

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Shosana Isaacs

An Experimental Retelling of the Myth of the Minotaur

by Caitlin Green

Severin Blake puts their own spin on the myth of the [Minotaur](#) in their solo work, *Labyrinth of the Other*, produced by [Applied Mechanics](#). In this version, Ariadne doesn't want to help slay the beast and instead, eagerly exclaims, "I can't wait to be eaten! ...taken in whole. Digested." Meanwhile, the Minotaur, misperceived as a reckless monster, only wants to be surrounded by flowers. Blake's retelling of the myth makes room for confrontation and self-reflection amidst conflict, both internal and interpersonal.

Blake uses the Minotaur's lore as a vehicle for releasing baggage, literally, figuratively, and collectively. They unpack a purple bag and share its contents with consenting audience members (a yellow notebook, a synthetic garland of roses, a Care Bear kite, a whale pin), perhaps lightening the load in this foreshadowing moment. The performance evolves into a demonstration of emotional processing, asking for support, and embracing the complexity, disorder and beauty of multiplicity.

"Your ancestors are waiting. They're calling... don't hold back your liberation," a voice sings. The audiences' eyes wander as they search for its source.

Blake peeks out from the back curtain of the Icebox Project Space, gliding across the floor while singing their welcome song to introduce the work. As they meander through the spectators who are seated on chairs and floor pillows laid around the perimeter of the room, their open posture has a weightless quality, which is accentuated by their flowing asymmetrical toga. From the moment the house lights dim to signal the start of the show, Blake acknowledges attendees directly, inviting us into several participatory moments (which I won't spoil for future audiences). Each offering is initiated with consent and presence. By centering autonomy and self-awareness, Blake encourages us to let go of audience etiquette, consult our bodies, and allow our attention to wander wherever it needs to during the performance.

A rumbling undertone supports poetic reflections that spiral into tangential rants, touching on attachment, abuse, racial ambiguity, sexuality, insecurity, oppression... yeah, it's a loaded serving of psychological soup. Blake acknowledges this by naming the intensity of the moment, and demonstrating a personal self-soothing practice: jumping up and down repeatedly while deeply inhaling and exhaling, body jolting with the reverb of each heavy, feet-to-floor impact.

Throughout the piece, Blake embodies each character themselves, making the narrative challenging to follow. This approach reflects blurred lines of identity, and the confusion involved when working to integrate remnants of past selves with the present. "Who am *I*?" and "Who is *the other*?" Maybe they aren't so distinct after all.

Labyrinth of the Other embraces performance as a vehicle for journeying through hard truths, a catalyst for the transformation that can ensue from fostering symbiotic relationships between self and other, audience and performer, past and present.

Labyrinth of the Other, Applied Mechanics, Cannonball, September 6-20.

Homepage and Article Page Image Description: *Severin Blake sits on the floor in the middle of a studio space with their arms outstretched toward an audience member. Blake is surrounded by a group of people sitting on chairs and pillows with their arms outstretched as well. There is a singing bowl, some cards, and a broom head sitting on the floor at the center of the space. The studio is dimly lit with two clip lights that are mounted on the wall.*

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