

Episode 3- Magic, art, and the Asatru Mindset

Wednesday, January 3rd, 2007

Dave: Welcome to Ravencast!

Sandy: Ravencast!

S: With Sandy

D: and Dave.

S: This time around we have something very, very special. That's right, Episode number three. And you are already going to get a bonus cast. We set out to have one really great interview for this podcast.

D: And that's what you are getting in this podcast, with Denise Bowen.

S: However, we also have two other amazing interviews with some great people. So, we wanted to sort of let you know what was on our mind when we decided to interview these folks. I had been thinking that there was resurgence in art, music, and a lot of interest now in those sorts of things for most Asatruar. And I kind of wanted to explore that with some people who have a WHOLE lot more artistic ability than I do.

D: [1:35] And for me the only interlinking of these attributes was inspiration, and I think we did a pretty damn good job of highlighting what inspiration is from these amazing people.

S: Definitely. There was an idea that kind of past through all of the interviews. Well, I'll let you guys listen and judge for yourself, but the main point was that inspiration is whatever hits you in your heart and gets you motivated to do something, anything, to do something creative, have an outlet for yourself.

D: And give you a forum for your spirituality and give you a form to that function of prayer, worship, and a way to express that that helps yourself out, your commute and is all around goodness.

S: Sure, because it helps act as a springboard to enhance and elevate what it is you are feeling inside, and allow other people to feel that with you.

D: Sandy and I decided what this podcast was going to be about, as you know, about a month ago. And interestingly, Denise came up with her event about last week or so. After we decided what this podcast was going to be about. Coincidence? Cosmic Connection? You be the Judge.

S: ***laughing*** I definitely think it is somewhat of serendipity but “Cosmic Connection”? I um...

D: The Gods are everywhere. But seriously, this is a great interview and Denise is, was a pleasure to interview and...

S: Well everyone was a pleasure, an absolute pleasure to interview and I feel so lucky to have been able to get the time together, to get them on the phone and talk a little bit about where they are heading.

D: Well enough farting around, here we go!

S: Woo Hoo!

[4:04]

S: Well Hi Denise.

Denise Bowen: Hi.

S: Hi, lets start with our first question. And I’m going to start with a broad one. Which is basically, what has inspired you as far as your artwork?

DB: What has inspired me as far as my artwork? As far as the Heathen artwork? Other artists, other artwork. You know in Havamal, a word leads to another word; another deed leads to another deed. It does work out that way. I mean I get inspired by other artists. Not just Heathen artists, any kind of artist. [4:46]

S: Are heathen artists in a special category for you? Do they inspire you specifically?

DB: Yeah, because the part of it is “Hey I can do that” or “I could do that better” or “Oh my god why didn’t I think of that”. But also I think when I’m looking at heathen art sometimes I learn something from someone else’s interpretation of a God or Goddess or a scene from the lore. Whether it’s musical or art and craft it can inspire me to think new thoughts or broaden my understanding about stuff which in turn changes my own art, and what I would do and what I want to do. And I get all these ideas and it just grows from there.

S: [5:45] That’s great.

D: Got any examples?

DB: Any examples? Well when I first started hanging around with the Asatru Community everybody was talking about this guy Bob Stine, who is “Mythical Man”, this Human Dwarf, who did all this amazing stuff and I was like, “Really? Huh.” And

then I got to see some of his stuff and his drinking horns and I was like “Wow.” I wanted to do that! So he was my first big Heathen artist influence. And also he was really nice and I got to ask questions. Now we are friends and I know him well, but even years ago when I first started getting involved in the community I approached him, and was like “Hey, how do you do that?” And he was really nice and “Well, this is what you do,” and it was great.

S: [6:51] Have you found that other artists within the Heathen community have been really open about sharing their techniques and tips on crafting different items?

