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A DOUBLE ACT: COLEADERSHIP AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on coleadership, a unique form of dual leadership where both leaders are considered equal with a shared responsibility of the leadership and management of the organisation. This management structure is commonly adopted in performing arts organisations. Coleadership in the arts acknowledges the dual imperatives of an arts company, namely artistic excellence and organisational sustainability with each aspect being represented in the leadership structure with a sense of equality. 46 interviews were conducted with the leaders (both artistic and managerial) of the major performing arts organisations in Australia. The organisations included ballet, opera, dance and theatre companies, circus, symphony orchestras and other music companies. The interviews revealed that common characteristics of successful coleadership arrangements were a high intensity of communication, shared decision making and shared values. Trust in and respect for their dual leader were also paramount in the interviews, however, are not considered unique to coleadership, but rather an element of dual leadership as a whole. Other findings indicated that the organisational context within which the relationship took place influenced whether coleadership was practiced and that the dynamics of the relationship between the Artistic Director and General Manager varied according to the specific art form.

Key words: coleadership; dual leadership; leadership; arts management; performing arts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This paper presents the findings of a major research project conducted over the past five years. The goal of this extended research project was to examine the phenomenon of coleadership in arts organisations, and in particular the relationship between the artistic leader of an organisation and the managerial leader. Throughout this paper the managerial leader is referred to as the GM and the artistic leader as the AD. The research focussed primarily on the Australian major performing arts companies, but has also extended to a number of companies in the UK and USA.[1] The companies comprise national and state-based arts organisations across art forms and included ballet and dance companies, opera, theatre companies, circus, symphony orchestras and other music companies. The research has been carried out over a period of five years and has involved both close analysis of the broader management literature on dual leadership and coleadership, and primary data collection.

While there is extensive literature relating to dual leadership, the focus on coleadership in the arts has had only limited coverage. Where it has been canvassed there is an assumption that it operates in the same way in each instance and the analysis is at a very general level. By conducting extensive interviews with participants in dual leadership arrangements we hoped to illuminate the nature of these dynamics and to explore the circumstances that give rise to coleadership structures and practices, as well as the associated outcomes of such arrangements.

LITERATURE

De Voogt (2006) has noted there are many different forms of dual leadership arrangements in both the arts and business more generally. Variations include a close working relationship between a leader and a deputy (Heenan & Bennis, 1999). Corporate leadership teams will often consist of a chief executive officer with an emphasis on the external environment and a chief operating officer with greater focus on the internal management; an alternative being a CEO with a sales and marketing background and a COO with a detailed knowledge of the product area (Miles & Watkins, 2007: 93). Regardless of the specialisations of the respective leaders, dual leadership implies a complementarity of skills and a differentiation of roles. Inevitably not all dual leadership arrangements are productive and Miles and Watkins (2007: 88) referred to the possibility that the leaders may "sleep in the same bed but dream different dreams." Miles and Watkins (2007) identified four characteristics of successful complementary leadership arrangements, namely a common vision, common incentives, communication, and trust. They also identify the pressure points of complementary leadership, namely when facing succession issues.

Leadership in the arts has a number of very different connotations. The lone hero form of arts leadership, that of the creative but perhaps misunderstood genius, has tended to pervade more popular concepts of artistic leadership. However, as noted by Solia-Wadman and Köping (2009), leadership in the arts is inherently relational, recognising that "leadership is a shared phenomenon in an organisation – that is, the leader and those with whom s/he interacts are responsible for the actions, processes and relations they construe jointly" (2009: 40). Solia-Wadman and Köping (2009) focussed on leadership in the collaborative environment of creative activity, and did not extend their analysis to the diversity of activities performed within arts organisations, and in particular the managerial aspects of their activities.

