“Beheading” *The Minotaur*: How Anna Ziegler’s Modern Myth Reframes Classical Storytelling for a Modern Audience

A Director’s Perspective

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By

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Abstract

This essay aims to explore Anna Ziegler's play *The Minotaur* and its place within the development of a modern theatrical landscape that recontextualizes Greek myths. Within the past decade and a half, there have been many modern interpretations of Greek myths, with many plays, including Sara Ruhl's *Eurydice* (2003) and Anais Mitchell's *Hadestown* (2016), being prime examples of the modern recontextualization of Greek myths and applying to the myths modern ideas and sensibilities such as female-led stories and anti-industrial sentiments. This essay aims to explore why this phenomenon is occurring by analyzing the work of Anna Ziegler and its relationship to the Modernist movement of the twentieth century and its own exploration and recontextualization of Greek Myth. After examining and connecting the dots between Ziegler's works and the Modernists through analyzing the source material of The Minotaur myth and its many reinterpretations in art and literature, and by analyzing another of Ziegler's plays, *Ron Swoboda's Wish*, I present my own directorial view of Ziegler's play by exploring its central themes of the "modern hero's journey" and the modernist idea of challenging ancient ideas of "fate" and rejecting it. I present my own production process in directing and staging a full production of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* as a practical application of my thesis that Greek myths keep being looked at due to the fact that we as a society lack connection at the deepest level with each other. Something that myths are capable of doing is connecting us with our own humanity through the use of their universal themes and being perfect blank theatrical canvases with which to re-contextualize and create "modern myths," or myths that we as a modern society can more readily relate to that question our most fundamental ideas about being human.

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The Modernists and the Myth: Examining the Source Material and its Modernist Reinterpretations

The Modernist movement of the early 1900s had an intense fascination with the Greeks and saw a resurgence starting in the year 1900 with the excavation of the palace of Knossos in Crete that created a revived sense of fantasy about early civilizations and about their myths (Ziolkowski). Early to mid-twentieth-century authors like Albert Camus were exposed to this rediscovery of Ancient life and were inspired by these ancient texts and stories to recontextualize them within this new movement. Their aim was to question the reality around them by examining certain social circumstances by way of translating them into ancient myth, reinterpreting the ancient myths in the process. Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* is a perfect example of this idea of "reexamining" a Greek myth. Camus' fascination was with the myth of Sisyphus, a mythological figure who was eternally cursed in the afterlife due to his attempt at cheating death, being doomed to eternally push a boulder up a hill that would then fall down the hill, becoming an impossible task and a pointless afterlife (thus the term "Sisyphean task" was coined to describe a task that is both labor intensive and meaningless). Camus' main thesis is that by examining the myth of Sisyphus, one can find meaning in life and use the myth as a counter to Nihilism, the philosophical idea that all values (and, by extension, life according to Camus) are incapable of conveying meaning and that the only impulse is to destroy, and in the case of life, to destroy it through suicide. Camus argues that Sisyphus, in the face of his impossible task, rebels against the nihilistic sentiment that his purpose in doing this task is meaningless and finds this idea of "freedom of mind" in his task, saying that "The fundamental subject of 'The Myth of Sisyphus' is this: it is legitimate and necessary to wonder whether life has a meaning; therefore it is legitimate to meet the problem of suicide face to face… this book declares that even within the

limits of nihilism it is possible to find the means to proceed beyond nihilism. In all the books I have written since I have attempted to pursue this direction. Although "The Myth of Sisyphus" poses mortal problems, it sums itself up for me as a lucid invitation to live and to create in the very midst of the desert" (Camus 1). The idea that these ancient stories can spark modern debate and be injected so easily with modern themes and issues fascinates me. In the theatrical world, a similar phenomenon has arisen: plays have arisen on and off Broadway within the last decade and a half that have taken a Greek myth and "modernized" it in presentation. The main example that this essay focuses on is Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur*, which combines the ancient myth of the half-man, half-bull monster with modern themes and presentation, like playing Connect Four while questioning the Minotaur's identity as a "monster." Sisyphus reframes the pointless task that he is performing into one in which he finds enjoyment, and as Camus famously states, "One could imagine Sisyphus to be happy" in doing this impossible task because Sisyphus has deemed that the task isn't pointless, finding meaning and creating this idea of "Freedom of mind"(Camus). The question arises: Why has it been that we as a society have kept coming back to myth? Why do we so readily relate to them and want to repeatedly adapt and analyze them? Are they really that relatable?

To answer these questions, we must first provide context by examining the origins of Western theatrical tradition, which has its roots in ancient Greek theatre. In ancient Greek society, mythology was considered a sacred social construct through which answers about how the world works around them were found, and in my opinion, these myths were best translated into theatre. The ancient Greeks were the first society to stress the importance of storytelling in the form of theatre and developed theatrical traditions predominantly in the city-state of Ancient Athens. They were the first ancient Western society that transformed the purpose of the arts like

theatre into a civic setting, where people would go to the theatre and be entertained and, more importantly, educated (depending on the subject matter), which reinforced "proper" civic behavior (Rea). The Greeks also revolutionized the way we see the art form today by setting bedrock precedents from a structural perspective, such as establishing the idea of a chorus or ensemble made up of the citizens within the narrative's setting that speaks on the happenings of the play and how it affects their society, imparting practical lessons upon the viewing audience through topics such as heroism, responsibility, and to fear the "wrath of the gods."

The biggest contribution of the Greeks to the theatrical world was the use of universal concepts that their myths and plays focused on - mainly love, betrayal, family, and even the structure of the "hero's journey" - that persist even in the modern theatrical canon. Aristotle was one of the biggest contributors to the new Greek way of thinking about art, and in his *Poetics*, he quite literally writes the rulebook when it comes to a successful theatrical structure, which, according to him, should aim to elicit "catharsis" within the audience, which he defined in the text as "pity and fear" (Aristotle). By achieving this "purgation" of emotions, a truly great tragedy is made because the audience becomes emotionally attuned to the characters, who have "good and bad" qualities that make those tragic heroes more accessible to an audience. Aristotle says, "A perfect tragedy should… be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should imitate actions that excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation… pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves" (Aristotle 45). Even the idea of the actor itself has its roots in the ancient Greek tradition; there is the famous origin of the word "Thespian," where it is said that a man named Thespis first stepped out of the Chorus to become the first person to play an individual character, creating what we know today as the "actor." (Britannica). Ronald B. Tobias, author of the book

20 Master Plots and How to Build Them, notes that Aristotle was also responsible for what we know as dramatic theory today and even helped define plot as we know it, and quotes Aristotle's concept of "unified action," saying, "A unified action creates a whole made up of a beginning, middle and an end" (Tobias 15). The contributions of the Greeks to theatre have led to these traditions being reexamined continuously by the theatrical world, and in particular by playwrights like Anna Ziegler.

Another definition that must be applied in understanding the context of this essay is my definition of what I consider to be "Modernist" within a theatrical context. In what is Modernism, the movement is best described as a rebellious period, almost another "Renaissance," but specifically when it comes to this rediscovery of mythology. With the excavations at Knossos, the world was reintroduced to the idea of mythology and its power in storytelling, and thus, myths returned thanks to this Modernist movement. In this paper, when we discuss "modern" pieces of art and literature or even "modern" concepts in psychology that occurred during the Modernist period, we are talking about mythology resurfacing and being reinterpreted within this modern sociocultural context. As we will discuss, artists, writers, and psychologists were all exposed to the resurfacing of mythology, and it influenced findings and artistic pieces in multiple disciplines.

This resurfacing of mythology also gives us insight into the collective psyche of these ancient people, and this is best reflected in new advancements in psychology during this Modernist period previously discussed. To understand Anna Ziegler's play, *The Minotaur*, we must first examine the source material itself, that being the myth of the Minotaur, as well as our understanding of "the labyrinth" as not only the mythological prison into which the Minotaur is trapped but also the psychological context into which the setting of this play is embedded. As

mentioned previously, the Greeks transmitted their myths and history orally, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, before they were written. This leads to many different interpretations and translations of the myth of the Minotaur, Theseus, and Ariadne. However, one of the primary sources, the Roman poet Ovid, wrote down a series of myths known as *The Metamorphoses*. Ovid wrote *Metamorphoses* (or "Transformations") at a time when the idea of why myths were told was being turned upside down. Myth writers such as the Greek poet Callimachus were using myths not to plunge the depths of humanity to teach lessons and fables but to be "objects of play and artful manipulation" (Galinsky 1). Ovid's myth of the Minotaur, Ariadne, and Theseus reads:

> When Minos reached Cretan soil he paid his dues to Jove, with the sacrifice of a hundred bulls, and hung up his war trophies to adorn the palace. The scandal concerning his family grew, and the queen's unnatural adultery was evident from the birth of a strange hybrid monster. Minos resolved to remove this shame, the Minotaur, from his house, and hide it away in a labyrinth with blind passageways. Daedalus, celebrated for his skill in architecture, laid out the design, and confused the clues to direction, and led the eye into a tortuous maze, by the windings of alternating paths…so Daedalus made the endless pathways of the maze, and was scarcely able to recover the entrance himself: the building was as deceptive as that.
> In there, Minos walled up the twin form of bull and man, and twice nourished it on Athenian blood, but the third repetition of the nine-year tribute by lot, caused the monster's downfall. When, through the help of the virgin princess, Ariadne, by rewinding the thread, Theseus, son of Aegeus, won his way back to the elusive threshold, that no one had previously regained, he immediately set sail for Dia, stealing the daughter of Minos away with him, then cruelly abandoned his companion on that shore. Deserted and weeping bitterly, as she was, Bacchus-Liber brought her help and comfort. So that she might shine among the eternal stars, he took the crown from her forehead, and set it in the sky. It soared through the rarefied air, and as it soared, its jewels changed to bright fires, and took their place, retaining the appearance of a crown, as the Corona Borealis, between the kneeling Hercules and the head of the serpent that Ophiuchus holds. (Ovid, VIII 152-182)

Several of these keystone details within the original source material are employed within Anna Ziegler's work, albeit with modern differences. The play uses Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur as its central figures, thoughit describes them with modern labeling, most notably referring to the Minotaur as a "young man" (*The Minotaur* 4). Ziegler also makes constant

reference to the smaller characters within the myth. For example, the play opens on pg.7 with exposition that explains the circumstances of the birth of the Minotaur narrated by the Chorus, which matches many of the details of the original myth:

> RABBI: To punish the king and queen, Poseidon caused Pasiphae to give birth to a *monster*, the Minotaur
>
> PRIEST: Such a fearful monster could not go free, and the clever Daedulus constructed for him a labyrinth under the palace. It was a maze of passageways and little rooms-
>
> RABBI, PRIEST, and LAWYER: From which nobody could ever hope to find his way out (*The Minotaur* 7).

