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Genii

THE CONJURORS' MAGAZINE

Nikola Arkane

A photograph of a forest scene. A red boot with green laces is placed on a tree trunk. The tree trunk is covered in vines and has a rough, textured bark. The background is a dense forest with many thin tree trunks and some green foliage. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and twigs.

A Few Days with


Nikola

PHOTO BY VICTORIA VETTESE



Arkane

by Tom Stone



It is 1:40 p.m. Monday, January 30, 2023 in Stockholm, Sweden. I am sitting at a table at Subtopia, which is a hub for all sorts of people in the realm of art and culture. On the other side of the table is Nikola Arkane, who's working on her laptop.

When I ask her what she is doing, she replies that she's translating her FizzWizzPop script into Swedish. FizzWizzPop is the name of her kid show character that she's had success with during the last 16 years in her hometown of Belfast, Northern Ireland. It might seem like Nikola Arkane appeared from nowhere in just a few years, but she actually has many years of experience as a family entertainer to rely on.

While I want to tell you all about her work discipline, passion for magic, and fearlessness, I also feel a bit hesitant. I worry that my objectivity will be tinted since we have been dating for the last four years. I recall old issues of *Genii*, where couples have written articles waxing lyrically about each other, and how I've found that to be a tad tacky because what else would they write? Wouldn't they say the same regardless of whether their partner is a good or bad magician? In retrospect, some of it has not aged well, considering how bad some break-ups have been. And now I've been asked to put ourselves in a potentially similar situation. Would it be believable if I go beyond "she's not terrible" in my comments? Will it age well? Would it be better and more credible if someone else did it? Many questions and no answers. In any case, our relationship is the main reason Nikola is spending more and more time in Sweden, and why she is learning to perform her kidshow in Swedish. But now, after having declared my biases, I should probably get this thing started.





GENII: What else have you been up to in the last few days?

ARKANE: I recently attended The Session convention in London. Since I returned, I've showcased my work under my own name in a show produced by the circus group Burnt Out Punks. I've been reading several books including Luke Jermy's new *The Ways to Think About and Develop Magic*, Tommy Wonder's *Books of Wonder, Vol. 2*, and Stephen King's latest book *Fairy Tale*. I have also been listening to podcasts and audio books like *Conversations with Close*, Michael Close's interview with John Bannon, as well as Mark Manson's *Everything is F****d: a Book About Hope*. I'm learning to cook and made my first beef bourguignon the other day. I've just signed up to a six-week belly dance course.

I'm also trying to figure out the ins and outs of being able to live and work in Sweden, including to build a Swedish version of my FizzWizzPop magic show that I can take on the road across the country. In between, I've been watching Lukas's manipulation DVDs as I would like to use the lessons from them in a new act I've been working on since The Conjuring Workshop last summer.

I've been to several shows by Swedish performers to see how they interact with audiences here, was interviewed by Craig Petty for his YouTube channel, and I've built and constructed an old-style book gimmicked to produce a magic prop for my FizzWizzPop show. Yesterday, I designed the cards for a new card trick that I came up with and sent it to the printer. I might write this trick up for a future booklet of my work, but not until I've had some fun with it myself.

Strange, it felt like I have done nothing, but after listing it like this, I'm almost exhausted.



Above: Nikola in the semifinals of Sweden's Got Talent 2022. Below: During Nikola's audition for SGT 2022, her "Cups and Balls" didn't end with lemons, but with a standing ovation.

GENII: That was a lot! Some of it sounds quite intriguing. Why a course in belly dancing?

