

The actor as rehabilitator: an examination of the Geese Theatre Company practitioner training to work with people in prison and those at risk of committing offences

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The actor as rehabilitator: an examination of the Geese Theatre Company practitioner training to work with people in prison and those at risk of committing offences.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Wolverhampton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2023

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ABSTRACT

The Arts have always played an important role in rehabilitation and this thesis continues to explore that. The main focus however is the role of the *practitioner* who carries out this work. The thesis examines the six-month training period which new practitioners must complete when arriving at Geese Theatre Company. Geese is an international theatre company founded in 1987 (UK) with National Portfolio status with Arts Council, England since 2003. They use Drama as a tool for rehabilitation with people who have committed offences and those who are at risk of offending. A third of new actor/ practitioner recruits to Geese are not taken on permanently after the six-month training period. There is published research and evaluation on the projects that Geese deliver but there is no research available on how a performer is trained to work with the company. Geese need to intensively train someone to have a combination of strong performance skill as well as an understanding of the psychological demands of this area of work. They are unique in having a substantial period of training following which the recruit is not necessarily taken on by the company.

The thesis focuses particularly upon the training methods used by the company and on the journey of a new recruit. It explores the research questions through semi-structured interviews with Geese practitioners as well as conducting structured observations of workshops, facilitation and performance work by the company. The findings allow for: an exploration of the skills and experience a new recruit to Geese starts at the company with, a definition of the elements of the six-month training, an investigation into the skills and attributes needed to be successful at Geese and an analysis of which elements are missing when practitioners are not taken on after the training. This thesis is a contribution to knowledge as it examines the intensive training period for a Geese practitioner. The exploration of this as well as the conclusions about why around a third of trainees do not pass the training is not something which exists currently in literature. In addition, this contributes to the wider research area of actor/ facilitator training.

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Chapter One: Literature Review and introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the reasons behind choosing to write about the actor as a rehabilitator working in the field of applied drama and specifically about the training of a practitioner to work at Geese Theatre Company. Geese is a theatre company which uses Drama and theatre to effect change with people in prison and those at risk of offending. The chapter will look at the personal context to the thesis and the writer's connection to the area of investigation as well as detailing the literature currently available about this area of study. It will introduce the policy and rationale of the criminal justice system, the place which the arts have within it and then will look more specifically at the role of Theatre in Criminal Justice and rehabilitation.

Following this the chapter will narrow in focus to outline the work of Geese Theatre Company in order to begin to explore the context of the overarching research question of how the company train a practitioner in six-months to use Drama to affect change. Finally, the chapter will detail actor training and developing an actor as a facilitator as a background to the later exploration of how Geese train their practitioners.

1.2 Personal context

It is important to understand the difference between Drama and Theatre as terms used in this thesis. Theatre is for example the performances which Geese have rehearsed and then perform in prisons (see examples in 1.4.6 *Geese Performances*). Drama is the work that happens through games and exercises in the workshops that follow performances (see 1.4.7 *Geese Workshops*). My reasons for

exploring the areas of Drama and Theatre in the criminal justice system and in particular the training of the performers who work in this field are threefold: a long and sustained interest which I have had in Geese Theatre Company and their practice, my own training at Drama school as a performer and thirdly the employment which I have had in the areas of mental health, teaching challenging pupils in secondary schools and youth support activities with 18-25 year olds. This raises the issue of whether I am an 'insider' or 'outsider' researcher. In general terms I have been a part of some of the types of groups which I am researching because of my performer training, teaching others in performance and through working with more challenging groups. Braun and Clarke state though that "we can be both insiders and outsiders in multiple ways" (2022, p.18). Though I have worked and trained in this area and I am very familiar with Geese and how they work I began the thesis as an outsider in relation to how the company train practitioners as I had not experienced the training inside the company.

I first came across Geese as a company local to where I live in Birmingham when they were set up in 1987 (Geese US had been created in 1980). I remember attending one of the information sessions which they hold a few times a year in the very early days of the company and being fascinated by the masks which they work with and the ethos of the company. The masks are central to the work of the company and in particular the idea of being able to 'lift the mask' and reveal the true thoughts of the character. Being able to witness this process allows people who are in prison to have more access to their true feelings in situations and therefore be able to find a way of moving forward. This was a fairly informal session held at The Midlands Arts Centre which is where the company was first based (these sessions

still happen today and are a set part of the Geese calendar though the company now has its own premises in Moseley, Birmingham). My interest in the company has continued from then amongst the other things which I have been doing in my career.

1.2.1 My experience and my connection to the work

I brought my experience as a professional actress and knowledge of applied theatre to this study. I had the traditional Drama School training route to the acting profession. I also completed an undergraduate degree in Theatre Studies as a mature student and taught in higher education at University of Wolverhampton for seventeen years as a Senior Lecturer in Drama, Programme leader for Drama, Head of Dance and Drama and in the last four years Deputy Head of the School of Performing Arts. Once I became a university lecturer and in charge of the Drama course, I brought Geese in to deliver workshops with students. I also added Drama in prisons to the applied theatre strand on the degree. I arranged for Andy Watson (M.B.E), the CEO of Geese to deliver a public lecture at the university (2017) which was about the use of theatre in criminal justice settings. Memorable from this lecture was Watson's central theme regarding the importance of play for children and the effect upon them if it is removed. Play has a central role in the work of an actor, applied artist and teacher so resonated with me. Watson often refers to the fact that the work of Geese is about dealing with "where we are at now" with a prisoner rather than questioning whether they *should* be rehabilitated in your role of practitioner. As part of the lecture, he discussed the fact that the prisoner is in prison because of the piece of behaviour which broke the law. That behaviour, he believes "doesn't have to define who you are" (Watson, 2017). Watson explains this idea more in the short film, *Why do Arts in Criminal Justice Matter?* made by the National Criminal Justice

Arts Alliance (NCJAA). He believes that “art enables people to think and look at themselves as complex beings. Not as kind of siloed problems” (2018). Prisoners still have other roles in their lives and possibilities for change he believes. He says that the person who has got an addiction to heroin “is also an uncle and a brother and a fisherman and a painter and what we do in prison is we confine people to the thing that they’re quite ashamed of”. He explains “we hold them in their shame and I think what art does is say actually people are really complex. Which bit do we push forward with? Who do you want to be?” (2018). The who do you want to be question is central to the work that Geese do in exploring the possibilities for change. Watson picks this up again in Bano “Our work is entirely built around the idea of change; the belief that people can live a different life from the one that brought them into prison” (2019, www.thestage.co.uk). Geese centre their work around “the possibility that engaging in a theatre-based process might be the catalyst for people to start thinking about how they are, and how they can be differently in their lives.” (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). Watson explains that many people who Geese work with are on a journey of “exploring their own identity – who they are and who they could be in the world”. He believes that it is about how you can use theatre to explore some of those issues around identity “the roles we play in our lives, the script that we tend to repeat – thinking through the skills they might need to rehearse when they get out of prison”. Watson says that “at its core, theatre is behaviour”. He explains that with the character of Macbeth for instance we know what his behaviours are but “what are the feelings, attitudes and beliefs driving those behaviours? That’s why theatre speaks to this work so well” (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). He continues that “you can create a safe, theatre-based space where people are not having to be the hyper-vigilant, hyper-masculine version of themselves to survive prison”. During the

Geese workshops participants are able to “explore vulnerability, without fear that people are going to take the piss or laugh at them”. He feels that this is “the same as a rehearsal room in theatre. You take that principle and apply it in a prison” (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). Watson illustrates why I have such an interest in this work as it brings together the different worlds of therapy and theatre which I have worked in. You take the idea of what can happen in a rehearsal room with very good actors who also have the skills of facilitation and move it to the prison. You give prisoners a safe space in which to explore how they react in situations and how they might want to do things differently when leaving prison at all times guided through the process by Geese practitioners who are very skilled at facilitating change.

1.2.2 Training at Drama School

Drama school for me was about the development of skills in voice, physicality and in specialisms such as radio and television technique. We did explore mime too and worked on a production of *Animal Farm* with a professional mime director (I played Mollie the horse with the twenty-seven ribbons). We made our own masks with chicken wire and papier mâché and spent hours working on the physicality of animals as performers. We were held back from performing generally to the public in the first year of Drama School with the idea being that we were not ready and gradually performed more and more in the final two years. The route we were taking was seen as being very specialised and the traditional route for those who wanted to act when they graduated. Despite many years of working as a professional actress on and off since then, mainly in theatre and producing voice over work with some sporadic and then more fixed secondary teaching work around it, I had to accept eventually that it was not earning me a reliable living and that I was doing more

teaching than acting across the year so reluctantly moved into full-time teaching. Watching Watson perform short monologues to my students and have conversations with them in-role (who in turn became very engaged in this area of Drama because of it) made me reflect upon what has become one of the main themes of this thesis. Watson is a very good performer: he was trained at Le Coq International Mime School and brings those skills to what he does. It was seeing him mix that performing ability with the psychological understanding required to work with prisoners and create authentic pieces that made me question how it is possible to train someone to work in this area. Since then, I have seen several other company members perform who all have that special quality of excellent performance skills and real authenticity in performance. It has clearly been possible therefore to train these company members to a high standard in the specialised area in which they work but as I embarked on this research it was not clear how.

1.2.3 Completing the Geese course *The Other Side of the Wall*

In 2012, I completed the company's three-day course, *The Other Side of the Wall* (TOSW) led by Watson. This course aims to take the participant through some of the key things which Geese do such as facilitating and processing games, facilitator enabled stimulus scenes, facilitation and processing of client-led frozen pictures and scenes and an exploration of client groups presenting behaviour and vulnerabilities through the metaphor of the mask. The course is primarily for those that work with the kind of client groups that Geese do, allowing participants to go back to their place of work and use some of the skills that they have learnt and employ the games and exercises. My intentions in attending were to further my knowledge of Geese and their work and to be able to use some of the new knowledge in my teaching with

undergraduate students. Attending this course eventually did more than that though as it became central to my decision to explore the training process at Geese through my research.

TOSW is an intensive course which is demanding of the participant. It was largely practical and in my job as a lecturer (having put my acting career aside) provided a very good reminder of how it feels to be challenged intensively to come up with performance work. I was the only person that week on the course attending from a performance perspective. In attendance was also a new recruit to Geese (who had started less than two months before) who was there as part of his six-month training period. There were many times when I viewed the course through his eyes and felt like this was almost an extended part of his audition. He is still with the company so it is a test he clearly passed (Snook is one of the Geese practitioners who agreed to be interviewed for this study).

The course describes the principles of the work at Geese as exploring the participant and “their experience of the world” and being able to identify “patterns of behaviour and exploring strategies for change” (TOSW, 2012, p.2). It took the form of participation in games and exercises at the start of each day (see Appendix 1 for examples). We played them again at the start of the afternoon and sometimes for long periods during the days. The company describe the games as being “designed to energise and focus the participants in a fast and physical way” (TOSW, 2012, p.2). Each game had a purpose and was explained as we tried them out. They were often quite challenging and as participants we bonded as we tried to navigate them rather like a group of people attending a workshop in a prison might. We were of course all

much more open to the work and were not presenting some of the 'blocks' which might come from participants in a prison setting. We played and discussed over twenty games. Each had a low, medium or high focus in terms of what the game was expecting from the participant. The way in which the games were facilitated and discussed demonstrated very good practice from a Drama facilitator perspective as we looked at what each game was for, why we were doing it, how it made us feel, how it could be adapted and how it might be handled differently depending upon the client group. I took this much more methodical approach regarding playing games back into my teaching.

The games progressed to be described by Geese as more focused, thematic exercises (TOSW, 2012, p.2). This was done by Geese expecting participants to start to make links between their experience of the exercises and other experiences in their lives (TOSW, 2012, p.2). We were asked to try things out in the exercises and discuss connections with our real-world experience. Here Geese feel that "physicalizing experiences" is key (TOSW, 2012, p.2). The structure of the game and exercise playing remained throughout the three days as we then gradually explored the key aspects of the work which Geese do in prisons and in the probation system. We settled into a process of taking part as we might in a Geese workshop in the prison or probation service and then also stepping outside of the work to analyse and explain. This consisted of a combination of explaining exercises and games in relation to their purpose and also talking through how the group had got on during a game or exercise. The next steps were creation and processing of facilitator enacted stimulus scenes and then client-led frozen pictures and scenes. It then progressed to mask work which explores "client groups presenting behaviours and vulnerabilities"

(TOSW, 2012, p.3). We were taught the difference between working at ‘one step removed’ which is not based on anything personal to someone in the group or on a ‘personal’ level which as it suggests starts to use the personal experiences of those present. Geese warn that even one step removed can elicit a lot of involvement and opinion from those participating. The personal work might lead to a re-enactment of a recent event with the opportunity to then “rehearse an upcoming conversation with someone important” (TOSW, 2012, p.3). We had conversations about how we might handle participants who find it too conflicting when the personal level is reached and everyone shared their experiences of encountering these kinds of situations.

On Day Two we were taught about the *Four Stages of Involvement* in a workshop (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: The Geese four stages of involvement in a workshop

Stage	Activity
Stage One	Games and Exercises – general and thematic
Stage Two	The Interactive Observer
Stage Three	Frozen Pictures
Stage Four	Scene work/ role play

Source: TOSW course, Geese

The games and exercises phase has been discussed previously. The Interactive Observer phase is “halfway between theatrical performance and audience participation drama” (TOSW, 2012, p.5). In this phase the participant interacts with presented material. In the Frozen Picture stage, we had to create static images of real or imagined situations and characters. Geese feel that this method has “infinite

adaptability” because “characters can speak, we can hear their thoughts, we can swap characters around” (TOSW, 2012, p.6). We did quite a lot of frozen pictures during the three days in small groups working on what we had come up with. The final point of this process is creating scenes and role play. This again can be “at one step removed in hypothetical situations or on a personal level and related to events in the participants lives” (TOSW, 2012, p.6). This is the more challenging aspect for participants in prisons who might think they are not an actor and don’t want to ‘look silly’. Usually though the process has been so supportive and engaging in the lead up to this that the transition to being able to do it is smooth (The facilitation process is discussed further in 4.6.3).

On day three we were introduced to the idea of ‘pacing, leading, reframing’ from Neuro Linguistic Programming. Neuro Linguistic Programming examines how our thoughts influence and affect behaviour. This “involves meeting the participant at his/her view of the world”. This then moves on to “directing an audience to give thoughts and feelings for a particular character”. The conclusion would be “reframing a scene to incorporate the victim’s experience” (TOSW, 2012, p.7). During the course Watson also discussed the three theories at the centre of the work of Geese: Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1976), Cognitive Behavioural Theory (Beck, 1976) and Role Theory (Moreno, 1993) which are discussed later in this chapter (see section 1.5). We explored mask as a significant part of what is special about the company too. We spent an afternoon with Watson introducing us to the selection of Fragment masks (see Appendix 2 for image) which the company use (and which were specially commissioned for them). Each mask has a name (see section 1.4.8 for details regarding each mask). Watson introduced discussion of the use of mask and mask

lifting used by Geese. We then had to interact with a character Watson had explained in advance to us (played by Watson). This was a man who was in prison and having a conversation with us as the 'audience'. As we asked this character questions Watson went quickly between the different masks to give us answers in role with the mood shifting from defensive to joking to aggressive etc. The mask work provides separation and yet challenges all of the issues that need to be tackled with participants in an engaging way that provokes results. Watson discusses participants arguing with the behaviour of the character not realizing that they are watching a representation of some of their own patterns of behaviour.

Next, we explored facilitator-enacted stimulus scenes. These are very short pieces of mime performed by the facilitator which are intended to act as a stimulus for discussion and further exploration around the subject matter of the piece. The facilitator performs a simple short mime which lasts about a minute. Watson performed one of these and we also had to try and perform some ourselves too. Watson's scene was a man in a bar drinking a pint of beer and relaxing. There were no words and no mimed speech. The character walks over to the pool table but there are others playing (students – who this character resents being in his local). Mid-way through he takes a telephone call from his partner which "doesn't seem to go his way"). We see the tension mounting as he is unable to ignore that others are playing when he wants to himself. At the end of the scene, he walks over and slams something down on the table causing a confrontation. The scene is quick and very effective and gives a snapshot of situations in the man's life which lead to aggression. These very short scenes are a key part of what Geese do with the resulting conversations and remodelling of the scene afterwards. The three days

were informative and challenging and allowed me to see that training to work in this area is difficult and complicated in addition to needing real skill as a performer to begin with.

1.2.4 My relevant work experience

Some of the employment which I have done has also led me to this area of study. When I left school in two years of employment before going to Drama School I worked at a community centre in Erdington, West Midlands. Here I worked with 18–25-year-olds who were unemployed and some of whom had already been in prison and were attending as part of a rehabilitation programme. This was difficult work and I was relatively inexperienced but tried to use Drama in some of the sessions I ran there. I then worked as an Occupational Therapy Assistant at a psychiatric hospital (Midland Nerve, Birmingham, now closed) in all my holidays from Drama School where I ran a weekly Drama session (1987-1990). This gave me experience of using Drama with individuals who were being *required* to attend sessions rather than through choice. I also had to create material for workshops whilst considering the very complex conditions that patients were presenting with. I trained as a secondary school Drama teacher during my years as an actress in order to be able to do supply teaching around the intermittent acting jobs. The life of a supply teacher is a very challenging one and I taught in about 25 different secondary schools in the West Midlands over a period of a few years. The environment was often hostile and a lot of skill and/ or confidence to look like I was in control was needed to get through the day. When I accepted that I was not going to be able to continue as a professional actress I became Head of Drama at a very challenging secondary school in Birmingham on a four day a week contract hoping the remaining one day might allow

me to continue some acting work. Only 15% of pupils at this school were leaving with GCSE grades A-C. In my Drama classes every day I had to try and compensate for what had been an absence of play in the childhood of many of these children. This is where I saw first-hand what Watson later talked about – the damaging effect that its absence can have on children. Pupils were asked to improvise simple scenes as part of the Drama class but often struggled to do this responding with comments such as 'but I am not a Policeman/ friend/ teacher so I can't do this'. Pupils telling me that they could not act out a different character from themselves because it was not them was startling and a very difficult problem as a Drama teacher to encounter. I tackled it by employing lots of low focus games rather like Geese does at the start of a workshop in prisons. I often made the decision to work on these for all of the lesson in order to slowly lead the pupils to the kind of work I needed them to do. I was at the school for two years and found it the hardest and yet ultimately some of the most rewarding work I have done to date in education.

In 2014, I watched *Stay*. This was one of Geese' rare public performances of their work at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre. This is a stark piece about domestic violence. It was fascinating to see in the question-and-answer session at the end that this audience was full of people like high court judges but very few apart from myself who seemed to be coming from a performance background. Key for me in all of these threads is that Geese use drama to affect change and this is what I had been trying to do in multiple ways in the jobs I did around my professional acting work and after it stopped so I had some understanding of what they were trying to do and how difficult it was. All of these experiences led to the decision to undertake this research in 2018 alongside my work in higher education.

1.3 The Criminal Justice System – Arts in Criminal Justice - Theatre, Criminal Justice and rehabilitation

This section explores the wider area of criminal justice and then the place which the arts have within it followed by a discussion of Theatre, Criminal Justice and rehabilitation.

1.3.1 The Criminal Justice System

The Criminal Justice System exists to manage criminal offending and exert justice. Harding, Davies, and Mair believe that if this process is managed successfully “criminals are convicted, punished and rehabilitated, which, in turn, ensures that the general public are safeguarded from future harm” (2017, p.62). There was a total of 85,407 prisoners in England and Wales on 2 June 2023. That comprises 82,039 men and 3,368 women. On 31 March 2023 there were 14,591 people on remand (including both untried and convicted unsentenced). There are 122 prisons in England and Wales. 10 of these are women only prisons and 8 are Category A prisons. The category B, C and D are resettlement or open prisons. The structure of the criminal justice system in England and Wales places The Ministry of Justice as the government department responsible at the centre and in control of the operation. The Ministry of Justice states that it “works together and with other government and agencies to bring the principles of justice to life for everyone in society” (www.gov.uk). They continue “we work to ensure that sentences are served and offenders are encouraged to turn their lives around and become law-abiding citizens” (www.gov.uk). Below The Ministry of Justice is Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service. The Probation Service assesses and organises offenders. Those that are deemed high risk enter the prison service. The others seen as low to medium risk

are looked after by the probation service. Children between 10 and 17 years are handled by the youth courts. They may enter a secure unit and are looked after by youth offending teams. In the year 2021/22 it cost an average of £46,696 to keep a prisoner in prison per year (www.gov.uk).

1.3.2 Arts in the Criminal Justice System

The Arts in the Criminal Justice system in the United Kingdom includes projects and programmes around reading, creative writing, sewing, art and art therapy, Fashion, Dance, Music, Drama and Theatre. Companies work in prisons and with those on probation. Some also work with young people at risk of offending. These programmes can be stand-alone performances or sometimes with associated workshops. The programme might last for several weeks or be something that happens in a day. Companies work in prisons and with those on probation. Some also work with young people at risk of offending. Some of these companies might complete a one-off project that takes part in prisons. Motionhouse, a physical theatre company, completed a project at HMP Dovegate (2003-2004) to “develop physical skills and devise two performances for peers” (www.motionhouse.co.uk).

Other companies have a much more substantial body of work connected to prisons. Examples are a Music based company such as the Irene Taylor Trust running creative music in prison projects and Koestler Arts (formerly Koestler Trust) as a UK Prison Arts Charity who “generate artworks from prison, secure hospitals, immigration removal centres, probation services and secure children’s homes” (Arts in Criminal Justice Conference, 2017). They tackle issues such as substance misuse, prison resettlement and employment skills. They also run an annual art competition for those who are confined as patients or prisoners to enter. This

company was started in the 1950s by Arthur Koestler who campaigned for the abolition of capital punishment.

The use of arts in the criminal justice system divides opinion. Some question whether we should be helping those who have committed a criminal offence. The Arts Council document, *The Arts and Culture in Health and Wellbeing and in the Criminal Justice System* challenges making the case that the arts can bring about a reduction in reoffending as “highly problematic” (2018a). They feel that any evidence produced seems “to concur that any short-term intervention is unlikely to have that kind of immediate impact” (2018a). Crossick & Kaszynska disagree feeling that “At the heart of desistance from offending is an ability to think about oneself and others, to see genuine choices and options, and to imagine other life circumstances and other possible futures” (2016). They acknowledge that it is difficult to “isolate the effects of cultural engagement from all other factors involved in reoffending” (2016) but “arts engagement in prisons has been shown to make serious contribution to these processes” (2016). At a celebration of 30 years of Geese Theatre Company, Clark Baim (who established Geese in the UK in 1987) highlighted the fact that “80% of prisoners will be released” (2018). His argument is therefore that we have as a society to consider the people that we are releasing back into the community. If we do not believe that activities around rehabilitation have a place in the criminal justice system what will the impact of that be on society? Watson (in Bano, 2019) states that “pretty much everyone we work with in a prison is going to be getting out,” and “they’re going to be someone’s neighbour, someone’s uncle, someone’s employee”. He describes the aim being that they will be “assets to the community”. He continues that “the perception for a lot of these men and women is that they have become

deficits to their community, which is why they've been removed". However, he emphasizes that they are all coming out and he asks the question "how do we want them to be when they come out?" (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). The Ministry of Justice as stated earlier build their work around making sure that sentences are served but that "offenders are encouraged to turn their lives around" (www.gov.uk). Caulfield too believes that "punishment in and of itself is ineffective" (2018). She believes that used alone it, "will only result in increasing people's risk of reoffending in the future" (2018). She continues that prisons contain "the whole spectrum of life". She acknowledges that there are those in prison who have committed awful offences, but that there are others in prison who "are very vulnerable . . . some of whom have had bad things happen to them and some people who are very unwell" (2018).

The National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA) managed by Clinks (who are an organisation who "support, promote and represent" the voluntary sector working with offenders www.clinks.org) has 900 network members with several arts companies delivering arts projects across all areas of the criminal justice system. It's vision "is to ensure everyone in the criminal justice system can engage in arts . . . a springboard to positive change". It gives a "collective voice at policy level" (www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk). This means that they are able to commission reports and respond to government legislation as one voice for many of the arts organisations that are sometimes quite small. In response to the Arts Council document, *The Next 10 Years*, The NCJAA describe those in the criminal justice system as some of the most disadvantaged people in our society (2019). They point to The Prison Reform Trust's 2018 *Bromley Briefing* which in examining the current

prison population “highlights the over-representation of people from low socio-economic groups, such as care leavers and those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds” (2019). In a short film made by NCJAA (2018) Sally Taylor, Chief Executive of the Koestler Trust picks up the idea of rehabilitation and second chances asserting that they very much believe that people should get second chances and not be judged by the worse thing which they have done. Taylor says that it’s important that the criminal justice system can use the arts to change the way that people think about people who have committed offences. Taylor speaks for the different companies in the arts working with prisoners. They all believe that using the arts in whatever form is key to rehabilitating prisoners but also in improving the view that others have of them.

Using the arts in prisons as a form of rehabilitation is not new. McAvinchey writes that one of the earliest recorded examples of theatre with prisoners is the “1789 staging of George Farquhar’s Restoration Comedy *The Recruiting Officer* by convicts transported to found the British colony of New South Wales” (2011, p.55). She continues that “this event was the catalyst for Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *Our Country’s Good* (Royal Court, London, 1988)”. The play “questions the value of punishment and the redemptive possibilities of theatre” (McAvinchey, 2011, p.55). Caulfield and Simpson explain that “the inclusion of artistic and literary content in official prison regimes appear alongside the emergence of the modern penal system” (2018, pp.399-400). They detail a mention in 1837 of an instruction to read from a book as part of the daily routine in a House of Young Prisoners in Paris. Move to the Troubles in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s and McDonnell describes the fact that republican political prisoners in HMP Maze in Northern Ireland, used theatre

for “peer education and rigorous exploration of questions of national identity, republicanism and representation” (2008, p.56). Bergman and Hewish (founder members of Geese Theatre Company) state that people make change in complex ways (Liebmann, 1996, p.116). They believe that people who have committed offences “need to experience change, see change, have the sting and terror of change confirmed or repudiated” (Liebmann, 1996, p.116). Hewish asserts that the arts in criminal justice “challenge personal orthodoxy and facilitate the development of new narratives, and they allow participants to experiment and take risks” (Hewish, 2015, p. 214). He continues that without arts and artists working in prison “trying to mitigate against the pull of prison culture . . . we risk losing the opportunity to help people find their humanity” (Hewish, 2015, p. 216).

Evaluating the projects that are taking place in prisons is vital. “Evaluation is in a sense the tool we can use to advocate a standard of effectiveness in criminal justice against the increasingly popular but ineffective and destructive performance of retribution” (Thompson, 1998, p.18). Bilby, Caulfield and Ridley state that “the value of engaging prisoners in purposeful activity has long been recognized” (2013, p.12). They acknowledge though that the key to sustaining this work is that there is clear evaluation of it. They detail that those “who know from experience that the arts are uniquely powerful as a means of transforming lives, often need objective evidence to make the case” (2013, p.2). The Arts Council describe completing an evaluation of an arts project as allowing the organisation to prove the value of what they are doing, the ability to record the contribution to the field they are working in and to inform others working in the same field and ultimately support future applications using the evidence collected (www.artscouncil.org.uk). This is an important element for

companies to get right and according to The Arts Council might involve creative judgements and maybe an assessment of impact on an 'audience'. There is certainly a significant place for the arts in offering a rehabilitative tool in the criminal justice system.

1.3.3 Theatre, criminal justice and rehabilitation

Much has been written about the challenges and potential success of utilising the power of Drama and Theatre to help participants in all kinds of situations. As an example, McAvinchey describes the creation of a project in a pupil referral unit (Prentki and Preston, 2009). She worked as a theatre practitioner with Yun Jung Ko a visual artist with year 10 pupils for six months once a week to try and create a performance piece. Working with the pupils was challenging. McAvinchey describes the group being unable to take themselves seriously "they were trying to push us to the moment when we would throw up our hands and say I give up, I give up on you" (Prentki and Preston, 2009 p.280). McAvinchey and Yun did not give up but instead kept changing strategies and "deflecting situations between us" (2009, p.280).

Eventually it was decided that the final piece would be an installation instead of a performance, launched on parent's evening and representing the supposed 'headspace of the pupils'. The audience were able to see represented visually what was going on inside the heads of the group and thereby their thoughts and this resulted in a very successful project.

Cox discusses the period 1989-1991 when several Shakespeare plays were performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Broadmoor Hospital. In one of the chapters the actor Mark Rylance is interviewed by Rob Ferris about playing Hamlet.

Rylance says he thought to himself “these people really have experienced some of the things that we as actors pretend to do in plays” (Cox, 1992, p.27). He describes a line from Hamlet and looking at one of the audience members as he said it “a man who I didn’t know, but who had looked at me with such clarity” (Cox, 1992, p.30). Rylance describes it being “awful” when he returned to the audiences at Stratford. He felt that there was something very different about the audience at Broadmoor compared to the people coming out for a bit of theatre and a drink/ meal. He details “feeling such sympathy and empathy for the fates they have had to deal with” in relation to the patients at Broadmoor and that “they had to be there in that hospital until they faced themselves” (Cox, 1992, p.38).

Thompson (1998) in *Prison Theatre* highlights some of the theatre and drama practices from performances taken into prisons (Shakespeare and Broadmoor, Cox) to Dramatherapy (Holding On: Dramatherapy with Offenders, Stamp). He asks “does theatre bring health to a prison or does it provide a basic human need?”(1998, p.10). He goes on “Is theatre in prisons about bringing ‘soul’ and humanising the system, or is it to transform it?” (1998,p.10). His questions provoke the chapters which follow from people working in the field. Balfour describes *Theatre in Prison* as following on from Thompson’s *Prison Theatre* with international essays about theatre and drama work in prison-related contexts (2004, p.1). Balfour describes it as “critical that the contemporary prison theatre field needs to be approached with both an understanding of criminological discourse, and an awareness of the paradox of creative work within a system orientated as much to punishment as rehabilitation” (2004, p.3). Lucas in *Prison Theatre and the global crisis of incarceration* (2021) concentrates on theatre in prisons which consists of rehearsed and performed plays.

She points to Geese as the other type of drama work which happens in prisons and the fact that they use Drama Therapy techniques. Lucas states that “artistic practice of any kind can certainly have many emotional and psychological benefits for us all, but in this respect people in prison are not exceptional” (2021, pp 9-10). In fact, she says that prisons “cause many subsequent and repeated forms of trauma (i.e. family separation, witnessing and experiencing violence, being trapped and powerless)” so she feels that “it does not make sense to claim the prison as a site for therapeutic work” (2021, p.10). She believes though that theatre in prisons helps “incarcerated actors, stage managers, technicians, and audiences experience the theatre as a way to temporarily shift the power dynamics of the prison and to engage in a celebration of their lives (2021, p.15).

Shailor concentrates on theatrical performance in prisons in *Performing New Lives* (2011). He believes that “theatre creates a dual consciousness: one is both oneself, and not oneself; a character, and not that character” (2011, p.22). He continues that this allows for reflection and evaluation “How am I like/ not like this character? How do my own interpretations, motivations, and choices compare to those of this character?” (2011, p.22). He believes that while this can be the function of theatre in any setting it has a special role in a prison “a prison theatre programme can be a place of sanctuary, a crucible for information, and a vehicle for (re)integration” (2011,p.22).

Two of the most significant theatre companies working in the area of theatre in the criminal justice system are Geese Theatre Company and Clean Break Theatre Company. Thompson discusses the meeting of two women prisoners in HMP

Askham Grange in 1979, leading to the setting up of Clean Break Theatre Company. He sees it as “a key to the development of this field in the UK” (Thompson, 1998, p.12). The founders were Jenny Hicks and Jacqueline Holborough. They were serving sentences in a high security wing of Durham prison. Geese theatre Company was next, establishing Geese US in 1980 and the UK company in 1987. The company has now achieved over 35 years in existence. Thompson describes their work as “The innovative fusion of rehabilitation theory and theatre methods”. He thinks it “demonstrates that they are key practitioners of one of the major approaches to prison theatre” (1998, p.13).

Clean Break is the only female theatre company working in this area and describes itself as using theatre “to keep the subject of women in prison on the cultural radar, helping to reveal the damage caused by the criminal justice system” (www.cleanbreak.org.uk). The company’s work has evolved over their time in existence and went through a restructure in 2018 moving away from different strands of work to one artistic programme (Stuart Fisher & Thompson, 2020, p.135). McAviney details that the company’s commitment to theatre as a means to “navigate, critique and understand the world is reiterated through the acquisition of skills; the emphasis on personal development; the valuing of collaboration that invites people to contribute in the way they are able to at a particular moment” (Thompson & Fisher, 2020, p.134). She says that Clean Break’s approach to women and criminal justice “is in effect, an approach to supporting women made vulnerable through societal structural disadvantage” (Stuart Fisher & Thompson, 2020, p.136).

It is interesting to examine Geese and Clean Break (in relation to how they work and their ethos) alongside each other for a moment as significant longstanding companies in the field. They are though completely different kinds of companies. Clean Break was set up by ex-prisoners and largely employed current and ex-prisoners in the work until 1990. After that they started to commission playwrights such as Winsome Pinnock, Sarah Daniels and Rebecca Pritchard. As well as performances in prisons they run theatre based education courses. The company is women only. They aim to “shine a light on injustice faced by women in the criminal justice system” (www.cleanbreak.org.uk). The company “uses theatre to keep the subject of women in prison on the cultural radar”. Their use of theatre performances is to advocate for change in how women experience the prison system and they see their purpose as questioning the need for women to be in prison at all in relation to certain sentences.

Geese perform plays but they are not usually scripted by others. They are created based on a particular thing that needs to be explored such as domestic abuse, often with a workshop connected to it. They perform them in a workshop setting rather than as a theatre piece. The performance skill however means that it does act as a strong piece of theatre. Geese focus on how they can enable an individual to seek positive change and rehabilitation. They start their work from where the participant is at rather than questioning what has gone before and whether they should be serving a sentence in prison. Their work is more from a therapeutic standpoint, using drama to help in that process. They do of course also advocate for the power of the arts in the criminal justice system and for the benefit which the arts can have in general terms.

Other significant companies are Safeground who deliver arts based therapeutic group work which “challenges people and communities to do relationships differently” (www.safeground.org.uk) founded in 1993 by Antonia Rubinstein and Polly Freeman. Rideout too delivers creative arts for rehabilitation. They describe its programmes as “usually drama or film-based activities . . . that analyse and challenge offending behaviour” (www.rideout.org.uk). The company was established in 1999 by Saul Hewish and Chris Johnston. Saul was a founder member of Geese (1987-1994). There is also Synergy, established in 2000 who use theatre and related activities with prisoners and young people at risk of offending and Odd Arts that was founded in 2004 and use theatre “to challenge inequalities” (www.oddarts.co.uk).

The “Acting for a Change – Theatre with Offenders’ conference in 1992 brought together practitioners who had in many cases been doing ground-breaking work in near total isolation” (Thompson, 1998, P12). The Theatre in Prison and Probation Service (TIPP) was formed in 1991 to give a focus, “for theatre in prisons in the UK” and to create a “higher profile” (Thompson, 1998, p.12). Its vision is to “see the arts playing a part at all levels of the criminal justice system” (www.tipp.org.uk). These collective groups have continued. Hewish feels that Drama “has the ability to make both easily accessible and deeply resonant pictures out of often difficult emotional and intellectual information and constructs”. He goes on that it “can provide the vital key to opening up channels of communication that may otherwise remain closed” (Hewish, 2015, pp.218-219). Participants are given the opportunity to view some of their behaviours and actions and look at them potentially in a different way.

The area of Drama and Theatre in the criminal justice system whilst a challenging one is thriving for a core of companies and well supported by organisations such as The Criminal Justice Arts Alliance. This thesis will explore the work of Geese Theatre, as one of those companies who has managed to sustain their practice against the odds.

1.4 Geese Theatre Company

Geese Theatre Company works with participants who have committed offences or who are at risk of offending. They work with prisons, probation services, young offender institutions, youth offending teams and secure hospitals and mental health institutions (www.geese.co.uk). Geese has also widened its work to include people who come into contact with prisoners and those at risk of offending such as probation officers, court judges and prison staff. The artistic director and CEO of Geese, Andy Watson, who has been with the company since 1997 states that the company works from the principle that theatre and drama are “highly effective vehicles for exploring behaviour and contemplating the possibility of change” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p47). At the company there is also Lou Heywood as Director of Programmes, Emma Smallman as the Practitioner Manager and four further practitioner/ senior practitioners. In addition, there is a Participation and Inclusion Manager, Business Development and Marketing Officer, Administrator, Director of Finance and Operations and a Director of Funding and Partnerships.

1.4.1 The history of the company

2023 marked 36 years since Geese was founded in the UK in 1987. Saul Hewish,

who was a founder member of Geese UK describes there being only a few organisations working in this area in 1987. He compares the large number of companies now, to work taking place in prisons in other countries concluding that the “variety and extent of work in the UK has been unrivalled” (Hewish, 2015, p.212). He feels that it was certainly easier to do this kind of work thirty years ago which emphasises the success that Geese has achieved. This is because there were fewer companies, more flexibility in what prisons could commission and relationships could be built up over a period of time. He explores the reasons why Geese succeeded where others did not and feels that they worked on “proving people wrong” (Hewish, 2015, p.212). He continues that, “we also learnt the language of incarceration” (Hewish, 2015, p.213). This idea is referred to at various points by Geese practitioners. They learn how to be very authentic performers depicting the reality of the world which participants are dealing with. John Bergman (founder of Geese US and co-founder of Geese UK) describes the eventual realisation that “we have created a specialised theatre that challenges inmates to rearrange their core beliefs and perceptions” (Liebmann, 1996, p.92). He feels that this happened “by asking questions” (Liebmann, 1996, p.92). He describes the first production by the company as a “didactic historical/ political treatise entitled Gimme a Dollar”(1996, p.94). The piece Liebmann says was about some of America’s “politically controversial figures . . . who were unfairly executed for crimes they did not commit” (1996, p.93). He says on reflection now that the company were “naïve” and made “the classic mistake of seeing this special audience through our political ‘leftness’ rather than through their specialness” (Liebmann, 1996, p.94). He explains this as being that they naively thought that the “right political information liberated inmates who had been enchanted through ignorance” (1996, p. 94). He describes the early period of

questioning as “a crucial stage for any company” (Liebmann, 1996, p.95). He believes “It made us focus on the audience, on how to reach them. It made the company humble” (Liebmann, 1996, p.95). The company has a long history and the work it does today comes from a place of real experience in this area of applied drama.

1.4.2 How Geese is funded

Geese Theatre Company is a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) with Arts Council England (ACE). ACE have 985 arts organisations with NPO status for the 2023-2026 cycle. The Arts Council sees National Portfolio Organisations as being “leaders in their areas”. They have a “collective responsibility to protect and develop our national arts and cultural ecology” (www.artscouncil.org.uk). These companies receive dedicated funding for a four-year period and have differing targets to meet depending on how much funding they receive. They have to reapply every four years so have no long-term guarantee of money. Mags Patten (Executive director of Public Policy and Communication at the Arts Council) describes Geese as having a “very sound business plan” and as being “social entrepreneurs” (*Transforming Power of Arts*, 2018). In *30 years of Geese*, Watson discusses the issue of funding and that people ask him frequently how the company has ‘survived’. He feels that this is particularly difficult when, “subject to changing ideas from government, governors, commissioners and public opinion and our core audiences are seldom in the position to become legacy donors or to pay for a front row ticket” (www.geese.co.uk). Geese gets 10% of its income from The Arts Council, 20% from grant making trusts, the remaining 70% of the income is earned “we are fortunate to have a reputation where prisons, secure hospitals and community organisations will pay towards the projects

we deliver with them". (www.geese.co.uk).

1.4.3 Why Geese do what they do

Watson describes the recurring questions for participants are “what happens to me when I get out? Will I re-offend and risk returning to prison? How do I deal with the impulses that got me here in the first place” (Jackson, 2007, p.213). Watson says that the company “tries to avoid moralising” (2007, p.214). He states that Geese don’t teach participants not to reoffend “Any changes that participants make are their own – our work provides the catalyst or framework but any changes are instigated and owned by the participants” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p47). Their goals are “to reduce recidivism, to reduce criminality; and to reduce the number of victims” (Jackson, 2007, p.214). Watson describes the work of Geese simply as “encouraging offenders to consider the roles they play, have played or could play in the future” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p47). The company describe its work as placing the participant “as close as possible to the real event and, as a result, he/she has access to all the attitudes, values and beliefs associated with the experience” (TOSW, Geese, 2012, p2). The group worker then has to challenge those feelings and “in challenging them, reflecting back distortions that might keep the participant’s behaviour in place” (TOSW, Geese, 2012, p2). Bergman and Hewish in Liebmann state that “we believe that offenders need to experience the extraordinary ‘presentness’ of theatre and dramatherapy in order to initiate new behaviour. They need pictures that reflect something inside their minds before their defences deny the pictures’ reality” (Liebmann, 1996, pp.97-98). Watson on discussing the work that the company does in prisons describes “the ‘magic’ that happens when we notice a participant make a deep connection”. He explains that “the magic is not by accident but by design” (Geese Theatre Company, 2018).

Geese concentrate on giving the individual ownership over the changes which they can make. They present through their work the actions which will help to make the change. However, this is not a solitary process for the prisoner. They are part of a collective, collaborative act of drama with an 'audience' of sorts. The activities are worked on together as a group. An example of this would be a Geese exercise where everyone in the workshop is invited to make suggestions for a role which the Geese practitioner is creating and then going to use in-role in the workshop. The participant though being invited to make changes is doing that amongst a group of people and is getting support throughout that process. They are not solely responsible for their own rehabilitation. Bergman and Hewish explain that "People make change in complex ways. They need to experience change, see change, have the sting and terror of change confirmed or repudiated" (Liebmann, 1996, p.116). They continue "The cortex of theatre therapy lies in challenging the old voices and creating new life. At the heart of the voyage the violent man remakes himself and starts his journey again" (Liebmann, 1996, p.117). It is the 'second chances' referred to earlier and the ability not to be 'held in their shame' that enables prisoners to develop and possibly move past their offence.

1.4.4 Existing literature about Geese

In terms of key literature on the company *The Geese Theatre Handbook* (2002) discusses the working practices of Geese and the theories behind the work and is important because it is edited by Baim, Brookes and Mountford who were all working at Geese at the time of publication. The bulk of the book details games and exercises used by the company. This is the only *book* on the work of the company but there are chapters in books and journal articles about Geese. Particularly

relevant are the ones written by founder members of the company or by current company members. The most recent is the chapter Geese Theatre Company – 30 years on by Heywood and Watson (Balfour and Bartleet, 2019, pp. 33-48). Heywood touches briefly on the demands of the practitioner training and the need for its rigour in this chapter in answering a question from Balfour about how the company has maintained consistency in terms of “values, aesthetics and philosophical approach” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2019, p.39). Watson has also written the chapter *Lift Your Mask* (2009, pp.47-54). This gives insight into the performance work of the company and the use of masks. Mountford (Company member, Geese, 1989-2005) and Farrall have written *The House of Four Rooms – Theatre, Violence and the Cycle of Change* (1998, pp.109-126). As the title suggests this is an exploration of the work which Geese do with violent offenders and particularly a “theatrical structure within the company’s two-week violent offender programmes” (1998, p.109). Baim has written a chapter about psychodrama with violent and sexually abusive men (2004, pp. 139-160), Baim with Bergman (who established Geese USA) have written a chapter about the creation of *Violent Illusion* (Liebmann, 1996, pp.92-117) where they believe they “evolved a process to link inmate thinking and behaviour to relevant theatre” (Liebmann, 1996, p.93). Hewish (founder member of Geese and co-founder of Rideout) has written an introduction about the company and section on Dramatic Improvisation in *Shakespeare Comes to Broadmoor* (1992, pp.217-219). He has also written the broader view of this area in *Counterblast: A Stretch in Time: Some Personal Reflections on 25 Years of Delivering Arts Projects in Prisons* (2015). Geese is then the focus of chapters and publications because it has been established for a long time and is well regarded for the work which it does. Inevitably that means now that staff at the company are asked to contribute to articles and

books about the use of Drama in prisons. There are also studies of projects which the company has done which are useful in relation to their ability to obtain further funding from organisations like The Arts Council. The original use of masks in their work also provokes interest and analysis by writers and researchers.

Other literature on the company includes a section about Geese by Jackson (2007), Balfour (2003) and Moore (1997). There are a relatively small number of evaluations of the work of Geese available. Some of these are found in journal articles and or at the Arts in Criminal Justice Evidence Library (www.artsevidence.org.uk): Day looks at *The Experience of Journey Women from the perspective of the participants* (2013). Bottoms explores actor and audience in *Journey Women* (2010). There is an evaluation of the *Inside Talk* programme (Beech et al, 2009), *Reconnect Programme* (Beech et al, 2008), *Psychodrama with Sex Offenders* (Baim, Allam, Eames, Dunford, Hunt, 1997) and *A combined Drama-based and CBT approach to working with self-reported anger aggression* (Blacker and Watson, 2008). More recently there is "I'd Probably be Dead Now", *Evaluating the Impact of Theatre Practitioners Working on a Recovery-Based Community Drama Project* (Kewley & Van Hout, 2020). This evaluation examines the Staging Recovery Programme which Geese run for those recovering from substance abuse.

This literature gives us a good deal of information. We learn about the factors which influence the work at Geese, the history of the company, the exercises and games which form a substantial part of what Geese do (Baim, Brookes & Mountford, 2002), the specifics of the mask work (Prentki & Preston, 2009). There are personal recollection pieces such as Watson reflecting on working for twenty years at Geese

and then reflecting upon thirty years since the company has been established (www.geese.co.uk). There are detailed evaluations of specific projects and others talking about witnessing the work at the company such as a performance of *Stay* (Jackson, 2007). We therefore learn about the work, the reasons behind it and the effect which it has upon participants. The limitations in the literature are that while the Geese practitioner is discussed in relation to performances or facilitation work there is no information about how this person is trained.

There are a number of PhD theses which examine theatre in prisons and or more specifically work at Geese Theatre Company. Caoimhe McAvinchey investigated *Possible Fictions: The Testimony of Applied Performance with Women in Prisons in England and Brazil* (2006) which looks at the area of applied performance in relation to Women in Prison. She went on to write the book *Theatre & Prison* in 2011 (as part of the Theatre & series) and later *Applied Theatre: Women and the Criminal Justice System* (2020). Emilia Di Girolamo wrote the thesis *A critical examination of the use of drama with offenders in prison and on probation* (2000) where the work of Geese amongst other companies is explored. She describes becoming interested in this area after attending a workshop by Saul Hewish. The thesis explores the idea that Drama is a valuable tool for rehabilitation. Baim himself completed a PhD in 2018 entitled *Theatre, Therapy and Personal Narrative: Developing a framework for safe, ethical, flexible and intentional practice in the theatre of personal stories*. He has developed that work into a book *Staging the Personal* (2020). Key in this new book is Baim's exploration of creating theatre from personal stories. He seeks to identify a very structured way of working in this area. His solution is the invention of The Drama Spiral which is a diagram of the way in which to work. He describes it as a

“decision-making tool intended to help theatre and arts practitioners to work safely and ethically along the continuum from the fictional to the highly personal” (Baim, 2020, p.120). In describing the writing of this book Baim reflects on *The Geese Handbook* (2002) which he co-wrote with Mountford and Brookes. He describes having to examine what had been up until then ‘largely intuitive processes’ at Geese (Baim, 2020, p.116). He continues that “we began an arduous, multi-layered, five-year process of breaking down our approach to theatre games, drama workshops, structuring sessions and creating and performing original issue-based productions into a series of discrete steps” (Baim, 2020, pp.116-117). His reflection back to this process and work at Geese allowed him to create this recent new way of working.

There is literature then about the company and its history, the theories discussed by the current key practitioners at Geese and those that were founder members of the company about its work in different settings and evaluations of that work but not a great deal about the performers who work at Geese and how they are trained to work in the company which is what this thesis will aim to investigate.

1.4.5 The Geese model of working

Every project is different but Geese use some key set elements to their work. They create performance pieces which they deliver and typically follow these with a workshop. Bergman in Liebmann explains that when first setting Geese up they decided on key principles for the work: “Create and mirror the inmate’s special world accurately” (1995, p.95). This is the inner thoughts and feelings of the prisoner and how they are viewing what is happening to them at any given time. They then wanted to “Create metaphors of special meaning to this audience that they can use

to make a difference in their lives”(1995, p.95). In the workshops “participants can (at one remove) investigate and reflect on their own behaviour and belief systems” (2007, p.218). This enables Geese “to negotiate those apparently contradictory requirements of prison institution and of live theatre” (Jackson, 2007, p.218). Kewley & Van Hout (2020) in their evaluation of the Staging Recovery programme at Geese conclude that “The key to this level of work is advocacy in which the ‘performance’ can be used to communicate injustice or help prevent the recurrence of suffering” (p.15). She describes one of the participants (Deborah) stating that one of the characters she played in the workshop “resonated [with] her own unresolved issues” (2020, p.15). Deborah describes wanting to end her life before participating in the workshop. However, she says supported by Geese practitioners to play a fictional character of a child victim enabled her to advocate on behalf of victims of abuse “the one that I had [the mask], that one looked like a young girl sitting in a corner, scared and the look on the face, that’s why I can relate to it ... I used to look like that every day” (2020, p.15). This is where the performances, use of mask and skill of the Geese practitioner results in a powerful moment for the participant.

1.4.6 Geese Performances

Geese create pieces of theatre based on detailed research about key issues that prisoners may be facing (see Table 2 below). They use masks in those performances so that there is the combination of the very stylised mask work and the domestic scene that is playing out.

