

Winner

Social Purpose Learning in Action Award

Black Toffee Productions – Fantastic – A One Act Play (Bolton)

Peter Carruthers and Laura Lindsay

'Theatre, if done carefully and respectfully, can be a powerful learning tool for people who work in health as well as in the wider general public.'

Peter

Fantastic is a seventy minute one-act play- which explores themes of mental health, forced treatment, the clinicalisation of human experience and the pressure placed on people to conform to a notion of normal. Set in a dystopian view of the not-too-distant future a new 'miracle cure' has been discovered. Simply called, 'The Implant', the treatment promises to cure any psychological disorder by electronically 'normalising' brain activity. The implant promises a happier life, free from distress and a reassurance of finally fitting in. Aisling (who is a voice hearer) and her brother Joseph (who has Aspergers and is a synesthete), are potential recipients of the new treatment. 'Fantastic' depicts their battle to work out if the implant is the scientific

advancement they've been waiting for, or if it poses a threat to the very thing that makes them human.

This project stemmed from an extensive period of research and interviews with 'experts by experience' and clinicians. Rehearsed readings were presented to an invited audience of health professionals, students and those with lived experience. Audience feedback was deemed absolutely fundamental to the play's development. A full production of Fantastic will run for two weeks in Manchester during November. Ongoing open rehearsals will further support creative engagement and development. A series of post-show Q&As with expert panels will also open up discussion, and a cross-discipline symposium between the arts and health sectors entitled 'Change of mind: alternative perspectives on mental health and disorders' is planned.

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