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THEATER REVIEW | 'THE BE(A)ST OF TAYLOR MAC'

A Stand-Up Comic in Drag, Bursting Protective Bubbles

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Taylor Mac is wearing something akin to rags when we first meet him in “The Be(a)st of Taylor Mac” at the Here Arts Center, and before long he has made a mess of the stage as well. But the sloppier things get, the more you marvel at how assured and in control this brash, genial performer is.

Mr. Mac, working in drag but not in drag clichés, has the ease and bantering skills of a veteran stand-up comic, yet he can shift effortlessly to a more somber tone when he wants to drive home a message. His mastery in this one-man show is all the more impressive when you know that he is alternating “Be(a)st” with “The Young Ladies of ...,” an equally demanding solo work inspired by letters his father received when stationed in Vietnam.

“Be(a)st” starts with something that, even at this remove, remains risky: a seemingly lighthearted reference to 9/11. But Mr. Mac knows just what he is doing in threatening

your comfort zone: the overarching theme of the show is the protective bubble we live in, especially since those attacks.

Somebody else might use that as a springboard to 90 minutes of theatrical preaching, but Mr. Mac rolls out the theme so daffily that you barely realize he's sticking to the subject. There is an outlandish bit where he draws comparisons between his work and the coming Broadway turn in "Equus" by [Daniel Radcliffe](#) of the "[Harry Potter](#)" movies.

There is a scandalous recitation of masturbation fantasies (made less scandalous by a well-placed sheet). There are songs that are silly or poignant or, often, both, with ukulele accompaniment. And, remarkably, somewhere within all that is a serious point, expertly made.