



Anthony Darkstone Brook In Conversation With Ariann Black

I am very proud to call Ariann a special & valued friend. It is a feeling that is shared by all those who know her well. She is a warm and generous person, deeply caring and totally passionate about The Art of Magic. Johnny & Pam Thompson, Penny Wiggins, The Amazing Jonathan, are just a few of the Las Vegas stars who consider her an exceptional talent.

Last year, she opened in her own show entitled, "Ariann Black -Secrets at The Westin Hotel & Casino. She is a stunningly attractive lady with all the glamour, style, class & sophistication of a Monroe or Loren. She has a wonderful sense of humor and many other exceptional qualities that make her a true Superstar in the real sense of the word. She exudes a professionalism that has kept her in the forefront of International Magical stardom for well over a decade. Crowned "Female Magician of the Year" no less than three times by the IMS, she has Starred in & Produced her own shows in Las Vegas. I am always in awe of her performances and must publicly state I am a huge fan. I was delighted, once again, to spend quality time with her when I was recently in Vegas.

She has appeared on the stages of major venues, TV shows & in films. A quick peruse of You Tube, Google or any other Internet Search will bring up myriad references that testify to her skill & talent. Any further words of mine at this juncture will be superfluous.

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ADB: Hello Ariann. Your schedule is hectic and, as always, you have a ton of things to do. So thanks for taking time to stop and converse awhile.

AB: Hi Tony. My pleasure . Always good to spend time with good friends. You are right . My schedules are hectic but good hectic, you know what I mean. I enjoy being busy and performing.

ADB: "Can't sing, can't act, can dance a little" – those absurd words were once used by someone who didn't know any better to describe Fred Astaire after an audition; you had a similar experience after you enrolled at the Grant MacEwan Musical Theater in Edmonton

AB: Yes! About the Grant MacEwan Theater. Looking back, I always laugh out loud about that ... after I finished High School , I was accepted there and in order to attend the school I needed to sing, dance, and perform a monologue, but after one year they told me that I wasn't dedicated to the theater, at least their type of theater, and was asked to leave the school. In their minds, there was no room for magic in the theater.

ADB: Obviously, they were not much good at spotting potential talent. I can see why you laugh out loud. I would too and am at the absurdity of their remarks! I brought that up because it is a great inspiration story to any young performer who experiences negativity & setbacks. Apart from your talent and skills as a performer, there is a dedication within you that spurred you to success.

AB: I have always known that magic was meant to be a part of my life; you have to have determination to survive in this business. I have dedicated myself and the people who work for me, to keep focused on my goals. As a result, of that tenacity and sheer hard work I have made it to where I am today.

ADB: Absolutely. Great talent is not enough. As most of us know, we have to not only pursue the dream but dedicate ourselves to achieving it. Let us converse about Female Magicians. I know this a topic that interests you for both personal & Professional reasons. You and I have many mutual friends who are World Class Lady Magicians. We have in the past, talked about this topic of Lady Magicians at some length one in particular , our mutual friend Celeste Evans who truly blazed a trail.....there are several other noteworthy names we could also mention but, one of my favorites is a good friend of yours and mine, in fact, it was she who introduced us many years ago. That remarkable lady is Cherie Kay from Houston, Texas. Cherie is another leading figure in the forefront of World Class Magicians. Cherie is a family friend and my wife, my son and I are huge fans of her work. I'm bringing up this topic of Lady Magicians because even in 2010, there is a still a hint of reluctance on the part of audiences and indeed many male performers to grant full acceptance. Share some of your views on this

AB: As you say Tony, it is better in 2010 but there is still some reluctance. Nowadays there is an acceptance of Female Magicians that wasn't there, but there is still a way to go...yes.. Celeste, Dell O'Dell, and many more did wonders not only for female Magicians but for Magic as an art. Celeste was elegant, glamorous and very talented. As for myself, I was lucky to be one of the featured acts in the Las Vegas revue show SPLASH, a show known for hiring the best magicians from around the world.

