



The Big Anxiety, Naarm Theatre of the Oppressed workshop on power and mental health

Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by the Brazilian theatre maker Augusto Boal, uses theatre as a means of promoting social and political change. One technique, known as Forum Theatre, invites actors and non-actors to share, and then enact, an oppression or struggle relevant to the audience or community. After the initial performance, audience members are invited to become 'spect-actors', stepping into the action to replace the actors, in an attempt to explore new outcomes.

Minola Theatre, in collaboration with Arts for Inclusion, utilise this technique within *The Big Anxiety* to uncover and disrupt the power relations inherent in interactions within mental health systems.

For our Melbourne festival, Minola & Arts for Inclusion will work with mental health consumers/survivors in an initial trauma informed workshop to develop scenarios to be performed on stage in *The Big Anxiety* Forum at Storey Hall.

We are looking for ~10 participants with lived experience of the mental health system who would like to be part of this process (referred to as 'actors'). We would like to recruit a group with a range of different experiences with mental health and trauma; for example, survivors of mental health institutions, people who have experienced community or private hospital care, and people who have received significant 'treatment' or interventions. We are particularly interested in recruiting people who have reflected on the power balances and structural factors relevant to mental health and mental health supports.

A mix of professional and non-professional actors is ideal but all actors should bring lived experience to the process, which will involve drawing on your experience to develop scripts that demonstrate the power relations and emotional politics encountered in the system. All participation will be opt-in, and participants can engage as fully or as little as they feel able to do through the duration of the workshop.

The 4-hour workshop will take place in The Green Brain, RMIT on **Tuesday 4 October 10am to 2pm**

Participants will be paid \$200 for the session.

Some of the actors will join Minola & Arts for Inclusion in performing the scenarios on stage at Storey Hall on **7th October (currently scheduled for 9am)**. It is not essential to appear on stage if you participate in the workshop. We recognise that some people may want to be part of the workshop without committing to perform. Those who participate in the one-hour performance will be paid an additional \$100. All participants will be invited to the performance and the 2-day Forum event 6-7 Oct.

Places in the program are limited, so if you are interested in participating and are available on 4th and 7th October, please send an email to <xavier.hazard@rmit.edu.au> responding the following requests:

- a) Please tell us a little about your lived experience (this does not have to be detailed or include disclosures of any kind; we just want to get a sense of your experience)
- b) Please tell us about any views or reflections you have on power in the mental health sector
- c) Please let us know if you have any acting training/experience (not essential)
- d) Please let us know if you would like be part of the performance as well as the workshop *Please note, this does not affect your chance of selection. You are also welcome to change your mind. Expressing interest in the performance is not an agreement to perform.*
- e) Please add anything else you think is relevant.

Deadline for expression of interest: 12 August (if the program is over-subscribed we may close early)
Participants confirmed by week of 15 August.

Note: this is arts project commissioned by The Big Anxiety Forum. It is not a research project and does not collect or retain data from the workshop beyond the scope of the collectively devised performance.