ARKANE: When I competed in *Sweden's Got Talent* last year I discovered that I have no real body awareness. I had created a piece that required me to ditch a thing without looking, but I couldn't do it. I have literally no idea where my body parts are in space. Body awareness is useful in order to look good on stage, but it is more than that. Knowing where one's body is in space is essential for misdirection, when movements need to happen in one direction while the gaze moves in another. It would be easy just to wing it and hope for the best, but that's not where my ambitions are. For a while now I have marked foot positions with tape on the floor as an aid during rehearsals. To get further ahead, I could take a course in anything that deals with structured body movements: martial arts, dance, acrobatics. In this case, the earliest course that had open spots was belly dancing, and it also seemed to be great fun in and of itself. So to recap, I want to get improved body control so my magic and misdirection become better, hence belly dancing.

GENII: Jermay, Wonder, and King—what made you choose those books?

ARKANE: One of my purchases at The Session convention was everything Luke Jermay had to sell, simply because his new lecture was outstanding. I particularly enjoyed his one percent approach. To





improve an effect we only need to improve it by one percent for it to be new, original, even unique. Since returning, I have been reading his book to delve further into Jermy's thinking.

Tommy Wonder ... well I am a super fan of this man's work and life. I only wish I had met and worked with him. But since that was not meant to be, I have the next best thing, his books. I should say that I have borrowed them from a good friend (who will get them back at some point, I promise). At this moment in life, I find myself between homes. I have a tiny room with my dad in Belfast and I am living part of the year in Sweden. I have had to downsize everything I own simply because I have no place to put stuff. So, in scaling down my things, I began to organize my little library of magic books and realized there were so many books I had started to read but never actually finished. Including the *Books of Wonder*. So this year I set myself a goal to read every book on my shelves from first to last page before buying another book. And I finally have made my way through the entire first volume of *Books of Wonder* and am on to the second.

Stephen King ... well I am a big believer in not overloading oneself with too much of something. So, for good measure I always have something "normal" to read. Especially at night when I find it hard to sleep I like to read something that takes my mind outside of magic, problem solving, and

the real world, and into a bit of a fantasy world, and for some reason I have missed Stephen King's books until recently.

GENII: You mentioned that you had been showcasing your Nikola Arkane show, and that you're working on translating your FizzWizzPop show. What's the main difference between those shows, and wouldn't you need to translate both of them?

ARKANE: Almost all adults in Sweden speak English fluently, so there's no real need for me to translate my close-up and parlor work. But children do not learn English in Sweden until they are much older. As FizzWizzPop I love to perform for the age range where seeing me is the very first time they meet magic. And in order to do that I need to know the language, otherwise it simply won't work.

There are more differences between FizzWizzPop and Nikola Arkane than just the characters and audiences. It's important for me when performing for children as FizzWizzPop and performing for adults as Nikola Arkane that both the characters and material fit. What I mean is, kid shows should be kid shows: imaginative, joyful, fun. Sometimes I see peers perform dumbed down versions of their standard close-up and parlor material, as if the kids are merely small adults, and I feel that takes away something important from the kids. There is a tendency to look down on kid show work and not take it seriously, which is completely undeserved because

As FizzWizzPop at the *Sooty and Friends* show, Eastbourne 2022



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER WOODS

Above: "Lost Things," a physical theatre piece by KIC Project, 2010

Right: Danny Carmo's *Mathemagical Mysteries*, the American tour 2016.

it is hard and challenging work. That's not to say that there aren't challenges in performing magic for adults. Having done a lot of kid shows, it is way too easy to start mugging and have over-exaggerated expressions in adult performances as well. A lot of performers do not make this transition well.

GENII: Is this also the reason why you have three different websites: Fizzwizzpop.com, nikolaarkane.com, and arkaneshop.com?

ARKANE: Yes, since each show is targeted to completely different customers it's less confusing if I keep it separate. And the third site is solely for my peers, and is where I write my journal of the ins and outs of being a performer, as well as selling my books and props.

GENII: We've been talking about FizzWizzPop a bit. What exactly is that character, and how did she come to life?

