



Stories, roles and resistance from Penelope to the present day

Maria Hodermarska, Adam D.-F. Stevens, Akhila Khanna, & Anna Seymour

Penelope, Odysseus's wife, has an untold story. The stories of her survival during his long journey home were silently caught in the web and weft of her loom by day and destroyed by her by night so she could remain safe. This panel will focus on the untold or silenced stories of contemporary life.

The presenters come from the United States and UK during a time where the world is on fire; cities are becoming police states; Black, POC, Trans and Dis/abled bodies continue to be victimized at much higher rates; and people, who we are told lack sufficient documentation and have criminal justice involvement, are being disappeared, some into prisons in distant countries. For every story told of heroes, of "arms and the man" and of the returns home, there are many more stories that are not told because they are not safe to tell--stories that do not end with a return home, but, rather, in silencing, deportation, institutionalization, criminalization or surveillance by systems.

Our stories determine the roles we play in life. This panel will discuss current thinking in drama therapy about role and role play through clinical case examples. Roles and role play offer expressions of identities, of experience, and serve as a form of metaphoric and embodied resistance to disrupt and subvert the repetitions of power. Expansions in Landy's Role Taxonomy and Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, remind us that drama therapy is political. Untold stories find shape and voice in and through role when the act of telling one's own story can be the most dangerous thing of all—something that Penelope knew all too well.



Biographies

Maria Hodermarska, MA, (she/her), RDT/BCT, CASAC, ICADC, LCAT is a Clinical Associate Professor of Drama Therapy at New York University. She is a Registered Drama Therapist and Board-Certified Trainer of Drama Therapy in the US. Maria is the convener of the Disability Justice Affinity Group, a collaboration between New York University and the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA). She serves on the Ethics Committee for the NADTA.

Adam D.-F. Stevens, MA, (they/them) RDT/BCT is a Registered Drama Therapist and Board-Certified Trainer who supports queer, POC, and neurodivergent youth in transforming grief into joy and empowerment. They teach at Antioch University Seattle and Marymount Manhattan College and serve as Artistic Director of NYU's Collideoscope Repertory Theatre Company, advancing racial justice through performance. A doctoral student at NYU, Adam also serves as Secretary of the National Alliance for Children's Grief and President of the North American Drama Therapy Association, bringing a social justice and creative lens to bereavement work. Their superpowers are rooted in the fantastical forces of creativity, love, and radical imagination.

Akhila Khanna, (she/her) is a Licensed Creative Arts Therapist (Drama Therapist) from New Delhi, India working with adults in acute inpatient psychiatry at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, NY, and as a researcher with the NYC Health + Hospitals Arts in Medicine department. At the hospital, Akhila uses Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) with patients and their clinicians, a drama therapy group protocol she examined in her senior thesis at the NYU Drama Therapy program (Khanna, 2023). Prior to practicing in hospitals, Akhila trained as a Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) practitioner in India and Brazil, performing and jokering Forum Theatre (Khanna et al., 2024) and writing on role of TO to combat issues like sexual harassment.

Anna Seymour, PhD, (she/her), is Emeritus Professor of Dramatherapy at the University of Roehampton, London who trained with Augusto Boal in the early 1990s.



Recent Publications

Hodermarska, M. Stevens, A., Johnson, J., Jones, E., Manzi, M. S. McGowan (2023)

Disability Justice: Drama therapy as collective liberation. In Parasuram & Supraja Parasuraman Eds., *Artability: Creative arts and disabilities*. India: Notion Press.

Khanna, A. (2023). *Power-play: Exploring the potential of theatre of the oppressed (TO) as group psychotherapy with patients and clinicians* (Publication No. 31556412) [Master's dissertation]. New York University. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/power-play-exploring-potential-theatre/docview/31556412>

Stevens, A. (2018). *Know your role: An autoethographic exploration of black American race roles in drama therapy*. [Unpublished master's thesis]. Program in Drama Therapy, New York University.