Table 2: Selected examples of Geese plays

Title	Date devised	Content	Target audience
<i>The Plague Game</i>	c1985	Explores the role of prison visits in maintaining the relationship between prisoners and families.	Prison – general audiences.
<i>Stay</i>	1996	Collapse of a relationship based around a man’s controlling behaviour.	Perpetrators of domestic violence/ professional audiences to learn more.
<i>Gutted</i>	c1998	This play explores masculinity. “It provides a metaphor for the ways men learn to bottle up or lock away vulnerable feelings”.	Prison – male audience.
<i>Previous</i>	2006	Three men in a prison cell tell each other stories – the impact that has on them and their decisions to use their time inside wisely.	Prison - general audiences.
<i>Journey Woman</i>	2006	Full face mask piece. Ellie is older and has broken the cycle of offending/ prison and is reflecting on her life.	Prison - general audience.

Source: *Thirty Years of Geese, 2018*

Performances of short plays are key to the work which Geese does. They are all very different and created very specifically for different client groups. Something like *Stay* (for inmates convicted of violence against a partner) when attendance “is part of a court order” (2009, p.48) means that the audiences are therefore “often very resistant” (2009, p.48). Jackson comments on a performance of *Stay* which he saw at a probation centre in the Midlands “the stunned silence with which a group of adult male probationers watched the steady downhill progress of a marriage into violence and abuse was, for me, a testament to the galvanising power of theatre” (Jackson, 2007, p.216). He feels that it made “concrete the usually unspoken and, till too late, the invisible processes that lead to violence in a relationship and to a trap from which

none of the parties can readily escape” (Jackson, 2007, p.216).

Watson, in discussing *Stay* feels that it “offers a further example of how a powerful dramatic experience can engender what Festinger has termed cognitive dissonance” (Jackson, 2007, p.217). He explains this as “the sudden realisation that the beliefs you have (or the beliefs you share with the play’s protagonist) are completely at odds with the world as seen from another’s perspective” in this case of the wife and son (Jackson, 2007, p.217). This realisation gives material for the workshops that follow. Jackson concludes that “In ways such as this, theatre as an aesthetic experience is capable of reaching people who probably have little if any prior experience of live theatre, and can be used as an aid to interrogating personal experience” (Jackson, 2007, p.217) He believes that “it gives space to those qualities that lie at the root of all effective, live theatre: playfulness, surprise, danger, unpredictability, spontaneity, emotional engagement, performative skill, *eventness*” (Jackson, 2007, p.217). The qualities are there and, in this work, they enable the participants to experience something new and challenging which might enable them to realise how they can move forward differently. In relation to the performances Geese do Watson says “we believe that the performance itself has the power to motivate, to shift people’s thinking, to create affect and to act as a catalyst for the change process” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p48).

Watson cites one of their plays, *Gutted* as an “example of how we create theatre within clearly defined parameters” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p48). Jackson describes the “sheer theatrical power that emanates from a performance such as *Gutted*” (Jackson, 2007, p.213). Watson outlines that as a company they wanted to “provide

an easily accessible narrative which the audience could recognise; show a man's struggle with the choices he has made and the impact of those choices on his friends and family" (2009, p48). Watson states that the work is "designed to accurately mirror the audience's world" (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p.49). *Gutted* is a play for fathers who have had a series of short prison sentences "The audience immediately recognise Craig; they are familiar with the situations he finds himself in, the debates he has with himself, the emotions he feels, and the strategies he employs" (2009, p49). He believes if participants are "recognising characters who, although not them, bear a striking resemblance to them, in situations which they recognise, they are more likely to 'see the point' and be willing to engage with what is presented" (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p.49). Watson goes on to describe Geese's play *The Plague Game* which is about a prisoner struggling to communicate with their family on a prison visit. It is a scene which the audience will identify with "they have been there" (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p.49). He continues "In this moment of recognition they become 'hooked' into the performance – they want to know how the fictional inmate is going to deal with the situation" (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p.49). He explains further that "In this articulation of exactly what is going on for the character at that moment we are inviting the audience to consider what goes on for them in similar moments" (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p.50). They feel that "by externalising the character's internal process we are inviting the audience to consider their own internal processes, their own decision making" (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p.50). Therefore, while the work remains removed and is not directly personal it allows participants to witness and explore their own decision making. The company then have built up a series of plays which can be used on a variety of topics relevant to the audiences which they work with. These are plays that stay in the Geese

repertoire and which new staff gradually learn and are worked into.

1.4.7 Geese Workshops

In a Geese workshop participants go through a series of drama exercises “leading to the exploration of offending and other related material” (TOSW, 2012, p.2). The company believe that “Drama places the participant as close as possible to the real event and, as a result, he/she has access to all the attitudes, values and beliefs associated with the experience” (TOSW, 2012, p.2). They believe that the groupworker then has to work with the participant “in accessing those thoughts and feelings, and, in challenging them, reflecting back distortions that might keep the participant’s behaviour in place” (TOSW, 2012, p.2). The company describe having a four-stage model for the workshops which works progressively through: games and exercises, The Interactive Observer, Frozen Pictures and finally role play. Discussing the workshop following a performance of *Stay*, Watson states that “The strategy of the performance and the workshop that followed was based on the principle that the best person to challenge the distortion (that is, the abusive male’s belief that he has every justification for doing what he does) is the person that holds such distorted beliefs” (Jackson, 2007, p.217). In discussing a workshop that might follow a performance of *Gutted* Watson explains that “if an audience member has recognised an aspect of himself in the performance and also experienced a moment of dissonance or ambivalence in that recognition, we can move forward in the groupwork process exploring what might need to happen if that participant wants to make changes” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p49). Those two elements will allow progress to be made by the participants.

1.4.8 Use of Mask and metaphors

Significant in the company's work is the use of mask. Geese started off with half-masks "Drawing on the concept and usage developed by the Russian director Meyerhold in the 1920s" (Thompson, 1998, p112). These were, "intended to represent the front that an offender might use to keep harsh reality at bay". It had the added benefit that when "characters on stage wish, or are requested by the audience, to say what they really think and feel in a given situation, they lift their masks" (Thompson, 1998, p112). Geese also use full masks in performances. Bottoms, in his evaluation of Geese Theatre's *Journey Woman* discusses the use of mask and the fact that it limits vocal performance "Geese make no attempt to compensate for this separation by employing the kind of expansive physicality and/or knockabout visual humour that has characterised the full-mask performances of companies such as Trestle Theatre" (2010, p480). He goes on to explain that "the actors operate simply as automata or hieroglyphs, using functional gestures to sketch out the parameters of a narrative whose emotional implications the audience must fill in for themselves" (Bottoms, 2010, p.480). It is this 'filling in' of the detail by the participants that connects them to the work which they are seeing. Bottoms quotes Watson who feels that there is no other company using mask "in the way we use it" (2010, p.480). Watson was trained in mask and mime with Jacques Lecoq in Paris in the mid-1990s and Bottoms knows that "Watson is well versed in the history and traditions of such work" (2010, p.480). He points out that "most full-mask performances aim for an other-worldly quality, with the frozen visages helping to evoke a spirit of fantasy and fable". It's quite odd instead he concludes, "to use them for this very naturalistic storyline, with very recognisable characters existing in our world" (2010, pp.480-81). There is a juxtaposition here between the surreal masks

and authentic dialogue but it is a combination which works. Bergman and Hewish state that “we designed masks to be cognitive devices to help offenders catch sight of their behaviour” (Liebmann, 1996, p.100). This links to Watson’s thoughts earlier that by ‘catching sight’ or the ‘recognition’ as he calls it the participant can begin to think about how to change.

Geese also use a collection of masks made for the company named Fragment Masks (see Table 3 below) which depict a series of characters, personalities and roles that might be found amongst the participants. Geese explain that each mask “represents a different behaviour or coping strategy” (*Thirty Years of Geese*, 2018) which a participant might use in different situations. When the practitioner has the mask on each of the characters has a personality and set of behaviours to match their name and is a quick way of participants associating ways in which they behave themselves with what they are seeing. Geese named them as Fragment because “each symbolizes a prominent strategy – or fragment of behaviour – used in threatening or stressful situations, or just to ‘con’ others” (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002, p.184). The company explains further that they represent “key self-protective strategies such as blaming others, denying, using charm, acting out aggressively or playing the victim role” and they say we should think of the masks as “coping masks, aiding self-protection” (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002, p.184). The idea here being Geese suggest that once participants “understand the situations that provoke their ‘fragment mask’ strategy, they can also decide whether or not they want to use a different strategy” (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002, p.184).

Table 3: Geese Fragment Masks

Fragment Mask Name	Things which the character might say in this mask
The Fist	"Don't mess with me"
The Brick Wall	"I didn't do anything. I don't remember"
Mr Cool	Everything is sweet as a nut. I've got no problems – have you?"
Good Guy	"All I am doing is defending my family. I never hurt anyone who doesn't deserve it"
The Mouth	"I think you'd improve the course if you used more Freud and you could expand our minds and take in a new dimension"
Poor Me	"You don't understand what it's like. I didn't have a choice, the system's against me"
The Joker	"Have you heard the one about . . . ?"
Rescuer	"I don't blame you mate. I'd have done the same. He deserved a good kicking"

Source: The Geese Theatre Handbook, 2002, pp.184-5

The masks are used in a session with participants where they can ask questions of the character in the Drama. In replying the actor will swap to different masks depending on the response which she/ he is giving to the audience. Responses correspond to the character such as, 'Everything is fine' (Mr Cool mask) and I don't want to talk about it' (Stonewall mask). The characters in some of the plays wear half-masks "These half-masks represent the 'front' that people show to the outside world" (Watson in Prentki and Preston, 2009, p.53). He continues "audiences are encouraged to ask the characters to lift their masks throughout the performance" (2009, p.53). An actor will then "reveal something to the audience, and to the other characters, that they have kept hidden" (2009, p.53). He explains further that "It is

the destructive masks which we concentrate on when working with offender groups; the masks that they accept cause damage to themselves and others” (2009, p.53). Watson explains the need that the company has to find, “highly accessible visual metaphors” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p.52). In their work “The whole set of *Gutted* serves as a metaphor – a large wall within which the central protagonist locks away uncomfortable or difficult feelings” (2009, p.52). In *Stay* it is “the child’s drawing of a female figure which is periodically ripped up . . . which might represent the gradual destruction of the female partner” (2009, p.52). These metaphors are used in the groupwork too “they provide meaning for some of the experiences which they have not fully been able to articulate” (2009, p52).

1.4.9 Other work

In his reflection on getting to the 30-year anniversary of Geese, Watson feels that “it’s unlikely that we would still be in existence if we hadn’t developed a third strand of work – bespoke conference performances and training events for professionals” (www.geese.co.uk). He explains that “for us, building a resilient business model is not about ‘selling’ our work to anyone who might want it, but about really understanding how the specialist knowledge and expertise we have built up over the past three decades can truly add value to the development of professionals from other sectors” (www.geese.co.uk). He outlines a recent project called *Safe Stages* which explores the reality of safeguarding within arts venues”. He says that this project “encourages whole staff teams to reflect on how to put policy into practice”. The piece challenges audiences to “recognise indicators of vulnerability and abuse, identify barriers there might be to reporting and consider what a proactive, as opposed to reactive, approach to safeguarding might look like”

www.geese.co.uk). The Geese team complete extensive planning for this kind of work as they would for projects in prisons. The detailed research allows them to provide a very bespoke day or piece for a variety of groups.

1.5 Theories and approaches used by Geese

Geese use three central theories in their work: Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Cognitive Behavioural Theory (Beck, 1976) and Role Theory (Moreno, 1993). In addition to this, members of Geese old and new mention the impact of the work of Augusto Boal (1979) and Dorothy Heathcote (1995) frequently in their discussion of the work. They also refer to Desistance theory (Maruna, 2001) and the Good Lives Model (Ward and Brown, 2004).

1.5.1 Social Learning Theory

This theory was defined by Albert Bandura. It explores the way in which people learn from one another via observation, imitation and modelling. This is important as it highlights the importance of social processes on individual behaviour. Bandura, Ross and Ross created The Bobo Doll Experiment (worked on during 1961-1963) where 66 nursery children watched an adult modelling violence to a Bobo Doll. In one instance the model was rewarded, in the second a second adult was seen telling off the model. Finally, the model was neither punished nor rewarded. The children were then left in the room with the doll. The results of the experiment were that the children behaved differently depending on what they had seen. In the key text, *Social Learning Theory* Bandura explains that when people “mentally rehearse or actually

perform modelled response patterns, they are less likely to forget them than if they neither think about them nor practice what they have seen” (Bandura, 1976, p.26). He continues that “by observing a model of the desired behaviour, an individual forms an idea of how response components must be combined and sequenced to produce the new behaviour” (Bandura, 1976, p.35). Geese describe the need to follow a standard process discussed by Bandura (1976) of “assessment/ self-assessment of skills needed, instruction in the recommended steps or procedures for practising this skill, modelling the behaviour or skill, multiple practice of the new skill by the participant, real world practice and finally testing of the new skill” (TOSW, 2012, p.9).

1.5.2 Cognitive Behavioural Theory

Cognitive Behavioural Theory helps people develop alternative ways of thinking and behaving. It is based on the notion that thoughts, emotions and behaviours are all connected. If a person is thinking something it will therefore affect how they feel. Key to much of the work of Geese is enabling prisoners to see how they are responding in real world situations and to enable them to see that there is an alternative way of responding “Much of the focus of cognitive-behavioural therapy – as it applies to offenders – is on addressing and modifying beliefs and habitual thinking and feeling cycles which prove self-defeating and which can lead to offending behaviour” (Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002). Heywood picks this up giving an example “if a man believes that women are inherently untrustworthy and duplicitous – a belief that has come from a particular experience (and is potentially validated by particular societal values) – it may lead him to think that, when his partner is on the phone to an unknown caller, she is cheating on him” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2019, p.40). He is

“likely to ‘wind himself up’ with self-pitying or vengeful thoughts, which may lead to anger and violence” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2019, p.40). She explains that he cannot be expected to change his behaviour “without exploring and changing some of those complex internal processes and core beliefs first” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2019, p.40). Heywood explains that Geese might “assist someone to think about concepts like ‘self-talk’ before we practise new behavioural responses” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2019, p.40). This allows the participant to develop the tools to then tackle the more complex changes needed. Geese describe “one of the main aims of drama-based work used in a cognitive behavioural context is to help create a gap between the “participant’s beliefs and his behaviour” (TOSW, 2012, p.9). They describe the thought process that “playing the role of a victim of crime . . . will often challenge the participant’s belief that nobody got hurt as a consequence of his offending and that it was just a laugh” (TOSW, 2012, pp.9-10). He continues “After a time, if the participant is motivated, he can use role play to help develop the thinking skills, the interpersonal skills and the confidence to make the changes he wants to make” (TOSW, 2012, p.10). This would hopefully then start to close that ‘gap’.

1.5.3 Role Theory

In the chapter ‘If all the world’s a stage why did I get the worst parts?’ (Balfour, 2003) Baim discusses the importance of role theory and how it might be used in Drama work in prisons. The theory is that we have several roles which we learn and then play out in life “When we know how to perform a given role, it can be said to be in our *role repertoire*” (Balfour, 2003, p.142). It can “help us understand the factors influencing who becomes a habitual offender and how he might, if so inclined, leave behind such a destructive role” (Balfour, 2003, p.142). Socialisation for a child for instance has two stages. In the primary phase children are influenced by close

family. In the secondary phase influence comes from school and from peers. Children develop effectively because they have agents of socialisation who are allowing them to understand their place in the world such as parents, teachers and friends. Baim goes on to explore the fact that J.L. Moreno “had the notion that roles do not emerge from the self, but the self may emerge from roles” (Moreno, 1972 in 2003, p.142). The development of these roles may have been restricted in some cases by family and the people which the child comes into contact with. This means that the child “never learns that he is part of an inter-dependent social network, never learns the role of co-operator” (Balfour, 2003, p.142). Instead “He learns that it is safer to suppress painful feelings and to emotionally detach from others”. More destructive to his progress is that he learns that “the only way to meet his needs is to exaggerate his feelings and use coercion, deception, manipulation or force”. He continues that “by no coincidence, these are the two dominant strategies used by inmates in order to survive in mainstream prisons (Balfour, 2003, pp.142-143). By exploring different roles, the participant can break this destructive pattern.

1.5.4 Boal

Augusto Boal (1931-2009) was a practitioner that invented Forum Theatre and wrote *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992) and *The Rainbow of Desire* (1995). He was a director, writer and politician. He aimed in his work to effect social change, challenge authority and to give a voice to oppressed groups and individuals. The objectives were to rehearse for reality, to reflect upon past actions, to see the world through different eyes and to reach a collective understanding. The tools and teaching of Theatre of the Oppressed are games, Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Rainbow of Desire and Legislative Theatre. These are all forms of participatory theatre. Games are a key part of what

Geese do along with Image theatre in terms of the frozen pictures that they use in their work and Forum Theatre in relation to interaction with the prisoners. Forum Theatre is a piece of theatre (anti model) which depicts the oppression of a main character (protagonist) and is performed for an audience (spect-actors). The piece is run again until the spect-actors shout 'stop' and come up on stage to replace the protagonist to fight the oppressive action. Through this process debate is created and ways of dealing with the presented oppression are offered and examined.

The main principle of Boal's work was that an audience was not there to be a spectator watching the actors but that they should be involved in the performance and should be invited to stop the action and make suggestions on how the piece could progress differently. They might also take the place of the actor in carrying out this change. This became known as Forum Theatre. Watson refers to Adrian Jackson's introduction in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Boal, 1996), "if the model is right, if it is true to life, and the audience invest in the characters and the world they inhabit because they recognise it, they will engage with what is being presented". He goes on "By observing a world that is recognisable and believable, this offender is galvanised into wanting to make changes in his life" (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p51). If he wants to make changes then he becomes open to the work he needs to do to progress.

1.5.5 Heathcote

Dorothy Heathcote (1926-2011) was a Drama educationalist. A key part of her work was inventing teacher-in-role and Mantle of the Expert as methods to use in the Drama classroom. In the latter children are put in the role of experts in a situation

and explore the topic through Drama. On reflecting on her method, she said “What I am always saying in the drama situation is, from where you are, how does this problem seem to you? And when it’s been dealt with, let’s look at where you now are” (Johnson and O’Neill, 1984, p.121). Pupils were able to make decisions about scenarios based on the ‘expert’ they were playing. She explained further “It’s where you are that makes you deal with your life. It’s how you understand that makes you deal with your way of life so that all the time the growth you bring about is the reality of the class you’ve got (Johnson and O’Neill, 1984, p.121)”. Watson and the other key Geese founder members all mention Heathcote as a key practitioner that they look to in examining work.

1.5.6 Desistance and Individualising work

Geese refer to Desistance literature often and define it as “the factors that might support and sustain the process of abstaining from crime”. They have incorporated many of the factors into their drama work. Most notably “the development of a mature outlook and mature relationships - working collectively and co-operatively in a group environment and challenging self-centred thinking” (www.geese.co.uk). The other is” building positive social ties”. Participants are encouraged to do this by being invited “to reflect upon the impact their offending has on their social networks”. They are “encouraged to develop life skills which will enhance social ties”. Key in this work too is the Geese work on “disrupting negative identities – through the taking on of new roles (in scene work and performance)”. Participants instead “develop hope, belief and motivation for the possibilities of new identities” (www.geese.co.uk). They have new and different roles with which to approach their lives.

Watson discusses the need for the work to be individualised. It has to be “responsive to where an individual is on their own journey” (Balfour & Bartleet, 2019, p.41). He discusses some of the research on desistance (Maruna 2001; Maruna et al. 2004 and Campbell 2010) as being “very clear about the need for a unique and personal journey rather than ‘one-size-fits-all’ process” (Balfour & Bartleet, 2019, p.41). He goes on “It’s focus on the importance of instilling hope in individuals, of helping them to build a non-criminal identity and find a meaningful role in the world, is a great fit with our approach and methods” (Balfour & Bartleet, 2019, p.41). He feels then that this fits very well with the model of what Geese do.

1.5.7 The Good Lives Model

Ward states that The Good Lives Model comes from “the assumption that offenders are essentially human beings with similar needs and aspirations to nonoffending members of the community” (Ward & Maruna, 2007, p.24). The model (Ward & Brown, 2004) attempts to move the idea from focusing on risk management in rehabilitation to “equip individuals with the tools to live more fulfilling lives rather than to simply develop increasingly sophisticated risk management measures and strategies” (2004, p.244). It suggests that “treatment should focus first on identifying the various obstacles preventing offenders from living a balanced and fulfilling life” (2004, p.255). Then “seek to equip them with the skills, beliefs, values and supports needed to counteract their influence” (p.255). Watson is acknowledging that risks cannot be removed from the route participants have to take after leaving prison for instance but ex-prisoners can be taught how to deal with those risks and obstacles.

1.6 The Geese practitioner

A Geese Theatre company performer needs to have a high level of performance skill because they will be expected to perform authentically in plays and monologues. It is important that they arrive at Geese with very good ability in this area.

1.6.1 Performance skill and training

Some of the practitioners arriving at Geese will have completed Drama degrees at university or even been professional actors before joining the company. Watson, now CEO and Artistic Director of Geese trained at the International School of Mime and Theatre in Paris before joining Geese. Jacques Le Coq (1921-1999) established the school to teach his process of working as a performer. Students go to the school to study usually after some other form of actor training such as going to drama school. It is a two-year course which explores the study of improvisation and its rules and movement techniques and its analysis. Le Coq stated that at the start “we investigate psychological play which is silent” (Le Coq, 2002, p.14). Masks are key in the work starting with the use of neutral masks and proceeding to larval masks, expressive masks, commedia masks, clown and red nose. This is quite specific training and one can see how this kind of exploration and learning of skill enabled Watson to fit into the way of working at Geese. Le Coq also wrote the books *Le Theatre du Geste* (1981) and *Le Corps Poetique* (1998).

Traditional drama school training is usually for students joining after school at 18 years. Not all courses are the same but broadly cover the study of voice, physicality, working with text, stage fighting, technique for radio and television, mime, movement

and the gradual experience of performing to the public “these are skills that will be taught and developed at drama school” (www.federationofdramaschools.co.uk).

Mask work would not necessarily be on the curriculum or might just be explored through a production. Some will follow a particular actor training system in their training such as Stanislavsky or Brecht as the most notable ones or Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Grotowski or Peter Brook. Some actors do not do any training at all apart from on the job. Mike Alfreds, the founding director of Shared Experience theatre company explores this in *Different Every Night*. He discusses the fact that other performers such as singers and dancers know that they have to train intensively to continue their art. The general public can see the need for this but “all the actors are seen to do, mostly is talk and walk about, displaying attitudes and emotions common to us all” (Alfreds, 2007, p.29). He agrees this is true as “the actor’s job *is* to reveal what is common to us all” (Alfreds, 2007, p.29). Nevertheless, he feels “they should do so in a way that is heightened, selected and resonant” (Alfred’s, 2007, p.30). He is advocating for a continual training and reflection process rather like that at Geese.

1.6.2 Facilitation skills

As well as the skills of an actor the Geese performer has to facilitate workshops. They will have to lead sessions with prisoners and navigate through complex workshops and material. Balfour addresses this difficult role and feels that a “facilitator needs to manage complex social dynamics” (Preston, 2016, p.152). He gives another term for this as ‘animateur’ (Preston, 2016, p.152). He defines this as the process of “encouraging groups to have courage, to be bold, to be safe, and to give spirit to a process” (2016, p.152). He feels that it works well if a facilitator is

willing to “bring their own identity into the process” (2016, p.151). This is important because as a facilitator you are asking participants to take risks and join you in this collective activity. That works better if you are able to share a little of yourself with the group so that they feel that they want to go through that process with you.

Balfour believes that in any workshop “a facilitator is faced with myriad decisions based on a fine-tuned analysis of social cues and dynamics” (2016, p.164). He concludes that “The craft of facilitation is derived from the ability to negotiate the dynamics, to acknowledge and identify them, and to work with them towards a positive goal” (2016, p. P164). This kind of skill takes time to develop. Watson states that “We train people for six months minimum to do this. In prison you’re working with a vulnerable population, but a vulnerable population that disguises their vulnerability. You need to understand what you’re doing” (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). He believes that this work takes time and skill to develop as a company and as a practitioner. He feels that if more mainstream companies start to work in prisons they need to question why “If the only answer you can come up with is ‘because I got funding’ or ‘because it ticks a box with the Arts Council’ then that’s not good enough”. He expands on this in saying it is a small sector “you can spend 30 years doing great work. It takes one bad project to make a prison governor say, I will never do that again”. He continues “It takes one piece of equipment left lying around – one incident can damage the whole sector” (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). It is possible to see then the reason why the training to work with Geese needs to be detailed and last for six months in order to work with a practitioner on the particular skills needed.

1.7 Summary

Geese Theatre Company established in the UK in 1987 use Drama and Theatre to effect change with people in prison and those at risk of committing offences. Their work has also broadened in recent years to work with other marginalised groups and to run sessions for the staff who work with these different client groups. Their philosophy is to start from where the person is at and they believe that the crime committed does not have to define who you are as you move ahead. All practitioners are strong performers who also possess the psychological knowledge and skill to work with prisoners. The knowledge comes from the theories used by the company (discussed in 1.5 Theories and approaches used by Geese). The skill comes from existing experience which practitioners possess followed by the training which they experience when starting work with the company. They are able to be very authentic in their performances so that those watching believe what they are seeing and in turn become engaged in how they might adjust their own behaviour. The direction of this study was formulated when discovering that Geese are unique for this type of company in running a six-month training probationary period. However, they do not recruit permanently a third of trainees after this intense period has finished. I was hopefully well placed to carry out this study as this chapter has outlined. I brought my performer training, applied drama experience and my knowledge of the company for thirty-five years as a background to what I investigated here.

There is literature about the work which Geese do in the form of evaluations and discussion of their methods, often concentrating on the fact that they use mask in a different and unusual way. They published *The Geese Theatre Handbook* (Baim, Brookes & Mountford, 2002) which concentrates on the company and their games

and exercises. There is not though published literature about the training period Geese run for new practitioners which seems therefore to be a valid area for research. This research will be important for those interested in performer training and in the more specific area of training an applied drama performer/ facilitator. The overarching research question to be explored is how do Geese train a practitioner in six months to use Drama in prison to effect change and why are a third of recruits not taken on at the end of this probationary period? The following chapter will outline the Methodology used in this study to try and answer these questions.

2. Chapter Two: Methodology

This chapter explores the methodology employed in this thesis. It will discuss the rationale and design for the research. It details the research questions and explains the research methods and data collection. In addition, it will examine the reliability of the research and credibility of the researcher. It will describe how a research relationship was built with Geese and what the obstacles along the way were. The thesis aims to investigate what the six-month training period at Geese Theatre Company consists of and how new recruits can succeed and be taken on permanently by the company. The study is the culmination of an interest in the company since 1987 with a direction for the research coming much later. The activity from 1987 to date (see Table 4 below) can be viewed as part of the research process.

Table 4: Summary of the research process for the thesis

When	Details
1987- present	Interest in and association with the work which Geese does including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeing performances/ attending events at Geese ▪ Arranging for Watson to complete a workshop for university students ▪ Participation in the three-day course at Geese – TOSW
November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting with Watson to talk about the work at Geese ▪ Watson mentioned the fact that about a third of new recruits are not taken on after the six-month training at the company ▪ This fact provides the stimulus for the direction of the study and means that the study also becomes a response to the needs of an organisation to understand this statistic

February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conversation with Watson about this PhD study and access which I would ideally require to the company ▪ Gained his verbal consent to go ahead
February 2018 – January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed Thesis Statement ▪ Completed literature review chapter draft
February 2018 – November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liaised with the company to maintain the research relationship
February 2019 – January 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed Methodology chapter draft
July 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting with Smallman (Team Manager) and Heywood (Director of Programmes) at Geese to talk about my research plans in more detail ▪ Requested access to complete some structured observations and arranged three of these for November 2019.
October 2019	Attended the Geese play <i>Playing the Game</i> at Birmingham Repertory Theatre (part of Bedlam Arts and Mental Health Festival)
November 2019	Ethics approval for the study granted
November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 Structured observations at Geese ▪ Informal interview/ chat with Clark Baim (founder member of Geese UK) as part of one of these events
January - February 2020	Designed interview questions
March 2020	Ready to arrange interviews and begin
March 2020 – September 2021	Covid-19 caused disruption to the progress of the study as Geese were unable to take part in any research activity for most of this period due to their furlough restrictions
April 2021	Consent obtained and semi-structured interview with Watson
June 2021	Obtained consent and semi-structured interview with two ex-Geese practitioners (who were not in a furlough situation): Anderson and Milne

September 2021	Recruitment of other Geese practitioners to be interviewed
November 2021 and January 2022	Obtained consent and semi-structured interviews with remaining Geese practitioners: Brown Teare Heywood Smallman Snook
July – August 2021 and November 2021- January 2022	Transcription of Geese interviews
February – April 2022	Thematic analysis process (see Table 9, section 2.8 for details of this process)
May 2022 – April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued work on writing all chapters ▪ Editing and refining of chapters already written
May – June 2023	Final editing process

2.1 Rationale

The literature review demonstrated that there is much material written about the applied theatre practitioner and about the training of actors. There is also general material about Geese Theatre Company and what they do. In addition, there are evaluations of Geese's work. However, there is very little written about the six-month training period at Geese which new practitioners must complete before being taken on permanently by the company. Being able to examine this training process and explore why practitioners succeed and why they are sometimes not taken on at the end of it would contribute to the area of literature around applied drama, drama practitioners who work in this area and actor/ practitioner/ performer training in

applied drama. It would allow insight into something which currently occurs away from public view.

2.2 Research design

The strategy for being able to research Geese Theatre Company was to establish a narrow focus of study based on a real understanding of what the company does. Discovering that the company has an intensive training period for new practitioners and that not all new recruits are taken on after the six-month probation gave that focus. Nicholson and Kershaw believe that the researcher needs to ask the question “Who is my audience and how do I acknowledge this is in the dissemination of my research?” (2011, p.159). In this case the audience is those interested in performer training, applied facilitator training and in the work of Geese. The study used a qualitative research approach with a range of research methods employed. Kershaw and Nicholson (2011) call this a “blend of materials” (p.159). This blend (see Table 5 below) allowed an analysis of this quite unique process of training performers which Geese have created.

Table 5: Methods used to collect data for this study

Method	Details	Activities
Desk-based review	Examination of existing in-house documents written by Geese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysed the company training documents ▪ Examined literature for three-day TOSW course

Structured observations	These are observations which can be of different aspects of the research but the observation follows a set template of areas which are detailed as part of the observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Solihull Safeguarding Board performance 02/10/19 ▪ Getting Connected performance BCU 13/11/19 ▪ Project with Nursing students, Coventry University, 22/11/19
Semi-structured interviews	Also described as “guided” interviews (Caulfield & Hill, 2014, p.10) where questions are created from knowledge of the area and in order to elicit the information needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with 8 Geese practitioners ▪ Including six current and two who have left but still work in a freelance capacity for Geese
Case study	This is an in-depth analysis of a person (or more than one person) or thing which is needed to gain more insight into an area of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The intention here was to ‘follow’ a new recruit to Geese in order to view the six-month training period from their perspective ▪ Described later in this chapter, Covid-19 meant that this part of the research needed to be rethought ▪ Eventually this became a case study of the monitoring process which is so key at Geese through the lens of a recent recruit who had successfully passed the probation

The investigation sought to explore the role of the performer/ practitioner at Geese and specifically the training which they receive rather than the effect of their projects upon the client participants. In order to be able to explore this training period effectively qualitative methods were more suitable as they allowed flexibility to look at the training period in a variety of ways. Hammond & Wellington describe qualitative methods as dealing with “data that are not presented in countable form

and need techniques such as coding and content analysis in order to be managed and analysed” (2021, p.127). This best-suited the exploration needed and allowed for a range of activities to contribute to the research. In this thesis it meant that we could use a desk-based review of materials, interview data and structured observations to find the information required. The study wanted to explore the lived experience of the participants which meant that qualitative methods were more appropriate. The study was also small scale in terms of the number of participants used so needed to be flexible to make the best use of the data presented. The range of qualitative methods would provide a depth of understanding about a complex area. Nicholson who has written extensively about applied theatre practices discusses the issues around the ‘measurement’ of arts referring to the document *Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture* (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). She explores choices for the type of method used in this area in the article *Close Reading* saying “there is a place for quantitative research and appropriate axiological measures in our field” but she says “it is also important to understand that the value of arts and culture is not restricted to things that can be counted” (2017, p.183). However, there was a quantitative checking of themes in the case study chapter in order to be able to examine the set of monitoring forms available. This is due to the fact that at this point the thesis had already identified what the competences and the skills and attributes needed to be a successful Geese practitioner were. A quantitative method would be able to examine the completed monitoring forms from Teare (examined in Chapter 6 *Monitoring at Geese – a case study*) with this prior knowledge and systematically search for codes which align with or deviate from the completed research. The aim was to provide a type of data triangulation “consistency within data can improve the credibility of findings – for example if respondents are saying the same things in

different contexts at different times, then, in a commonsensical way at least, the credibility of the findings are improved” (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.186). It would be possible to see whether Teare’s analysis matched the evidence already found for what qualities are needed to be a successful Geese practitioner or whether the data would tell a different story. The thesis in total then used a mixed methods approach.

2.3 Research questions

This study hoped to discover original material about that training process at Geese so the research questions were created from that aim (see Table 6 below). The overarching research question is how do Geese Theatre Company train a practitioner in six-months to use Drama in prison to effect change and why are a third of recruits not taken on at the end of this probationary period? Four sub questions were considered along with that.

Table 6: Research Questions

	Research Questions
Overarching	How do Geese Theatre Company train a practitioner in six-months to use Drama to effect change and why are a third of recruits not taken on at the end of this probationary period?
Sub question One	Is it possible to define the elements involved in the six-month training period for new practitioner/ performer recruits to Geese Theatre Company and the journey which they go through?
Sub question Two	What ability does the new recruit start with when they join the company and how are they trained in the very specific way that Geese works?
Sub question Three	What skills and attributes enable the practitioner to work in this company and in turn potentially in the wider area of applied drama?
Sub question Four	Is it possible to identify which elements are missing when practitioners are not taken on after the six-month training period?

The research process sought to define what the key elements of the training at Geese actually were and how they are taught to trainees. This led to sub research question one which asked if it is possible to identify the elements of the training. The job specification (accessed in 2019, see appendix 3) suggested that a new recruit needed to come to Geese with a good deal of experience which led to sub question two exploring what that experience was and how it was utilised during the probationary period so that the practitioner could be trained in the “Geese way”. Sub question three looked more broadly at what the skills and attributes were that made for a good Geese practitioner. Finally, research sub question four was around what the reasons might be for someone not being taken on after the six-month probation. Around a third of new recruits are not kept on by the company. These will be practitioners who have gone through a three-day audition followed by six months with the company. The study needed to try and find the reasons why this happens despite the lengthy training and recruitment process. In summary the questions allowed for an investigation into the approach to training at Geese Theatre Company, the journey for the new recruit and the attributes needed for them to be successful.

2.4 Research Methods and data collection

This study as outlined earlier (see section 2.2) used a qualitative approach and a range of research methods. This consisted of a desk-based review of materials, structured observations, semi-structured interviews and case study.

2.4.1 Desk-based review

This consisted of an analysis of training documents and associated literature which recruits are given by Geese as well as a training manual from TOSW course which all new recruits have to participate in. Kershaw and Nicholson believe that “The research questions to be posed of training practices are themselves contingent upon a range of shifting epistemological and cultural factors” (2011, p.144). The study needed to ascertain what Geese give new recruits as a selection of references/reading to start off their process of training.

2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Caulfield & Hill describe the semi-structured interview (described by them as a guided interview) saying it should “reflect the fact that researchers usually have an idea of the topics they would like to explore in advance of carrying out the interviews” (2014, p.110). In this case there were key areas around which the questions were designed to elicit information about what happens during the training for instance. By conducting a semi-structured interview, it enabled practitioners to give lots of examples from their own training but also their perspective in some cases as the people conducting the training. They were able to do this within the framework of a set of questions which were designed to elicit the key information needed to investigate this area. Interviews with a range of practitioners at Geese would mean finding out details that are not in the public domain about their training process.

The questions for the interview (see Appendix 8) were developed out of the literature review, Geese’s own statements in literature such as the Information for Applicants (2019) and informal observations of the company. Rubin and Rubin feel that “You have to interview people who are knowledgeable on your topic, and you must restrict

your questioning to what they know first-hand” (2012, p.64). All interviewees are experienced and expert in discussing the work of Geese and all were giving their first-hand experiences as information. Galleta describes the early part of an interview and states that it is “intended to elicit from the participant the central story that will give your interview direction and depth” (2013, pp46-47). She continues that the researcher should make sure that “The questions are open-ended in order to create space for participants to narrate their experience; however, the focus of the questions is very deliberate and carefully tied to your research topic” (2013, p.47). She believes that this phase will “elicit data you cannot anticipate in advance” (2013, p.47). Knowing about your subject area is key here she continues which enhances “your ability to support the unfolding of the participant’s narrative” (2013, p.47). The researcher’s long interest in Geese meant that there was good knowledge about the company before starting the interviews. Caulfield & Hill ask “Have you allowed the participants sufficient flexibility to raise issues that you may have omitted?” (2014, p113). This came from the openness of some of the questions and an opportunity at the end for interviewees to add further information.

2.4.3 Research participants

To find out what the training is like and how practitioners experience it meant the logical decision was to interview Geese practitioners who would be able to offer an insight into the process. Different practitioners associated with Geese were interviewed (see Table 7 below). Each person identified had a unique experience of the company and work but there were common threads in what they all discussed.

Table 7: Semi-structured interviews with current and past Geese practitioners

Practitioner Name	Role at Geese	Joined the company
Current employees		
Watson, Andy	CEO, Artistic Director	1997
Heywood, Lou	Director of Programmes	1991
Smallman, Emma	Team Manager in charge of training	2009
Snook, Dave	Senior Practitioner	2012
Brown, Liz	Senior Practitioner	2013
Teare, Benji	Practitioner	2020
Past employees		
Anderson, Daniel	Senior Practitioner	2014-2019
Milne, Ruth	Practitioner	2017-2018

The eight practitioners had been with the company for varying lengths of time and some interviewed had already moved on to other jobs but agreed to be interviewed about their time at Geese. The two participants who had left Geese had done so in the last five years so their experiences were as valid as those of the others and they were able to be interviewed earlier due to not being furloughed during the Covid pandemic. Lou Heywood has been at the company for over thirty years joining in 1991 and is now Director of Programmes. Andy Watson joined the company in 1997 becoming Artistic Director in 2003. He largely talks about his view as artistic director. Emma Smallman joined Geese in 2009 and has progressed through the company to now be Team Manager and in charge of new recruits. She was encouraged in the interview to talk about her experiences of the training as someone joining the company in 2009 but also about her work as the person in charge of it now. Dave Snook joined Geese in 2011 and Liz Brown in 2013. Daniel Anderson was with the company for five years from 2014 to 2019 and Ruth Milne for eighteen months

between 2017 and 2018. Benji Teare joined the company in 2020 where he experienced a prolonged period of probation as he had to suspend the training period due to Covid restrictions (and the company members being furloughed) and resume the training in 2021.

2.4.4 Structured observations

Structured observation means having a set template of questions/ activities (see appendix 7) to be recorded through notes of an activity such as a workshop/ performance being witnessed. The observation methodology was drawn from methods in Criminology and Performing Arts where a structured observation is used when there is background knowledge about the work and clear ideas about what the researcher is trying to obtain information on . For this study the structured observations were of three different events of Geese delivering work with a variety of client groups: Solihull Safeguarding Board performance, Getting Connected performance for social work students about attachment theory and a workshop with nursing students at Coventry University about to go out on placements. The template for notes was a fixed document for all three activities.

2.4.5 Case study

The original intention of this study was to 'follow' a new recruit through the six-month period of the training. It would take the form of an ethnographic case study as it would consist of several smaller observations and interviews/ questions throughout the process that build a picture of this experience. Ultimately the case study could not go ahead because of Covid-19 and some reluctance on the part of the company to put the further pressure of being observed on a trainee. Instead, a case study of

the monitoring forms completed by a recent recruit were examined for this part of the study.

The examination of the monitoring forms had three stages to it:

1. Writing up of each monitoring form, adding details regarding prisons referred to when applicable. This meant reading the monitoring form (which looked like the blank template - see appendix 11) but with information/ questions and analysis provided by Teare in one colour and responses/ questions from the lead practitioner in another colour. This was then written up into full sentences with comments by the researcher added in.
2. Familiarisation of the data followed by using deductive coding to check the current information on the forms against previously assigned codes drawn from themes.
3. Quantifying and describing. Codes were counted to provide a quantitative representation of the frequency in which they appear. If Teare writes about for example performance skill in the monitoring form it is shown as '1' in Table 26 (see chapter 6) even if he makes two comments about performance skill in that form. The aim was to identify which of the nine codes was mentioned in each form not how many times it is mentioned in one form. Alongside this, qualitative descriptions of each theme and how they are discussed in the monitoring process are given.

2.4.6 Personal research development reflection

Reflecting at the end of the research period I can see that I have been on a journey and developed as a researcher during the five years of PhD study . My background and other academic work have been in the areas of Theatre/ Drama and Education in academic arts and education departments. Working on a PhD though it is about Drama and Theatre practices sits within the Social Sciences academic area has encouraged me to learn more about different research methods that are more naturally associated with that area and improve in my handling of these. I have become better I think amongst other things at analysis and in particular thematic analysis, seeking to quantify information where necessary and at creating tables of information that might enhance understanding and clarity for the reader.

2.5 Ethical considerations

All studies of this kind need a robust ethical approach to ensure that participants are protected and that there are systems in place for how everything is being handled.

This consisted of gaining ethical clearance, responding to queries from the Ethics committee, recruiting the sample of people to interview and giving out research information and gaining consent. The British Psychological Society have a code of ethics which are useful to consider here. This consists of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity (www.bps.org.uk).

2.5.1 Ethical clearance

A detailed ethics form was completed and passed by Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics committee, University of Wolverhampton in November 2019. Key issues addressed in this form are detailed below:

Confidentiality

I had already completed mandatory university lecturer training including Information Security Awareness and GDPR. Informed consent forms and recordings of interviews were stored on the researcher's laptop which is password protected.

Participant discomfort or distress

I did not expect any consequences for participants taking part. The interview questions were focused on their training period with Geese and the work of the company. On the practitioner information form and at the beginning of the interview it was made clear that the participant could ask to stop at any time without giving a reason. The time of the interview was made in consultation with participants to

ensure they were comfortable with the arrangements. Interviews were conducted over Zoom as they were conducted following the period of Covid-19 lockdown.

Consent

I asked the head of training at the company to ask Geese staff if they would be willing to volunteer to be interviewed. There was no compulsion to take part.

Risk/ Researcher safety

When observing work, I was going to be with company members at all times if viewing work. Somebody would know where I was and for how long at all times.

Anonymity

There were limits to anonymising participants as their role in the company which did need to be discussed would identify them. The company were happy to have staff identified and the individual consent process checked this too.

Observations

Key in the presentation of the ethical information was to draw the distinction between research into how Drama is used to help people in prison and what this study focuses on which is to examine the *performers* being trained to work in this area. This meant that observation of Geese at work in prisons if it happened would consist of the observation of the practitioners *not* those in prison completing workshops with Geese. Geese work in prisons and young offender institutions which house inmates up to category A. Formal permission for the researcher to be in the prisons conducting research on what Geese do would form part of the permissions that the theatre company seeks. No data would be collected on the participants in prisons

and other vulnerable groups which Geese work with. There would be no filming or audio recordings made of observations.

The ethics form was passed with some questions from the committee (see Table 8 below) which were responded to and a final clearance was subsequently given.

Table 8: Ethics Committee queries and researcher responses

Question	Query from Ethics committee	Researcher response
16	<p>If we understand correctly, you/ the researcher will be observing the theatre company in prisons. If so, will formal permission from the prisons to conduct the research be obtained? What level of offenders/ category of prison will the researcher be accessing?</p> <p>Those being observed 'will be given information about the research project' (section 20) – does this include the prisoners taking part as well as the Geese Theatre Company Volunteers?</p>	<p>Geese work in prisons and young offender institutions which house inmates up to category A.</p> <p>Formal permission for me to be in the prisons conducting research on what Geese do forms part of the permissions that the Theatre company seeks.</p> <p>There are information sheets for Geese practitioners and participants in workshops.</p>
16	<p>It mentions that 'I will record observations by making written notes', although the consent form mentions audio recordings: could you please clarify?</p>	<p>A camera will <i>not</i> be used to record observations. I will record observations by making written notes.</p> <p>Zoom recordings will be made of <i>interviews only</i> not observations of practical sessions.</p>
19	<p>The applicant suggests that 'they do not expect any consequences for research participants. However, has some consideration of any strategy in place to respond to any inadvertent distress (no matter how remote) that may be caused?</p>	<p>The information sheet to practitioners and what I say to the participant at the start of the interview will make it clear that the participant can ask to stop at any time and without giving a reason.</p>

19	The research participants will be identified through the 'head of the training'. Will this put undue pressure on volunteers to participate? How will this be minimised?	I asked the head of training at the company to ask Geese staff if they would be willing to <i>volunteer</i> to be interviewed. There is no compulsion to take part.
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2.5.2 Causing offence

The ethics process *did not* specifically ask questions about causing offence as part of this research “in recent years there has been a tendency for ethics committees to extend the reach into areas such as the giving of offence, unacceptable language . . .” caused by the research (Prentki and Abraham, 2020, p.13). However, there is “a backlash” from practitioners against the over-domination of ethical concerns” (Prentki and Preston, 2020, p.13). It is probably wise to mention though here that there is occasional language in this document which for some might cause offence which is there in the context of a practitioner creating an internal dialogue that goes alongside a character which they are playing for instance. The language used in these cases is realistic in respect of the character and demonstrates how the practitioner builds an authentic performance so it is therefore important not to remove it just because this is an academic thesis.

2.5.3 Recruiting a sample of practitioners to interview

Smallman as team manager at Geese agreed that she would ask practitioners at the company if they were interested in being interviewed for this study with no obligation on them to take part. Those that agreed were then contacted by the researcher. Watson also suggested that two practitioners who had recently left the company might be prepared to be interviewed. Watson approached them and they were happy

to take part. This meant that there was a total of eight practitioners who could be interviewed for the study.

2.5.4 Information, permissions and informed consent

Those Geese employees who were interviewed and observed conducting sessions were given information about the research project (see appendix 4). They were asked to complete a consent form (see appendix 5) which made it clear that:

1. The practitioner could stop at any point during an interview if they did not wish to continue – no reason had to be given
2. It was also detailed that interviews *only* would be recorded on Zoom and the details transcribed – observations would be detailed with written notes and not recorded

A more general information sheet detailing the research project was created to be available for any session participants (in prisons for example) to read where applicable for information only (see appendix 6). Caulfield and Hill believe that “Ethical decisions are underpinned by different value positions so it is up to researchers to think carefully about and discuss their justifications for the conduct of their research process” (2014, p.27). They describe key ethical principles are to “gain informed consent/ avoid deceit”. They say these principles are used to “maintain confidentiality” and to “safeguard those involved in/ affected by the research – avoid harm” (2014, p29). One of these ethical considerations centred around the naming of individuals working at the company and whether it is necessary to anonymise them in this kind of study. It was concluded that there are limits to anonymising participants as their role in the company would identify them. The company were happy to have staff identified as were the individuals. However, before any public

sharing of the content of the thesis beyond in the PhD format Geese will be approached again to confirm that they give approval.

2.6 Conducting the research

2.6.1 Process of collecting the data

Through the semi-structured interviews, those who took part were all asked the same questions but there was capacity for follow up questions and the questions asked were adapted where necessary to allow for who was being interviewed, e.g. Watson talked more about his role and view as Artistic Director of the company around the issues rather than his experience when first working with the company though he refers to that too. The practitioners started by detailing their time with the company. This helped to give a context to how much experience they have with Geese, what the company was like when they joined and how relevant their prior skills are. Apart from the most recent recruit these are practitioners with a great deal of experience and length of time with the company which supports the idea described by Terry and Hayfield that “interviews are most suited to when the participant is personally invested in the topic because this means that they are likely to have a good deal to say and can therefore provide you with the type of in-depth and detailed data that is ideal for Thematic Analysis” (2021, p.20). This was certainly the case here and the practitioners provided plenty of detail in answer to the questions posed.

Ackroyd and O'Toole discuss the relationships between researcher and participant. They suggest that "There is often a problem in the power dynamics between the researcher and the research participants, especially if the participants perceive themselves as less empowered and carry less cultural capital" (2010, p.55). This could certainly be an issue researching directly with participants in prison. Here Geese employees are used to their work being evaluated and discussed so should be open to the study particularly as it is directed much more at their personal experience of the training. Caulfield & Hill believe that "The most important task for an interviewer is to put the participant at ease by establishing rapport at the beginning of an interview" (2018, p.116). Galletta discusses expressing "gratitude" for the participant's involvement (2013, p.46). Rubin & Rubin believe that "People are usually more willing to talk to you if they feel some personal connection to you. Interviewees may feel they know you if they have already met you while you were doing participant observation" (2012, p.77). This was the case here as most of the interviews followed the informal observation period and start of the structured observations so they would be used to seeing the researcher. This relates to Braun and Clarke's idea stated earlier that we can change from being an insider to an outsider during research (2022, p.18). The researcher is not a member of Geese Theatre Company but observing the work of the company on three significant occasions as well as the knowledge held of the company's work allows the company members to feel more willing to engage in discussion.

