone to buy tricks and perform them ..often badlyis easy. The high-tech world of YouTube and Internet shopping has changed many things ..forever ... not always for the better...

Nevertheless we can not say that everybody who does magic does art ! It may be paradoxical but I have to say Magic is an art but depending on how you do it. Art can be described as: Giving messages to society in a creative way. So if magic lacks in one of these messages, one cannot call oneself an artist. This is the point which is forgotten or probably not known to many magicians. Often, there is magic without creativity or magic without a message. So when you cannot produce something you cannot talk about art. But unfortunately those who have no idea what art is talk about "art" more than those who are in the know...,What a pity !

ADB: Yes sadly the Art has been devalued ... and as seen by lay people albeit from a different perspective ...but let us talk a bit about you and the social media...

OT: I agree with you about the Art being unnecessarily cheapened ... and I'm sure we can talk about that for hours ..in fact, over the yeas we have had quite a few conversations about that topic ...but in regards to the social media .. yes, I am a communicator and I use them to the fullest extent. I am quite a fan of Skype, Chat boxes , Facebook , etc ... it allows me to interact with people all over the world , especially Magicians. I have built up a large network of friends , quite literally , all over the world. I am quite astonished by the wonderful interaction that can be achieved.

ADB: You are credited with many "firsts" in Turkey ...tell us a bit about that ...

OT: Thank you for asking me about those ... I am, in all modesty quite proud of those achievements . I have, as you say done many "firsts" in magic in my country and I will list some of them below. Most important of all I am the first Magician / Mentalist who was accepted to compete in the FISM ever from Turkey. It was a great honor. You asked me to tell you about them ...well, here goes ...

I was the first Turk to be featured in the well-known Scandinavian magazine, "JOKERI" . First Turk to compete at FISM. Back in 2003, I was the first person to start a Magic club at a University. Team

Captain not once, but twice for Turkey at FISM. Starred in my own TV Show on Turkish Television. First person to represent Turkey at various Magic conventions, Started IBM Rings in Turkey. Was the first TVP in Turkey. Published the first Magic related magazine in Turkey. In 2004, I received the GOLDEN ARTEMIS Award from the Municipality of Selcuk and the Directorate of Ephesus Museum. I am the only Turk who has won international awards in mentalism such as from Balkanian Magic Convention. There is much more. Much, much more but I think this is enough for you to get the idea. I do not want to turn this in to a board of self-esteem.

ADB: Well, in a way, why not? You have ever right to be proud of your achievements . I mentioned in my introduction that you have the ability to think on several levels at the same time and this brief list of your many achievements clearly demonstrates that quality. You used to perform as, "Ozlen The Magician" but changed to Dr. Tora.

OT: Yes Tony. It is a long story but the short version is that there are many people who had contributed to my development but I have to thank one person especially: Dr. Morgan, my mentor. He did not teach me lots of tricks. He taught me how to become an original.... not a copy of anybody. More importantly, he also taught me the ethics of the art. He taught me the very basic effects in detail such as: The Linking Rings, Rope cutting and basic card manipulation etc. He was a great man. He created **Dr.TORA:** The Prince of Magic out of a young boy "Ozlen the magician "

ADB: Over the years there has been some controversy over that ...as there is another gentleman who uses that name

OT: Well yes ... you are right Tony. I can talk about that for hours but the fact remains that I used it first . Some will agree with me some won't. It is, as you say, quite controversial and it is a subject that has been talked about, debated about and in the end as I said already, some agree with me, some don't. Nevertheless in this very e-zine I had written about it. I also had written to many places such as IBM, IMS, WAM etc. For me, I am Dr.Tora and I will continue to be Dr. Tora. Audiences and other members of the International Magic community will decide which side of the debate they will support. But I have the proof to present to anybody who is interested. He was TURA not TORA and changed his name after meeting me. I have his own commercial papers and posters in which he called himself TURA. As I said, the magic community will decide who is the original one.

ADB: Well true ... people will decide. But I'm told that one hard core fact is that you studied at the IMS and obtained your Magic degree as Dr. Tora.

OT: Yes that is indeed true. It is a matter of record. But my academic study about a Magic Curriculum for a year university education in the major field of Psychology surpasses all. My doctorate comes from there in fact. I am "Dr" Tora for I have an academic doctorate.