I have also been an Opening Act and starred in my own shows as I currently am again starring in a show starting May 2010. It is an all female show, myself & three fabulous dancers and yes ..dare I say it ..it is very glamorous and sensual but it also has good Magic. I happen to think that it is not enough to be glamorous but it is also necessary to provide my audiences with Magic that is every bit as good if not better than any equivalent male performer. By the way, for special events and long weekends we will have a specialty spot with a stand up comic in the show.

ADB: You are so right about doing good magic. I have personally sat in the audience and been completely blown away not only with your entertainment value but also sat in awe and admiration of your superb technical & stagecraft skills. It is obvious you have a passion for our Art This began when you were a child ...right? Do you recall us chatting about this late one night ..well early morning ..with some Vegas friends over waffles and ice-cream? Share some of that with us please

AB: As you know I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and began to appreciate magic at an early age. I began doing magic tricks at the age of five when my cousin, a magic enthusiast, showed me various card tricks. I was fascinated with the tricks and would spend hours attempting to learn their secrets. I hounded my cousin to show me more and more tricks until his knowledge of the card tricks was exhausted. I was 6 years old and got the flu; as a reward for a visit to the doctor, my Mom took me to a nearby magic store. I still vividly recall the thrill and passion I felt when I entered the store. I guess for most children of that age a candy store or an ice cream parlor was a remedy for the flu, but for me, the magic store was everything, a real treasure under the rainbow. My eyes lit up as I became fascinated and enchanted as they roamed over each item on every shelf. I remember gazing at the pictures on the boxes and being mesmerized by the feathers and silks. The Magic kicked in. I was hooked. I began to envision myself performing.

After a hard choice in this Aladdin's wonderland, I finally selected a rope trick.

However, when my Mom went to buy it, the store owner said he wouldn't sell it to her. When my Mom asked why he told that that he believed women were only the magician's assistant and weren't the magician.

ADB. Good grief! What a dreadful experience ...not just for your Mom but also for a 6 year child ... can you recall how you left? Stupid question I know ...but share your answer anyway.

AB. In a single word. Devastated. I was also very confused as to why this could be. I had the desire. I knew I could develop the skills and I really couldn't understand why. I was a determined child and did not like to be told I could not do something. I still have that determination in me and love it when people tell me "No" I love to prove them wrong.

ADB: But the story has a happy endingdoesn't it?

AB:.. it does. In the store at the same time was a magician who observed what had happened at the store; he stopped my mother outside the magic shop. The kindly magician took a rope out of his pocket and showed us how to do the rope trick. After completing the rope trick he gave us his rope to take home.

This same magician said that I didn't need the ropes to do the trick, that I could use a hair ribbon, cotton twine, anything that was rope like, he also told my Mom about all the great magic books that were in the local library. To this very day, I remember this sincere gesture but I can't remember his name, only his appearance. He had red hair and a red goatee beard.

It was the best lesson I ever learned in magic. That you don't need the props you get when you buy a trick. So many illusions can be performed with everyday objects if you just take the time to think about what else can replace that rope.

ADB: We have that kindly man to thank. I'm glad you shared that story with us. Thank you. It certainly will make many performers stop and think about their approach to Magic... share with us please your growth from that moment

AB: I began to quench my thirst for magic & visited the library every day. Day after day, I spent hours in the library pouring over every magic book. I looked at every picture, studied every detail and imagined myself performing tricks and illusions with the greatest of skill in front of large audiences. Although I did wonder why they never referred to the person in magic books as SHE, commonly in magic books a person is always referred to as HE.