We have chosen the term coleadership in our research to convey the existence of a close partnership between the artistic and managerial leaders. We consider coleadership to be a unique form of dual leadership, present where there is a sense of equality between the leaders and where the leadership and management of the organisation as a whole is shared. In this way, coleadership can be thought of as a special case of dual leadership. The most common form of dual leadership in the arts is that of an artistic director and a managing director. Cray, Inglis and Freeman (2007: 298) describe the respective roles of these two leaders as follows:

"The artistic director traditionally plays the dominant leadership role, and it is essential that the artistic direction of the organisation enhances his or her reputation among peers. … The managing director's role, on the other hand, is to establish and maintain the organisation as an ongoing operation, and his or her reputation as a successful administrator depends on efficiency and effectiveness."

This characterisation implies the potential for conflict, or "different dreams", in that it suggests that the motivation of the artistic director is one of enhancing their own reputation whereas the managerial leader is more concerned with the status of the organisation. The notion of conflict between these two positions is also referred to by

Landry (2011: 51) in her work on conceptualising succession in the cultural sector, where she frames the relationship between the artistic director and managerial leader as being "underpinned by contradictory logics". If this were the case then one would expect to see considerable tension within these relationships. Indeed, this view is encouraged through the rare though highly publicised and dramatic breakdowns in dual leadership relationships in arts organisations.

However, there is ample evidence of successful dual leadership arrangements, with an emphasis on collaboration in the literature on day-to-day practices of performing arts organisations (for example Mehta, 2003: 5-7). Mehta (2003: 5) invokes the analogy of a marriage, "the music director and executive director are forced to live together even though they did not necessarily choose each other". Nonetheless, the day-to-day operations of the relationship remain opaque, and it may well be that this characterisation of a "forced marriage" is inadequate, if not in fact misleading. Cray et al. (2007) suggest that further research is required in order to better understand the nature of leadership within the dynamic environment of arts organisations; research that analyses "actual leaders activities and styles and their relationships to characteristics of the organisation and its environment" (Cray et al., 2007: 312). This is the task that we undertake in this research, with a particular emphasis on these activities and styles in the context of the relationship between the Artistic Director and the General Manager. If there is a tension between creativity and managerialism then we would expect to see it come out in this crucial leadership relationship.

HYPOTHESES/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our research sought to identify the conditions in which coleadership, a particular form of dual leadership, arises in the performing arts. In particular we sought to test the hypotheses:

that the organisational context within which the relationship took place would be a factor in whether coleadership was practised and that the relationship between artistic director and general manager would vary according to the specific form of performing arts;
that it would be possible to identify characteristics of successful coleadership arrangements; and
that successful outcomes were largely determined by the skills of the particular individuals in the coleadership relationship.

METHODOLOGY

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the artistic and managerial leaders of the performing arts companies. The participants were assured that they would remain anonymous in any published material. It was decided to interview the current leaders of each of the Australian Major Performing Arts organisations rather than attempt a sample. All interviewees occupied either the principal managerial role or the principal artistic role in one of Australia's leading performing arts companies. As such, we adopted purposeful sampling, in that we sought out a particular set of informants, and then criterion sampling in that we could identify the criteria that they needed to meet (Patton, 1990 cited in Wengraf 2006: 102-103). We then sought 100 per cent coverage of our identified population in Australia: the two leaders in each performing arts organisation at a particular period of time. Given that our desire was to reach a deeper understanding about the way in which dual leadership was operationalized in these organisations, and in particular of the way in which the leaders worked with each other, we confined ourselves to the artistic and managerial leaders, and did not interview other members of the organisation. While we aspired for 100 per cent coverage this was not achieved. The area that proved most problematic was obtaining interviews with chief conductors of the symphony orchestras. In some instances we were able to obtain an interview with the musical director; however this did not occur in all instances, often due to the nature of this role in the smaller orchestras. Of the nine orchestras included in the major performing arts group, we interviewed four artistic leaders. Time constraints and changes in leadership structures and personnel limited our ability to obtain further interviews with all artistic leaders. In some companies, changes of personnel meant that we actually obtained additional interviews with successive general managers and/or artistic directors. In total we interviewed 27 General Managers and 19 Artistic Directors.