2.6.2 Structured observations

The literature review and initial informal observations of Geese before this study began created key possible areas of interest to use when deciding on the structure of the observations. The approach was to observe different elements of what Geese

do such as performances and workshops through the lens of how practitioners are trained to be able to carry out this work. The observations allowed for an understanding of the work but particularly how somebody new to the company might be able to learn 'how to do it'. From past informal observations and experience of watching the company and the work which they do a list of what the structured observation would focus on for data collection was created: role of the facilitator, use of mask, the interactive style which the company work in, performance skill, repeated motifs used, link to theoretical frameworks and the personal skills and attributes of the practitioner leading the workshop. These seemed to be the key areas that form the foundation of what Geese do as a company and are the things which a new recruit would need to be able to become accomplished at particularly in workshop delivery.

At an early stage of the research, it is possible to guess that someone might not be taken on after the six months of training simply because something does not quite work in the relationship between Geese and the recruit. However, there could be something more tangible such as the facilitation or performance skills not being accomplished enough. Geese state in the recruitment information for potential employees that their company values are "Responsibility, belief in change, rigour, artistic excellence, innovation, partnership and inclusion" (2019). Many of these attributes therefore are included in the material to gather from observation and can also be investigated in the interviewing process. They are either mentioned by name in the observation topics or included in a specific question in the interview template.

The study examined performances and facilitation by the company. It was hoped at the start of the thesis that creation and rehearsal of work could also form part of the

study. The rehearsal room is usually a closed door to outsiders and Kershaw and Nicholson discuss this “What are the pitfalls and, conversely, the potentialities when researching in and around a theatre studio environment? How does one balance a state of *engagement* in ‘hands on’ practices with a state of *separation* from those very same practices, the second being more appropriate for reflective thinking and expression?” (2011, p.138). It was not in the end possible to observe Geese in this way as the intention would have been to observe a new recruit rehearsing for the case study which then happened in a different way.

2.7 Interpreting the data

This study used Thematic Analysis as a format for exploring the dataset. Braun and Clarke define six stages of reflexive thematic analysis which were followed in this research (see Table 9 below).

Table 9: Summary of phases for Thematic Analysis

Phase	Activity	Detail	Application to this study
One	Familiarising yourself with the dataset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become very familiar with the dataset by reading and re-reading/ listening to recordings ▪ Making notes about analytical ideas or insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This involved listening to the recordings of the interviews and making preliminary notes ▪ The observation notes were also read several times
Two	Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working through the data in a detailed way ▪ Identify “segments” which relate to the research questions and give these labels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This was applied to the transcriptions from each interview

Three	Generating initial themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Compile clusters of codes that seem to share a core idea or concept” which might answer the research questions ▪ Collate all coded data relevant to each candidate theme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Codes from phase two were compiled into clusters which might answer the research questions
Four	Developing and reviewing themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does each theme “tell a convincing and compelling story about an important pattern of shared meaning related to the dataset?” ▪ Be prepared to revise themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Themes were examined and any necessary revisions made
Five	Refining, defining and naming themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Fine tune analysis” ▪ Each theme needs to be built around a “strong core concept” ▪ “Ask yourself what story does this theme tell?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The existing analysis was “fine-tuned”
Six	Writing up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Here you are aiming to “weave together your analytic narrative and compelling, vivid data extracts, to tell your reader a coherent and persuasive story about the dataset that addresses your research question” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Here the writing up happened to create a “persuasive story”

Source: Braun & Clarke, *Thematic Analysis* (2022), pp.35-36

Caulfield and Hill state that “To do justice to the data collected, researchers must engage with a rigorous approach to analysis (2018, p.180). They believe that “For thematic analysis, it is vital to be highly familiar with the data before formally beginning the analysis (2018, p.180). They suggest that the researcher transcribing their own data is the key here believing it is “one of the best ways of becoming highly familiar with the data you have collected, and this process of familiarisation is vital to

successful data analysis” (2018, p.181). They conclude that “Thematic analysis, when done well, can provide a rich and detailed account of the data a researcher has collected, and thus give a clear voice to those involved in the research” (2018, p.189). Giving a clear voice to the Geese practitioners interviewed was very important so that a true picture of the training could be created.

Once data had been collected through desk-based review, semi structured interviews, structured observation and case study it was collated. The interviews were transcribed which was a lengthy process but also formed part of the first phase of familiarisation with the dataset. A further read and reread of all the notes and transcriptions took place before the coding process (phase two) began (see Table 10 below). Codes were created as the data was sifted with checking of any duplication of similar codes.

Table 10: Initial identification of codes

Initial Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with people where they are rather than where they should be ▪ Being authentic ▪ The ability new practitioners come to the company with ▪ People who can play the range ▪ Being responsive in the moment ▪ Moving between characters quickly ▪ Having a lack of ego ▪ Enabling others not profiling ourselves ▪ Drama school v Drama degree ▪ Working in unconventional settings ▪ Take the offer and do something with it ▪ Lifting the mask ▪ Training period is entirely about ensuring quality ▪ Info/ training given to trainees during the six months ▪ The Geese audition ▪ Performance skill ▪ Working in prisons ▪ Curiosity and commitment to the work

- Groundedness/ resilience
- Missing elements when the probation period doesn't work out
- The Geese Way
- It's about what you do with the facilitation exercises
- The Geese repertoire
- Monitoring the work as an individual during training
- Theoretical underpinning to the work
- Personal beliefs and attributes of the Geese performer
- Company evaluation after performances

Source: Codes created after transcription of interviews

Once the coding process had been completed it was possible to identify and compile what Braun and Clarke describe as “clusters of codes that seem to share a core idea or concept” (2022, p. 35). By analysing these, four, described by Braun and Clarke as early “initial themes” (2022, p.35) were found. This is phase three of the process of Thematic Analysis (see table 11 below for themes developed). Caulfield and Hill believe that it is easy to complete this bit of the process badly (2018, p80). They say “it is important that you do not fall into the trap of identifying superficial themes” (2018, p.180). This might be themes which do not represent the research conducted adequately and instead are comments made briefly by one participant for instance. Hughes and Nicholson in *Research Methods in Performance* also warn that “qualitative data are often used without rigorous analysis: participants’ statements can be uncritically taken to correspond to reality, and research often blurs the boundary between research and advocacy” (2011, p.192). They say that the “weaknesses of reflective practitioner and interpretative social science approaches include difficulty generalising from findings and their subsequent lack of credibility for policy-making audiences (Kershaw & Nicholson, 2011, p.192). In order to avoid this problem the quantitative approach to the monitoring forms used by the trainee Teare

meant that there was an additional way of checking and supporting the original findings.

Table 11: Initial themes developed from codes

1. Previous skills of new recruits arriving at Geese (commonalities) and the selection process they undertake to join the company
2. Competences which must be gained during the six-month training for practitioners
3. The skills and attributes a practitioner requires to be able to work at Geese
4. Evaluating and monitoring work

Following Phase four of the process meant developing and reviewing the themes identified confirming that “these highlight the most important patterns across the dataset in relation to your research questions?” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.36). Phase Five consisted of a refining process in connection to the themes. Braun and Clarke ask the researcher to think about “what story does the theme tell”. The codes and initial themes then were combined to test out how the story of the data was unfolding. Codes were then matched with themes (see Table 12 below).

Table 12: Matching codes with themes

Previous skills of new recruits arriving at Geese (commonalities) and the selection process they undertake to join the company	Competences which must be gained during the six-month training for practitioners	The skills and attributes a practitioner requires to be able to work at Geese	Evaluating and monitoring work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability new practitioners come to the company with ▪ Drama school v Drama degree ▪ 'Take the offer and do something with it' during improvisation sessions ▪ The Geese audition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theoretical underpinning to the work ▪ Working in unconventional settings ▪ Lifting the mask ▪ Training period is entirely about ensuring quality ▪ Info/ training given to trainees during the six months ▪ Working in prisons ▪ Performing skill ▪ It's about what you do with the facilitation exercises ▪ The Geese Way ▪ The Geese repertoire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having a lack of ego ▪ Being authentic ▪ Personal beliefs and attributes of the Geese performer ▪ Work with people where they are rather than where they should be ▪ People who can play the range ▪ Performance skill ▪ Curiosity and commitment to the work ▪ Groundedness/ resilience ▪ Missing elements when the probation period doesn't work out ▪ Being responsive in the moment ▪ Moving between characters quickly ▪ Enabling others not profiling ourselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Company evaluation after performances ▪ Monitoring the work as an individual during training

Phase six is the writing up phase though writing up was able to happen from an earlier stage gradually too. The relevant connected data that represented ideas from the codes was sorted into the four themed areas which would become chapters. The first chapter about previous skills of the practitioner and the audition process consisted of information about those two things whilst examining the patterns between the different practitioners of what they had each done. The Competences and Skills and Attributes chapters had some overlap (Performance skill, facilitation skill for instance is discussed in both) but could be largely sorted based on clear activities which become the competences of the training and the less tangible ideas such as needing a lack of ego as a Geese practitioner which falls under the Skills and Attributes chapter. The final data chapter was created from any of the interview data which discussed monitoring and evaluation and from the additional examination of Teare's monitoring forms.

2.8 Reliability of the research and credibility of the researcher

This study focused upon analysing the six-month training period that Geese Theatre Company run for new recruits. The research came directly from observations and interviews with the company. Although this was a study of a very specific area of what Geese do it was important to have a secure understanding of all aspects of the company in order to be able to make judgements about what to investigate. This background for the researcher came from contact with and interest in the company since they were founded in the UK in 1987. This long interest included completing the three-day specialist course which the company run, attending the public performances which they occasionally hold and more recently observing some of the different aspects of the work of the company. In addition, the researcher has trained

as a performer through the traditional Drama school route. The researcher then can be seen as credible to the 'audience' of the research because they have knowledge of the company and have experienced one of the mainstream routes to actor training. It was therefore legitimate that the researcher is exploring this material. Probably most importantly though it also meant that it was evident to the company that the researcher understood this field and specifically what Geese do. This does lead to questions of subjectivity and objectivity. Having a long-standing connection with the company in attending courses and performances at Geese could mean that it was difficult to be objective about the research undertaken. Therefore, it was important to have a structured method for the observations/ interviews and data analysis so that separation could be achieved when viewing the data results.

Consideration is needed for the 'insider/ outsider' position which the researcher held during this research. Whilst not a member of the company and therefore a true insider there had been a history of contact with Geese, awareness of their work and participation in their intensive three-day course which leads to a possible insider interpretation. The interest in the company comes from a position of believing that they conduct excellent work. This has to be balanced though with the need to be an outsider negotiating the framework for the research and carrying it out. A challenge to this balancing act is around respect for the subject of the research whilst having critical independence as a researcher. Once independence is evident and the research is carried out the element of insider/ outsider needs to be considered in how the findings are articulated, with respect for the organisation's care and protection for its practices, reputation and, ultimately, it's livelihood.

2.9 Building the research relationship and obstacles along the way

It was vital to the success of this thesis to build a good relationship with Geese Theatre Company in the hope that it led to them trusting the research which was being done. This can be a challenging aspect of any study and needed ongoing attention throughout. Theatre companies are busy and it was important that the research being conducted did not add to that workload. This meant it was crucial to be organised and efficient in making plans with them and being on time and prepared for observations and interviews. In a day of observing the company doing a workshop for social work students for instance it was important to connect with the practitioners but then play the role of the quiet unobtrusive researcher who is not 'getting in the way'. It needed to feel easy for Geese to have the researcher around. Eventually further along in the process the research should then be of benefit to the company as it would be able to provide an objective view of the training which takes place.

Companies like Geese are approached a great deal to take part in research, interviews or to contribute to book chapters. The regular Geese general information session that was a less formal affair in the 1990s is now something that attendees pay £10 to go to and is always oversubscribed. Geese will have a history of trying to protect their image and maintain the quality of how they are presented in print and through images. They will be naturally sceptical of any researcher and want to know that they have some control over what is put in the public domain. It was the researcher's job to reassure in this instance.

2.9.1 Building the research relationship

It was a lengthy path to the start of this research. I have known Watson through attending the work of Geese and employing Geese to come into the university where I worked to deliver workshops and give a public lecture. I discussed my initial desire to focus my PhD on Geese with him. Once I was further along and had completed a literature review, I met with Lou Heywood as Director of Programmes and Emma Smallman as Manager of new recruits at Geese. This meant that I had to start again in terms of building a relationship with different Geese staff. This was a positive thing as it would enable me to be more removed from Watson as CEO and then go back to him for an interview further along in the process. I felt that it was important to 'prove myself' with these different staff members as a legitimate researcher with a good deal of knowledge about the company and its practices gained over a number of years. I did this by mentioning the range of Geese work which I had seen and the three-day course I had attended so that it would be evident that my interest in the company was quite substantial. Gradually it became clear through discussion that Geese sometimes answer questions for interviews/ contribute to book chapters but the resulting copy does not always adequately reflect that conversation. This means that they are probably starting from a point of reservation about the work which researchers like me complete so would need some reassurance along the way to make this relationship work.

At the meeting with Heywood and Smallman I arranged three informal observations that I would go to in order to immerse myself in their current work: Solihull Safeguarding Review performance, *Getting Connected* training Day for Social Work students and an interactive theatre performance for student nurses. My hope at the

time was that if handled correctly I could gain the trust of other company members during this period. These observations went well and I also attended a performance of *Playing the Game* created by Geese and Helena Enright for the Bedlam Festival in Birmingham around this time. During this period Geese sent out an advert for a new groupworker in October 2019. I felt that involvement in the recruitment and training of a new recruit was crucial to my thesis so felt happy that this could be happening at this point. I asked if I could observe the auditions which were set for December 2019 but I was refused. I accepted I would need to gather the information in different ways. It is of course a key skill needed in the research process to accept and respond to obstacles. The researcher needs to be able to adapt to changes. I asked if I could meet with Smallman to go through the training process ahead of hopefully being able to observe the new recruit. In a company like Geese practitioners are often out delivering work several days in a row and not 'in the office' to be able to respond readily to requests to meet so patience is required and an ability to get on with other research tasks in the meantime. The fears as a researcher during any waiting periods were that the company might decide that they do not want the research to continue or that they might reduce access. I knew that I needed to be present at the beginning of a new recruit starting work and I was fearful that I would miss this opportunity. This was the phase for primary work about to begin in my research. Would the company pull out at this stage? Maybe a little irrational but nevertheless a concern. It turned out that nobody was appointed in the December 2019 auditions so this gave a different perspective on what had been happening and the wait I was experiencing. Geese were two male actors short and not having success at appointing anyone suitable which would make for a challenging time in staffing projects for them.

2.9.2 Obstacles

The most significant threat to this study came due to COVID-19 in 2020. Quite soon after the National lockdown had been announced in March 2020, Watson suspended any primary research which I was doing with the company as most of the company had been furloughed and were only being brought in for specific projects. This uncertain position of no activity that was possible with the company continued for over a year. This was a really challenging period of the study. Whilst there was something happening nationally that was beyond the control of the researcher it had also come at the very moment that the interviews for the study for instance were going to begin. In addition, there was no timeframe for when research could resume with the company and all that could be done was to keep some contact with Geese from time to time and use the time to go back over areas already completed. There were doubts as to whether the study could sustain such a long gap of waiting and conversations were had with the supervisory team about contingency plans. This thesis was about one particular theatre company. There was not another one it could be replaced with as the training period was unique to Geese. What was explored instead was a possible list of people to interview who were not currently working for Geese and therefore not furloughed. A list was drawn up including people like Clark Baim. These ideas were put to Watson but he did not think that this would work. He was more interested in a picture of what the training was like now and analysis of that and for me not to base the research around interviews with people who worked at Geese a long time ago. This was a valid point and needed to be respected. Contingency plans were put to one side. Raising the possibility of the need to do this though meant that Watson did then kindly agree for me to interview him and the two people who had recently left Geese during the period April – June 2021. This was

over six months before I eventually was able to interview the others so it gave me material to start transcribing and thereby kept the research going.

2.10 Summary

Geese do seem to have a blueprint for how to train performers and practitioners in this field. Through the research to date it is evident that there are not companies that do anything in quite the same way as this training period at Geese. The combined methods of case study, semi-structured interview and structured observation allowed this training to be explored in a methodical way and conclusions to be made. It was possible to find and specify what that Geese blueprint is and to make some conclusions about it. In addition, the study was able to identify what the key attributes for the new recruit that joins the company are and how it is possible for them to successfully pass their probationary period with the company and what might prevent them doing so. This is a contribution to knowledge it is hoped as much of what is written currently about Geese centres on the rehabilitative power of the work rather than the skill of the practitioner completing it.

3. Chapter Three: Skills and previous experience of the Geese practitioner and how they are selected for the company

3.1 Introduction

This is the first of the thematic analysis chapters and explores the previous experience of the Geese practitioner and how they are selected for the company. It is necessary to examine what ability and experience was held at the point when they joined the company so that we can draw conclusions about whether there are a set of qualities that someone needs to possess to be invited to and then be successful in passing the audition at Geese. Examining what the practitioners have done before arriving at Geese and the skills which they have was also important in then analysing what happens to those skills during the training period.

Sub question two of the research questions for this study (all questions are detailed in full in the Methodology chapter) asks “What ability does the new recruit start with when they join the company and how are they trained in the very specific way that Geese works?”. The process of analysis sought to ascertain if patterns could be found between the practitioners of similar previous training and work experience. It would explore the degree of skill and of what kind (performance/ facilitation) existed already and how much would then need to be taught through the Geese training period. Or would the interview data show that there was in fact some other special quality that Geese were looking for in the selection process that these participants all had and therefore made them successful in the process of joining the company.

This chapter includes presentation of the following themes: previous skills and experience and getting selected to join Geese through audition. The themes are then

brought together in a final summary discussion, which includes a template for the qualities and skills needed to be a successful Geese practitioner viewed at the point of auditioning for the company (the thesis will provide a checklist in the later Skills and Attributes chapter which expands on qualities needed in relation to passing the six-month probation period too). The final discussion places the chapter findings within the context of existing literature.

3.2 Previous skills and experience

Once practitioners discussed their training and experience it was possible to create six sub-themes for the findings based on the data collected: degree and/ or training, relevant work experience, acting ability and experience, work with companies similar to Geese and interest in and dedication to getting a job at Geese.

The data presented is based on the information which the eight practitioners gave when questioned about their time at the company and their previous skills and experience before joining Geese. It is possible to look at the most significant elements of this data in brief in table 13 below. This chapter will also look at data on broader requirements and experiences: section 3.5 will examine if the practitioners have worked with companies similar to Geese in their career and 3.6 will explore whether the practitioners had an interest in and dedication to getting a job at Geese.

Table 13: Quick reference for practitioner data (in chronological order of when the practitioner joined Geese)

Geese Practitioner	Time at the company	UG Degree	PG degree	Full-time actor/ other skills training	Relevant work experience (Teaching or Facilitation)	Relevant work experience (Acting/ Performing)
Heywood	1991-	✓	✓		✓	✓
Watson	1997-	✓		✓	✓	✓
Smallman	2009-	✓	✓		✓	✓
Snook	2012-	✓			✓	✓
Brown	2013-	✓			✓	✓
Anderson	2014-2019			✓	✓	✓
Milne	2017-2018			✓	✓	✓
Teare	2020-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Interview data regarding previous training and work of Geese practitioners

3.2.1 Degree and/ or training

In terms of a degree or training qualification which is part of the essential criteria for people applying to Geese, all of the practitioners interviewed had obtained one or other before joining Geese. Ian Watson in Evans (2015) discusses what he describes as the “full training cycle” for performers as containing “at least five overlapping components”. He lists these as “foundational training; experiential training; production-specific training; vocational training; and the training of others” (2016, p.11). He continues that Foundational training is “the actor’s initial training”.

Experiential training, he says “is even less clearly delineated” than Foundational as “it can encompass an entire professional career” (2016, p.11). This is because actors will develop in many different directions after the initial training which they have and therefore their training needs will be varied depending on for instance whether they work in theatre or television. Training for a musical theatre performer is much clearer in that they will always need to train their singing voice for instance for any production which they are in.

In terms of initial training, several of the practitioners had completed Drama related degrees. There is a theme emerging then of deeper exploration of their subject area completed through a degree or full-time training course for the practitioners.

Heywood completed a Drama degree at Hull University. Watson had taken his Drama degree at University of East Anglia. Brown had completed a Theatre Studies degree at Huddersfield University. Smallman’s undergraduate degree was not in Drama but in Media and Sociology and Teare went to University College London and studied a Literature degree before joining Geese. Though not Drama degrees the English degree for Teare is closely related to the subject of Drama and the Sociology in Smallman’s degree would be very useful in working with a company like Geese. Snook had taken a slightly different route but still then completing a Drama and Performance undergraduate degree eventually. He completed a Higher National Diploma (HND) course in Performing Arts at The Arts Centre in Liverpool (supported by LIPA – Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts). He then wanted to go on and do a degree but could not decide between an Acting degree or one in Community theatre at LIPA. He wanted to be an actor but was “torn between the community stuff and just doing an acting course”. With a gap after this for other professional work Snook

then did a one-year top-up degree course at University of Worcester in Drama and Performance to complete his studies.

3.2.2 Actor training

Anderson and Milne were different to the others in completing full-time professional acting training courses for three years instead of an undergraduate degree as their 'foundation' training. Anderson at The Birmingham School of Acting and Milne at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. These type of conservatoire courses are much more practical and skill based than a university course. Students will typically work in smaller cohorts and study vocal skills, stage fighting, radio technique, television technique, solo audition skills and how to work in the industry etc. The schools are specifically training students to go on and be professional actors. This is different to a Drama degree that will generally be presenting a wider area connected to Drama for students to explore. During the latter students will look at a range of areas which might include critical theory, textual analysis, stand-up comedy, playwriting, applied drama, production skills, performance skills and performance work. There is of course a great deal of overlap (and Drama schools have moved in the last twenty years to often being under the umbrella of a university) but one of the key differences is that a Drama school course is usually taught 9-5pm every day whereas a university student might be attending for taught modules three times a week. In addition, students will specialise in very different areas by the end of the degree going on to be stage managers, writers, in arts management and yes of course sometimes actors.

3.2.3 Postgraduate study

Most of those interviewed had gone on after undergraduate studies to complete a range of further studies too. Watson says that it is a myth that applicants need a master's degree for instance to work with Geese. However, he admits "people often say to me I have applied to you seven times and I can't get an audition what can I do?". He continues that "sometimes I will say to people - well if you are really seriously interested (and it is financially heavy and I am not sure it will guarantee you but) there are ways of further exploring this through a university route and to get a master's". Andy remembers suggesting this to Smallman as is later detailed before she got the job at Geese and she then went to do a master's course at Manchester but emphasises that "it is not a necessity". He explains "I teach on a lot of those master's courses and you get a lot of people who are very good thinkers but they can't do the performance side". What Watson is describing is that he has worked with students who understand applied drama and its uses. They are able to articulate the philosophy of it. However, their practical skills if asked to lead an applied workshop or perform in one of the set plays of the kind Geese use are possibly much weaker or non-existent.

Heywood had completed a PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) (Secondary) at Goldsmiths University. Others went on to complete a master's course: Teare at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in Acting and Smallman a part-time master's course in Applied Theatre at Manchester University. Watson as his further training went to Jacques Lecoq International Mime and Physical Theatre School in Paris 1995-1996 before leaving a year into his two-year course. These practitioners had explored their subject or the skills associated with their subject in

greater depth as a postgraduate student bringing those skills to the audition process at Geese.

The eight practitioners had all then had some kind of formal training as part of a degree or professional actor/ mime training course. It is common for people working towards a career in performing or applied theatre work to do some sort of course after leaving school or college. Most here had done a Drama, Theatre or Acting related course either as first degree, professional actor training course or as a postgraduate degree. Performance ability is very important for working at Geese. However, practitioners would probably have performance ability regardless of their training. It is important however that the practitioners have the experience and maturity to deal with the work so a combination of training and work experience will certainly enhance any other natural performance skills which the practitioners possess.

3.3 Relevant work experience

There are some similarities identified in the work experience data collected through the interviews with practitioners. They were asked to talk about the relevant work experience which they had done prior to joining Geese as part of discovering the existing skills and experience which they had before auditioning for the company. This would form part of creating a set of qualities that a practitioner needed to possess to be invited to and then be successful at the audition to work with the company. There is a pattern in terms of the kind of work experience practitioners had completed and what form it took: the work was teaching or Theatre-in-Education

(TIE) based work in schools, this happened as performers or facilitators, was often centred on personal development and change and sometimes for quite a challenging 'audience'. This work experience provided a range of skills for the practitioners which they would be able to go on and utilise at Geese and which would make them attractive to the company at audition: teaching and/ or facilitation experience, working with challenging or resistant participants and tackling difficult topics through Drama.

3.3.1 Teaching or Theatre-in-Education work

In terms of teaching or Theatre-in-Education (TIE) work completed by practitioners Heywood did a probationary year in teaching following a PGCE and then did some supply teaching after that, Snook and Brown worked at TIE companies amongst other things and Smallman worked with young people at an outdoors educational establishment called Brathay. The teaching Heywood had completed included in some challenging schools. This type of teaching will have meant that Heywood was able to manage a room and negotiate activities with a group who were reluctant and resistant so it was good experience for the work which she would go on and do at Geese. She agrees that "I guess I had some experience of working with people that were a bit more challenging". Snook too had experience of working with some difficult participants but through TIE work. Directly before auditioning at Geese Snook worked at Loudmouth Theatre Company who are a TIE company who go into schools to help deliver the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) programmes. He says "they use theatre to explore the issues that teachers find difficult – teen pregnancy, STIs". This will have given Snook experience of working

with an audience of unwilling participants working on subjects that the pupils won't necessarily want to be engaging with.

Like Snook Brown had also worked for a well-known TIE company in the Midlands prior to joining Geese. In this case it was Big Brum Theatre-in-Education. Before that she had also belonged to a touring community theatre company where she performed shows as an actor and went into schools. In addition, she worked for a TIE Company in London where she did youth theatre and any performances which they were running. She had accumulated then a good deal of experience working in community and TIE companies. The intention was to do all this while attending auditions for performing jobs "I just wanted to perform as it was what I loved doing but I also really enjoyed facilitation". Brown explains that it is the style of working of Big Brum that then 'drew' her to Geese. She describes Big Brum's style as like the original style of TIE. This means not as much on "issue-based stuff" but "exploring what it is to be human" and "working with young people to learn how to think rather than teaching them what to think". This meant "exploring bigger philosophical questions but routed in whatever play you were working with them on". This had a big impact upon Brown and became her preference for the style of theatre that she wanted to work in. She says it led her to a "different style of questioning and how to open theatre up". She continues that when she was leaving Big Brum "I knew I couldn't just go to another Theatre-in-Education company as I knew there would be a clash with what we were doing". Brown was able then to take the skills of enabling participants to "learn how to think" plus the strong performance ability tested in schools and the community plays and bring this into the work she does at Geese.

Smallman like the other practitioners had done lots of different types of work with young people before joining Geese. She worked at a young person's homeless shelter as a support worker. She was also going into schools delivering motivational presentations. She believes that the more relevant experience for Geese however and where she learnt about facilitation was at Brathay which is a wellbeing organisation for young people she had previously worked at in The Lake District. She explains that they are "very much about personal development and change". In comparing this with Geese she agrees they are similar except that "they use the outdoors and experiential learning whereas Geese use Theatre". She saw joining Geese when she did as a "marrying of all my different interests and professional experience". This work will have provided Smallman with a lot of experience of facilitation which is the skill second to performance needed in working successfully at Geese.

Snook, during a period of indecision following his HND went to Ibiza to be an entertainer and did three six-month periods there over three years. He was responsible for all the entertainment in a hotel "from games and exercises in the day to evening entertainment". This might sound a bit remote from the work which Geese do but Snook says "I used to find that the teenagers were at that phase where they were with the parents but wanted to go out in Ibiza so I had to find ways of remaining professional". Snook believes that "all that (experience) came in useful when working for Loudmouth . . . a teenager who is torn between things . . . we would come across that quite a lot in that work" and it was eventually experience he could use at Geese. He continues "Loudmouth moved towards domestic violence but within teenage relationships". He explains that when that work started changing "I became more

interested . . . closer to the sort of stuff that Geese are doing". Snook was progressing in his jobs towards the kind of work which Geese do and his interest in it was growing. Milne was doing some support work for people in supported housing experiencing homelessness. Like Snook she had worked with Loudmouth and described her work with young people as helping them "learn how to think rather than teaching them what to think". Teare hadn't done as much applied work as the others. His experience was more related to acting. He was however the workshop coordinator for the Drama society at university and ran two weekly one-hour workshops. He says he also "did a few workshops just as training . . . lots of Geese workshops". He had previously done a little bit of teaching work but feels it was "mostly performance skills that he could bring" to his work at Geese. He had also completed a four-week course with the National Youth Theatre before his master's.

This work will have provided the practitioners with many of the skills and the experience mentioned previously which they would need at Geese such as facilitation skills, working with challenging or resistant participants and tackling awkward topics through Drama like sexually transmitted disease in the example from Snook. The subject matter and environment would be different in a prison but a great deal of these skills would still be needed. Many of the practitioners interviewed for this study arrived at the Geese audition with relevant experience in the wider areas of applied drama and facilitation. They had worked in non-traditional theatre settings such as schools and community centres and education centres. They had been responsible for preparing and delivering usually educational workshops to a range of client groups. They had also developed confidence in facilitation tackling a variety of topics in the work they had been involved in.

3.4 Acting ability and experience

Acting ability and acting experience is evident to differing degrees in the practitioners examined for this study. It would seem that it works best when people come to Geese with very good acting ability but Watson feels that doesn't have to be "professionally or through any formal training". He continues "when I joined Geese there was a member of staff who had got no performance training – who had come from a probation background". He explains that "lots have (acted professionally or have some training in it) but it is not always the case – we actually take very few who've been through a drama school for instance – partly because Drama school teaches some fairly bad habits – it teaches you to be about you". An important quality for practitioners to have at Geese according to Watson (discussed in more depth later) is a lack of ego. Watson feels that the Drama school route often encourages actors to have too much ego which isn't helpful to work at Geese.

In the eight interviewed for this study two practitioners had been to Drama school at undergraduate level for a three-year Acting course. One had completed a postgraduate year at a Drama School for Acting. All three were working as professional actors before coming to Geese amongst other things. A further had trained in a related way in mime as a postgraduate course. The rest had not received professional acting training but had participated in performance work in other ways. Often that was not in the traditional in a theatre space kind of performance experience and more likely to be in a school or in the community.

3.4.1 Professional actor training

Strong performance ability is central to the work which Geese do. The participants must believe in what is being presented to them and for that the acting needs to be authentic. That of course does not have to come from Drama school training but some of the practitioners in this study were drama school trained. Anderson arrived at Geese as a professional actor having worked in television, film and radio for nine years after leaving Drama school. Milne worked as an actor before and after the Drama school training she completed. She left Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2010 and was working professionally for seven years as an actress in a variety of jobs before joining Geese in July 2017. Teare describes “doing lots of acting at university”. Graduating from there he did “a couple of years as a jobbing actor”. He says he “went on tour, did a few shows, was quite busy”. Watson didn’t attend a drama school but did do full-time skills training in mime and physical theatre which is evident in the work which he does at Geese.

3.4.2 Disillusion with the standard acting profession

The professional actors all describe wanting something more than the standard route to using their training after they had experienced the profession for a while. Anderson describes always having “a passion in using my skills and abilities outside the commercial realms of the arts”. This meant that the work which Anderson was doing increasingly was moving away from standard acting jobs and more towards using theatre as a tool for change. Teare says that he was “intending on going down the performance route but in those two years (after the master’s course) though I got a chance to do lots of performance . . . I had a good agent and it was very successful . . . I found it a bit . . . I didn’t find it interesting and varied enough”. He continues “it

didn't feel like enough of a stretch . . . it didn't feel like I was meeting lots of different people . . . so, it was in those two years that I decided to explore applied theatre”.

3.4.3 Acting experience for those who did not take the Drama School route

All the practitioners interviewed had been using acting in some way in the various jobs which they had held often connected to the applied work which they were doing but not always. Heywood had done some acting jobs (one with a company that went into schools and interacted with the audience) and work at a youth theatre.

In terms of the performance element to the job Smallman had always done acting, singing and dancing because she enjoyed it and in a semi-professional way though at the audition, she worried about people around her who sounded like they had a lot of professional mainstream acting experience. Brown was hoping to have a career as a professional actress and was acting in community plays and with Big Brum.

Snook had used his acting ability in TIE work and describes being torn when deciding on his degree between a conservatoire type course or a more traditional acting one deciding on the latter eventually. Heywood says “I didn't particularly think of myself as talented (as an actor)” She says “I am a pretty competent actor *now*. . . I feel confident acting, and I feel that I am pretty skilled”. However, she says “If you asked me to do a Shakespeare in a big theatre where the skills are around being good with that more florid language or projection, I don't think I would be”. She explains “I am good at this type of acting which has to be quite real . . . you have to make yourself quite vulnerable – it has to be realistic – not always naturalistic”. She continues “I have lost any of that slight discomfort that young actors have around just being vulnerable or about it not being a proper job and showing off . . . the little things that can get in the way”. Heywood feels that her acting has improved at her time at

Geese though considering the work Geese were doing when she joined (largely performance work) she must have had good ability at that point too.

There is a real mixture of actor training and experience in the practitioners interviewed. Some had done full-time professional training for three years (Anderson and Milne), others had done this kind of full-time training but only at postgraduate level (Teare and in a loosely related course, Watson). Some had done acting as part of their degrees and wanted to work as actors but applied work had come along (Snook and Brown). Others like Heywood and Smallman describe themselves as inexperienced in acting when they joined Geese but obviously had an ability to act authentically and then have worked on the craft needed for this company since then.

3.5 Work experience with companies similar to Geese

Many of the practitioners had been involved in work of a similar nature to that of Geese or had worked with client groups outside of education. This is important in terms of experience because it means that the practitioners were, in many cases, used to using Drama to effect change, which is in line with the work which Geese do. They had also worked with a variety of client groups. Some had worked in prisons already too.

3.5.1 Experience

Heywood had done some work for a company working with people on probation (coincidentally, the person she did this project with told Heywood about Geese).

When working with the Theatre-in-Education company in London it was the first time

Brown went into prisons. During this period, she went into two prisons – one a category A and one an open prison. Going into prisons albeit to do a different kind of work was not new to Brown when she came to Geese, so she already had some experience of that. Anderson explains having about six years where he worked with Drama in prisons and with young people at risk of offending. This included making a documentary film (*Inside Out*, 2014) which explores the realities of resettlement of people who have been in prison. He describes completing “extensive research, going into prisons and speaking to prisoners”. Anderson explains his life experiences and how they influenced the direction he wanted to take in his career. He asserts that “if it wasn’t for Drama, Theatre or Film I’d either be dead, in prison or seriously mentally ill”. He continues to emphasize this point “I didn’t do well at school, got excluded quite a bit, got into a lot of fights”. He says he was “an angry young man trying to find out who I was, my identity”. He emphasises again “if it wasn’t for Drama, Theatre or Film my trajectory as a young black British man would have been very different”. Anderson says “I was interested in going to prisons and unconventional settings to use Drama and Theatre because I felt if it can transform my life then surely it can transform other people’s lives as well”. The fact that Anderson describes quite strongly how working with Drama ‘saved’ him and changed the course of his life meant that he then wanted to use that Drama to do something similar for others.

It is evident that there is work experience here which is linked to the kind of work which Geese does. The practitioners were coming to the audition at Geese with a range of work which they had completed before but much of it having similarities to the work which Geese does, the way in which they work or the kind of people they work with. Some had already worked in prisons or completed work with marginalised

groups. We can see the elements coming together that meant Anderson for instance as an example had the potential to be suited to being successful at Geese. He was trained as a professional actor so would have the strong performance skills needed to work at Geese but then also had a personal interest in working with people in prisons which had led him to have experience in doing this for about six years prior to auditioning.

3.6 Interest in and dedication to getting a job at Geese

The practitioners talked about an interest in and sometimes dedication to getting a job at Geese. It appeared to be more than just another audition for them in many cases. Being a member of Geese is not a particularly well-paid job and can be very demanding in terms of the participants that the company works with and the subject matter covered. It would appear important then that people really want to be doing the job as they also start at a lower salary for the probation period too.

3.6.1 Dedicated to working at Geese

Smallman describes her process of getting a job at Geese as “dedicated” as she applied two years before she was taken on by the company. On that occasion she did not get given an audition. Watson suggested she think about doing a master’s degree such as the Applied one at Manchester University (where Simon Rudding, ex founder member of Geese operates TIPP). At the time she was looking at other postgraduate performance courses at universities, but they were not “hitting the spot” in terms of what she wanted to do so she joined Manchester. While on the course Geese were recruiting again and amusingly Smallman applied again “they were looking for a man but I applied anyway”. This attempt failed but then she applied for

another post towards the end of her master's course and got an audition. Brown explains thinking she was not going to get the job at Geese when it came up, but she had left Big Brum just because it felt like the time to move on and she felt she needed the experience of applying and hopefully going through the audition process as she had been seven years at Big Brum. In between acting jobs Milne had done some volunteering for Clean Break. This started in 2013 and Milne worked as an assistant tutor on some of their education programmes. She says she "always had an interest in the kind of work which Geese does". Teare details that "in the run up to applying to Geese I had been to a public show (*Playing the Game*, Birmingham Rep, 2019) and a Geese information workshop". Teare was asked if Geese was just one of many companies he was applying to and he said that "for about six months he was scoping them out . . . I was on tour and unhappy with acting". Brown and Anderson were running the information session he went to and "that is where I got to see the mime scenes and the masks". This seemed to lead to him being very interested in and focused on getting a job at the company.

Geese are a well-known company in the field of using Drama to work with prisoners and possibly the best doing this kind of work in the United Kingdom but they are possibly not known outside of the niche area of this work. For most of the eight interviewed they knew of the work though and therefore really wanted to work with Geese or during the audition process realised that this was very much the kind of company they wanted to work for.

3.7 Getting selected to join Geese through audition

With all of the various experiences which the potential recruits came to Geese with they then have to try and successfully complete the audition process for the company. The company list essential criteria to be seen through the application or audition as: theatre training/ experience, excellent performance and improvisation skills, ability to work flexibly in response to audience/ participant interaction and input, excellent communication and interpersonal skills and enthusiasm for the area of work (Geese job specification, 2019 – see appendix 3). We begin by looking at what Geese formally state in terms of the person specification needed and what the requirements for the audition are. This is followed by the data of what the eight practitioners discussed in answers. Based on the information given in these answers it was possible to divide the findings under a further nine subheadings: initial thoughts on the process, changes in the process over time, basic activities included at the audition, being versatile, using masks, the workshop, the interview, looking back as practitioners now and letting go of your ego. The audition process at Geese is very challenging and lengthy and reveals some key information about what the company are looking for in the trainee.

3.7.1 What Geese say – Person Specification

When Geese are recruiting Watson says “We are never casting for a particular role because that would be odd for us . . . it’s always about - we need someone who can step into all of the work ultimately and yes sometimes we will advertise for male or female and that’s partly about keeping balance within the company”. He explains this further “partly because the female practitioners deliver the female work, so we need to keep a balance between male and female. If you look at our applications, we get

10 applications from women for every man so it would be easier for us to recruit more women but then we would be unbalanced in terms of our ability to deliver the work". Geese are looking then for a practitioner who can participate in all aspects of the company's work. Geese outline the person specification in their recruitment information given to people thinking about applying to the company (see Table 14 below). The list indicates the skills, attributes and experience that a new member of the company will need.

Table 14: Geese person specification

Required Skills/Attributes	Assessment
Theatre training/ experience	Application
Excellent performance and improvisational skills	Audition
Able to work flexibly in response to audience/participant interaction and input	Audition
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills	Application and Audition
Enthusiasm for the area of work	Application, Audition and Interview
Able to reflect and evaluate own practice	Audition and Interview
Desirable Skills/Attributes	Assessment
Experience of training or facilitating others	Application and Audition
Experience of working with marginalised, vulnerable and at-risk groups	Application
Experience of devising work	Application and Audition
Able to conduct research around a specific brief and a willingness to learn	Audition and Interview
Good organisational skills	Application and Audition

Source: Geese recruitment information, person specification

Geese describe needing "a multi-skilled person – to be both an actor and groupwork facilitator; to be able to work alone and also as part of a team. You will need to be confident, resourceful and self-organised". They detail that "the focus of each day will be different . . . you could be performing; rehearsing; facilitating a group on your own; facilitating a group with a co-worker; travelling; working in the office; delivering staff

training; preparing and planning future work; researching; spending time involved in staff development or at company meetings” (Geese, 2019). They describe the clients as being “from a range of criminal justice agencies, male or female prisoners and vulnerable people in community settings. Our work involves delivering projects with people who have committed a wide range of offences, including violence, domestic abuse and sexual offences against both children and adults” (2019). The six-month probation period is mentioned “during the six-month probation period, training will involve observing work and rehearsing into some of our productions, before progressing onto co-working. There will be some theory sessions and basic computer training (if needed)”. The salary offered in 2019 (which has not increased in 2023 and is for a full-time commitment to the company) was £20,500 rising to £22,500 on successful completion of the probation period.

3.7.2 The audition

Table 15, below, provides a summary of the activities which Geese have constructed in order to test the skills and qualities which they are looking for in a potential practitioner for the company. It is a long and detailed audition process which tests people in all of the skills which Geese expect in a new recruit.

Table 15: Activities included in a Geese audition

ACTIVITY	KEY INFORMATION
Games and exercises	Standard Drama games. These test ability but also serve as a warmup and help participants to work together effectively.
Improvisation	Short improvisation exercises are set. Important though which kind of characters participants draw upon to use when requested (are they appropriate for the area of work?).

Facilitation/ workshop	Participants have time to prepare for this. They then have to deliver part of a workshop using others as imagined participants in a prison.
Using masks	Participants are given a stock character with some time to prepare. They then wear a half mask and Geese direct questions at your character.
Perform in the play <i>Stay</i>	<i>Stay</i> is a piece about domestic abuse created and used by Geese for different audiences. Participants have to perform in a scene from this opposite a current Geese practitioner.
Interview	The final activity in the Geese audition where participants are asked about their experience of the audition as well as other general questions.

Source: information gathered from asking current practitioners to detail the content of the audition

The audition process is long and demanding expecting those applying and remaining throughout the process to participate in games and exercises and improvisation work, to facilitate part of a workshop, perform in a section of one of Geese' key plays *Stay* with existing Geese practitioners and then to be interviewed. Auditionees are 'let go' throughout the process which is similar to auditioning for a theatre or television job. The number of participants who are there at the beginning of the auditions is gradually reduced with people being sent home. The various elements are often separated up so that there might be a day in between one section and another particularly towards the end of the process or the auditionees might have a weekend to prepare for the final stage.

3.7.3 Initial thoughts from practitioners

Smallman explains feeling "totally out of my depth" arriving at the auditions as she had not trained as an actor and the others there were talking about television which they had done. She thought therefore that she "may as well enjoy the day and the

experience". Snook really enjoyed the process at the audition of "improvising and being creative again" after working with scripted pieces at Loudmouth. As with the others Snook took part in a day of activity with thirty applicants. This was reduced by the end of the day and those remaining were invited back the following week. In the meantime, the company told the applicants to do some related reading which Snook did. Brown explains that the numbers invited to audition have been cut over the years but in 2013 when Liz auditioned there were thirty women called in the morning and thirty in the afternoon which were then reduced and reduced over the three days of the audition. Though the audition process seems quite gruelling Smallman feels that "It was very carefully done so I didn't feel that I was in a threatening not particularly nice audition environment". Milne describes the audition process as "rigorous" and starting with a large group audition. She remembers there being probably thirty people at the audition. She details that "most people had more formal experience in applied theatre that were applying so I was a bit like oh I don't have that". Anderson agrees that the audition process is gruelling. He describes that the first part is the acting workshops and seeing "how we gel as a group". He explains that his audition started with twenty people and then you are taken into a room where auditionees are told that some haven't been successful. This process continued to reduce those left. Teare describes the audition process at Geese as "long". Long days and travelling to Birmingham from London where he was living at the time. He describes there being maybe twenty people or more at the audition to start with. After about two hours about half of those were sent home.

3.7.4 Changes in the process over time

When Heywood joined Geese just four years after it started as a company with Saul Hewish as the artistic director there was no facilitation as part of the audition process. Instead, it was an acting and improvisation task. The company at that point had two strands of work– a touring company that went into prisons to give performances and workshops – named creative residencies and then project work in probation settings. Heywood joined to be part of the touring company. She had to do basic acting exercises and improvisation she says. Heywood explains that the performances then compared to now were much more improvised in prisons so effectively structured improvisations. This meant a planned start to a scene such as ‘two people coming out of prison’ but then Heywood explains that the rest would be dictated by where the audience saw the scene going. She feels that they were looking at audition for people who could “play the parts they wanted - clearly I must have been able to improvise in the moment”. This is a difficult skill to achieve and would mean that Heywood’s improvisation skills would become very strong.

3.8 The auditionees’ view of the contents of the audition

Brown describes the contents of the audition as “an introduction to Geese, some standard Drama exercises, improvisation was important too”. She did an improvisation class just before the audition to feel prepared. On the first day Teare describes being expected to do “lots of improvised scenes of different set ups” and there were some name exercises. Brown details that there were Drama circle activities including the exercise *What are you doing?* (in this improvisation game everyone is in a circle; person one goes into the circle and starts doing something like putting their jacket on; person two comes into the circle and asks ‘what are you

doing?'; person one says 'I am brushing my teeth' – deliberately saying something different from what they were actually doing; person two has to then brush their teeth; person one leaves the circle and so on). In terms of content Milne remembers similar exercises. She explains doing some improvisation games such as “somebody goes into the circle . . . that somebody has to hold a pose and you have to create a shape that makes sense and then give a bit of dialogue”. She says “I remember them saying they did want to see real characters . . . it wasn't about being fanciful in that moment . . . they wanted quite grounded characters”.

Watson says “We look for people who are comfortable being responsive – that ability – I guess it is connected to the improvisational stuff – it's the ability to take what the offer is and do something with it – whether that's the offer from another actor or an offer from the facilitator or an offer from an audience member and be able to work with it”. Milne remembers thinking “I don't necessarily have these applied theatre background skills but I felt that my acting background helped me”. It helped her she says because “I was able to click into quite grounded characters quite quickly which was a different angle”. What Milne felt she needed to do here echoes Watson's description of a need for the actor to be “authentic and genuine” quickly.

All the practitioners describe the process of the numbers at audition being steadily reduced by sending people home after each section. Brown details that the afternoon got more intensive and the *Park Bench* exercise was used (in this improvisation person one sits on an imaginary park bench and starts being a character – they are left doing this for a while; person two joins person one as a character which changes the scene and they interact; person one finds a reason as

their character to leave the park bench; person two is then joined by person three who instigates a new scene and so on). Brown explains that Geese lead this so that applicants are encouraged to “try to use a range of age groups, classes and social status”. She knows now of course that they are “also trying to see if we would weave these through ourselves”. So, choice of characters and how as an actor you bring these into the exercises is key. You can see this well in an improvisation game like *Park Bench* because there is a good deal as an actor of having to work with what the actor you join has come up with character wise. You have to try and make that work rather than twisting it to fit some pre-planned character which you have in your ‘actor’s toolkit’.

3.9 Qualities and skills needed at audition

3.9.1 Being versatile

Heywood explains that “we need to see people can play particular roles so they might be offender roles, partners of offender roles . . . people who have seen a bit of the world”. She details that this is people who “might be a bit more street for want of a better word . . . if you don’t have experience of being around people like that or you don’t come from somewhere like that then it is much harder”. She explains “so, if you have lived a very privileged life then you are not going to be able to play those characters very easily because you won’t know them”. Heywood feels that she was successful in passing the audition because she was able to do this. Watson picks up the idea of this skill of versatility which is needed “We look for people who we think can play the range rather than people who sort of . . . you know sometimes you meet people - they do one thing really well, but they can’t do anything else – so there’s

something about testing for range”. He explains this further saying that successful recruits to Geese need to have “the ability to switch between being a seven-year-old boy living in a house where there is domestic abuse to then playing a probation officer to then playing a judge, to being a police officer to then being an offender whose got a conviction for a sexual offence”. He explains that needs to happen quickly and “without needing to go uh . I don’t know what my character would think”.

The ability to move quickly between very different characters is clearly a very important skill for people to have who are joining Geese. From the observation work of practical projects at Geese carried out before the formal interviews the need for this skill was very evident. The practitioners were indeed going between all of these different kinds of roles and usually in quick succession often playing several parts in the same piece of theatre. Each role needs to be believable as you are expecting an audience of people in prisons to believe what they are seeing. You need them to find the characters depicted authentic and therefore engage in what the piece is about and the ‘story’ of the characters. Watson says “What we test for in audition is a very specific set of performance skills . . . and those are . . . we are testing for ability to jump in and out of character immediately, quickly - an ability to be authentic and genuine really quickly”. He continues that “it is the opposite of someone who says hang on hang on I need some time – it is the opposite of that - is the best way of describing it”. Strong performance ability then is essential at Geese but quite a specific performance ability of being able to play a range of characters. The Geese practitioner needs to be able to switch between these roles very quickly in performance but also be able to portray very authentic characters when they are doing it.