ARKANE: Well, weirdly she came to be both out of necessity and also indulgence. I never really planned to become a magician. My original goal was to become a stage actress. When studying for my degree in theater I had to go on work experience with a director of a show—he was a magician and he put me in a box, a "Bo Staff" illusion. Magic was thrust into my life. After finishing my degree there was literally no acting work. Neither for me nor anyone else. All the theaters in Belfast had shut



Right: All the kids are eager to help FizzWizzPop with her problems.
Middle: Fleming Fulton school in Belfast

down for refurbishments. So I had to do something in the interim until I was able to find acting work. I thought, why don't I become a magician? Why not create a magic show for children? I needed to earn money to survive and what better way to do it than with something I had discovered that I enjoyed—magic. Now here comes the indulgence part. I had some pretty strong ideas about what I wanted to create. I wanted the character to look fabulous. So I got a West End costume designer to make my first outfit. I made my magic case from scratch. I got a logo designed, business cards. I bought magic props, practiced, came up with scripts, performed the tricks for my parents. I wanted this creation of mine to be the best it could be, and that was before I'd even performed a show. When I finally did my first show it was one of the worst experiences of my adult life. It was simply not good. But I knew that doing something once is not enough to base any judgement on. So I pressured myself to get out and perform again. With every next step I took, my feet became steadier and more confident, and after a little while I began to know what I was doing and all the preparation paid off.

GENI: That was about 16 years ago, but Nikola Arkane is a bit younger than FizzWizzPop. How did she come about?

ARKANE: Yes, Nikola Arkane is just an infant really. My kids character is all grown up and my adult character is just a child. But, yes, I suppose she came about through my desire to do more than magic for children. To fulfill my inner need to expand my range. As noted earlier, in the eyes of many magicians, children's entertainers are not taken seriously, and I want to be taken seriously. At first, the urge was to become somebody, to feel respected in the eyes of my peers. I felt a desire to perform close-up magic, card magic, coin magic—what was considered real magic, serious magic. But then something changed. I suppose I began taking magic seriously for its own sake. I know that with FizzWizzPop I take that kind of magic more seriously than most and I think that's why she is successful. So I realized if I wanted Nikola Arkane to be as good, I have to put the same amount of work into her. Right now when I perform as Nikola Arkane I feel like Bambi sliding across the ice. I am



still so unsure of myself. But I also know that comes with the territory when doing something new.

Lots of people ask me if Nikola Arkane is my real name. The answer is no. My birth name was Nicola Cunningham. My former married surname was McBride. And what I didn't want was to be known as Nicola McBride, like I was a long lost relative of Jeff McBride. I wanted a name of my own, unique. I wanted a name that played into my roots in Ireland—its history, lore, and magic. At the time I was reading lots of comic books and came across *Swamp Thing* by Alan Moore, which had an important character named Abigail Arcane. The name resonated with me. Arcane was from an archaic land of Ireland. So I decided my stage name would be Nicola Arcane. And just to be on the safe side I chose to spell it like Nikola Tesla, so if people saw my name in print they would be able to pronounce it properly. Long story, but I absolutely love the name and glad I took time to think about it since it will be my name for life.

GENII: Does this mean that your interest in close-up and stage magic has emerged more recently than your interest in children's entertainment?

ARKANE: That is not completely accurate. When I first got into magic I wanted to try performing in all kinds of settings. I did try my hand at close-up then, in the venues that were open to me, which meant pubs. Places that were filled with happy but quite drunk people. They were happy—my own experiences were less joyful. Men repeatedly harassed me and spoke inappropriately. At the time I just started to find myself and magic so I had no idea how to deal with it. I didn't have the confidence and voice to tell these men where to go and just ended up leaving the events deflated. Also, the people I met really wanted my magic to go horribly wrong. They took joy in it, maybe because they noticed that I was too inexperienced to handle it. Things like taking my props and not returning them.