Ziegler's play also has an intense fascination with the origin and birth of the Minotaur. As in Ovid's myth, the Minotaur is the offspring of the queen of Crete, Pasiphae, and a bull created by the Greek god of the sea, Poseidon. The Minotaur is the half-brother of the Cretan princess Ariadne, and in order to appease its appetite, the king of Crete, Minos, must sacrifice prisoners of war as its hunger can only be satisfied with human flesh due to its unnatural nature (*The Minotaur* 7-8). Ziegler's examination of the Minotaur's nature, half man and half beast, is rooted in the source material, with Ovid making reference to the Minotaur being "a strange hybrid monster" and "a shame" to King Minos (Kline) and in many ways Anna Ziegler explores this in her work. The Minotaur constantly makes references to his "hybrid" nature, in particular the theme of "carnal desire and love being two sides of the same coin." In his confrontation with Theseus, the Minotaur says this about the two of them and their desires: "I am not afraid of my desires! That's the difference between you and me, Theseus. I don't punish myself for being hungry. But we have the same hunger" (*The Minotaur* 41). By challenging the myth and questioning who really is the "monster" and what defines monstrosity, Ziegler redefines these

mythological figures and creates room for reinterpretation of the myth of The Minotaur. Ziegler's play constantly challenges the idea of a "monster" in the classical sense and chooses the modern approach of questioning prescribed definitions and labels and recontextualizing classically villainized or one-dimensional characters into nuanced beings with wants and desires.

Another very important detail of this myth that Ziegler incorporates into her play is her abstract interpretation of the setting of the Labyrinth. Ziegler's setting is described as "any time, any place" (*The Minotaur* 4), and surprisingly, the abstractness of her description loosely echoes the source material but allows for an extreme level of creative interpretation, a hybrid of the old and the new. Ovid's description of the Labyrinth is very brief, describing it with words like "deceptive," "winding," and "torturous" (Kline). This notion that the labyrinth is a maze or winding prison, however, predates even the Greeks. Theodore Ziolkowski's *Minos and the Moderns* examines the Minotaur myth and the idea of the Labyrinth as it was depicted in art and literature in the early 20th century in Europe. In his examination of the origins of the Minotaur and the Labyrinth, Ziolkowski notes that the idea of the Labyrinth has its origins in ancient Egypt, saying, "It is known from archeological evidence… that the image of the bull in a maze or labyrinth goes back originally to ancient myths and rituals in Egypt… The Egyptian labyrinth was both secular and religious in function, the center both of cult and of administration" (Ziolkowski 69). Ziolkowski notes that based on excavations made at the palace of Knossos by archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans, interest in the Minotaur myth was reignited, leading to an exploration and explosion of Minotaur-related media from literature to paintings to art and a conclusion about the central monster: "The monster at the heart of the labyrinth is a symbol of the ambivalence of that which is the focus of all ritual. For the monster is the ancient bull-man, at once the conqueror and the conquered, the dying and the rising god, the slain and the living king,

the symbol of the price that must ever be paid for the gift of life" (Ziolkowski 70). The idea of death and rebirth is most notably seen in Anna Ziegler's play through the revival of the Minotaur at the end of the show, and this concept (a notably Judeo-Christian ideology) reverberates in the telling of a new, "enlightened" story that is ushered in by a resurrected Minotaur, who states the claim that, "I am and am not the Minotaur, you see, just as this story is everything and nothing, light and shadow, boat and mooring, wave and tide" (*The Minotaur* 54). Dichotomies that are seen in the "conqueror and conquered" or the "slain and living king" are once again seen in Ziegler's play and leave room for religious interpretations to be applied to myth.

In this globally renewed interest in the Minotaur myth and study of the Labyrinth, intellectuals of the 20th century explored this "primordial" idea of the maze and the bull, leading writers of this era to examine the Labyrinth in a psychological context. Myth scholar Karl Kerenyi, in his work, *Labyrinth-Studien*, notes that "the labyrinth, originally spiral in shape, represents a totality that is both infinite and immortal, both life and death… The Minotaur in the center is hell, the devil; the Labyrinth a false path leading into certain destruction unless Theseus-Christ comes to the rescue" (Ziolkowski 70-71). The exploration of this ancient maze as a psychological idea is explored further by prominent 20th-century psychologist Carl Jung, who, in a letter to Kerenyi, offers that the Labyrinth in the myth is not only rooted in the subconscious but represents a larger hero's journey that has roots in psychology, particularly the concept of the unconscious self, saying:

> The labyrinth is indeed a primordial image which one encounters in psychology mostly in the form of the fantasy of a descent into the underworld. In most cases, however, the topography of the unconscious is not expressed in the concentrated form of the labyrinth but in the false trails, deceptions, and perils of an underworld journey. But there are also

> designs which express the labyrinth idea in the skein motif (coiling serpents, meanders, etc.)... This complex of motifs is a labyrinth in itself, an indescribable tangle of problems… (Jung)

The psychological examination of the hero's journey was also explored by another prominent Modernist mind, Joseph Campbell, author of the book that created the idea of the "Monomyth" or the "hero's journey" itself. In an interview conducted with Bill Moyers recorded in *The Power of Myth*, Campbell notes that the origins of the hero's journey in mythology exist in the idea of "archetypes" (a Jungian idea) and presents that the heroic journey present in myths is more of a grounded process, saying:

> The psyche is the inward experience of the body, which is essentially the same in all human beings… Out of this common ground have come what Jung called the archetypes, which are the common ideas of myths… They are elementary ideas, what could be called 'ground' ideas… Archetypes of the unconscious means it comes from below… archetypes of the unconscious are manifestations of the organs of the body and their powers. Archetypes are biologically grounded… (Campbell and Moyers 51)

Campbell is saying that not only are myths secular in nature, but they follow very similar and repeated patterns that are grounded within a psychological framework (and, in this case, biological as well) and evolve into a heightened "spiritual quest." It is not so farfetched to say that the hero's journey is transformational in myths: the hero goes to accomplish their quest, and in doing so, they become different by the end of it. Greek myths play into this pattern, and in particular, Modernist reinterpretations of Greek mythological subjects. The subjects have been subjected to some trial, and they are deeply affected as a result of this, as we will explore with modernist depictions of Ariadne. Ziegler's play most likely was inspired by the ideas seen in the

psychological and spiritual examination of the mythological journey and reinvented the way in which that journey could be interpreted and theatrically presented.

Depictions of the labyrinth and the Minotaur, inspired by these psychological and archaeological findings of the 20th century, flowed into literature and art. Pablo Picasso was one of the most prominent artists of this time and one of the founders of the Cubist artistic movement. Cubism was an art style that mainly focused on creating flat, geometric shapes that did not reflect the natural world, rejecting many of the artistic movements that came before and instead breaking down form, creating fragmented, geometric landscapes and figures ("Cubism"). One particular fascination of Picasso during the 1930s was the myth of the Minotaur and the labyrinth, and this was due to the turmoil present in his life at this time: he had a troubled marriage at the time, and his mistress had recently become pregnant (much to his ambivalence), leading him to explore the "paradoxical nature of the bull-man" (Picasso). The best example of this exploration of the Minotaur is his 1935 etching and engraving *Minotauromachy* (*La Minotauromachie*).

(Image 1.1)

This painting has a lot of symbolic imagery that taps into the myth of the Minotaur while exploring the carnal nature of the monster through raw sexuality (a trait of the character within Ziegler's play). The Minotaur is depicted as a strange, bull-human hybrid, towering over a small girl holding flowers and a candle, locked in a staring contest. To one side is an injured female bullfighter or matador over a lacerated horse whose teeth are exposed. Two girls with doves (who are typically depicted as symbols of peace in most artistic depictions, but here this implication was probably imposed after the Spanish Civil War) watch from above the action, and a man with a beard on a ladder is on the left, with a ship way in the background (Picasso). This painting was also made a year prior to the Spanish Civil War, almost predicting a very violent period in Spanish history and became the basis for future Picasso works that depicted this violence, in particular his later piece *Guernica* (1937). One of the more interesting things about this image, however, is that the labyrinth is depicted as geometric dark gray walls on which the Minotaur is leaning. The environment that Picasso conveys in this piece is purposeful- he creates a dark, violent scene that reflects the violent origin of the Minotaur. The wounded horse and matador can be interpreted as the sacrificial prisoners the Minotaur must devour to stay alive in the labyrinth. The depiction of the labyrinth itself as these dark, lifeless walls is reminiscent of the "torturous" qualities of the prison that Ovid had described. In many ways, Picasso has tapped into this myth as a way to express his own "private mythology" (Picasso) and turmoil, which is very similar to the Jungian idea that the labyrinth represents the deep "tangled" subconscious of humanity. There is also the possibility that the young girl holding the flowers and candle is a stand-in for one of the guiding figures of this myth: the Minotaur's half-sister and princess of Crete, Ariadne. The young man on the left can also be interpreted as "Theseus-like," quite literally descending a staircase, just as mythological heroes ascend and descend. All three of the

central characters in the myth are not only depicted but also reimagined in this modernist light, and Ziegler similarly tinkers with the source material in inventive ways.

Ziegler's interpretation of the Labyrinth is a lot more abstract than Picasso's painting. In her setting and stage directions, the only description she gives is that this play takes place "Any time, any place" (*The Minotaur* 4). However, it is described very similarly to the source material, mainly by the Minotaur, as "this prison into which I was born and from which I will never escape" (*The Minotaur* 9, 12). It is also described by the Chorus of the Priest, Rabbi, and Lawyer as "a series of passageways and little rooms" that nobody can get out of (*The Minotaur* 7). The aspect of the Labyrinth as a prison is very much emphasized in Ziegler's play, but an interesting thing said about the Labyrinth is that it is also "a metaphor for the end of life" (*The Minotaur* 38). In the play, the Labyrinth is both prison and home for the Minotaur and yet it must be the place where his life will end according to the narrative of the myth. It also is the end of life for Theseus and Ariadne in a metaphorical sense, as the brutal slaying of the Minotaur is also the end of Ariadne's life, as she will become abandoned on Naxos just as the story is supposed to go according to the Chorus. Theseus becomes a shell of a man due to the traumatic experience of killing the Minotaur in this play, a highly symbolic death for all three characters due to this specific moment in which the Minotaur is sacrificed for the sake of keeping the prescribed nature of the myth alive. Ziegler's interpretation of the Labyrinth is not only deeply rooted in classical iterations but also takes inspiration from modernist artists such as Picasso, who created a marriage of the two to create a uniquely theatrical depiction of the ancient maze.