3.9.2 Using mask effectively

Brown describes a section of the audition where applicants have an introduction to the mask work which Geese do and are given a hot seating character (hot-seating is a drama strategy where one actor in character is 'interviewed' by the other workshop participants and has to answer the questions in character). In terms of Geese the questioning of the character is also part of the working with masks as actors will have to use the Geese skill of 'lifting the mask' when they are speaking truthfully as the character. Brown gives an example of scenarios as "15-year-old girl, Mum has just found some weed, what does she do when the Mum confronts her". It could also be Brown describes "talking to a headteacher or someone else like that . . . figuring out how you use the mask when you lift it and when you put it down". This was just using the half masks at this point. There are four stock characters and fifteen people in the room. Brown describes each person being given one of the stock characters. The auditionees were given some time to think about their character and then Geese would "fire questions at you". Brown feels that they were looking at "how you work the mask and how quickly you go from one thing to another". Brown had done some mask work before but not "lifting the mask which is pretty unique to Geese". She remembers at that point feeling "oh no I don't think I have got this". She felt that there were some really good actors in the room with "serious skills". Brown got through that day nevertheless and then ten people were called the next day (five men and five women).

3.9.3 Workshop facilitation

Watson says "In terms of groupwork, facilitation . . . we often talk about the fact that we can teach a lot of the groupwork stuff and the group facilitation stuff but we can't

really teach the acting”. He continues “you either have the ability to do this or you have the essence and we think we can see how we can help you grow”. He explains “It is different though with the facilitation work it’s about looking for people who can – it’s about the responsivity thing – can you be responsive to what someone throws at you in a group situation?”. He explains that yes, the company look for all the normal skills of facilitation such as people who can deliver exercise instructions clearly and concisely. People he says “who’ve got authority but humour that are able to command the space without being commanding”. At Geese though he says “are you able to deviate from whatever you planned to do and respond in the moment to what is coming up?”. He explains why this is so important “because our work . . . is absolutely about working with what’s in the room rather than working through your plan”. Watson states “that’s what differentiates Geese from a lot of other organisations I think in that we work with people where they are at rather than where we think they should be at”. So, there will be organisations who do important work that perform prepared pieces to audiences similar to those that Geese work with. However, that will be a set piece that does not adapt and change based on what is coming from the audience on that day. It is a set performance that isn’t interactive but might have a workshop afterwards that is interactive possibly.

All participants still there towards the end of the audition process must deliver part of a workshop. Brown describes that she had to prepare a workshop and decide who it was for “maybe young men in for a violent offence”. She had to deliver a ten-minute part of that workshop and show progression and also say for instance that this was “week three of seven”. Therefore, only very basic information was given as the stimulus by Geese. Each person then delivered their workshop using the other

auditionees as participants. Like Smallman, Brown mentions reading *The Geese Theatre Handbook* (2002) “from cover to cover” prior to the audition. This meant she says that “she had an idea of their approach . . . I just used some of the stuff I know they do but doing it how I would do it because I only knew my style”. She continues “I think I did something to do with creating frozen pictures for a word then bringing them to life”. This is a key exercise which Geese use. She discusses what Geese are looking for in the facilitation part of the audition partly with her hindsight as a member of Geese now too saying they are not just looking at you creating a workshop but “how responsive you can be within a workshop”. She explains this as “how do you talk to people and how can you be assertive and give an instruction, are you open to whatever disruption you might get”. She says she was fortunate as she had been working with children and being responsive was a key part of that work”. The key phrase from Brown here is “are you open to whatever disruption you might get” which echoes what Watson describes as being a really key skill for Geese practitioners. Anderson says following the first day he thought “by the end of the day I was still in the room, oh my gosh”. He was then given a recall and describes this as “even more intense’. He had to deliver a thirty-minute workshop, more improvisation and acting. He describes being “over the moon” when he found out that he had got the job “because what you go through is such a lot”. Milne describes there then being five auditionees that were called back the next day and being asked to do a facilitation task too. After the first day of auditions Smallman says she felt that she really wanted to work at the company after what she had participated in. She was then invited back to a further day at the weekend. “I felt a bit sort of confident coming back as it was the workshop delivery and that is what I had been doing”. All the participants then had parts of the process they felt more comfortable/ better at. With

Milne it was the responsive acting, Smallman the facilitation work for instance. Most had thought ahead and prepared with the Geese manual being mentioned particularly as a resource.

Teare discusses delivering the workshop but also that “we were taking part in each other’s . . . when you are not delivering you are aware of how you are in the room”. He continues “it is a weird experience because everyone is role playing what it is like to be . . . you say at the beginning who you think this workshop is catered for and the Geese facilitators will play as though they are sixteen-year-old youth offending group or just a standard prison – depending on who your target audience is”. He explains it is “so weird because everyone is role playing around you . . . probably the hardest thing is trying to judge how to play the room just as yourself”. He says when this was over there were “increasingly intense improvisations towards the end of the day”.

3.9.4 Performing in a set extract

Teare describes working on a section from *Stay* “where you play the perpetrator” so “given a set up from the play . . . ok you need to scare the shit out of this woman with whatever tactics you can . . . to see where naturally you go to”. He says this was “quite an intense one shouting horrible things at Emma (Smallman) who is now my line manager”. *Stay* was created almost 20 years ago by Geese. The company describe the play’s content as “a couple move into a new home with their child. We are witness to the collapse of their relationship in the face of the man’s controlling behaviour, emotional abuse and physical violence” (www.geese.co.uk). It is a significant piece at Geese and has been used in several client settings since its creation “*Stay* provides a challenging insight into one man’s cycle of abuse, the

attitudes and beliefs which support it and the impact his behaviours have on his partner and child". Brown explains that a section of *Stay* was performed by Geese which went up to a point and then in pairs they had to perform the next section of the play. Each pair was an auditionee with a Geese practitioner. When it was performed "there was quite a bit of push that a bit further . . . what is happening for that character . . . so, there was a constant pushing and pushing and pushing". So rather like some more lengthy theatre auditions it is not a case of just presenting a piece from a play but demonstrating how you can respond to directions to further develop the piece and improve it. Can you as a performer try lots of different options of how a piece runs instead of being stuck to just one? Being able to do this shows a director/company like Geese that you have the skills to respond to direction, be flexible in your approach and can perform the scene in a way that is maybe contrary to how you perceive it to be.

3.9.5 Interview ability

Brown sums up the interview in saying that even after the games and exercises and leading a workshop and performing in part of *Stay* she then had to talk to two Geese practitioners mainly about "a bit of reflection on how the three days had been, how your workshop had gone, anything you would change, anything that went well, anything you wanted to ask about the company". Then there was an interview with Watson and Heywood. By this point Brown says "I was so tired and exhausted that I had forgotten there was still an interview and still had to hold my composure so when they asked how I was I was like "Phew I'm knackered". Probably this bit of humour and relaxation was one of the things Geese liked as it gives a sense of what the person will be like working with them day to day. Watson adds that yes as well as all the practical activities "in addition to that of course you are looking for people who

have got an interest in working in criminal justice, social welfare, what is it that has drawn them to it, you are trying to weed out the people that think oh it might just be quite sexy working in prisons from the people that have got a kind of genuine interest in social justice". Some of this will be evident during the practical work and some will be explored in the interview.

3.9.6 Letting go of your ego as a performer

Watson adds a new additional quality which the company is looking for which is possibly the most significant thing. He explores something outside of all the skills already mentioned saying "this is a really weird thing to test for in audition and again it is a really hard to articulate it in audition but one of the qualities we look for is people who are willing to let go of their own ego and put that to one side". He explains "Sometimes we meet in audition people who are really good performers but it is all about them and that is the opposite of what we look for in people because the vast majority of our work is about enabling others not about profiling ourselves". In terms of the audition activities and criteria he says "that is possibly a more hidden quality that we are trying to see in people and of course you see that both in the more formal audition moments where people are in focus and you see it in how people respond to other people being in focus". He explains this "in an audition you might have set up three people in an improvisation – this is I think quite key – we're as interested in watching how people watch them as we are in watching them". He concludes "It's that sense of how are you being as a person in that space with other people?". This is something which is much more difficult to define than training, performance ability and facilitation skill but may be the very thing that when it is there

in addition to the above means the auditionee is very likely to be taken on and succeed with the company.

3.10 Reflecting on the auditions as practitioners now

Many of the practitioners were able to also talk about their view now as members of the company as distinct from the experience at the audition. Smallman says “now being the other side of the audition process it is so much less about what your training has been and is so much about the person and what you can bring”. She concludes that “I was being authentic and that was what we want at Geese”. She felt that “you learn a lot on that audition day as it is such a different style of performing”. Snook felt he did ok at the mask work section of the auditions. He comments “I notice that some people - being on the other side of the auditions that’s where a lot of people - they’re really good [but] start to struggle and just don’t quite get it, but I think I *did* because working with fronts – working with teenagers we get a lot of stuff in pupil referral units . . . you are constantly met with fronts that start to loosen when they enjoy what you are doing . . . I was able to pick up on that mask work and where Geese were coming from”. Brown says she realised this on the day “but more since I have been on the other side”. She discusses the game where one person is in the middle of a circle in role and stops and someone else comes in “do you start something akin to what Geese will be doing or do you just go for random improv/ drama school stuff?”. She goes on “Who are you and what are your go-tos (in improvisation) and what are you thinking about whilst you are doing the job”. She concludes that “weirdly when I think about it now in terms of the exercises we use with Geese, everything is working on so many different levels at all times even if you

are not aware of it". Smallman says she recalls there being someone else at the audition who seemed much more experienced and would surely get the job but "Geese are looking at many things and we are looking at (and I guess they saw this in me) that I was coming here for a long time and I have been". She says "I remember playing a heroin user during the audition and really immersing in it and really considering those roles . . . I found it really excellent for my own development".

The interviewees were concluding then that personal qualities are very important and probably much more important than training. Personal qualities in terms of your own 'go tos' as Brown says and the fact that Smallman felt that she was going to be a Geese for the long-term and the company could sense this.

3.11 Summary

Analysis of the data collected allows the creation of an at a glance checklist (see Table 16 below) of the kind of person best suited to working at Geese and what skills and experience and qualities they will need to have to be successful. A formula if you like for what will ensure success. Not all these qualities will be perfect at the audition stage but the competitiveness of joining the company will mean that they will need to see evidence of these skills or believe that they can be further developed during the six-month training period in order to take someone on.

Table 16: Qualities/ skills needed to become a successful Geese practitioner

What?	Detail
UG degree/ training course	This could be a three-year UG degree or Drama school training or degree followed by postgraduate study.
Work experience	Experience working in areas of performance/ education/ applied theatre and or with marginalised groups.
Excellent communicator	Confident and clear in talking to a wide range of participants.
Competent actor	Able to perform to a high standard – this cannot really be taught at Geese.
Be authentic as a performer	To be able to bring authenticity to the performances so that they are believed by the client group who then more readily engage with the work.
Versatility in performance	Able to play a wide range of characters and go between them easily and quickly.
Who you are as a person	Be able to work well in a small team. Have a good energy in a room with others.
No ego as performer	The requirement to prioritise the needs of the client group above personal needs.
Strong skills in improvisation	Able to improvise to a high standard.
Facilitation skills	Confident and responsive as a facilitator.
Able to perform in a mask well	Skill in mask is central to the work at Geese.
Strong interest in this area of work	Be genuinely interested in working in this area.
Able to evaluate your own practice	Be able to continually evaluate your own practice and that of others.

Source: data collected from the interviews where the practitioners were asked to outline their skills and experience

Exploration of the previous skills that Geese practitioners had before joining the company and what the audition selection process consisted of for them allowed some themes to emerge. All of the eight interviewees had degree or professional performance/ actor training. Watson described having a degree as not essential and it is stated as training *or* experience on the person specification for applying for the

company. However, they will all have matured and gained experience from the degrees which they took and they were all taken in Drama or related subject areas.

The data demonstrated that the practitioners had gained a variety of differing work experience but it is evident how these jobs prior to joining Geese were suited to the work which they would then go on to do with the company. They had worked as teachers, in theatre-in-education or applied work as performers and facilitators or in traditional acting jobs. This had given them experience of working with 'audiences' that were not always willing participants and could often be challenging such as school pupils, teenagers holidaying in Ibiza and people in prison. Many had also worked with people struggling with issues such as housing for instance. They were all having to act as part of jobs but were often using theatre for the purpose of change rather than just in traditional acting roles. This was resulting in them gaining skills in how to use Drama to effect change or to know how it can be used for people to be able to re-examine how they approach the world. There was a sense from all of them through the interviews that they wanted to either continue and extend the kind of work they were involved in, or that just traditional performance/ theatre-in-education work was not quite enough for them. Some had come through the specialised actor training route but were finding that traditional acting jobs were not quite fulfilling enough or that they wanted more meaning to what they were doing.

The practitioners often worried if they were good enough to do the work at Geese and described others at the audition as seeming to be more experienced and better suited to the work so were often humble about their own ability. One described just giving the audition a go as she knew this was the direction she wanted to go in but

felt she might not be good enough to make it through. Another talked about the mainstream experience that many of the others at audition had as they were discussing all the various television and theatre roles which they had done. They all it seems viewed Geese as a job where they wanted to be for a long time and only one had a relatively short time with the company (and that was just because she needed to be back living in London where she was from). Another describes knowing by the end of the audition process that she wanted the job and wanted to be there for a long time and she felt Geese could sense that.

It had been evident in following the work of the company and particularly watching the Artistic Director performing as a practitioner that strong performance ability is key and this was confirmed here through the interviews. However, this certainly did not need to be Drama school trained actors. Two are trained actors with one training at postgraduate level but Watson stated that in fact someone from the Drama school route is less likely to appeal to the company as he feels “it teaches you to be about you”. This is a generalisation of course but yes Drama school training does focus on the individual performer in terms of performance skills and psychology regarding acting. Students are encouraged to develop a strong confidence in what they are doing and to think about how they might project themselves to directors etc. in the industry and find work. There is much debate about the requirement for actor training. Freeman explores the idea of whether training for acting is even necessary “Not everyone is convinced that actors need training at all”. He goes on “Speaking at a Westminster Forum Projects meeting, The National Youth Theatre’s artistic director Paul Roseby claimed that most actors do not require years of drama school to learn their craft; people, he suggests, can either act or they can’t” (2019, p.17). I would

agree with this from experience performing but also teaching actors. There has to be a base line ability which exists. What a Drama School training then does is look at key skills and hopefully develops a 'thinking actor'. This is someone who can make informed choices about why they are doing something and have an analytical approach to working with text. Alfreds discusses actor training in *Different Every Night*. Crudely, what drama schools used to teach or what actors would pick up learning on the job were largely a set of external techniques for making sure their faces could be seen and their voices heard" (2007, p.28). He goes on to say that "Acting schools are now considerably more enlightened than they were, so it's possible for actors to learn the tools of their trade in a coherent manner rather than piecemeal, on the job" (2007, p.29). Alfreds is in favour of the formal training as he believes that "most actors seem to settle for a sort of competence" otherwise. He contrasts this with other types of performers who "know they cannot sing, dance or play an instrument without specialised training". He continues "Indeed, their lives are accompanied by continuous coaching, study and exercise" (2007, p.29). Drama School training can offer the concentration on aspects such as breathing, voice projection, characterisation and more specialised skills such as stage fighting and radio and television technique but this certainly is not essential to working at Geese. Training is important then but can take many forms such as formal Drama school training or learning through acting jobs and then being able to continue that with Geese. Significantly the two drama school trained practitioners had done a lot of non-traditional acting jobs coming out of Drama school and considerable amounts of work with marginalised communities so if initially taught maybe that it was all about themselves in performance work had certainly moved away from that in the jobs which they had done since.

The audition selection process which the interviewees attended is very structured consisting of all the various tasks you might expect to test ability. Watson agrees that they are testing for a very specific set of performance skills. There are games and improvisation exercises; mask work; a facilitation exercise of delivering part of a workshop and finally performing in *Stay* which is one of the company's significant texts about domestic violence. The audition seems to typically start with as many as thirty people and then they are 'let go' at various points so that there might just be five left on the last day. Participants have to demonstrate skill in all of the areas mentioned: be able to improvise well, lead and facilitate a workshop, cope with the particular demands of mask work and perform well in the play excerpt. Watson says "participants have to be able to jump in and out of character immediately" and can show this in the improvisation exercises.

It is also important that people coming to work at Geese are very versatile performers able to play the range of characters which appear in all the plays which the company do. This is difficult as good actors will be able to play various roles but the range here can be between playing a young child, social worker, teacher, parent and at other times someone who is in prison for child sexual offences for instance. The Director of Programmes mentioned in relation to this that she feels having some lived experience or having been around some of the kinds of characters which appear in the Geese work will be useful or certainly makes it harder if you have not. She felt that if you have not "you are not going to be able to play those characters very easily because you won't know them".

Confidence in performance and facilitation is key. In *The Geese Theatre Handbook* confidence is discussed as being necessary to “convey to the participants that they can contribute honestly to the process without running the risk of destabilising us and then suffering the consequences” (2002, p.26). They explore this further in terms of being nervous when facilitating workshops “even when we have moments of internal nervousness, it is important to project confidence”. They explain “this means paying attention to how we are coming across to the participants, how we are using our voice, our gestures and our body language as a whole.” They conclude “to some degree, leading groups is a performance, in that the process works better when we present our most able and confident self to the group” (2002, p.26). It was right then to see that confidence is important.

There is a definite structure to the selection process then which asks participants to demonstrate skills in acting and facilitation but what comes out of the interviews is that what Geese are looking for is much more sophisticated than this. Geese are seeking to employ people who can be very authentic and demonstrate vulnerability in the characters which they portray. Watson wants people to be “authentic and genuine really quickly”. He says that is the “opposite of someone who says hang on hang on I need some time”. Yes, they have to be strong actors but as Watson says they have to be “responsive” actors particularly. So able to respond to what is happening on that day in that room when performing rather than giving a set performance. One of the practitioners talks about “who are you and what are your go tos (in terms of improvisation)” as being key too. This supports Hewish’s words in the literature review “we. . . learnt the language of incarceration” (2015, p.213). In improvisation exercises at audition will you select the right characters to bring into

the improvisation or stick to the set ones you have in your acting toolkit? She follows this up by saying that everything at Geese works on multiple levels so they are looking for lots of different skills to be evident in just one exercise.

The word “responsive” used by Watson is used by one of the other practitioners in relation to the workshop facilitation too. She knows now that Geese are not just looking at the creation of the workshop in the audition but “how responsive you can be” and “are you open”. This confirms Heywood’s words in the literature review that practitioners need to be “empathic, non-judgemental and responsive facilitators” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2012, p.39). It is that ability again to work with what is happening in the room rather than just delivering your pre-planned workshop. This is a very difficult skill and is needed a great deal in the work which Geese do.

Hepplewhite discusses Responsivity and Respond-ability in *Applied theatre* “responsive expertise in an experienced theatre artist in participatory settings is made up of a complex combination of skills and judgement which enable them to make good choices in the moment of practice” (Preston, 2016, p.165). She continues “qualities that make up a responsive practitioner are labelled as awareness (of issues relating to context) anticipation and adaptation (being able to both plan and to respond well), attunement (having an empathetic and informed response to the practitioners) and respond-ability (where practitioners are able to grow and develop themselves through the work)” (Preston, 2016, p166). Hepplewhite later in *The Applied Theatre Artist* feels that “planning is balanced by the capacity to then facilitate inter-personal activity and make choices in the moment of practice” (2020, p.2). Earlier Hughes and Rudding (2009) explore what they describe as “the skills and capacities needed by practitioners” working in applied theatre and in this case

with young people in prison and at risk of being in prison. They believe “there is an urgent need to research the skills and capacities of practitioners in order to support their confident engagement with the discourses of institutional environments they ‘apply’ their methodologies within as well as enhance the impact of the work” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p.221). They list some of the qualities needed from the practitioner “amenability to working in non-linear ways, openness to following the direction of the group, willingness to take risks, ability to respond in the moment (spontaneity) and to work off manual” (2009, p.221). The phrase ‘off manual’ alludes to this ability to change and respond to what is developing in a workshop rather than sticking to the prepared plan sometimes.

Watson wants to see if you are “able to deviate from whatever you planned to do and respond in the moment to what is coming up”. One of the practitioners expands on this by saying “are you open to whatever disruption you might get”. She means that the participants of the workshop you are running may raise something you are not expecting or question something which is happening in the workshop and it may work better to shift the course of the content to suit this. You will need to be able to respond to the changing dynamic and change your content accordingly. Watson agrees with this stating that he thinks what separates Geese and how they work is that they do not go into a prison and present a piece of theatre and a pre-planned workshop. Instead, they work with the participants “that’s what differentiates Geese from a lot of other organisations” he says. As Watson stated earlier, Geese work with people where they are rather than where they should be. Working with people “where they are at” is central to the work at Geese. In the literature review Watson discussed some of the research on desistance (Maruna 2001; Maruna et al. 2004

and Campbell 2010) as being “very clear about the need for a unique and personal journey rather than ‘one-size-fits-all’ process” (Balfour & Bartleet, 2019, p.41) so responding to where the person in prison is at for that moment. As this is so important Geese will be looking to see this ability in the audition.

Who you are as a person is significant too and Watson sets this above the training and experience that people new to Geese have to offer. One of the early practitioners at Geese stated in the literature review “the interview process allows us to understand where they’re coming from – their philosophy on criminal justice, on offending, on change” (Balfour and Bartleet, 2012, p.39). Watson says it is important particularly that the practitioner has “no ego”. He believes that it is central to the work at Geese that they are “enabling others” and it is “not about profiling ourselves”.

Watson talks about this in relation to people who have had actor training and that many drama schools actively work on building up the ego of the performer and how they are central to the work which they are doing. It is completely different to this in the work which Geese do as the person in prison attending becomes the central figure and the Geese practitioner needs to demonstrate a complete lack of ego in how they respond in performance and workshops to make this successful. Lecoq in Evans states that “The ego is superfluous”. Instead, he says “It is more important to observe how beings and objects move, and how they find a reflection in us”. He says “We must give priority to the horizontal and vertical, to whatever exists outside ourselves, however intangible”. He continues “I prefer to see more distance between the actor’s own ego and the character performed” (2015, p.42). Watson trained for a year at Lecoq so it is interesting to surmise that he may have developed his ideas about lack of ego from that period though it is not known whether this is true. Watson

is also watching for how a person behaves in the audition room and particularly how they are with others. He says “it’s that sense of how you are being as a person in that space with other people”. Are you just thinking about what you are doing as a performer or are you engaged and watching others, enabling them to progress? By watching in this way with a lack of ego you will be able to be responsive in the way that Geese want.

This chapter has examined the skills and previous experience of the Geese Theatre practitioner using the data gathered from interviews conducted. It has been possible to see that there are some key elements related to prior training and experience which the practitioners have in common. They all have a degree or degree level education. Some have specific actor training but not all. Others have postgraduate degrees. The practitioners possess work experience in Teaching, Theatre-in-Education and/ or Applied drama generally and some have been professional actors. Some have worked for companies similar to Geese. The professional actors all shared a desire to use their acting specialism in a less mainstream way prior to joining Geese. Many practitioners knew about the work at Geese and actively wanted to work for this company before joining. Generally, the practitioners come to work at Geese with training and work experience which will enable them to then be able to train in The Geese Way of working.

The chapter looked at the audition process and how people are selected for the company. It is possible to conclude that the selection process is rigorous and involves the testing of various skills through warm up games, improvisation, acting in excerpts from Geese plays, leading a workshop, using masks and completing an

interview. People are sent home when unsuccessful at various points in the audition process until only a few remain for the final stages. The Geese practitioner will need to be a strong performer and facilitator. In performance they will be versatile and have the ability to play many characters. They should be authentic and genuine in performance work. The additional qualities of no ego as a performer, ability to be responsive, dealing with disruption of what you have planned and working with where the participants are at in your workshop room are much more subtle requirements that will be needed to be successful in the Geese audition. This data adds to existing knowledge about training someone to work in this area. There is a good deal of literature about actor training (Evans, 2015) or being a good facilitator (Balfour in Preston, 2016) but this chapter has been able to explore all the other qualities which are needed alongside these key skills at Geese.

All these interviewees clearly scored well in the requirements needed and were taken on by the company. The real work would start next of achieving the competences which would mean that they could pass the six-month probationary training period and be taken on permanently by the company which is explored in the next chapter.

4. Chapter Four: The six-month training at Geese and achieving competences

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the six-month training period came about at Geese and how it evolved. Geese, as mentioned previously are unusual as a theatre company in having this kind of substantial training period. It is difficult to comprehend how a practitioner might work in this area of applied theatre without this kind of training to prepare for it. There is a real value for the practitioner taking part in it and could even be viewed as stand-alone training which is of benefit whether that person is taken on or not at the end of it. This kind of training does not happen at other theatre companies in this way and is not available currently as discrete training unconnected with a theatre company. There is little public information about what the six-month training period consists of. The chapter looks at why Geese believe they need this kind of training period and indeed continual training once the six-month period is over. It explores what the Competency Framework (and set of competences within) is and what the supporting information which is given to new recruits consists of. This chapter hopes to identify what the competences are from the perspective of those who have been through the process. Finally, it explores what the practitioners believe to be the most challenging aspects of the training having completed it. Each section presents data from the interviews followed by a summary of key points. The Competences data is then brought together in a final summary discussion.

Sub question one for this thesis (all questions are detailed in full in Chapter Two: Methodology) asks “Is it possible to define the elements involved in the six-month

training period for new practitioner/ performer recruits to Geese Theatre Company and the journey which they go through?”. This chapter sets out to answer this question.

4.2 Training at Geese

All new Geese practitioners complete a six-month training period. It is about developing and learning a set of practical skills with theoretical underpinning but it is also about how to approach the way in which Geese work and to understand what they are trying to do. As described in the Literature review (Chapter One) Bergman and Hewish in Liebmann (1996, p.100) state that the instruction to new staff at Geese when they were working there was “Listen to the inmate tell the story. Listen to the special needs, the particular issues, the way in which pressure and tension are drawn in the landscape of their minds, and then create theatre to fit this” (Liebmann, 1996, p.100). Working at Geese will likely require a different approach to maybe any that practitioners have experienced before.

The literature review explored all the main companies in the UK working in prisons and found no similar training period in place at that point (2018-2019) with no further changes to date. Watson says he feels that this is probably because it is very expensive and a big investment “we pay someone we can’t fully utilise for at least six months”. He suggests one of the other reasons is that there are not many organisations with a permanent team of practitioners. Staff are brought in he says to work on individual projects which does not allow for this type of training period.

Geese instead operate more like a repertory company where staff are permanently there and often with the company for a number of years.

4.2.1 Training when Geese was first established

Heywood says there was not a probation period when she joined Geese in 1991. They were trained instead to do two shows – *Lifting the Weight* and *The Plague Game*. She explains having to learn the structure and types of material which you could add into these improvised shows. She describes devices called lazzis which they could utilise (this word comes from Commedia dell arte which was a form of theatre developed in Northern Italy in the fifteenth century consisting of set plots, improvised dialogue and the use of stock characters. Lazzis were stock comedic or action routines - so short sections of the performance which were fixed and which the improvised dialogue happened around). Heywood says though that for the most part it would be “you need to be the partner of someone who has been in prison for X amount of time . . . you have to understand that things have been tough for you . . . you’ve probably got children, limited resources etc. etc.”. The idea being she says that you are “presenting the lead characters who would be the people mirroring the audience who have dilemmas”. This highlights that the company operated in a different way when it was first set up because they used just two performance pieces which were improvised to present in prisons.

Geese was very successful when it started but operated more simply in the range and scope of work by having two performance pieces which it took out to prisons and ran workshops around these. Once the work increased and the company started doing a much bigger range of activities Watson wanted to explore issues around managing people combined with ensuring quality in the work which he sent out.

4.2.2 The reasons for a training period at Geese

Watson states that the training period “is entirely about ensuring quality” and was something that evolved at the company. He explains that having a permanent team of practitioners means the company can train them thoroughly and he can guarantee that any Geese project that goes out will be of a certain standard. Likewise, if the work is not of a certain standard, he can resolve that. He describes this as giving the company “more control” than using people for one off projects. Watson discusses the people this work is for and why the quality must therefore be of a high standard “our work is with people who are very vulnerable, have been through horrendous trauma quite often”. He explains “the manifestation of that vulnerability and trauma might be very challenging”. He believes that it is not right to put people in positions where they are either not skilled and competent enough to do that work and it’s not right to be in a room as a participant with someone who is not skilled and competent to do that work saying “it is potentially quite dangerous”. Despite the drive for the quality of the work though Watson says that it doesn’t mean someone who is on probation won’t be sent into a prison. Watson gives the example that Teare as the most recent trainee was observing in a prison in week two of his employment and by week four, they were saying to him “we know this group, they know us . . . so why don’t you run this exercise that we practiced with you in our rehearsal room and see how it goes”. He goes on “why don’t you try prompting and provoking this discussion and see how it goes knowing that we can do it with him in a very safe space”. He explains this is because “we knew the prison, we knew the prison staff, we knew the group”. The company then has a structured competency framework that can respond to what the strengths and weaknesses are of someone who is training to ensure that this process works effectively.

Knowing that whichever practitioner from Geese goes out to do a job has had the same level of training and therefore works at the same standard would seem to be a crucial factor regarding the reason for the six-month training period. The competences which make up the probation period allow Watson and senior Geese staff to ensure that whichever practitioner goes out to a prison to perform and run a workshop the prisoners will receive the same standard of Geese experience. In the literature review the initial stimulus for this thesis was discussed including reflection upon how competent Watson is at performing and running workshops and wondering how the company ensure that the other practitioners are equally as competent . Having a probationary six months with a framework of key competences that practitioners have to acquire would appear to be the way in which they achieve this.

4.2.3 The need for continual training

Baim in conversation with the researcher following a *Getting Connected* event for social workers (see Chapter One: Literature review) believes that it would take five years of working at Geese to understand the repertoire of work meaning that the training certainly does not stop after six months. Milne agrees remembering that the training for her certainly continued after the six months “I remember the next big challenge for me was being the lead practitioner writing a play for Geese - that definitely felt like a new frontier of pushing myself”. She was conscious that many of the practitioners had been there for a long time and she was “still learning all the time” from them. Watson confirms this saying there is a distinction to be drawn between what is a probationary period and becoming a member of Geese and what happens next. He says that the competences do not stop there, running instead for the next four or five years. Watson explains that Stage one is “yes we think you have

the foundations to becoming a good Geese practitioner” and then you move into the next levels of competences. They do not expect everyone to reach the same point at the same time. He suggests that the different areas these long-term competences might be about are staff training, relationship management – with key stakeholders, associated with the writing of particular pieces of work, programmes of activity and performances. Watson details that “it is about giving a structure to professional development and it’s about succession planning”. It is about preparing he says for “what happens when the people who can currently write the shows are no longer here - we need to have created some pathways for people that are learning the different elements that go into a picture of all the work that we do at Geese”.

Watson details the complexity of the work and how practitioners are trained for that “so you’ve got the mode we work, the literature and theory that sits alongside it then the different beneficiaries or participants or client groups that we work with and the different levels of understanding and knowledge around those different communities”. He explains that all three of these things need to be happening at the same time and that is why it can take four to five years. He says that by the end of that five-year period “you would want people to be able to write shows, liaise with conference organisers, deliver staff training, think through evaluation and research, be able to liaise with governors, create project plans for large scale projects and create a project with a homelessness charity for instance”. He concludes that the company want people to be able to do everything with the caveat some people’s interest and skills lend themselves to some areas more than others and “that’s alright” he says.

4.3 The Geese Competency Framework

Watson describes The Competency Framework as a “series of skills and qualities we are hoping we can either see demonstrated or that people know they are working towards being able to demonstrate”. Though there is not any one document available to detail this from the company he says it is made very transparent what is required. Part of the focus of this thesis is to identify what these competences are. Watson gives an example of an early competence “we want you to be able to perform authentically in a half mask the role of somebody who has just left prison”. He says by the end of the six months they would hope “you could articulate three of the key theories that underpin our groupwork model to somebody who has never encountered our work before”.

From company information, interview data and research for this thesis it is possible to find seven key areas that form The Geese Competency Framework along with associated activities such as observing work and practising skills which support it. The skills and qualities which form the Competency Framework are performance skill, facilitation and processing work as well as using masks. The trainee will complete a great deal of observation of others at Geese working too and have to get used to working in prisons. They will also need to understand the theory which underpins the work at Geese and understand the ‘Geese style’. They will gradually learn the repertoire and become used to the detailed monitoring of work which happens.

4.3.1 How the training is organised and how the competences are achieved

Smallman felt that when she was a trainee it was a clear process and “not just a box ticking”. She explains “when you go out and observe the work you see the huge range of work you are going to have to do, you see the repertoire of the work so I was under no illusion”. She says it was definitely very hard as a process and she remembers going home thinking “why did I think I could do this?”. She goes on “it was tough – there is not the same six months for anybody when they start – you’re in a prison, you’re performing – there’s such a range of things”. The training period will be different for everyone and depends very much on the schedule of work Geese has at the time. Watson explains that the training does not sit as a discrete project outside of the rest of Geese. Snook supports this by saying that during his training because the work was varied that year it was easier to tick the competences off. For the first project in prisons Snook just ran some simple exercises. He then watched for the rest of the time (three days) so he was eased into the work bit at a time. When Brown began, she details doing a lot of performance before any groupwork. She says “I might have done a little bit of everything before the end of the six months but maybe not quite in depth”. She notes though that this will mean that you might get to the end of six months and you will have never worked in a woman’s prison for instance.

Anderson says he was very aware of the need to get through the set of competences (see Table 20, Key competences to achieve during the six-month training) during the six-month period “it felt like a list that had to be ticked off”. He says “you are being appraised, you are being monitored and they are very clear that for the six months you haven’t got the job yet”. He continues “so that is always in the back of your mind

. . . yes I've got to enjoy it because I have got an opportunity but at the same time I have got to perform and prove to the senior members of the company that I am more than capable of being a full-time practitioner". He continues "that I am more than capable of learning lines in a day, of monitoring and feedback, facilitating a workshop with violent offenders and then being able to be spontaneous". He also says that "every now and again you get a question thrown at you in terms of . . . what's that about Dan . . . opening questions, what's behind the concept of behavioural theory?". He goes on to explain what else he might be asked "why do we do the work that we do . . . did you notice the way that person answered the question? . . . so, a constant reminder that we are grounded within a framework". Yes, he was aware he says that it was a formal process but at the same time because of the way Geese works "they are very close . . . they are like a family – the closest I've been to anyone in any theatre company before because of the nature of the work". He continues that even though there was a formality to it "there was also an informality in terms of the friendships you are building up . . . the support networks . . . the supervision that you get from your practitioners". Anderson was asked whether there was a sense that Watson as Artistic Director had to have seen a new recruit complete the various competences. He feels that the progress was communicated as "a lot of it was fed back to Andy through the channels". However, he says that when he started Watson was very much involved in the performances "in fact my first performance Andy was part of it . . . oh my gosh the artistic director is in the performance . . . he's asking me questions as the fool and I'm having to do the mask lifting and reviewing on the way home . . . Dan, I liked what you did there but maybe have a think about this . . .".

It is quite tricky then to manage how the trainee achieves the competences because as Watson says the work comes first and they find a way of fitting the trainee into that work so that they get the experience they need. As a company of course they are skilled at doing this now and have Smallman organising everything to do with the trainees to ensure it works.

4.4 Information given to trainees during the training

The following table (see table 17 below) demonstrates the basic information given to new practitioners at Geese and the general training which they are given aside from the more detailed work on the competences which they have to complete during the six months.

Table 17: Information and training given to new practitioners at Geese

Selected reading list (see appendix 9)	This is a list of 9 books/ chapters from books with a further 3 books recommended. They include <i>The Geese Handbook</i> and Watson's chapter <i>Lift the mask in The Applied Theatre Reader</i> .
Introduction to groupwork (document)	This is an introduction to using groupwork in the Criminal Justice System and consists of information, suggested reading and exercises to complete or questions to answer.
Questions for trainees (document) (see appendix 10)	The trainee is encouraged to find out the answers to 61 questions posed as a way of discovering information on the most important aspects of the work at Geese.

General training sessions	<p>These are sessions which are provided throughout the six-month training on all the main aspects of the work at Geese:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overview of the company's work ▪ Masks/ Fragment masks ▪ Processing an exercise ▪ Facilitator enacted scenes <p>Sessions provided when appropriate depending on the needs of the work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with violence ▪ Working with domestic abuse ▪ Working with sexual offenders
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Source: Interview data and information from Smallman – Team Manager in charge of training

4.4.1 Questions for Geese trainees

The questions which the practitioners refer to (see appendix 10) are a series of sixty-one questions which new recruits in the probationary period need to use as a way of navigating the competences which they are expected to complete. The questions are made up of five areas which are important for Geese: general group work/ workshop, prisons, your relationship with offenders, young people who have offended/ at risk of offending and performance questions. The idea being that you would need to know the answers to all of these questions by the end of the six-month training period.

Table 18: Questions for trainees in summary

Areas of questions	Content	Examples of questions
General groupwork/ workshop	This section is related to working with groups and leading workshops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How would you deal with a group member who refuses to participate in a particular exercise? ▪ What theatrical or active methods could you use to explore - anger management, victim empathy and cognitive distortions?

Prisons	This section concentrates on the work that happens in prisons in relation to security, safeguarding, working with prison staff and the Geese practitioner partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How might you win over a cynical governor, officer or other staff member? ▪ Your partner has disappeared what would you do? ▪ There is a mask or tool missing. What would you do?
Your relationship with offenders	This section examines the practitioner's relationship with people in prison.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In what ways might a prisoner attempt to get you to collude with them and on what issues? How might you respond to this? ▪ Under what circumstances would you need to pass on information a prisoner tells you?
Young people who have offended/ at risk of offending	This section explores the particular challenges of working with young people rather than adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How might a workshop with young people differ from one with adult offenders? ▪ Why and how might our stance on personal responsibility need to be modified when working with young people?
Performance	This section concentrates on all aspects of the performance work at Geese.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do you decide what is 'mask up' and 'mask down'? ▪ What might you need to bear in mind when playing an offender character for an offender audience? ▪ How would you go about playing a convincing offender, magistrate or psychiatric nurse, for example, if you have no experience of these roles?

Source: Geese' document - Questions for trainees (see appendix 10 for full document)

There is an extensive range of questions then of differing kinds. Heywood says “we encourage people to say - I have no idea about this”. Some of these will be quickly answered and others will mean the trainee has to do a variety of things to find out the answer: use existing knowledge, look up the information in the suggested reading for trainees, discover the answer through doing the work at Geese or by asking a Geese practitioner. The system of questions to answer seems to be a really

positive way of giving a structure to the probation period and complements the other activities happening during the six months. As a device this could be used very effectively in lots of different workplaces to ensure that everything which the trainee needs to know is covered. It puts emphasis on the trainee 'finding out' what they need to know rather than just being told information and this is a positive and productive approach.

4.4.2 Introduction to groupwork

This is a workbook given to trainees when they start at the company. It is described as part of the NVQ Certificate in Community Justice and is a programme of learning related to groupwork with people in prisons. It consists of explanation sections, tasks for the trainee to do/ think about and some suggested reading. It begins by exploring ideas related to belonging to a group. It looks at approaches to and development of groupwork in the Criminal Justice System. It discusses the debate in the 1980s about "what worked with offenders" bringing about the "What Works" movement. It goes on to look at the life cycle of a group, leadership of groups and groups which can be problematic. It concludes with a training approach to groupwork concluding that it is "the instruction and practice of cognitive behavioural skills in order to provide alternatives to offending".

4.4.3 Training sessions

There are standard sessions which are provided throughout the six-month training on all the main aspects of the work at Geese. They are run at Geese headquarters by permanent Geese practitioners. Some will be a one-to-one session; others might include a few practitioners so that in the session on processing for instance the other

staff can act as the prisoners for the purpose of practising. The sessions include an overview of the company's work, masks/ Fragment masks, processing an exercise and facilitator enacted scenes. There are further sessions organised when appropriate depending on the needs of the work which is happening which might include: working with violence, working with domestic abuse and working with sexual offenders. Smallman says that in terms of the set training in the office there is an ad hoc quality to it depending on who has office days. She says the trainee might say "Oh, I am going to be doing the Frags soon so could you give me a session on those?" She thinks that works well. "I quite liked the fluid nature as a trainee . . . it is what we try and do now . . . is give the trainee a sense of autonomy in terms of going when you have some office time and there is somebody else in go through those questions with them". She concludes "take a bit of ownership over that".

Although there is quite a lot of learning through doing the work at Geese trainees are also given these set sessions on things which are key for them to be able to pass their probationary period.

4.5 Competences – beginning work

In the first few weeks of the probation period Watson believes that for the new recruit "the ideal situation is one of observe, then co-work, then lead being observed". He says "it is a bit of a judgement call when you move from one to the other". He explains that for the performance work they tend to put people in quite quickly because much of their work lends itself to that and if there is a cast of five there is usually one actor who is taking significantly less roles within a conference performance for example. He says they would want them observing groups before

they lead work but “it is not a case of right it’s your turn now you are on and take this whole two-hour session”. He explains “it’s more that we would be going – we want you to run one warm up exercise or we want you to run this one exercise and begin the processing of it but don’t worry if you get lost because as soon as you get lost one of us will pick it up”. Snook did what is called Company Development during the first week of his probation which consisted of creating new work, training and trauma form he says. He had a bit of a shock on the first or second day talking to Heywood realising that he would have to actually *pass* the training which raised his anxiety levels. Milne says the six months felt really clear and really structured. She talks about the review process after every piece of work. Smallman was her line manager. Milne says she understood what was expected of her and how that was being monitored. She continues that she was in HMP Hewell in her first week but the process was gradual as she was there as an additional member of staff.

Snook as an example then almost did not realise he was on probation or had forgotten and then felt nervous when he realised. Milne was very clear on what she needed to do and it looks like she was able to have a gradual training process. Both describe experiencing a range of work they were being introduced to.

4.5.1 Observing work

During the six-month training the new practitioners will observe others doing the work. The aim being that they are led gently towards running and leading sessions themselves. The most ideal seems to be that at the start there is a good deal of observing with some performance work and small amounts of facilitation such as leading a warm up exercise for instance. Brown says “what is useful is that you get

to really shadow people". Teare says "I spent at least 50% of the time, maybe more, observing - looking at how different facilitators work". He continues "then it is introducing the basic exercises followed by the more complicated ones". He explains that he had two sessions training on the Fragment Masks then had to do it live in a group "I think that was a big tick which allowed me to pass probation".

What comes up certainly in all the interview answers is that there is quite a bit of watching other established Geese practitioners during the six months. Doing this allows the trainee to develop at a comfortable pace and to see the range of work which the company do. At the same time it allows Geese to control the quality of the work going out to client groups.

4.5.2 Practising work

Being able to practice the competences alongside the delivery of work is crucial for trainees during the six-month probation period. Watson says Smallman would be creating opportunities to practice running exercises, processing exercises internally with other practitioners where there is no pressure. He says of course there is still a kind of pressure because the person is doing it with us. Watson talks about the practising element a good deal which happens in the rehearsal room at Geese headquarters so the trainee being able to have a go at an exercise. Heywood mentions this too describing the practice "say if five of us were around we would go - right everyone in the rehearsal room and then the trainee could practice an exercise". Watson gives a recent example involving Benji Teare with a conference performance due on Tuesday with rehearsals on the Monday. At the offices Emma will say to Benji "we want you to run two exercises of your choice – one of them a

warm up and one of them a thematic exercise and we want you to have a go at processing it". He explains that the other practitioners will be the pretend participants. Watson says "we would probably go here's the Geese Theatre Handbook – take your pick – can you run *Anyone Who* – can you run *Bombs and Shields?*" (see appendix 1 Examples of Geese games and exercises). These are both warm up games/ exercises. Milne recalls "I remember trying to learn how to process *Socks* (also known as Group Juggling, see appendix 1 Examples of Geese games and exercises) . . . that can be quite tricky to hold all the metaphors and stuff". She explains that the other practitioners would come in pretending to be participants and she was pretending to run it. She remembers that happening regularly before having to deliver something for the first time. She describes everyone as being very supportive. It wasn't like a test but you would be nervous. Brown believes that the practising is vital. She says it is "constantly trying to practice each of those things with practitioners in a safe place first then in a group but in the safest way possible and always with scaffolding talking about it in and around whoever you are working with". She emphasises "I think the main thing for me that made that practice safer – you are never doing it without an experienced practitioner".

As we get the sense from Milne and Brown Watson says that this practising is not done in a very formal way. Watson says it is a bit like when they run training events for people who want to come and figure out how to do our work and allow them to say "time out I've got lost – I don't know where I am going with this – I've lost my train of thought, where could I go?" He explains "we'll then chip in – take it back a few stages – when you asked that question and you got that response – that was

probably your golden moment to go down that route so just take it back there and we will pick it up again”.

The trainees are experiencing lots of opportunities then to try out games, exercises and processing as well as performing and mask work. This allows them to slowly get used to the process. This can be organised according to the work which is happening and the needs of the trainee. As Brown says it gives them a supportive atmosphere in which to ‘try things out’ but also protects the quality of the work which goes into prisons.

4.6 Achieving the competences

The main competences to achieve during the six-month training are understanding the theoretical underpinning to the work, performance skill, facilitation and processing work, working with masks, learning the repertoire, understanding and employing the Geese Style and being comfortable working in prisons.

4.6.1 Theoretical underpinning to the work

Geese have key theories which support the practice they undertake as described in chapter one. These theories are: Social Learning Theory, Cognitive Behavioural Theory, Role Theory, influences from Boal and Heathcote, theories of Desistance and The Good Lives Model. This allows there to be basis to the work which they devise at Geese and practitioners can understand the purpose for doing an exercise and how it might relate to the theories used. It means that the process is always anchored by the theories and how they dictate what might happen. We know from the interview data that Geese will give the trainee a session on the theories and that

they have reading material on them too but Watson says that often it will come up almost just through the practice. He explains “the only reason to have any knowledge around Social Learning Theory is because it tells you about how to deliver skills practice – it tells you how to tweak a skills practice so that someone can acquire a skill”. He goes on “so it comes up through thinking what are we trying to do when we are doing skills practice role play? Let’s look at the theory that sits behind it for example”. He continues “some of the broader theories like desistance – some of that stuff around desistance is almost like a macro theory about a principle or a set of principles that the work sits within rather than informing the micro level”. He says Cognitive Behaviour Theory (CBT) is like that too and it is useful to have an understanding broadly of what CBT might look like but “on a micro level it is essentially just some language we might use to help unpick the inside - the thoughts and feelings”.

Smallman details really liking the training with the combination of working and training happening “having to explore the theoretical side of stuff while then being able to go and practically apply it was great”. She says that examining the theoretical basis to the work really helped her “whilst I’d worked with marginalised populations and lots of young people at risk, I hadn’t done much work with adults and I definitely hadn’t done it in The Criminal Justice custodial settings so I really appreciated having the balance of being able to study a little bit and then do the work”. Teare says that a lot of the theory is about “groupwork, the nature of groups and how they function”. He gives an example “so for instance the facilitator enacted mime scene - I did a day of training with Lou – where firstly I learnt how to perform it and then how to process it which is really interesting – how to find the cognitive distortions amongst

the group, how it works for different groups". In terms of the theoretical frameworks that the company use Anderson says "the cognitive behavioural theory, the whole way Geese approach questions . . it was very much a part of my appraisals . . every four weeks I would speak to one of the senior practitioners or Lou and would go through what I am learning". Snook agrees explaining that often the theories are discussed as part of the review after projects too. Snook gives the example of looking at Cognitive Behavioural Theory "if someone was maybe giving me some notes - maybe you should have started by asking for a thought before you move onto the feeling". He goes on "a lot of people in Geese instantly go how does it feel to be in that position but breaking down CBT it is really important to start with those thoughts because they are what fuel that feeling". He thinks that the reading "is good and makes sense but unless you are really seeing it in action and practising it straight away I think it might fade a bit in your head".

Watson does say that you do not have to have a really deep understanding of the theory to be a good practitioner "the theory can articulate why the work works but to be a good practitioner you don't have to necessarily articulate why the work works". He goes on though that *he* does need to be able to do this "I need to be able to articulate why the work works. I need to be able to do that to academics, funders, to governors". A good practitioner however Watson says "might have a certain understanding but not necessarily yes I have read everything there is to read about the Good Lives Model". A good practitioner might need to just know why it might be important and the headlines around the good lives model. He explains "the Good Lives Model simply says we are all trying to achieve certain goals in our lives – the way in which we achieve them might not necessarily be the best way". He goes on

“everyone at some level is trying to achieve the goal of intimacy – what does that mean about someone who commits a sexual offence against a child? How have they got a skewed pathway to achieving intimacy?”. He gives an example in relation to Teare in his training. He says they have looked at CBT and Teare can understand and articulate why that is important in our groupwork programmes, how it might underpin a mimed scene and in mask lifting “somewhere in there should be the question - what might a trauma informed Geese approach look like as opposed to a non-trauma informed approach or how does our work already sit within trauma informed practices”. Geese state that this means having “an understanding of trauma and its impact and a commitment to working in a way which avoids re-traumatisation”. They explain that by doing this you are supporting “an individual’s coping strategies so they can safely engage in our projects” (www.geese.co.uk). Teare says a lot of this happens intuitively and then it is like the theory can follow that. He underlines this in saying – “we are way more interested in people being good at the practice and then having the theory that may sit behind it”.

Geese practitioners require understanding of the basic principles of the theories then that the company engages with. It appears that it is looked at formally but is also naturally examined as part of the practical work which happens and in discussion afterwards. Watson and other more senior practitioners at the company would need a more comprehensive understanding so that they can articulate what the company does and how they work to outside agencies. The emphasis in all this is that the practice comes first and it is hoped that the theory develops around that.