It got to a stage where I was actually hired for an event and I was so afraid to perform I had to call the organizer and tell them that I wasn't feeling well and couldn't make it. Little did they know I'd actually already arrived at the event and was so filled with anxiety I simply couldn't go through the



doors. While I can laugh at it today, it made me feel like an utter failure at the time. So I just gave up on the idea of performing close-up magic and kept that interest as a hobby, while focusing on my kid show work.

GENII: Considering all the close-up magic you are performing now, at some point you must have given up on giving up. How did that happen, and are people still acting inappropriately toward you?

ARKANE: Well, I talked with a man named Marco Fida on the very last day of The Session convention in 2018. I'm not sure if he realizes the impact our talk had on me, but here goes. I was waiting for a taxi to the airport when Marco invited me to sit down beside him. He asked me why I came to the Session and what my story was.



Weirdly I took this as my moment to let go of everything I had been holding up inside me and I told him about my past experiences, all the horrible ones. But during that cathartic woe I told him several good experiences that I had: the work I'd done with FizzWizzPop, the touring, the shows. He listened to me for quite some time. Taking it all in. And at the end of it he said, "You know what? After all you have told me, I reckon if you put yourself back into those 'horrible settings' I bet you are in the right place to deal with them now. You have so much more experience now and I bet you will feel differently. At least you should give it a go, you will never know until you try." After talking to this person I'd never met before, I left feeling happy, smiling, and almost like I could do it. I just had to try.

So I did, and although all the feelings before the events were exactly the same, the actual performances at the events were different. In fact, people began to listen to me, watch me. I suppose I had a presence that I didn't have back when I first began. People were actually interested. I don't fully understand why, but they were.

GENIE: Since I've heard you talk about how you got into close-up again, I know that there was also someone else who was influential.

ARKANE: Yes indeed. The one and only Fay Presto. The close-up legend. I have been so lucky that this amazing woman came into my life and has been there to help me navigate this strange world of magic, particularly in the close-up field. She gener-

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Performing a hybrid of Oil and Water, and Cards through Handkerchief in Zeist, Netherlands 2022





My Friend Nikola

By George Bleeks

Nikola Arkane was born Nicola Cunningham in Tiger's Bay, Belfast, Northern Ireland, an area badly affected by The Troubles. While antisocial behavior, sectarianism, and crime occurred around her, Nikola took a different path. Her parents Liz and Philip, her sister Lisa, and her good friends all provided a loving and supportive atmosphere where she had a very happy and safe childhood.

Happy and safe were great for growing up, but she always knew she didn't want a normal nine-to-five job. She chose to take a degree in Drama at Queen's University in Belfast, and it was there that her future direction was discovered. On work experience with Cahoots, an award-winning children's magic theater company, she had her first real introduction to magic and, from then on, she was smitten.

After Nikola graduated, she continued her involvement with Cahoots, acting and performing in many of their productions. She became an experienced box jumper, in fact one of the best, because she instinctively understood magic. I have been a board member of

Cahoots since the start and she was a delight to employ and was hired time and again by the company. Back then it was clear from talking to her and seeing her interest in all things magical that she wanted more.

While at Cahoots, it was inevitable that she would meet other magicians. Rafael Rafael was in the first production she ever did with Cahoots and was certainly a big influence on her early magical career. She also met Caolan McBride at this time and they worked together extensively both in Cahoots and in their own double act. Ever curious, and with her legendary enthusiasm, she started learning from others and was inspired to do more on her own.

I have built a large library of magic books that I am very protective of. There are very few people I am willing to lend books to, but Nikola is one of them. Why? Because I know that she really understands the importance of proper study and appreciates soaking in new information from all sources open to her. It always gives me great pleasure when she shows me some hidden gem that I have overlooked, or how she took an effect from a book and turned it into something that suited her unique theatrical style. I'm even happier when I get the book back, it having been respected and treated well.