DB: Oh sure. I mean everybody that I have met is always willing to share their information or talk about what they do and how they do it. Or offer to do something for me, or for other people. A bunch of really generous artists and also, I think most artists like to talk about the technical details of what they do sometimes and it’s exciting when you find someone who is actually interested.

S: [7:30] Now, when we were talking about inspiration as far as your creativity, have you found that having a small child in your life has influenced you artistically?

DB: We’ve come up with some alternate lyrics to The Cat in the Hat, or to I Will Not Eat Green Eggs and Ham.

D: Got a rendition of that?

DB: “I will not beat my neighbors child.” That was pretty much what we came up with.

Everyone: ***Laughing***

DB: [8:10] But it was a joke. I’ve been doing more, I’ve been writing more Lullabies.

S: I was just about to ask you about that actually. One of the ones that’s on the Tru Spirit CD, (<http://www.myspace.com/truspiritatmyspace>) which also has Jon on it, whom we have also interviewed, has you singing a lullaby.

DB: [8:23] Yeah, I wrote that for my mom as a birthday gift for her one year and my mom is the person I got my singing voice from and I love my mom and she is always singing. She still does and it’s were I get all that so I wrote another lullaby for Gus, who belongs to Victoria, and Eric Witcherly, who is my godson. And now that I live in the woods I get inspired by the land that we have. I come up with little verses all the time now.

S: Is there any work you are particularly proud of?

DB: Recently, as far as music is concerned?

S: Well music or art. Anything that was particularly difficult for you to accomplish and you are proud that you were able to finish the project, or something like that?

DB: [9:31] Well I did an awesome Einjahaar horn for Mark Andersen. That was really cool to do because I got to try out some new stuff on the horn carving and it was a stretch for me because it was really, really, really, detailed and a lot more than what I'm used to doing, and I feel like it made me a better carver.

S: [9:56] Nice.

DB: And because I've had such a chaotic year, actually finishing it was a big accomplishment. I was "please Odin help me finish this horn!"

S & D: ***Laughing***

DB: And I did, Yeah! And I like it and he likes it and that's all that really matters to me. When I make a piece for someone, a custom piece, I want them to like it. That's the most important thing to me. I want to be what they want.

S: [10:28] Have you incorporated any of your songs or any of your pieces into your spiritual practice in any particular way? Like adding a song to a blot or some other ritual?

DB: [10:42] More, yah. More, and more and more, when I go to blots, instead of just doing a plain old hail, I'll sing a verse. Or if I go to a sýmbel, I'll sing a verse. Or if I get shy sometimes but when I am doing it I'm singing it as an offering to the Gods. That's my Hail when I'm singing a verse or an entire song for them. And, also, over the past year or so there has been a couple of rituals I have attended where people have asked me to sing a type of invocation. Which I really think is cool and I want to do more and more and more music in ritual, and art in ritual. Like making stuff to forne; to sacrifice.

S: [11:41] Now do you see that there's that, I get the sense that there's a particular place for art, music in religion?

DB: Yes. Yah, definitely, definitely. It's so incredibly important and to an extent the artist is the historian. The artist is the teacher. Art, music, those are incredibly powerful forms of communication and expression. There's a lot of times, I think are emotionally intense or moving, provocative. And can add so much to a ritual or to someone's personal worship.

D: [12:34] Well, it becomes sacrifice and a form of prayer.

DB: Yah it really is and so many other cultures do it and I grew up Roman Catholic and sang all the time. Yah, I still sing Christmas carols. And I was in choir for

years and years and years. So music was always a part of my spiritual practice. And even when I was a little kid sometimes when I prayed I would just sing them songs. You know like, “Hey I’m gonna sing a song for you,” and I still do that now. I sing for my Gods. And I do artwork for them and I make things for them and sometimes it’s really hard to put that thing in the fire. Sometimes it’s really hard to make something you think is so beautiful and just say, “Ok, it’s leaving Midgard. I’m giving it to the Gods.” I’m giving it to whatever God or Goddess or ancestor or whoever and it’s no longer mine. It’s hard to let it go, but that’s what sacrifice is.

