


# The role of community theatre in the process of recovery

**Dr Stephanie Kewley**  
**School of Psychology**

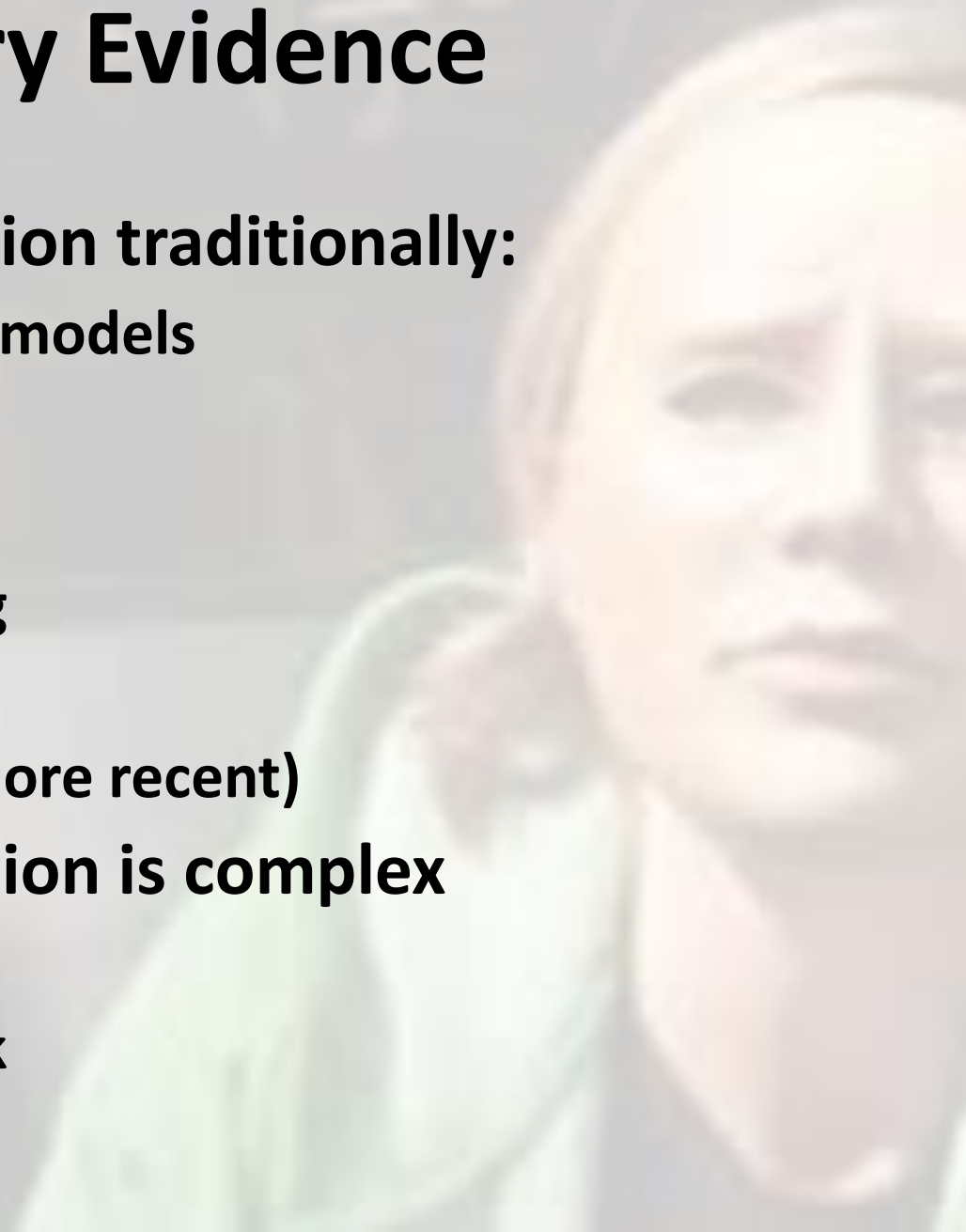
Recovery and the Arts Conference  
3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019  
Liverpool, UK



- 
- 1. Evidence for arts-based activities and addiction**
  - 2. Staging Recovery and Geese Theatre Company**
  - 3. Findings from study**

# Recovery Evidence

- **Approaches to addiction traditionally:**
  - Medical and criminal models
- **Addiction treatment:**
  - Abstinence
  - Substitute prescribing
  - Harm reduction
  - Social prescription (more recent)
- **Recovery from addiction is complex**
  - Psycho/socio/bio
  - Strengths based v risk
  - Recovery capital