A highlight of her involvement with Cahoots was their series of mathematics-based productions. These played in theaters all over Ireland and toured America extensively. *Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries*, for example, was presented in 57 venues, in front of audiences of up to 3,000 children at a time. This gave Nikola a taste for the appreciation of large audiences.

Through Cahoots artistic director, Paul McEaney, she joined The Ulster Society of Magicians. Like everything Nikola becomes involved with, she threw herself into becoming one of the Society's most ardent supporters, and she remains so to this day. It wasn't long until she was an active member of the Committee, served as Treasurer for several years, entered and won their stage competition (in a double act with Caolan) and, in 2012, was elected as their first-ever female chair since their formation in 1942.

In 2016, she organized the Irish magic convention, Belfast MagiCon, on behalf of the Society, bringing local artists together with magicians from

around the world, including Roberto Giobbi, Malin Nilsson, John Lenahan, and Rafael Rafael.

All this time she was performing professionally as her alter-ego FizzWizzPop. When she entertains as FizzWizzPop, she becomes the character. All parts of her act, from her costume to her persona, from her props to her magic, are beautifully combined into a wonderful, consistent whole. She works tirelessly in developing and honing her skills. It is clear why she is one of the best and busiest children's entertainers in Northern Ireland.

In the background, however, she was constantly practicing her close-up skills and really wanted to take this further. Then she attended The Session in 2018 with me and her life was turned around. Even though she had been to many conventions before, there was something about this one that just clicked with her. She spent many happy hours hanging out with the likes of Johnny Thompson and Paul Vigil, talking magic into the night. It was also here that she met Tom Stone, who is now so much part of her life.

Since that time, I have seen this young woman grow so much not just in close-up but in all aspects of magic. She has won several prestigious magic competitions including the I.B.M. British Close-Up Competition and the Ali Bongo Micro Marathon in 2019. She has appeared all over the world, both virtually and in person, in places like The Magic Castle and The Chicago Magic Lounge. She has become proficient at a lot of the necessary electronic gadgetry required nowadays and is becoming quite skilled at making her own magic props. I must say that, with the latter, her tendency to be a bit accident-prone has not deterred her in any way.

In addition to all the magic-related growth over the last few years, I have seen Nikola's personal vision of her life clarify for her and she is in a much happier place than she has been for many years. For all of this time she has been a good friend to me, not just in magic, but in life. I am proud and honored to be able to call her a friend. •

George Bleeks is a magician based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He has been a member of The Ulster Society of Magicians since 1975, was their Secretary for 30 years, and is currently their Honorary President. He has an extensive magic library, and is the local go-to for magic research.



PHOTO BY ARTO AIRAKSINEN

Performing at Mystique, Stockholm, 2019



PHOTO BY JAMES HOBART

First encounter with Fay Presto, 2014

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ously took me under her wing and has allowed me to watch her work on several occasions. We have met and talked close-up, the environment, and how to deal with people. About the most important things in close-up—*you!* And her time and interest in me have helped my self-confidence to grow and grow. She has been like a mum to me in magic and for that I will be forever grateful. We need people to look up to in magic and, as a girl, it's important to have women to look up to.

GENII: There are a lot of more women in magic now compared with just 20 years ago and I've noticed that you are quick to post positive comments to and about them. Why is that?

ARKANE: When I first got into magic I thought there were no women at all, which felt awful. So it is really important to me that we build a good community for women in our field. Let's put it this way. The community of male magicians that has existed so far has done okay. But women have a chance to build our community from scratch with the opportunity to bypass mistakes that have already been made. We have an opportunity to help each other to become the ones on whose shoulders future female magicians will stand. I believe this emerging community begins with us and our atti-

tudes. As individuals we are only that: individuals. What a force women in magic can become if we work together. That's why I make the effort to praise, follow, message, and engage with other women in magic. It's so important and ultimately it will create a better future for younger women and girls who are getting into magic and aid them in being accepted. It is also important for the art itself, because it is difficult for any magician to compete with other art forms for art grants and recognition if the outward appearance is that 50 percent of the population seems excluded.

