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Collaborative Leadership in the Arts as a Unique Form of Dual Leadership

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KEYWORDS

Collaboration; collaborative leadership; conflict; dual leadership; interdependency; performing arts

ABSTRACT

This article examines dual leadership in Australian performing arts companies, reflected in the respective roles of artistic directors and general managers. Our findings challenge assumptions underpinning much of the literature on dual leadership; in particular, the assumption that conflict is inevitable between the two leaders. In our research, we identified dual leadership relationships that might more accurately be described as instances of collaborative leadership. We suggest that one explanation for this presence of collaborative leadership may be that the study found similarities in both leaders' passion for the arts, often reflected in a shared background in an arts practice.

Introduction

Dual leadership is perceived to be a way of managing the imperatives of artistic quality and financial sustainability within arts organizations. The most common manifestation is where two leaders—the artistic leader and the managerial leader—take responsibility for separate functions of a company. In this article, we examine the relationship between these two leaders in twenty-six Australian performing arts organizations. These are all large companies, recognized by the federal government and the national funding body, the Australia Council, as the premier performing arts companies in Australia, and include national and state-based arts organizations encompassing ballet and dance, opera, theatre, circus, and classical music.

The findings both support and illuminate previous studies on dual leadership arrangements. For example, Miles and Watkins (2007) presented four pillars of effective complementarity: common vision, common incentives, communication, and trust, three of which were supported in the findings (trust, common vision, and communication). However, a number of our findings challenge assumptions underpinning much of the literature on dual leadership or extend beyond current understanding. These assumptions include: that conflict is inevitable in dual management relationships; that dual leadership would be formalized in organizational charts; that structured communication is required; and that managerial and artistic leaders have divergent yet complementary skill sets. Many of the dual leader relationships that we examined were not characterized by conflict, operated outside formal management hierarchies, involved significant amounts of informal communication, and displayed commonalities between the two leaders that are largely ignored in the literature. Once these assumption

Had been disassembled and our findings emerged, we identified a special case of dual leadership within some leadership couples: one which demonstrates a sense of equality and shared

responsibility for leadership of the organization at the highest level, irrespective of the formal hierarchical relationship between the two. We identify this as an instance of collaborative leadership, a special case of dual leadership, characterized by an acknowledged interdependency between the dual leaders

Literature

The performing arts companies that participated in our research have formal management systems, with high levels of accountability to government, their funders, and audiences. In recent years, many arts companies have turned towards more corporate models of management (Cray, Inglis, and Freeman 2007). The internal structure of the companies reflects a bifurcated view of their functions: an artistic area of operations and an organizational administration area. While acknowledging the interconnectedness of management and leadership in overall company performance (Kotter1990), rather than emphasizing systems, structures, and authority, we locate our research within leadership studies with an emphasis on practices and relationality (Rost1991). As such, our interest is not on the management functions undertaken by the artistic director and general manager as heads of their respective areas, but on the dynamic relationship between the two as they negotiate sharing the leadership of the company, as well as managing a substantial area of the company's activities.

Shared leadership has become a field of interest as organizations have grown more complex and the demands on leadership have increased. In an extensive review of the leadership literature, Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone (2007) contrasted shared leadership with leadership models in which a manager is positioned "hierarchically above and external to a team" (1218). The concept of shared leadership has extended beyond ways of managing work teams, with researchers challenging the presumption that the leadership of an organization is most commonly the activity of a sole leader (Reid and Karambayya 2009). Indeed, Denis, Langley, and Sergi talk of shared leadership as a "plural phenomenon," consisting of instances that are "all attempting to reach beyond the heroic or romantic perspective of the individual leader" (2012, 267). Although, in 2014, only five of the top 827 companies internationally had co-CEOs (Ignatius 2014), there is a small collection of writers who have pointed out that even when there is a formal sole leader, there is often an internal partnership. Gronn (1999) wrote of the leadership couple in the context of educational settings, and Miles and Watkins (2007) provide a range of examples of complementary leadership in the corporate world, as do Heenan and Bennis (1999). Elsewhere, the concept of collaborative leadership has been proposed as a challenge to traditional forms of leadership, although this literature is under developed in a corporate setting. Examples of dual leadership can be found in military organizations (Kubis 2005) and health institutions (Steinert, Goebel, and Rieger2006). Chrislip and Larson (1994) refer to collaborative forms of leadership in their exploration of citizen and government partnerships driving urban revitalization projects in the United States. This is part of a wider literature that examines shared leadership of projects that involve multiple entities. While the structural context might differ, features of the leadership relationships examined by Chrislip and Larson resonate with the challenges faced in many dual leadership situations. The authors highlight the way trust emerges through "informal exploring," whereby leaders "discover common interests, similar ways of defining the problem, and shared aspirations for solutions, as well as the opportunity to get to know individuals as people" (1994, 92). The project-based origin of collaborative leadership is, to some extent, replicated in the arts organizations included in our research. The dual leaders in an arts organization could equally be characterized as engaged in an ongoing series of creative projects, akin to what Rubin describes as "sustained collaborations" (2002, 19).

