

ABIGAIL McBRIDE

CHATS TO JAY FORTUNE



It was 2006 when I first arrived at the House of Mystery, the home of Jeff and Abigail McBride. Over the course of the next few days I was treated with hospitality deserving of someone far above my skill-set, handsomeness and talent. And that was mainly down to the welcome I received from Abigail. Known as the 'Swiss-Army-Wife', Abigail is a multi-talented magician, musician, healer and teacher. Both Jeff and Abigail embody the spirit of the magician as an agent of transformation, where magic is respected deeply as an art, combining spirit, theatre and performance. I began by asking Abigail how she began on her journey into magic many years ago.

Abigail: I have always been interested in the performing arts. As a child, I studied music, dance, competitive gymnastics and drama. When I was in second grade, I had a boyfriend named Adam who loved magic. I really wanted to know how he did his tricks, but he told me magicians always keep their secrets.... So, I explained to him that if I were his assistant, then it would be ok for me to know how things worked, so I could help him be better, and that was what started me on the road to magic. I continued on my own way in the performing arts, but when I met the man who would become my husband, Jeff McBride, my interest in magic rekindled and caught fire.

Jay: Interesting to hear you began as an assistant. I know you

have written about the role of the female as magician, going from High Priestess to assistant and now, it seems, taking back the power of women being magicians in their own right.

Abigail: This could be an entire article all on its own! The nutshell version is that women have always been magic, because we create life. Every month, we bleed but do not die. Women's magic is mysterious and hidden within our bodies. Women have always been the ones who know, through intuition, what others are feeling, which herbs to use for healing, how to calm an upset little one. By reading signs and portents, and by using magical skills, the women who played the role of the Oracle of Delphi over several hundred years, were among the

most powerful people in classical Greece. In the early part of the 20th century, women like Mary Ann Ford, (known as Talma), Adelaide Hermann and Suzy Wandas were performing their own shows and gaining acclaim. Over the course of time, according to the dictates of society, women were relegated to the roles of assistants, but now, the tides are turning, and there are more and more women in magic, as we are seeing at our Magic & Mystery School. Even NBC news here in the States has featured women in magic recently.

Jay: Another string to your bow – pun intended! – you are a skilled song-writer and musician. Do you see many similarities between yourself as a musician and as a magician?

Abigail: What the two have in common is that they are both arts that require practice. When performed with excellence they look easy, but the necessity of learning from an expert teacher, putting in the time on a regular basis, rehearsing and reviewing performances for critique, are all very much the same.

Jay: In your own repertoire, how do you choose, evolve and develop a piece?

Abigail: I am very fortunate in that I have the greatest magic teacher of our time as my husband - Jeff! So, I am exposed to lots of new and wonderful magic almost every day. Often, I will see Jeff perform something for a student, and I'll say, "ooh, that looks cool; show me how to do

that!” That’s how I started doing BEKOS, (the Best Ever Knots Off Silk) and it’s become one of my favourites to perform. The “Sawed in Thirds” is another one of my favourites. When Jeff, Eugene and I started working together, we had a discussion one evening about how I wanted to be presented on stage. I knew I wasn’t going for the showgirl/sequin bikini style. I wanted to be myself, but more so. I wanted to be perceived as smart, classy, talented and elegant. So, the magic I choose and the scripts I write are going to reflect those values. Jeff helped me come up with the idea of the zig-zag card as a sawing illusion, and together, with Eugene, we created the historical script that I use. You can see me performing the effect on Masters of Illusion!

Jay: Let’s talk a little about the school. What role do you play in Mystery School – now celebrating it’s 30th year!

Abigail: I have been an integral part of the School since its inception. My official title is the ‘Human Resources Director and Counsellor for the McBride Magic & Mystery School’.

Jay: That’s a long business card!

Abigail: I help students figure out which class or course of study is going to best fit their needs. I work with the scholarship committee to help students who need a hand-up to get the magical education they desire. I offer mindfulness training on our Mystery School Monday show and facilitate discussions among the students. I help Jeff create new classes and advise him on the best ways to help students who may be struggling, and I also work with him and our Dean, Larry Hass, on all other aspects of the School.