ANALYSIS

A range of analytical techniques were considered appropriate given the open ended nature of the interviews and the different cultural contexts from which the interviewees spoke: managerial on the one hand and artistic on the other, and with the variation in the different art forms (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998 and elaborated by Dougherty, 2002). Relevant techniques summarized by Ryan and Bernard (2000; 2003) were used to identify

themes that emerged from the interviews. In the first instance a thorough reading of each of the interviews took place to identify as many themes as possible. This initial "open coding" sought to capture the full range of terms employed by the interviewees. Themes were then explored across interviews, codes consolidated and finally the results were analysed within the context of the theoretical framing of the research. The coding of interviews took place over an extended period and as noted by Richards and Morse (2007), the coding categories evolved in tandem with the data collection. By the conclusion of 30 or so interviews the researchers felt that a level of saturation had been achieved in that familiar themes were emerging in interviews and these became the codes that were deployed from that stage onwards. For reasons that we examine later in the article not all interviews were a good fit with this framework. This was perhaps inevitable given our decision not to structure the interview too closely. We preferred to retain the integrity of these interviews in place rather than seek to selectively incorporate parts of it into our research agenda.

We wish to stress that at this stage the findings remain preliminary and this paper does not report on all of the results.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AS AN INFLUENCE ON LEADERSHIP

Structure

All of the interviewees were in organisations with dual leadership arrangements, having both an artistic and a managerial leader. Coleadership is only considered present if there is a sense of equality between the leaders and the responsibility of the management and leadership of the organisation is truly shared. Upon investigating the current structures of the performing arts organisations studied, it can be seen that the particular art form can influence which one of the dual leaders is officially the Chief Executive Officer. Lapierre (2001: 4) highlights the centrality of the Artistic Director and claims the General Manager position is as a servant to the arts, and hence Artistic Director. However, this was not evident in the structure of all the organisations surveyed.

The following table depicts the formal structures of the organisations, whether or not the Chief Executive Officer position sits with either the General Manager or the Artistic Director, or if both leaders are considered joint CEOs.

ART FORM	JOINT	GM AS CEO	AD AS CEO	TOTAL
Ballet	3			3
Contemporary performance	1	2		3
Opera	1	2		3
Orchestra		9		9
Theatre	3	2	3	8

Note: Due to the small numbers of organisations we have combined contemporary dance and circus into the one category so as to maintain anonymity or respondents

All of the 9 orchestral organisations involved in the research had the General Manager as the CEO. This is likely to be a result of the lack of the physical presence of the majority of the artistic leaders who are often only present at the organisation for approximately 15 weeks per year (indeed it was this characteristic of the AD role in the orchestra that made it difficult to interview these leaders). Given this structure of orchestras, perhaps it is not surprising that unlike other sectors, equality between leaders in orchestras did not appear to be a concern. Only 3 of the 13 orchestra leaders talked about an equal and sharing partnership. This differs from the other sectors in which 16 of the remaining 33 respondents referring to an equal and sharing partnership (despite in some instances a hierarchy being in place). The reduced presence of a coleadership relationship in orchestras is also reflected in the fact that only one of the orchestra leaders spoke of the importance of their relationship with their dual leader. Given that this lone comment arose in a circumstance where there was an artistic leader who was present for most of the year, it suggests that coleadership arises most often out of sustained physical proximity for at least some stage of the working relationship. These preliminary findings suggest that the unique arrangement of most orchestras, with the lack of a present artistic leader, and a hierarchical structure, creates

an environment in which dual leadership but not coleadership is practiced. Further work is needed to determine whether what appears to be less of a focus on the coleadership ideal within an orchestra setting is indeed widespread and to identify what aspects of the structure and culture of orchestras might contribute to this result.

