

## **PSYCHIC RADIO STAR: THE SELF IS BORN Nov 4, 2016**

**by Natalie Singer-Velush**

To witness Ezra Dickinson's newest performance is to be invited into the birthing room, to be led by the hand behind the white curtain to witness raw emergence and then, after one birth, a rebirth, and another, and another.

If you have never participated in a birth, that's okay, and if you have, this will be nothing like it anyway. You will not be playing the role of mother, or father, or well-meaning relative standing out in the hallway with a crumpled gift bag filled with Babies R Us crap so much as you'll be playing the role of midwife, helping usher the journey of one earnest soul along with the whole evolution of humankind.

Put on your psychic scrubs.

Like all of ours, this soul must navigate a struggle to emerge. Yet unlike many birth stories this one turns our attention to the child's labor instead of the mother's — though the tension of Dickinson's mother's efforts hovers slightly out of our frame, like a ghost in her own story, not entirely dismissed. Awash in the trickle-turned-pound of coursing liquid, pre-natal life beats down toward its opening, an unrelenting maelstrom of emotion. From the inside, a body ripples against the other that contains it. Do we remember this, our own insistent swim? In the darkness of audience and memory, we feel around. This birth is haunting, melodic, synthesized. And bloody.

Propelled by the energy of the world, the soul, dressed in its birthing gown, finally emerges. But midwives: There is a problem. The person is lashed to their host, perhaps born en-caul. Anchored to the womb, exposed to the world, a soul wants to begin the path of individuation. But its amniotic origins seem un-shirkable, a bit in a racehorse's mouth. A furious, vulnerable dance of resistance ensues: Claw, crawl, wrench, tweak, curl, begin again.

Finally, the new soul is released through violence by an outside force, looming threat as liberator. Like all of us, called from the life-giving suffocation of the womb into the hostility of the world. Every attempt at building identity is met with outside interference. The midwives recognize the universal truth here: What is the world, really, but interfering with the soul's process?

Sound, image and light pave the way for new growth - sense-enveloping recordings of too-mortal gasping, radio static carrying reminders of the moral framework that encloses us (and the ghost of Dickinson's father), video of bodies mirroring each other through the sometimes frightening maze of consciousness. Finally, Dickinson's soul flutters down through the calm of the cosmos, floating into primordial stew. With the same pull of the birth dance but more mindful, the soul, more sure-footed and now clad in black-light-enabled twinkle, infuses its movement with a recognizable ballet. When we make art, we are reborn.

And then, abruptly, Dickinson reaches the next stage. Our little soul, the one we helped deliver into the world, is on its way again without us. And isn't this just like life? We are always waiting, waiting for it to start, and to end. Is it now? Now? The loneliness comes flooding back, and we are bereft.

The soul is a supernova. A star that will haunt us a long time.