Forms of dual leadership are widely observed within performing arts organizations — with some companies formalizing this through appointing co-chief executive officers (MacNeill and Tonks 2013). Of the twenty-six Australian performing arts companies that we examined, all had dual leaders, and eight had a co-CEO structure. However, the dual leadership model is not found across all sectors of the arts. The literature on the museum and gallery sector takes for granted a hierarchical management structure that places a CEO or director above all others (Griffin, Abraham, and Crawford 1999). While galleries and museums are locations where art is exhibited, they are not the site where the art itself is made, so the artistic imperatives of the organization are not physically present in the form of artists. In contrast, the prevalence of the dual and at times co-CEO model in the performing arts is likely to result from the sizeable percentage of the employees who are engaged in actual creative activity, demanding representation at the highest levels of the organization's management. For example, forty percent of the Australian Ballet's personnel are directly involved in the artistic aspects of the company's activities, and in the course of any year, a theatre company is likely to have as many actors and artists engaged in productions as there are administrative staff employed (MacNeill and Tonks 2013).

The prevalence of the dual leadership model in arts organizations arises from the dual mission of "artistic endeavors" and "organizational administration." Cray, Inglis, and Freeman (2007) described 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 organization enhances his or her reputation among peers.... The managing director's role, on the other hand, is to establish and maintain the organization as an ongoing operation, and his or her reputation as a successful administrator depends on efficiency and effectiveness. (298)

This, in turn, produces a specific form of dual leadership in which an artistic director assumes responsibility for artistic excellence and a managing director or general manager is responsible for organizational efficiency and financial sustainability (Stein and Bathurst 2008). The advantages of dual leadership are widely accepted within the arts sector; nonetheless, the management literature, within the arts and beyond, implies unavoidable conflict because of the different roles undertaken by each leader and their ambitions. In her work on conceptualizing succession in the cultural sector, Landry (2011) frames the relationship between the artistic director and managerial leader as being "underpinned by contradictory logics" (51). Alvarez and Svejenova (2005) refer to the inevitable conflict that can arise between dual leaders, and Miles and Watkins (2007) write of managers who may "sleep in the same bed but dream different dreams" (95). Conflict in arts companies is seen as a natural consequence of the competing goals of artistic creativity and financial sustainability. Auvinen (2001) assumed the inevitability of "conflicts and confusions over authority-organizational versus artistic-in the organization" in opera houses as a result of a dual organizational structure in which the managerial and artistic teams function separately (277). An analysis of the discrete business and artistic perspectives using the concept of separate fields provides a nuanced approach to this tension in a theatre company setting (Røyseng 2008). Cray, Inglis, and Freeman (2007) assert the uniqueness of arts organizations in the need to balance both aesthetic and fiscal responsibility, reflecting a broader literature that assumes that traditional business methods often do not align with creative thought (Murphy and Pauleen 2007).

Paradoxically, the dual leadership model is seen as a way of managing the perceived conflict in an arts company's mission; at the same time, dual leadership itself is seen to lead to conflict. Ways of managing and minimising such assumed conflict include structured communication processes (Reid and Karambayya 2009), enabling one partner to be part of the recruitment process for the other

(O’Toole, Galbraith, and Lawler 2002), ensuring healthy egos to enable credit sharing (Heenan and Bennis 1999), and the requirement to have different leadership styles such as transformational for the artistic leader and transactional for the managerial leader (Caust 2010). The collaborative leadership literature offers additional insights, in that it is focused not so much on the differences between the leaders, but on highlighting similarities and shared goals, best encapsulated by the notion of interdependence. Indeed, Emerson et al. observe that collaboration action arises when “individuals and organizations are unable to accomplish something on their own” (Emerson et al. 2012 citing Gray 1989; Thomson and Perry 2006). Rather than entrenching a divide between art and business, Järvinen, Ansio, and Houni’s research in Finnish theatre companies led them to observe the way in which “intense collaboration” between dual leaders can bridge the “boundaries of different objectives and subgroups with an (arts) organization” (2015, 25). Archer and Cameron (2009) also examine collaborative leadership as a means of two parties working across boundaries to achieve common goals. In their study, they describe three stages of collaborative group formation, with the third stage being openness, which arises when the leaders are “truly accepting [of] their interdependence and [are] open with each other about their hopes and fears for the joint enterprise” (166).