Theatre is the only art form studied that had an artistic leader as the sole CEO of the organisation. Despite a structural hierarchy, this was not always felt between the leaders, "I'm the CEO but I don't think of myself as any higher in the hierarchy" (GM3) or as another commented "CEO/General Manager or CEO/Artistic Director relationship within the performing arts, if the relationship's working well, they tend to function like co-CEOs regardless of the title" (GM12). On the other hand all of the ballet organisations interviewed demonstrated a preference for formal joint leadership with both leaders as CEOs. This may be a result of the nature of the art form, where "ballet...is such a collaborative art form" (GM1B). While this might be argued to also be the case in theatre, unlike the theatre companies who had no permanent ensemble of actors, the dancers are permanent members of the ballet companies. Although a formal joint leadership arrangement is indeed conducive to coleadership, interviewees often mentioned that although a formal hierarchical structure was in place, in reality a coleadership relationship existed.

The structural organisation of the theatre companies warrants further explanation. The two situations where the General Manager was the CEO resulted from structural changes adopted by the respective Boards in response to the organisations' recent history. In one case the Board wanted to protect the artistic vibrancy of the company by making the General Manager CEO. Previously, when the Artistic Director was CEO, if a disagreement occurred, the Government had the ability to remove the Artistic Director. As answerable to the CEO, the Artistic Director was seen to be insulated from any future government interference. The other situation resulted from an experience with a previous Artistic Director, which led the Board to make the General Manager the CEO.

Public Face

Regardless of formal structure, there was a common theme across the organisations that the Artistic Director is recognised as the public face of the organisation. Of the 26 organisations examined, 15 spoke of the public face of their particular organisation, and of these 15, 14 of them identified the Artistic Director as the public face, "[the] artistic director has a much higher profile and is the public face of the company" (GM5). This finding is supported by Cray et al. (2007) who mentioned that usually the artistic leader plays the primary leadership role. It is perhaps not surprising that the artistic leaders are the public face, given that the art is the core product of the organisation. Many of the General Managers (11) interviewed noted that their role was to purely facilitate the art and create an environment where the artistic leader could create the best work possible. For example, "my job is to make him be able to do his job" (GM11) and "my role has always been to facilitate" (GM19). Nonetheless, one contemporary performance organisation recognised the interconnectedness of the General Manager and Artistic Director positions in the public arena, noting that they are both the public figures of the company, but that this "probably [was] because of our personalities...that we do like to do the public representation" (GM3).

CHARACTERISTICS OF DUAL LEADERSHIP

Intensity of Communication

In the five sectors examined in this study, communication was a reoccurring theme. Of the 46 leaders surveyed, 44 commented in detail on communication, its importance and the form it takes in their particular dual leadership arrangement. Communication between the leaders is evidently of key concern for successful relationships. However, the degree of communication varied between the interviewees, depending on their particular arrangement, the sector, size of the organisation and its history. The intensity of the communication appeared to be indicative of the presence of coleadership.

Of the 44 who commented on communication, 16 were so greatly focused on communication with their dual leader that they expressed the need to talk daily and to be in constant communication and discussion. Comments such as "it's constant communication to the point of ridiculousness" (GM1B) or "Communication is fundamental and there is no one minute where we then if there is something we're really working on that we don't communicate either via email or SMS or we'd call or Skype, whatever, we always communicate" (AD2) characterised the frequency of these communications.

In cases where the artistic leader was not readily available regular communication either did not occur or took on different forms. When an artistic leader was creating the art or touring this proved a major obstacle to regular, daily face to face communication. Time constraints and the lack of availability of the artistic leader were particularly evident in the orchestra sector, with the artistic leader often only physically at the organisation for approximately 15 weeks a year. No manager in the Orchestra sector mentioned a regular, ongoing, daily communication arrangement. This again supports previous observations that the art form of orchestras may not be conducive to coleadership arrangements.