# Arts Evidence

- General evidence is encouraging
- For addiction is negligible
- Systematic review = improvement of abstinence goals, quality of life, social and employment engagement
- Methodological inadequacies



## Original Articles

### Assessing Drama Therapy as an Intervention for Recovering Substance Users: A Systematic Review

Journal of Drug Issues  
1-14  
© The Author(s) 2019  
Article reuse guidelines:  
sagepub.com/journals-permissions  
DOI: 10.1177/0022042619845845  
journals.sagepub.com/home/jod



Jessica Leather<sup>1</sup> and Stephanie Kewley<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

The aim of this systematic review was to evaluate the quality and efficacy of drama therapy interventions used to support and promote the recovery process in substance users. Seven databases plus two journals were searched; three studies met the inclusion criteria. It was found that drama therapy interventions commonly consist of expressive activities such as role-play and improvisation, along with group reflection to improve communication skills, emotional awareness, and metacognition. Findings were encouraging with two studies reporting that participants maintained or improved abstinence goals, quality of life was reported to be significantly higher postintervention compared with the control group (one study), and social and occupational engagement significantly improved postintervention and was maintained at a 6-week follow-up (one study). These results, however, should be interpreted with caution. Methodological inadequacies and the small number of published studies available make it difficult to determine with confidence the efficacy of these interventions.

#### Keywords

drama therapy, recovery, addiction, substance use, systematic review



# Geese Theatre Company

## Geese

- Theatre practitioners
- Present and facilitate interactive theatre, drama-based group work
- Criminal/Social and Forensic Context
  - People in prison, probation, mental health setting
  - Young people at risk
  - Professionals who work with this group

## Staging Recovery

- Three year project funded Paul Hamlyn Foundation
  - aim to expose people in recovery to the Arts
- Intensive group workshops (12 per block) culminating in two performances
- Multiple arts forms, exploring universal themes such as family, choices, and personal development

# The Research

- **What are the outcomes and experiences for those engaged in SR?**
  - **Concurrent Triangulation of Mixed Methods**
    - **Quant = Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI)\* SPSS**
    - **Qual = Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) NVivo**
  - **Longitudinal (4 data collection points – final in November)**
  - **Purposive Sampling**

Time One: “The Fisherman”	Time Two: “Complexed”	Time Three: “A little bit of hope”
Louise	X	X
Alison	X (performed only)	X (performed only)
<b>Deborah</b>	<b>Deborah</b>	<b>Deborah</b>
<b>Shaun</b>	<b>Shaun</b>	<b>Shaun</b>
Matthew	X	X
Thomas	X (performed only)	X (performed only)
	<b>Lewis</b>	<b>Lewis</b>
	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Mark</b>
		Graham

## Demographics of Sample from Time 1

Name	Gender	Age (M=52.5, SD = 8.26)	Substance	Approx. Time in Recovery (years) (M = 4.25, SD = 2.40)
<b>Louise</b>	Female	39	Alcohol	4.5
<b>Alison</b>	Female	57	Alcohol	6
<b>Deborah</b>	Female	58	Alcohol	6
<b>Shaun</b>	Male	58	Alcohol	6
<b>Matthew</b>	Male	43	Alcohol	3
<b>Thomas</b>	Male	60	Gambling	Active



Research Article

Changing identities through Staging Recovery: The role of community theatre in the process of recovery

Stephanie Kewley

Liverpool John Moores University, Byrom Street, Merseyside L33AF, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

