



SCOTTISH MENTAL HEALTH ARTS AND FILM FESTIVAL LAUNCHES IT'S MOST AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME YET

POWER and mental health will be put in the spotlight at one of the world's largest social justice festivals taking place throughout Scotland from October 1 - 19.

The announcement was made today [MON] at the programme launch of this year's Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival (SMHAFF), which will see over 300 events staged across Scotland.

The theatre, film, literature and music programmes will explore the nature of personal, political and social power as well as the disempowerment associated with mental ill health and the empowerment gained through the arts.

The theatre programme features Vanishing Point's week long run of Tomorrow at the Tramway; a visual imagining of growing old and living with dementia described as 'brutally beautiful and makes your shiver' by the Guardian. It also includes Emma Jayne Park's tour Status Anxiety & Thinking in the First Person, a hip hop performance exploring who we become when hidden behind a computer screen.

The film programme boasts three UK premieres including Beneath the Blindfold, a ground-breaking documentary on overcoming the effects of torture, screened in partnership with Document Film Festival; Alive Inside, a heart-warming testament to the power of music in reaching people with Alzheimer's, screened in partnership with Luminare; and Ana Ana, a cinematic poem following four young Egyptian women struggling to make sense of their post-Arab Spring world through the arts and filmmaking.

Also included is a special screening of Glasgow Girls, a drama based on the true-life story of a group of school girls who changed the legal system while rescuing a friend caught in an immigration nightmare, followed by a discussion with original Glasgow Girl Amal Azzudin.

The First World War will be remembered in the Voices of War centenary event; an evening of war poetry set against the stunning backdrop of Edinburgh Castle including poetry from Sassoon and Owen as well as their pioneering psychiatrist Capt WHR Rivers.

Scottish songwriter Withered Hand will perform at the festival, presenting his long-awaited new album New Gods with support from Fruit Tree Foundation graduate Marie Collins. The Glasgow Art School will showcase Glasgow-based electro/shoegaze crossover outfit Machines In Heaven and electronica act Atom Tree in a dedicated SMHAFF show.

Festival director Lee Knifton said: "Our Festival was founded upon the belief that arts and film have the power to raise awareness of social injustice and to stimulate change. This year's theme of 'power' was chosen to bring the Festival back to its campaigning roots."

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To arrange interviews, images and media tickets for the launch or any other Festival event, please contact Clare McBrien, Communications officer, via SMHAFFMedia@mentalhealth.org.uk, 0141 226 9846 or 07824 776 030. For more information please visit www.mhfestival.com.

More Information on Festival Events

The Festival will kick off with ***Moving Minds***, an all-day event celebrating diversity in our community, featuring creative workshops, film screenings of past winners of the International Film Awards, Malawian Music, a fashion show by Maryhill Integration Network and much more.

Theatre Programme

From national tours to local productions, this year's theatre programme is the most hard-hitting yet. Highlights include **Emma Jayne Park's** tour ***Status Anxiety & Thinking in the First Person***, a visceral hip hop theatre performance exploring who we become when hidden behind a computer screen; and a week-long run of ***Tomorrow***, a thought-provoking piece by **Vanishing Point** on growing old and living with dementia. The Festival sees the return of the superb **vacuum cleaner** with his piece ***The Assessment*** which challenges the mental health assessment process in a humorous, thought-provoking way. Regional tours include **Ismael Velasco's** one-man play ***The Life and Nearly Death of Riley***, which will tour Orkney and Shetland; and **Julie McNamara's** ***Let Me Stay***, a tender and unique exploration of the impact of Alzheimer's on family relations presented in collaboration with Luminare, which will visit Inverness, Skye and Cove.

Film Programme

This year's film programme is marked by its diversity, bravery and social conscience. Within documentary, three UK premieres are featured; ***Beneath the Blindfold***, a ground-breaking US documentary on overcoming the effects of torture; ***Alive Inside***, a heart-warming testament to the power of music to reach people with Alzheimer's; and ***Ana Ana***, a cinematic poem following four young Egyptian women struggling to make sense of their post-Arab Spring world through art and filmmaking. The programme also includes two-time Academy Award nominee **Lucy Walker's** film ***The Crash Reel***, which follows Kevin Pearce's recovery from a traumatic brain injury acquired at the summit of his snowboarding career.

Scotland is at the heart of this year's programme with Scottish film director **Gillies Mackinnon's** drama ***Regeneration***, depicting Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon as they struggle to give voice to the pain of armed conflict through poetry at Craig Lockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh. There is an opportunity for a post-show discussion with Glasgow-based documentary film maker **David Graham Scott** after the screening of his film ***Iboga Nights***, the story of a man striving to share his means of escaping drug dependency with others. There will also be a chance to discuss the ***Glasgow Girls***, a drama based on the true-life story of young women who changed the legal system while rescuing a friend caught in an immigration nightmare, with original Glasgow Girl Amal Azzudin.

