

Michelle Belanger

Michelle Belanger has shared her dark gifts with the world through a wide variety of creative expressions. Her contributions to the gothic community are vast and varied, spanning the realms of literature and philosophy, and with the release of her debut album, Blood of Angels, she is embarking on a solo career as a musical artist.



By DEVON KING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PENDRAGON



Psychic experiences and ghostly phenomena were common occurrences in the Belanger household when Michelle was growing up. Afflicted with a life-threatening heart defect from birth, she endured several out of body encounters and near death experiences before the age of five. Her mother believed that these traumatic brushes with death made Michelle more sensitive to psychic phenomenon.

Throughout the years, Michelle's psychic inheritance has manifested itself in a variety of ways. Her pioneering work, *The Psychic Vampire Codex* details concepts and techniques that she learned through an intensive study of her own vampiric experiences. A firm believer that psychic perceptions are something that anyone can cultivate, she travels the country giving lectures and seminars on psychic energy exchange, dreamwalking, spirit communication, and a variety of other occult and mystical practices.

Michelle's full-register operatic voice has graced the gothic realm as well. She has performed as a guest vocalist for the musical act Nox Arcana and the Chicago-based goth-rock band Urn, appearing in their "Shadow Dancer" video with her friend, real-life vampire Don Henrie. She recently re-teamed with Joseph Vargo and William Piotrowski of Nox Arcana to create her debut solo album *Blood of Angels*.

"Music has always been an integral part of my life," Michelle confides. "It

started with my mother who was an art and music student at Kent State University. She would practice her violin while she watched me play, filling my childhood with the cascading notes of Vivaldi, Mozart, and Rossini. I started my own musical training early, first on piano, then on flute, honing my vocal talents all the while.

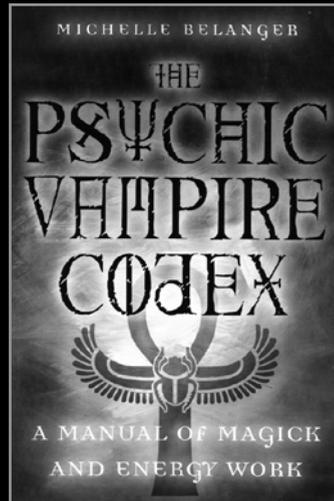
"I am classically trained in voice, with a background in opera, liturgical music, and Medieval polyphony. One of the things I really enjoyed in working on this album was the fact that Joseph and William gave me free reign to play with my vocal skills. A lot of the songs feature my signature vocal arias— those haunting, high counter-melodies that drift over the rest of the song. Most people are aware that I sing soprano, but I've got a much wider range than that, and this album allows me to really show that off, using the different aspects of my voice to tell the story behind each song. On the title track, *Blood of Angels*, I actually sing four octaves of music and I still can't believe it's me when I hear it."

The theme of the album is based on legends of the Watcher Angels who were condemned to the earthly realm after mating with mortals and sharing their mystical secrets with them. Drawing upon ancient Enochian myths, Michelle explores the concept of these celestial beings who abandoned Heaven for a taste of mortal love to create an album that is steeped in magick, ancient lore,

and forbidden passion. The songs range in lyrical content from ghost stories to tales of fallen angels and lost love, while the music ranges from haunting dirges to mystical Middle-Eastern melodies to full-blooded orchestrations replete with gothic chants.

William Piotrowski of Nox Arcana relates how the project came together, "The collaboration came about after Michelle sang the medieval ballad 'Past Time With Good Company' on our album *Winter's Knight* in 2005. She did a wonderful job, and after that, Joseph and I had discussed the possibility of working on an entire album with her. However, our busy schedules didn't ever allow any of us enough time to work on such an elaborate project together. One day we just decided to make it happen. Joseph, who was old friends with Michelle, called her up out-of-the-blue and proposed that we all take a break from our ongoing projects and set aside an entire week to create an album together."

Producer and composer Joseph Vargo affirms, "We set a date and about a month or so before we got together Michelle gave us a demo with about twenty snippets of basic melodies that she had sung. William and I went through them and chose a few of the darker, more melodic ones and began composing some accompanying music that would fit them. We also tapped into the Nox Arcana vault of unused melodies and riffs.



It was just amazing, having three driven and creative people in a studio together for five days with one overriding goal: create.

“Once we got together in the studio with Michelle, the three of us listened to everything we had come up with. We chose a few songs, and just jumped right into recording them. We lived in our studio for a solid week of 16-hour days. Some of the songs were written on the spot and occasionally we’d be off in two different worlds. William and I would work on putting the music together while Michelle would be in her own creative zone writing her lyrics. But it all came together very smoothly and efficiently with tremendous results.”

Michelle relates, “The whole experience was about playing with our styles of Gothic music, finding where those styles converged, then weaving lyrics and vocals and orchestration together to paint these haunting, eerie landscapes of sound. There was a wicked alchemy between the three of us, and we were literally on fire creatively that whole week. It was a marathon session of writing and recording. It was exhausting, but it was very rewarding. I’m insanely happy with our finished product.”

“My tastes in music have always been dark,” Michelle confides. “I think I was Goth before most people even knew what that was. I would sometimes amuse myself by turning the poems of some of my favorite gothic writers into songs. The groups I listen to, when I’m not listening to Gregorian chant or Classical, include Dead Can Dance, Loreena McKennit, Nightwish, QNTL, and

VNV Nation. I think the influences of most of these artists come through on *Blood of Angels*.”

A prolific and accomplished writer, Michelle has authored hundreds of poems, stories and essays dealing with gothic, occult, and spiritual topics. From 1991 to 1996, while attending college at John Carroll University, she wrote and published *Shadowdance*, a cutting-edge magazine that celebrated the gothic lifestyle. As the founder of House Kheperu, a magickal society with a unique style of energy work, Michelle has shared her knowledge and vast occult library with the gothic and vampire community.

Michelle’s dark literary interests have resulted in the publication of numerous influential books that shed light on the shadows of the gothic lifestyle. Her fictional works include *The Enchanted Wood*, and *These Haunted Dreams*, while her non-fiction books include *The Psychic Vampire Codex*, and *Sacred Hunger*. Her latest release, *Psychic Dreamwalking: Explorations at the Edge of Self*, delves into the fascinating territory where dreams, the subconscious and astral projection intersect.

In *The Psychic Vampire Codex*, Michelle examines the phenomenon and experience of modern vampirism completely from the vampire’s perspective and introduces readers to profound spiritual traditions that support a fascinating system of energy work used

by vampires themselves.

“Psychic vampires are people who prey on the vital, human life energies of others,” Michelle explains. “They are not believed to be undead. They are mortal people whose need for energy metaphorically connects them to the life-stealing predators of vampire myth.”

Being an authority on such topics, Michelle has also been featured in a number of television shows and films documenting the vampire subculture. She has appeared in the A&E special *The Secret Life of Vampires*, the WE! television network’s *Night Bites: Women and Their Vampires*, and will appear this fall in the History Channel’s upcoming special *Vampire Secrets*.

So what will the future hold for this Renaissance woman? Michelle reveals that her forthcoming projects include *The Psychic Energy Book: A Psychic Development Guide*, slated for release this coming Spring, and a follow-up to *The Psychic Vampire Codex*, due out in the Fall of 2007.

“My upcoming novel, *Incubus Chronicles*, is a Victorian romance with a supernatural twist, and I am currently shopping around a screenplay that takes a traditional vampire yarn in whole new directions. Beyond that, I’m already brainstorming on a follow-up album to *Blood of Angels*.”

For more information on Michelle, visit: www.MichelleBelanger.com