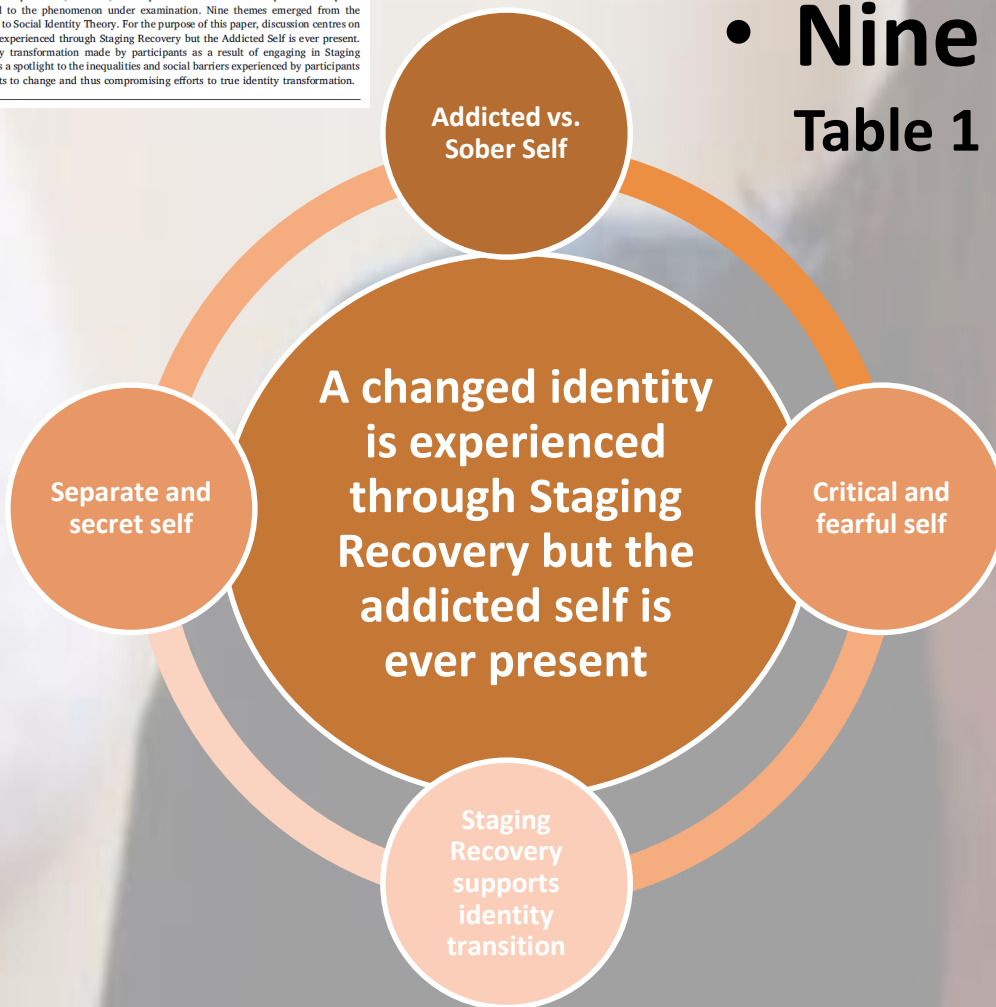
ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
Recovery  
Addiction  
Identity transformation  
Arts based interventions  
Community drama

This study aimed to explore the experiences of six performers following their engagement in a community arts intervention called Staging Recovery. Staging Recovery is a three year drama project, delivered by The Geese Theatre Company, working with people marginalised within society and recovering from substance abuse. The study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to collect and analyse the data as IPA allows the exploration of sensitive and unique experiences; more so, it encapsulates the voices and experiences of participants, ensuring they are central to the phenomenon under examination. Nine themes emerged from the analysis, with five of these relating to Social Identity Theory. For the purpose of this paper, discussion centres on one theme: A Changed Identity is experienced through Staging Recovery but the Addicted Self is ever present. This theme highlights the identity transformation made by participants as a result of engaging in Staging Recovery; however, it also provides a spotlight to the inequalities and social barriers experienced by participants that continue to thwart their efforts to change and thus compromising efforts to true identity transformation.

# Findings from Data Collection 1

- **Nine Themes** (see Table 1 in Appendix)





# Addicted vs. Sober Self

- Simplistic - two identities are separate
  - ‘Me now, sober, to me drinking, is two different ladies, it really is’
- Strength and persistence of the addicted self
  - Addiction is dominant descriptor
  - Full sobriety never reached
  - Certainty of addicted self
    - Social networks
    - Thoughts/Feelings/Behaviours
    - Confidence in self then
    - Defined new sober self

## Critical and Fearful Self (n=4)

- Strength as a group but as individuals highly self critical and fragile
- As a group, shared pressure to get things right
  - 'As long as everyone does their best, but not perfection. If someone makes a mistake, it's not the end of the world.'*
- And share the glory of success
- But, failure was not shared
  - 'I'm not happy with that because I still know, and the group will still know if I've messed up there's no point...I'm never going to be able to get it...how can I expect anybody else to put up with me'*

# Separate and secret self

- Group is like a family 'they're a little second family for me'

'it's amazing how close you get working with these people for four hours a day, you do have a friendship blossom as well...it's just nice just belonging to a group as well...it's having that belonging feeling.'

- Secret (sanctuary)

'my place to shine... Something for me to do, rather than doing the housework that's destroyed within 10 minutes...it's my selfish moment'

- Secret (shame)

'I think they think I've got a part-time job or something or I'm a cleaner or something.'