Jay: What is your creative process?

Abigail: My creative process blends the physical, mental and spiritual worlds together. I

believe that we are most like the Creator when we are creating, and so I begin by breathing deeply, reflecting on gratitude, lighting a candle and inviting Light to guide me. I like to start with the question, “what can I make that will best serve the highest good right now?” Often, in my musical process, I will have the seed of an idea for a song, a phrase for a lyric or a little humming melody in my ear. I give myself time to just play, to repeat this little seed, to roll it around and see what might fit with it. I like to use Jeff’s process of nonlinear thinking to consider what elements I might put together in a new way, how I can weave my passions together to make something new. That’s what we did with BEKOS v2. I loved the Knots Off Silk effect, and I love making people smile and feel happy, and you can see how that turned out online!

Jay: How do you see the future for yourself and for women in magic? What would you like to see happen?

Abigail: When I gaze into my crystal ball, the future right now is partly sunny, with some clouds and mist. I think we are at a crossroads in our destiny right now, in terms of the future for all life on the planet. Through the choices we make and the actions we take now, we have an impact on the generations yet to be. I think it is of the utmost importance for us to use our powers for good, to convey meaningful messages that can help people learn to think in new ways about their own choices. In so doing, we can create a ripple effect that just might save the world. Now, more than ever, people need magic. They need your magic. So, for all of us, women, men and those gender benders in between, this is the time. As Eugene Burger used to ask us, “What do you want your magic to be?” I want my magic to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. I want to be one of the angels awakening



people out of the sleepwalking trance of chasing material satisfaction through consumerism and greed. I would like to see us humans change the way we treat animals, each other and the planet, and I would like my music and magic, in some small way, to contribute to that.

Jay: Who inspires you and why? I reckon I can guess the answer to this one!

Abigail: My biggest inspiration is my beloved husband, Jeff McBride. His devotion to learning, performing and teaching magic is inspirational. He is focused on his students, his reading, and his practice, on a daily basis. He shows me how to achieve excellence and provides me with fertile ground to safely grow in. No matter how busy he is, if I approach him with a deck of cards in my hand and ask “does this false cut look right to you?” he will zoom in on me and give me his full focused attention. Magic is his primary language and I am happy to speak it with him.

Jay: And finally, what one piece of advice would you give to women entering the world of magic?

Abigail: Two things; Magic is an art, and it will take time and regular practice to master it. And also, you need to get a teacher. There has never been a prima ballerina or an Oscar winning actor who did not have a teacher, a mentor, a coach. This is not something you can do on your own by watching videos online.

A MINDFUL MOMENT WITH ABIGAIL

Abigail has been a practicing mindfulness since a child. Take a moment to learn how these simple techniques can help you with performing anxiety.

“Most people take around twenty thousand breaths each day and are aware of none of them. Perhaps, even just reading these words, you’re tuning into your breath right now, dear reader. So, I invite you to bring your full attention to your inhalation... and your exhalation, feeling the breath moving into your nose and noticing how deep the breath comes into the chest, the heart, the belly... and noticing as the breath goes out, at the bottom of the exhale, if you can squeeze your navel toward your spine and release any old air that hangs out at the bottom of the lungs... and one more time, just like that. Great! You’ve just had three mindful breaths. See if you can do that every day.”

THE MAGIC & MYSTERY SCHOOL:

<https://www.magicalwisdom.com>

INVITATION

Join us every Monday at 7pm pacific time for free here:

<https://zoom.us/j/685273864>

If you can’t tune in live, you can watch on demand, anytime here:

<https://shop.magicalwisdom.com/i/mystery-school-monday-ep->

WATCH & LISTEN:

Listen to Abigail’s music

<https://music.apple.com/us/artist/Abigail-spinner-mcbride/267315505>

Watch Abigail on NBC News talking about Women in Magic

<https://vimeo.com/359190609>

See ‘Sawed in Thirds’ performance on Masters of Illusion

<https://vimeo.com/147896693>

Watch the Happy version of BEKOS:

<https://vimeo.com/399038132>