When I was 12, I began performing at children's birthday parties as Alice in Wonderland. Word got around. Each Saturday, the main Edmonton library treated the local children to movies and stories, but when they heard about me, I was invited to perform. These performances were fantastic because this was the first time I ever performed on an actual stage. I did that for over a year. I started out with only ten minutes of magic from my birthday act and later began to introduce new tricks into my performance. I guess, you might say, that

I intuitively knew, even at that early age the importance of variety in my show. It also fulfilled my desire to learn everything I could about magic.

ADB: One major name influenced you greatly....Doug Henning. Another performer who influenced you was, a very noteworthy Vegas name.... Peter Reveen.

AB: Yes It was watching Doug Henning on television that made realize I didn't have to look like the stereotypical magician to succeed. I could be myself, and he let me imagine the possibility that I too could be a famous magician I knew even more that this would be my profession for life. As you know Tony, last year Peter Reveen, was honored by the Las Vegas IBM Ring. He was one of the major influences of my life when I saw him live at the Queen Elizabeth Theater. For me everything that I read and envisioned a magic act to be was right there before my eyes, in person and on the biggest stage in town. I knew that I needed to know more than just magic tricks, so I planned each step from that point forward and studied theater, dance, music and drama, anything that was associated with the theater and what it meant to be on stage.

I must also mention Dale Harney who performed on television in Canada, as I watched his shows, I knew there was more to magic than just magic.

ADB: How right you are ..it is something of a cliché but an accurate one nevertheless; .by that I mean ..the trick is just 5% the other 95% is the Performance & Presentation ...that is where the real Magic lives... but the skills have to be honed and the raw talent trained and that is exactly what you did ...

AB: Yes. I wanted to do great Magic and achieve my goal and dreams. I attended the College of Manual Dexterity and Prestidigitation, Chavez School of Magic, in Pasadena, California and graduated in 1987. Whilst I was there, I met Doug Henning. For me, this was a dream come true. He was my idol and a giant in the industry. Doug, as we all know, literally changed the face of magic. I wanted to learn even more and be like him. I wanted to achieve his level of success in the industry. He was truly inspirational. I listened to his advice and his suggestions in an effort to improve my talent.

ADB: And what wonderful advice it was too ...you are a good friend and you know how much I love your work.... you are exceptionally talentedyou have awesome technical skill, your card manipulation is a Master class in Artistry, but the thing I love the most is your stagecraft.....for me you are just one of a small handful of Magicians who really know how to move on a stage ..your stagecraft is impeccable..

AB: Thank you Tony. You and I have had many conversations about Stagecraft and I know it is one of your passions ...and yes, you are so right ...it is not enough to know how to do a trick or even have the technical skill but as you say, it is of the utmost importance for any actor to know at any given point in time where he or she should be on stage ...

In Magic this is even more important ...it is not enough to move on stage or even keep still but it is crucial to know where to move , when to move and how to move and even more importantly, where in relation to the props the performer should be you and I have talked about this for hours and most likely could for several more

ADB: Yes we have and indeed we canbut I'd like to move away from the topic of Magic for a moment Outside of Magic, you and I share a deep passion for waffles and ice-cream and also Stocks & shares. You and I have talked about the very real business of share dealing and the "secret thrill " of watching our stock climb ...share with us some of this side of you as an accomplished businesswoman

AB: Yes, just like you I am partial to waffles and ice-cream ..no idea whyjust love to do that after a gigthe Market ..well, I am passionate about it ...it is a very real extension of my business. You know Tony, as you always say, there is the show and there is the business, and the business side is of course important to me.

I have some other business interests, and one of them is Trading stock. I first started Trading & building a Portfolio back in 1996. I believe that as a performer you should take care for your retirement before you retire. So I have a couple different accounts, but I also have some pet stocks that I like to buy sell and trade. The trick is to find stocks that are products you are interested in or believe in. I have 6 different companies I like to dabble in and out of. You just have to know your risk tolerance and not buy more than you are willing to lose.