# Staging Recovery supports identity transition

- New networks, skills, knowledge, opportunities etc.
- There are social, temporal, and cultural barriers to the transition

*‘So I’m starting this plastering...and I’m thinking, “I don’t want to be here. I want to be back at Geese with my new buddies and I don’t like you lot anymore. You ruffians” [laughs].’*

*‘I haven’t totally crossed that barrier of the “drama is okay”. Drama is okay in this world, but it’s still not okay.’*

*‘If my mother new she would say “Stick to the drink” [Laughter].’*

A changed identity is experienced through Staging Recovery *but* the addicted self is ever present



# What's next for Recovery and the Arts in the UK?

- What we need to know:
  - What arts based projects are being delivered?
    - What do these look like?
  - How are these being measured for effectiveness?
    - Do drama based activities work better than dance?
  - Combine studies?
  - How do they interact/complement traditional treatment?
  - How are they funded?
  - How does this compare internationally?
  - Is a collective voice/community needed?



# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

**CONTACT:**

**Dr Stephanie Kewley**

Liverpool John Moores University

James Parsons Building, Byrom Street, Liverpool, L3 3AF

t: 0151 904 6327 or 01244 456 0727 e: [S.Kewley@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:S.Kewley@ljmu.ac.uk)

w: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/staff-profiles/faculty-of-science/natural-sciences-and-psychology/stephanie-kewley>





# APPENDIX



# IOMI

- Tool to assess clients change over time
- Pre and post administration
- Seven dimensions including:
  - resilience (2 items)
  - wellbeing (3 items)
  - agency / self-efficacy (3 items)
  - impulsivity / problem-solving (3 items)
  - motivation to change (3 items)
  - hope (3 items)
  - interpersonal trust (4 items)
- To access tool see <https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/reduce-reoffending.html>



Table 1. Nine themes from the analysis of Staging Recovery

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	
The fear of Staging Recovery ending is detrimental to participants mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipation</li> <li>• Loss</li> <li>• Mental health</li> </ul>	
When working on Staging Recovery, the sense of belonging and support is very strong; getting a physical buzz from just having fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical buzz</li> <li>• belonging</li> <li>• challenged</li> <li>• feels good</li> <li>• fun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hard to explain why such a good experience</li> <li>• not judged</li> <li>• supported</li> <li>• trust</li> </ul>
The commitment to Geese is strong as the experience is priceless and cannot be compared to any other intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other interventions not as effective</li> <li>• passion for geese</li> <li>• sense of duty or responsibility to geese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• geese staff</li> <li>• the geese experience is priceless and cannot compare</li> </ul>
<b>A changed identity is experienced through Staging Recovery but the addicted self is ever present</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>addicted versus sober self</b></li> <li>• <b>critical and fearful self</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staging Recovery supports identity transition</b></li> <li>• <b>separate and secret self</b></li> </ul>
Paradoxically, without offending or addiction, Staging Recovery would not be an option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offending opens the door to Geese</li> <li>• shame and fear</li> </ul>	
Engaging in a Staging Recovery ensemble has improved health and well-being, sense of self, skills and social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health and well-being (break from life, mental health, motivation to stay clean and healthy)</li> <li>• improved self (achievement, confidence, motivation, pride, purpose, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-belief)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved skills (acting, coping, creativity, expression, planning, social skills)</li> <li>• social capital (new friendships, support, teamwork)</li> </ul>
Performers are significantly socially, economically and psychologically disadvantaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employment issues</li> <li>• homelessness</li> <li>• hostile upbringing</li> <li>• loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pressures on family children</li> <li>• psychological mental health issues</li> <li>• relationship breakdown</li> <li>• victim of sexual abuse</li> </ul>
The process of Staging Recovery is important, it's fast, responsive, and dynamic nature engages and pushes performers to work under pressure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to use other people's life experiences</li> <li>• anxiety of performing</li> <li>• catch ups are essential</li> <li>• moving on from geese</li> <li>• pace is fast</li> <li>• performing in theatre</li> <li>• processing experience after the event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relationship with audience</li> <li>• responsive and dynamic</li> <li>• review or reflection on performance</li> <li>• something wonderful from nothing</li> <li>• the importance of something tangible to take away</li> <li>• working under pressure</li> </ul>
Staging Recovery provides an opportunity for people to relate and learn from the recovery experiences of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consequences of addiction</li> <li>• different to others in recovery</li> <li>• experience of people in recovery</li> <li>• relate to others with the same substance issue</li> </ul>	