GENII: You mentioned the Conjuring Workshop earlier. For those who don't know what it is, could you describe it?

ARKANE: It is where real magic happens. The Conjuring courses are held in a small village just north of Stockholm. During the course of a week, you work from early morning to late night with magicians from around the world. There is a cost for lodging and meals, but the actual course is free. They have literally changed the way I think of, create, and perform magic, and have helped me become a real magician. While magic books are good at explaining and describing the workings of tricks, there are not many books that can teach everything else, like the composition of magic, how to create new routines, how to learn misdirection, how to trust one's own ideas, how to build props—those are the kinds of things you workshop together with other magicians. Everything is hands-on, so you quickly get an intuitive feel for how something works and why something else doesn't.

Attending these courses has helped me to grow up into magic. I've gained confidence, met people I otherwise never would have met, did things I never tried before simply because I was in a place that allowed me to try. It isn't just magic you discover here. It's a passion for the work. You explore all sorts of dramatic techniques and tools. Speaking of tools, with guidance from Tim Star I even built my very own magic wand from scratch. Before this, I never even dreamt of using tools due to the fear of maiming myself, but I am no longer afraid of making things, like the old-style book prop I mentioned earlier. It's now my dad who is afraid—sometimes very afraid, but I always end up

impressing him, which is nice.

GENII: You said that you might put your new card trick in a booklet. You've written a few books by now, on both kid shows and close-up: *Becoming FizzWizzPop*, *Pop*, *The Chaos Within*, *In Plain Sight*. What made you decide to start publishing your ideas?

ARKANE: It began with other magicians asking my advice on performing for children. How do you choose material? How do you control children shouting over you? How long should a show be? All



Competing in
The I.B.M. British Ring
Stage Competition
2019



PHOTO BY JEWMA TYNNAN



Performing at The Magic Castle, 2019



of these questions which I myself had battled with. Things I thought were second nature to all performers but me. Over the years I discovered that other magicians and kids entertainers also were unsure of the same things. Upon answering these questions, I realized that I had built up a wealth of knowledge on working in this field. After a little research I found that many books for children's entertainers included routines and advice on developing routines but nothing, and I mean *nothing*, was written about the business of being a kids entertainer or even why you would want to be one. That surprised me, and I remembered back to when I began doing this, I got little help from others. The people I reached out to didn't want to teach or tell me things out of fear that I might take their work—which is impossible since there is so much work for everyone. None of us can perform at every event. I just decided that I didn't want others to feel the hopelessness that I had felt in the beginning, and began writing what would become the book *Becoming FizzWizzPop*. I went back to the beginning and broke down the nuts and bolts of how I had built everything. I described both the highs and the lows; it was an honest telling of what it is to set up a business entertaining children. Because it's so honest I feel that readers get the idea

of how much hard work it takes to make it successful, work that is within anyone's grasp. The book delves into the whys and hows of creating a character, as well as the business side of things. No one writes about these things and yet they are essential. I suppose that I wrote a book that I wished existed when I started out.

After that I kind of got the bug for writing. And I also realized that there are very few, if any, women authors in this field. In my time of reading magic I've never read a proper magic book written by a woman, and I believe that is a problem. And I thought that if something needs to be done, and no one is doing it, then I am the one who needs to do it. I can't just wait for others to bring about a change. If I'm the one who has noticed it, then I suppose I'm the one who has to do something about it. So I did.

I began documenting my discoveries in my blog. I wrote up a set of notes on my Magic Castle act which, although it contain tricks, is more about the structure of the entire act, how I devised the act, and my thoughts about how to bring the audience with me on the journey through the show. Again this is also something I rarely see written about. I think I like to write about things I would like to read about.