Not only are there many different depictions and explorations of the Minotaur and the Labyrinth but there are also many depictions of Ariadne, which is important in understanding the context of Ziegler's play. Looking back at the source material, Ovid only writes that she is the

princess of Crete who assists Theseus after she falls in love with him by giving him yarn that guides him through the labyrinth, who is then abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos (or Dia), rescued later by Bacchus who grants her immortality and takes her as his wife (Kline). Ariadne's depictions go well beyond Ovid's original text, however, as there have been many artistic and even operatic interpretations of the tragic heroine. Scholar Wendy Heller's "Rescuing Ariadne" explores the many artistic renditions of Ariadne in operas and paintings, mainly from the 1500s to the late 1700s. Annibale Carracci's *The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne* is an interesting artistic depiction of Ariadne because rather than having her be depicted as being completely attached to her divine savior and new lover, Ariadne is depicted with more independence and an unexplained serenity:

> Ariadne and Bacchus neither touch one another nor exchange glances… Carracci places Ariadne not adjacent to her lover but a bit ahead of him, her blue dress reminding us of Mary's divinity. Her still body likewise distinguishes her from the rest of the Bacchic company. Attentive neither to the chaos that surrounds her nor to her future husband, she confronts the viewer directly with an enigmatic expression. If she had been lamenting the loss of Theseus, she certainly seems to have dried her tears, for there is little of the abandoned woman in her haughty stare. (Heller 377)

(Image 1.2)

Ariadne is depicted less as a victim of circumstance than she is in the myth but is more independent, able to be more than a lovestruck, tragic heroine. This is further explored in the one surviving piece from the opera *Arianna* by Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi, that piece being Ariadne's lamentation. Heller explains that this lamentation gave every audience member cathartic responses (linking back to Aristotle), but the lamentation goes beyond the tragedy of a female character, saying that the lamentation was the bedrock for future operatic female monologues, and "female eloquence in Venetian opera," allowing Ariadne to find her own voice following the cruelty inflicted upon her (Heller 378-379). The idea of exploring a more "modern" Ariadne was actually first conceived by Ovid, as Heller points out. Ovid encountered the heroine in his *Heroides* and decided to explore her character from a "variety of perspectives," creating this new version of the heroine that, according to Heller, is a heroine who is, "both more restless and dynamic than any other heroine; she runs around, climbs up rocks, shouts, and gesticulates—just as if she had been let out of a prison" (Heller 381).

Ziegler's depiction of Ariadne is very much in line with the Modernist interpretations of mythological Greek heroines, who are explored through a more nuanced lens. They are victims of cruelty who use whatever powers they possess to try and combat their bleak situations, and in the case of the myth of the Minotaur, Ariadne's power, while limited in the myth, is built upon in modern adaptations, including Ziegler's *The Minotaur*. One really important moment for Ariadne lies on pages 28-29 of the script, where she writes a letter to Theseus that describes her feelings for him and her perspective on herself. When looking at the source material, Ovid has also written a letter by Ariadne to Theseus; however, this version of Ariadne is far less autonomous, instead being written from the perspective of a woman desperate for a man to come back and save her:

> Now see me not with your eyes, but as you can, with your mind, clinging to a rock the fickle sea beats against: see my disheveled hair like one who is in mourning and my clothes heavy with tears like rain! My body trembles like ears of wheat struck by a north wind, and the letters I write waver in my unsteady fingers … I beg you by these tears your actions have caused: turn your ship, Theseus, fall back against the wind: if I die first, you can still bear my bones. (*Heroides* 10:134-8, 141-4)

If we contrast Ovid's letter with segments of Ziegler's, we can see not only a more direct Ariadne but an Ariadne that focuses on the transformative element of their relationship:

> Dear Theseus: Here is my letter. It contains multitudes. It contains everything I want to say to you so that, if there comes a time when we no longer know each other, it will be recorded so you can't forget…When you stepped onto Cretan soil and I first saw you face to face, I fell in love with you. I knew I would meet you and be with you but I didn't know I would love you. But I do. And I can say that now, in part because I am writing it

> and not saying it to your face. Since I met you, I've realized that love is so strong that it transforms things…It's funny to me that men who fight wars can be frightened by a woman's words, but I've heard this is the case… One more thing: Can one fall in love with one's own words? With the idea that's become assembled in ink before you? I hope not. I hope this is real. (*The Minotaur* 28-29)

Ziegler's Ariadne is capable of change and transformation, which runs counter to the more desperate, pleading Ariadne we see in the source material. Ziegler's version of the letter signifies that she has taken the source material from Ovid and created an Ariadne that is "modern" in sensibility. Lines such as "the ringing of a telephone becomes a possibility" (*The Minotaur* 29) signify not a pleading but a sharing, giving Ariadne the space and ability to openly express herself with her new lover as opposed to being a victim within a destructive narrative. By recontextualizing Ariadne's position and giving her a higher narrative status, Ziegler effectively creates a modern heroine that gives modern audiences the ability to readily feel the "pity and fear" of catharsis for her since she is more "like them," blending Classical tradition with Modernist views and creating a new, "modern" mythological character.

Ziegler's writing allows for her characters to be more grounded, and she is able to have her characters form very nuanced and complicated relationships. This is especially the case when examining Ariadne's relationships with both Theseus and the Minotaur. With Theseus, the arc of their relationship transforms throughout the play, starting at first with a more "classical" and in-line version of how their relationship is supposed to play out, with Ariadne's expectations of how their lives will play out being very akin to the Greek myth, resulting in a "young lovers" mentality based in fantasy. On pages 19-20 of *The Minotaur*, upon first meeting Theseus (after meeting him online on a chat post site for royals), she asks him not to speak because, "It might

affect the way I feel about you. It might change my mind." Ariadne's entire perception of Theseus and their life together throughout the first half of the play is that they would fall in love, he would take her away from Crete, and they would live a happy life together, saving herself from the unloving family by pinning her future on him. However, when Ariadne confronts Theseus about the letter, and she hears his halfhearted response of calling her letter "kind" (*The Minotaur* 31), it causes her fantasy to crash and drive knitting needles straight into her thighs on the strong urging of the Chorus (*The Minotaur* 32). When she sees him next, the stakes couldn't be more dire and dark for her, as she begs Theseus to slay the Minotaur and save her image of him and her future, saying, "He is no one. His name is dust and his body will follow his name… Life has to go on. Something must change… Plunge this [sword] into his heart. Right into his heart. If you need to, stab more than once to make sure it's done. Then I want you to behead him." The stage directions for this scene aid in displaying a darker, more driven Ariadne, as it says, "She holds the sword to Theseus' throat as though she's possessed" (*The Minotaur* 34). With the Minotaur, Ziegler creates an extremely complex sibling dynamic between Ariadne and the eponymous monster throughout the play. An interesting scene between the pair is the one I refer to as "The Connect Four Scene," as Ziegler repeats the scene twice, each with a completely different intention. The first version of the scene feels more akin to the classic interpretations. Ariadne and the Minotaur are vying for power in their relationship, mocking and trying to one-up each other. An example of an exchange is on page 10:

MINOTAUR: Poor Ariadne…

ARIADNE: Don't do that.

MINOTAUR: Don't do what?

ARIADNE: You know.

MINOTAUR: Nope. I might eat minds, but I can't read them.

ARIADNE: That's not funny.

MINOTAUR: Connect Four.

ARIADNE: Damn it!

MINOTAUR: I win again. How does that make you feel? That I always win. That you never beat me. That, try as you might, I master you in every task. In every way.

ARIADNE: Don't say that.

Ziegler then repeats this scene, with the main difference being the stage direction given at the top of the scene by Ziegler, in which she writes, "*(Note: In this version of the scene, Ariadne and the Minotaur are searching more hopefully for connection, having given up the pretense of and power grabs of the first iteration of the scene)*" (*The Minotaur* 11). The "Second Connect Four" scene plays out identically to the first, but when reading it, the words almost counter the intention behind them. The result is a failed attempt at connection between the two siblings, who, despite the desire to converse and connect as siblings should, simply can't due to their differences, both philosophically and physically, resulting in a conversation that cleverly feels strained and forced. The scene's ending differs on page 12 of the script, as instead of "leaving in a huff," the Minotaur forgets his usual mocking line, the usual ending becoming suspended in uncertainty as a result of Ziegler's experimentation with form:

MINOTAUR: Connect Four.

ARIADNE: Damn It!

MINOTAUR: I win again. How does that make you feel? That I always win. That you never beat me. That, try as you might…

A very long beat. The chorus looks nervously at each other.

ARIADNE: You master me in every task, in every way.

MINOTAUR: Right

ARIADNE: Why didn't you say it? You always say it.

MINOTAUR: I don't know.

Ziegler creates a more dynamic and "new" Ariadne in her play, having her relationships to Theseus and the Minotaur be layered and complicated, combining the Ovid myth with more modern takes to create a modern heroine that has reclaimed her power instead of being a victim, imbuing Modernist concepts like feminism to create a new version of the mythological character.

Anna Ziegler and the Minotaur: Examining Ziegler's Plays and her Retelling of the Myth

Within the last 10 to 15 years, there seems to have been a recent uptick in the number of "modern" versions of classical Greek plays and stories. From the years 2009-2024, there has been at least one play, either on Broadway or Off-Broadway, that was either a modern staging of a classic Greek Play (*Antigone* was performed in 2015 Off-Broadway at the Brooklyn Academy of Music) or a new play based on Greek stories or myths (*Lysistrata Jones* was a new musical based on *Lysistrata* and was performed Off-Broadway and on Broadway in 2011 in the Walter Kerr Theater)(*Broadwayworld.com*).

