

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Storytelling

Storytelling is an interactive and performative art form where a storyteller shares narratives directly with an audience. It uses voice, gesture, imagination, and presence to bring characters and landscapes to life in the audience's minds, often without props, fixed scripts, or elaborate staging. Through vivid language, pacing, and emotional resonance, the storyteller creates a connection that draws listeners into the story. Storytelling can take many forms - traditional folk tales, autobiography, myths, legends, or contemporary stories—and thrives on the shared experience between teller and listener.

Described by the Federation of European Storytelling (FEST) as the master art form, storytelling is the foundation of linguistic expression and learning and the source from which many other art forms have emerged. As such, it shares traits with poetry, which uses language and imagery to create beauty and insight; stand-up comedy, which uses humour and wit to entertain; and theatre, which evokes characters, dialogue and transformative plot journeys.

However, storytelling stands apart in its ability to transport listeners into imaginary worlds and in its adaptability, the storyteller can shape their narratives in response to the audience and setting, creating an experience that feels immediate and personal. It can stir the full spectrum of emotions while nurturing imagination, safeguarding cultural traditions, and inspiring meaningful conversation.

At its heart is the connection between the storyteller and the audience, one that, at its best, transcends the limits of time and place.

Socially Engaged Storytelling

For the Cassandra team, socially engaged storytelling is a performance art form in which stories are created and told that matter personally to the teller on topics that matter on a global level; it's staging stories that are deeply researched, created in conversation with others and which address and promote awareness of social issues, encouraging further conversation and positive change. It goes beyond entertainment, aiming to inspire action and create a more inclusive and just society.

Socially engaged storytelling differs from *applied storytelling*, which uses narrative techniques for specific practical outcomes in fields such as education, therapy, social work, and community or organisational development, and where performance may be an outcome but is not the overall goal. For more on applied storytelling in sensitive contexts, please see our sister program, 3. [THE AURUS PROJECT](#).

Performance storytelling

Performance storytelling is the art of bringing stories to life through a carefully crafted and engaging performance. It focuses on how a story is told, using voice, movement, and stage presence to captivate and connect with an audience and can take place in front of larger audiences often in performance settings like theatre stages, or amphitheatres. Where traditional storytelling often values the content or preservation of oral traditions, performance storytelling emphasises the artistry of its presentation.

Participant-led Mentorship

In a participant-led mentorship approach, the role of a mentor is to act as a supportive guide, helping storytellers take charge of their own creative journey. Rather than steering the process, teaching specific techniques, or imposing a particular style or approach, mentors empower artists to find their own path and develop their unique voice. We'll dive deeper into this approach in the Set-Up and Recruitment chapter of this manual.

International Storytelling/Storyteller

In storytelling, the term 'International' literally means the teller has performed professionally in numerous countries, but it is also a mark of excellence and recognition. An international storyteller works at the highest level of skill and artistry, creating performances that are both meaningful and unique. They often represent the richness of their own cultural heritage while finding creative ways to make their stories relevant and accessible to global audiences. This balance of individuality and universality is at the heart of international storytelling.



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