4.6.2 Performance skill

It is very important to have strong performance ability and skill as a Geese practitioner. Practitioners have to be able to be authentic when portraying characters so that they are believable. This is also what the interview data is demonstrating. The literature review described Bergman and Hewish in Liebmann stating that “we believe that offenders need to experience the extraordinary ‘presentness’ of theatre and dramatherapy in order to initiate new behaviour” and that “they need pictures that reflect something inside their minds before their defences deny the pictures’ reality”. (1996, pp. 97-98). They go on to describe needing to mirror the inmate’s world. Watson follows that up with “we believe that the performance itself has the power to motivate, to shift people’s thinking, to create affect and to act as a catalyst for the change process” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p48). In relation to the competence regarding performance skill the trainee needs to be able to be responsive, go between other activities in a workshop, play a wide range of characters and come in and out of character quickly. In a workshop for instance the Geese practitioner will be acting in short plays or scenes and then facilitating exercises. Watson explains that “you’ve got to go from playing a person who has just got out of prison who is struggling with addiction then suddenly I am talking to a group of professionals about quite a complex question which I have then got to remember their answers and I have got to come back on stage and feed it back as neutrally and as succinctly as possible”. He agrees this is “a big ask”. He says though that sometimes they will put a trainee in the performance at a conference for instance but won’t ask them to do the section where they have to go out into the audience with questions and then feedback the answers as he says that’s the bit that people absolutely struggle with. It means he says that when a trainee comes in, they

can be put in a role which they are trained and rehearsed for but Geese say don't worry about also going out into the audience. He goes on "or we say go out for this one question and get a feel of it – go out for the first question which might be a simple straight forward how's this character thinking, what might they be feeling kind of question". He says this is opposed to "the questions which might be more like if you think about the systems as a whole what would we be doing proactively to avoid a situation like this in the future". Watson says this "is a way more complicated question".

The trainee needs then to be a strong performer who is able to create authentic characters, change quickly between them when needed and also move between performing and facilitating with ease.

4.6.3 Facilitation - processing work

A Geese practitioner needs to be good at facilitation and in particular the processing of exercises. This is a competence which is developed during the six-month training. Facilitation will take many different forms at the company such as delivering workshops in prisons and workshops for other groups such as social workers or nurses. The workshop will include some short scenes or mimes. There are then exercises which are facilitated around the performances which allows for the participant to reflect upon the issues presented.

The facilitation skill here Watson says is not about setting these exercises up – it's about what you do with them. He goes on "somebody shouldn't really be joining Geese if they can't set exercises up – that's sort of a given". He explains "it comes

back to the responsivity thing – now you have set this exercise up and you have run it what on earth are you going to do with it?”. He explains “setting it up and running it is like 25% of the job – the other 75% - and probably the really useful, important 75% is the. . . and what now – what are we doing with this?”. He goes on “Where are we going to take the conversation? How are we going to encourage the group we have been working with to be reflective about themselves and their behaviour off the back of this exercise?”. Watson believes that this is the actual skill of this work “the thing that people often struggle with – partly because, I think, no one ever trains them to do it”. He explains further “it doesn’t appear in any curriculum anywhere – how to process – which is weird because in other areas of life people are trained how to process”. He gives the example of adventure/ outdoor therapy “people don’t just go on high wires because of the experience – they go on high wires so that they can then explore what it means, what the feeling was like”. He concludes “that’s the principal that sits in our work – how do we use what’s just happened to become reflective about ourselves”. He says “bridging that from the exercise to the reflection is what we are trying to get our trainees to figure out how to do”.

As Watson says practitioners will arrive at Geese being able to facilitate. They will be able to lead and set up exercises but they might need much more skill in how to process the exercises to lead to reflection for the participants who Geese encounter. Snook describes doing this as hard the first time. He says “you have to learn the mime scenes and the thematic exercises which we process . . . that feels like a big step when you run a *Bombs and Shields* and process it for the first time”. He continues “I think when you are watching other people like at Geese you sort of learn to be quite calm”. It is a bit different though when running the processing and asking

the questions yourself he says “your brain is constantly going is this the right question, should I be asking this, what else could I ask?”. He likens this to being a bit like a swan “calm on top but lots of stuff going on underneath”. Teare acknowledged that he came into Geese being able naturally to run workshops so he could cope with the challenge Snook describes. He says his “experience and bluffing” helped him. If the workshop is not going well he is “able to not let that show”. Snook feels that he really struggled the first time doing this as he had seen a lot of really “great ones” but afterwards “everyone was like that was really good, great first process”. All of those interviewed had done facilitation work before joining Geese but then had to adapt to the specific requirements around the processing of work required.

4.6.4 Working with masks

Using masks in performance and in workshops is a key part of what Geese are known for. They use half masks in performance. There are also the special Fragment Masks which are used as part of workshops. Consequently, mask work has to feature as a competence which the trainee needs to acquire in the six-month probation period.

Brown says in terms of mask work as a competence any half mask work you can learn as you are doing performance. She says that when you are going to do groupwork you do different trainee sessions. She explains “you might do a session on an introduction to mask and that is literally you talk to a group about the mask – what are the questions you might ask – general patter before you start – making that your own”. She says “then you might learn in the same session . . . how to create one-minute mime scenes – you would do one of those and have someone directing

you and training you so that would mean you had done that and when it came to the next groupwork session you had done that". Anderson describes finding the performing in masks difficult. He says "I am used to being on stage and people seeing my whole face and my expressions but these are half masks so getting used to that". He continues that the metaphor of the mask was another element that was challenging "what it means to go beyond the mask and then the front that we put on to the outside world". An interesting perspective from someone trained as an actor and having worked professionally. It is inevitable though that he would find it quite a shift to make to adapting to facial expressions being hidden behind the mask if he had not done this before. Snook says he had seen a lot of people deliver the masks but it is "important to find your own way".

Brown says the Fragment Masks (which all the company describe as the 'Fraggs') are quite involved because "it is not just how you perform in them but how do you process them with a group". To do this she says "you need to know what each of those masks is about, how they might manifest, what are the ones that might come underneath them". To achieve this skill Brown says you will watch someone do them, "you'd talk about the masks, you'd maybe set up in terms of - ok imagine we are a group of guys in prison and we are looking at violent offences – what might be some of the things that you use for The Fist mask or the Good Guy mask". She says that once you have discussed that you would try it out. After that you would discuss each mask and how you might use them and what might be going on underneath the mask. She says you would look at "what are they, what are the standard things you say, what are some of the questions that come up, what are some of the responses". She continues "so you really kind of interrogate each part of that, go through each

part and then you try it out really nervously". She says that after that "you talk about it in the monitoring form again and then it is a matter of trying to get you in as many things that are coming up so you can keep practising that". The difficulty though says Brown is that this work depends on the responses from the participants so "you talk about what some of the typical responses might be but until you are in the room actually doing it in a way you can't practice". She explains "because someone asks you a question and you have got to answer that from the thread of the mime scene into the Frags and just work with whatever the group has brought to each of those things". She concludes "so being responsive is a massive massive part". She also adds that women doing the fragment masks is quite rare. "Processing the Frags you get very used to – going with guys into prisons because they are doing the Frags and you are processing them . . . what you don't get as much practice in is being the person in the mask because there are less women's prisons and less work being done". Interestingly Brown explains that "the guys never see the women doing the Frags . . . because if we are doing a women's prison it is always two women".

Trainees get general sessions on the masks with a company member, they will observe permanent staff using them and then will have practice at using them themselves. They will have to do this with the simple half masks and the more complex Fragment masks but as Brown says the real practice largely comes from being able to use them with participants beyond practising with other Geese staff.

4.6.5 Learning the Geese repertoire

Geese have a repertoire of plays which they have created over the years which can be utilised depending on the needs of a job which they are doing. The most well-

known of these plays is probably *Stay* which is about domestic abuse. Brown says the trainee will not necessarily learn all the set plays at this point (on probation) and Brown for instance did not work on *Stay* until three years after being with the company “because that’s to do with numbers of people, amount of time you’ve got to actually learn it before you go out and do it”. She says that if you do not have a week to learn and rehearse how to do *Stay* then you will not be put in it until there is time for that training. In relation to the plays Milne says she was used to four weeks rehearsal as an actor. The plays at Geese are not short she says and it is quite a specific skill. She says that now she can do it as some of the structures of the plays are quite similar and you get used to that and it helps you. She explains “I was interested from an acting background . . . there was definitely a brain training thing in the actual skill of just learning lines . . . like every day because you are doing it all the time”. She says “by the end of it it is not just that you learn the repertoire - you are exercising that part of your brain”. She describes the atmosphere as “so supportive” at the company that it is not like “dropping a line at The National (Theatre)”. She says “everybody gets that it is part of it and it is really live . . . the team will pick it up . . . they will find a way”. She describes a day when one of her colleagues was sick on the way so “we had to swap parts in the car”. She continues “it has just got that flexibility that makes you more relaxed and makes you learn lines quicker but at the beginning that is quite challenging”. She emphasises the challenge “It really is one day’s rehearsal and you are performing the next day and that’s the end of it”.

There is a significant repertoire then and learning this and understanding it can only be something that begins during the six months and continues on into the first five years at the company.

4.6.6 The Geese style

The concept of there being a 'Geese style' is discussed by many of the practitioners. This is a particular way of working which is unique to them. All the practitioners came to Geese with good experience in a range of jobs and possessed skills in performing and facilitation but describe having to adapt to a particular way in which Geese work. Anderson describes this saying a key element in the six-month training was getting used to The Geese Way of work because it is very different. He explains "you can go to Drama School, you can be on stage, you can be in a Hollywood film . . . you come to Geese and throw all of that out of the window". The literature review details this process of 'throwing it all out of the window' in relation to Drama schools where often students who attend describe this sense of starting again with skills or needing to put aside their current skills in order to learn a particular style of working. Brown feels that it is about learning The Geese Style of working which obviously with the mask is one element but in terms of how those conference performances are put together "it is much more about landing with something rather than exploring a character". She continues that you have to learn this quickly as you rehearse one day and then perform the following day. Milne discusses this speed of working in relation to working on the plays "there were challenges for me internally in making an interesting switch between what it is to learn a play as an actor and what it is to learn a Geese play . . . that was a bit of a switch". She explains "I couldn't learn a script to the extent that I would do if doing a play . . . so I had to go on stage with less and that was new and different".

Anderson describes the process of adjusting to the change in style as almost relearning the craft based on how Geese do it. He details the elements of facilitation

are very specific “it took me a while to grasp it and I understand now why it is six months . . . it is not like you walk into a room and you throw a ball around and then you explore change and goal setting”. He says “there’s a very particular way that they (Geese) open the room for discussion, that they allow men and women to discuss their thoughts and feelings about a particular subject and how to navigate the subject matter”. He continues “that element was very challenging”. Milne feels there was also “an adjustment across the board . . . rehearsal rooms are sacred whereas at Geese it is quite fluid . . . there is stuff around . . . the subject matters are so heavy and you are doing it all the time that there isn’t this – actually it is a lack of ego in the room”. She explains “there is respect for the work – it was an interesting adjustment for me that oh right we are going to have a laugh and people are going to come in and go out and it’s a working space”. She says “it lacks that ego and that pressure . . . because you couldn’t do that all the time . . . that silent space”.

Anderson sums up his thoughts on The Geese style in relation to the feedback in live performances and the processing giving the example of the *Bombs and Shields* exercise “out of that creative exercise you’re going to ask a series of questions that opens up the room for discussion about thoughts and feelings and triggers”. He explains “there’s a very specific way of doing it and at the beginning I found that very difficult”. He goes on “I was asking questions without thinking about the response and then latching onto that response then opening up to another . . . I am just very linear but Geese ask you to open it up and I found that very challenging”. This he said got better with experience “the more times you do it the more accomplished you get . . . and realise I could have asked that . . . it is about confidence as well”.

What the practitioners are describing then is a way of relearning how they work on plays and facilitation which is different from what they are used to and of course they are adding mask work into these requirements too. It is a way of working with very specific facilitation techniques added to performances which come from a big repertoire and which are rehearsed quickly. All practitioners are different but they will all have had training in a particular style of work which happens at Geese by the end of the six months.

4.6.7 Working in prisons

Getting used to going into prisons is part of working at Geese and something that the training practitioner needs to become competent in doing. Some of those interviewed had worked with companies that worked in prisons before arriving at Geese but others had not. Snook felt that all of his training happened quite naturally and that he was fortunate to do quite a lot of prison stuff early on. This was the first time that Snook had worked in prisons and he describes being very nervous before going in for the first time but then “loving it”. He says that it would appear to be a chance thing as to when and how much someone going through the training goes into prisons and will depend on what work the company is doing at the time. He explains “part of it is strategically trying to place you in work if they know it is coming up”. Milne says she went into a prison in her first week of training. She said “it didn’t feel like a big thing . . . I had worked in supported housing . . . some of that is lone working . . . some of that is with people who have just come out of prison”. She continues “I am used to working with people who might have had experience in the Criminal Justice System . . . I had done some volunteering for a homelessness charity and I had worked at Clean Break”. She says in that first week “I felt really confident with the team . . . I knew there wasn’t much pressure on me”. Teare says he went into prisons around

seven times during probation. He did a performance and some workshops. When asked about the challenge of working in prisons he said in his first two months “I was working with sex offenders and there is a lot of shame in that group – so a lot more psychologically intense (in those prisons)”. He explains “I remember early doors you take on a lot because there is so much pent-up anxiety in the room” He says he then “started working with people who had committed violent offences and that was a much easier time”. Going into prisons is an essential part of the role at Geese. It seems to happen naturally as part of the work which comes up but the trainee is always very supported in relation to being there with another practitioner and as with the other work will not be expected to lead before they are ready. There will be quite a bit of observation and leading of smaller sections of a workshop for instance.

It is possible then to identify the key competences which have to be acquired or improved during the six-months of training: performance skill, facilitation/ processing exercises and working with the masks. To achieve these trainees will need to observe a good deal of work and practice frequently. They will also start to learn the repertoire. To help them they will need to understand the theoretical frameworks which Geese work from and know what the ‘Geese style’ is. They will also be required to be comfortable with working in prisons. Added to all of that is to be able to evaluate projects and monitor your work as an individual which are discussed in the next section.

4.7 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is a process of discussing and reviewing work that allows individuals and a company to assess the progress and measure the quality of the work which it is producing. Monitoring through individual self-reflection and supporting how trainees are developing is a significant part of what Geese do (see Table 19 for a summary). This thesis has a chapter exploring the monitoring forms completed by Teare as a trainee after each job he did as a form of case study but this section looks at the subject of monitoring at Geese in general and what the practitioners have discussed about it in the interviews.

Table 19: Geese types of monitoring and evaluation summary

Type of monitoring/ evaluation	Detail
Evaluation work as a company	<p>After each piece of work the practitioners involved evaluate how the work went. This is afterwards on the same day and involves the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each practitioner talks about what they delivered and how it went ▪ Each practitioner gives some general comments and this might include comments on something another practitioner has done
Process of individual monitoring during six-month probation period	<p>The trainee has to complete a monitoring form after each project which they are involved in during the six-month training period. They have to complete this within one week of the project. It is a set template with three main points for the trainee to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work undertaken (observation, exercises run, performance etc) ▪ Review of own work (what worked, what worked less well) ▪ Learning points or questions about material, client group or own input <p>The lead practitioner will then respond to what is on the form with their comments back to the trainee.</p>

Line management support during six-month probation period as a form of monitoring	The trainees are looked after and managed by Smallman who is in charge of the training. They will have regular meetings to discuss their progress more generally in relation to the competences and development at Geese.
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Source: Interview data and information from Smallman – Team Manager in charge of training

4.7.1 Evaluation after projects

Smallman says “it is so important to hear other people’s perspectives of the same experience”. She describes that following a performance practitioners talk about their own experience first and anything they have set up and delivered or reflections on that and that process goes around everybody. Then she says you do a more general one so that might be “any learning points from the day, any feedback that you specifically want to give to another colleague, something that might have come up with a group member that you want to just put out there or questions”. She continues “it’s about being specific with that feedback be it constructive or something you learnt from that interaction or that performing or facilitation”. Heywood says this review process was much more informal when she started at Geese “we would have reviews after the performance . . . you’d get advice”. Heywood remembers this being “we had a go round everyone and we just had a . . . you could kind of throw in anything”. She says she remembers this changing with Alun Mountford (founder member of Geese). He said “wouldn’t it be better if people were allowed to comment on their own performance first . . . you know when you kind of slightly mess up?”. She explains “it’s easier to go oh do you know what I forgot that bit . . . or I was a bit low energy today . . . then other people don’t have to because it is there”. Heywood

continues that it seems obvious “but back then we just hadn’t thought of it”. She says the change was very organic. Brown explains that evaluating like this allows you to “reflect personally on stuff but also generally on the group maybe even asking questions about how and why somebody else did something like that”. Anderson agrees “whether we have done a workshop or a performance we review it. He says giving others constructive feedback “was the element I had to get used to”. Anderson definitely found being able to give feedback to others a bit more challenging. This process is quite intensive. It is good practice but probably not done in this way in other companies to such an extent. As discussed earlier Geese have a permanent team of staff which is not always the case in similar companies so are able to maintain a real structure to how they operate which benefits evaluation of projects too. It is time consuming but ensures that the practitioners working that day reflect properly on what they have done and continually think about the quality of what the company is producing and what could be different next time.

4.7.2 Individual Monitoring Forms

When a trainee is on probation with the company they have to complete a Geese monitoring form after each piece of work which they are involved in. This is a free text document but asks the trainee to write about the following: work undertaken (observation, exercises run, performance etc), review of own work (what worked, what worked less well), learning points or questions about material, client group or own input. This form goes into the lead practitioner of the project within a week of it happening and the lead practitioner responds on the form to what has been written. Smallman says that she enjoyed the process of the monitoring forms after each performance/ workshop. “It is your chance to externalise stuff and get a bit of

feedback and a response”. (This process will be examined more closely in chapter six).

4.7.3 Line management support during the six-month probation

In terms of knowing how you are getting on from your line manager Smallman describes there being set meetings at six weeks, three months, four and a half months and then at the end of the six months. Smallman as a trainee says she was told all the way through how she was getting on “it is what I do now with people - you’ll know where you are at, there won’t be any surprises because I will fully communicate”. Snook says that during his probation he had a line manager who was Heywood and then another member of the company who he could go to about things he might not want to bring directly to his line manager for more informal conversations. Brown also had Heywood as her line manager and says you are always looking at the competences as you go through the training. In respect of getting feedback she says they were definitely honest about it “for me it was definitely about confidence”. Brown continues “I had gone in quite low on confidence . . . one of the things for me was always worrying that I would do something wrong that would have a massive effect on people”. Brown explains “because for me the way I look at theatre is that it is very deeply affecting and I didn’t want to be the person who did or said something that would then send someone off on a spiral”. To deal with this Brown says it was very much trying to learn that yes we are a part of someone’s journey and thought process and you might do something that doesn’t work well but you are not going to harm someone “it is always couched in protective factors”. This meant that Brown felt Geese had to work on her level of confidence “on trying things out, on being able to say no *actually* that did go well rather than looking

at all the things that I don't think I did right". She explains that notes for performances would always be given such as "be able to snap a bit more with the mask or just being a bit rawer maybe underneath the mask depending on what character you are playing". Milne says she had sit down meetings with Smallman during the six months and there were no issues. She says "I might have been more aware of the training process if there had been more hurdles". Instead, she says "I seemed to be hitting things at the right time". She emphasises "I did feel very supported as a trainee . . . I felt the structure of it was very clear . . . I felt like I knew what I was trying to do . . . I had all the information and the resources that I needed".

4.8 Most challenging aspects of the training

The six-months training period is very challenging and as can be seen in the sections above will demand a lot of skills and dedication for the trainee to be successful.

In terms of what Smallman found the most challenging she says that she "had to strip back everything, so I felt like I was coming with skills and then I thought I had none and then I built them back up again". She describes this further as "it was almost like you had to rip everything away to go - this is The Geese Way of doing things . . . everything was new so I felt like I just lost all my knowledge and stuff". She says she realised then though that "I had to scratch it all back, learn this Geese style and then once I was getting comfortable with that my additional skills from previous experience then started to layer on top – hey now I can start using them again". This idea of 'stripping away' is very much part of the traditional idea of performer training

and is how those who attend Drama school would describe the training in some institutions. This idea that everything previously known has to be unlearned. Snook found the sense of knowing always that he was on probation difficult “it is easier now to go oh it was fine . . . the more I did the work the more I enjoyed it . I just think that thing hanging over you that you haven’t passed your probation made me quite nervous”. He continues “so if there was a review of the work when you are on probation you cling on to the things people say it will be constructive feedback (because people are very good at that at Geese)”. He says “I remember going after performances – what if I can’t make that better – does that mean I don’t get the job?” He says though that he was getting lots of positive feedback and felt like he was getting better “I could read how I was doing from other actor/ facilitators who had passed probation already on those competences”.

The thing Brown found most challenging during the six months was running exercises on her own in groupwork where she knew she had got support there but realising that she had to do it at some point “I would get really nervous but also go you *do* know how to do this”. Milne also found the processing of exercises one of the most challenging activities of the six-month training period and working with the Fragment masks. The latter she says she only did once as a full-time practitioner and once as a freelancer with Geese. She says “as an actor I really really loved the lifting of the mask because you are in the character and you are basically being hot-seated and you’ve got this lovely shift and that’s all it is. It is really quite straight forward if you are trained . . . if you are an actor”. She says the Fragment masks are very different though “because what you are doing all the time is you’re like listening to the questions and then you have to stay in character and think which mask does

that then prompt and then you have to physically get the mask out and put that on". She explains "I found it really hard when I was doing it not to let that 'Oh my God what are all the things I am meant to do bleed into the actual character and make the character a bit wild". She says with the Fragment masks the characters are a bit heightened because they have to be "I was always quite conscious of . . . that character has been developed as a projection of the audience so that's how they have built that character with the mime scenes so I was always anxious that in heightening those characters I would be sort of caricaturing them and where that line is".

Anderson found the interactivity of Geese performances difficult "I used to dread feedback . . . I was never very good at it . . . I got better . . . I was always nervous because you're performing your lines which you only rehearsed the day before . . . in any traditional setting you've got a month of rehearsal". Instead with Geese he says "you've got a rehearsal on the Thursday, travelling down to Wales on the Thursday night and then we're performing on Friday morning and it is an hour and a half show". He says "I used to be at the hotel sweating thinking I haven't got my lines yet, I've got to get up early in the morning" He also talks about audience feedback as being difficult when you go into the audience and ask them for feedback and then you present that feedback to the audience. It was suggested to him that it must be so easy to forget what the audience are saying to you and Anderson says "many times I have forgotten . . . you've just got to be so sharp and quick in terms of what you are going to say and package it so that it is succinct". Smallman found the performance work challenging for different reasons "I think I had a little thing on my shoulder – you've not been trained, you don't know what you are doing". She says that she

hadn't spent time in prison to really know the client group. With Geese "the more you work and facilitate the more time you spend time with the clients the more that informs your performance". She goes on "so it builds and builds and builds . . . I was watching people do stuff and thinking how do they know what to say . . . I don't know the right dialogue yet". She continues "because I am quite calm as a person to then have to be like aggressive – it was a real stretch - it's acting that's what it is, but it is a stretch from my normal self". She remembers Andy and Lou really trying to encourage her to "cultivate and go just go big . . . you really have to kinda let rip of your inhibitions". They said they would be able to tone it down if necessary. She describes being rehearsed into *Stay* quite early on "there's some very extreme emotions there . . . you have to go to quite a dark place to access it". Smallman had moved cities to work at Geese so that can destabilise you she says "when you are at the start of a learning process – you recoil a bit – it's a bit scary. You are out of your comfort zone every single day". She describes the fact that "You arrive and everyone is very skilled – you want to be at their level and you can't – you have to learn and it is a journey". Smallman is underlining here why the training is for six months because practitioners need that time to try and develop and be able to work in the way which Geese does.

Teare says the conference performances (with professionals such as judges or social workers) have been the most difficult for him. "it's in mask but on a big stage – it's a very difficult style". He goes on "you have to go quite big – in a way I have been trained not to. It goes against my theatrical sensibility and the nature of our work because you work with professionals you have to be really precise about the characters you pitch in order for them to accept and empathise with them". Like

Smallman he says “it takes quite a lot of experience meeting different client groups so I would feel like I am failing – this is the acting bit – I should be able to take on that character easily but if you haven’t met that client group you don’t really know what you are talking about”. This echoes what Smallman said about needing that time around participants to get better at representing them. He says “there is always the mask up moment where you have to be very authentic in connecting with them” “there is a sense that in acting in general you don’t want to give too much away - you don’t just go. . . these are my real feelings, my real emotion”. He explains “that’s unusual – maybe you will have a pay off right at the end of the play – that is your character’s arc in the play but in every Geese play there is a moment where you suddenly have to slip, everything comes out and then back in which is quite different and it still jars with me quite a bit”. Anderson also describes the challenge of the clientele too “it is so layered in Geese whether it is working with sex offenders or category A prisoners or young people who are sexual offenders or a secure unit . . . so, the range of people that we are working with, then having to navigate how I facilitate that”.

The training is challenging and trainees will find different aspects of it difficult. They will have arrived at Geese with a variety of skills. They are expected to be able to perform, facilitate and get used to going into prisons and all these combined means that the training is quite tough for most going through it.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has examined what is expected of the Geese trainee once they pass the audition and are in the first six months of probation. It looks at what they need to be able to achieve to be taken on by the company permanently. It is also possible to see how the six-month training period came about at Geese and why it is important. The data collected enabled the creation of a table of what the key competences are which trainees are expected to achieve during the six months (see Table 20 below) and a table of the associated activities which support this (see Table 21 below).

Table 20: Key competences to achieve during the six-month training

Theoretical frameworks	The trainee learns about the theoretical background to the work which Geese does including particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Social Learning Theory▪ Cognitive Behaviour Theory▪ Role Theory
Performance skill	Practitioners require strong performance skills and the ability to be authentic in the characters they portray.
Facilitation – Processing work	The trainee will need to be able to process exercises in workshops which means leading and working through the exercises with participants.
Working with masks	This is a key skill and central to the work at Geese. They use standard half-masks and Fragment masks.

Learning the repertoire	Geese have a repertoire of short pieces/ plays which they use. The trainee at some point will start to be placed in these and have to perform in them.
The Geese Style	Geese have a special way of working. There is a sense that people have to forget how they have approached performance and facilitation work before in order to succeed.
Working in prisons	The trainee will perhaps go into prisons for the first time to work and will need to be able to work in this kind of environment.

Sources: Geese company information, research for this thesis and interview data

Table 21: Associated activities which support the work on competences

Observing work	This involves the trainee practitioner observing Geese practitioners perform/ run workshops before attempting it themselves but also means that the observation continues alongside the trainee starting to perform and process exercises.
Practising skills	It is a key part of the six-month training that practitioners get the opportunity to frequently practice what they will then go out and do in prisons. It is a safe way of rehearsing the skills which will be needed.
Monitoring work/ review meetings/ support	Every piece of work is evaluated. Practitioners are expected to go through together after a performance/ workshop and discuss what worked and what could have been done differently. During the six-month period the trainee will also have personal review meetings and receive support on how they are getting on from their line manager.

Sources: Geese company information, research for this thesis and interview data

The training at Geese evolved as a way of having a structure for new trainees coming to the company. It is predominantly though according to Watson a way of ensuring quality in the work which Geese sends out to client groups. Watson needs to know that the work he is sending out is uniformly of a good standard and training practitioners is a way of ensuring that. He emphasises that the training period is *entirely* about ensuring quality. The chapter has examined the competences which trainees have to achieve during the six-month training: theoretical frameworks, performance skill, facilitation – processing exercises, working with masks, learning the repertoire, The Geese Style and working in prisons. It is important to note that despite the emphasis on the six-month training the interviewees all discuss the need for the training to continue and the requirement for about five years to really know the full repertoire at Geese.

Watson believes that the kind of work which they do at Geese takes time and skill to develop as a company and as a practitioner hence the need for a training period. He feels that if more mainstream companies start to work in prisons they need to question why “If the only answer you can come up with is because I got funding or because it ticks a box with the Arts Council then that’s not good enough”. By the end of the training the Geese practitioner will need to be a strong performer and facilitator able to use the Geese masks effectively. They will be comfortable working in prisons and will be getting familiar with the Geese repertoire. They will have done a good deal of observing of the more experienced practitioners and will have been able to practice skills in the rehearsal room at Geese. They will understand the theoretical frameworks which support the work and have become used to The Geese Style of working. During the six months they will be constantly reviewing and monitoring the

work which they and others are doing too.

At the start of the training the new recruits are given a reading list and an Introduction to Groupwork manual. They receive some key general training sessions at Geese Headquarters about things like mask work. They are also given a list of questions which form a significant part of how they move through the training. Finding the answers to these questions which are about key areas of Geese practice allows the trainee to progress and take some ownership over their training.

The trainee will need to be a strong performer, facilitator and be able to use mask well. Jackson described Geese' performance work as being "highly skilled, well-pitched performances that come into the lives of those in prison" (Jackson, 2007, p.218). This links with those interviewed who talk about the need for authenticity in performance so that those watching become engaged and want to be a part of the process of change. Kewley & Van Hout (2020) also discuss this in their evaluation of the Staging Recovery programme at Geese concluding that the key to this level of work is "advocacy in which the performance can be used to communicate injustice or help prevent the recurrence of suffering". As a facilitator the trainee should be able to facilitate and process exercises well. Balfour describes the many decisions a facilitator has to make when running a workshop (2016, p.164). He concludes that the craft of facilitation comes from the "ability to negotiate the dynamics, to acknowledge and identify them, and to work with them towards a positive goal" (2016, p. P164). Watson supports this in discussing a workshop that might follow a performance of *Gutted* referred to in the literature review explaining that if someone in the audience has recognised an aspect of himself in the performance and

experienced what he describes as a moment of “dissonance or ambivalence in that recognition” (Prentki & Preston, 2009, p49) then he believes they can move forward in the groupwork examining what might be needed for change to occur. The facilitator will need the right skill to be able to work with that participant following what they have seen. In terms of the mask competence there is a juxtaposition between the surreal masks and authentic dialogue but it is a combination which works Watson believes. Trainees will have training with the Fragment masks and will build their confidence in using them and the half masks which are used in the majority of the work.

The trainee will progress by observing more experienced practitioners and practising before they deliver work. They will develop an understanding of the theoretical frameworks which the company use. They will then gradually do more and more connected to projects so maybe running one exercise to start with and then moving on to having greater input into projects. They will also need to become used to going into prisons to work which some may not have done before. The trainee will need to gradually learn the company repertoire of plays but certainly is slotted into performances more quickly than into facilitation work which may need more preparation to handle in the way which Geese does. There is discussion of needing to learn The Geese Style for doing things too and also the practitioners saying that they had to strip away other skills and understanding and learn what is needed in terms of The Geese Style first rather like the traditional Drama school system of actor training.

The data shows that monitoring and evaluation is key to the work at Geese as a company after each project and individually completing monitoring forms during the six-month training. The trainee also meets regularly with their line manager during the six months so that they are aware of how they are progressing. This will give them a sense of whether they are likely to pass the probationary period. The literature review stated Watson's belief that one of the most important aspects of the training process at Geese is to "develop our practitioners' ability to be reflective about their practice" (Balfour & Bartleet, 2012, p.41). He calls it a process of "reflective reviewing" (Balfour & Bartleet, 2012, p.41). He maintains that this "ability to be reflective enables us to continually refine our work, both as individuals and as an organisation" (Balfour & Bartleet, 2012, p.41).

What individuals find challenging during the six months will often depend on what their strongest skills were when they arrived at Geese but include performing, facilitation - particularly processing exercises, using masks, the interactivity of the work at Geese, running the conference performances and working with the client groups which the work is for. There is no doubt that the six months are challenging though the data shows that the recruits enjoy it and feel supported and included by the company. They are always aware of their progress and how they are getting on and therefore the Geese practitioners say it is not a shock to those that struggle with the training that they may need to have their probation extended or at worst may not pass the probation and have to leave the company.

The next chapter moves on from the competences to achieve during the six-month training at Geese to examine more broadly the skills and attributes required by the practitioner to be successful at the company.

5. Chapter Five: The skills and attributes required for a practitioner to succeed at Geese

5.1 Introduction

The third thematic analysis chapter explores the skills and attributes required by a practitioner at Geese Theatre Company. The previous chapter examined the competences which practitioners must achieve during the six-month training but this chapter investigates more widely to identify the skills and attributes required. The chapter looks behind the written job role descriptors to find out what really gets people through to passing the six-month probation. The data comes from practitioners who have successfully passed the probation themselves but who have also observed others passing or failing the training.

Sub question three for this thesis (all questions are detailed in full in the Methodology chapter) asks “What skills and attributes enable the practitioner to work in this company and in turn potentially the wider area of applied drama?” and sub question four “Is it possible to identify which elements are missing when practitioners are not taken on after the six-month training period?”.

Whilst there is overlap in the content of the discussions here with the previous chapter, this chapter aims to discover through the interview data analysis specifically what skills and attributes a person will need to have to be able to work successfully for Geese. Not just what they have to *do* during the six months of training but what will make them successful as a Geese practitioner to pass the training and move into long term work with the company. This is the formal skills and experience but the soft

skills too. Many of these attributes would also apply to someone working in the wider field of applied theatre. The chapter sets out the attributes discovered through the interviews and subsequent analysis: performance ability, facilitation – processing skills, understanding The Geese Style, dealing with the impact of the work and personal qualities of the practitioner. It also discusses why practitioners believe they passed their probation and were taken on by the company and identifies the possible reasons why someone is not taken on. Both questions also allow conclusions about what the required skills and attributes for a Geese practitioner are.

At the end of the chapter there is a summary of the findings and a table which seeks to summarise at a glance what the skills and attributes needed are. This information comes from interviewee responses to the questions that form the basis of this chapter, but data relevant to this chapter also came through in response to questions asked in other parts of the interviews so that data is also presented here. Where appropriate, cross references to the other data chapters is also made.

5.2 Performance ability

The data demonstrates as discovered in the competences chapter that the Geese practitioner needs to be a strong performer but this chapter details more fully what that entails. They will be required to be authentic in performance, have good improvisational skills, be able to play a range of characters suitable to the work, to change quickly between those characters, be able to learn lines and rehearse quickly and use masks effectively. They will also, as many applied theatre artists have to do, be able to perform in non-traditional theatre spaces. This will mean being

skilled enough to cope with these more challenging environments and to not be distracted by the audience who may not all be sitting watching intently.

The practitioner needs to have a base line level of performance ability when they come to Geese. They can then add the nuances required for the Geese work.

Anderson believes you need to be “a good performer who can improvise, a good performer who can learn lines very quickly”. Brown says that she thinks her facilitation skills are stronger than performance skills but she loves performing. She concludes that you have to be competent at both and one might “shine more than the other”. Heywood believes that you do need the basic performance skills and you do need to be able to play certain characters. She says in prison you are going to find middle-class offenders “but generally that is not the people you are working with”. Brown discusses the range of characters which you need to be able to play “a kid and a Mum and a social worker – a prison officer and someone in prison”. Milne agrees that you need to be able to play multiple different roles such as a young teenage girl struggling with various issues and then swap into a professional role. She adds that you do need an ability to shift in and out of those characters quickly too. Smallman feels that “authenticity is key”. It is something talked about by all of the practitioners. The ability to see the detail in character portrayal is important too. Anderson says he certainly did not arrive at the company knowing how to look for the detail in building characters “it really grounded me as a performer . . . so when I perform now my performances are so nuanced because of my time at Geese and looking at the intricacies of character”. He explains “we worked with some people in prison and all over the country – different stories”. He believes that he is able now to “dig deeper as a writer as well into what it means to portray character and

storytelling”. Heywood says that as an actor you need to be able to listen (“the sign of a smart actor”) and you need to be able to share and you need to be able “to work backwards and forwards with each other”. Anderson believes that you also need to be able to perform under pressure asking “can you perform in a prison setting when there are drug deals going on and you are getting heckled and still stay in character?”.

Snook in discussing whether prior training for the performance element is essential says that being a trained actor is obviously useful but “sometimes a lot of the stuff we do at Geese goes against that”. He explains that what he found useful with the short one-minute mime pieces was to actually “live it in your head”. He explains “oh fuck it I’ll have a cup of tea rather than I stand up and walk over to stage right”. He says “I can definitely see when people are having that monologue in their heads – if you are just being that person - oh for fuck’s sake I can’t be arsed being here or whatever – that starts to read in the body”. Snook is suggesting that he adopts a Stanislavskian approach of also working on what your character is thinking as well as doing in a scene (Stanislavsky was an actor and director, 1863-1938 who invented the ‘System’ which was a way of training actors so that they concentrated on the internal feelings and motivations of the character they were playing).

A rich range of skills then that constitute performance ability. There are several skills here which would be expected of all performers such as good acting ability. An applied theatre artist would also be expected to be good at improvising and to play a range of characters sometimes needing to move quickly between them on stage. They would need to be accomplished too at performing in non-traditional venues.

Geese also require a high degree of authenticity in the characters and are often playing a child one minute and a social worker the next in scenes. The pace of learning lines is fast and rehearsal time is short. All actors have to be believable to draw us into the story of the play but there is the added element here that a possibly quite disaffected group of people have to be presented with performances which are so authentic and engaging that they are brought into the world of the performance piece and therefore start to respond to it, allowing them to go through the process of change.

5.3 Facilitation – Processing

When discussing facilitation at Geese the practitioners talk about needing an ability to listen, being able to read the room, being responsive to what is happening in the room, being assertive and having good communication with participants. Snook talks about having to be responsive as a key skill needed for facilitation at Geese. He explains this in relation to processing exercises “there’s a general opening question, there’s a skills and tactics section then there’s moments of heat and connections to real life”. He explains “you can move that in a formulaic way but what Geese teach you on TOSW is about having that as a backdrop and just go wherever the people take it – the participants”. He says “that’s a real skill which you can’t train – it just happens . . . when I watch someone else process I will always have questions in my head and someone might not ask it but a few questions down the line they are asking it”. He says that if someone is quite new, they might struggle to listen as much because they are panicking in their head if they are asking the right questions. Brown agrees “you have to be able to be responsive, assertive, open to ideas”. She

explains “you might go in with one idea of what you are going to do in a workshop and something might come up that makes you go – do you know what let’s follow that thread instead”. She feels her background at Big Brum helped her with that process which she describes as “very much following the arrow rather than looking at the target”. Anderson talks in a similar way about it “the ability to read the room when it comes to facilitation – understanding when something is working and when to move on and change it up very quickly based on the energy in the room”.

Milne talks about communication with participants as being one of the key attributes needed in facilitation. She explains this further saying “a level of groundedness and being able to communicate on a level with participants – I would imagine this is a deal breaker for Geese”. Milne explains that coming into Geese she did not have as much facilitation experience as other people but she says “I think if you are ok at communication and ok at performing those are probably the elements that create a good facilitator anyway – that communication that allows you to connect with people”. She believes that she learned a great deal at Geese in terms of the processing “coming from an acting background. . . the lack of ego (at Geese) and the groundedness and the genuine absolute unwavering thing of what is best for the participants - Geese will give you that”. She continues “It is about listening . . . it is about listening and having that conversation”. When discussing the processing and how hard it is Heywood says there are skills of an actor which overlap it. She explains that at the auditions now people have to run workshops so that they can show facilitation “they don’t have to be able to process but they’ve got to have intuition about working with people”. Milne agrees saying she remembers the processing being difficult “I was getting caught up in my words now and again

especially with things like *Socks* (exercise) when you are trying to use the metaphor – there was something about using the metaphor in that exercise – even though I feel quite confident of having conversations in that way”. She explains “I was trying to use something external in terms of these metaphors that are part of that and I could imagine if I did know that stat (about a third of people not getting taken on by Geese after probation) that I could have got myself more tied up with that than I did”.

Geese practitioners are expected to have very good facilitation and processing skills particularly. Processing is a significant part of what Geese do. The practitioners in processing have to be able to talk through an exercise and deliver the various layers of what the participants have to do. They also have to respond to what is happening with the exercise in the room and make changes if needed rather than just following a set workshop plan. The practitioners will need to be able to listen to participants and “read the room”. They will be required to be assertive to make this work and have good communication skills with participants.

5.4 The Geese Style

All the practitioners refer to Geese having a ‘style’ – a particular way of working. They say that despite having quite a lot of experience as actors and practitioners when they come to Geese, they have to almost start again in understanding The Geese Way of working and building up their skills.

Anderson talks about Geese bringing him as a performer/ facilitator “back to basics”. He explains “if you go to Geese and your chest is like that (pushes his chest out) and

you think you are the best you will get humbled very quickly". Brown says "in terms of performance "just being able to adapt your style because Geese definitely has a particular style of working – weirdly I think that is harder for people coming from Drama school because yeah there is a way you approach a character or that you approach how and why you are saying and doing things". She explains The Geese Style "is like trying to get that nuance but also working on the fact that humans work on stereotypes . . . how do you land that type but also getting the nuance of what is going on for that character?". She explains this process is quite condensed because the rehearsal period is so short. She says you have to be able to take direction on quite quickly to make this work.

The Geese Style then seems to be this mixture of working with stereotypes but also then finding the nuances within them. The practitioner also needs to work quickly in rehearsal and combine this with a lack of ego about themselves in the work. As detailed in the Literature Review (see chapter one) Geese work with what they call Fragment masks. They each have a name: Good Girl/ Boy, Mr Cool, Bullshit, The Joker, Brickwall, The Target for example. Each of these characters has personalities and behaviours to match their name and is a quick way of participants associating ways in which they behave themselves with what they are seeing. These are stereotypes of people but are an effective way theatrically of presenting different types of behaviour to those watching. The audience will start to see that yes as individuals in this situation they present a brick wall emotionally or they play the Joker to avoid confronting issues. It is a simple mechanism but a fast way of connecting with those who have committed offences. They are witnessing a pattern of behaviour which they might be following. In tandem with this though is very authentic character scenes which present real scenarios which the prisoner might

have found themselves in. These are realistic acting scenes with characters using very authentic dialogue. It's the juxtaposition between these two extremes which seems to create the perfect blend which makes the Geese work so powerful.

5.5 Dealing with the impact of the work

Working in this area is demanding physically and mentally. The practitioners are working with people in prison or those at risk of offending and they are tackling subjects such as domestic and sexual abuse. They will need to be able to talk about the work with each other, be honest when the work is challenging and have regular supervision and support from their line manager.

Heywood says practitioners need "the skills or the outlets" to deal with the impact of the work". Snook agrees that if you are playing a guy that is grooming a teenage girl at a church "the complexities and levels and the type of people who do those kinds of things are very complex individuals that it is hard to understand". He goes on that though the character might be so far removed from who you are "you still have to be able to keep yourself within that role". Anderson was honest in admitting he could quite easily have ended up in prison based on his early life experiences and he says "Drama saved me". He is very articulate about this and it appears that he has processed what his life was like and could have become and is therefore in a stable position to move forward. Not everyone is able to do this and working at Geese might become too traumatic for some. He admits "yes there were a few times when I broke down – I don't mind sharing – everyone has got their own journey personally - what they go through – whether it is trauma, upset, grief and because of the nature

of the work you're gonna explore those feelings of grief and frustration and anger". He asks "so when you hit that – are you mature enough as a performer to look past it and work through it – if you are not, it hinders your ability to really free yourself and let go to give the performance the best it can for the clients which is why we have that supervision to unload and unpick". He warns there is a difficulty too in that you can become desensitised to everything "oh yeah murder and sexual offences". Instead, he says "it's about keeping that humanity even though we deal with it all the time and there is an element of having to go I've got to put it to one side and not get too emotionally involved you've also got to look at where do I stand in this emotionally – how do I look after myself emotionally as well". Anderson describes a complex process that is happening in the mind of the practitioner to create a balance of empathy but resilience and the ability to detach enough from the work to prevent it causing emotional stress.

Smallman believes that communicating as you go through the process (of the training) as to where you are at is very important. She says this particularly as the person in charge of the training "I need to know where people are at – I need to know if the work is affecting them, I need to know if they are getting triggered by something". She explains this is because Geese want to keep people safe when they are going into prison environments and working with the subject matter. She says she does not want them to say they are fine and then be going home and "their head be absolutely spinning out with the topic of the play". She continues that what is needed is a kind of "strength in the fragility of going . . . because it is hardcore stuff that we deal with it is ok that it affects you as long as we know where people are at – so an honesty I think".

There is a clear understanding that this is a challenging job to be in. The company have mechanisms to cope with this: they talk together after projects, staff are offered supervision where they talk through issues that arise out of the work and they have regular contact with their line manager where their wellbeing is checked amongst other things. An actor/ facilitator working in theatre or other areas of applied drama wouldn't have to build this set of skills in relation to coping with the impact of their work. Anderson sums it up very well in saying the Geese practitioner needs a balance of empathy, resilience and detachment when working and Smallman adds to that the need for a strength in the fragility of saying things are not ok when the work becomes too difficult.

5.6 Personal qualities

The interview data from the participants provides a selection of personal qualities (see Table 22) which appear to be key in making a good Geese practitioner: an understanding that change can occur and that Geese know how to facilitate that, being confident, a clear communicator, having curiosity and commitment to the work, ability to cope with the range of work and the environment where it takes place, being uninhibited when performing, being grounded, having a lack of ego, being resilient and being able to work closely together in a small team. Some of the things in this list are hard to define and difficult to put into a job description (chapter 3 details the person specification at Geese – section 3.7.1). Unsurprisingly 'lack of ego' and 'groundedness' are not mentioned in the job specification. They are not the standard kinds of words or phrases used in job person specifications and are hard to

quantify but are certainly key attributes needed at Geese based on the interview data here.

Table 22: Personal qualities required at a glance

An understanding that change can occur
Self-confidence
Being a clear communicator
Having a curiosity and commitment to the work
Able to cope with the range of work
Able to cope with the environments in which the work takes place
Being uninhibited when performing
Being grounded
Being resilient
Having a lack of ego
Able to work closely in a small team

Source: Interview data drawn from skills and attributes question

5.6.1 An understanding that change can occur

Brown believes that on a personal level you need a real understanding that change (with prisoners or people at risk of offending) can occur. Belief in change is one of Geese' company values "Geese upholds and promotes a belief in the potential and possibility of individual change". Brown says "I think it would be really difficult doing this work – forgetting the drama, forgetting the facilitation without being able to approach it that I could be that person and that there is potential for change". She

believes that you really need to have that as an attitude and “that goes for all types of criminality”. She says that of course we all have different experiences of things in life where you might find one type of offence harder than another to work with but “you have got to be able to put that aside in the room”. She emphasises “visibly put that aside in the room when you are working with any of those people - just being able to see someone as a whole person is invaluable”. Smallman believes that you need too to have a respect for the knowledge that Geese as an organisation has and that “the direction and feedback and stuff is coming from that place of knowledge as opposed to being critical of somebody and their skills”. She says you need “an acceptance of the huge amount of understanding and knowledge that Geese have of this world”. Practitioners need to believe that change is possible and that Geese can bring about that change through their work.

5.6.2 Self-confidence and communication skills

Self-confidence and good communication skills are essential qualities to have as a Geese practitioner. Teare says “It does seem to be the way you can be in the room . . . it’s that emotional intelligence of being able to pick things up and not fulfil your own needs to be liked”. He explains “you have to be able to step back as well so I think a lot of self-confidence is quite necessary”. He continues “when you are leading the group and you feel like you want to be performing, doing something special when really the best groupwork is when you allow space for people to contribute”.

Smallman says working for Geese “requires and asks for a lot in terms of communications skills”. Any type of performing or facilitation type work would require communication skills to be strong. The practitioner will need to work with a variety of client groups and be able to be very clear in giving instructions and working through

processing of exercises. What is also being discussed here though relates to having a lack of ego when delivering the work so that the needs of the participants take priority which Teare describes as “allowing space”. Being able to do this does take confidence and maturity as a performer and facilitator to not always stick to the prepared plan and try to “do something special” but acknowledging that the direction of the work should be dictated by the participants in the room and how they are responding.

5.6.3 Curiosity and commitment to the work

Heywood believes that you need to have a curiosity and a real commitment to the work at Geese “because if you come into it as an acting job . . . thinking you maybe want to do something else eventually . . . it’s a bit of a way of life . . . you can’t do it half-heartedly”. She says there are people who see it as an acting job and that can be evident in the audition and application form “if they are just going I want to be an actor and your company looks good - it’s not going to work”. She concludes that to be successful the person needs to be “fascinated and curious”. Smallman agrees that “you have to be committed – we are really committed to the work”. Milne says too that it would be difficult to take on the job and pass that training without a real understanding of what is going on for the people in prison “a basic understanding of what it is like for people in different situations”. She explains “you couldn’t come in as an actor just because you get to do it every day and not have an understanding of or interest in social justice and the fact that people are going through different things”. Snook believes that it’s something about a “genuine interest and empathy with the people we work with”. He explains “because you could just go through all the processes of every exercise and you could do it really well but if you don’t really care

I don't think you'd stick at a job like this". He continues "it can be quite consuming and it can impact on you beyond work – I can be with a group of guys on life sentences for a week - you start to feel guilty about being at home". Anderson says "Geese for me was life changing – it changed my life – I have got nothing but great things to say about Geese and my time there. If they call me back to freelance I will always if I have the time step in because they are an awesome company – it humbles you". What the practitioners are saying is that this isn't a standard acting or facilitating job at Geese. The work is challenging and therefore the staff at the company need to have a real interest and curiosity and commitment to the work. They seem to be suggesting too that you probably need to commit to being at Geese for quite a long time. Watson discussed the fact earlier that the probation continues into the first five years so to be successful a Geese practitioner probably needs to at least commit to that period of time. They have to believe that the work can bring about change and that the methods they are using will facilitate that change.