Instead the General Managers of orchestras had adopted other ways of maintaining communication with their artistic leader, despite them being physically at the company for such a limited time. There was a pervading sense of the General Managers keeping the artistic leader informed: "he's here for about ten weeks of the year and when he's not here we probably talk every couple of weeks" (GM23) and "we certainly email pretty consistently, it would be unusual to not get an email from him, or me to him every week or two" (GM22). This need to keep the artistic leader involved is reiterated by one particular General Manager:

"I suppose every board meeting I would send him an email update as to what's happening in the board meeting, and once every week or two I would send him a "So-and-so's sick, and so-and-so's well, and so-and-so's fallen in love with this one." Whatever's happening … Because they need to know all of that. And if you don't try to keep them involved, they won't be involved." (GM24)

As these examples of orchestras depict, although proximity of the two leaders may assist in communication, this does not appear to be essential for the relationship. Another factor for the successful communication in orchestras could be that the artists in an orchestra are relatively consistent, whereas in other organisations such as theatre, the actors and others involved alter with each production. This stability in orchestras may assist in communication as familiarity between the musicians is well established.

Nonetheless, orchestra General Managers were all satisfied with the level of communication with their dual leader. As one manager stated, "I'm not uncomfortable with our level of communication, I feel quite happy about it" (GM22), or as another General Manager stated, "I'll ring him if something comes up but time wise we won't have that easy contact because he'll just be away. I don't see it being a huge problem" (GM7). Perhaps this level of communication is what is expected in the sector due to the limited contact time with the artistic leader as one General Manager stated, "[the Artistic Director's] role doesn't really call for a whole lot of consensus" (GM9), again suggesting there is less of a need for day-to-day communication. As we see later, this lack of intensity of communication was also accompanied by an absence of shared decision making in the organisation. For this reason, the majority of the orchestras in this study are depicted as dual leadership situations and do not appear to exhibit a coleadership arrangement.

The availability of the artistic leader in different arts organisations appears to be a common theme across the interviews, although the absences were of a different order to those experienced in the orchestras. Artistic leaders are often creating the art, rehearsing, touring and are "very, very time constrained, and they have actual deadlines, the curtain goes up every single day at a certain time, everything happens… So they have a very sort of demanding, time critical minutia that just has to happen" (GM1B). However, a less frequent rate of communication, and in particular lack of face to face communication, was not seen as a difficulty by those General Managers who had worked with the corresponding artistic leaders for a significant period of time. In this case they had built an understanding, trust and for some a shared language. For example, "we've built the relationship up now so that we can communicate by email or by phone because we've built up that relationship. We know each other. We know each other's nuances" (GM17A). Another General Manager took this further, stating "there's a lot of communication that happens and a lot of decisions that kind of happen by osmosis and through the shorthand way in which you've learned how to discuss things and make decisions, that make it fairly quick" (GM25). Constant communication had become less of a priority: "it's the benefit of having worked together for six years and you wouldn't have that trust within the first couple or the longevity" (GM11). It indeed appears that time brings with it a general understanding between the two leaders, "there are signal words we've developed over the years" (GM7).

Between the two leaders there was rarely an occasion for formal meeting times – with only three interviewees mentioning structured meetings with their dual leader. That is not to say that there were not regular interactions: "we make a point of having lunch every day and that's when we kind of have our executive meeting" (GM2). While

formal meetings might have occurred with a larger executive team as a whole, or when there was an urgent matter to discuss, the vast majority of interviewees highlighted informal modes of communication as their prime method. For example, "most of our communication just takes place without making meetings" (GM9). The majority of General Managers cited the absence or work practices of the Artistic Director as the reasoning behind the informality of meetings and communication. For example, "[communication] is informal simply because a structure wouldn't ever work. It's again back to the time restrictions on the Artistic Director and when can you ever get to see them" (GM15).

This informal type of communication and lack of availability on the part of the artistic leader ensured that the General Manager became the driver behind communication with their dual leader, "we would talk every day, but we don't have the kind of formal...We don't have that...Nothing is slipping as a result, but it's not a perfect relationship" (GM19). Time constraints demand that the General Manager carefully manage the information given to the artistic leader, "I have to really prioritise and I have to constantly make a judgement call as to what I need [the Artistic Director] absolutely to have input on" (GM4).