ADB: Moving on ... let's talk about the annual Magic Convention that you are involved with at Izmir... tell us a bit about that ... how it got started , etc ..etc ...

OT: Tony, would you believe that it was not a planned event ? In the year 2000, One of my good friends Dr. Selim Basarir informed that he has come to Izmir for an academic meeting and will glad to meet with me in the evening. We met and two my colleagues were with me. We went to the seaside and sat at a cafe table doing tricks for each other. During this session, I received a call from one of my very good friends Mr. Erdinc Demiray from Istanbul. He told me he wanted to visit. And surprisingly, he said he was already in the area. We told him to wait there and headed the location immediately. We arrived in 15 minutes. We met at the reception lobby of the camping site and sat at a table chatting about magic and doing more tricks. Hen I got another call ... a friend from Austria was calling and said he was only 35 km away and wanted to meet me the next day. I was glad and told him that I was not alone but with more people who were mutual magician friends. We agreed to meet the next evening at the OBA hotel's lobby. To make a long story short, we met the next evening and spent time together until dawn . We did not know that it was the first of our meetings to come. Only 5 magicians and some lay people to watch that was all.

The next year we had some students and we wanted them to show their acquired skills to their families. Incidentally, it was on the same week that we had met the year before. We only invited the families of the students and in the last minute we also wanted to inform the magicians about this event. Just to inform ! We did not invite because we did not expect them to come. We were wrong. Many people from different cities and even from foreign countries came to share the event. The saloon was fully packed. And it was at this second meeting that we decided to convert this event in to a get

together. The following year we had held it in conjunction with the International Izmir Fair which is a huge event involving millions of visitors. This was so huge for us that we again decided going on in our original premises: OBA Hotels lobby. This year we will be doing the 12th get together. I can keep talking about this annual gathering for forever so I better stop nowHowever, I just would like to add that this is a non profit making event in which nobody earns anythingjust sharing magic. Anybody who is interested is welcome. This year the event will take place on the 28, 29 and 30th of June 2011. Plus if you are a member of any of the Magic organizations or Societies you do not have to pay to attend the event. Any form of contribution is welcomed, such as a show, a lecture, a workshop or whatsoever. Anyone interested can contact me.

ADB: You are a very easy-going and friendly person with a great personality and you also speak English & French. Turkish coffee , Turkish delight and Raki ... tell us a bit about Turkey , the customs , the people and mostly about Turkish Magicians. You all seem very warm and welcoming

OT: Many cultures over the Centuries give modern day Turkey a unique place on the world map. We are an open, Democratic country and for Centuries have been the gateway to many areas of Trade and Culture. We had our glory days during the Ottoman Empire... the British Empire was also in full bloom at the time ... but today much has changed for the better. And when I say Turkey, many will think about Turkish Delight (many kinds), Turkish Coffee, Raki and belly dancers. All are original to Turkey. Turkish tradition takes any visitor as a guest of honor. We are hospitable by blood, we have embraced it from our ancestors. We try to be contemporary without leaving our traditions. We are a country that embraces modern thinking but still values our past and traditions and so it is with Turkish Magicians.

As I mentioned before, I had a leading role to play in the development of Turkish Magic both inside and outside Turkey. I say this not to be proud in a boastful way but proud in a way that allowed me to contribute to the Art of Magic in Turkey. But let me point out it is team work naturally. We were three musketeers of magic to give a modern way to this art: Myself, Dr. Selim BASARIR (M.Dr) and late Erdinc DEMIRAY (The founders of the Izmir Magic get together)

ADB: Yes. I understand what you mean. Someone has to start things; be an innovator. Everything has to start somewhere and someone has to play a key role in organizing things. Share with us some of the stories and experiences in founding the IBM Rings ...