As mentioned previously, Theater has seen an explosion in modern adaptations of classical stories, and in particular those of the ancient Greeks. The modern phenomenon of recontextualizing Greek myths can be seen in plays such as Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* (2012), along with many others like *Hadestown* by Anais Mitchell (2016) and *Oedipus El Rey* by Luis Alfaro (2017). I posit that the reason for this contemporary boom of adapted classics is due to the universality of these Greek stories, and this universality is possible because of how deeply

human the themes in their plays are. Audiences, from the time of Ancient Greece, when they were written to even today, connect with stories that they can see themselves in, as our dear friend Aristotle has pointed out, with that feeling of "catharsis." Several Greek plays contain themes that are indeed universal in nature, and because they are universal, they are narratively flexible. For example, *Oedipus* has several familiar themes present within it, one being that you cannot outrun your fate, as the gods have a plan for you that you cannot change. *Lysistrata* deals with the theme of war affecting not only those fighting but those left behind. The universality of these Greek plays leads to flexibility when it comes to theatrical storytelling: they become blank canvases in which modern playwrights, in the tradition of Modernists like Camus, explore modern problems and experiment with how to solve them. In fact, almost every early Greek tragedy was an adaptation of myth, with most of the characters within them being drawn from Homer's mythological characters, and every time the myth is told, it is changed in some way. Modern writers are, in essence, doing the same thing as the ancient writers did- reworking dramatic figures to adapt to modern audiences, such as a musical adaptation of *Lysistrata* called *Lysistrata Jones* set in a high school, or the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice taking place in a post-industrial version of the Greek underworld in *Hadestown*. This leads to characters whose narratives were abandoned in the past, like Ariadne in the Minotaur myth, to be explored within a modern sociocultural context. Rather than being bystanders in their own narratives, modern playwrights have allowed them to be the heroes, and what's more, they express contemporary interest by giving them new voices and granting them new autonomy within these modern versions of the myths, expressing new viewpoints that otherwise weren't explored in the source material. The biggest example of this idea is creating a more autonomous and driven female heroine, as opposed to one in desperate need of a male character to assist her, and we see this in

characters such as Ariadne in Ziegler's *The Minotaur*. This recontextualization of myth helps in creating a modern mythology that contemporary audiences can more easily relate to.

When looking at the modern playwrights that stand out in this emerging genre of "modern" Greek myths, Anna Ziegler, in particular, pops up as one that has particularly drawn my attention as an exemplary model of how to successfully adapt a classical myth. Anna Ziegler has adapted her modern version of the myth of the Minotaur without having complete source material, as there is no surviving Minotaur play. Instead, she uses ancient Greek myths and draws from the example of Greek theatre to produce a truly modernist take on classical sources. When examining Anna Ziegler's resume, her achievements speak to her ability to adapt a myth like the Minotaur. According to Ziegler's website, "Anna Ziegler is an American playwright and screenwriter. She graduated from Yale and holds master's degrees in both poetry from the University of East Anglia in the UK and dramatic writing from New York University. Her critically acclaimed plays have been produced at major theaters around the U.S. and in Australia, Japan, Italy, Germany, India, and Sweden" (MultiRachel). Despite receiving some of the highest honors in the world of playwriting, her work remains introspective and human, with an emphasis on being extremely personal. In an interview done with Direct Arts in 2011, Ziegler mentions that her work is always inspired by her cultural background, in particular her Jewish heritage. By injecting her personal background into her plays, it creates a sense of personability within her artistic work, a tool that results in audiences being more open to emotionally connecting and investing in a piece of art, falling in line with the Modernist tradition of injecting an artist's personal life and history into their own artistic work. She says of her writing being influenced by her heritage:

Most of my work has at least a passing reference to Judaism, but I don't think of myself

> as a Jewish writer. I've been drawn to stories that feature Jews -- my play *Dov and Ali* is about a Jewish teacher and his Muslim student, and my play *Photograph 51* is about the Jewish British scientist Rosalind Franklin. However, other plays don't use Judaism as a theme.
>
> If anything, my work has been more influenced by the milieu in which I grew up and things that have happened to me along the way. (Direct Arts)

When discussing her inspiration for her modernized version of the myth of the minotaur, she says that she was inspired by another play in this long tradition of recontextualized myths in theatre, that being Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* (2003), a female-driven perspective of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. She says in that same interview, "I've always wanted to adapt a myth, and it became clear, after seeing Sarah Ruhl's tremendous and inspiring *Eurydice* at 2nd Stage, that I would have to try right then and there" (Direct Arts). The idea of adapting the myth of the Minotaur, she says, was a result of its themes resonating with her previous works, themes like "betrayal and forgiveness and the durability of love" that she and so many other modern playwrights keep coming back to (Direct Arts). By adapting myth to fit a modern world, playwrights like Ziegler are given the opportunity to inject their own background to create a grounded story that is meaningful to them and also being able to personally relate to a modern audience, an increasingly accepted and normal trait within the modern theatrical landscape.

Examining *The Minotaur* requires an examination of an earlier Ziegler play, as it will not only help contextualize her artistic style and its development but also help establish thematic threads that carry into *The Minotaur*. *Ron Swoboda's Wish* (2010) is a short play that centers on the relationship between two twin brothers with two extenuating circumstances. One brother is on the Autism Spectrum and, as a result, has difficulty communicating his feelings, solely

communicating to his brother through his special interest in the Mets, specifically the 1969 World Series-winning team featuring Ron Swoboda. His brother, Jason, just recently broke up with his boyfriend of several years and, as a result, has returned to the house that he spent so much time and energy escaping from because he sees his twin brother as an emotionless "robot" who just spews statistics and cannot properly express emotion, with Jason saying, "Freddy thought it was so amazing, you know, like freakishly cool - what you could do. And I'd ask him if he thought what machines could do was amazing, and he'd say, 'Your brother isn't a machine,' and I'd say, 'he is, basically,' because ever since we were born, that's how you've seemed to me, totally… impenetrable" (*Ron Swoboda* 248). The play's climax has Jason confronting Jacob in trying to get him to analyze an emotion by asking repeatedly how Ron Swoboda felt when he didn't get the MVP of the World Series due to not getting a homerun, to which Jacob enlightens him, "He felt… regret" (252) and goes on to imagine the both of them at that 1969 game, enjoying it together: "We're there together. And the crowd is all around us and we're a part of it and we lose ourselves…together" (252).

Ron Swoboda's Wish is extremely indicative of Ziegler's writing, and is vital in understanding themes present in *The Minotaur*. The main thing about Ziegler's writing that is impressive on a technical level is the ways in which she grounds her characters in extremely poetic language. In *Ron Swoboda's Wish*, both of the brothers open the show with monologues that introduce the audience to their characters. Jason, the neurotypical brother, says that at the top of the show, his boyfriend has left him due to some differences, and says one of the reasons was because he, "Said he wished I was as nice a person as my brother, who at least has within him the milk of human kindness" (*Ron Swoboda* 246). Funnily enough, in *The Minotaur*, Theseus describes reading Ariadne's letter as "Being force fed the mother's milk of all my future sons"

(*The Minotaur* 30). The imagery at the end of *Ron Swoboda's Wish,* where Jacob describes his and Jason's relationship as being lost in the crowd at the 1969 World Series and "losing themselves" (*Ron Swoboda* 252), is also extremely similar to the images Ziegler creates within *The Minotaur*. When Theseus leaves the labyrinth after beheading the Minotaur, he is described as going through stages of his life, and Theseus himself says upon being transported to a memory of when he was 10 years old, "I'm alone in a field outside of Athens… I am alone under the big sky, and the way the wind moves through the tall grass today scares me. This is a memory of fear… Of worrying I'd fall asleep and wake up somewhere else, somewhere unrecognizable. Like Japan. Or on a planet astronomers have yet to see through their tremendous telescopes made of dreams" (*The Minotaur* 47). This poetic language is quite fitting for Ziegler's writing, considering her background prior to playwriting was in poetry writing, and this poetic language being injected into grounded, hyper-realistic characters is a throughline we see in her works. This provides a necessary tool when it comes to engaging with ancient themes and topics such as Greek mythology. Greek storytelling had its roots in an oral tradition and was later written down by poets and scholars from other civilizations, like the Roman poet Ovid. By creating modern, grounded characters using hyper-poetic and symbolic language, Ziegler effectively combines ancient and modern practices in a highly effective manner, making her a perfect example of a playwright creating "modern myth" within the last decade and a half.

Another thread that we see connecting both of Ziegler's plays is the themes that she chooses to explore, in particular, the theme of choices and how they influence the world around us. In *Ron Swoboda's Wish*, the ending is Jason choosing to reconnect with his estranged brother, with his final line of "Yeah… I guess we are" (*Ron Swoboa* 252) being the beginning of a new chapter in their relationship, an uncertain conclusion that hints at many possibilities for that

relationship that we as an audience don't get to see. Jason's choosing to dive into Jacob's imaginary world of that 1969 World Series win creates a new possibility for their relationship and their lives moving forward. We see a very similar pattern at the end of *The Minotaur*. The Chorus has been pushed out of the story by the Greek characters as a result of Theseus choosing to stay with Ariadne on the island of Naxos rather than continue the story and abandon her. Theseus and Ariadne kiss and think of the future, and as the play ends, Ziegler leaves a final stage direction that signals another uncertain ending: "Theseus and Ariadne gaze into each other's eyes… But just before the lights go down, a shadow of fear crosses Ariadne's face. Blackout" (*The Minotaur* 57). Once again, characters in a Ziegler play make a decision that influences their relationship and, by proxy, their future, and once again, the ending is left uncertain. Choice has bred a possibility for the future (even if it is an uncertain future), and this idea that choice holds such power in narratives is a very compelling theme in her work that mirrors much of the work within this field of contemporary myth, combining classical traditions with modern storytelling devices to create "modern myths."