As the role of the General Manager is to support the art of the organisation, the General Manager must adapt to the Artistic Director and his or her work style. "You learn things like, you don't actually go and discuss a serious issue with the artistic director half an hour before he's about to go into rehearsals. So I've worked around rehearsal weeks and you actually accommodate yourself to how you know they actually work" (GM17B). This focus on communication and collaboration suggests a coleadership arrangement, therefore it appears that it is important for the General Manager to learn and understand how the artistic leader works to ensure a successful coleadership arrangement.

Trust and respect

Communication was not the only highly prevalent theme across all sectors; trust was mentioned by 70 per cent of those interviewed. This is not surprising, as Ilies, Morgeson and Nahrgang (2005) commented, open and truthful relationships result in a high degree of trust, hence the high focus on communication is linked to a high degree of trust. Those who commented on trust mentioned its high importance, making claims such as "trust I think is the most important" (AD6) and "that's probably the biggest thing, is trusting each other" (GM20). This development of a sense of trust appears to aid the decision making process with many respondents commenting along the lines of "there's enough trust between the two of us to have the difficult conversations when we need to" (GM16).

It appears that this trust develops over time, "[it was] kind of a process, and me learning to trust him" (GM5). This development of a relationship is supported by another Artistic Director: "[trust is] normally borne of experience of each other.... I think a year is about enough. You'll know whether you've got a marriage or not at the end of that, and whether you should get into bed together or stay in bed together" (AD19). However, this need for time to develop a level of trust together at an organisation was not always necessary. Being a relatively small industry, many dual leaders knew each other and had developed trust, to a degree, prior to their formal dual leadership arrangement. For example, "if you've been in the field for a long time, you do know mostly everybody and know something about them" (GM1B). Trust and respect seemed to go hand in hand, with 83 per cent of those interviewed mentioning the need to respect the other and their role in the organisation with 21 of the 27 managerial leaders and 17 of the 19 artistic leaders making mention of the need for respect.

Comments on respect were twofold: respect for the other's skills and abilities and for the dual leader personally. Comments included "I admire my chief conductor, and I think he admires me and my skills ... mutual admiration and respect and the weaknesses" (GM21) and "there's mutual respect for what each other does" (GM16). Not only do the interviewees mention that they respect the other, but also they recognise that this is an essential ingredient for a successful relationship "you also need to be respectful of each other's skill bases" (AD14). Miles and Watkins (2007) support the importance of complementing skills, stating that coleadership arrangements are most successful with this balance of abilities. The interviews also showed a respect and appreciation for their dual leader on a personal level, "we get on so very, very well and we've just got a very natural rapport and we're very good friends, and we respect each other, and that's probably the basis of everything" (GM20). This is echoed in the following comment:

"Like a marriage, the relationship has to work on a personal level. You can use whatever charts and organisational structures you like, but the two people have to actually develop an appropriate relationship and I feel very

strongly that the two people involved have to develop a relationship of trust and have to maintain really open communication lines, otherwise it just doesn't work." (GM17B)

This emphasis and need for respect could also be tied into the chemistry between the partners, which Hommes and de Voogt (2006) state is crucial for successful dual management relationships. The presence of trust and respect are of importance to the majority of the interviewees regardless of art form and structure. This suggests that they are not unique characteristics to successful coleadership arrangements, but to dual leadership more broadly.

Shared decision making

With joint decision making between two leaders, with one responsible for the artistic vision, and the other responsible for the business aspects, one would expect greater conflict and issues between leaders, particularly when joint decision making is involved. As stated by Cray et al. (2007), arts organisations are unique in the need to balance both the "aesthetic" whilst being fiscally responsible, creating a situation where traditional business methods often do not align with creative thought (Murphy & Pauleen, 2007). However, this did not seem to be an issue in this study.