OT: Hahaha ... It is another funny story. To be honest till the year 2000 not many people believed in any society/organization of magic. Even the Turkish Society of Magicians had less than 50 members. When I competed in the Balkanian Magic Convention in the year 2000 in Bulgaria, I have seen that the group can be much more powerful than the individuals. After that, I became a member of The IBM... and still proud of it. I tried to tell people about how can we achieve things easier when we are under a common umbrella. One day, after several years in my efforts to promote the IBM I was asked if I wanted to be the first TVP for Turkey. It was an honour ! And I still, proudly carry this title. After that we had all tried to start a ring in Turkey. With a twist of fate , we opened two rings simultaneously ! Twin Rings ! And we founded the third ring in Izmir nearly two years ago and still achieving really good publicity for magic. Oh... if you let me talk, I talk a lot :-)) Let me point out that I became TVP when there was no ring yet but helped to found the current rings. Ok, ok... I know I talk a lot :-))

ADB: You referred earlier on to your Mentor Dr. Morgan. Tell us a bit about him and some of the Magicians that influenced you ... for example the times you spent with Ted Lesley and others of similar quality ...

OT: Tony how do you find these questions? Before this I did not even think over these, this is being a self accounting for me. To be honest I was in love with magic but never had a childhood hero in this art. But I used to watch every magician I could. Nevertheless the legendary Turkish magician ZATI SUNGUR had shown me that a magician could receive good respect if he is outstanding. He did many things to advance Turkish Magic as an Art and is now immortal. He is on the same level to the art of Turkish magic as Robert-Houdin is to world magic. By the way Tony, you are my only living Mentor. I hope I may have you many more years.

ADB: Thank you. That is very flattering ... and I hope to be a living Mentor for quite a while!!! But let us talk about the great Dr. Morgan

OT: I was a very young boy and interested in Magic when I met Dr. Morgan. Dr Morgan was a very famous Indian fakir and had learned the art in India. He used to have a ballet group and would involve magic with a very spectacular show. After the magic show he used to do the fakir shows which had no trick but playing with your own life. He was a very accomplished magician; manipulations, big illusions and Mentalism. I begged for his help in learning the art. He refused to help me telling that I should finish my school first. I was quite persistent & insistent. He cultivated me days and days in his home often till the early hours of the morning...Very, very long and tiring nights.

During that time I was doing amateur shows with the name. Ozlen-The magician. After this hard training, Dr. Morgan suggested me to find a name which can be easily remembered. I had chosen TORA because it was the name of a book I was reading and the meaning was "Magnetic Power". And it was easy to read & pronounce in any language.

I began to perform in 1984 with my new name. But I was still young. A famous impresario added a suffix to my name – Tora : The prince of magic. I have told you how I had converted this name into Dr. Tora before. During those days my idol was SALVANO. I knew that I could never be another Salvano but I had to be myself. I had many mentors but for short periods of time. To be honest I did not find many of them to be able to help me. I was reading a lot. I was ahead of most of them. And I began to work in the world's biggest internet platform of magicians; the famous "The Magic Café" I was and still the Café Hospitality Host. I have met many people here. And they were beautiful people. I recommend everybody to visit there, you will be addicted to coffee or the Cafe. I met Ted Lesley there. His health was not all it should be and he had some difficulty in defending himself against aggressive teenagers. Having some experience with students myself, I could handle the problem and had them apologize to Ted.

For me, Ted Lesley was a legend He spent hours over Skype and MSN mentoring me. He even helped with my routine which I had used at FISM 2003. He let me to do his effects and use his jokes and he told me I am the only one in the world he gave permission to do so. I visited him in Germany when I had the opportunity. His passing was a big loss to me as was Dr. Morgan's passing. Then, as if by Magic, you and I got connected. I had much to learn and you helped me a lot.

ADB: Quite flattering that you put me in the same league but I have been very blessed & fortunate and was taught & mentored by many greats and I am happy to share with those like yourself who have a true passion for the Art. Indeed, it is my duty. Let's talk about other influences ...

OT: As for the magicians that have influenced me, I am proud to say most of them became my friends later on. I can not recall all immediately but let me point out some: Salvano, Lance Burton, Jeff McBride, Ted Lesley, Max Maven are the ones whom have inspired me a lot. But as I said before I had to be an original not to be a copy of someone else . I believe that I am original now.