My writing so far is all my discoveries, joy in the work, and the failures. It needs to be honest, because then I feel that others can also benefit from it. And it is cathartic for me. I learn and grow from writing it all down. I like to think that the books are good, but that is not the essential thing, because I hope that I am opening a door and that other women in the field will also begin to write about their discoveries and ideas. If I can do it, anyone can do it.

GENII: Among the things you've done in the last few days, you listed that you had participated in a show with other performers, and that you had been to see a few shows by other magicians.

ARKANE: One thing I love about Sweden is the magic community here. I cannot explain it, but it is ... different. I have been very lucky at home with a community that has been extremely supportive. But here artists seem to go above and beyond to help each other to achieve their goals artistically. It's not about the trick or 'I know something you don't'—it seems to be more about the actual work. The realization that everyone benefits from work-

shopping together. I think the Swedish magicians that I have been lucky enough to meet and work with are more open to creativity and trying ideas out—even ideas that might be rubbish, just to see what works and what doesn't. And more importantly, analyzing things afterward. It's a process. People here really care, not only about their own work but the work of others, because everyone's work reflects on everyone else's. I also find that my work is progressing faster simply because I can trust people here to work with my material and take it to the next level. We get on our feet and workshop it properly instead of talking around it with guesses and theories. It's fast, efficient, and what helps is that the magicians here have created a language for magic which enables them to converse properly about what we do. I suppose magic—if you like—is more grown up here. My mum always said I needed to go beyond Belfast, and I understand now that what she meant was to go further afield and meet many more people who think about magic like me. I absolutely love magic. I eat, breathe, and sleep it and am beyond passionate about it. In Sweden I

PHOTO BY TAYLOR WONG



Performing an insane paddle routine with Leif Olberius and Tom Stone, at Mystique, Stockholm, 2022

PHOTO BY OTTAR KRAEIVER



The Nirvana, Hollywood, 2022

have found my community. My people. And, so far my magic has gone from strength to strength, thanks to the support, encouragement, and drive of the magic artists here.

At the same time, the field of kids magic is underdeveloped here. While the kid show magicians are quite good, there are very few. At home, the market is over-saturated, but here the market is uncharted territory, and I feel confident that once I get the hang of the language, FizzWizzPop will absolutely slay here.

One unexpected side effect of translating my work is that my original English script also improves. A language cannot be translated directly to another, word by word. In order to retain the feeling of the script from one language to another, each word has to be measured carefully, idioms have to be changed, puns need to be rewritten. This frequently leads me to find more humor and drama which I want bring back into my original script.

Translating my show into a different language has opened up ideas and concepts that I would



PHOTO BY KARI HENDER

never have discovered if I only performed it in English. I have also gained a much stronger admiration for all the performers around the world who have taught themselves to perform their acts not just in their native language but also in English. That is something I just took for granted until I attempted to perform in a second language and felt my brain implode. So many of us don't realize the effort artists around the world put into sharing their work, and it is something to be grateful for.

GENII: While it isn't an essential question to



PHOTO BY OLAV HØITEN

finish with, I still found it curious that you are learning to cook. What is that about?

ARKANE: Well, it's about time. The real answer is I have had an absolutely horrible relationship with food my entire life. For years, I've been on the verge of having an eating disorder. But now that I am in a much better place, physically and mentally, I have decided it's finally time to conquer this once and for all. It also helps that I am dating someone whose cooking I prefer over fine dining restaurants. I've been shown that anything can become tasty, even the most basic meals, and I feel encouraged to try and experiment and I don't want to go my whole life not eating properly. So I've started to learn. All learning ends up in the same head, so I wouldn't be surprised if what I learn in the kitchen is eventually expressed in my magic.



It is now 5 p.m. and it is time to go home. I'll do the cooking tonight, I think I'll make some kind of fish soup. While I'm dancing around in the kitchen, Nikola will likely read and practice magic. She's getting more and more recognition in our field and I think most will agree with me; she's not terrible. •

Nikola and Tom Stone, 2018