Cray and Inglis (2011) concluded their study of dual leadership in Australian arts organizations with the recommendation that further research is required into the nature of the relationship between the dual leaders. Likewise Denis, Langley, and Sergi (2012) suggested that the dynamics between the dual leaders warranted greater attention, a call answered by Järvinen, Ansio, and Houni (2015), and now ourselves with this extensive survey of Australian arts leaders. Based on the literature described herein, this article provides an analysis of the day-to-day lives of arts leaders, both artistic and managerial, shedding light on the extent to which their relationships are sites of conflict as they seek to integrate the dual mission of artistic success and financial stability.

Methodology

The research adopted a methodology similar in many ways to that utilized by Järvinen, Ansio, and Houni (2015) in which they interviewed dual leaders in six Finnish theatre companies. However, our focus on performing arts companies produced a much larger number of interviewees as we sought to interview all fifty-six dual leaders, defined as occupying either the managerial role or the principal artistic role, in Australia’s major performing arts organizations. We achieved forty-six interviews: twenty-seven with general managers (GM) and nineteen with artistic directors (AD). Interviewees were advised that the interview would last approximately one hour, although a number exceeded this duration. This was in part due to our use of open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview format. In each instance, the interviewers conducted preliminary research about the organization and the interviewee. This enabled us to personalize the interview questions, while also ensuring that we did not overlook the key topics that we sought to cover (Table1).

Table 1. Key topics covered in interviews.

Topic	Sub-topics
Organization	Formal and informal organizational structure History
Individual	Professional background Leadership style Skills

	Values Personality
Their co-leader	Leadership style Skills Values Personality
Relationship	Dynamics of relationship Divisions of labor Formal and informal processes
Dual leadership	Pros and cons Implications Any past experiences

Open-ended questions can be more conversational, friendly and non-threatening (Yin 2014). They also allow for descriptive answers, seek to avoid interviewees repeating the same words in their response as are used in the question, and can be effective in eliciting “more sensitive information” (Lewin 2011, 225; Bryman 2012, 246). Given that we sought to elicit views and experiences unique to the individual, we used questions that invited, but did not pre-determine, responses that would provide this information. At the same time, we ensured that sets of topics were covered so that we could aggregate and compare the data across the companies. We sought to ensure that the interviewees were not deterred from talking about potentially uncomfortable issues such as conflict in the current partnership when addressing the key elements of relationship dynamics and potential issues with the dual leadership structure. Complete confidentiality was provided to our interviewees, and the open-ended questions encouraged the sharing of experiences, examples being: “Are there disadvantages to the organization in having two people in charge? What is the worst moment you have had with your co-CEO? How did you recover from this?”

As Popping (2015) has noted, open-ended interviews require detailed text analysis, and for this reason, the interviews were recorded and transcribed so as to avoid any interviewer error (27). Techniques summarized by Ryan and Bernard (2000; 2003) were used to identify themes that emerged from the interviews. This involved, in the first instance, a thorough reading of each interview so as to capture the full range of terms employed by the interviewees. These terms started to coalesce around a number of themes. The analysis of interviews took place over an extended period and, as noted by Richards and Morse (2007), the themes evolved in tandem with the data collection. After completing the analysis of approximately thirty of the forty-six interviews, a level of saturation had been achieved: familiar themes were emerging from the interview analysis and these were used in analysing interview transcripts from that stage onwards. In the following section, we discuss the findings that amplify existing understandings of dual leadership in the areas of trust, shared values and vision, and respect. We then consider findings that challenge existing assumptions about the nature of dual leadership and develop our case for the existence of a distinct category of dual leadership: one which is highly collaborative with minimal conflict.

Table 2. Formal structure.

Art form	GM & AD as CEO	GM as CEO	AD as CEO	Total
Ballet	3			3
Contemporary performance	1	2		3
Opera	1	2		3

Classical Music		9		9
Theatre	3	2	3	8
Total	8	15	3	26

Note: Due to the small numbers of organizations, contemporary dance and circus have been combined under the heading “contemporary performance.”

