



## Berklee Institute for Accessible Arts Education

### **ABLE Voices Episode 50: Kace Valentine**

[Introduction music by Kai Levin plays]

**[Dr. Bernard]** Hello, everyone, and welcome to the ABLE Voices Podcast. I'm Dr. Rhoda Bernard, founding managing director of the Berklee Institute for Accessible Arts Education, and I'm proud to present this podcast featuring disabled artists and arts educators. We are inviting artists with disabilities to be guest hosts for the ABLE Voices Podcast.

Today, you'll meet our next guest host, Kace Valentine. Kace Valentine is an influential voice in the worlds of alternative music, fashion, and Autism Advocacy. Their powerful music and bold comedic TikTok reel style have earned them a devoted following of fans who love their unique perspective and inspiring message. As an autistic person themselves, Kace is passionate about promoting Autism awareness and acceptance. Kace uses their platforms on Instagram and TikTok to share their own experiences and educate others about the challenges and opportunities of living with autism. Their content covers a wide range of topics, from alternative fashion and music to autism advocacy and comedy, all with the focus of empowering their followers and creating a more inclusive world. As a performer, Kace has an electric energy that captivates audiences and leaves them wanting more. Their live shows are a mix of ethereal vocals, whimsical guitar, and raw emotion, creating a truly unique sound. Whether you're a fan of their music, content, or advocacy work, Kace Valentine is a force to be reckoned with. Through their creativity and passion, they're helping to create a world where everyone can feel accepted, celebrated, and empowered.

Welcome, Kace! We are delighted to have you as the next guest host of the ABLE Voices Podcast!

**[Kace Valentine]** Hi! I'm really happy to be here! Thank you for having me.

**[Dr. Bernard]** Our pleasure! I'd like to start off by asking you to tell us your story as an artist. How did you get your start as an artist, and how did you get to where you are today?

**[Kace Valentine]** So, I've always wanted to be an artist and a musician. Primarily- it began- I believe, in the fourth or fifth grade when I picked up the guitar for the first time in elementary school, and I just couldn't put it down since.

[Dr. Bernard and Kace Valentine laugh]

**[Kace Valentine]** Yeah! Once I got out of elementary school, I started taking lessons for guitar, and then- I just fell in love with the instrument and fell in love with songwriting. I was playing nonstop and ended up starting to gig for the first time once I got out of middle school. I've been gigging in bands and stuff since I was fresh out of middle school. I've been in lots of bands and lots of different genres, and since then, I've grown a lot as an artist and musician. I just have a love for all genres of music, performing in front of a live audience, songwriting, and all of that. Now I'm continuing to perform with my band at the moment, and I just love live performance and growing as a musician.

**[Dr. Bernard]** Wow! Fantastic story! I love thinking about picking up that guitar in fourth grade and never putting it down- that's just pretty awesome! Can you talk for us about your experiences as a person with a disability and as an artist with a disability?

**[Kace Valentine]** Yeah, of course. As an autistic person, I believe I've been given unique challenges and opportunities when living in this world. Personally- growing up- my childhood was particularly unique because of my disability, and being an autistic person, I struggled a lot with social cues and knowing how to interact with my peers. I played very differently compared to my neurotypical peers, and- because of that- I was bullied quite a lot, as many autistic people tend to be, because of how different we are. But- my childhood and the way I've grown up has really shaped me into the person I am today. Being autistic kind of gives you your own set of- not issues- but struggles- I guess- when it comes to sensory processing- being really sensitive to sounds, lights, and touch or social interactions- not really knowing what to say when to say it or dealing with selective mutism or- I also have a speech impediment that's tied into my communication skills and kind of makes communication a bit difficult for me.

Yeah- it's just given me a unique set of challenges, but with those challenges, I believe I've become a very strong and creative person through it, and it's definitely interesting being a musician who is also on the spectrum- that's been a unique experience.

**[Dr. Bernard]** Can you say more about that last bit? How is- when you say, "Being a musician who's also autistic is a unique experience," can we get specific about what's unique about it?

**[Kace Valentine]** Yeah! Performing live is definitely something because normally I am very sensitive to sound and light, and I get really overwhelmed from strobe lights or being in an environment that's really loud or having to interact with multiple people and kind of make eye contact and- I never liked being the center of attention growing up. I never really liked people paying attention to me- I kind of preferred to be in the shadows- and that's interesting because now I am a frontman in a band, and all the attention's on me.

[Kace Valentine and Dr. Bernard laugh]

**[Kace Valentine]** So that's definitely different, but it's interesting because- after- when I first started gigging as a musician, it was very difficult for me because- I remember the first gig I played with my first band- I went up on stage, it was this little random dive bar and we just played some covers- and I stood there and had my guitar and I never once looked up. I had my head down, I had my hair in my face, and a hat on to kind of hide my eyes, and I just stood there, not moving for the entire 20-minute set list, and by the time it was over, I was just so done with it- I didn't want to be there anymore-

[Kace Valentine and Dr. Bernard laugh]

**[Kace Valentine]** With everyone just looking at me. But I've definitely gotten better at stage presence and looking up and actually moving around and interacting with the crowd.

**[Dr. Bernard]** That's great! That's amazing. I know that our listeners are going to be interested in learning how you came to learn how to play guitar and write songs and perform and sing- it sounds like a lot of it was DIY?

