



THE ANTIDOTE

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PRESS RELEASE

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*The Antidote invites you to
the wildest self-help “seminar” you’ll ever attend...*

THE CELEBRITY GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

**Philadelphia Fringe Festival (Online Stream)
September 10-October 4, 2020**

Prone to panic? Anxious about everything? Heal yourself the Hollywood way!
Join us for this one-of-a-kind “seminar” and discover all the self-help secrets you wish you knew.
We promise you’ll never look at mental health the same way again.

ABOUT THE CELEBRITY GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Celebrity Guide to Mental Health and Wellness is a new work co-created by Philadelphia-based director Michael Osinski and Chicago-based performer Tyler Esselman (under the umbrella of The Antidote). Originally produced as a live interactive show in the 2019 Philadelphia SoLow Fest, the show is a **comedic riff on the self-help seminar** that tries to make sense of **the mixed messages about mental health coming from news reports, celebrities, commercials, and other media**. Led by solo performer Tyler Esselman, the show morphs from Tony Robbins-style seminar to children’s television programming to New Age voice lesson with reckless abandon.

“Our initial inspiration for the piece was the suicides of two of our artistic idols: rock musician Chris Cornell and actor Robin Williams,” director Michael Osinski says. “Those deaths started a conversation about our own experiences with mental health management. We agreed there still exists a dangerous stigma around speaking about mental health, and we wanted to do something to combat that.”

Osinski (he/him), former co-founder and Producing Artistic Director of Flashpoint Theatre Company, returned to Philadelphia in 2015 after completing his MFA in Directing at The Theatre School at DePaul University. Since receiving his degree, he has directed for Azuka Theatre, assisted Tony-winning director Rachel Chavkin at the Old Globe, and completed a fellowship with the Drama League Directors Project in New York. He hopes to direct *A Twist of Water* at Passage Theatre in Trenton in the spring.

The show features Chicago-based actor, writer, and producer Tyler Esselman (he/him). Esselman has performed at A Red Orchid and Redtwist Theatres in Chicago, as well as Theatreworks in Colorado Springs. Osinski and Esselman met while studying at DePaul together, and they have been

collaborating on the piece for close to 2 years. “We’d hoped to bring the live version of the show to various fringe festivals this summer,” says Esselman. “But digitizing the piece in this time of quarantine has given it another dimension of accessibility and allowed us to continue advocating for improved access to mental health care.”

The Antidote will make the filmed adaptation of *The Celebrity Guide to Mental Health and Wellness* available online daily during the festival. Ticket buyers will receive an e-mail with instructions, including a customized link to access the performance. Patrons who need captions will be able to access a fully captioned version of the performance. In addition, Osinski and Esselman plan to offer several live chats and Q&A’s on The Antidote’s Facebook and Instagram accounts throughout the festival.

A portion of the proceeds from ticket sales will be donated to The Okra Project’s Nina Pop Mental Health Recovery Fund and Tony McDade Mental Health Recovery Fund, which provide Black trans men and women one-time sessions with a licensed Black therapist, free of cost.

CONTENT WARNING: This performance includes discussion and portrayal of mental illness, anxiety, and panic attacks. The performance also discusses issues of suicide and suicidal ideation.

ABOUT THE ANTIDOTE

The Antidote is an ever-changing collective of artists led by Philadelphia-based director and theatre artist Michael Osinski. The Antidote believes live performance succeeds most when it entertains audiences *and* gives them a puzzle to solve. We blend contemporary pop culture with classic plots to craft a new way of telling stories. One that blends timeless tales and viral videos. One that appeals to the fast-paced multi-tasking world we live in.

The Antidote’s first production in 2015 - *The Hamlet Project* - reimagined the Shakespearean classic through the lens of daytime television talk shows, music videos, online blogs, and pharmaceutical commercials. *Great Again* (2017) paid homage to Ibsen’s housewife heroine, blending 1950’s sitcoms, dance crazes, and pulp fiction, all within the comfort and confines of a South Philly row home. Most recently they created *Red Lodge, Montana* (2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival), a nightmarish unapologetic love letter to David Lynch staged in a former locker room at the Bok Building in South Philadelphia. *Phindie* described it as “a bizarro fusion of indolence, violence, nudity, sex, and dance.”

FACT SHEET

Performances: Thursday, September 10 thru Sunday, October 4 – 8:00pm each day
FringeArts will e-mail ticket buyers the customized link they need to access the show. Ticket buyers will have 24 hours to watch the performance, starting at 8:00pm on the date they selected.

Location: Online

Tickets: All tickets are \$12.50. Tickets available at www.fringearts.com.

Artistic Team:

Michael Osinski – Co-Creator/Director

Tyler Esselman – Co-Creator/Performer

Curtis Matzke – Director of Photography

Damien Figueras – Editing, Graphics, and Sound Design & Mixing