Characteristics of dual leadership in the arts

In this section, we present our key findings. These highlight and support already observed elements of dual leadership arrangements noted in the literature, such as features of the relationships including trust, respect, vision and shared values. However, the study also challenged existing assumptions in a number of key areas, most significantly in the way in which issues of conflict were rarely raised by interviewees. This aspect is discussed later in this section. Other findings of note were the pervasiveness of informal management structures, the importance of informal communication between the leadership pair, and a much greater overlap in skill sets between the leaders than previous research would suggest.

Art form and management structures

The research on leadership structures in Australian arts companies by Inglis and Cray (2011) revealed a range of shared, dual, and sole leadership structures. Our study, focused solely on organizations with dual leadership arrangements, observed that even though a hierarchy between the two leaders may have existed in a formal organizational chart, in practice the respective leaders worked much more closely than the structure might imply. Lapierre’s (2001) claim that the general manager position is a servant to the arts, and hence a “servant” to the artistic director, was not borne out in every case, and all three configurations of the dual leaders were observed in the formal hierarchy: general manager as head (chief executive officer); artistic director as head; and pure co-CEO structure where both leaders answered separately to a board of management (see Table 2). Inglis and Cray (2011), in their smaller sample of fifteen organizations, were unable to “recognise patterns in different types of organizations” (125). Other organizations were theatre complexes, galleries, a museum, and a festival (2011, 116). Due to the larger sample and greater concentration on the performing arts, we were able to observe a relationship between art form and management structure in the following art forms: classical music, ballet, and theatre.

The symphony orchestras presented the most consistent formal structures, with the general manager holding the CEO position in all nine orchestras included in the study. A number of characteristics of Australian symphony orchestras are likely to explain this consistency of organizational structure. Elsewhere, we suggest that one such factor is their shared history of reform and a common management model arising from government policy (MacNeill and Tonks 2013). A factor more specific to the art form is the increasingly global market place for chief conductors. Often considered the archetypal sole leader in the artistic realm, in reality, these artistic leaders are physically present at the organization for approximately fifteen weeks per year in Australia. It is perhaps unsurprising then that only one of the orchestra leaders spoke of the importance of their relationship with their dual leader. This comment arose in a unique circumstance where the artistic leader was present for most of the year. More common was the view that the chief conductor did not necessarily have a sense of what was good for the orchestra, in any sense other than artistic requirements, and that it was the responsibility of the general manager to ensure that the artistic program would, in fact, contribute to the financial sustainability of the company. It appears that when one leader has both a limited focus and a limited physical connection to the company, the

relationship with the dual leader does not develop in the same trusting way as we have seen more generally. As one general manager stated, “[the artistic director’s] role doesn’t really call for a whole lot of consensus” (GM9).

The structure of theatre companies was more consistent with Lapierre’s (2001) observation that the centrality of the arts mandated that the general manager must serve the artistic director. Of the art forms studied, theatre was the only form that had an artistic leader as the sole CEO of the organization. This was true in three of the eight companies. Another three had a formal joint leadership structure. However, in the three companies with the artistic director at the head, there was clearly an informal relationship closer to the co-CEO model. In two companies, the general manager was the CEO, but for very different reasons. In one case, the board wanted to protect the artistic vibrancy of the company by making the general manager the CEO; hence, insulating the artistic director from any 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. Only one of the theatre companies had an ensemble at the time of the interviews, and in all cases the vast majority of actors are hired on a production-by-production basis. In this case, general managers were very clear that the artistic director must represent the artistic character of the company for both its internal and external integrity: “[the] artistic director has a much higher profile and is the public face of the company” (GM5).

Ballet companies stood alone in demonstrating a clear preference for formal joint leadership structures. This may be a result of the size of the organization structure and the specific art form. Large ballet companies are very complex entities, often encompassing a ballet school, resident musicians, choreographers, and health professionals. Yet, for all this complexity, or perhaps because of it, as Scapolan and Montanari (2013) observed, there is surprisingly little academic attention paid to it, even within organizational studies of performing arts companies. Unlike the theatre companies, but not dissimilar to orchestras, ballet companies consist of a large number of resident performers.

