

ORGAN RECITAL

A STORYTELLING FESTIVAL ABOUT
BODIES, HEALTH & HEALTHCARE

WELCOME TO ORGAN RECITAL, STORYTELLERS

"But I'm not a storyteller"

Yes, Yes you are.

Humans are storytellers. It's in our DNA and has been since the beginning. It's the way we communicated where danger was, where to find food, and the whereabouts of the saber toothed tiger. I guess the first and the last things are similar but what can I say. I have a lot of fear of saber toothed tigers.

But think about it.

Hasn't hearing stories about people who look like you, or felt like you or had an experience like you had...hasn't that made a huge difference in your life?

Someone wants to hear your story.

Someone needs to hear your story.

Some tips:

If you don't have a specific story in mind for the theme, brainstorm or do a mind map about all the different experiences you have had around that theme. Write them all down, even if they aren't experiences you could or would talk about in public.

Write them down even if you think they aren't all that interesting.

Most themes lend themselves to using some kind of prompts to help your memory. For example, if the theme is death, respond to:

When is my most recent experience with death?

My earliest experience? My most intense experience? My most confusing experience?

What are my predominant feelings around death right now? How about when I was a child?

Why did they change?

How have the people closest to me faced/ talked about/ responded to death?

What traditions does my family have around death and how have these traditions formed and changed?

Leave the brainstorming alone for a bit and then come back to it to select your story. You might not feel totally committed to it at first, and that's fine, that's part of the process. Sometimes in the writing it out, and telling it and retelling it you discover what the story is...or what the ending is.

In order for something to be a story instead of just an anecdote it needs:

A protagonist (that's you)

A beginning

A middle

And an end

And according to This American Life producer Brian Reed it also needs

REFLECTION (that's you explaining how you changed in the story or how what happened in the story changed your way of seeing things)

STAKES (that's the part where you tell the audience why what was happening was important).

If you get stuck either choosing your story or trying to outline the important parts use the STORY SPINE to get a draft together:

Once Upon a Time _____ and every day, _____

Until one day, _____

Because of that _____

And then _____

And then _____
Until finally/then suddenly _____
And the funny thing was _____
Ever since then _____

Try it. Improv people have been using that structure for years. It really works.

Most experienced storytellers recommend actually writing out the whole story to begin with, even if you're going to have to cut it down or even if you're telling at a show that doesn't allow you to use notes (Organ Recital/Queer Memoir doesn't require our storytellers to memorize their stories but many shows do)

Once you write it all out, you may need to cut for time; the general rule is that an average person speaks at the rate of about 120 words a minute, so if your story is supposed to be between seven and eight minutes you will probably only be able to squeeze in 840- 960 words. That's less than five pages typed and doublespaced!

If you get confused about what to cut, remember you only NEED to include information that

1. Sets the scene
2. Moves the action along
3. Illustrates who you are as a person within the story, ie so your actions make sense
4. Explains why the events in the story were important/ life changing to you and/or why your life is different now as a result.

There are some great resources out there about first person storytelling. Some that are recommended include:

[THE MOTH's tips for storytelling](#) (lots of excellent videos of everyday folks telling stories)

Judy Carter's work on The Story Of You (especially the workbook of the same name for story prompts); check out her schedule of free online workshops [here](#)

[Pixar's 22 Storytelling Basics](#); every point doesn't perfectly apply first person storytelling still pretty darn helpful.

Finally some things we ask for if you're telling a story as part of ORGAN RECITAL or QUEER MEMOIR:

-Please use first names only for non public figures

-Please please don't imitate the speech, accent etc of any group that you're not identified with. I know you would never do this. But sometimes people do, and it's not what we're about and also I guarantee it will make even a super supportive audience get annoyed with you!

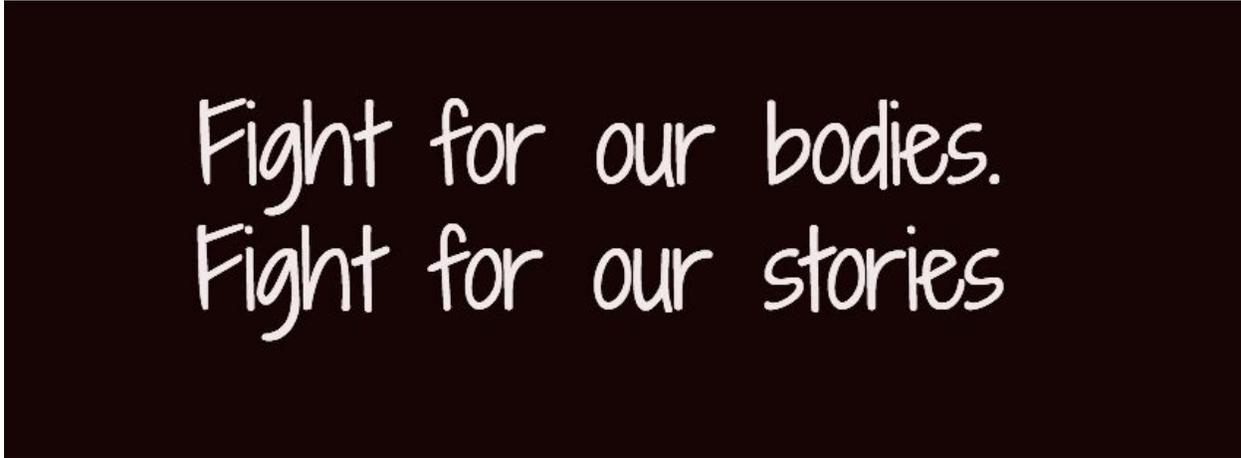
If you have any questions, reach out to ORGAN RECITAL or your individual producer/curator.

We can't wait to have you.

And remember

someone wants to hear your story.

someone out there NEEDS to hear your story.



Fight for our bodies.
Fight for our stories