5.6.4 Cope with a range of work, environments and be uninhibited in performance

Geese work in prisons and young offender institutions with prisoners and those at risk of offending but might also be working on a conference performance for Social Workers or Nurses or delivering a workshop to Judges. The practitioner at Geese needs then to be able to cope with the range of work and the environments in which it takes place. Smallman says "you have to be able to switch up things quite a lot day to day". In those environments and in the work you need to be uninhibited too. Anderson says "you need to not be inhibited . . . you've got to be relaxed; you've got to be comfortable within your own skin. You have to be able to lose inhibition". He continues "many performers when I see them find it hard to not be themselves – to

lose that inhibition. With Geese you have to just throw that out of the window because sometimes you might be working in a prison and you might get challenged personally and if I get challenged personally I'm like oh my gosh that's what they think about me but I've got to carry on and go you know what I don't care – it doesn't matter". What the practitioners are describing is a day after day huge range of work and environments in which that work takes place. Coupled with that they need to be uninhibited in performance and facilitation work. They need an ability to cope with whatever attitude greets them from prisoners. This is similar to the work of a teacher in a challenging secondary school but in a much more pressurised environment.

5.6.5 Groundedness, a lack of ego and being resilient

Earlier in this chapter Milne described the need for a "level of groundedness and being able to communicate on a level with participants". She also mentioned this in relation to the characters which practitioners are using. In the first thematic analysis chapter Watson talked about a lack of ego being key for a Geese practitioner "the vast majority of our work is about enabling others not about profiling ourselves". Brown says you have to have "first and foremost an attitude of wanting to work with people as opposed to work at or to people". Heywood lists "resilience in terms of managing the work" as a key attribute that the Geese trainee practitioner needs to have and Anderson also uses the word resilience. When Milne uses the word groundedness she is trying to convey a quality which all the Geese practitioners have. They come across as "down-to-earth" in conversation which is an important way to be with prisoners for instance. They demonstrate humility in the skills which they have often questioning if they are good enough. This groundedness means that they make appropriate choices regarding characters too. They are able to act as

though they have experienced crime and prison themselves. Conveying something you have not done yourself is of course what being an actor is often about but doing that in the theatre or on television is different to trying to convey it at very close quarters with a group of participants currently in prison and who are often quite defensive. The Geese practitioner being able to have this sense of groundedness means that they can connect with the participants more readily.

5.6.6 Working in a small team

In terms of making things work in a small team Smallman says “you do sleep eat and breathe it sometimes . . . if you are staying away you are not just working together, you are having breakfast together and you’re having dinner together and you are travelling in the van together for hours and hours so there is definitely something about being personable”. Snook agrees “we spend a lot of time in vans or Premier Inns – the people in Geese are working out whether you work as part of the team but you are also working out are these people I can spend a lot of time with”. It was a bit different for Teare joining the company and training during the extended disrupted Covid-19 period but he agrees “when we do projects it is quite intense especially when we are staying somewhere else – you spend a lot of time together”. A new member of staff being able to be “personable” and essentially fit into an existing group of people is almost impossible to state on a person specification for a job due to legal restrictions but it is important here and would be in many jobs. It is a small team at Geese that spends a lot of time together so it will be necessary that the new person compliments the existing staff group.

It is possible then to identify the personal qualities in a practitioner which will allow them to succeed at Geese: confidence, being a clear communicator, possessing a curiosity and commitment to the work and ability to cope with the range of work and settings. They will also need to be uninhibited, grounded, have a lack of ego, possess resilience and be able to work in a small close team.

5.7 Passing or failing the probation at Geese

It was discovering that a third of people are not taken on permanently by Geese after the six-month training that acted as the main stimulus for the direction of this study. It is important to examine what the reasons might be for a trainee being unsuccessful and when they were *successful* examine what had gone right for them in order to answer the research questions.

5.7.1 Passing probation

After a rigorous audition process and then six months of training it is a significant moment for practitioners when they pass the probation and get accepted by the company to become a permanent member of Geese staff. The trainees were asked why they think they were successful in being taken on and Watson discusses this issue from his perspective as Artistic Director and CEO of the company too.

Watson says that regarding someone passing their probation “it’s not about us saying you have absolutely nailed that . . . what we think is that people have got the foundations in place to be able to do that work successfully and it is not always easy to articulate when someone has and hasn’t”. Watson says when he joined Geese he knew there was a probationary period and knew he was being assessed. He says

that they try to make people feel as integrated in the company as possible and “that’s why sometimes it is really painful because you want to welcome people in and you want them to feel as comfortable as possible – you want to give them the best opportunity”. Heywood says “you take people on not going– they can do that, and they can play that, and they are perfect for that. You take them on with potential and most of the time we get that right”. Brown talks about the end of six-month meeting approaching “there is a part of you that knows it’s coming but there’s also a scramble to be able to try to do the things you need to be able to get those competences”. She says “that’s probably happening more for you than them as you can’t place yourself in that work - someone else has to put you there”. She felt reasonably secure when it got to that point “I think I hadn’t heard anything that would make me go no you’re not going to get through. She feels that she had experienced the opportunity to try quite a lot of things out. Anderson describes it in a similar way “as we went along, I knew that certain things had fallen into place, me learning how to process the bigger exercises was a learning curve though. I felt that I was aware that I was not quite nailing it”. He goes on “by the end of it I knew I was delivering the exercises and I knew they were working, they were happy enough with the performances. I felt like I was part of the company”. Brown was getting a sense of doing ok from client group reactions particularly “I remember going to a prison and only maybe working with them for a couple of weeks and someone said I thought you had been with them (Geese) for ages and that’s when you go oh clearly I must look like I fit because if you think I am part of this and I don’t know what I am doing then that sounds good”. She continues “I had things that I was taking on that I know they hadn’t necessarily given to trainees before and I think I was a bit older, I was already in my thirties”. Brown felt she had some life experience which helped “it is like when you are doing

theatre at university and say you want to do Drama therapy and they say no you need experience and you don't understand what they mean and then you live for a bit you think oh I get you". She explains "you've met lots of different types of people, you've engaged in lots of different kinds of ways and you have experienced different issues which means you come with a different level to things". Brown feels this helped her to pass the probation.

Anderson explains that people can get through the audition at Geese but there's an "exposing" that happens once they are doing the training sometimes. He says "I am a very committed person and I am passionate about this kind of work and they knew I was passionate". There was a connection he says "sometimes I would be in a prison and see guys that I grew up with – and that's up and down the country so I said Dan you have a connection to this world". He goes on "I thought – I'm supposed to be here and I think they saw that and saw my want and my desire to get it right". Likewise, he said "when I was getting it wrong they saw my frustration – me being hard on myself - I feel like I am a gifted performer anyway – I am confident enough to say that but in terms of the specifics of Geese I really wanted to get it". He concludes "when it came around to the six months, I thought yeah I think they are going to keep me on because I think I am a valuable member of the team now based on who I am, what I can bring and my passion for the work".

When asked why he thought he had passed the probation Snook says "having the skill and the ability to do the type of acting that is needed. I think you can train all the facilitation and exercises". He also enjoys the work and has empathy for the people he meets in prison "my thoughts, feelings and beliefs about people we work with I

think are part of why I got employed by Geese – if you don't care and you just want to do acting then I don't think you are going to stick it out – so I think they are looking for that at Geese". Teare describes working with Smallman as an indication that his probation was going ok "we have developed that ability to work as co-workers and rely on each other – that made me feel that yes I deserved to pass the probation". He explains that he felt he could do all the things required and I did have the confidence to take on any of the material "I won't deliver it quite so well – if I am processing something I will probably miss what the really experienced facilitators would get but then they can always chip in". Teare explains that he got taken on alongside someone else (gender protected in these following examples so that there is no risk of identification) "she/he had trained as a psychodramatist . . . she/he had the drama school stuff but also the therapeutic stuff that she/he was coming from". He continues "she/he didn't have much workshop training either but lots of other stuff". Interestingly in a chat afterwards she/he said to Teare that "she/he only wanted to work for Geese for a year". That is not the kind of commitment needed for a company like this Teare believes. This echoes what Heywood said earlier about feeling that it really would not work if someone viewed coming to Geese like any other acting job.

5.7.2 Failing probation and being told

This section begins the discussion on why practitioners fail the probation period and explains how Geese makes the decision and communicates with the trainee that things are not working out. There are four key reasons which those asked identified: performance skills are not strong enough, facilitation skills are not of the required standard, practitioners are not able to fit into the Geese team dynamic and the

trainee is not at the right point in their life to work with Geese and is affected by their own personal issues.

In relation to communicating to the trainee that things aren't going that well Watson says "one of the things that I think is really important in all of this is that it is done in a completely transparent way – that there's dialogue all the way through". He continues that he always says to people when they join and are offered a job – a training position "look this is a brilliant opportunity but I must be clear with you that as many people don't succeed at this as do succeed at this . . . because I think we are quite unusual in how much we will hold to that". He explains "it is sometimes really painful because you might really really value somebody – they might be a brilliant person but they might just not be quite right for us in terms of what we think is their ability to deliver the range of work". He goes on "it doesn't matter how nice someone is if they're not right for the work then they're not going to make it". Watson says "if I am completely honest then it very rarely comes as a surprise when someone doesn't make it – it is usually a mutual sort of decision". He explains "because when people struggle at this kind of work it really impacts upon their mental health . . . you can see it and you can feel it and you think actually you probably could get this, you probably could just about get there but I think it would kill you".

Smallman says "it's not a test this six months – we really want you in the company – we've seen you audition – we think you could bring a lot and it is such an investment from Geese going through this whole process". She continues "the last thing we want to do is to lose somebody so when we notice where their weaker areas might be we communicate and look at how can we support you and help with the development".

She explains “it’s quite an ask for people to wear all these different hats and have all these different skills so it is quite a leap in development and skills to get to that point”. Brown agrees it is horrible when people do not get through the training “it is devastating because you do become like a family”. Watson too says “It is the worst thing to have invested six months of the company’s time and resource into training someone for us to turn round and say I am sorry this just hasn’t worked out – that is just a nightmare for Geese – from an emotional but equally a financial point of view”. However, he says “we think it is a short-term nightmare that puts off a longer problem”. He explains “what we don’t want to get into the situation of doing at Geese is saying ok this person - we’ll never use them for these sorts of things because we don’t think they are quite good enough”.

Brown discusses why the unsuitability cannot always be picked up at audition. She says as well as looking at “is your performance quite hitting where we need it to be, is your facilitation quite hitting where we need it to be, when you are actually in a group do you collude? Are you able to set boundaries well”. She explains “all of that you start to see clearer as people start to do the work”. She says “so what you saw in the audition might not necessarily carry through”. She concludes “for me that’s what I saw in particular with someone when they started to do the work – when they weren’t taken on it was a conflation of those three things not quite fitting”. Heywood underlines this by saying “you can’t tell how vulnerable someone is at the audition”. It seems to be a range of reasons why it does not work out with a trainee. Smallman says “it could be a competency-based thing and not just one competency but a range of stuff which . . . some of them you think yes we can teach you these skills but some of them are hard to teach and if they are not there that’s difficult”. In

relation to making the decision Watson was asked if he had to have final sign off for trainees. He said this wasn't necessarily the case but "because of the nature of how we work and again I think this is quite unusual in that you've got my role as CEO Artistic Director but equally I am also a practitioner and I think that is really odd for an organisation like us". He continues "so I think there is probably an element of people who are in training wanting to know that not only colleagues at the same level but colleagues who are slightly senior have said that they are doing ok". He explains "Emma is responsible for the trainee - for the whole practitioner team so she takes a line management role and feeds back stuff and I guess if there was a concern that I might create a situation where I would be coming to observe or make sure I am involved in a piece of work which involves the trainee so I get to see them in action".

Geese want the trainee to succeed but can clearly see when it will not work and believe ending it when the six-month probation period comes to an end is better than it not working long-term. In other areas of work that have a probation period for staff such as higher education it is quite difficult to not continue with the member of staff following relatively poor performance during the probation period (one year for academic staff). There is a sense that there must be very significant issues to for instance extend the probation or indeed not continue the employment. There is much more of a sense that the probation period is a formality and if there are a few issues at the end of it the permanent employment is started in the hope that they will be resolved. There is also not a difference in salary between the probation period and permanent employment in academia. At Geese they have been able to create a situation where passing the probation is very much seen as *not* automatic and

therefore, they are more able to make the decisions needed when it is not working out.

5.7.3 Reasons for failing - Performance skills are not strong enough

Snook has experience of a couple of people who did not get through the probation during his time at Geese. For one of these he gives the reason as connected to performance skills “I think it was mostly down to the acting side of things – I had been to university with her/him, we’d done lots of projects together in university and when she/he came for the audition – I did a couple of prison days with her/him and she/he had a really good energy with the guys and stuff”. He says though that he agreed with the notes she/he was getting “a lot of the characters she/he was doing, there weren’t many levels to them. I don’t know why it was for her/him that he wasn’t able to find them”. He emphasises “I have seen her/him act and know she/he is a good actor and I know that there are roles she/he can do brilliantly – she/he is still doing acting now but for Geese there has to be this level of being able to improvise and go off script”. He continues “you have to respond to what is happening in the room whether that be a prison or a conference or whatever and I think that was maybe where she/he struggled”. Heywood tells a similar story “we had someone who we took on – at the audition – it often happens when we say – they are not brilliant at that but we could work with it – she/he just didn’t come up to scratch performance wise – she/he just didn’t have the sharpness of perception and analysis around performing and the level we needed to get her/him to – she/he got stuck and we were like no this is as good as it gets and we thought possibly we made a mistake – we felt it was worth the risk because that person is quite special”. Anderson believes that being able to play the range of characters in terms of your performing skills is

vital. He says it “unravels - as a performer if you can’t reach those range of emotions whether it is anger, whether it is grief, whether it is frustration, sadness, playing a child – convincingly as well you are going to struggle”. Heywood talks about someone who they believe was just the result of a mistake at the audition stage realising “she/he’s not as good an actor as we thought – it does happen – we put people through an audition but they are kind of alright on the day”. In most cases she says it works and she refers to the people who have been at the company a long time “think about Liz, Dave, Daniel. I think in auditions we didn’t really have any questions – you knew they were the right fit”. Anderson describes it is also a problem for “those performers who aren’t natural – they are very much animated and trying to go for an animated performance whereas Geese performances need to be natural”.

Snook discussed another trainee who did not make it through the six months. He reflects on the fact that she/he was able to rehearse a play that went on tour and was performed a lot and he remembers “her/him nailing it every time”. She/he was also a very good facilitator. However, though he says “most of the time at Geese you get a script, rehearse it and have to do it the day after”. He says that others can struggle “but maybe if you are older it doesn’t come across to the audience – whereas if this person got themselves into a bit of a . . . changing mask/ coming on in costume flap it might be easier to read from the audience”.

Performance skills have to be strong but it seems they might have appeared competent at the audition but this can “unravel” during the intensive six-month period.

5.7.4 Facilitation skills are not of the required standard

The trainee mentioned by Heywood in relation to a lack of performance skills also struggled with the facilitation “the group work skills weren’t . . . it came down to the same thing (sounds a horrible thing to say) but just not being as smart as we thought they were”. She explains “processing an exercise – kind of exploring it and picking it apart is actually – it’s a skill which is very layered – I think if you don’t have the capacity to think on all those different levels and have a reasonably sophisticated understanding you can’t do it”. She concludes that it was “that inability to think on all those levels”. Anderson discusses how important communication skills with participants are “I can imagine if there was anything around Geese wasn’t sure about the way someone was communicating with participants, I think that would be a game changer”. Teare says the thing that had the potential to mean he didn’t get through probation was the performer/ facilitation work in conference performances “the acting part is what I have relied on as a given – that’s fine – the bit that would really trip you up – especially in a conference performance – you have to be able to hit those marks – it really does affect how it goes and that’s the thing that takes a lot to train – you need loads of experience to do those sort of performances”

Performance and facilitation are the two main key skills the practitioner has to have so the facilitation skills being weak will mean that the trainee doesn’t pass the probation.

5.7.5 Not able to fit into the Geese team dynamic

Anderson says “it is such a close-knit team and you have to travel away and it is such a group who work really well together that I think those who struggle to gel within the group - because like I said Geese is a family”. Smallman agrees “because

it is such a tight knit family as an organisation it is really apparent if it is not working for somebody and it's uncomfortable for everybody". Anderson continues "anyone who comes into that family who is new – you've got to be able to fit in – you've got to fit into their way of doing things". He explains "If you struggle to do that then it is going to be hard because we travel together, we are on the road together, we are away for five days together – we are together all the time and if you can't gel within that as a human being then that might be a struggle". Brown agrees "that chemistry has to be there because you work together constantly, travelling together constantly there needs to be a kind of understanding between you and the company about your general attitude to life and people and various issues out there".

5.7.6 The trainee is not at the right point in their life to work with Geese

In some cases, the trainee has good ability and will have got through the audition because of that but is not in a stable position mentally and emotionally to deal with the challenges of the work at Geese. Maybe they have not processed any difficult life experiences which they have had and therefore the work at Geese may cause distress or be difficult to manage alongside any personal problems. Alternatively, someone can demonstrate good skills at the audition but when the range of skills are being tested every day and in increasing detail weaknesses can appear.

Smallman says "I think it depends where people are at in their journey in life and sometimes it isn't the right time to do this kind of work". She explains "I mean we are always evolving but you sort of need to have a bit of a secure base in yourself because you are taking on quite a lot of other people's things when you are going out and doing the work and you almost need to be able to have or develop the

resistance to be able to do that and keep doing that". She continues "there are not hard and fast rules with this but I think it helps if you have done some of your own processing of your own experiences . . . because of the range of stuff we do if you are performing something that is a real trauma for you that's not maybe how you want to spend every day of your working life having to process difficult things". She goes on "so yes it depends where you are at in your own experience but because we have to deliver to such a wide range of people – judges one day – working in a high security prison the other it requires and asks for a lot in terms of communication skills, performance skills, being able to adapt to the different settings". Heywood recounts the experience of someone who didn't get through the training "a girl/guy in his thirties, just a very gentle girl/guy but she/he could do the job. She/he had a history of some kind of family violence and she/he just got to a point – it wasn't affecting her/his work ostensibly but she/he got to a point where she/he said I can't do this". The company encouraged her/him to stay but she/he said it was too hard and was "hitting things" so chose to leave.

Heywood details another trainee who did not pass the probation "she/he did a very good job and was very bright. . . she had a background that she/he knew these characters that we were playing. She/he did a very good job of being those characters at the audition and was passionate about the job". She says they knew it was a slight risk taking her/him on because "we knew she/he was young and also possibly younger than her/his years but she/he had a lot of potential". This was an instance where personal history impacted the ability to do the job and Heywood describes her/him as having "experiences which she hadn't processed fully that you would describe as traumatic – doing this job connected really strongly with that". She

explains “it (the work) would just hit so many buttons and it would just hit her/him in the moment”. Heywood continues that everyone has group supervision so she/he was offered personal supervision. They had this but to move forward she/he “would need to have put some of this stuff to bed or put in a place where it was manageable – 1. For her/his own wellbeing but 2. That connection with her/him being able to – I think it is that fact of going oh I’m an actor now – oh I’ve got to – the reality of it and those two things were about who am I, a discomfort about acting”. It did not work out then but that decision came from the trainee too. Heywood talks about how difficult it becomes as it is a small company and Geese want it to work and give the trainee a “fair shot” but she says you need to balance “the needs of the person coming in and the work going out and for me – if someone sticks out and there isn’t a match in terms of quality I find it really uncomfortable because for me the main thing is . . . we have a reputation of having a certain level of quality and if it’s not there that’s kind of worrying”.

Watson concludes that “Geese will inevitably mean you are going to need to work through your own trauma if you haven’t done so already because you can’t work in the environments we work in without it bringing stuff up for you”. He explains “If you are in a place where you are still raw and vulnerable or have had bad experiences then I think this work exposes that but I don’t think you can prepare people for that very easily and I think that can hit you just randomly”. He continues “whether it’s through – quite often it is through a conference – we’re looking at adverse childhood experience or we are looking at attachment theory or we are looking at other forms of trauma that happen in people’s lives”. He says “if it resonates for you and it resonates in a way that you have not had an opportunity to explore – you’ve not

resolved it in any kind of way then I think this work just brings it up". Geese management then need to be secure in their decision making and able to clinically prioritise the needs of the work when facing a trainee that is not fulfilling everything which is required.

A mixture of reasons then why the probationary training period at Geese does not work out for some to do with the depth of ability and whether someone can continue to develop during the training but also whether they are mentally and emotionally stable enough to deal with the work. Perhaps it might be worth Geese thinking about something which might try to explore/ test this mental and emotional stability at audition? They look at performance skills, facilitation, mask work etc but could also find a way of testing whether someone is able to cope with the mental and emotional demands of the work.

5.8 Summary

From the interview data analysis it is possible to identify the key skills and attributes which someone will need to be able to work successfully at Geese. Practitioners were asked specifically to list what they thought these were. They were also asked why they thought they had been successful in passing the six-month probation training and what they thought were the reasons when others had not. Using this information together with the knowledge of what the Geese competences for the training are (discussed in chapter 4), the skills and attributes could be identified (see Table 23 below).

Table 23: Skills and attributes needed to succeed at Geese in summary

Skills and attributes	Detail
Performance ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong ability as a performer ▪ Ability to be authentic in performance ▪ Good improvisation skills ▪ Ability to play a range of characters ▪ To be able to move quickly from one character to another ▪ To learn lines and rehearse quickly ▪ To use masks effectively ▪ Ability to cope with working in non-traditional theatre spaces
Facilitation - processing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to listen ▪ Be able to 'read the room' ▪ Be responsive to what is happening in the room ▪ Be assertive ▪ Good communication with participants
Understanding The Geese Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be willing to start again regarding your existing skills ▪ Trying to get that "nuanced work" but also working on the fact that humans work on stereotypes
Dealing with the impact of the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talk about the work ▪ Being honest when the work is difficult ▪ Regular supervision ▪ Support from line manager
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding that it is possible for change to occur and that Geese know how to initiate that change ▪ Confident ▪ Clear communicator ▪ curiosity and commitment to the work ▪ Being able to cope with the range of work and performance environments where it takes place ▪ Not to be inhibited in performance ▪ To be grounded ▪ To have a lack of ego ▪ To be resilient ▪ To be able to work in a small team closely together

Source: data analysis from the interviews based on the question about skills and attributes

Before exploring here the practice skills needed to work at Geese those interviewed talked about the need to be sympathetic to the ethos of the company. This is described by one of the practitioners as a need to understand that it is possible for change to occur. Practitioners refer to also needing to be confident in the knowledge that Geese know how to bring about that change and have been successfully doing that since 1987.

This thesis as well as this chapter has emphasised the need for a Geese practitioner to have strong performance ability. They need to be able to engage those watching with the authenticity of the performance pieces. It is the plays like *Stay* which provoke the work which happens in the workshop afterwards with participants. In addition, there are facilitator-enacted stimulus scenes. The facilitator performs a simple short mime which lasts about a minute. These can happen at any point during a workshop. Geese learn how to be very authentic performers depicting the reality of the world which participants are dealing with. In terms of what strong performance ability is one of the practitioners in this chapter describes this as needing to be good at improvising and being able to learn lines very quickly. Another practitioner talks about the range of characters that they need to be able to play such as a kid, a Mum, a Social worker, a Prison officer and someone in prison. Another describes needing an ability to shift in and out of character quickly. Watson describes the detail of needing the ability to switch between being a seven-year-old boy living in a house where there is domestic abuse to then playing a probation officer to then playing a judge, to being a police officer to then being an offender whose got a conviction for a sexual offence and doing that quickly and without hesitation. He says Geese also look for people who are comfortable being responsive which he believes is

connected to the improvisational stuff. He says it is the ability to take what the offer is and do something with it. That can be something on offer from another actor or from the audience.

The other key practical skill required is that the Geese practitioner has to be a very good facilitator and in particular have the ability to 'process' exercises. Baim believes that people in prison require "an approach that is somewhat different from facilitating drama in the general population" (Blatner, 2007, p.206). He acknowledges that there are things in common between the two but that there are realities in this area of work. He explains that "we are accountable to the criminal justice system and the public at large for the work we do with offenders as their rehabilitation and welfare are the responsibility of the state" (Blatner, 2007, p.207). He suggests learning from the experiences of more experienced practitioners in this area so that past mistakes are not repeated. Practitioners also need to understand The Geese Style. One of the practitioners describes this as finding the character nuances but also working on the fact that human beings work on stereotypes.

There is no question that being able to deal with the impact of the work is an important attribute to have. The Geese practitioners are given group supervision and meetings with their line manager but all refer to the need to also talk about the work continually and to be honest when they find the work difficult. One of the practitioners described feeling guilty when going home after working with prisoners who are in prison serving life sentences. The practitioners will also deal with those who have committed sexual offences and domestic violence for instance. Baim says that you may be working with people who have committed crimes that you find "abhorrent".

He says that the “challenge is to hold in mind that the person you are working with is more than his or her worst actions” (Blatner, 2007, p.207).

It is possible to create a list of personal qualities needed to work at Geese which are mentioned by all the practitioners. Every person will bring something different but there seems to be some key personal qualities which are discussed by all of the interviewees. The practitioners describe the need to be a confident and a clear communicator. They emphasise that how you are in the room – your presence is key. There is a need for emotional intelligence when picking things up in exercises and not concentrating on being liked by the group. They also talk about the need for a curiosity and commitment to the work and mention needing a genuine interest and empathy with the people they work with. Practitioners will need to be able to cope with the range of work from working in a prison one day to running a workshop with judges the next. They explain the need to be uninhibited which means being relaxed, and “comfortable within your own skin”. The word grounded comes up a good deal too and the idea of working on a level with the participants. Watson has stated already that a lack of ego is a significant attribute needed and that as a practitioner you are enabling others not “profiling” yourself. Through all this the practitioners describe needing to be resilient and able to work well together in a small team. They will need to spend quite a lot of time together working and travelling and need to be able to do that.

This chapter has also discussed passing and failing probation. Trainees fail probation for four key reasons: performance skills are not strong enough, facilitation skills are not of the required standard, practitioners are not able to fit into the Geese

team dynamic and the trainee is not at the right point in their life to work with Geese. The *stimulus* for writing this thesis came from the initial surprise that it is as much as a third of trainees who do not pass the training. However, this could also be viewed differently in that the training is difficult and wide reaching with trainees expected to develop skills in multiple areas. Given this it could instead be concluded that it is surprising that as many as two thirds *do* get through the training. This also says something about Organisational Care on the part of the company. It would appear that for most of those who do not pass the training it is a careful and right decision for both the person and the organisation. Considering this gives even more access to Geese's practices of care around recruitment and support. Thompson describes care ethics as valuing "real attachments between individuals and groups, where there is a felt responsibility for the other and concomitant commitment to aid that other" (Stuart Fisher & Thompson, 2020, p.41).

Geese demand rigour and nuance from trainees which is similar to professional actor training. A successful Geese practitioner will need then to understand that Geese can initiate change in a person. They will need to be a strong performer and facilitator able to work within The Geese Style. Practitioners will have to be able to deal with the impact of the work and have a range of personal qualities which will help them to do all of these aspects of the job.

6. Chapter Six: Monitoring at Geese – a case study

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the monitoring process at Geese which is a significant part of the six-month training period. Monitoring and evaluation are key parts of what Geese do in all aspects of their work. The idea being that completing this process allows reflection and then progression for the company and its members. As Baim discussed in the previous chapter you are also accountable to The Criminal Justice System and the public for the work which takes place in prisons (Blatner, 2007, p.207). This study has already explored the evaluation process which happens amongst the practitioners as a team after every performance/ workshop. This chapter though concentrates on the monitoring process which happens for the individual trainee during the six-month training and probationary period. Geese require trainees to complete a structured and formal way of analysing what they are doing and then obtaining feedback from Geese project by project through an individual monitoring form completed after each piece of work. This monitoring process is explored here through the lens of a recent new practitioner to the company – Benji Teare. Analysing these forms allows us to emphasise and extend the findings from the research interviews in chapters three, four and five .

The original intention for this chapter of the thesis was to complete a case study of a new recruit to Geese. This was going to be done by observing them working and also meeting with them throughout the process. However, Covid-19 meant that the company were not working in the usual way for eighteen months at the point in the research where the case study might have happened. Geese were also reluctant

about the idea of asking a trainee who was already being observed a good deal to also be observed for this research. Instead Teare gave access to the monitoring forms which he had completed during his recent training. The value of this kind of access which cannot usually be seen by the public is significant and meant that though not the original intention, a different kind of case study could still be explored which was equally as valid and relevant to the study. Teare started at Geese two months before the start of Covid-19 in February 2020 so experienced a 'normal' period of training but then had a period of furlough in the middle when his training was suspended before returning to complete.

In terms of the link to the research, sub research question one for this thesis (all questions are detailed in full in Chapter Two: Methodology chapter) asks "Is it possible to define the elements involved in the six-month training period for new practitioner/ performer recruits to Geese Theatre Company and the journey which they go through?". Teare allowed access to all twenty-four of his monitoring forms which he had completed during the training period. The findings from Teare's forms were examined against the already identified codes related to being a successful Geese practitioner (see Table 24 below). The codes were selected from the themes presented in chapter four regarding competences and associated elements and chapter five where the skills and attributes needed to succeed at Geese are summarised (further information on this process can be found in Chapter Two: Methodology). The list was reduced slightly to be applicable to this particular investigation (coping with going into prison for instance became part of 'personal qualities – coping with different work environments) to create a list of codes to search for and analyse in the monitoring forms from Teare. This chapter as a case

study of the monitoring process takes the reader through the journey of one trainee as well as being able to triangulate the themes from the previous interview data against this additional individual data from Teare. In terms of what this adds to the study, in the previous data chapters practitioners are reflecting after the event on for instance the qualities which a Geese practitioner needs. An examination of the monitoring forms by contrast gives an insight into the process of a training practitioner at Geese trying to acquire the skills needed as it happens project by project.

Table 24: Codes selected to quantify from Teare’s monitoring forms

Code	Which includes
Performance skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong ability as a performer ▪ Ability to be authentic in performance ▪ Good improvisation skills ▪ Ability to play a range of characters ▪ To be able to move quickly from one character to another ▪ To learn lines and rehearse quickly ▪ To use masks effectively ▪ Ability to cope with working in non-traditional theatre spaces
Facilitation and processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to listen ▪ Be able to ‘read the room’ ▪ Be responsive to what is happening in the room ▪ Be assertive ▪ Good communication with participants
Working with masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Geese half masks in performance ▪ There are also the special Fragment Masks which are used as part of workshops ▪ Geese is known for ‘Lifting the mask’ technique where a character can speak honestly to the audience
The Geese Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be willing to start again regarding your existing skills ▪ Trying to get that “nuance” but also working on the fact that humans work on “stereotypes”

Theoretical framework	The main theories which Geese use as frameworks for what they do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Learning Theory ▪ Cognitive Behaviour Theory ▪ Role Theory
Observing work	This involves the trainee practitioner observing Geese practitioners perform/ run workshops before attempting it themselves but also means that the observation continues alongside the trainee starting to perform and process exercises.
Practising skills	It is a key part of the six-month training that practitioners get the opportunity to frequently practice what they will then go out and do in prisons. It is a safe way of rehearsing the skills which will be needed.
Dealing with the impact of the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talk about the work ▪ Being honest when the work is difficult ▪ Regular supervision ▪ Support from line manager
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding that it is possible for change to occur and that Geese know how to initiate that change ▪ Being confident ▪ Being a clear communicator ▪ curiosity and commitment to the work ▪ Being able to cope with the range of work and performance environments where it takes place ▪ Not to be inhibited in performance ▪ To be grounded ▪ To have a lack of ego ▪ To be resilient ▪ To be able to work in a small team closely together

6.2 The monitoring form

Practitioners undertaking the six-month probationary training period at Geese have to complete a Trainee Monitoring Form (see appendix 11) after every piece of work they are involved in. The company describe this as being “intended as a written record of a trainee’s progress and an opportunity for them to reflect on their practice”. The trainee completes the basic details regarding date, venue, work type

and who the lead practitioner for the project is. They then have a free text opportunity where they are asked to write about the following:

- Work undertaken (observation, exercises run, performance etc)
- Learning points or questions about material, client group or own input

This has to be done within a week of the event. The lead practitioner who organised the event then reads this and gives feedback which includes the following areas:

- Delivery (group work / performance / role-play etc)
- Co-working with Geese practitioners and other staff
- Boundaries and rapport building with staff / clients
- Input into session planning / selection of material
- Other (punctuality, organisational skills etc)

6.3 Geese practitioners discussing monitoring

Geese practitioners talked about the monitoring and evaluation process at Geese whilst discussing the competences during training as well as Watson referring to it in the existing Geese literature which was examined. Watson believes that one of the most important aspects of the training process at Geese is to “develop our practitioners’ ability to be reflective about their practice” (Balfour & Bartleet, 2012, p.41). He explains that this is a structured process happening at the end of each day when they deliver work. He maintains that this ability to be reflective “enables us to continually refine our work, both as individuals and as an organisation” (Balfour & Bartleet, 2012, p.41). Brown describes the monitoring form as including questions about what you did and what you played “how you felt it went, what skills you used – why those particular skills were used, what you might have learnt from that”. She says that if you were doing groupwork and looking at an exercise for instance “you look at how well it went, what you would have changed about it, how you think it

works". She continues "whoever the lead practitioner is on that project then responds to all of the stuff – they would write their own extension of the review back to you but also answering any questions". She explains "it is continuous dialogue with each other really". Teare talks about the review process and how it allowed him to hear how he was getting on. He says "in the detail there was always lots of constructive feedback. I never got the sense that I was failing or really lagging behind. He continues "I was always told from the beginning that I had good presence in the group and good authority and made them feel at ease. Even though I heard that every single time it was a reassuring thing".

Milne says she welcomed the opportunity to discuss the work afterwards "I'm quite self-critical so I was able to say I didn't do that very well before anyone else did – if they knew that I knew that I had made this mistake and could identify for myself – so I was able to identify the thing I had to work on – I knew those things existed, I knew I was learning a huge amount". Anderson though describes having to monitor his own practice as challenging. Heywood says that some find it difficult to be analytical in relation to completing the monitoring forms. She explains that the approach in that case is to reassure the practitioner about their ability but push them to analyse their understanding of the work. Heywood says the idea of the forms "is that they have to be useful for the person but also we have to make sure that we are providing that feedback so that if the worse comes to the worse – it doesn't work out – then you've given people the best chance and you have it noted that you have".

The process of monitoring is about trainees learning to be reflective about their practice so that they can refine it. It happens after every project during the training

period. The form sets up a continuous dialogue between the trainee and the lead practitioner so that each piece of work can be analysed and the trainee can receive constructive feedback. As well as this of course it provides a record of progress which will be particularly relevant if Geese need to tell a trainee that they are unable to pass the probationary period.

6.4 Teare's monitoring forms

Teare allowed access to twenty-four monitoring forms (see Table 25 below for a summary of these) which he and various lead practitioners in response had completed during his probation period. The lead practitioner has a significant role in the process of monitoring as they respond to points and observations made by the trainee, they raise questions and push the trainee at times to analyse in much more depth. They are also able to give positive reinforcements such as "you are doing well" or "you seem to have got the hang of this skill".

Table 25: Summary of monitoring forms analysed for this chapter

	Date	Where/ with whom	Activity	Lead practitioner
1.	04-5/02/20	Social work students	Rehearsal and performance with keynote speaker of <i>Knocking on the door</i> (about social worker home visits)	Heywood
2.	07/02/20	HMP Whatton (Category C prison) Males convicted of sexual offences	Workshop	Watson
3.	10/02/20	National Probation Service, South Wales	Rehearsal/ performance of <i>The Principality</i>	Pearson

4.	11-13/02/20	HMP Whatton, Nottingham	Reconnect Programme	Snook
5.	18/02/20	Tamarind Centre, Birmingham Medium Secure Forensic Centre for Men	Workshop	Brown
6.	19-20/02/20	Hill's Lodge, Birmingham Low secure unit providing support for people with severe mental health issues who have committed an offence or displayed threatening behaviour	Thrive Workshop	Snook
7.	26&28/02/20	Hill's Lodge	Thrive Workshop	Snook
8.	27/02/20	PD Acorns Unit Personality disorder unit	Workshop	Watson
9.	02/03/20	Derby Theatre MA students	Workshop	Watson
10.	03-04/03/20	Hill's Lodge	Thrive workshop	Snook
11.	11/03/20	HMP Whatton Personality disorder group	Workshop	Watson
12.	13/03/20	HMP Oakwood (Category C male prison)	Performance	Watson
13.	13/03/20	Warwick University Judges	Playing 'Angry Man' in performance and workshop	N/A
14.	18-20/03/20	HMP Oakwood, Staffordshire (Category C prison)	Workshop	Smallman
15.	11/04/21	Moseley Hive	Staging Recovery Creative Project (week 1)	Smallman
16.	2-6/08/21	Glebe House Adults and children with learning difficulties	Workshop	Snook
17.	17-18/08/21	Royal Ballet Company	Safer Stages rehearsal and performance	Smallman
18.	16/08 + 23- 24/08/21	Hednesford Valley School Secondary special school	Rehearsals and filming of <i>Getting connected</i>	Heywood

19.	11/10/21	Geese Headquarters	Office Facilitator-enacted scenes training	Heywood
20.	19/10/21	Hounslow Borough Council	Performance <i>Home Advantage</i>	Heywood
21.	19/10/21	Geese Headquarters	Office Fragments training	Snook
22.	26/10/21	Vinney Green Secure children's home	Performance of <i>Hectic</i>	Snook
23.	02/09/21	Virtual Schools performance Primary		Heywood
24.	03/09/21	Hednesford Valley School	Virtual school's performance	Heywood

6.5 Findings

Teare discussed all nine of the identified codes related to being a successful Geese practitioner in the monitoring forms. A tally was made of how many times Teare mentioned one of these elements per form and is shown in table 26 below.

Table 26: Frequency of discussion of identified codes in the monitoring forms for Teare

Monitoring codes	Count per numbered monitoring form																								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Performance skill	1		1	1	1				1			1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16
Facilitation	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			1	1		1	1		18
Working with masks		1	1						1			1					1	1			1				7
The Geese Style									1			1													2
Theoretical frameworks																			1		1				2
Observing work	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1															9
Practising skills						1						1				1	1		1					1	6
Dealing with the impact of the work				1											1										2
Personal qualities	1	1	1	1	1			1		1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1		1	1	17

The codes discussed the most were facilitation, personal qualities and performance skill which aligns with previous findings in this thesis. The elements Teare mentions most next are observing work, working with masks and practising skills. The codes with only two mentions each were The Geese Style, theoretical frameworks and dealing with the impact of the work. There were no new aspects of the training which were discussed that were not already identified in the nine existing codes. How Teare discussed the themes is analysed in the following sections. The findings here are presented to take the reader on a journey through the experience of the trainee with further discussion of the findings in the summary (see section 6.13).

6.6 Discussion of themes - facilitation

Teare discusses issues around facilitation in eighteen of the twenty-four monitoring forms. This is not surprising as facilitation in workshops is a significant part of what Geese do as a company. The sections below highlight the most relevant and interesting points from these forms.

6.6.1 Collecting feedback

One of the exercises which Geese carry out frequently is collecting feedback to questions posed to a conference style audience where the company is also performing excerpts of a play. Quite a few of the practitioners describe this as difficult including Teare in his first monitoring form (04/05/20). He says that practitioners are good at working the whole room which involved not only tracking the places they had been to, but also being aware of the places that others were heading. Teare notices that the practitioners were “eager and energised when talking about what people said – as if it was the first time they’d heard those answers”. He comments that

“there didn’t seem to be any favouring of particular answers, but I did wonder about filtering out of answers that were blatantly wrong or ill-observed?” Heywood (as lead practitioner on this event) responds to this within the form suggesting that Teare should rephrase these inappropriate answers “in a way that takes it seriously... especially with prison shows, make sure not to collude by using their language e.g. it might be steeped in misogyny”. She goes on that in relation to jargon that prisoners might use “don’t be afraid to ask what these things mean – especially in a prison, because you’ll muck it up. Don’t try to pretend to be down with them”.

For the Safer Stages work at The Royal Ballet Company (17-18/08/21) Teare says that feedback was the thing that he struggled with and describes himself as “still finding my feet”. He continues “if I move chronologically through the scene in my head when feeding back, this might help to order the points that I collect”. He also adds that somebody has suggested that he pay attention to how he can fit the points he has into the narrative of what the other performers are saying “this is something I’m not entirely sure about and will be paying close attention to!”. Smallman responds “You will work to find your own way to hear, collate and then present the info. It is a skill to use the short-term memory whilst also using a more medium term one keeping the script in your head. I think it’s the hardest part of the performance side of the job”. We see Teare then working through the difficulties of this technique and getting advice from Geese practitioners on how to handle it.

6.6.2 Assessing a group early on and creating a safe space

Teare describes a workshop at HMP Whatton (07/02/20) as being designed specifically for people who do not know each other so notes that Watson stated the

importance of “bonding the group with an opening question and continuum, before going straight into an exercise like *Name-Ball* which could feel competitive and pressurised”. Teare observes that the participants responses to the early exercises in the workshop were “valuable”. He explains that Brown and Watson then used these responses throughout the workshop when processing. Teare says that Watson later explained the importance of “gauging early on what groups/typologies are in the room, and through processing, how we can make each exercise relevant and specific accordingly”. Teare notices that collecting interests and hobbies in the early stages meant that practitioners could “make participants feel valued and included, increase their engagement, and pre-empt the chance of disengagement”. Teare concludes that a big overall learning point for him was to try and pick up on the ways Brown and Watson were actively engaging participants and making them feel safe. He feels that these pre-emptive strategies are probably harder to spot than any strategies that might be used when the work is being challenged. Watson responds to this by saying that “creating a safe space is essential to all of our work”. Brown comments at Tamarind Centre (18/02/20) “we want the space to be as safe as possible for those taking part”. Teare is learning here then the strategies to use in order to create the sense of a safe space which is needed for the work which Geese does.

6.6.3 Model the engagement you want

When discussing a dip in the level of engagement and energy from participants at HMP Whatton (11-13/02/20) Teare comments that Snook suggested that he model the engagement which he wants “if I put chairs away while saying come into a circle participants will naturally mirror this”. Snook as lead practitioner gives some positive

reinforcement “I realise this was your first time delivering something with a group, you did a great job so if any exercises you would like to run come up in future projects please let us know”. He cautions “We just need to make sure there is some time to go through all of the set up so we can ensure the group feel safe and able to take part and you feel ready to run it”. He continues “even if these warm up exercises appear simple it is important to get all of the set up correct so don’t worry about asking questions that seem to have obvious answers”. He underlines “it’s about us making sure you have had the time to be confident with an exercise and its intricacies. Sometimes as experienced practitioners we can rush over these games and forget how important they are”. Teare learns here then about modelling the engagement he wants in sessions and about how important it is to set up exercises in advance which might include practising too.

6.6.4 Having the confidence to be responsive when facilitating

At HMP Whatton (11-13/02/20) Teare observes in relation to facilitation of the *Socks* exercise that Snook “had the confidence to follow ideas whilst parking others, in the knowledge that he could come back to them. He made it feel very found-in-the-room”. Snook picks up on this “When processing it’s so important to make it seem like you are interested in everything they say, even if I’ve heard it before in *Socks* I’ll make it seem new. Conversations seem to develop more when we facilitate like this”. At Hill’s Lodge, Birmingham (19-20/02/20) which is a low secure unit providing support for people with severe mental health issues who have committed an offence Teare discusses choices on adaptations that were made to exercises and Snook comments that “a key skill at Geese is being responsive, and we can be in all areas. This can be with timings or even changing up what we have planned”. For a Thrive

workshop a Hill's Lodge (03-04/03/20) on performance day Teare talks about responding to the atmosphere of participants and not needing to do a big "energiser". Snook picks up on this "we talk a lot about being responsive and this needs to be when responding to participants in processing or just feeling what's in the room and how best we facilitate to achieve our goal". He continues "I think this is something that comes naturally to you as you are quite aware of how groups make you feel and what might be in the room when we are facilitating". Being responsive is a quality discussed by many of the practitioners in this thesis. It is evident it is a key skill which is needed at Geese so important that Teare learns that during the training.

6.6.5 Not allowing an easy get-out for participants or letting them leave sessions early

Teare notes (11-13/02/20) that it is obvious when the participants could not face their crime. He describes one of them trying to go and get a drink but that Snook did not let him. He continues that he "realised at most uncomfortable moments it's important to be firm". Snook supports this "I think you need to be firm when it feels right. This was the first time we had touched on anything personal level for them and I didn't want them to feel like there was an easy get out when things get a little bit tougher in the room. Mainly because I know that it will get even harder for them at times during these sessions". At Tamarind Centre (18/02/20) Teare comments that Brown managed someone's attempt to leave "with quite a lot of charm – managed to do it whilst avoiding teacher/student dynamic; much more like a mate". Teare is seeing here two examples of how to deal with a workshop participant trying to leave a session early and will be able to hopefully handle similar situations when leading a workshop himself.

6.6.6 Facilitating is performing too

Teare comments on the facilitation style demonstrated by Brown at Tamarind Centre (18/02/20) “Liz worked well to make it look like we were cool with it in front of participants and she stayed very relaxed. Important point, as participants will sense if we’re feeling a bit confused or surprised”. Brown responds that “although groupwork is different to a performance there is a performance element within it!”. She goes on that “an important feature with all groups is to give positive regard for all responses even if it’s just to check in on whether a comment was a joke”. She says “for all groups it is about creating a clear and relatable character but with some you can go into further detail and even allow more moments of discussion”. Teare was already a professional actor before joining Geese but it is a really important point for him to learn that facilitation needs a performance element too when delivering.

6.6.7 How to rephrase and challenge feedback

For the Personality Disorder Unit, Acorns (27/02/20) Teare goes through how he has handled the exercises he led. He says he had a learning point during Continuum “about how to subtly rephrase/challenge feedback”. He gives the example of Watson reflecting on how a participant opened with the statement “I’m starting to notice how my behaviour causes problems” but then spent the rest of his time talking about how issues around him were causing problems. Teare says that Watson “zoned in on the first thing he’d said and amplified this as a subtle challenge to the rest”. Teare says the aim therefore is “to use positive things that a participant has identified for themselves in order to challenge other feedback they give that might be avoidant etc.”. This can be a difficult skill to learn to be able to find what the most significant

thing being said by a participant is as nerves will get in the way. As Teare relaxes in workshops he will be able to acquire this skill too.

6.6.8 Dealing with participants not engaging appropriately

At HMP Whatton (11/03/20) Teare describes the mood after lunch at the workshop being a little bit silly with two of the participants “in quite a childish mood and enjoyed challenging rules etc”. He says “I dealt with it calmly, but Brown pointed out later in review that if the answer to my question is obvious, e.g. how to stop me sitting, and the group are wilfully not answering, it’s alright to be a bit directive. We don’t need to have unlimited patience”. This is a good piece of advice for Teare to learn that sometimes he will need to be more direct with participants in workshops and that is acceptable.

6.6.9 When a participant is already familiar with the work of Geese

At HMP Oakwood (13/03/20) which is a category C prison Teare observes the situation with a participant who already has quite a lot of experience of working with Geese but holds a certain regard amongst others in the group. He says “going personally deep might be difficult. He may be extra reluctant to risk changing what he thinks our perception of him might be”. He continues “this is perhaps at the loss of his own opportunity to genuinely explore deep-seated attitudes to violent behaviour”. Teare gives as an example the fact that the participant told a story that Brown interpreted as “a safe cover for other issues he may have”. Brown responds that “yes, he does just come for the Drama and because he likes Geese, not because he wants to unpick things. From his perspective he doesn’t see violence as a problem”. Teare says that it would have been interesting to do three more days to see “whether

the group challenged him or if we could have probed further". For form sixteen at Glebe House (2-6/08/21) which supports adults and children with learning disabilities Teare describes difficulties in assigning groups "some fractious relationships between participants, and lots of staff made it difficult to marshal the groups I'd suggested". Smallman responds by suggesting that Teare count them into groups. Teare also feels that he could have been clearer as the director of the scene participants were working on "especially as it was their first bit of performance. Counting them in one, two, three is a nice clear convention to set up". Teare is learning about small facilitation techniques such as counting participants into groups and is able to reflect upon having someone in the workshop who has experienced previous work with Geese.

6.6.10 Learning about Facilitator-enacted scenes and processing them

Teare has an office-based training session on facilitator enacted scenes with Heywood (11/10/21). He firstly talks about performing these scenes. He comments that he has not done much mime work before "so it was very useful to get technical details about creating and maintaining the space. Being made aware of pitfalls like over-signalling or over-exaggerating actions (e.g. the kettle only takes a little tap) was also useful". By the end he felt that he still needed to work on the internal monologue for the character "especially during the moments of tantrum: I can't believe this; she's making me do this; People are always making shit difficult for me". Teare says "these self-righteous thoughts help fuel the building frustration and also identify moments to explore during the process". Teare then discusses the processing of these scenes which Heywood worked on with him. She gives the advice that he can "ask simple questions at first to create the sense that there are no

trick questions and encourage participation”. Teare then reiterates on the form that it is important to make sure what is happening in the scene is clearly “spelled out” before he moves into processing of thoughts and feelings. Also, as much detail as possible allows us to learn things about our group but encourages them to take ownership of the character and situation”. He says “I need to make sure that I come and share the space with the character in order to keep the audience focus on the scene. This includes going across to where invisible characters might be. I kept forgetting to get up for this in practice”. Heywood agrees “ Yes . . .called *directing the focus* in various training notes”. Teare notes that the “aim is to start to investigate how actions are stemming from feelings and beliefs: how angry actions are masking/alleviating these vulnerable feelings”. He says “freezing before and after outbursts is something that helps this. It’s also good to try and catch some of the self-righteous thoughts with questions like who’s fault is this?”. He explains that “we’re looking for the dissonance between what participants say and their behaviours”. A good example of this question is, “what’s more comfortable, the feeling of being bossed around or getting to go fuck off?” Facilitator-enacted scenes and processing them is a significant area of the work which Geese do which is probably why he is given a specific office-based session in order to learn the techniques.