The artistic leader is also in residence, and working closely with the dancers on a daily basis. As one general manager noted: “Ballet is such a difficult art form... it requires such a collaboration with dancers and nurturing their talent” and went on to suggest “that may be why it’s setup that way”; i.e., why artistic directors work within the company (GM1B). A sense of a closely shared ambition for the company as a whole was evident, with one artistic director stating: “When I worked with [...] we really wanted to make this the best ballet company it could be” (AD1). A clear preference was asserted for dual leadership—of the closest sort—by one general manager at a time when the company was recruiting: “I am very much of the opinion... we will find someone who we love, and who is going to be a great leader, and very collaborative, a good communicator, and let’s lead together” (GM26). This was in response to a board preference for a sole CEO after a difficult relationship with a previous artistic director.

These findings suggest that the formal structural relationship between artistic director and general manager will vary according to the specific art form. One explanatory factory may be the extent to which the art form practitioners are present in the company. In the absence of a resident company of actors, it is a strategic and symbolic gesture to make the artistic

Table 3. Characteristics of dual leader relationship.

	General manger (n = 27)	Artistic director (n = 19)	Total (n = 46)
Conflict	3 (11%)	2 (10%)	5 (11%)

Trust	19 (70%)	13 (70%)	32 (70%)
Respect	21 (77%)	17 (89%)	38 (83%)
Values & shared vision	25 (92%)	13 (70%)	38 (83%)

director a theatre company's CEO, so as to convey the importance that attaches to the artistic product. A co-CEO may be appropriate in a ballet company, in which significant numbers of practitioners and administrators are present on a day-to-day basis. A high-profile, though absent, chief conductor, together with featured soloists and orchestra leaders, will ensure the prominence of the artistic outcome of an orchestra, while the general manager performs the role of CEO.

Before concluding that the structures as discussed are definitive for each art form, it must be emphasized that the practices of dual leadership do not always conform to the hierarchical structure. Other than in the orchestra setting, many interviewees referred to an equal and sharing relationship, despite a hierarchy being in place, engaging in what might be considered collaborative leadership practice: "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). This is consistent with the collaborative leadership literature that emphasizes the practice of leadership, rather than defining it solely by way of formal accountability structures (Rost 1991; Denis et al. 2012).

Features of the relationship

Miles and Watkins identify "four pillars of effective complementarity" among leadership teams: common vision, common incentives, communication, and trust (2007, 96). When leaders in our research spoke about the characteristics of their relationship with their dual leader, the most common themes were trust, respect, and shared vision and/or values (see Table 3). We might think of shared vision as also capturing common goals, but trust and respect emerged as slightly different qualities. Although the sample included a larger number of general managers (twenty-seven as compared with eighteen), the data in Table 3 suggests that this did not skew the results, with reporting rates of the key themes being similar across both roles. Conflict was not seen as a driver in the relationships between artistic and management leaders, as will be discussed in further detail later.

Trust and respect

With a relationship that was seen as trusting and respectful, whatever mistakes or differences might occur were viewed as resolvable in ways that didn't lead to conflict. Those who commented on trust emphasized its high importance, making claims such as "trust I think is the most important" (AD6) and "that's probably the biggest thing... trusting each other" (GM20). This development of a sense of trust appears to aid the decision-making process, with many respondents commenting similarly to this general manager: "there's enough trust between the two of us to have the difficult conversations when we need to" (GM16). Trust develops over time, "[it was] kind of a process, and me learning to trust him" (GM5) and "[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). In a relatively small industry, trust may have developed prior to the existing appointment, with many dual leaders already known to each other: "if you've been in the field for a long time, you do know mostly everybody and know something about them" (GM1B).

Comments on respect occurred on two equally important levels: respect personally for the other and respect for their skills. On a personal level, respect for the dual leader was compared to the type of respect one has for a good friend or partner: “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 respect for the other personally is also reflected in the following comment: “like a marriage, the relationship has to work on a personal level” (GM17B).

Professional respect for the other tended to highlight their value to the organization “you also need to be respectful of each other’s skill base” (AD14). Comments included “I admire my chief conductor, and I think he admires me and my skills... mutual admiration and respect” (GM21) and “there’s mutual respect for what each other does” (GM16). This emphasis and need for respect could also be tied into the chemistry between the partners, with Hommes and de Voogt (2006) commenting that it is crucial for successful dual management relationships.

Shared vision

The interviews highlighted this thinking; for example, “I think (if) 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). The importance of a common vision is reflected in responses to questions regarding previous conflicts. 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).