D: [13:37] Yep, that’s exactly what sacrifice is. If it’s not something that comes from you, then it’s just not a good sacrifice.

DB: And I also think it’s not just, “Here I made this great thing and now it’s ours.” In away it’s not even about what you make, it’s about the process of making it. Whether it’s writing a song or creating a work of art. As sacrifice as a votive offering, because while you are like, “Wow, I’m really doing it at least,” and I think a lot of artists feel this way. It becomes a ritual while you’re doing it. And it’s very meditative and it causes you, during the process, to look deep inside yourself and to explore the subject matter deeper and to understand it in a different ways. And it’s a growth experience as well as a way to draw closer to whatever the subject is. When I wanted to do something for Ran, I drew a picture for her and in doing that I came to understand her better. Stuff like that. Every time I do a carving on a horn or a wood burning of a God or Goddess, or write a song about them, I feel like I deepen my connection with them. So the whole process is spiritual for me.

S: [15:01] Now you’re going to be hosting an event in February, that’s going to focus on music and art. Correct?

DB: Yes. It’s called Winter Wassail, and it is going to be February 23-25, Friday through Sunday, at the Log Cabin Campground at Ross Junction Virginia. And it’s going to be a very small event. And my wonderful husband is creating a website this evening and working on it so we will have a website up. It will be WWW.Winterwassail.org (*Editor's note: Site no longer up*). It’s going to be cold and beautiful. It’s in the mountains in Northern Virginia, and the purpose, my intended purpose of this event is for people to come together and do art, create a communal sacrifice. I’m going to have all kinds of arts & craft supplies so people can make things. I’m also going to be building what is in my head, a cart, or a sled. I haven’t actually drawn up the plans yet so it’s going to be something. ****Laugh**** Maybe made of wood that everybody will get an opportunity to decorate during the weekend. And all the offerings will go inside of it and then that will be, during the main ritual, burned. Everybody will have an opportunity to create something for the main sacrifice. And I want to have classes on making idols and I want people to be singing and I want there to be music and I’m just now coming up with everything so I don’t even have a schedule yet. I’m still working on all the finer details. But I have a date. I have a place. I came up with the idea for this a week ago, eight days ago literally. ****Laughing**** So it’s

still in it's gestation period. But it's gonna be a fantastic time. And I really want people to come together and experience Heathenry through art and Music.

D: [17:34] Awesome. This is the first link of event I've heard that's been like this. An Asatru event specifically dedicated to art. I think that's just amazing.

DB: Leave it to an artist I guess. ****Laughing**** But important to me. I was at a heathen gathering and I was driving home and was, "So great. I love seeing everybody." And it just recharges my batteries and I was, "Wouldn't it be great if we do this," and. "Wouldn't it be great if we do this and that?" I was like, "Hey I can do this, I can plan this." And so I got the idea in my head and started emailing people and now it's happening and I'm really excited about it. Because I want to see more music in ritual. I want to see, I want to encourage more Heathen artists because there's so many unbelievably talented people in our community. And every year I meet a couple more and they're kinda shy about, "Well ya know, yah, I do some painting or something." Or they just want to learn how to do stuff and I want to encourage them. So we're gonna do it. And all of the classes are going to be about either making stuff or making music. There's not going to be any Asatru 101, there's not going to be any discussions of deep philosophical whatever. Unless it's deep philosophical discussion while you're working on making something. Or as it pertains to making something.

S: Well you said that the site address is going to be WinterWassail.org?

DB: Yah.

S: Ok, Great. What we're going to do is we're gonna put a link to that in our show notes as well. So people can keep track of your plan in progress and, you know, that sort of thing as well.

D: Can you spell that out?

DB: I'm so excited! That's so cool. Thank you very much!

S: Yep. So anybody who gets this on Itunes or looks at our blog will see it there. Now how exactly is it going to be spelt? For those grammatically challenged?