Before beginning to discuss my directorial process for this production of *The Minotaur*, some context on the play itself will be useful in understanding its significance. *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler was published in 2012. It was first performed as a joint world premiere at both Synchronicity Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia, on October 26th, 2012, directed by Rachel May, and at the Rorschach Theatre in Washington, D.C., on January 18th, 2013, directed by Randy Baker (*The Minotaur* 3). The characters of the play consist of the Minotaur, Theseus, and Ariadne, as well as a "Greek chorus" of the Priest, Rabbi, and Lawyer, who are malevolent and unreliable narrators of the story due to their incessant need to "Tell the story, to move it along… to keep doctrine doctrinal, to keep amendments to a minimum and maintain the integrity of the myth"

and ensure that the myth ends the way it is supposed to: with the Minotaur dead, Ariadne abandoned, and Theseus sailing away (*The Minotaur* 54). Summarizing the play is like attempting to hold the ocean in a glass- it is a modernized retelling of the myth of the Minotaur in a way that is abstract and yet deeply human. A review of the Rorschach Theatre production by Sophie Gilbert of the Washingtonian described it as "Extraordinarily ambitious—her characters seem to exist in a *Matrix*-like universe where they're condemned to play out the same story over and over again, as shackled to their fates as the Minotaur is to his underground home…the universally strong performances and the heady concepts of desire, self-control, and fate make this an absorbing and inventive work" (Gilbert).

One of the most important and compelling things about Ziegler's play is the use of the Chorus and the Chorus' relationship to the named Greek characters. Traditionally, Greek choruses served as the stand-in for the audience. They would mainly be depicted as characters or the general public within the setting where the story takes place. The Chorus in *Oedipus,* for example, is comprised of the citizens of Thebes, the main setting for the narrative. They would sometimes be conflicted characters who, by the end, expound upon the lessons of the play to the audience so that they may understand the play's significance. Ziegler brings a Modernist perspective to the concept of a Greek chorus by first making them a trio of a Rabbi, Priest, and Lawyer (yes, like the classic joke) and also making them not only highly opinionated but also unreliable. They are controlling and manipulative beings who actually disagree with each other at times as to how the story should even be told. As Ziegler notes in the beginning stage direction of the play, "*(Note: The chorus' need to tell the story, to do their job, is intense, but they are often in conflict about who should speak and whose version of the story is the right one)*" (*The Minotaur* 7). This creates an interesting dynamic in which the Chorus seemingly has control over

the characters within the myth and does everything in their power to tell the story "as written," and when the characters within the myth fail to "stay on script," the Chorus launches into these different distraction tactics in order to divert the characters and get them back on track. For example, when Theseus and Ariadne first meet, they discuss the possibility that they may have met before this, a brief instance of them understanding the cyclical nature of the myth that is expressed within the context of the play. The Chorus, upon sensing this, "launches into a distraction tactic aimed at Ariadne" by talking at her, distracting her from that thought to get her back to the myth and try to help Theseus (*The Minotaur* 22). Gilbert's review of *The Minotaur* also notes that the Chorus has a special relationship to the way in which the story is told, as she writes, "The ideas Ziegler raises with the chorus are profound… Does the chorus represent the powerful forces in contemporary society determining the fates of others? Is the storytelling process a metaphor for playwriting?" (Gilbert) The Chorus is an integral part of the dramatic action of the play by acting as an antagonistic force within the play. The Chorus, throughout the play, drives the myth in the direction that it is traditionally supposed to go and subjects the characters within the narrative to their version of the story. They propel the action and begin transitions, similarly to a classic chorus, but there is malicious intent behind their narrative purpose, and this is due to Ziegler applying the Modernist perspective of having the mythological characters be stripped of their narrative autonomy due to the societal expectations of how the myth should be, and are unable to make their own choices, being at the whim of the ancient idea of "fate." This is best exhibited when the Chorus, in response to Ariadne saying that Theseus has a choice and doesn't have to abandon her, says, "Are you kidding? Everything is preordained" (*The Minotaur* 51). By reinventing the Chorus as antagonistic and representative of an ancient way of life that latches on to tradition, it creates a very unique dynamic within the

play that not only creates more dramatic tension within the narrative but allows for flexibility in the staging of a play with this kind of narrative device.

The Director and *The Minotaur*- The Practical Implementation of Research into a Production of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur*

It now becomes time to discuss my directorial process of directing the production of Anna Zigler's *The Minotaur* at Drew University in April 2024. The first step in discussing this process is talking about what drew me to direct this show. To answer that, it is important to answer the question of what overarching themes drew me to *The Minotaur* in the first place. One of the first things that I was drawn to when reading *The Minotaur* was the cyclical nature of the story, as the characters both are and are not aware that this is a very "lived-in" and repeated story. The idea of patterns and the structure of this narrative calls to mind the writings of management consultant Robert Fritz, who, on the topic of patterns and structures, says:

> If we back up, we can see patterns fairly clearly. However, most of us are too close to see the patterns we are in. It is hard to see a pattern when you are in the pattern. If you think about your own history, you will notice that many episodes in your life seem awfully familiar, almost as if it's happened before. And, in fact, it has. Patterns have a beginning, a development, an ending, all typical of how things happen in your life. Sometimes, the pattern moves very quickly, in a matter of days or weeks. But sometimes, a pattern can move very slowly, so slowly that it is hard to see that you are in a pattern. Perhaps one of the steps takes three years to move to the next step. The pattern has an inevitable sequence, but it is practically invisible. ("Patterns and Structures")

The characters of Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur are aware that they are in a story that always ends the same and repeats, with a "beginning, development, and ending" present in the dramatic structure of the plot. They are, at the same time, victim to this storytelling of the Chorus, akin to the idea of the "slowly moving pattern" that Fritz alludes to. This myth is extremely lived in, and the patterns have been repeated so many times that the Greek characters have become "close" to the point that they cannot see they are in a myth. This extremely creative narrative structure led me to become attached to the idea that this play's main theme is choice and of challenging "fate." The central figures of the myth are rebelling against prescribed paradigms set onto them by the chorus, and the idea of "fate" becomes a far more grounded discussion within this play due to this rebellion and flipping the script on ancient tradition. Ziegler follows the traditions of the Modernists and quite literally flips tradition through creative reinventions of ancient storytelling traditions, and this central idea inspired many of the design elements and staging choices for this production.

Another theme that was key in my process for directing *The Minotaur* is the reframing of the "hero's journey" as a way to challenge the idea of a traditional "hero." Ziegler's play is a modernization of a Greek myth, but it is also a modern "hero's journey." The "hero's journey" or "The Monomyth" is the idea that every story, or every compelling story, always follows a similar dramatic structure in which a central hero journeys into the underworld and emerges changed in some capacity, introduced by Joseph Campbell (who was largely influenced by Carl Jung) in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, published in 1973. In his book, Campbell describes how every noteworthy story follows a narrative structure that involves some sort of sacrifice and rebirth, saying, "Everywhere, no matter what the sphere of interest (whether religious, political, or personal), the really creative acts are represented as those deriving from some sort of dying to

the world; and what happens in the interval of the hero's nonentity, so that he comes back as one reborn, made great and filled with creative power, mankind is also unanimous in declaring" (Campbell 33). Anna Ziegler takes this very ancient and universal structure of "the hero's journey" and almost rejects it, instead shifting the meaning of the hero's journey within the context of the play. The "heroic journey" of slaying and killing the Minotaur and doing everything the myth says to do is not the true heroic journey for Theseus, but rather the events of the myth serve as markers for a transformation that happens to him at the end of the play. Ziegler changes the ending of the myth and writes that the Minotaur, after his unavoidable beheading, comes back at the end of the play, contrary to every retelling of the story, in order to tell Theseus that "Maybe stories are more flexible than I thought… I am here to tell you to stay on this island and have a happy life. To avoid all of the adventures and the tragedy. Keep it simple" (*The Minotaur* 53-54). Theseus, upon seeing the Minotaur again and hearing all of these things from him that go counter to his own idea of a "hero," he finally makes a self-driven choice for the first time in this whole play, a choice that for him fully realizes his "hero's journey" by picking the hard decision and choosing not to abandon Ariadne, but to stay. When the Chorus tries to talk him out of it, he affirms his decision and says, "If I keep going, if I keep moving, it [this story] goes on and on, is told and retold, and yet I've done nothing… I am **not** a hero and not a person. Just someone who doesn't believe in the possibility of anything enduring and what kind of life is that?" (*The Minotaur* 56). Ronald B. Tobias notes this very process in the master plot labeled "Transformation." In this plot, he says of the hero at the end of the story, "It's common for a protagonist to learn lessons other than what he expected to learn. The real lessons are often the hidden or unexpected ones. Expectations are baffled; illusions are destroyed. Reality overtakes fantasy" (Tobias 158). Theseus' fantasy crumbles (as does the Chorus' in a way), and the newly

created reality sets in. His true hero's journey has finally concluded, leading to a point of "true growth" for Theseus and final understanding (Tobias 159). The "journey" in this play means that rather than being beholden to fate, one can make a new choice that can shape the course of their future, transforming them and becoming more "human" in the process. This aligns with the idea of Jung and Campbell because there is a deep transformative action that occurs within these characters- they are no longer the same as when we saw them at the beginning of the play. Theseus, in particular, becomes more heroic by making the hard choice, the one that doesn't bring him eternal glory in an undying myth but the one that brings him true contentment and love by staying with Ariadne. The Campbell and Jungian ideas of transformative narrative action for a character are present, and Ziegler runs with this concept in full within *The Minotaur*. "Fate" in Greek myth is reframed by Ziegler here- the Chorus are the stand-ins for the "gods" of ancient Greek society, and their machinations are thwarted by the rebellious choice of the mythological characters. Choice and fate, in this case, are diametrically opposing forces at work within the Minotaur, and Ziegler recontextualizes the way in which the heroic journey is depicted by injecting this highly Modernist theme of "choice versus fate" and using this restructured hero's journey as the vessel with which to explore this modern theme.