**[Kace Valentine]** A lot of it was DIY but also- I did take some guitar lessons when I was in middle school. That was really helpful and then- I had auditioned to go into a music school for high school. It was this school in Tampa, I auditioned, I got in for guitar, but we had to move last minute, and I couldn't attend this school. So instead, my parents did some research, and they found a little music lesson place in South Florida, and I started attending that alongside my normal school. It was called Life Needs a Community. It really- it was game-changing for me because- I don't know if you know of-

**[Dr. Bernard]** Yes!

**[Kace Valentine]** You know School of Rock-

**[Dr. Bernard]** Yes, I know School of Rock well!

**[Kace Valentine]** They get like- yeah! They get kids and put them in bands and stuff- this school was started from an ex-employee of School of Rock and basically just a similar concept, but it's much more authentic. You just take some kids who are interested in similar genres and put them in a normal three to five-piece band and just teach them how to be a band, how to do the business side, make their own merchandise, book gigs, and just start gigging ASAP and graduate the program so they can do it on their own. That is what I was in when I was in high school, and that really helped me just get the skills and the knowledge under my belt to be an independent musician on my own and just play music and make money from doing it, and it taught me how to build a proper, authentic brand alongside my music and just kind of keep that business mindset while pursuing it.

**[Dr. Bernard]** I love that! I love that it's not just the craft but it's also the business because, if you're an independent musician, the business piece is super important. You can have the greatest music in the world, and you can give phenomenal shows, but if you don't know how to book them, if you don't know your brand, if you don't know how to market yourself, if you don't know how to do merch and all these other things- you're not going to get out there, right? So, I love that! That's amazing! Very cool.

**[Kace Valentine]** Yes! That's great. I'm actually going to school for business. I am graduating from FSU fairly soon, and the reason why I got into business is because I want to gain the business skills to get a job, get myself employed in the music industry, and work on brand development, marketing, and management in the industry. I believe that business is almost just as important as the skill and the art of making the music itself.

**[Dr. Bernard]** Couldn't agree more! That's great that you're doing that- that's fantastic! I know you have some audio that you want to share with us. Can you tell us what we're about to hear?

**[Kace Valentine]** Yes! Lately, this past year or so, I've been going down to Orlando with my producer and working on putting out some new music and recording it, and I'm gonna show you all a little demo of one of the tracks I've been working on, which would be a cover of "Sweet Dreams," but it's just a little snippet of what we have so far to kind of give an idea of what the sound's going for.

**[Dr. Bernard]** Awesome! Let's all take a listen.

[“Sweet Dreams” cover recording by Kace Valentine plays]

**[Dr. Bernard]** Thank you so much, Kace, for sharing that with us! That leads me right to my next question- what are you working on now?

**[Kace Valentine]** At the moment, I'm working on putting out some new music as a solo artist. I have a producer in Orlando and once I graduate fairly soon, I'm moving down there to kind of focus on working on the music and putting it out there. At the moment- lately- I've been in Tallahassee attending school, playing in a band called Unwanted Company, fronting it alongside another frontman and I also play guitar and violin in it. That's been a lot of fun playing shows around town. We have a show coming up next week and that's going to be the last show that I perform with them before I move down to Orlando. Once I do move down, I'm going to work on music and hopefully put together another band to start gigging again.

**[Dr. Bernard]** Awesome! Fantastic! What advice would you give to a young disabled artist?

**[Kace Valentine]** I would say to do what you love and don't be ashamed while doing it. To me, I loved music, and I loved singing, and I loved playing guitar, and I felt almost- as if- I felt skilled in playing guitar, but it took me a long time to be able to come out of my shell and sing. Something I noticed was- when I first started singing, I could not stand being in front of people, I could not stand having a spotlight on me, and when I would sing in front of people, my voice would shake a lot, and it ended up having this unique vibrato sound. At first, I thought that was a bad thing and I should fix that as if it was a flaw, but now that exact style is a part of my signature sound, and it gives me my ethereal sound, and it fits in my genre of goth, alternative pop-

**[Dr. Bernard]** Sure!

**[Kace Valentine]** It's really nice how something that you think is a flaw can turn into your entire brand and make you exactly what you are and differentiate yourself from the crowd. So- I guess to just- it's really important to embrace what you have even if you may think it's a flaw; it could be just what you need to set yourself apart from the crowd.

**[Dr. Bernard]** I love that advice because so much of everybody's life is about blending in and being like everyone else, right, and- no! We need to be ourselves in all the ways and especially in our art. I love that advice! Thank you for that.

Thank you so much, Kace, for sharing your experience and your thoughts with us today. We are really looking forward to our next episode where you will be our guest host.

**[Kace Valentine]** Thank you so much! It was a pleasure being here. I appreciate you having me and I'm looking forward to the next episode.

[Outro music by Sebastian Batista starts]

**[Dr. Bernard]** Me too!

[Outro music continues]

**[Dr. Bernard]** ABLE Voices is a production of the Berklee Institute for Accessible Arts Education, led by me, Dr. Rhoda Bernard, the founding managing director. It is produced by Daniel Martinez del Campo.

[Outro music ends]

The introduction music is by Kai Levin, and our closing song is by Sebastian Batista. Kai and Sebastian are students in the arts education programs at the Berklee Institute for Accessible Arts Education.

If you would like to learn more about our work, you can find us online at [berkee.edu slash B-I-A-A-E](http://berkee.edu/slash/B-I-A-A-E) or email us at [B-I-A-A-E at Berklee, that's L-E-E.edu](mailto:B-I-A-A-E@Berklee.edu)