

THE PHYSICAL AND THE PSYCHIC Nov 4, 2016

by NKO Rey

Dudes, there are some heavy themes in Ezra Dickinson's Psychic Radio Star - mental illness, police violence, alienation, the struggle that defines life, reincarnation. Instead of discussing these, I'll talk about the themes of revealing and concealing, and the unseen unsettling forces that shape our actions - namely, the people included by choice or circumstance in our lives.

Dickinson makes every effort to acknowledge and develop his relationship with his family thru his work. Family are our unchosen collaborators, with whom relationships are always complicated. Dickinson states that Psychic Radio Star is a gift for his mother, whose mental illness has shaped their relationship, and we can see Dickinson struggling to reconcile her visions with his own. Perhaps her relationship with reality is what has allowed Dickinson to so clearly articulate his own. But she is not the only ghost in the room - included are voice tapes of his father's 6 year practice of on-air debate with talk radio host Bob Larson when they lived in Bellingham.

Psychic Radio Star is a beautiful and seamlessly executed piece, including movement, video projection, lighting design, specialty prop fabrication and painting, sound composition, scenic design and costuming. All of these components are assembled seemingly effortlessly, allowing the technical details to disappear and focusing attention clearly on Ezra's highly proficient choreography. These details are meticulously crafted by collaborators who disappear into the pages of the program, behind the glass of the booth, or into the audience.

Let's consider one image - where a stage sized projection emulates stars falling. The stars seem to fall into Dickinson's chest, glistening there. Represented by an interaction of light and his sequined costume, the sound crescendos as if he were about to explode with this contained light. This crystalline image is clearly realized thanks to the costumes crafted by Danielle Blackwell, sound composition by Paul Walsh, video designed by Leo Mayberry and lighting design by Jessica Trundy.

Dickinson chooses his tribe carefully - establishing long term partnerships that provide a basis communication and realization of these visions. For example, Paul Walsh has composed sound for Dickinson's pieces since 2005, and Blackwell has consumed him

since 2008. The trust enabled by these lengthy relationships engenders a rare clarity of execution - Dickinson allows his collaborators to create their best work by providing a strong narrative framework, displaying their creations on and thru the canvas of his body.

Back to revealing and concealing. What's revealed in *Psychic Radio Star*, during its surprisingly short 70 minutes, is a moving journey through life - from birth, thru life and struggle, to death, thru transformation, and into new life. What's concealed is the level of technical mastery assembled to create this vision. Dickinson's collaboration heavy process in producing this work allows him to focus his lens on creating and commenting on meaning in his familial relationships - a process with which we all struggle. The clarity and beauty expressed - between he and his chosen and natural families - is love.