There was definitely a sense that decisions that affected the organisation as a whole and impact the manager's respective responsibilities were discussed together. For example, "most of the big decisions we do together, we definitely do together" (AD10) and "we try and consult on things that are very obviously public in terms of the organisation, its message, its branding, its core values and so on" (GM7). Shared decision making is central to coleadership arrangements, where there is a shared responsibility for the sustainability of the organisation. The interviews revealed that other decisions were made separately; however, this depended on the scale and potential impacts, "of course, some things I can, that fall completely within the administrative envelope and so on, but how would you make that review. Let's say you wanted to change a marketing approach. Can that be done without talking to the artistic director? I don't think so" (GM1B).

Although the relationships between the interviewed leaders were successful, there was indeed a mention of conflict. 35 of the entire sample of 46 leaders mentioned conflict to varying degrees, with some leaders telling of more serious conflict from previous, not as successful, dual leadership arrangements. Conflict was not always depicted in a negative light, with many mentioning that this conflict "was actually a positive resource" (GM21). "You've got to create a really powerful partnership. And that doesn't mean you're going to agree with everything. I think half the fun is that you won't...I will always come from this perspective, and you will always come from that perspective, and we find a middle ground and have that good debate" (GM19). The productive value of disagreement and/or conflict is the subject of an emerging literature, which suggests that conflict can be constructive for group decision making (see for example Tjosvold, 2006). The capacity for shared decision making would appear to be an indicator of coleadership and will be explored in future analysis of the data.

Values

38 of the 46 leaders in this sample mentioned the need for a shared vision and values for an organisation in a dual leadership arrangement. "I think we've got the basic philosophy right, the intention and the sort of shared aims, everything else will look after itself, then you wipe ego out of the equation, there is nothing to worry about except communication" (AD9) and "I think as long as the two people that are doing it are on the same page there's not an issue. If you've got someone who's diametrically opposed to what you're doing, then yeah, it won't work" (AD6). This was reflected in responses to questions regarding previous conflicts. For example, when asked why a previous relationship failed, an Artistic Director stated "I don't think we had shared values. I don't think we shared the same goals...So every idea I put forward or vision I had for the company was something to be suspicious of" (AD13).

Although the need for shared vision is constant in the interviews, it was highlighted by a few that even if a shared vision is not present, it does not mean the organisation will be destroyed, but rather the organisation may fail to grow and develop. For example, "shared values are vital – if we didn't share the same values then it would be very hard to – we could work together but the company wouldn't flourish, it wouldn't go anywhere, if we were at odds in terms of, not aesthetics but the raison d'être of the company" (AD11).

As was the case with trust, creating a shared vision may take time to develop between dual leaders. One manager stated that:

"For the first couple of years, neither of us were really sure what to make of the other. I think that's reasonable. And there were a number of slips along the way when we probably misunderstood each other, but I would say by about the fourth or fifth year, we had worked out that we really were on the same page. So, we had the same goals and the same level of dedication, which I didn't have at the beginning, certainly." (AD9)

The need for shared values and vision appears to be of importance in dual leadership arrangements, rather than solely specific to coleadership.

THE INDIVIDUALS' ATTRIBUTES

It is a commonly held view that those who work in the arts must be passionate about their particular art form. This is self evident in the case of the artistic leaders who have dedicated their lives to their art form. However, it is interesting to see that the majority of the General Managers also have an extensive background in the arts, and often as a performer. Of the 27 General Managers interviewed in this study, 17 (63 per cent) had originally trained as artists themselves and made the transition to management during their career. This suggests that these particular managers would have a deep understanding and sympathy for the arts and the workings of the Artistic Director as they have experience on the artistic side of the arts themselves and would be able "to understand their needs, to be able to appreciate the art form from an insider's point of view, but to really understand the performance issues, or what it's like to be out there on stage" (GM9). Only one General Manager (GM22) considered that their background in the specific art form might be a hindrance "95 per cent of the time", and that "I just have to be careful that I, on a number of occasions where there are things where I could wade in with an opinion, I just sit on my hands for a while and just see what else floats in to ensure that I don't dominate the conversation" (GM22).