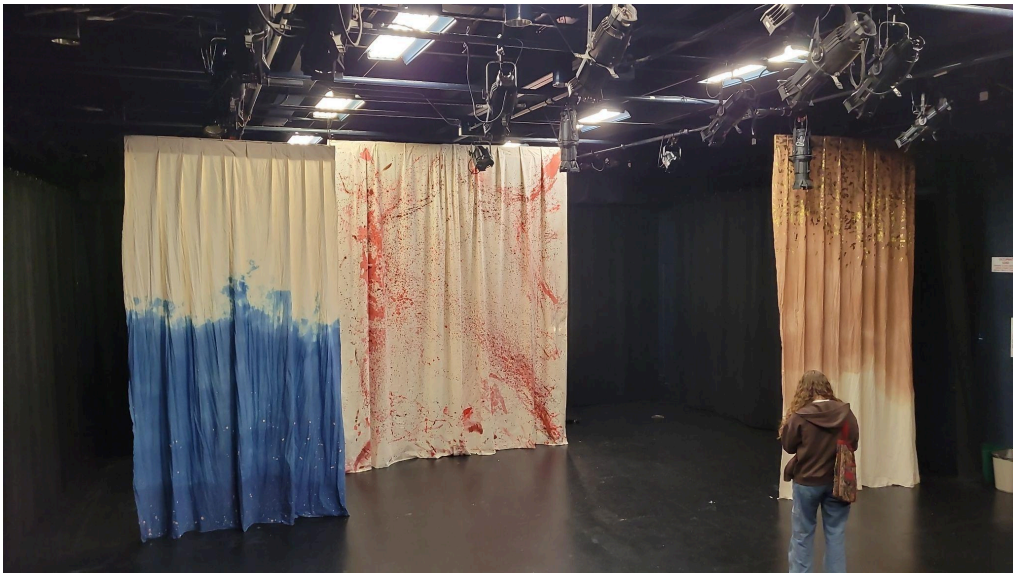
With these central themes in mind, my next task as director was establishing ideas for how I wanted the design of this production to look. When it came to this production, the fields of design that needed to be developed were the set, costumes, lights, sound, and props. An examination of the design process for each department will help further contextualize my directorial process and artistic goals for this production of *The Minotaur*.

Set design for this show was particularly challenging. The set designer, Julia Caldwell, and I first needed to identify where we wanted the action of the story to take place, as Ziegler's

only direction on setting and time, as previously mentioned, is nondescript and vague, leading to flexibility in our approach. We decided that we wanted this play to take place predominantly in the Labyrinth due to the significance Ziegler has placed on the Labyrinth, with it being the Minotaur's prison and the setting of the myth itself. Not only that, but the Labyrinth is treated as an arena in which a lot of the dramatic tension is created. Besides the "Connect Four" scenes, Ariadne and the Minotaur's complicated sibling relationship is developed further when Ariadne becomes hostile to her brother and declares, "You don't love me just as I don't love you. I need love. I need Theseus to see me," reinforcing the idea that she is denying the parts of her that are similar to her brother in an effort to grasp onto the imagined, "mythical" life she so desperately wants (*The Minotaur* 30). The Labyrinth is also the setting for the slaying and beheading of the Minotaur that happens on page 46, the climax of the myth itself and one of the heightened dramatic actions of the play. Indeed, the Labyrinth is the setting of all of the dramatic tension within the narrative. This idea that the Labyrinth serves almost as a "tension center" for the play is reinforced by another work by Robert Fritz in his book *The Path of Least Resistance*. In this book, he discusses the idea that basic conflict structures can be broken down as "tension-resolution systems," in which a "tension" (in his example, he uses the idea of being hungry as a "tension") seeks out a "resolution" (his example for the resolution for the tension of being hungry is to eat) (Fritz 79). He says of these systems, "As you attempt to resolve one system, you deny the other and increase the tension in it," and each tension cannot be resolved sequentially or exist at the same time, as one tension feeds into the other (Fritz 79). *The Minotaur* falls very much in line with this idea, as, for example, Theseus, as a character, works against multiple "tension-resolution" systems within his journey through the Labyrinth. Slaying the Minotaur resolves the tension of needing to complete his quest and move on but creates

another tension, which is the horror of what he has done and the consequences that it has for Ariadne. Tension and Resolution, coupled with the importance of the setting of the Labyrinth itself, made it the prime choice for working the set design around.

It came time after deciding where the play took place to establish how we would depict this very primordial image of the Labyrinth. One of the themes that I had discussed with all of the production designers at the beginning of the process was the idea of the story being very "lived in" and cyclical, with this play finally being the version of the myth to break the cycle and rebel against the prescribed idea of "fate" and making a "heroic" choice. Julia latched onto this theme and came up with the idea of using hanging panels made of muslin fabric from the ceiling as a way to symbolize the "walls" of the Labyrinth. Three hanging fabrics would be used, and each represents one of the mythological characters:



(Image 1.3)

The widest fabric panel symbolized the Minotaur and resided furthest upstage, or away from the audience. Two longer yet thinner fabrics represented Theseus and Ariadne, which were hung on the right and left side of the stage, respectively. Not only did these fabrics hang from the ceiling,

but to reinforce the idea that they represented each of the characters, Julia and I also decided to have each panel dyed and painted in a way that related to each of the Greek characters. The Minotaur's panel was painted with blood splotches and stained in a way that reflects his monstrous appetite for devouring human victims. Julia pulled a reference image that really reflects the look of savagery and the "wild" nature of the Minotaur in a Jackson Pollock painting. Jackson Pollock was an abstract expressionist painter of the 1930s through the 1950s, and his art reflected his personality and philosophy on art: "Pollock was described by his contemporaries as gentle and contemplative when sober, violent when drunk. These extremes found equilibrium in his art… He believed that art derived from the unconscious, saw himself as the essential subject of his painting, and judged his work and that of others on its inherent authenticity of personal expression" (O'Connor). One of his more experimental works was his series of "drip paintings," where Pollock splashed paint on the canvas, and the perfect example of this, and one of the reference paintings Julia used for the design of the Minotaur's curtain, is his piece *One: Number 31, 1950.*

(Image 1.4)

The way the paint is splashed on the canvas and the color palette of the tans, whites, and grays reflects the goal of all of these hanging fabric panels: to reinforce the idea that this story is "lived

in." The characters constantly reference the fact that this myth is retold, and this idea translated into the way we wanted these hanging fabrics to look- weathered, worn as if they had been there for thousands of years. Ariadne and Theseus' curtains were also similarly distressed, with Theseus' curtain reminiscent of a salt-cured sheet that had been sitting in the ocean for too long, blues and whites to tie in his connection to the sea, his next adventure, "the freedom of his future" as the script suggests on page 53. Ariadne's was distressed to look like faded gilding, yellows that are rusted the longer you look at it, to symbolize her royal lineage and also kept the aesthetic of "being lived in" and repeating the same patterns that trap us (as mentioned in the Fritz reading). Having this be our main set gave me, as the director, not only extreme flexibility when it came to staging this play but also reinforced the cyclical nature of the world of the play (such as the Connect 4 scenes repeating themselves between Ariadne and the Minotaur), allowing for the nature of storytelling to be explored in inventive ways within this play. This falls in line with my central guiding themes of narrative choice and the recontextualization of the hero's journey because by allowing the set to be defined yet flexible, it allowed for staging to adapt with the story, creating a living piece that flowed and transitioned from one scene to the next (despite there being no scene delineation within the script).

Another key design element of this production was the sound design. The sound designer Stephanie Yanes and I really wanted to explore the ways in which Anna Ziegler emphasized music in this play and its power within the story. Several moments in *The Minotaur* called for very specific music choices, with the main song that is sung and referenced throughout the show being Donovan's "Catch the Wind." The first mention of the song is on page 28 of the script when it says that the Minotaur sings a folk song to "elicit our sympathy." The song is always associated with the Minotaur and is sung or referenced in relation to him- it is mentioned to get

under Theseus' skin on page 46 of the script by the Priest ("He thinks of the songs he likes, and how these have changed over the years. How for three months straight he listened to a single song by Donovan, "Catch the Wind") and is sung again after he is dead on page 49 of the script, and Ariadne mentions how the song is, "So…sad. It's filling me with… the deepest sorrow, as though my whole life has been nothing but a failed attempt to be loved." There is a thematic importance to this Donovan song, and the idea that there is a sadness and longing within it is the reason why it is sung and placed in the moments where it is placed- it is always at heightened emotional moments that directly relate to the Minotaur, whether it be his death, moments leading up to his death, or how his death has affected the other characters within the myth. The lyrics to the song also support this idea, and one refrain in particular truly stands out for how haunting and sorrowful it sounds:

> For standing in your heart
>
> Is where I want to be, and I long to be
>
> Ah, but I may as well try and catch the wind. (Donovan)

This song is very much symbolic of the Minotaur's character arc throughout the show, as his final line captures the essence of "Catch the Wind" when he says, "The Minotaur tastes their happiness, and it tastes good… Maybe he had a taste for happiness after all…he realizes" (*The Minotaur* 57). The power that the Donovan song has in this play influences the choices the characters make, and again, reconnects with the idea that the characters within the play find their own power and choose a different story this time around. The music is almost a narrative "call to arms," spurring the characters to break out of the lull of the cycle of the story and create a new possibility. Sound, in particular music, is a tool that Ziegler uses to reinforce the emotional language of the play, and it needed to be incorporated as much as possible within this production,

whether it be sung by the actors or played through the speakers of the space. It was vital to me that the music that Ziegler mentions in the piece be incorporated into the sound design.

Lighting design for this show was used in multiple capacities. The lighting designer, Ollie Arnold, and I really wanted to utilize the lighting not only to aid in the storytelling by being a tool to reinforce certain dramatic moments but also to act as the "walls" at times in which the action on stage can be contained, much like the set design. For the "Connect Four" scenes, we wanted to play with the stage direction that Ziegler gives for Ariadne, "*Must reach through the bars of the mouth of the labyrinth in order to play*" (*The Minotaur* 8). Rather than construct physical bars or have the chorus be the bars, it felt best to use lighting and shape it as a box of light in which the Minotaur and Ariadne were contained to mimic the "prison-like" atmosphere of the stage directions.

(Image 1.5)

Beyond defining playing space, lights in this show also aided in creating key stage pictures or moments in the show. Theseus' arrival into the story used a blue spotlight to emphasize his

connection to the sea (similarly to how his set curtain is also blue) (*The Minotaur* 19). By connecting Theseus' character to a color palette consistent with the myth, it not only connects the play to the source material but follows Ziegler's intentionality of creating a highly theatrical show in which space is liminal, and the characters can live in that liminality without an audience feeling lost, reinforcing and connecting characters back to themes.

(Image 1.6)

The slaying of the Minotaur was accented with red lights that fully covered the entire stage, red being a universal symbol for blood and violence (*The Minotaur* 46). This act is a sacrifice, an ancient ritual that is carnal and brutal. The Chorus described this act as "beautiful, in a way," as they delight in the savagery of the action, and the stage image that was created reflected this violent and sacrificial act (*The Minotaur* 48).