Literature

The Festival's very first **International Writing Awards**, held in the Mitchell Theatre, is the highlight of our literature events. Run in partnership with Bipolar Scotland, this will be an afternoon dedicated to the power of the writing process for the understanding of and recovery from mental ill health. Elsewhere, **Nathan Filer** will present ***The Shock of the Fall***, the resolute, frank writings of a 19-year-old with schizophrenia struggling within the mental health system. **Allan Beveridge** will present James Boswell's ***Life of Johnson***, a fascinating account of

discussions held between James Boswell and Samuel Johnson on their experience of melancholy and madness. Meanwhile, critically acclaimed poet and 2009 UK Slam poetry champion **Holly McNish** will showcase the wit, intelligence and sincerity that brought her to Glastonbury, WOW festival, the Tate Modern and Channel 4 Random Acts in Glasgow as part of her UK tour. Poetry will also be explored against the stunning backdrop of Edinburgh Castle at the **Voices of War** event; an evening of poetry including work from Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon along with the work of their pioneering psychiatrist Capt. WHR Rivers to uncover their lasting legacy on how we work with today's veterans.

Music

Our Festival soundtrack is better than ever with a wide range of music from blues and protest songs at **The Malt Mill** in Aberdeen, to Scottish indie rock from **Withered Hand** who will present his long-awaited new album 'New Gods' with support from **Fruit Tree Foundation** graduate Marie Collins. **The Art School** presents Glasgow-based electro/shoegaze crossover outfit **Machines In Heaven** and electronica act **Atom Tree** in a dedicated SMHAFF show. Meanwhile the **TYCI** collective invites female guitar 'n' drums duo **Deux Furieuses** to Glasgow and independent Scottish DIY label, **Olive Grove Records** brings music from glacial pop outfit, **Call to Mind**, and Adam Ross, lead singer of Glasgow-based melody merchants **Randolph's Leap**.

Visual Arts

Caps Advocacy returns this year with **Out of Sight/Out of Mind**, an ambitious, multi-venue exhibition across Edinburgh featuring diverse work by artists with experience of mental health issues. Also in Edinburgh is a fascinating collection of work by artist **Moyna Flanigan**, while Forth Valley brings us **Illuminate!**, the culmination of an intensive writing and arts project held in Cornton Vale prison by artist **Frances Douglas** and poet **Evelynn Sharp**.

Editor's Notes:

1) ABOUT SMHAFF: Now in its eighth year, the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival is one of Scotland's most striking and provocative cultural events, encompassing music, film, visual art, theatre, dance, and literature. The annual Festival takes place in venues across Scotland throughout October, aiming to support the arts and challenge preconceived ideas about mental health. By engaging artists, connecting with communities and forming collaborations, the Festival celebrates the artistic achievements of people with experience of mental health issues, exploring the relationship between creativity and the mind, and promotes positive mental health and well-being.

2) PARTNERS: The Festival is led by The Mental Health Foundation in association with the following national partners: See Me, Scotland's programme to end mental health stigma, NHS Health Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lothian, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, Lanarkshire Recovery Network, Voices of Experience, Healthier Scotland Scottish Government, University of Strathclyde and Bipolar Scotland.

The Festival is also supported by hundreds of arts, community and public organisations across Scotland. These groups programme events in their own towns and cities on behalf of the festival, in partnership with local artists and activists.

3) The MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION is a leading UK mental health charity that conducts robust research, provides practical solutions to help everyone lead mentally healthier lives, and works to raise public awareness and improve mental health services for the entire population. The Foundation is proud of the vital role it plays in hosting, developing and managing the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival www.mentalhealth.org.uk

FUNDING THE FESTIVAL - SMHAFF 2014 PARTNERS

The eighth annual Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival is led by the Mental Health Foundation in association with national partners: Scotland's anti-stigma campaign 'see me', NHS Health Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lothian, Bipolar Scotland, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, Lanarkshire Recovery Network, Voices of Experience, University of Strathclyde and Healthier Scotland (Scottish Government). Here's why they support SMHAFF:

“Our festival was founded upon the belief that arts and film have the power to raise awareness of social injustice and to stimulate change. Now, in our eighth year, we are one of the largest international social justice festivals. This year's theme of 'power' was chosen to bring the festival back to its campaigning roots. The result is a compelling programme which we hope will challenge, inspire and entertain.”

