

Interview with Maria Gonzalez

Weltneugier: *Before we start with the actual questions, tell us a bit about yourself. Where are you from and how did you end up in Edinburgh?*

Maria: *I'm Spanish but I was tired of living in such a big city like Madrid so I came up here. And I love it!*

Weltneugier: *How did you discover the Beltane Fire Society and what made you join it? Since when are you a part of it?*

Maria: *6 months after arriving to Edinburgh I met a guy who was involved. It took me another two years to get involved myself.*

Weltneugier: *You belong to the group "Reds". Please, tell us a bit about it. How many people belong to the group? What role do the "Reds" play in the festival? To what extent can you identify with that role?*

Maria: *It's usually 16 Reds who represent the bubbling energy and the fertility that bring everything back to life the spring time comes. There is so much red in me :) once you've gone through it, it stays with you. But Reds and Beltane to an extent is different to everybody and different every time. Don't take my experience as standard. I don't think there is such a thing.*

Weltneugier: *Tell us about the people involved in your group and in the festival in general? How would you describe the audience; are there more locals or more tourists?*

Maria: *The Reds are supposed to be chaotic, free, fun, naughty. We are covered only with red paint and a red thong and make human pyramids and general mischief... ;) about the origin of the audience... difficult to say. It's not what my attention is focused on the night. It is a very powerful transforming experience. You interact with the public and that one of the best parts, but I couldn't tell you for the life of me where this people come from...*

Weltneugier: *Are the performances at the festival always the same or do they differ every year?*

Maria: *There is some basic story line, that varies slightly every year, and so does the performance. But in general terms it's the celebration of the arrival of the good weather and the life and fertility that this brings.*

Weltneugier: *Tell us about the first time you took part in the festival. How did you feel? What was/is more important to you, acrobatics or acting and playing a role?*

Maria: *Neither of those. The most important for me is the preparations. Two months of working with 15 other people, really closely challenging yourself and others, growing. And then, on the night, the powerful experience of being red, being the representation of the seed of life itself. Acrobatics is an important part of it. It's the order in the chaos. It's trust in yourself and the group. It's challenge and power.*

Weltneugier: *It surely takes a lot of work to prepare for the festival. What do your preparations look like exactly?*

Maria: *Two months of intense physic and mental training. And bonding between us. The night it's really demanding in many aspects. You need to be ready for physical and mental challenges. The paint, the fire and the rest of the group makes this magically transfixing.*

Weltneugier: *Does your group only perform at the Beltane Festival or do you also appear at other events?*

Maria: *They also take part in Samouhinn, on the 31st of October in the Royal Mile.*

Weltneugier: *Before we finish our interview, why would you recommend our readers to visit the Beltane festival?*

Maria: *Mmmm.... it's amazing, sure. But if you don't know what's going on, you're very likely to miss most of it. There is 12.000 people on a hill, and 300 performers parading. If you're coming make sure you know where to be at each given point*

Weltneugier: *Last but not least the infamous last words. Here's your chance:*

Maria: *The performance is what you see. But the journey is what Beltane is about.*



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