(Image 1.7)

Lights were also used to aid the storytelling through various “shadow work” moments. “Shadow work” or “shadow puppetry” is a theatrical technique in which a story can be told through just shadows, and the ways in which the actors move and position themselves affect the ways in which the shadow work affects the storytelling. There were two main moments in which this storytelling tool was used. The first resided in Act 1. Instead of following Ziegler’s stage directions of having the Chorus reenact the scene of the Minotaur’s conception on stage in ridiculous costumes, I wanted to take a more creative approach and use shadow work to portray this moment (*The Minotaur* 14). This was mainly because of practicality and also to use another storytelling form, and once again tap into the theme that this play is all about how stories are told.

(Image 1.8)

The other shadow moment happened in Act 2, and it purposefully mirrored the moment in Act 1. The moment involves the portrayal of the relationship between the Minotaur and the "goat girl," a character played by the Priest who was a young prisoner whom the Minotaur falls in love with and then tragically must eat due to his nature, a story he "tells" to Theseus to prove that their hunger and appetite are mirrors of each other (*The Minotaur* 43). Rather than the Minotaur telling the story and then the Chorus acting it out through shadow work like in Act 1, this moment was the reverse, the Chorus telling the story and the Minotaur and Priest acting it out. By doing so, it helped aid in the telling of this story that turns so tragic, showing a very "human moment" for the Minotaur that quickly sours due to "the bones of the story's inability to change" (*The Minotaur* 44). The Minotaur becomes the victim due to his participation in the story, completely stripped of the power and agency that he had with the first shadow moment. By using shadow work, not only were we able to incorporate new storytelling tools and once again link to the central theme of choice and the reinvention of the way in which stories and journeys are told, but we also allowed for these moments of intimacy to be staged in a way that was more

dramatically engaging, dissecting the design element of lights and creating a new storytelling tool.

(Image 1.9)

Lights were used to aid in the narrative flexibility, and the use of them in very heightened moments within this play signaled that these narrative moments were vital chapters in this reinvented hero's journey. Only after the tragedies of killing the Minotaur and of the potential abandonment of Ariadne by Theseus does a spark of change erupt, and once again points to the Modernist reinterpretation that Ziegler has explored within this play. Lights, like the other design categories, were used as flexible narrative tools with which to explore the boundless possibilities that Ziegler presents for this story.

The costume and props designs were very much influenced by the text, resulting in more straightforward approaches as opposed to the other design disciplines. For costumes, the costume

designer Amyrose Bertolino and I were heavily influenced by the idea of the "modern myth," using the descriptions that Ziegler gave for each of her characters on page 4 of the script and drawing on the idea of the Greek characters being presented as "modernized" versions of the classical Greek depictions. For example, Theseus' character description reads, "a young man in search of adventure. He's lived rarefied air, a prep school boy who's had every advantage in the world" (*The Minotaur* 4). Amyrose and I needed to have Theseus in a preppy outfit, complete with a vest, tie, and jewelry such as a wristwatch, to harken to the classical depiction of his nobility, a breed between the old and the new (See image 1.5). The color palettes for the costumes of the Chorus and the Greek characters were also intentionally opposed. The Greeks were costumed with brighter and more varied color palettes- Theseus in gold and blue, Ariadne in pink and gold, and the Minotaur in blacks and whites and splashes of reds. The Chorus, meanwhile, were more monochrome: the Priest in a black habit, the Lawyer in a gray pinstripe suit, and the Rabbi in a flowing gray robe and a tallis, a religious Jewish shawl that fits around her head. The idea with these palette choices was to emphasize the dichotomy between these two groups, the vibrancy of the Greek myth clashing with the monochromatic Chorus who control the events of the story, working together with the "old vs. new" motif in several of the design elements.

(Image 1.10)

Props designer Kay Aguirre had the easier time of looking at the script and noting the items needed for the show that were integral to the telling of this story. The ball of yarn was the biggest task, as it needed to be “magical” in some way, as it is described in the script. We decided the best course was to rig the yarn so that it could house a puck light inside of it so that when it was on stage, it would glow from the inside yet still be able to unravel slightly on stage, creating the illusion that the string is “magical” in some way.

(Image 1.11)

The Minotaur's head was also a collaboration between both costumes and props that was vital in the storytelling. The Minotaur's head was both a prop and a costume piece due to the fact that it not only was a headpiece that the actor playing the Minotaur wore but was then removed and became a prop once his beheading occurred. What resulted was a piece constructed from cardboard and aluminum foil and attached to a baseball cap that could be removed and function as both prop and costume, a true collaboration between both departments that was essential to this production.

(Image 1.12)

Developing these versions of the characters and their relationships with each other for this production of *The Minotaur* was guided by the idea that collaboration in theatrical storytelling leads to deeper and more informed performances and was a very important step in this process of creating and staging a "modern myth." Ziegler's play is particularly challenging

due to the unique world in which these characters exist. The Chorus interacts with the Greeks in a way that is familiar, and yet the Greek characters sometimes struggle to remember the finer details of what happens during the myth, while at other times, they are able to predict exactly what comes next, and the Greek characters are both aware of the existence of the Chorus and directly interact with them, while also at the same time not seeing them and hearing them more as thoughts in their own minds. For example, on page 46 of the script, when Theseus slays the Minotaur, the Chorus, in an effort to get what they want (which is to follow the myth by having Theseus slay the Minotaur), they attempt to "get under his skin" and "egg him on" so he will become angry and overwhelmed into a wrathful state that will enable him to kill the Minotaur (*The Minotaur* 46). Meanwhile, when the second "Connect Four" scene occurs, and the ending is changed from the first scene, Ariadne turns to the Chorus and asks if she "Needs to leave in a huff" and correct the scene to appease them (*The Minotaur* 13). This led to many questions coming from the actors about the relationship between the mythological characters and the Chorus. Why does the Chorus even care so much about telling the myth correctly? Who are they in relation to the Greeks? Many questions like these were taken into account and recorded for my personal reflections as part of my "directing journals." Part of my coursework while being a mainstage director as part of Drew University's Theatre Arts program was keeping a weekly directing journal with which to track challenges throughout the week, goals and whether or not they were accomplished for the week, and what discoveries I made about myself as a director and what needs to be improved upon. This very question was recorded, and as the first week of rehearsals went, my cast and I had a major breakthrough about the nature of the Chorus in the world of this play:

> We have landed on the idea that the reason why the Chorus cares so much about this story being told in such a specific way is because they are "reincarnations" of the classic Greek chorus that has been modernized for the current day. This story has been lived in and told countless times according to the characters, and so the Chorus must adapt to the times, as stories are transmissions of lessons and culture. (Perez 1)

This interpretation of the Chorus falls in line with many of the themes and discussions of this play discussed throughout this paper. Firstly, the idea that there is a cyclical nature within this story and a reason we as a society have kept coming back to Greek myth repeatedly is present in this idea that the Chorus, with each telling of the story, "reincarnate" in order to adapt and "modernize" for a modern audience. This iteration just happens to appear as a Priest, Rabbi, and Lawyer, people in modern day who are in positions of influence and leadership, something also noted by the actors. This interpretation also serves as a connection to the cultural significance of mythological stories previously discussed. Myths often set standards for appropriate behaviors, and for the Greeks, it was a civic duty to attend plays that usually depicted mythological beings (Zunner). They are not only accepted by the culture but perpetuated by transmission (usually through oral storytelling), leading to the myth being widespread and thus accepted (Zunner). The Chorus, in this instance, are malevolent beings tasked with telling this myth millions of times, each time adapting and becoming the necessary storytellers for this myth. Solidifying this relationship that the Chorus had to this myth and to these characters (along with the relationship between the Greek characters themselves mentioned earlier in this Thesis) made the performances for the actors more connected and grounded, being able to act upon this relationship in a way that stays in line with Ziegler's text.

Incorporating all of these design elements, as well as the character and relationship work established by the actors, into the staging of this production of *The Minotaur* was no small task, but I dedicated myself to the guiding principle that this is a story about telling stories, and to tell a good story, using multiple storytelling devices (like shadow puppetry and physical movement) would allow a modern audience to become engaged in the presentation. By being engaged in the presentation, we would then uplift the ideas of choice that were present within the play, as well as the idea that the “hero’s journey” in myth may not be the true heroic journey. This is the "modernist" view that has been discussed throughout this paper. It comes to settle here: the breaking free of fatalist or pre-ordained structures and perceptions and the centrality of the psyche-driven (as opposed to god-ordained) individual journey. Instead of "fate," Theseus chooses free will. This is also from where Sisyphus' scornful humor derives: we may be bound by an existential imperative, but we can make our own momentary purpose or, in the case of Ziegler's mythical pawns, discover freedom and even, perhaps, rapture.

Besides the shadow puppetry moments, as previously discussed, another creative storytelling device that was discovered was the incorporation of different entrances and exits, creating seamless transitions from one scene into the next, as was intended in the script. A prime example of this is when Theseus enters the Labyrinth. The space for this performance was the “Directing Lab” located in the theatre wing of Drew University’s Dorothy Young Center for the Arts, a performance space that seats about 80 audience members in proscenium seating, which means the audience is seated facing the stage that is presented in a vertical view, similar to the typical movie theater seating arrangement. The space itself houses many side doors, along with black curtains that form a large “U” shape that has an entrance at each corner of the “U,” four in total. Combine this with the placement of the hanging fabric curtains mentioned above, and this

created endless possibilities for creative staging. For Theseus' entrance, I wanted his entrance into the heart of Labyrinth to be reminiscent of the typical "hero's journey" that usually has a point where the hero "descends into the underworld" in order to complete his task (Campbell). This "underworld" entrance was placed at the double door entrance into the space so that when he entered into the deepest part of the Labyrinth, he would swing open the double doors, creating an extremely dramatic stage picture that aids in the storytelling of that moment: Theseus is deep in the Labyrinth, about to approach and face the Minotaur, which falls right in line with this idea of the "ideal heroic journey" that is then interrupted with the realizations that occur in the play following the death of the Minotaur. There are also several other creative entrances that aided in this inventive storytelling. When the Minotaur returns from the dead towards the end of the play, I wanted this entrance to be like an emergence from the ocean, falling in line with the original source material of how the bull of Poseidon emerged from the sea, the Minotaur mirroring his father in the finale of the show and symbolizing a new attained enlightenment for the character that he experiences when he talks about "The stars all around me" (*The Minotaur* 53). The result was having the Minotaur enter for this moment from a hidden door near the back of the audience close to the technical booth so that the actors on stage have to look out into the audience to see the Minotaur's arrival, allowing the audience to follow their eyes and see the Minotaur walking right next to them! Combine these with several playful entrances from behind the hanging fabrics and exits that go through the Minotaur's parted curtain and even the far upstage (or further from the audience) corner exits, with the intention of using the space in an inventive way that creates a multifaceted theatrical form that aided in clearing up the abstract nature of this piece. It also worked in favor of one of the main dramatic themes that I wished to explore: the ways in which we tell stories, how we tell them, who they affect, and in what ways.