DB: WinterWassail.org

S: Yah! Alright.

DB. The whole idea of Wassailing, you know, singing and drinking to each other's house, that's a good winter thing you know.

S: [20:12] Definitely.

DB: That's what I want to see happen.

S: I picture a whole bunch of little cabins with different people walking from cabin to cabin-singing random songs.

DE: [20:24] The way the campground is set up, and this is something that anybody that comes to the event should know, and it'll be on the website. Once I write all that up and it gets put on the website. There are three small outbuildings and each one of them has a wood-burning stove, and the floor in those buildings is gravel. There are no beds. If you're gonna camp you gotta bring a cot, or you gotta bring a pad to put underneath you. And you have to understand that there is going to be a woodburning stove so the space can be heated up but it's rustic. And it's gonna be a limited amount of people. Thirty people, probably max, are gonna be able to come and get a heated spot. And everybody is gonna be cramming in together.

S: [21:10] So only the hardy need apply. ****Laughing****

DE: Well, I mean yeah. The wood burning stoves you get it cranking, it's pretty warm. Cuz the space is 10x20ft.

D: We're Asatruar. You have to suffer for your art.

DB: They're small. They're cozy, it's gonna be, just picture Iceland in the winter.

S: [21:28] Yeah!

DB: Everybody crammed in together. Fart jokes agoing. People are snickering, "Good night John Boy, Goodnight Mary Ellen."

S: ****Laughing****

DB: Yeah, ya know that's pretty much what it's gonna be like.

S: Nice.

DB: It'll be really fun. But there is a limited amount of heated space. People who are really hardy, or they want to bring a camper, there are camper hookups.

S: Ok.

DB: Because it's like a RV campground. So there's all kinds of camper hookups and we'll have electricity for the campers and stuff. So anybody who brings an RV can hook it up, or a camper can hook it up. Or people who want to camp, who are used to winter camping, can just set up a tent and camp. And that's cool too. [22:13]

S: Very nice.

DB: Yah, and we're planning ways to keep people warm you know. Maybe some midnight snacks and hot apple cider. We'll have big campfires going on. It'll be good. And I'm expecting really, that it's gonna be the people who love winter and excited about being outside in the snow building fires, ya know. Who's gonna come. Really it's gonna be about making stuff and singing songs and burnin' it. Make stuff, burn it, sing.

S: [22:48] And snowballs. I want a big giant snowball fight.

D: Hail the Gods and maybe, possibly, sweat lodge.

S: Ooh.

DB: yah. Maybe possibly sweat lodge. We're still working out all the details for that. But the fine people from Seelie Court, (<http://www.seeliecourt.net/>) might be coming to do a sweat for the event and that would be really cool. Cuz then it would be Sauna/Snow.

S: Right. Exactly.

DB: Sweat your butt off. Freeze your butt off.

S: [23:35] Balance. It's all about balance.

DB: There will be plenty of warm space to hang out in. It's not like everybody's going to be trapped outside. Cuz we'll all be hanging out around the wood burning stoves and it'll be awesome. And then there's a couple of fire circles. Fires, the warmth and gladness in your heart to be around these fine Heathen people will keep you warm all weekend.

S: Great.

D: Is there anything you want to say in closing?

DB: [23:59] In closing? I'd like to say thank you very much for asking me to come and talk. You guys called me, but thank you very much for doing this. And I totally enjoy your show. And everybody out there who is inspired to do something, I don't care if it's stick figures, do something. Express yourself and hail the Gods.

S: Hail. And thank you so much for allowing us to interview you.

D: So that was the interview with Denise Bowen.

S: And that finishes our first half of our Episode number three. We hope you enjoyed Denise's interview and that you decide to stick around and listen to our great interviews with Dave Hawkins, and Jon Cyr.

D: See you next week!

S: Bye!

D: Take care.

-Transcribed by Miss F.P. Molina