6.6.11 Questioning styles

Teare looks at more complicated questioning styles with Heywood in an office-based training session on facilitator-enacted scenes (11/10/21). He describes these beginning with reframing which “can be done through an altering of context e.g. taking the victim’s view on things; can also look at the beliefs that are underlying the feelings”. He goes on to pacing which is “the gentle walking-alongside approach that

demonstrates to a participant that you're trying to understand them. This allows you to lead a little and pick certain parts of interest in what they're saying". He says that there is assumptive questioning too "How often do you get angry? – but one I'll be wary of until I get a feel for a group". Teare is wary of using assumptive questions yet as they require a good deal of skill. The assumptive question assumes something about the person being asked. The above example asks how often the person gets angry rather than asking first if there are times when they get angry. They would work well in some of the workshops which Geese run in prisons which are an invited group of participants convicted of a particular crime such as domestic abuse. Finally, he describes exploring Jenkins' motivation questions "the notion of bringing praise into the question e.g. How did you manage to do this? What were you saying to yourself that allowed you to act in this positive way". Different ways of approaching questioning will be an essential skill for Teare working at Geese.

6.7 Discussion of themes - personal qualities

The next most written about category on Teare's monitoring forms is personal qualities. This category covers a wide range of attributes that are needed in all aspects of the work which Geese do: understanding that it is possible to change and that Geese know how to initiate change, being confident, a clear communicator, having curiosity and commitment to the work, being able to cope with the range of work and performance environments where it takes place, not being inhibited in performance, being grounded, having a lack of ego, being resilient and ability to work in a small team.

6.7.1 Not being inhibited

At HMP Whatton (07/02/20) which is a category C men's prison in Nottinghamshire and is for males convicted of sexual offences Teare was observing a five-hour workshop with Watson as the lead practitioner with Brown working with him. This was Teare's first Geese observed session in a prison and he notes that he "didn't feel overly intimidated by the space or circumstance". He describes getting on well with the team and participants during breaks at the prison and the realisation that this is "very important wherever we go". Watson responds to this saying "you clearly felt comfortable in the group and with the staff and I noticed you engaging with a couple of the participants during break-times". Watson goes on "as you identify, this is really useful both in terms of building rapport and relationships but also in terms of the signalling it sends to the group – we are happy to talk with them as people talking to people – not as authority teaching group members all the time". Teare seems to naturally be uninhibited which will help him cope in the variety of places where Geese work. Teare says performing at Oakwood (13/03/20) "showed me the importance of energy in all aspects of the performance. This audience responded well to a bigger performance e.g. Dealer and Savage. Moving forward, I should take this different performance style onboard". He continues that "Watson made it clear that this energy is equally important in feedback". Teare is being quite direct here about what he is learning and what he still needs to do.

6.7.2 Being able to cope with the range of work and performance environments

At the National Probation Service, South Wales (10/02/20) Teare describes the event as stressful "but everyone stayed positive and gave a high-quality show – big

learning point on how important this is!!” Teare is emphasising here the importance as an actor of giving a quality performance despite any issues to deal with. This will mean strong acting and vocal skills and authenticity of characterisation. The lead practitioner Pearson (not interviewed as part of this study) responds to Teare that “even though you didn’t have any specific responsibilities you remained a positive and unfazed member of the team, being alert and helpful throughout, which is appreciated”. Teare picks up on levels of volume in the show saying that it is “interesting to note decrease in energy/volume towards the end of the show – perhaps due to lack of opportunity to practice/ tricky room-shape/lack of confidence (especially in professional characters)”. Pearson responds that “When performing in different spaces an awareness of how sound travels is important”. He explains “this particular space had a few challenges in terms of spacing and sound: often we have to remind ourselves backstage to position conversations out towards the audience and keep volume high, particularly when there is a close emotional scene or professional conversation coming up”. He goes on “this space also provided what I call a ‘false reading’: where there is a shelf or back wall that is closer to you than a lot of the audience, so you may feel that you are being loud enough”. Instead, though he says “you are actually hearing more than the audience can due to the reflections of the wall, whereas those without a wall behind them or a bit further away tend to hear a lot less than you”. His advice to Teare is “It’s worth keeping one eye on the fool/ facilitator when performing in a show as they will indicate to you if the volume has dropped”. At the Tamarind Centre (18/02/20) Teare discusses the “very wide range of experience/ personalities/ expectations amongst participants”. He details that “what participants are going to get out of the work is very varied... some have come from prison, some from home... Liz dealt with this well when building the

character, incorporating both in order to make him relatable to all participants”. He says that Brown “took good time on the mime scene . . . very different rhythm to previous groups. Participants just needed more time to think often – possibly due to meds”. He gives an example of someone who sat quietly for a while but then might “say something really insightful and precise”. For Glebe House (02-06/08/21) which is for adults and children with learning difficulties, Teare explains running the game *Grandmother’s Footsteps* outside, followed by a process inside. He says that Snook “noted different challenges with being outdoor for the game, e.g. all the energy dissipates a bit. Both pros and cons to this”. He describes Snook also facing some disruptive behaviour during the indoor process “He challenged the behaviour before calling a break. It was a useful turning point in the week. His challenge wasn’t too soon in the week that it met with resistance, or too late that it felt like a telling-off”. Teare is observing and getting a sense of the different performance environments and difficulties which they can encounter and how to deal with them.

6.7.3 Being confident

At HMP Whatton (11-13/02/20) Teare comments that he was very aware of being younger than most of the male participants. Snook responds that “Yeah you will be younger than a lot of our participants but we are not claiming as Geese practitioners to be experts at life, we try and put them in role as expert in their situations/lives.

What we are good at and this will come with time and confidence is using creative/theatrical techniques to help people explore things that are relevant to them”.

For Hill’s Lodge monitoring (03-04/03/20) Snook is very positive about having Teare work on this project “was great having you on this project Benjamin, your expertise on guitar was great for (mentions two of the participants)”. He continues “I’m looking

forward and confident about your ability to run exercises with all the different people we work with. You come across as calm & confident which helps put participants at ease". He explains "This will become very important when working with groups who might have fears or worries about engaging in something that is different". Teare seems to have demonstrated the confidence which is needed in delivering the Geese work quite naturally.

6.7.4 Curiosity and commitment to the work

At Tamarind Centre (18/02/20) in relation to curiosity and commitment to the work

Teare describes a "big learning point" for him is about "the importance of experienced and committed staff" when working on projects such as these.

Brown agrees that yes, it is an "important thing to note and useful to think about in terms of what helps the work *work*". This is the fifth piece of work for Teare since starting the probation period and he has had five different lead practitioners so a real chance to see how everyone works.

6.7.5 Being resilient

At Warwick University where Teare was playing Angry Man and leading a workshop (13/03/20) he says as an actor "I also felt personally bad when a judge was rattled and unable to deal with the character. One particular judge was clearly very embarrassed and refused to look at me after the exercise had finished". He feels though that "It was important for the exercise that the character continued with their agenda and made their arguments as best as they could. They would only learn if I kept the character real in these moments". He goes on "Even when a judge was quite unprepared for the situation, it was important to look for constructive things during feedback that dwelt on the positive as well as negative". He goes on "With the

judge that got rattled, I was able to explain how my character felt when they used ineffective strategies like reading out the letter of the law. But also how a strategy they hadn't used enough would be worth using more in future". Teare is demonstrating resilience in dealing with the response from one of the judges and not allowing it to change what he has to do.

6.8 Discussion of themes - performance skill

Teare discussed performance skill on sixteen of the monitoring forms. The research to date identified strong performance skill as an essential part of what a Geese practitioner needs so the comments from Teare support that. Watson states in chapter four "we believe that the performance itself has the power to motivate, to shift people's thinking, to create affect and to act as a catalyst for the change process" (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p48) which means it will need to be strong and authentic. Making sure it is right will be central to the training period as each trainee will arrive with differing ability in performing. The fact that Teare refers to it so many times underlines that assertion.

6.8.1 When to stick to the script

Teare's first monitoring form included observation of rehearsal, and performance the following day, of *Knocking on the Door* for social work students (4-5/02/20). Teare comments on there being times when you need to stick to the script and times when you can embellish it. Heywood comes back to Teare and asks for examples. Teare responds by talking about the need to stick to cue lines when performing but at other times suggests changes can be made when a provocation for a line seems out of

place for instance. Heywood responds by saying “more often than not, the reason for sticking exactly to the script is because you might be playing a professional character with lots of ‘jargony’ dialogue. It has to be accurate so audience members, who your character might be representing, can buy into them as real”. She continues “for most other characters, it’s important that characters’ dialogue sounds genuine and that the words ‘sit right’ in that actor’s mouth so tweaking it to suit is important”. She continues “When I write performances, I do focus on the rhythm of the dialogue as well and so sometimes I might ask people to stick to the script because it just works better”. Heywood ends by saying “the trick to these performances is to get audience on side... especially for the main characters who represent the audience”. She explains that there are three types of characters in these plays “protagonist/stand-in for audience; real and emotional characters e.g. Baxters; characters who are there to make things happen (functional) – they can be a bit over the top”. We see a learning point here for Teare that he can’t just change dialogue about without there being a good enough reason and that it probably has a reason for being as it is.

6.8.2 Working with students

At a session for MA students at Derby Theatre (02/03/20) in comparing this type of session with maybe one in a prison Teare says that Watson “used more theatrical demonstrations e.g. the boy playing with his toy car and the father’s neglect; the visiting scene to illustrate mask in prison”. Watson confirms that “I tend to use them if I think they can demonstrate something useful in terms of the teaching. Although I have used scenes like that, and similar, to explore themes around masculinity, and the early “rules” that boys learn about being a man”. Watson notes on the form that

one of his concerns about MA courses in general is that they tend to give people a good theoretical overview of the field but “little in terms of practical, skills-based learning”. He continues “I also have a real concern that many people think that applied theatre is about facilitation and therefore disconnected from performance skills”. He explains “I would absolutely disagree with this – good practice integrates excellent performance with excellent facilitation. It is important that MA students grasp this from my point of view”. Geese run sessions for students regularly mixed in with their work in prisons so it is good for Teare to start looking at particular skills needed in these sessions.

6.8.3 Strong ability as a performer/ ability to be authentic/ ability to play a range of characters/ able to move quickly from one character to another

At HMP Oakwood which is a category C prison (13/03/20) Teare comments that in relation to the performance “the character of Frank I found difficult. The narrow performance space, which is usual for Geese, felt quite clumsy on stage. Also, with only one scripted line it became difficult to know how to add to the scene, and bring it energy, in a way that wouldn’t disrupt other performers”. He also describes playing the inclusion worker as “tricky”. He says that he became aware of a lack of volume during the scene “but was worried about breaking the character’s ‘neutrality’ e.g. not wanting to come across as angry or defensive by suddenly raising my voice”. This meant that playing this role didn’t feel comfortable for Teare. It also “didn’t give Dan P (other Geese practitioner) very much to work with and killed the energy of the scene”. At an event for judges at Warwick University (13/03/20) where Teare was playing the character of an Angry Man he says that he felt comfortable with what he was doing “I’d done similar immersive style stuff before”. He says though that after the third time of doing it “I started to get a bit muddled with what points in the script

I'd already mentioned, especially as his script was more of a monologue". He did though he says manage "to make the character my own and develop issues that raised discussion in the feedback session afterwards". He explains this "for example the character would be reluctant to sit down and judges were often split on how to best deal with this – some reading it as too intimidating to allow, others saying that it was more important to choose their battles elsewhere with a character like this". He describes being "taken seriously by judges so was sufficiently life-like". Teare says his main concern "was not to get too carried away with the combative nature of the character. It was tempting to allow things to escalate for the sake of it. The point of the exercise is to respond truthfully to the judges handling of the situation". This can of course easily go wrong in this kind of role playing. Teare says "it was important to keep in mind for the character how serious this occasion would be to him and how, though he had an agenda and was very defensive, he did not want this tribunal to go against him. His defensiveness came from his fears about not being treated fairly".

At Hednesford Valley School (16/08 + 23-24/08/21) which is a secondary special school there were rehearsals and filming of *Getting Connected*. Teare states that younger characters are still a struggle for him to play "partly due to my height, but also I need to work on the nuances of age and voice: I have a tendency to go up at the end of sentences and sound cute rather than vulnerable". He discusses that with the character of Luke "certain triggers cause explosion with characters like these. Noticing what these triggers might be is something I can bring into how I look at each script". He continues "I found towards the end of filming that I got used to this character. Notes like avoiding eye-contact and fidgeting movements helped but also being a bit bolder with my voice etc. made the character feel more natural to me". He

says though “I sometimes worry about caricaturing young people. This was especially noticeable in the scene with Ethan”. It was noted by the practitioner that because “Luke is young and vulnerable, it’s okay if the audience see his bravado a bit for what it is, an unconvincing front”. He moves on to the character of Kai saying that the scene with Kai and another character Olivia “took the most work. There were lots of nuances to be worked through e.g. how charming vs. how threatening”. He explains that “useful notes for a character like this were [that] he’s only thinking about himself - everything she does that isn’t what he wants is extremely annoying - she’s there to serve him and when she takes any more of his time than that he’s going to flip”. He notes that the character is only nineteen “his tactics at the moment oscillate from being stroppy and verbally aggressive, to being superficially charming – a wink, a compliment and a trip to Nandos”. He concludes that “Kai and Luke were close in age and says he found differentiation between the two “by being more direct and using more stillness as Kai”.

At Hounslow Borough offices (18-19/10/21) Teare explores the detail of the characters he is performing in *Home Advantage*. He performed as four characters in this piece. He says that he had a chance to revisit the character of Billy from the filmed performance “so his posture and voice were already there and something I felt comfortable with”. He explains “I felt like having these things already rehearsed allowed me to be a bit freer and emotionally connect with the character. This was noted in review also”. He explores the detail “with the two parts of the scene with Suzanne, it was important to establish a more vulnerable side to him in the second”. He continues “I just about remembered to act on this note of altering his volume during the performance. This was reassuring as for this performance I felt able to

react a bit quicker to what was happening whilst on stage”. Heywood comments that “I thought you were able to find and convey Billy’s vulnerability really well which was a very positive step because finding vulnerability was a note you’d been given before”.

When playing Colin Teare says “having the previous experience helped, especially when re-discovering the slow (slightly drug induced) way of speaking”. He continues “Daniel noted how I shared well with the audience, spreading eye-contact around the room etc, during Colin’s conversation with the facilitator. This helped to bring people into the story”. He then has to play two social workers and notes generally that he needs to grab the audience with a few lines which the professional has “we want to make them feel like they are reflected on stage (their passion/ frustrations/ professionalism)”. He explains “we talked in feedback about how Lou’s opening interaction with the audience worked well to get them on side. Liz suggested it was something lighter in the voice, maybe more playful, that also helped”. He goes on “this is something I can maybe explore with these professional characters during the mask-ups. A bit more informality, a bit more of my own personality perhaps”.

Heywood responds “Yes, I think the key to these characters is to play them as if Benji had decided to go onto Social Work. They were suitably empathic and warm”.

For a virtual Schools performance (02/09/21) Teare discusses the nuances of character building again. As Steve (Chloe’s teaching assistant) “there was just a short moment where I had to establish a friendly rapport with Chloe and I could have made this clearer”. He says “when it came to dealing with the safeguarding issues, the key to the character was that they are well-meaning and competent but lacking

experience". He continues "in review, we explored how the emotional moments for these characters needs to be really clear. The uncomfortable and surprising desperately sad moment, where the professional mask fully slips and it hits them". He says that Dave and Daniel suggested altering the pace of the moment and "to keep experimenting". He continues "it may feel wrong and like a big theatrical overshare, but it's important for the audience to relate to". Heywood agrees "Yes, these tiny moments are key to connecting with the audience. This should be a 'lump in the throat' moment where the sadness almost catches him unawares. I think you should think about them as being moments of raw emotion rather than anything theatrical". She explains "getting to that emotion is often about removing a layer as an actor rather than employing a particular acting technique. It's about being in the moment but having that other level which allows you to control and pitch that. It's all about layers!". As the character of John Teare says he had to draw a clear distinction between the two characters "John is competent but also very experienced and a bit older. I think I got this distinction well enough". Heywood says "Agreed and often our professional characters are quite similar if we are playing two in one show. I think as long as they feel real, the audience just go with it. You seem comfortable with these characters".

For Hednesford Valley School Performance (03/09/21) Teare was playing Brian, various teenagers and a social worker. He feels that he did not get the audience on side with Brian "Certainly in feedback that I heard they were very quick to distance themselves from his teaching style! This was down to a few things: a stronger setup of what he is usually like with a class might have helped, a bit more confidence and rapport with students. This would then make clear that the lapse in control was out of

character – just one of those days where a few too many buttons get pressed - things just got to me - let my feelings get the better of me”. He continues “similar to the Virtual Schools performance, a stronger emotional moment was needed. Lou noted how angry some of the teachers/audience got at times, and that this reflected their passion for the job. Brian could have probably done with a bit of this”. In review Teare says that both he and Daniel “recognised how the classroom in both scenes could have been a bit more noisy and chaotic from the start”. He explains “this might have helped the audience to empathise a bit more with Brian’s situation and loss of control. Likewise, when I was playing a teenager at the back of Daniel’s class, I could have chosen a more boisterous character to do the same for him”. In response Heywood says “I think you play these professional characters well and you’ve got the timing and pitch of the comedy mask lifts (glamour, six figure salary etc.) down pat”. She feels that he needs to work on “vulnerability and genuine emotion under the mask”. She explains “It’s a question of seeing it as well as hearing it which is tricky when you only have a couple of lines. But this is how you’ll connect with the audience”. For Safer Stages (17/08/21) Teare describes that in review, the importance of minor characters was also mentioned “being part of my second live performance with Geese, I started to see how Liz and Dave were bringing extra energy to the scenes through these roles in order to set the environment of being ‘on-tour’ or in a ballet rehearsal. It really aided the engagement of our audience”.

The detail and analysis on these forms demonstrates Teare exploring the need for strong ability as a performer. We also see the need to be authentic in getting the detail of the characters correct. He certainly has to be able to play a range of

characters often playing up to four different characters in a play and has to move quickly between them.

6.8.4 Mime scenes

At Derby Theatre for MA students (02/03/20) watching Watson deliver a short mime scene Teare says “I hadn’t consciously considered aesthetic choices before with regards to the Mime scenes... students picked up on the importance of realistic detail and how the lack of distractions isolated and highlighted what was there e.g. shadow movements (tapping of foot etc). Andy also demonstrated clearly how good mask work requires clocking with the audience”. At HMP Oakwood (18-20/03/20) Teare describes his first attempt at the mime scenes which Geese do saying it was “very satisfying that it resonated with participants too. Lots of things can be clarified and slowed down and would be good to really work internal monologue like Emma suggested”. Smallman responds that “It was impressive that you learnt the scene in the café and delivered it in the afternoon. The fact that (name of one of the participants) connected with it so much was the greatest feedback you could have been given”. She expands on the thought process as delivering “It would be good to come back to it with time and really consider what the internal process is for the character in each of the moments. We can also practice it with people in the scene (we jump into role) so you get the eyelines right and what some of the dialogue might be”. The short mime scenes within workshops are an important feature of the work at Geese. It is important that Teare is able to perform them well.

6.8.5 Learn lines and rehearse quickly

Regarding a *Safer Stages* rehearsal and performance for Royal Ballet company (17-18/08/21) Teare states that he played the characters of Phillip, DV, Dad, Ballet Master and Sebastian. Smallman comments to Teare “you had an awful lot to do and learn for this piece so excellent work in getting your lines. At no point did it feel like you didn’t have a grasp of things”. Teare says that for the DV character “It took quite a few attempts to get the feeling of the scene. I found it was best to keep it really simple. Watching people do it in the past, there are few lines that help: she’s a slag, no-one would want her except me, What’s she been doing behind my back, stop fucking whinging, just shut up etc”. He continues “It helps to have the script of what he’s going to say really clear in his head like a short monologue, because he’s not really listening to anything his partner says. Everything is just a confirmation of his suspicions and an escalation (entitlement thwarted)”. Smallman responds that “The DV characters take a lot of work and I think it’s important to take time in rehearsals to try and work with the nuances. It felt like there was more depth by the time we got to performance and it’s worth thinking not only about a ‘script’ but also the underlying ‘script’ that is fuelling his behaviours”. She says “sit with what those thoughts and beliefs might be that underpin his behaviours, as well as the more surface level ones”. She suggests “it might be useful to go deeper into what his vulnerabilities are and what he says to himself about his partner to eradicate them and be in control. So many layers to these characters so good to keep exploring”. Many of the practitioners talk about the need for quick line learning and rehearsals at Geese and that it is much more demanding than for shows which they had done previously. Teare is exploring the need for this here.

6.9 Discussion of themes - observing work

Teare describes observing work on nine occasions and does solely that for the first three events that are detailed in the monitoring forms. Observation is a significant part of what a trainee will do during the six-month probation period. It progresses from just observing to doing a mixture of observation and performance and facilitation. As Watson stated in an earlier chapter practitioners can be put into performances quite quickly but will do a more gradual easing into the facilitation work running one or two exercises and building from there. Teare comments on things like the feedback actors are giving each other particularly when a performance piece is new, the spaces the work is happening in and audience reactions to the work. (N.B. Any relevant information that comes from the observations has been put in the section it is most pertinent to rather than being discussed in this stand-alone section).

6.10 Discussion of themes - working with masks

Mask is an identifying feature of the work at Geese and therefore an essential skill to be able to use.

6.10.1 Performing in masks

At HMP Oakwood (13/03/20) Teare talks about working with masks saying he hasn't previously done very much mask work. He describes that "some of the masks I was using didn't really fit very well and so visibility and comfort onstage made me feel self-conscious. Even if they don't fit, I should still make sure I'm prepared for this".

He says “I took my cue not to rehearse in mask from senior practitioners, but in future I should make a point of practising it a bit as I’m still getting started”. He continues “masks affect how I can see on stage, but also limit communication between performers in the moment”. He observes that “some of the masks change a lot of how you come across to an audience”. We can see Teare here struggling a little to get used to using the masks at Geese and how to perform in them.

6.10.2 Lifting the mask

At HMP Whatton (11-13/02/20) Teare discusses the Fragment masks describing Snook reflecting that when the fragment mask is lifted it is a chance for the character “to say what no one in the room dares to share”. He goes on “even the most avoidant/ shut-down members of the group were hooked at these moments”. At The Royal Ballet Company Safer Stages work (17-18/08/21) Teare says that he had to do some mask lifts with the character of Philip. He comments “I need to try and keep the two energies of mask down and mask-up separate. When going into a scene that has mask-up/ mask-down, I think I need to keep that awareness in the fore of my mind so that I’m clearly marking them throughout”. Smallman responds “As you point out later, we could have given you a better mask lift to help with this. I think the challenge with a character like Phillip is to keep him natural and relatable whilst also having performance energy. People were on board with Phillip though and that was a great sign as you were representing the audience”. Smallman continues “those characters are good opportunities to connect with the audience, use the chats with the fool to really speak to them by looking at them and inviting them into your world”.

At Hednesford Valley School (16-18/08/23) Teare discusses using the lifting mask device when playing a younger character named Luke. “Mask-up/ down with this character is a bit different from how I’ve done it previously . . . Luke always carries a state of tension with him”. He explains “Even with the mask-up, he is not the kind of character who is going to be particularly forthcoming. This is maybe a quality that is common for younger characters?!”. Teare is getting familiar with this style of work and is experimenting with how to make it work.

6.10.3 Fragment masks

During an office training session (19/10/21) on the Fragment masks Teare was able to explore using these in detail. He describes having “several practices in role moving one to the other”. He goes into quite a lot of detail about how he worked on developing these (see Table 27 below). Generally, he notes “it’s good for me to work on a series of postures for each mask to help immediately establish their difference. This is something that Dave noted I was doing naturally”. He says “I don’t always have to speak . . . some masks e.g. Cool/ Fist/ Brick wall sit well in silence. Calculated silence also prompts audience to ask questions”. He notes that he will need to “use time during the workshops before the Fragment section to think about how participants might use the masks with regards to their offences. This helps to keep them relevant to those in the room and will help me mirror my audience”. He also notes that he will need to keep the energy up during mask changes “need to keep the sense of performance and keep people really engaging”.

Table 27: Teare’s notes on practising the Fragment masks

Fragment mask	Teare notes
Chatterbox	<p>“After a few attempts I got the dot-to-dot patter pretty well. I can work on finding safety zones of conversation – areas of my own interest maybe – that allow me to talk without any need to stop”.</p>
Mr Cool	<p>“I found this one okay. Key things to keep in mind are ‘no vulnerability’/’top of the food chain’/’prison doesn’t bother him’. For future, I can think about different Mr. Cool’s e.g., small-time vs. big-time. This can reflect the group... whether it’s a drug dealer or shoplifter”.</p>
Good Guy	<p>“Good Guy can say things that are actually true. He can admit fault and appear to own up to his crime. But there is always a good reason and always someone worse than him (‘and I wouldn’t do that. That’s disgusting’). Say the right thing, but then demonstrate that you actually know nothing about it”.</p> <p>“I can work on finding the tipping point for when the good guy becomes ridiculous... e.g. Yes, I stole from the shop . . .The guy is a real arsehole . . . he charges £3 for a bottle of coke . . . he basically robs kids of their money . . . He deserved for somebody to do something”.</p> <p>“I can refer back to looking out for his family. Doing things for others. (For DV, this can be slapping the sense into his partner. Stopping her “screaming and upsetting the kids.). Focus on the positives. What makes him a good person. I need to be careful about moving into the target mask when shifting the blame. Good Guy isn’t blaming anyone, he was just doing what makes sense e.g. keeping people safe”.</p>
Joker	<p>“Jokes are a weapon to direct attention away from character. In prisons, where banter is expected, the joke can be taken pretty far. Especially good to focus on mocking victims and getting people on board with this”.</p> <p>“Good stock jokes are trainers/ special prisons for OAPs/ haircuts... Take the piss out of the question not the question-asker”.</p> <p>“I need to work on not carrying any emotional weight through the different masks. I noticed especially for this mask that I needed to be lighter and more playful”.</p>

Target	<p>“Straightforward. Everything is everyone else’s fault. You get unfairly singled out”</p> <p>“I can work on having some more specifics up my sleeve as to who is to blame . . . e.g. police/ probation/ partner/ family members/ judges/ court officials/ members of the jury”.</p>
Brickwall	<p>“Straightforward. Nice stock sentences like ‘Can you repeat the question?/How much longer are we here for?’”.</p>
Fist	<p>“Good triggers for the Fist mask are personal questions about family etc. I also don’t need to do much to act scary. It’s a scary mask. When I just held someone’s gaze, that can do more than speaking”.</p> <p>“I need to be careful not to direct too much at any one person. If I’m pushed to making threats, I can maybe threaten to ‘smash up the room’. Don’t keep the focus for too long on any one person in the audience. Fist mask is good for the end. Should feel the air disappear out of the room”.</p>

Source: Tear’s monitoring form 19-10-21 Fragments training, Geese headquarters

Teare is really embracing this style of work and realises he needs quite a lot of detailed thought about how he approaches each of the Fragment masks. He particularly focuses on having stock sentences for or attitudes to different things which are happening.

6.11 Discussion of themes – practising skills

There seems to be plenty of opportunities to practice skills. A lengthy practice session for Fragment masks is referred to earlier (6.10.3). In the form for HMP Oakwood (13/03/20) Teare refers to the need for rehearsal “my issues with Frank

highlighted the fact that I should work harder in rehearsal to look for moments that allow smaller characters like him to bring energy to the scene". He discusses how he will do this "in future, this means bringing full energy into rehearsal and trying lots of things out that I can then fall back on in the performance if needs be. I don't want to surprise other performers by suddenly doing lots when I haven't done so in rehearsal". Smallman talks about thinking ahead after Glebe House (02-06/08/21) and therefore being able to practice skills "not sure when your next group work opportunity will be but have a think on some exercises you would like to run and be ready with them, maybe even a thematic one and give processing a shot". For the *Safer Stages* performance (17-18/08/21) Smallman also comments that "it's important to take time in rehearsals to try and work with the nuances".

6.12 The Geese Style/ theoretical frameworks/ dealing with the impact of the work

These three elements are not discussed in any great depth in the monitoring forms. The Geese Style that practitioners referred to in the interviews might be something which the practitioner becomes much more aware of as the training continues or indeed when it is over. Theoretical frameworks are definitely explored by all the practitioners during the six-month training but this particularly involves them reading about them and asking Geese staff questions rather discussing them in the monitoring forms or this could just be Teare not referring to them. It might be of course that other practitioners if you were to have access to their forms might explore the theoretical frameworks throughout their forms. Dealing with the impact of the work is definitely key for Geese practitioners but it may be that this is discussed

much more at the one-to-one monthly sessions with Teare's line manager rather than in the forms which are shared with all Geese staff who lead work.

6.12.1 The Geese Style

In relation to the workshop for MA students at Derby (02/03/20) Teare discusses the fact that as this session was for students Teare believes Watson was "slightly more didactic in explaining why we do things the way we do them – though still very 'Geese' in Socratic style of questioning. Maybe slightly more talk and less play – as appropriate for an academic course". Teare is referencing the probing style of questioning used between teacher and student which often responds to answers from students with further questions. He continues "it also seemed to me that Andy was at particular pains to emphasise when he was calling on generalisations or anything that could be considered problematic to illustrate points". The only other time The Geese Style is mentioned is for HMP Oakwood. Teare says this workshop was the first time with him "delivering feedback in The Geese Style". He says "I fell into the trap of using some collusive language, e.g. missus, but it didn't seem to cause a major issue and became a useful learning point".

6.12.2 Theoretical Frameworks

In terms of the theories which Geese use in their work (see 1.5 Theories and approaches used by Geese). This is really only discussed in a very minor way about styles of questioning when Teare looks at Facilitator-enacted scenes (11/10/21) and he mentions looking at mask theory for the training session in-house about Fragment masks (19-10/21).

6.12.3 Dealing with the impact of the work

Snook mentions this in response to Teare on the form related to HMP Whatton for the Reconnect programme (11-13/02/20) "I think you mentioned in our last review that you noticed how stressed and tired you felt which was probably due to transference from the people in the room. I feel this happens a lot at Geese with the positive and negative vibes we get from them. It's good you noticed it early on and is worth mentioning in reviews".

6.13 Summary

This chapter has explored the monitoring process for practitioners during the six-month training period at Geese and in particular how that process worked for a recent successful trainee at the company, Benji Teare. Monitoring and evaluation are central to the work at the company. The trainee has to complete a monitoring form after each project which they are involved in. Teare gave access to all of the twenty-four forms which he had completed during training. What is particularly interesting about the way in which Geese approach this process is that the form becomes a kind of dialogue between the lead practitioner and trainee on that particular project. It is intended and proves to be a much more meaningful exercise because of the detail of the analysis which is expected of the trainee and how that is responded to by the lead practitioner.

It is unusual to be granted access to what is quite a private monitoring process. The practitioner is being very honest about their own work and that is then commented

upon by the lead practitioner on each project. Having to acknowledge when things go wrong, they are struggling or that activities which they attempt do not work quite so well is not always something which people would like to share with others. The process of monitoring every piece of work which the trainee is involved in results in them experiencing the expertise of each of the practitioners at Geese and not just the line manager Smallman who is in charge of recruits. By the time of the case study the thesis had established through the research what the competences are which have to be achieved during the six-month training and identified the skills and attributes which a Geese practitioner requires to be successful. This final data chapter served as a way of triangulating between different sources in the research to test the findings. Firstly, acting as a way of quantitatively checking the elements which Teare was discussing in the forms against the already formed list – a tally of how many times Teare discussed elements off that list. Secondly, it explored the detail of what Teare is discussing about these elements.

We are able to see the real range of work at Geese through these monitoring forms despite Teare experiencing his training with the interruption of Covid. He has to perform quite early on and also gradually does more and more leading of exercises and processing. There is a good deal of observation of other Geese practitioners throughout the process. He runs sessions for students but is also in a prison within the first week and from then on. In addition, he goes to a personality disorder unit and a secure children's home. He does a performance in front of judges and works on a staging recovery programme amongst others.

The limitations of the chapter are that it relates to just one trainee and cannot be compared with what a different trainee might write about the monitoring process. However, Teare does indeed discuss all of the elements of the identified list or requirements/ attributes. There are also no issues which he discusses which have not already been identified as important through this study. As might be expected the elements he mentions the most are facilitation, performance skill and personal qualities. This is followed by observing work, working with masks and practising skills. The elements with very few mentions are The Geese style, theoretical frameworks and dealing with the impact of the work. As discussed earlier in this chapter there are probably quite simple reasons for the elements mentioned the least. Teare may have talked more about the impact of the work in his one-to-one sessions. Theoretical frameworks involve reading material which Teare will have completed and just does not discuss here. The Geese Style could be something trainees build an awareness of as the training goes on and into the first year at the company.

There are some very interesting observations from Teare and responses from the lead practitioners in these forms which demonstrate that going through this monitoring process is significant in the development of the trainee. We see Teare finding it difficult to be able to learn the skill of collecting feedback from the audience and then repeating it back on stage. He discusses his struggles with this on monitoring form one but it comes up again as late as form seventeen. All the practitioners find this difficult and just seem to acquire the skill as time goes by. He is advised to use the short-term memory whilst also using a more medium term one to keep script in his head. Watson discusses creating a safe space for participants with

him. Teare also details the idea of collecting interests and hobbies in the early stages of a workshop which will help how the session runs later. Another practitioner suggests modelling the engagement he wants in sessions. Practitioners also discuss at various times the need to look like they are hearing comments from participants for the first time despite having heard similar things before. At several points the need for the Geese practitioner to be responsive is talked about too. Practitioners will need to display confidence when working which might involve altering timings or even changing something which has been planned. The idea of leading work and dealing with problems “with a lot of charm” is discussed by Teare when he observes one of the practitioners. He discusses the idea that she is able to avoid the teacher/pupil dynamic and that she talks to the participant “more like a mate”. The idea that practitioners look “cool” despite there being difficulties they are encountering is important. Also referred to is the need to give “positive regard” to what participants say at all times. Teare experiences an intensive office session on facilitator enacted scenes and processing them plus an office session on Fragment masks. He also works on questioning styles as part of this. He goes into a lot of detail about how he works on the Fragment masks particularly finding internal dialogue for each of them.

In terms of personal qualities at various times Teare learns to be able to cope with the range of work and performance environments, to be confident, have a curiosity and commitment to the work, to not to be inhibited in performance and to be resilient. Performance skill is a significant skill needed for the Geese practitioner and is explored many times in the forms. Teare comes to the training as a professional actor. He receives advice on the short mime scenes and discusses details at length when he feels he hasn't got a character quite right or needs to do something

differently next time. We see him having to play several characters often within one play moving quickly between them. He discusses the need to be authentic and how he will try and achieve that, worrying that he is much younger than the participants he is working with for instance. The need to learn lines quickly as we heard in the interviews is also shown.

There is a definite progression through the forms. Teare starts to analyse in much more detail as the forms continue needing less prompting from the lead practitioner. This enables us to see the work which he is having to do during the training. Following the quantitative analysis of whether Teare mentions the qualities needed (already identified) to be a Geese practitioner we are able to confirm that all of the identified qualities are mentioned with performance skill, facilitation and personal qualities referred to the most. There is nothing which Teare raises not already identified in the earlier part of the thesis. This chapter enables depth in the research. It emphasises and supports through triangulation the previously found themes. At the same time, it emphasises that the balance of these elements is unlikely to be equal in the experience of the trainee.

7. Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the work of Geese Theatre Company established in the UK in 1987. Geese is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) that uses Drama and Theatre to affect change in people who are in criminal justice and social welfare settings. Geese first became a regularly funded organisation by the Arts Council in 2003 and have remained so ever since, recently being given continued NPO status until 2026. They describe their work as giving time to their participants in a safe environment to reflect on their identity, place in the world and the impact of their behaviour and actions. They believe that this allows individuals to then “rehearse” different ways of approaching things which happen in their lives. From viewing Geese and their work before the start of this study, the actor as rehabilitator working at Geese and *rehearsing* these new ways of being with participants needs to be able to be a strong performer and facilitator but also have the personal skills to be a practitioner working in this challenging area. Finding someone who can do all of these things is not easy which means the audition process to join the company is intensive and described as “a fairly arduous process” that tests skills but “allows us to understand where they’re coming from - their philosophy on criminal justice, on offending, on change” (Balfour et al., 2019, p.39).

Geese are unique amongst similar theatre companies in having a six-month training period for new practitioners and they maintain that its purpose is about ensuring the quality of the work which it produces. The specific initial stimulus for this study was discovering that around a third of new recruits to the company are not taken on permanently after this training. Trainees have already participated in a rigorous

audition process before starting the training at the company so it was intriguing to speculate upon what the reason might be that they do not then pass the subsequent training period. The thesis set out to answer the overarching research question: How do Geese Theatre Company train a practitioner in six-months to use Drama to effect change and why are a third of recruits not taken on at the end of this probationary period? The sub questions connected to this were: is it possible to define the elements involved in the training, what ability does the new recruit start with and how are they trained in the very specific Geese way, what skills and attributes enable a practitioner to work in this company and is it possible to identify which elements are missing when someone is not taken on after the six months? To answer these research questions the thesis would specifically explore the six-month training period which Geese runs for new practitioner recruits to the company. There is nothing currently published about what occurs during this training so this would provide an opportunity to examine it and allow a process which is currently hidden to be set out for a wider audience such as performers and applied theatre practitioners.

This discussion chapter brings together and reflects upon the findings from the four data analysis chapters which hoped to answer these questions, placing these findings within the context of the literature review presented at the start of the study. The chapter also details the limitations of this study and explores what might have been done differently viewing the research now at this end point.

7.2 What we did not know at the start of the study

At the start of the research process, we knew that Geese had a six-month training period for new recruits and that around a third of them did not pass that training

despite a rigorous audition process having already taken place. What we did not know was what the training period consisted of and what was needed in order to ensure that someone passed that training and went on to work at the company. There was existing literature in the form of a handbook published by Geese (2002), various book chapters, articles and evaluations which all centred on the *work* at Geese. What was not published was anything on how the Geese practitioner is trained. This kind of research would place the focus upon the performer/ facilitator who works for the company rather than the way in which Geese work or the rehabilitative success which they may achieve. It is not publicly known that a third of trainees do not pass the training at the company. It is a natural assumption to presume that as training is part of many jobs, a new practitioner starting at Geese does the training and then continues to work in the company. Investigating this training period would provide research not already in existence and serve as a contribution to literature around actor/ facilitator training at a successful company like this.

7.3 Overview of findings

This section discusses the findings in the literature review and introduction chapter and then the subsequent four data chapters. In the data chapters analysis is drawn from interviews with Geese practitioners and from examination of the monitoring forms completed by a recent trainee at the company for the case study. There is also a backdrop to the research consisting of observations of the company's work and examination of the published literature about them and the training materials which

they use. The overview of findings is presented in the order of the chapters in the thesis.

7.3.1 Literature Review and Introduction Chapter

The literature review and Introduction chapter outlined the context for the study and placed Geese within the wider area of the arts in The Criminal Justice System then going on to explore Theatre, Criminal Justice and rehabilitation. The arts in criminal justice “challenge personal orthodoxy and facilitate the development of new narratives, and they allow participants to experiment and take risks” (Hewish, 2015, p. 214). He continues that without arts and artists working in prison “trying to mitigate against the pull of prison culture . . . we risk losing the opportunity to help people find their humanity” (Hewish, 2015, p. 216). Geese use Drama to affect change with people in prison and those who are at risk of committing offences. They generally use a set model of working. They create plays/ performance pieces which they deliver and typically follow up with a workshop. Using masks in performance and facilitation work is integral to the way in which the company work too. Most notable is their technique of ‘Lifting the mask’ which allows a character to speak their true feelings at any given time “we designed masks to be cognitive devices to help offenders catch sight of their behaviour” (Liebmann, 1996, p.100). The audience will be encouraged to ask the character to lift their mask during the performance “an actor will literally lift the mask from their face and the character will reveal something to the audience, and to the other characters that they have kept hidden” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p.53). Geese say that this isn’t about a character lying when in mask but when they lift the mask “we are inviting the character to verbalise their inner voice” (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p.53).

The chapter places Geese alongside companies working in the arts and criminal justice such as Clean Break (established in 1979 by Jenny Hicks and Jacqueline Holborough) and Odd Arts (established in 2004). Geese combine the power of theatre with the skills of facilitation to try and rehabilitate those that they work with. In terms of key literature on the company the chapter details *The Geese Theatre Handbook* (2002, Baim, Brookes and Mountford) which does discuss the working practices of Geese and details their theoretical frameworks and the plays which they had written up to that point but the majority of the book focuses on the games and exercises which are also a significant part of what they do. There are chapters in books about the work at Geese detailed. The most recent is *Geese Theatre Company – 30 years on* by Heywood and Watson, interviewed by Balfour in *Performing Arts in Prisons* (Balfour et al., 2019, pp 33-48). There are a relatively small number of evaluations of the work of Geese available. Some of these are found in journal articles and or at the Arts in Criminal Justice Evidence Library (www.artsevidence.org.uk). There was certainly literature about Geese available then at the start of this study but not specifically about the training of the Geese practitioner. The interest to date in the literature has understandably concentrated upon the kind of work which Geese do and whether it can rehabilitate the participants who engage in it but investigating the training of the Geese practitioner would add original research and enhance public knowledge about the company.

The chapter goes on to reflect upon some of the central aspects of Geese' work. Geese refer to their role as a practitioner as dealing with where a prisoner is at currently rather than questioning whether they should be rehabilitated. The prisoner is in prison because of the piece of behaviour which broke the law. That behaviour

does not have to define who you are “art enables people to think and look at themselves as complex beings. Not as kind of siloed problems” (Watson, NCJAA, 2018). He says that the person who has got an addiction to heroin “is also an uncle and a brother and a fisherman and a painter and what we do in prison is we confine people to the thing that they’re quite ashamed of”. He continues “we hold them in their shame and I think what art does is say actually people are really complex. Which bit do we push forward with? Who do you want to be?” (Watson, NCJAA, 2018). He states that almost everyone in prison is going to leave prison one day and be someone’s neighbour, relative and employee. Prisoners still have other roles in their lives and possibilities for change he believes (Bano, 2019, www.thestage.co.uk). The who do you want to be question is central to the work that Geese do in exploring the possibilities for change for those that they work with. At a celebration of 30 years of Geese Theatre Company, Clark Baim highlighted the fact that 80% of prisoners will be released. His argument like Watson is that we have as a society to consider the people that we are releasing back into the community.

The chapter discusses actor training and what traditional actor training looks like in places like drama schools. Geese practitioners have to be authentic performers. Their audience need to believe what they are seeing in order to engage in it and be prepared to embrace the work needed to make changes. This is what Liebmann described as “pictures that reflect something inside their minds before defences deny the pictures’ reality” (1996, pp.97-98). The Practitioner will need to have strong facilitation skills to lead the workshops too. The chapter details the three central theories in the work of Geese: Social Learning Theory, Cognitive Behavioural Theory and Role Theory. In addition to this, members of Geese old and new mention the

impact of the work of Augusto Boal and Dorothy Heathcote frequently in their discussion of the work. They also refer to Desistance theory and the theory of What Works. The need for an individualised approach supported by theory for participants has been mentioned several times in this thesis “Research on desistance (Maruna 2001; Maruna et al. 2004; O’Neill and Campbell 2010) is very clear about the need for a unique and personal journey rather than a one-size fits all process”. (Watson in Balfour et al, 2019, p.41). He continues that “Its focus on the importance of instilling hope in individuals, of helping them to build a non-criminal identity and find a meaningful role in the world, is a great fit with our approach and methods” (Balfour et al, 2019, p.41). Crossick & Kaszynska say that “At the heart of desistance from offending is an ability to think about oneself and others, to see genuine choices and options, and to imagine other life circumstances and other possible futures” (2016).

Geese believe that by “combining social learning theory, cognitive behavioural theory and role theory, three key concepts emerge which are of particular importance in Geese Theatre’s approach” (Baim, Brookes & Mountford, 2002, p.20). They detail these as “The concept of the mask, the concept of expanding the role repertoire and the concept that the challenge comes through the role” (Baim, Brookes & Mountford, 2002, p.20). Geese certainly use these theories as a basis to the work which they create. It also allows practitioners to understand the purpose of exercises which they are delivering. As stated earlier (see 4.6.1) the process is always anchored by the theories and how they dictate what might happen. The interview data is able to tell us that the Geese trainee has in-house sessions on the theories which Geese use and are given reading material on them too. However, the discussions about theory often come naturally out of the work that day. Teare does not specifically talk about

the theories in the monitoring forms. Watson asserts though that the practice comes first and that it is him who needs the greatest grasp on the theory in order to be able to justify the work to external parties such as funders.

7.3.2 Skills and previous experience of the Geese practitioner and how they are selected

The first data chapter explored the skills that practitioners come to Geese with and the recruitment process for the company. Although there was a variety of experience present, analysis of the material gathered from the interviews meant that a checklist could be created of the qualities which were needed to be successful at Geese and which those interviewed and auditioned had in common. There was a mixture of skills evident from the base level of some kind of degree or training course as well as appropriate work experience. The degree was Drama or similar in the majority of cases and two of those interviewed had been to Drama school instead of completing a degree. The work experience consisted of work in schools such as theatre-in-education, working with people in prisons and other marginalised groups. The practitioners had good skills in acting and facilitation with some being stronger in one over the other. Related to the performance skills were the qualities of being authentic in performance with strong improvisation skills. The Geese practitioner would also need to be a versatile performer with no ego who is able to perform well in a mask. Lecoq describes preferring to see “more distance between the actor’s own ego and the character performed” (Evans, 2015, p.42). Connected to facilitation skills the practitioner is required to be an excellent communicator. In relation to personal skills, they would need to be someone who can work in a small team, have a strong interest in this area and be able to evaluate their own practice. Many of those

interviewed also talked about being at a point in their career where they were looking for something different and emphasised that they knew that they wanted to be at the company for a long time.

The chapter examines the audition process for the company which is lengthy and rigorous. Geese say that they are testing for a very specific set of performance skills. People invited to audition have to complete a series of tasks including games and exercises, leading part of a workshop and performing with an existing Geese practitioner in an excerpt from the play *Stay*. Throughout this process the company are looking to find the mixture of qualities identified above. An auditionee who is versatile in performance and applied work and who is a strong performer using appropriate characters in improvisation work is more likely to pass the audition. The additional qualities of no ego as a performer, ability to be responsive, dealing with disruption of what you have planned and working with where the participants are at in your workshop room are much more subtle requirements which will be assessed in the audition and will be needed in order to ensure success. These elements will be required alongside versatility and ability to play many characters, being authentic and genuine in performance, standard facilitation skills and strong performance ability.

7.3.3 Competences to achieve during the six-month training at Geese

The second data chapter set out to identify what the competences (described by Geese as The Competency Framework) are which trainees have to be able to achieve during training in order to be able to pass the six-month probationary period and become a permanent member of the company. This is something which was not

known at the start of the thesis and would begin to answer the overarching research question of how Geese train practitioners. There is a gradual build-up of the trainee observing work, co-working and then leading sections. The training Watson stresses is about ensuring the quality of the work which goes out. It is expensive and a big investment he says to pay someone who cannot be fully used for six months. He believes that Geese is unique in doing this kind of training because of the cost but also because many similar companies do not have a permanent set of staff as Geese do so it becomes more difficult to run training like this. All those interviewed talked about the training going on beyond the six months and Watson believes that it probably takes five years for practitioners to gain all of the key training and experience needed at the company. Alfreds says “yes the actor’s job *is* to reveal what is common to us all” (2007, p.29). Nevertheless, he feels “they should do so in a way that is heightened, selected and resonant” (Alfred’s, 2007, p.30). He is therefore advocating for a continual training and reflection process rather like that at Geese. Watson describes the training being about the mode of work/ theoretical underpinning/ different participants and different levels of understanding and knowledge around the different participant groups they work with. The training does not sit as a discrete project outside the rest of Geese which means that it will vary from trainee to trainee as to how their six months looks as it relates to what projects are happening at the time.

As part of the probation period trainees are given some support literature and in-house training sessions. There is a reading list of key texts, an Introduction to groupwork document and a list of questions from the company in the form of a document. The questions are about a series of important elements to learn about:

general groupwork, prisons, your relationship with offenders, young people who have offended and performance. Analysis of the data identified seven elements which are needed as competences by the end of the training: knowledge of theoretical frameworks, The Geese Style, performance skill, facilitation skill, working with masks, going into prisons and learning the Geese repertoire. There are then a further three associated elements associated with this list which are required: observing work, practising skills and monitoring work. There is a sense and it is directly referenced by some of the practitioners that despite what a trainee has done before coming to Geese you 'start again' with one of the practitioners saying in relation to what he had done before arriving that you come to Geese and throw everything you already know and can do out of the window. The trainee is relearning their craft based on The Geese Way of doing it.

In terms of what those interviewed said was the most challenging about the training they all said that processing exercises was difficult. They also mentioned the interactivity of the work and particularly running conference performances and using masks. Despite this the practitioners felt that they enjoyed the training and felt supported during it.