Of the 17 General Managers who had originally trained as an artist, 9 had actually studied the particular art form practiced by the organisation. This is consistently quoted as a benefit, "I haven't played professionally in ... years but playing [particular instrument]...has been crucial for me in terms of understanding what musicians do and what their issues and challenges are" (GM10). 8 of the 17 General Managers had professional training in a different field of the performing arts, for example, 2 orchestra General Managers had initially trained as actors. Although it is not the same art form, it demonstrates a love and interest in the arts world. This is supported by one particular General Manager who stated a commonality of issues across the arts:

"I understand the artistic quandaries that organisations get into, because they're exactly the same ones that the organisation at the opera did and also that the theatre company faced ... they inevitably come down to a balance between the artistic vision and the financial reality. So, they're consistent across the board." (GM25)

Knowledge of the organisation's art form may also translate into an awareness on the part of the General Manager of the needs and modes of working deployed by the Artistic Director. This awareness is displayed in the focus on the partners having complementary skills.

"The most important thing is that your co-CEO should have complementing abilities. So I wouldn't particularly want to work with someone who was very flighty and impulsive and not as methodical because I think that tends to be my sort of thing. I tend to be a bit impulsive. I like to be flexible. I like to make decisions probably on the go and at the last minute. And I like to work with someone who's very sensible, who plans ahead, who's flexible so that you can react but they can give you that support. And I tend to think of myself as being very right brain and the Executive Director tends to be very left brain." (AD1)

A common theme emerged that it was the responsibility of the General Manager to adjust and adapt their own work style to complement and suit their Artistic Leader. Numerous General Managers made claims such as "you adapt to any different personality type" (GM12) and "he is, who he is and I just adapt to practices around to suit him...its part of that flexibility of bringing up the rear and making sure that that person is there and then supporting him through their goals" (GM15). This ability to "develop the bit that is missing" (GM3) seemed to

stem from the acknowledgement that the art form and the work of the Artistic Leader is central to the vibrancy of the organisation, as one General Manager states "there's no point in an institution thriving if the art doesn't. The art's got to come first in the minds of everyone" (GM14). This focus on the art, and understanding of the Artistic Director, possibly from a previous history and knowledge of the arts, seems to be a key requirement of the General Manager in dual leadership arrangements in the performing arts. Further studies would need to be conducted to explore this phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis of the interviews is continuing. Preliminary conclusions based on this analysis of dual leadership relationships suggest that the degree to which coleadership is practised is related to:

the particular art form;
the immediate past experience of the board, whereby a company may be restructured in response to a past "problem";
the broader policy framework and environment within which companies carry out their work; and
the individual characteristics of the particular leaders.

The findings appear to indicate that while various forms of dual leadership are common throughout the performing arts, in practice coleadership is demanded in many but not all of the sectors of the performing arts, with orchestras consistently presenting different outcomes. Successful coleadership arrangements would appear to arise from a combination of circumstances that include: the particular characteristics of the individual leaders; the broader organisational context in which the leadership arrangement exists; and the day-to-day proximity of the leaders to each other. The particular art form appears to be crucial in the dual leadership arrangement, impacting the modes of communication, the sense of equality, and the official hierarchy of the relationship. Recurring themes of communication, trust, respect and values were reiterated throughout the interviews, suggesting how important they are to this close working relationship. Of particular importance to coleadership rather than purely dual leadership is the presence of moderate to high intensity of communication, shared decision making, shared values and the ability of the General Manager to adapt to the artistic leader. General Managers commonly have a history in arts organisations either as an artist themselves or as a leader, demonstrating a love and dedication to the arts. The extent to which this is conducive to the practice of coleadership requires further consideration.

Coleadership can be exhibited in practice even if the structural arrangements in the company are in fact hierarchal. Examination of the structures of the organisations reflected the individual characteristics and requirements of particular art forms. It also provided a reminder that the structure of an arts organisation can be influenced by the recent experience of the Boards and external stakeholders and that an analysis based on one moment in time will inevitably be partial.

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(Endnotes)

1 The analysis of these interviews is the subject of a separate paper which analyses comparative results in the theatre sector across the USA, UK and Australia.