Combining the character work of the actors into the staging was also deeply important to me and surprisingly bled into our staging of the play, with the main example of this character work being translated to the staging of the play being how the Chorus was used on stage. For example, as mentioned about the lighting design, the "cage' for the Minotaur was made using a box of light, but on page 23 of the script, we did not have that luxury when attempting to establish where Theseus was detained within the Labyrinth. We decided on the idea that the Chorus themselves would create the physical boundaries for the scene by becoming the "bars" of Theseus' prison. By creating a strong diagonal line that lay in between Theseus and Ariadne and by having them interact on opposite sides of the stage, the combination of their distanced proximity, as well as the Chorus using their bodies as the walls of the story, meant they were not only monitoring the scenes as they played along to their whims, but also helped me as the director create the playing space in which the actors could perform, and helped the audience to establish setting. Finding creative ways to tell a "modern myth" like this is one reason I was so drawn to this play. The flexibility due to the nature of the story meant that the actors and I could enjoy a creatively free process in which we could try things, learn what worked and what didn't, and create a weird, fun, and deeply resonant piece together, which for me is a perfect encapsulation of what makes ancient stories perfect for modern adaptation.

Conclusion

Bruno Bettelheim, an Austrian-American child psychologist of the 1900s famous for his involvement in autism research in young children, authored the book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. In it, he explains the power that stories and myths

hold on us as human beings and how they shape our worldview from a deeply foundational and psychological level:

> Myths and fairy stories both answer the eternal questions: What is the world really like? How am I to live my life in it? How can I truly be myself?... Whatever our age, only a story conforming to the principles underlying our thought processes carries conviction for us… this is so for adults, who have learned to accept that there is more than one frame of reference for comprehending the world. (Bettelheim 45)

Myths tap into themes that center on topics like love, family, and destiny and explore these themes on a universal or macro-level scale. Despite cultural values changing, these universal topics still hold true because they resonate on a deeply personal and human level, and we as a society are still seeking out classical stories so as to reinterpret them because we seek to become more connected with these ideas and themes in an ever-changing modern landscape. Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* is an answer to the question of why these stories keep circulating and repeating in our theatrical history. They are about human life itself. We, as a modern society, seek stories that are comfortable and connect us deeply with our own humanity, and myths have a way of tapping into our primordial selves and assisting in answering the many problems and challenges the universe throws at us. A modern problem that the universe threw at us recently was the COVID-19 Pandemic, and a modern problem that came from it was social isolation and the urge to reconnect socially. A neurological study conducted by neuroscientists at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine found that one of the most basic desires of society, human connection, was robbed from us, and in particular, physical connection, or "social touch" (Chokshi). We lost our ability to connect with others due to social isolation, though according to Chokshi and O'Connor, this was a trend that started well before the pandemic:

> However, even before the pandemic, a number of groups already suffered from physical social isolation and, arguably, our society as a whole is trending in this direction. Social changes like the increasing digitization of our interactions are leading broader swaths of society toward life with fewer physical interactions. It's perhaps not coincidental that young people often report feeling lonelier and unhappier compared with their counterparts from prior generations, despite unprecedented levels of connection via social media. (Chokshi)

Like both *Ron Swoboda's Wish* and *The Minotaur*, Ziegler focuses on human connection. The characters within her plays seek connection to each other (the lapse of communication between the *Ron Swoboda* twins for example) but are often thwarted, and must reconcile with the best path forward for that connection. We as a society seek that same connection, and it is why her plays speak to such a deeply human need.

Greek myths are vital in reconnecting us to our humanity. The universality of these themes breeds familiarity, and as a result, these myths become timeless and are rediscovered and then recontextualized in modern adaptations like *The Minotaur*. By looking back on these primordial myths, we dive into deeply human ideas that connect us with what we lack-connection, either with our fellow members of society or with ourselves. Shows that are as abstract and introspective as *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler and that tap into classical Greek myths and modernize them challenge contemporary audiences to reckon with their deeply human desires and fears, such as their fate and their mortality. These themes are then given a modern voice by going deeper and injecting them within the confines of a classical myth to birth a new story that can fulfill Aristotle's criteria for "catharsis." One of the things that stood out to me upon receiving praise from audiences who got to watch my production of *The Minotaur* was how

much it made sense to them. Ziegler's language is so poetic and abstract within this piece that the biggest obstacle was connecting the dots of the narrative. But one reason why it ended up not being that difficult was because, at the end of the day, *The Minotaur* is a story about choice and love, things we as humans desperately crave. My work as a director to make the play make sense was already done for me, and it was because Anna Ziegler took a primordial idea given through a myth and gave it theatrical voice and presentation, allowing for a modern audience to experience the expunging of emotion and connect to the play and experience true "catharsis" (which I believe would bring a tear to Aristotle's eyes). Mythological stories are human stories, and it is due to this striking humanity that we keep coming back to them over and over, resulting in a theatrical canon that is more resonant and pertinent to a modern audience by redefining that humanity and examining, like Ziegler does in *The Minotaur*, how we define our humanity, as we are not that far off from the "beast" that is the titular creature. We must use the foundations laid out by the past to create a more dynamic and more human theatrical future where stories on stage can inspire us to reflect on our history, and like the Modernists, inspire new conversations that can shape our futures. As the Minotaur in Ziegler's play suggests, "Nothing and no one is just one thing" (*The Minotaur* 54), and in a world that has increasingly demanded less individualization, Greek mythology has shown me that stories are vital in the transmission of who we are as humans, and what we are capable of.

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Appendix

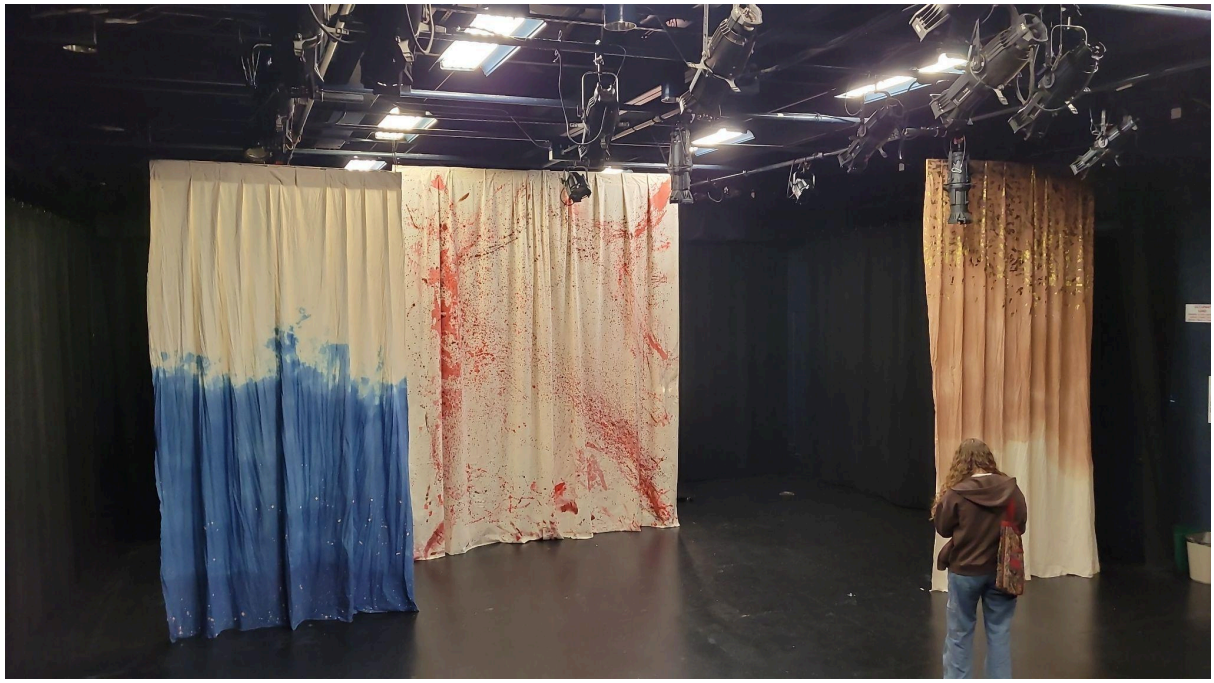
Image 1.1-

Picasso, Pablo. *Minotauromachy.* 1935. MOMA, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/60110

Image 1.2

Carracci, *The triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne* (detail) (Art Resource, NY)

Image 1.3-



Set photo of *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler, performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Photo taken by Kris Perez April 11th, 2024. Set Design by Julia Caldwell

Image 1.4-

Pollock, Jackson. *One: Number 31, 1950*. *MOMA*, www.moma.org/collection/works/78386.

Image 1.5-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performers from Left to Right- Avery Burnap as Minotaur and Christina Rodden as Ariadne. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.6-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performer Parker Hough as Theseus. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.7-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performers Parker Hough as Theseus and Avery Burnap as Minotaur. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.8-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performers from left to right- Avery Burnap as Minotaur, Raya Smith as Rabbi, Casey Cornwell as Lawyer, Jordan Weisblatt as Priest, Christina Rodden as Ariadne. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.9-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performers Jordan Weisblatt as Priest/Goat Girl, Avery Burnap as Minotaur. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.10-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performers from left to right- Parker Hough as Theseus, Christina Rodden as Ariadne, Jordan Weisblatt as Priest, Avery Burnap as Minotaur, Casey Cornwell as Lawyer, Raya Smith as Rabbi Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.11-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performer Christina Rodden as Ariadne. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.

Image 1.12-

Performance photos of Anna Ziegler's *The Minotaur* by Anna Ziegler. Performed at Drew University April 18th-20th, 2024. Performer Avery Burnap as Minotaur. Photos taken by Morgan Mundahl. Costume Design by Amyrose Bertolino, Prop Design by Kay Aguirre, Set Design by Julia Caldwell, Lighting Design by Ollie Arnold, Sound Design by Stephanie Yanes.