7.3.4 The skills and attributes required for a practitioner to succeed at Geese

The third data chapter looked a little more broadly at what skills and attributes are needed to be successful at Geese. There is inevitably some overlap with the chapter on competences but this is an examination of what the Geese practitioner has to *be* rather than what they have to *do* during the six-month probationary period. This chapter also explores what has gone wrong when a trainee is not taken on after the

training period. The interview data produced a list of five things in relation to skills and attributes: performance ability, facilitation ability, understanding The Geese style (sometimes called The Geese Way), dealing with the impact of the work plus personal qualities. Two of the key skills here are performance and facilitation. In the performance pieces for instance the practitioner has to “Create and mirror the inmate’s special world accurately” (1995, p.95). Jackson concludes too that in the kind of performance work which Geese does “theatre as an aesthetic experience is capable of reaching people who probably have little if any prior experience of live theatre and can be used as an aid to interrogating personal experience” (Jackson, 2007, p.217). He believes that “it gives space to those qualities that lie at the root of all effective, live theatre: playfulness, surprise, danger, unpredictability, spontaneity, emotional engagement, performative skill, *eventness*” (Jackson, 2007, p.217). As a Facilitator Balfour addresses this difficult role and feels that a “facilitator needs to manage complex social dynamics” (Preston, 2016, p.152). He gives another term for this as ‘animateur’ (Preston, 2016, p.152). He defines this as the process of “encouraging groups to have courage, to be bold, to be safe, and to give spirit to a process” (2016, p.152). He feels that it works well if a facilitator is willing to “bring their own identity into the process” (2016, p.151). Balfour believes that in any workshop “a facilitator is faced with myriad decisions based on a fine-tuned analysis of social cues and dynamics” (2016, p.164). He concludes that “The craft of facilitation is derived from the ability to negotiate the dynamics, to acknowledge and identify them, and to work with them towards a positive goal”. Geese will be doing this alongside their strong performances.

There was a sense that just seeing this as another acting job certainly would not work. The Geese Style too is defined as being a mixture of working with stereotypes but also finding nuances there. In relation to dealing with the impact of the work one of the practitioners was very honest in admitting that theatre “saved him” in his life before joining Geese. He felt that his life might have gone in a different direction without the focus that Drama and theatre gave him. He has been able to process this fact and move forward so is able to deal with the impact of the work at Geese. He believes that there is a complex process happening ideally in the mind of the practitioner which he describes as a balance of empathy but resilience and the ability to detach sufficiently from the work so that it does not cause emotional stress.

The data demonstrates that the successful practitioner needs to have certain personal qualities which will enable them to succeed. Quite key is that they have a curiosity and commitment to the work and an understanding that change can occur. The company has a “personal responsibility” stance in relation to understanding that change can occur “although we acknowledge that there are many reasons why individuals offend – from personal to socio-political - we focus on what individuals can change themselves” (Heywood in Balfour et al., 2019, p.39). She continues “what they have control over, which is generally their thinking, their behaviour and how they respond to the world” (Balfour et al., 2019, p.39). The practitioner also needs to be grounded and resilient, be confident and a clear communicator who is uninhibited in performance. They should be able to cope with the range of work and varied environments in which it takes place. They will need to be able to work in a small team too and have a lack of ego in their approach.

This chapter also discussed passing and failing the probationary period. Trainees fail probation for four key reasons: performance skills are not strong enough, facilitation skills are not of the required standard, practitioners are not able to fit into the Geese team dynamic or the trainee is not at the right point in their life to work with Geese. You need a secure personal base from which to do this work say the practitioners and if that is not there it becomes too difficult. In the examples discussed by interviewees of people who had not got through the training it was for a mixture of reasons. All of the practitioners emphasise that trainees are kept informed throughout the six-months and because their progress is discussed with them it is not ever a shock that it has not worked out. The company try to work with the trainee, often extending the six-month period to see if things will improve too. Sometimes the competency of acting/ performing is not good enough. One of the practitioners describes someone coming to the company who he had known before at university and who was a good actor but he explains that when she/he was at Geese a lot of the characters she/he was playing did not have many levels to them. He says that there was not perception and analysis displayed in what they were doing. This was not something that could be taught or improved so they did not pass the probation. Another described someone with a similar issue who had seemed ok at audition. Their ability was not that good but the company felt that they could work with them. Unfortunately, the acting standard once they were training just was not good enough. There have been others who can't cope with the work and are not in a secure position themselves, having maybe not processed anything difficult in their lives to date. Two such trainees are described. One who was very good but just decided themselves that they couldn't cope with the work probably based on experience of violence in their life previously. Another had experienced traumatic life

experiences which they had not processed fully and therefore the job connected with that. The company tried to make it work and extended the probation but they could not help to resolve the issues. Geese say that you need to balance the needs of the trainee but also ensure the quality of the work which is being produced. If it is not working then it becomes uncomfortable and the company needs to be mindful of its reputation to produce quality work.

The *stimulus* for writing this thesis came from the initial surprise that it is as much as a third of trainees who do not pass the training. This chapter discussed the fact that this could be viewed differently in that the training is difficult and wide reaching with trainees expected to develop skills in multiple areas. Given this it could be seen as surprising that as many as two thirds *do* get through the training. This also says something about Organisational care on the part of the company. It would appear that for most of those who do not pass the training it is a careful and right decision for both the person and the organisation. Considering this gives even more access to Geese's practices of care around recruitment and support. Geese demand rigour and nuance from trainees which is similar to professional actor training.

7.3.5 Monitoring at Geese – a case study

The final data chapter is a case study of the monitoring process at Geese through the lens of a recent recruit. A trainee during the probationary period has to complete an individual monitoring form after each project she/he completes. The company describe this as a record of the trainees' progress which gives them an opportunity to reflect on their practice. They have to detail the work undertaken, discuss learning points and ask any questions about the material. The company say that evaluation

after projects and this individual monitoring “enables us to continually refine our work, both as individuals and as an organization. It’s one of the great advantages of having a permanent team of practitioners who work together all the time” (Balfour et al., 2019, p.41). What is a little different from other situations where monitoring is completed (for instance after each lesson on a teacher training course) is that this becomes an interactive document. The lead practitioner responds to the trainee on the form discussing the delivery of it, comments about co-work, boundaries and session planning input. They might also ask questions or for more detail which the trainee then has to respond to. The chapter examines twenty-four monitoring forms which Teare had completed during his training. The forms are used to make a quantitative tally for this study of whether the previously identified list of what is needed to be successful at Geese are things mentioned in Teare’s monitoring process. The list used was performance skill, facilitation and processing, working with masks, The Geese Style, theoretical frameworks, observing work, practising skills, dealing with the impact of the work and a selection of personal qualities.

Teare does indeed discuss all of the elements of the identified list or requirements/ attributes. There are also no issues which he discusses which have not already been identified as important through this study. As might be expected the elements he mentions the most are facilitation (on eighteen forms), performance skill (on sixteen forms) and personal qualities (on seventeen forms). This is followed by observing work (on nine forms), working with masks (on seven forms) and practising skills (on six forms). The elements with very few mentions are The Geese Style, theoretical frameworks and dealing with the impact of the work (all with two mentions). These elements are certainly discussed by Teare and others in interviews so it is assumed

that they are just mentioned more at individual meetings perhaps with the line manager rather than on the individual monitoring form.

Teare obtains a good deal of advice through the forms from lead practitioners such as modelling the engagement he wants and having the confidence to be responsive when facilitating. He is also told to remember that facilitation is performing too. He is helped on matters such as participants not engaging and given suggestions of how to approach it. During the training we see that he has set sessions from Geese practitioners at the office which he needs to write about: Facilitator-enacted scenes and processing them as well as a session on the Fragment masks. We are able to see the real range of work which a trainee might complete during the six months too. Teare works with students, judges, a personality disorder group in a prison and with patients in a medium secure forensic centre as well as dancers at The Royal Ballet amongst others.

There is a lot of discussion particularly on the forms around performing and about learning the skill of the Fragment masks. In relation to performing Teare describes some of the characters he is having to act as “tricky” to play and he worries about making others life-like enough though he later comments in another form that his character was taken seriously so he had been successful in doing this. In a further form he discusses the challenge of portraying a character with just one scripted line. He felt that he didn’t know how to add to the scene without disrupting other performers. He discusses finding “triggers” for one of the characters so deciding what might make this particular character react violently in situations. Quite a lot of his notes are about finding an inner dialogue for the character. He describes one of

the characters as thinking solely about himself in relation to his partner finding everything which she does very annoying. He invents some internal dialogue saying that his wife is there to serve him and that he is going to react if she takes anymore of his time. He receives acting notes about eye contact and moments where a character might fidget to help portray the character. Teare details his worries about caricaturing young people that he is playing and is generally concerned about playing the younger characters because of his height and him therefore not looking young. He becomes quite technical and describes needing to work on the nuances of age and voice saying he tends to go up at the end of sentences and sound cute rather than vulnerable as he needs to. In another form he tries to find what he describes as differentiation between similar characters. This is when Teare is playing two characters who are close in age. He decides to get the difference by being more direct and using more stillness with one of them. At another point Teare talks about trying to get audience on side with a character.

Teare writes in detail about the Fragment masks which are unique to Geese and which require a lot of practice and thought. He makes notes for each of the masks. Two examples are Chatterbox and Mr Cool masks. For Chatterbox he writes that after a few attempts he managed to create the patter way of talking which he needs. He goes on that he can find safe areas of conversation which might be areas of interest to him that means he can talk without needing to stop. He makes a note about Mr Cool and things for him to keep in mind when using this mask such as phrases like prison doesn't bother him, that he has no vulnerability and that he is the boss. His careful analysis here for the masks means that he starts to build a base for building expertise in using them.

7.4 Applying the findings

The findings allow for a public understanding of how this company train the practitioners who come to work with them and has potential learning for other arts organisations. Geese is a very successful company who have continually been awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by the Arts Council since 2003. Mags Patten (Executive director of Public Policy and Communication at the Arts Council) described them as having a “very sound business plan” and as being “social entrepreneurs” (*Transforming Power of Arts*, 2018). They run a unique training period for practitioners who join the company. The findings of this study are relevant for those with an interest in training for actors and facilitators and to give an understanding of how this company works. In reference to good practice Geese have managed to find a way of developing a successful system of training new practitioners that could be employed by other similar theatre companies. In terms of policy the Arts Council could for instance use the key principles of this training as a template to help less experienced companies improve the quality of their work and training practices. Funding streams could be specifically targeted for companies to have a period of training like this. The criminal justice system who value and support the kind of work which Geese does might be prepared to employ other companies with the certainty that their training practices are similar.

The findings regarding the work at Geese have relevance beyond the company. The importance of play is central to what they do. An absence of play in a child’s life can have a negative impact which prevents them developing fully and Geese see the results of that with those that they work with. The work encourages someone to think about themselves beyond a role, beyond “shame” and to rehearse the roles which

they want to be in the future. The power of theatre in the criminal justice system is here too. Prisoners witness very authentic performances performed by strong actors. These engage them and allow them to think about how they might progress differently. Take away the strength of the performed drama and the workshop following becomes less intense and harder to manage. The work at Geese would not have the ability to rehabilitate without the skill of the practitioners carrying it out. Their knowledge, skill and intensive training period means that they create a safe, authentic space in which participants can consider their rehabilitation.

Some of the ways in which Geese work could also be replicated in other areas of the arts and other sectors. For example, the series of questions document which trainees have to find a way of answering during the six months could be adapted as a template to use in many different employment areas such as higher education, other creative industries, business and in the commercial sector . It is a simple exercise which does not cost anything to employ but reframes how a training period should look and work. It shifts the focus from an employer directly telling a new employee about the organisation and practices to the new employee having to actively find information out and engage with company ideas and practices in order to progress. It is also useful for Geese itself to have this research. Though the company know how they train during the six months there is data collected from most of the current practitioners here and two that have left. Examining what they all have said about the training process as part of one study will provide a good overview and allows reflection for Geese on this process.

7.5 Limitations to consider and what could have been done differently

Whilst the thesis discusses acting and facilitation more broadly it is intended as having a narrow focus upon how Geese Theatre company operate. This could be seen as of limited interest but much of the data does have transferable interest to other areas of applied work and other employment areas. In addition, there is a benefit to having a deep analysis of how a successful theatre company which has worked in prisons since 1987 trains their practitioners. This training does seem to ensure quality in the work which is produced and therefore it is of benefit to understand what it consists of and how it might be replicated. Lack of funding or time can often mean that research for theatre companies focuses on an element of their work for which they need evaluative evidence to gain or sustain funding. There are not any of those restrictions here allowing an intensive exploration of the practitioner at the heart of the work at Geese. The study is Geese talking about Geese largely so this could be viewed as too introspective. However, this is the only way to obtain information about the company which is not known publicly. The study also interviews two practitioners who have left the company and there is no difference in the way in which they discuss the training and company than those currently employed at Geese.

In terms of the research methods used the structured observations helped to give a strong base from which to complete the rest of the research. The semi-structured interviews allowed practitioners to talk freely about all aspects of the training period. As discussed in chapter six it was originally intended that the case study would 'follow' somebody new to the company completing the training. When this was not possible due to Covid-19 but also coupled with reservations from the company about

carrying out this work, an alternative was found. This means that following a practitioner completing the training is a way this study could have happened differently. However, once in a position of having to find an alternative (which became a case study of the monitoring forms from a recent trainee) there seemed to be a real benefit from approaching the study in this way. By the time the case study would have happened it had already been established what the competences were for the training period and skills and attributes which would be needed for a successful Geese practitioner identified. Following the trainee, whilst interesting, may not have offered any new research information. What became significant about examining the monitoring forms was the ongoing dialogue between the trainee and the lead practitioners. This gave a real insight into the process of monitoring and was like being given permission to witness private conversations about this process as it was happening.

The study could have involved a practitioner who had not passed the training at Geese. This would of course have provided an interesting perspective. It would have been ethically challenging to expect to be able to do this though and would probably not have been something the company would have agreed to. It would have been expecting someone who had gone through a challenging period of training with the disappointment of not passing the probation period to talk about that to someone outside of Geese. The company were not asked about this and the combination of interview and case study data were rich, providing enough information about why practitioners had not passed the training from existing staff.

The study could have also been widened to interview participants who have seen a Geese performance and been part of a workshop in prisons. In addition, prison staff could have been asked to comment on the practitioner role from their perspective as perhaps people who have witnessed different arts activities in a prison. These groups would not have been able to comment on the end result of the training but could have been asked about what they perceive to be an effective practitioner. This might have helped to support the reasons for the rigorous training at Geese. Ultimately though this would have made the study very broad when it was intended to be very much about the six-month training period. These groups would not have been able to add relevant information to this.

7.6 What we know at the end of the study and if any of it is surprising

At the start of this study, it was known that Geese run a six-month training period for new practitioner recruits but not what it consisted of. Obtaining this information and detail about the process would be of interest to performers and applied drama practitioners. Watson had revealed that a third of these recruits were not taken on at the end of the training period but the reasons why were unknown. By the end of the study, it is possible to see what the training consists of and what the competences are which are required of trainees. The thesis also identifies the skills and attributes a practitioner needs to be successful at the company. In addition, it details a case study of the individual monitoring process during training. The study has also taken it back a stage from there and explored the previous skills which practitioners have when they arrive to audition at Geese and what that audition for the company consists of. There are things discovered which we might expect such as that the

practitioners all have a degree and some further training and relevant work experience but there are also more surprising findings. Quite a few of the practitioners worried that they would not be good enough at the audition which means they are quite humble about their ability. Several also talked about wanting to commit to Geese for a long time. This seems to be important as the company have practitioners who have been there for many years so have clearly really committed to the work. It was mentioned that it would not work for a trainee if they were seeing this as just another acting job again underlining this need for commitment. Parker discusses the fact that actors *are* finding work “but when it comes to making a living from acting the picture isn’t so positive”. She explains “research into acting success by Queen Mary University of London from 2019 references earlier data from 2014 that suggests only 2% of actors make a living from the profession and that 90% are out of work at any one time”. She goes on “This research found that long career lengths and high activity were exponentially rare” (Parker, 2021). Whilst practitioners at Geese are not just actors as they are practitioners too it is still quite unusual to have actor/ practitioners working in a theatre company like this for several years. This could suggest that the work is interesting and fulfilling and that Geese practitioners enjoy that not only is there intense training in the first six months but that competences and training needed extend into the first five years. Geese also require the practitioner to be authentic in performance adding a further dimension to just wanting someone who can act well. Already at this point Watson mentions that practitioners should have no ego if they are going to be successful at audition. He also emphasises that he places who you are as a person above all the other qualities which the company searches for at this stage (see 3.9 Qualities and skills

needed at audition). This is more unexpected and certainly more difficult to articulate on a job specification.

The training is run on the job whilst other work continues at the company. We discover that there are no other theatre companies training their actor/ facilitators in this way so Geese have established a template for how to do this that could be followed by others. The trainee is given a reading list and a set of questions to answer during the probation by finding the information or asking others. They are also given some set training at the Geese offices. There are plenty of opportunities to observe the more experienced staff and practice the skills. The time is then spent being eased into projects by doing small amounts of facilitation at a time but taking more responsibility in performance work. During this time the trainee is trying to “tick off” a set of competences which the company will require for training to be passed. These consist of things that might have been guessed at such as performing, facilitation and mask work. It would have been more difficult to predict that the company would have a strong theoretical base to the work with practitioners and that they are expected to understand and discuss things like social learning theory and cognitive behaviour theory as part of their development which it in fact does. What is surprising too is discovering that practitioners refer to this idea of a ‘Geese Style’ or ‘Geese Way’. This is a mixture of things which sometimes means the style of the work and specifically the naturalistic domestic scene playing out alongside the more stylised use of masks. We are used to all kinds of styles of theatre in 2023 but it is quite unusual to use this combination to try and connect with hard-to-reach audiences. The naturalistic performance scenes would seem to be the best option to use but in fact adding the mask work gives the company the central metaphor of

'lifting the mask' and does really add to their work. 'The Geese Way' is also something that practitioners refer to in terms of stripping everything away when they arrive at Geese in connection to their skill base and how they do things. This does sound like a traditional drama school way of approaching training and is surprising to find.

In terms of the skills and attributes which practitioners need there are the expected skills such as performance and facilitation but then particular to Geese is how a practitioner deals with the impact of the work. This centres around being honest about how the work is affecting you as a practitioner. Alongside this are a set of personal qualities which the practitioner will need to be successful. The trainee will need to understand that it is possible for change to occur and will have to put a trust in Geese that they know how to do this. This will be particularly challenging in the case of people in prison for sexual offences towards children for example. Trainees are described as needing a curiosity towards the work which means they are expected to not just be a good actor and facilitator but to have a real interest in this area of work and a curiosity to be able to embrace what the role requires. This might seem obvious but underlines an earlier point that a practitioner coming to Geese cannot just be seeing this as another acting/ facilitating job. It is unlikely to work if they are. Perhaps surprising too is finding out that practitioners need to have the quality of being grounded. It means that if they have had any difficult experiences in their life then they will need to have processed these before arriving at Geese otherwise the work may cause issues for them.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation it would be expected that an Arts Council funded company would be doing the evaluation work which they are doing. What is a little more unexpected is that a new recruit has to complete a monitoring form for every piece of work which they are involved in. This is more like training routes such as teacher training but seems to work very well in this theatre company setting. Completing a case study of this individual process allowed an analysis of what Geese practitioners were saying about the training in relation to how a trainee experiences it whilst it is progressing. The findings matched what others had said. Surprising was that despite Teare being a trained actor he did find some of the activities challenging such as playing a few characters in the same play for instance. Something about the type of audience this was for – people whose lives you are trying to reflect made this harder for him. This tells us something about the strength of groups like Geese and the potential which they have to bring about social change because their knowledge, preparation and training is so detailed in order to be able to work in the very complex area of rehabilitation in prisons and with other groups.

7.7 Contribution to literature

This thesis makes an important contribution to research regarding the training of an actor/ facilitator in particular relation to working with Geese Theatre Company. This is not information which is currently in the public domain. It allows a window into what has until now been a private process. Geese have developed a robust system for recruiting and training their practitioners and here we are able to see how they do that. What unfolds is that what is required of a trainee is a complex mixture of skills and personal qualities in order to ensure success. A combination of expected skills but then also more surprising requirements such as the need for a lack of ego. This

thesis will be useful to Geese to be able to reflect upon their processes by seeing it set out for them. Students of acting and facilitation will benefit from the depth in which the craft is explored here and other theatre companies may want to consider how they train their practitioners in light of the information discovered. Beyond that as stated earlier there are processes used in the training which would have wider appeal in business and other professions such as the series of questions to complete during the probation and the close monitoring of every piece of work whilst receiving feedback and dialogue with an experienced practitioner.

7.8 Concluding thoughts

This study allows us to witness the multi-layered approach which trainees have to take to be able to succeed in passing their probation at the company. They arrive at Geese usually with a Drama degree or similar such as a three-year Drama school course with some form of further training such as a postgraduate course at a drama school or MA in applied drama. They will need to prove that they can be authentic and responsive during the selection process using the kind of characters in improvisation which align with the type of material in Geese plays. Once selected they will need an understanding that change can occur in the work which Geese does. They will require strong performance skills and need to learn how to process exercises in the way which Geese do. In fact, the notion of a “Geese way” comes up a great deal in the interview data. This is a particular way of using authentic material and characters but with heightened devices such as mask. Skill at using masks might be new to a trainee so has to be learnt too. The trainees have to understand the theory which underpins the work at the company. They will learn the repertoire

which the company has. They will observe others and practice their skills during the six months and will have to be able to develop a way of coping with the impact of the work. Notably they will be someone who can “leave their ego at the door”. This appears to be significant in what is needed to be successful at the company. Someone who can prioritise the needs of the work and participant and not concentrate on self as might happen in acting traditionally is essential. They will become used to a very regular pattern of evaluation of all of the work which they take part in with others as well as monitoring as an individual of all of the projects which they complete. In addition, the trainee will need to possess a selection of personal qualities in order to succeed such as confidence, being a clear communicator and having a curiosity and commitment to the work. They will adapt to working in different environments and running a variety of projects. They should be uninhibited, grounded, resilient and able to work closely within a small team.

Trainees will not get through this training if performance skills are not strong enough, facilitation skills are not of the required standard, practitioners are not able to fit into the Geese team dynamic or the trainee is not at the right point in their life to work with Geese and is affected by their own personal issues.

8. Chapter Eight: Bibliography

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9. Chapter Nine: Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of Geese games and exercises

Example of a low focus game (TOSW, 2012, pp.29-30)

NAME OF EXERCISE: **Group Juggling**

DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISE:

You will need a number of socks or soft juggling balls, almost as many as there are group members. Begin with the group standing in a circle and throwing a sock to someone roughly across the circle in an easy-to-catch arc. The person who has just received the sock does the same, throwing it to someone roughly across the circle from them. They then fold their arms to let other people know not to throw the sock to them again. In this way the sock will be thrown to each person only once, then back to you. You should be the last to receive it. This is now the set pattern of throws for the next step.

Ensure that each person is clear who they are throwing the sock to and who they are receiving it from. The sock is now thrown in the same pattern again, until people are comfortable and confident about the sequence. Now, one by one, add in as many socks to the sequence as the group can tolerate. If socks are dropped, they should be picked up and thrown back in. To increase the difficulty, you can add the command 'change', at which point the sequence must instantly reverse.

NOTES:

Low focus.

Good focus, concentration and co-operation exercise.

Can be processed in terms of what people have to 'juggle' in their lives. How did it feel to have things thrown at you when you weren't ready? How is this like situations in the real world? What did you think when you dropped a sock? What might picking it up mean?

Example of medium focus exercise (TOSW, 2012, pp.25-26)

NAME OF EXERCISE: **Anyone Who**

DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISE:

Make a circle of chairs, with one chair less than the number in the group. One person in the middle calls out something they might have in common with others (e.g. wearing black shoes). Everyone with black shoes has to get up and change chairs, trying to avoid being left in the middle. No one can move to the chair on their left or right or go back to their own chair. Whoever is left in the middle starts game again. The person in middle can also shout "All change" at any time. Remember the 'no contact' rule.

NOTES:

Medium focus and high energy.

Example of a more complex game (TOSW, 2012, pp.34-35)

NAME OF EXERCISE: **Barriers to Change**

DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISE:

This exercise works best either directly after or soon after the exercise *Cup, Table, Chair*.

Using the cup, table and chair, place the chair behind the table with the table on its side, acting as a barrier between the chair and the group members. Place the cup some distance in front of the table and in line with the chair.

Ask the group members what the chair and table might represent. Often, they will see the table as a barrier and themselves - or someone like them - as sitting in the chair. Ask what the cup might represent. This is often seen as something they are aiming for, like 'freedom' or 'a job.'

Ask, 'If the table is a barrier, what is it made up of? How does it work?'

Ask for a volunteer to sit in the chair to represent 'someone trying to change.' Ask the group members to identify issues or events that might be creating the barrier to change for this hypothetical person. Ask the group members to stand up by the table after they contribute an idea about what the barrier might consist of. In this way, the barrier gradually becomes densely populated.

Now ask the group to identify what the person in the chair needs to do in order to overcome the barrier. At this point it is best to allow the group members to improvise through the rest of this exercise, exploring the responses from the group and seeing where the discussion leads. Nothing should be too fixed. Encourage a dialogue to develop between those who represent the 'barrier' and the person representing the 'person trying to change.' Rotate the roles and use other *processing techniques* as appropriate.

NOTES:

It is important that this is a group exercise. Although it is possible to concentrate on one individual's issues, the exercise is best used at the level of *one step removed* in order to allow the roles to be exchanged more freely.

NAME OF EXERCISE: Equidistant / Bombs and Shields

DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISE:

Instruct the group to walk randomly around the room.

Instruct everyone to choose two other group members, without telling anyone who they are.

On workshop leader's signal, they must all keep an equal distance from their two chosen people.

After a while, count down from 10 to 0 at which point the group must freeze.

DEVELOPMENT:

Repeat: this time choose one person to be a 'bomb' and the other a 'shield'. They must keep their 'shield' between themselves and their 'bomb'. Again, count down from 10 using the idea of the bomb going off.

NOTES:

Low focus

Physical warm up

Process links between the exercise and real life e.g. How did it feel when I started counting down? What could a 'bomb' or 'shield' be for you?

Appendix 2: Geese Fragment masks



Appendix 3: Geese Theatre Company Job Specification



T H E A T R E
C O M P A N Y

Information for Applicants

Male* Actor/Groupworker

2019

*For this round of recruitment, we are looking to appoint one male worker only. The essential nature of the work requires dramatic performances and for reasons of authenticity we need to recruit one man only on this occasion, due to our casting requirements. This is a genuine occupational requirement and Geese is claiming an exemption under the Equality Act 2010 Schedule 9, Part 1

Geese Theatre Company is a team of professional actors and groupworkers. We present performances and conduct drama-based workshops in prisons, young offender institutions, secure mental health hospitals, community agencies, probation centres, and related venues throughout the UK and Ireland. We are an independent registered charity using theatre as a tool for education, rehabilitation and change. Our theatre looks directly at issues that are important to people who have committed (or are at risk of committing) offences, their families and their futures. The company has an international reputation for innovative and pioneering work and, since 1987, company members have worked in over 150 custodial institutions and with 42 probation services in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

We have a wide portfolio of work, all of which is issue-based. This includes:

- performances that explore issues such as: dealing with the first year after release from prison; maintaining relationships; domestic violence; sexually abusive behaviour; trafficking of women. Some of these performances are interactive improvisations, several are performed in half-masks and some utilise full masks.
- workshops for prisoners, probation clients, young offenders, people at risk and other vulnerable and marginalised groups such as those who are homeless or in recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol.
- Prison and secure mental health hospital groupwork programmes. These programmes are delivered in a variety of forms (ranging from one day to 6-month inputs) and cover a number of core themes, including: violent offending; resettlement; parenting; sexual offending; employability; and substance misuse.
- working with young people who are looked after, involved with Youth Offending Teams or who are at risk of offending.
- training for professionals in the use of theatre and drama with vulnerable groups.

In addition, the company is regularly commissioned to create new performances and training programmes for a wide range of agencies, including the Judicial College, third sector organisations, the Magistrates Association, the Prison Service, the Police, National Probation Service, RAF and military family services, other social and children's services and child protection agencies.

The company currently consists of thirteen members of staff, including the CEO/Artistic Director and a five person administrative team. All other members of staff are actors/groupworkers with their own areas of expertise and particular

responsibilities. Our actor/groupworkers have an average length of service of ten years and one current member of staff has been with Geese for over 25 years.

If you would like more detail about our work, you can look at our website at www.geese.co.uk or see the

Geese Theatre Handbook (Baim, Brookes, Mountford – Published by Waterside Press)

Geese Theatre Company Values

Responsibility

We support and encourage the notion of personal responsibility.

Belief in change

Geese upholds and promotes a belief in the potential and possibility of individual change.

Rigour

Every aspect of our work is grounded in robust evidence and theory to ensure the highest quality.

Artistic Excellence

Geese strives to develop and deliver theatre and drama practice of the highest quality to people and places with the least engagement in the arts.

Innovation

Geese is continually developing new performances, projects and services for new audiences, offering alternative approaches to reducing offending.

Partnership

Geese aims to create an ethos of collaboration and partnership, which values contributions from all members, employees, partners and clients (service users) in order that our work has the greatest impact.

Inclusion

Geese aims to treat all individuals with respect and to approach each other and those we work with in an inclusive and non-judgemental manner.

The Post

The post for which we hope that you will apply is that of actor/groupworker: a full company member working within the above environments. You will be expected to employ a variety of skills and, over time, the full range of the company's activities will be open to you. Upon successful completion of an initial six-month probationary training period, this will be a full-time, permanent position. For this round of recruitment, we are looking to appoint one male worker only. The essential nature of the work requires dramatic performances and for reasons of authenticity we need to recruit one man only on this

occasion, due to our casting requirements. This is a genuine occupational requirement.

Person Specification

The following list indicates the skills, attributes and experience that a new member of the company will need.

Required Skills/Attributes	Assessment
Theatre training / experience	Application
Excellent performance and improvisational skills	Audition
Able to work flexibly in response to audience/participant interaction and input	Audition
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills	Application and Audition
Enthusiasm for the area of work	Application, Audition and Interview
Able to reflect and evaluate own practice	Audition and Interview
Desirable Skills/Attributes	Assessment
Experience of training or facilitating others	Application and Audition
Experience of working with marginalised, vulnerable and at-risk groups	Application
Experience of devising work	Application and Audition
Able to conduct research around a specific brief and a willingness to learn	Audition and Interview
Good organisational skills	Application and Audition

Working in Geese Theatre Company

As you will realise when reading through this information, the position of a company member within Geese is an all-encompassing one. It requires a multi-skilled person – to be both an actor and groupwork facilitator; to be able to work alone and also as part of a team. You will need to be confident, resourceful and self-organised.

The focus of each day will be different and the varying combinations of Geese staff add further variety. You could be performing; rehearsing; facilitating a group on your own; facilitating a group with a co-worker; travelling; working in the office; delivering staff training; preparing and planning future work; researching; spending time involved in staff development or at company meetings. Clients can be professionals from a range of criminal justice agencies, male or female prisoners and vulnerable people in community settings. Our work involves delivering projects with people who

have committed a wide range of offences, including violence, domestic abuse and sexual offences against both children and adults.

This means that the environment is both challenging and stimulating, but long hours and a constant stream of work can also make it stressful and tiring. The company works nationally (and occasionally internationally) and travel away from home is a normal and regular part of the working pattern. This is why the company is looking only for an individual who wants to make a commitment to this area of work and who is creative, inquisitive and able to cope with the long hours and constant stream of work.

In return the company offers stimulating and exciting work, in places that many people will never experience and with an extremely diverse range of people. There is also the prestige of working for a company that is at the forefront of its field. During the six-month probation period, training will involve observing work and rehearsing into some of our productions, before progressing onto co-working. There will be some theory sessions and basic computer training (if needed).

The company offers seven weeks holiday, plus Bank Holidays (one of these weeks is in recognition of the long hours that are worked). The starting salary in 2019 will be **£20,500**. Assuming successful completion of the probation period, the salary will rise to **£22,500** with scope for further salary rises as the company member gains experience.

The successful applicant will be expected to live in the Birmingham area.

In addition to the six months of on-the-job training, the company offers other training opportunities. Currently, a number of training days are set during the year when external practitioners visit the company and company members can also request support for other training.

What happens next?

If you are interested in applying for the position of actor/groupworker with Geese Theatre Company, please return a completed **application form** either to the address at the foot of this document or as an email attachment to recruitment@geese.co.uk clearly marked "**Actor/Groupworker**" in the subject line. We would appreciate it if you could take the time to complete and return an **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** (although if you choose not to, this will not affect your application.)

*Please **do not** send any other additional information – e.g. a CV or headshots – as it will be disregarded.*

Completed applications must arrive at our offices by **10am** on **15 November 2019**

If we would like you to attend an audition, you will be notified on **29 November 2019**. The auditions will take place at our rehearsal space in Birmingham on **13 Dec 2019** with call-backs on **16 December 2019**.

The initial audition will be a whole group workshop with current members of Geese Theatre Company and other auditionees, and will primarily focus on your performance ability, and more specifically your ability to improvise and work responsively. You will not have to prepare an audition piece.

The audition will take place in several stages:

Stage 1: 1 ¼ hour group workshop, at the end of which some people will be asked to leave.

Stage 2: For those remaining, a further 1 ½ hour workshop, at the end of which some people will be asked to leave **Stage 3:** For those remaining, a whole afternoon group workshop, at the end of which some people will be invited to the recall which will take place on 16 December 2019.

It would be useful for you to have the above dates marked in your diary as we cannot offer alternative dates for people unable to attend. Regrettably, we also cannot offer to reimburse any travel expenses for those invited to audition.

If you make a full application, we will reply to you. However, we will not be contacting anyone before 20 June 2019, so please wait to hear from us!

Important Dates

Deadline for applications:	15 November 2019 at 10am
Notification of successful applicants:	29 November 2019
Auditions:	13 December 2019
Re-call	16 December 2019

We look forward to hearing from you.

Geese Theatre Company is claiming an exemption under the Equality Act 2010 Schedule 9, Part 1: the essential nature of the job would be materially different (physiology and authenticity). A male actor is required to fulfil male roles.

Geese Theatre Company aims to promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talents, skills and potential and we welcome applications from diverse candidates. Geese Theatre Company is pleased to consider applications by people with a criminal record and this will not necessarily be a bar to obtaining employment. However, this position requires the successful candidate to be able to work in low, medium and high secure prisons and any formal offer will be conditional upon being cleared through Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Enhanced Level 2 and Counter Terrorism Checks. The position for which you are applying involves contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and all subsequent amendments (England and Wales). Offer of employment will also be subject to an Enhanced check via Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Find out more about HMPPS vetting and DBS checks at <http://recruit.unlock.org.uk/>

Appendix 4: Information sheet for Geese practitioners



Information for participants

I am completing a PhD on the six-month training period for performers conducted at Geese Theatre Company. This document tells you about the research and helps answer any questions which you might have about it.

Background

This research will focus upon methodological approaches employed by Geese Theatre Company in training new recruits to the company. This work will explore actor training in the area of drama with people in prison and those at risk of offending. It will examine the skills that a performer working with drama in the criminal justice system has to have. I will ask if it is possible to define the elements needed for training and creating work in this area. The findings will be placed in the context of the development of Geese's work and how it sits within the larger history of theatre work in prisons.

Research

By participating, you will be involved in the research project which leads to the completion of a PhD study. I will undertake research with Geese in a number of ways:

a. semi-structured interview

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes depending on how much you would like to say. We will arrange a convenient date and time to conduct the interview and I will ask you to sign an informed consent form. The interview will be recorded on Zoom. This will help me to remember the exact words you say to describe your experiences and views of the project.

- b. Observation of key elements of the training** of a new recruit such as rehearsal sessions and performances and workshops in different settings.

How will the information be used?

I will use this material as information to explore the actor-training period which is unique to Geese. I will be writing about this in a PhD study which I am completing. It is hoped that this will enable the analysis and sharing of new insights into artistic practice in these settings. All information you provide and recordings will be stored securely. All data will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Participants will be further

consulted if I plan to use the work in public papers, conferences etc. I will also give you the option to read any of my work which is going to be made public before it is published.

Why do you want me to take part?

You have been asked to participate in this study because you work for Geese or have knowledge of the work which they do in relation to training recruits and/ or because you have gone through the training period they conduct.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Consent will be checked at all stages of the process.

What if I change my mind?

If, at any time, you change your mind about taking part, that's fine. You might have started off wanting to talk to the researcher, but you don't now. Or perhaps originally you didn't want to talk to them, but now you do. It's fine, just let the researcher know. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time and your data will not be used.

What if I have a question, concern or complaint?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please speak to me either in person or get in touch by email. If you have a concern or complaint about the conduct of my research, please contact my research supervisor: Professor Laura Caulfield, [e-mail address redacted].

Helen Rudge

[e-mail address redacted].

This document has been approved by the Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Wolverhampton.

**Thank you for reading this information sheet
Please keep this information for future reference**

Appendix 5: Consent Form for Geese practitioner to sign



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title of project: The actor as rehabilitator

Please initial in boxes

1. I have read about this PhD research project (or I had information about this project read and explained to me) and I understand what this project is about. I have asked all the questions I wanted to and had my questions answered in a way I understand.
2. I understand that I do not have to take part in this project and that it is OK to stop taking part at any point up without having to give a reason.
3. I give permission for the researcher to Zoom record (and transcribe) my interview/ observe my performance/ facilitation work and take written notes on this.
4. I understand that quotations from my interview will be used in the PhD thesis but not in any publication beyond that without further consent being required. I understand that the transcripts and recordings will be stored in accordance with the data protection act and only the researcher will have access to this information.
5. I agree to take part in this project.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Declaration by Researcher: (name) HELEN RUDGE

I have given a verbal or/and written explanation of the research project and procedures. I believe that participant has understood that explanation. I believe the participant is fully able to consent for him/herself.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 6: General information for participants in Geese work



Information for participants in Geese workshops

I am completing a PhD on the six-month training period for performers conducted at Geese Theatre Company. This document tells you about the research and helps answer any questions which you might have about it.

Background

This research will focus upon methodological approaches employed by Geese Theatre Company in training new recruits to the company. This work will explore actor training in the area of drama with people in prison and those at risk of offending. It will examine the skills that a performer working with drama in the criminal justice system has to have. I will ask if it is possible to define the elements needed for training and creating work in this area. The findings will be placed in the context of the development of Geese's work and how it sits within the larger history of theatre work in prisons.

Research

I will be conducting research in one of two main ways:

c. semi-structured interview

I will talk to Geese practitioners about the work which they do in relation to how they train a performer in this area.

d. Observation of key elements of the training

I will watch elements of the work which Geese does such as rehearsal sessions, workshops and performances in different settings.

How will the information be used?

I will use this material as information to explore the actor-training period which is unique to Geese. I will be writing about this in a PhD study which I am completing.

What this study isn't doing

I am *not* observing you as participants in prisons and writing about what you do. My focus is on the company Geese solely and how they train practitioners to work in this area.

**Thank you for reading this information sheet
Please keep this information for future reference**

Appendix 7: Structured Observation template

Performance/ workshop/ Performance & workshop/ rehearsal/ other (highlight)	Date and time:
Research Questions to be examined: What are the elements which constitute the six-month training period at Geese Theatre company?	
Relationship of this event to 6-month training period/ trainee:	
Venue:	Space/ setting description:
Context:	Aim:
Geese staff:	
General comments:	
Role of the Facilitator:	
“Lifting the mask” style/ use of masks in performance:	
Interactive/Forum style:	
Performance skill (“artistic excellence”):	
Repeated motifs:	
Link to theory (Social Learning Theory, Cognitive-behavioural Theory and Role Theory):	
Personal skills and attributes of the practitioner (“belief in change” “Responsibility”)	
General comments:	

Appendix 8: Semi-structured interview template

Date and Time:	Venue:
Geese practitioner:	Joined the company:
Position in the company:	
1. What training and experience did you already have when applying to join Geese?	
2. Tell me about the audition and selection process for joining the company?	
3. What different elements did the 6-month training period consist of for you? Competences? (Performing/ facilitation/ in prison/ masks/ theoretical frameworks)	
4. How formal or informal did the training feel to you? Were you regularly told how you were getting on?	
5. How was the process of reflecting and evaluating your own practice?	
6. What aspect of the training period did you find the most challenging? (and why?)	
7. What are the key skills and attributes which you believe someone needs to work for Geese?	
8. If you were in charge of designing the training period is there an aspect of it you would change?	
9. Have you worked with other theatre companies? Did this early period with Geese differ and how if so?	
10. Do you have any suggestions of why people don't get through the probationary period sometimes?	
Any further comments to add?	

Appendix 9: Preliminary reading list

The Geese practitioner will of course read other texts certainly but having a set list means that the company knows that the trainee will have read what they feel is a selection of key texts that can be referred to in enabling the trainee to gain a deeper understanding of the work. There are some quite old texts here (particularly the ones which are 1989 and 1990) but presumably selected as they cover the necessary information needed.

<p>Baim, C. Brookes, S. and Mountford, M. (2002) <i>The Geese Theatre Handbook: Drama with Offenders and People at Risk</i>. Winchester: Waterside Press.</p>	<p>From Geese: chapters 1-4 for theory, research and practice Chapters 5-8 for games, exercises and Drama Structures (suggested reading)</p> <p>Comment: the only complete book to date written by Geese themselves about their work which particularly details all the exercises which they use in workshops</p>
<p>Deacon, L. Gocke, B. Baim, C. (2000) <i>Understanding Perpetrators, Protecting Children: A Practitioner's Guide to working with child sexual abuse</i>. London: Whiting and Birch Ltd.</p>	<p>From Geese: further reading on sex offenders</p> <p>Comment: the aim here seems to demystify this area and present a set of principles for anyone working in this field</p>
<p>Douglas, T. (2016) (2nd ed.) <i>Basic Groupwork</i>. London: Routledge.</p>	<p>From Geese: there are trainee questions around this text in the Groupwork document (suggested reading)</p> <p>Comment: this is a guide for the practitioner about the processes of groupwork.</p>
<p>Gibson, B. <i>Criminal Justice: A Beginner's Guide</i>. (2014). Hook: Waterside Press.</p>	<p>From Geese: suggested reading</p> <p>Comment: this book covers all the basic information about the criminal justice system.</p>
<p>Gilligan, J. (1999) <i>Violence – Reflection on our Deadliest Epidemic</i>. London: Jessica Kingsley.</p>	<p>From Geese: further reading on violent offenders</p> <p>Comment: Gilligan describes the purpose of the book as him being able to “describe what I have learned about the causes and prevention of violent behaviour” (p.26)</p>

Jenkins, A. (1990) <i>Invitation to Responsibility: The Therapeutic engagement of men who are violent and abusive</i> . Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications	From Geese: suggested reading Comment: as the title suggests this book explores ways of working with men who are violent and abusive
McGuire, J. (2000) <i>Cognitive Behavioural Approaches: An introduction to theory and research</i> Available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk	From Geese: suggested reading Comment: this is a manual and described as outlining “the theoretical basis for the use of cognitive behavioural methods in offender programmes (p.13)
Owens, F. (2012) <i>The Little Book of Prison: A Beginner’s Guide</i> . Hook: Waterside Press.	From Geese: suggested reading Comment: this is an ex-prisoner writing a “survival guide” for people about to enter the prison system
Prentki, T. & Preston, S. (eds.) (2009) <i>The Applied Theatre Reader</i> . London: Routledge.	From Geese: Chapter 7 – ‘Lift Your Mask’ – Geese Theatre Company in Performance (suggested reading) Comment: this chapter is discussed in the literature review for this thesis. In it Watson (the current Artistic Director of Geese) discusses one of the most significant and unique aspects of the style of work at Geese which involves the actor lifting the mask in character to explain private feelings about what is going on with their emotions
Stordear, R. Stille, R. (1989) <i>Ending Men’s violence against their partners: one road to peace</i> . Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.	From Geese: further reading on Domestic violence Comment: this is a practical guide for people treating abusive men
Trotter, C. (2022) (4 th ed.) <i>Working with involuntary clients</i> . London: Routledge.	From Geese: there are trainee questions around this text in the Groupwork document (suggested reading) Comment: this is a practical guide for people like social workers and probation officers for dealing with reluctant clients.

Source: Information from Smallman – Team Manager in charge of training plus additional research to provide more information around the list from researcher

Appendix 10: Questions for Geese Trainees

These questions are intended to help you think about different aspects of our work. There are not necessarily any right answers and there will not be an exam! Company members may ask you to consider and discuss a couple of them on office days. You may want to use the library, Geese Theatre Handbook, the Introduction to Groupwork programme, staff training or TOSOW notes and your training pack as resources.

General Group Work / Workshop Questions

1. What has Geese got to offer?
2. Why use theatre?
3. What is at the core of Geese's work?
4. Why does Geese work in partnership with other organisations?
5. What is the importance of co-working with staff from partner agencies?
6. How would you structure a typical 'one-off' Geese workshop?
7. What is the difference between working on the personal level and working 'at one step removed'?
8. What theatrical tools might you use in group?
9. Why might you use a 'facilitator enacted scene'?
10. What is the point of processing? How would you help participants make the connections?
11. What are the main ways of processing a scene or frozen picture and how would you decide which technique to use?
12. How can you build rapport with participants?
13. What might resistance be about and how might you deal with it?
14. How would you deal with a group member who refuses to participate in a particular exercise?
15. How do you make a workshop safe for participants?
16. What might 'responsivity' mean in a group work context?
17. How might prison workshops differ from those in community settings?

18. What are the different client groups you might work with? How might they differ in terms of presenting behaviour and what might be some of the reasons for this? How might this impact on your approach and choice of material?

19. What theatrical or active methods could you use to explore:

- Anger management?
- Power and control?
- Goal setting and planning?
- Assertiveness?
- Listening skills?
- Co-operation skills?
- Communication skills?
- Creative problem solving?
- Victim empathy and victim awareness?
- Coping with high-risk situations, thoughts and feelings?
- Cognitive distortions?

Prisons

1. How might you win over a cynical governor, officer or other staff member?

2. What does 'dress appropriately for the environment' mean for you? Why?

3. If an officer asked you to stay on your own with a group of prisoners, what would you do?

4. Why is there a partnering system?

5. Your partner has disappeared. What would you do?

6. Your partner seems distressed or uncomfortable. What might you do?

7. Why is it important that most of the negotiation between Geese and prison staff is undertaken by the lead practitioner?

8. In what circumstances do you think you could become lax on security?

9. A member of the education or probation staff tells you to do something and then an officer tells you to do something different. What would you do?

10. There is a mask or tool missing. What would you do?

Your relationship with offenders

1. A prisoner wants to write to you and thinks the rules around this are stupid or discriminatory. What might you do or say?
2. What kind of personal information would you consider it appropriate to share with prisoners?
3. A prisoner asks you if you have ever committed an offence or used drugs. What would you say?
4. How might you deal with feeling manipulated or intimidated by a prisoner?
5. In what ways might a prisoner attempt to get you to collude with them and on what issues? How might you respond to this?
6. Under what circumstances would you need to pass on information an prisoner tells you?

Young people who have offended / at risk of offending

1. How might a workshop with young people differ from one with adult offenders?
2. Why work at 'one step removed'?
3. What might you need to bear in mind when processing with young people?
4. What exercises do you think would work well with young people? And which ones less well? Why?
5. What kind of facilitator enacted scenes might you use with young people?
6. What might be some of the frustrations of working with young people?
7. What issues might it be inappropriate to explore with young people and what areas might need particular sensitivity?
8. Why and how might our stance on personal responsibility need to be modified when working with young people?
9. How might a Geese worker's role differ from that of a teacher?

Performance Questions

1. What might be some of the main differences between an offender audience and a professional audience?
2. What might be the pros and cons of using half masks, full-faced masks and no masks in our performance?
3. What are the main performances in the Geese repertoire? What are their functions? How does their style serve their function?
4. What are the main features of our interactive performances?
5. What roles / functions can The Fool serve?
6. How do you decide what is 'mask up' and 'mask down'?
7. How might you create rapport with an offender audience and a professional audience?
8. What might you need to bear in mind when playing an offender character for an offender audience?
9. How would you go about playing a convincing offender, magistrate or psychiatric nurse, for example, if you have no experience of these roles?
10. How might you keep a professional audience onside if your character has to demonstrate 'bad practice'?
11. When giving feedback during an interactive performance, what are the most important things to remember?
12. When asking for feedback from audience members, you may get an offensive answer. What do you do with it?
13. What might you have to bear in mind when playing young offenders for a audience of young people? What are the pitfalls?
14. What might you have to bear in mind when thinking about how to pitch either a victim or victimiser character?
15. If an audience member is agitated or distressed during or after a performance, what can you do?
16. How might you prepare for performing 'Stay'?
17. Which types of characters do you feel comfortable playing and which do you think will be a challenge? How might you go about challenge?

Appendix 11: Trainee Monitoring Form

Geese Theatre Company - For Internal Use Only

TRAINEE MONITORING FORM

This form is intended as a written record of trainees' progress and an opportunity for them to reflect on their practice. Sections 1 to 3 should be completed by the trainee within one week of the piece of work undertaken and given to the lead practitioner.

The lead practitioner will give feedback on areas in which the trainee is doing well and areas which s/he might need further preparation, practice or training. The form will be returned to the trainee to be placed in their monitoring form file within a further week.

Feedback may be based on some or all of the criteria listed below

- Delivery (group work / performance / role-play etc)
- Co-working with Geese practitioners and other staff
- Boundaries and rapport building with staff / clients
- Input into session planning / selection of material
- Other (punctuality, organisational skills etc)

TRAINEE:

DATE / VENUE:

WORK TYPE:

LEAD PRACTITIONER:

-
- 1 Work undertaken (observation, exercises run, performance etc)
 - 2 Review of own work (what worked, what worked less well)
 - 3 Learning points or questions about material, client group or own input