



School: Bath School of Music and Performing Arts

Researcher: Dr Helena Enright

Project Title: On the Inside

UOA: 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

300-Word Statement

Playing the Game is a theatre performance created by Dr Helena Enright which explores women's experiences of motherhood in prison. Commissioned by Geese Theatre Company as part of a public engagement project *On the Inside* funded by The Centre for the History of Medicine at the University of Warwick and ACE.

This project builds on Enright's use of 'theatre of testimony' as an integrated model of creative practice-based research. Combining the disciplines of applied theatre, performance and oral history, Enright seeks to produce meaningful performance material that can deepen collaborators' and audience's understandings of both the past and the present. Enright, in collaboration with Liz Brown of Geese Theatre, co-designed and delivered a series of drama workshops with mothers at HMP Peterborough between April and July 2018. Working with historians, Professor Hilary Marland and Dr Rachel Bennett, the aim was to combine personal experience with research on the history of motherhood in prison in order to create a piece of theatre to shed light on the experiences and themes of contemporary maternal incarceration.

The script of *Playing the Game* was created using a combination of material sourced from these workshops, interviews conducted with the participants and staff at the prison, and resources taken from the historical archives. Through this project Enright used her model of theatre of testimony as an analytic to deepen understanding of services and health practices for mothers within the current prison system.

Playing the Game was staged for two nights 10th and 11th October 2019 at the Birmingham Rep Studio on 2019 as part of the Bedlam Mental Health Festival. Excerpts of the play have been presented at conferences and events focusing on the experiences of maternal health in prison and the use of arts, history, policy and practice in prisoner health.