Lee Knifton, Festival Director & University of Strathclyde

“Having the power to determine our destiny is absolutely vital for our mental health while disempowerment erodes our sense of self. Sadly, power is not equally shared; stigma and discrimination mean that the reality for many people with mental health problems is one of exclusion and unfair treatment. People adopt creative means to explore the complexities of these issues, from personal expressions of power through visual arts and film, to songs of protest and political theatre. It is therefore fitting that we are turning to the issue of power this year to consider what power means to us and our mental health and to ask what we can do to ensure people who experience mental health problems are valued and have a voice.”

Isabella Goldie, Festival Chair

“Stigma and discrimination affect too many people in Scotland with mental health problems. The Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival have strived for the last seven years to break down this stigma and challenge people's beliefs about mental illness with vibrant and exciting events.

As the national programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination we are proud to partner the festival again in its eighth year, working together to bring about meaningful changes in people's behaviours and beliefs. This year's theme of 'power' is incredibly exciting; too often we see power used against people with mental health problems, to deny them the same opportunities as others. However we are delighted to see the festival reverse this and empower people to show who they really are, behind the label of mental health, with exciting music, arts and films.”

Judith Robertson, See Me Programme Director

“NHS Health Scotland is delighted to be involved again in this year's festival; the theme of 'power' links directly our work around reducing health inequalities. The festival provides a great opportunity to link with a wide range of people and partners to explore power and its impact on mental health. We appreciate the chance to raise and discuss the social and environmental changes needed to redress the balance of power within communities, promote empowerment and equality to improve mental health and wellbeing. We are proud to be a partner to this ever expanding and increasingly exciting fixture.”

Wendy Halliday, NHS Scotland

“As a founding partner of the Festival, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is delighted to offer continued support for the 2014 programme of activities. Since 2007 the Festival has engaged many thousands of people through its lively and diverse programme of creative events. It has proved to be a fantastic way to connect people from all walks of life in discussion, debate and awareness raising around mental health issues. This year's theme of ‘power’ promises to be very interesting indeed - connecting to issues such as empowerment and social justice. As ever, we would encourage everyone to participate in the programme of events.”

Dr Trevor Lakey, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

“NHS Lothian is delighted, yet again, to be working with so many partners during the Festival. The creativity and commitment of people to making the Festival a success is phenomenal. I hope many people get involved and experience how powerful the arts can be in supporting wellbeing and creating social change.”

Linda Irvine, NHS Lothian

“I am pleased to continue to support The Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival which has been going from strength to strength. This year's theme of power ties in with the themes we are working towards in our own Mental Health Strategy, as we promote empowerment through rights and recovery, tackling stigma and discrimination and increasing support for self-management and self-help approaches. Keeping with the theme of power, we know that exploring these approaches through the creative arts in all their forms is a powerful way of promoting recovery and raising awareness.”

Michael Matheson, Minister for Public Health, Scottish Government

“Bipolar Scotland is delighted to be a partner in the 2014 SMHAFF. The Festival is now an established fixture in the Scottish cultural calendar and we are proud to play our part with the first Festival writing competition. We know that writing can be power, real power, the power of the puppet master to direct and guide his own inventions. It is healing, therapy, play, enjoyment all rolled into one. We are looking forward to seeing the portrayal of power in many different forms during this exciting festival time.”

Alison Cairns, Chief Executive, Bipolar Scotland

“RCPsych is proud to support and participate in the eighth festival. For us, the Festival has been a learning experience – giving insight into the lives and everyday challenges of people with mental health problems. Staging creative public performances is a strong antidote to the discrimination faced by our service users and carers. The events excite and provoke in ways we could not have imagined when we began this partnership eight years ago. Our members will join audiences across Scotland to celebrate this unique festival.”

Simon Wessely, President of Royal College of Psychiatrists and Peter Byrne, Public Mental Health Lead, RCPsych.

“I am delighted to see the Festival continue for its eighth consecutive year. The Festival reminds us all that mental health is important to all of us and we must all value and look after ours and others mental health. Being, involved, creative, connected, learning new things are very important to our mental health and therefore the Festival is for all of us. The Festival also aims to promote positive attitudes towards mental health and mental illness.

Despite the fact that most people will have some personal experience of mental ill health, stigma, discrimination and inequality experienced by people, young and old, who have or have had mental health care needs is common place within our society. The Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival provides a platform to challenge, engage and explore the issues and themes around mental health.”

Susan McMorrin, Lanarkshire Recovery Network

“VOX - Voices Of eXperience is once again highly supportive of this important festival. One of the original sponsors, our members continue to take part across the country in different ways. They all give freely of their time and lived experience to help, through the power of the arts, as the taking part is and has always been a direct way of tackling stigma and discrimination. They also help to reflect to Scottish society some of the messages that they have learned through their lived experience of the empowerment that the Festival brings. Finally our members share with the rest of Scotland the enjoyment that the Festival engenders for all whether as active participants or event attendees.”

Joyce Mouriki, Voices of Experience (Vox)