ADB: Well, we gotta take of the Product that is us and make a Dollar a two. Let me take you back to your early days in New York and the events that followed

AB: After my graduation in 1987, I accepted a position in a magic shop and moved to New York. After only three months, I was invited to perform with Ward Thomas during his one hour show. This was my first exposure to the trials and tribulations of a one-hour magic show. A real learning curve. I lived in New York for 5 years and worked as a magic consultant for the touring company for "Godspell", the original company for "Forever Plaid", and the Broadway rival of "The Cherry Orchard". During one of my performances in the Ward Thomas' Show, we were invited to Atlantic City for a revue show at Trump's Castle. Unfortunately, the revue show didn't last that long, but I was hired to stay on at Trump's Castle as the house magician for four years.

ADB: That's quite an accolade ... a lady Magician as the House Magician ...you had be not just good but as you said previously, exceptionally bettershare a little of those times with us ...

AB: It was fun but also very hard work. But I loved it. During the four years as the House Magician, I managed to save some money and began purchasing illusions in preparation for my own show. The first illusion I ever purchased was a sword basket, which I used in my act in Japan. My very first one hour show was booked in Koriyama, Japan. The show lasted three months, but they asked me to return for a six month contract in Minakami, Japan for another one hour show. The experience that I gained from these helped me hone my skills and because of these successful shows I was asked to meet an influential agent in Las Vegas. Through this agent, I began to travel Internationally performing magic. Chile, Japan, France, Italy and China were some of the many places I performed my full show.

ADB: You now live in Las Vegas, well have lived, for many years....you are well known here ...and I for one, always feel wonderful when together with other Vegas friends we go to a Restaurant or hang out ..or walk in to a theater that you kindly arrange comps for me...everywhere we go people recognize you, ...obviously, you like Vegas...and Vegas likes you ...

AB: OH WOW! I don't see it that way. Yes I know some people, but I really don't see myself as famous. I am just a performer who knows a lot of really nice people. I would love to one day be a famous magician, but for now that is one of my goals. I do love this town and I am honored that I have many good friends here in the business and we all get along socially and workwise ...I like it here because I am surrounded by resorts and major performers.

As you yourself know Tony, this town has an energy and special quality about it that is magical you and I have many mutual friends here and as we all know this town is special that is why several years ago, I made a conscious decision to begin to create my own Vegas magic shows. In 2004, I achieved another goal and began my own show at Fitzgerald's called "Secrets". This show ran for almost one year before the casino was sold. "Splash" at the Rivera was the site of my second Las Vegas resort experience as I was the featured magician. In May 2010, I opened, with my own show "Ariann Black - Secrets " at The Westin.

ADB: You have also been busy with many Guest spots, TV appearances and the like I know we can't list them all but give us a few highlights

AB: Yes I have .There are time when I look at my life and think I am the luckiest person on earth. I love the stage and the thrill of starring in my own shows, but I also love being involved

in other projects and TV. Over the last four years I have appeared on television in a number of countries and specials, such as Steve Harvey's Bigtime on the WB, The Greater Magic of Las Vegas on Fox Family, Card Sharks on ABC, The Magical World of Beto Carriro with World Productions in Brazil as the co-host, Circus Magic on Italian television, Lance Burton's Guerilla Magic on Animal Planet, The Magic of Vegas on Art-a Television and in two separate BBC documentaries.

ADB: Yes indeed. As I mentioned in my introduction, even a cursory glance at Google, You tube and similar will amply demonstrate some of your successes and skills. Because of time & space there is so much we haven't covered. Maybe soon, in another conversation.

You are indeed a very accomplished and versatile performer, highly respected in the business and I can't wait to catch the new show. ...and oh ...pancakes, waffles and ice-cream at your favorite place after the showshhh! I won't reveal where ..it's a SECRET. Ariann, as always, it has been just wonderful. Thank you for taking time to converse.

AB: Thank you Tony. Truly, it has been my pleasure. Comp ticket has your name on it. Stop by the Green Room, your favorite tea is always brewing.

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