ADB: Well, yes you are most certainly original. Let's talk a little about your ideas of the Presentation of Magic. You have some interesting ways of performing. You drop the spoon into a paper bag before it bends, you bend the stems of wine glasses. Naturally, I am not asking you to reveal your methodology but to share some of your mind-set when thinking about creating ways to present things in an original way

OT: I do nothing specific to find new ideas. When you work hard on the effects you find something different and good. Then you try to refine and innovate the method and presentation. As you say usually I find my own methods to do something as I do in spoon bending. On the other hand there may be others that come up with a similar idea. For example, I was crazy about the bending stems of wine glasses. Ted Lesley used to do it with a special apparatus concealed in a book. But I was uneasy about the method. If I can not use the same book for another effect- such as a book test, why I put the book over there ? I developed a way to do it in my hand and sent the video to Ted in the early 2002. He liked it and told me "go for it". I had shown the presentation to him in person a year later he said my version was better.

It was a private show for him in his own home which was like a city Library ! An enviable collection. Moreover, I have seen a video explaining about wine glass bending later on. I inspected it but the styles were different.... my style was more suitable for me. It was mine ! This was just an example but many little bits yes, I bend spoons in paper bags held by spectators.

However I used to feel the lack of a "peak point". Since I say "take spoon out", they knew that what was coming. I added a small touch to the routine years ago. I choose a little girl among the spectators.

I give her the bag to control it and put the spoon in the bag. I tell the girl hold the bag by the upper edge and just concentrate on it try to feel the spoon is getting soft. In the meantime I go amongst the spectators. I tell them to concentrate on the bag being held by the little girl and try to send their energy there. I ask the little girl if she feels a movement from the bag. When she says "yes", I ask her to open the bag and show what happened inside it. The spoon is now bent in the opposite direction. And the reception of the effect is excellent everywhere I perform it. It is bent in the opposite direction because "the little girl can not control the energy in the way we do". A nice touch I think.

The only criterion that I apply to all my Magic is :- How would the effect be achieved by real Magic? And, to search for "How can you do it in a better way; preferably in a different way than the others. And my only recommendation: Be yourself, nobody else !

ADB: You once told me that Magic is your Life style. Share with us some of what that means to you.....

OT: If you think about everything in the same way and try to see everything primarily through the same angle, it may be easily told that it is not an ordinary subject in your personality but you way of life. I do not recall at what age I thought of becoming a magician. I do not have a story as most of the magicians beginning with a "Mysto Magic Set" – we did not have such a thing in those days. I also do not have story as "one day a magician came to perform in our School and then..." "I was born as a magician.

Anything I do, I associate with magic. Anything I live, I try to link with magic. If I buy a shoe, I consider if I can use it on stage while performing. Any new music I hear, I try to associate it with an effect if I can use it for any new routine. I cannot imagine that I may be living when I do not deal with magic. It is not like an obsession because I do not suffer it. And then people around me are used to it now. Any new object I see leads to a new effect not necessarily that I perform it. Any new movie inspires me something about magic. I have no idea what happens if one day I become deprived of magic. I think this must be the same for most magicians and not unique to me. At least it's same for those I know.

ADB: Clarify something for us. You have competed at FISM and so have other Turkish Magiciansbut if I recall correctly, in a previous conversation you told me, that none of your Magic clubs in Turkey are FISM member clubs and because this is so you are looking for a FISM member club to "sponsor" you and a few other Turkish Magicians. I am not personally sure what the rules are now but in the past this was possible ... if this is possible what would you say to a potential sponsor club?

OT: I have to confess one thing: Although there are really good magicians in Turkey, the weakest part of these artists are that they cannot gather up under any institute. My efforts for IBM and some other magic clubs are always aimed to form a unity which may last for the long term. Unfortunately Turkish artists are not used to collaborating. The reasons are really unknown. One may say due to big egos, one may say they feel free when working individually; another reason may be is that they do not want to spend any money and time for a common club... I really don't know. The only thing I know is that people are not so willing to work together and share their knowledge. This may be because of the old tradition where everybody tried to hide everything from the others. This is one other barrier we could not break.

On the other hand, there are really skillful magicians in Turkey. But up to the year 2003, there was not a single Turk that competed at FISM representing Turkey before I did it. I had managed to participate with huge efforts and got a signature from Mr. Mike Stratman of IBM. It was a revolution in the Turkish history of magic. This revolution was two-folded: Turkish magicians learned that there is a huge magic world out there and the world learned that something about magic in Turkey. My fault was to compete in a competition which I have never watched before. It was a big experience for the Turkish magicians. Now we know what to do and what to expect. We are more prepared. In short, we are ready!

But since we cannot gather in a cluband the old minded professionals as well as those who know that they may never be on that level, do not collaborate. So no magic club gathers the application money to become a member of FISM.

To be honest I could pay it myself for once but who knows what may come the next year. I cannot personally be paying for it forever. I hope when I have more students and colleagues having the vision to be integrated with the magic world outside, we will do it. I hope it is close now, but we will need time.

Since we do not have any magic clubs in Turkey that are FISM member clubs we have to search again for a signature from a club who may endorse our applications.

Even I, as you said, probably the most known to the international Magic community needs help. As far as I know we have at least three acts ready for FISM – including mine.

However, since we cannot endorse an act, we need to spend enormous amounts of money. It is not so easy. I know that people work really hard on their acts. One of the most difficult situations is that there is seldom opportunity to perform in English & to record it – if it is a verbalized act like mine. We try to overcome this handicap individually. But what can a single individual do ?

We are seeking help. You told me if a Club would be interested in sponsoring me or other Turkish Magicians for FISM then we would need to reciprocate by giving free lectures.

Naturally, speaking for my self I would be more than willing. I am not alone, if the other candidates would be asked to do something they will not decline I guess. A free show, a lecture or similar will be a way of saying “thank you”.

As you know I am always prepared for every occasion of magic. I have several topics already prepared. The last one I had your help in formulating.. As you may recall; it was about a situation where a Magician loses his luggage/props ... a show to do and no Magic stores around. The performance is the next day. So how do you prepare a show with everyday objects. I have put together a lecture on this topic.

ADB: Yes indeed, an interesting concept. It has happened to me and a few others I recall, on one occasion in Vegas, when a group of us were sitting around discussing this topic and my dear friend Steve Daly commented, “ You are not really a Magician unless your luggage has gone in the opposite direction to which you are traveling !!!!”. We all have our ways of coping with that but nevertheless, I can well imagine a lecture on this topic could well prove to be interesting. As you have stated, you are keen to advance the Art in many ways . Imagine you had a room full of young eager Magicians. What general advice and tips would you give them ?

OT: Wow! the former questions were like “midterm” and this is like the “final”. Tony, you already know that I have more than several rooms full of those students. My first advice is – luckily enough if they can read this, it is done ! –learn a good standard of English. Because the majority of the sources of this art are in English. Yes, you know what is coming next. Read as much as you can about magic. Prefer books instead of videos.

Never copy anybody but be and become yourself. If anything seems hard for you and you are still willing to do it, then work at it ! Never give up ! Practice, practice and finally practice some more ! Magic is the most delicate and forgetful art. If you leave it for a period of time it forgets you totally. You will need to know each other again. Try to watch as many magicians as you can. You will learn the stage management from the good ones but learn what to avoid from the bad ones. Learn from both . Both are gains !. Try to personalize anything you learn. Never do anything as it is written in the ones. Instructions tell you how to do tricks not how to present them. Be yourself, have a unique stage persona ! Never try to be someone you are not ! I repeat this because I believe that this is very important. Try to blend other performing arts in your performance. Such as Mime, Theater, Ballet, dance, whatever you can. But never try to imitate. If you imitate for example a mime act and you did not study mime before, you will end up being ridiculous and clumsy.

Just be yourself and please DO consult master magicians: You will see most of them are willing to help a successor. I have done this many times. As you did for me Tony, as the late Ted Lesley did for me, as my mentor late Dr. Morgan did for me... and many more. I still learn many things. I know that when I say it is enough, I do not need to learn anything, that is another way of saying “I am finished”. I hope that day will never come. One last thing I am very glad that you have invited me to this conversation, and I am really open to start friendships with those who share my eternal love: MAGIC ! My thanks to you and to those who read this as well.

ADB: Well thank you Dr.Tora it has been very interesting and you have put a spin on some of the things that others take for granted. Your dedication to The Art is commendable. Until we meet again.

OT: Very welcome. The pleasure is all mine.

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