A lack of shared vision may not mean the destruction of an organization, but rather that the organization 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). 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... 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). This comment gestures to the evolution of the collaborative leadership relationship. Chrislip and Larsen describe a process of “informal exploring” whereby common interests and shared aspirations are discovered and develop (1994,95).

Communication

In their article on dual leadership in Canadian arts companies, Reid and Karambayya (2009) observed that the “the two leaders would normally connect at points throughout the year when the artistic plans and activities were integrated with the expectations for audience and funded resources” (1080). However, in our study, the pattern of communication in the companies did not conform to this highly structured process. Certainly, for the vast majority of the leaders interviewed, communication was a crucial aspect of their relationship with the other leader. Contrary to Reid and Karambayya’s (2009) suggestions, there was little talk of formal meeting times between the two leaders — with only three interviewees mentioning structured meetings with their dual leader. It was only in the case of orchestras that communication approximated a contained negotiation around artistic plans and resources, and as we noted previously, this largely resulted from the lack of physical presence of the chief conductor for much of the year. That is not to say that such

negotiations did not occur within all organizations, but rather they were normalized within, and part of, an ongoing pattern of day-to-day informal communication between the dual leaders. Rather than structured formal opportunities for communication, the focus that many dual leaders had on a genuine friendship provided a mechanism for less formal exchanges. Ullah (2011) observed, “collaborative leaders communicate at an interpersonal level markedly differently from more traditional leaders” (2011, 73), and attributes this to the fact that the collaboration itself rests on the inevitability of a “win-win” situation, or what Archer and Cameron (2009) describe as their interdependency.

While formal meetings occurred with the companies’ executive team, or when there was an urgent matter to discuss, the vast majority of interviewees highlighted informal modes of communication as being the primary method of contact with their dual leader: “most of our communication just takes place without making meetings” (GM9). The majority of general managers cited the absence of the artistic director when in the rehearsal room or working on independent projects as the reason 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). Whether it’s endless cups of coffee (GM8) or phone calls each lunchtime (GM5), conversation was informal and extremely regular if not daily amongst the leaders that we have described as being in collaborative dual leader relationships. This bears out Kramer and Crespy’s argument that “positive social relationships” are at the core of collaboration and, in such an environment, communication becomes a series of ongoing interactions rather than what might for some be feared as a “time-consuming burden” (2011,1035).

Time constraints demand that the general manager carefully manage the information given to the artistic leader: “I have to really prioritize 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 artistic vision of the organization, enacted by the artistic director, they 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).

These findings affirm the importance of communication between the dual leaders; however, in contrast to the more formalized modes of communication envisaged by Reid and Karambayya (2009), communication in a number of dual leader relationships is primarily informal, regular, and ongoing. Responsibility for maintaining productive channels of communication modes tended to be assumed by the general manager, who would devise strategies to make communication work around the artistic director’s imperatives and availability.

Individual attributes of leaders

It is a commonly held view that those who work in the arts must be passionate about their artform. In the museum context, Suchy (1999) highlighted the need for passion in museum leadership, a “deep feeling in the heart for the work” (57). Suchy (1999, 58) went on to describe the contribution of this passion to “flow theory,” a framework describing when a leader has a sense of a “rush” and is completely “in tune” with a task. Hooker and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) extend this concept to practices of shared leadership.

Passion may be self-evident in the case of the artistic directors who have dedicated their lives to their art form. Little research investigates the commitment and passion of those working as general

managers. Indeed, as noted by Kuesters, the arts manager and the artist are, by definition, cast in different roles:

The conceptualization of arts managers as opposed to, and functionally separated from, artists lies in the same line of thought as the conceptualization of art and economy/finance as strictly separated spheres. (2010,45)

Furthermore, it is assumed that their training and priorities will ensure that a general manager is driven by different objectives. Paul DiMaggio's ground-breaking research on the characteristics of arts managers found that there had been a shift in their skill base (1987). Based on data collected in 1981, DiMaggio determined that recent entrants into arts management roles in the industry were more likely to have administrative experience and/or qualifications than their predecessors. At the same time, DiMaggio noted that "many administrators did have firsthand familiarity with the arts that they managed" (DiMaggio 1987, 2). This art form knowledge might suggest that arts managers were prone to the same passion and commitment as their artistic director.

Kuesters (2010) challenges the perception that arts managers (general managers) are solely financially driven and "artistically uninvolved" (43). Certainly, there is evidence of a higher level of business training among arts managers, but the assumption that this must be at the expense of an aesthetic education or appreciation has gone untested. Bhansing's study of Dutch performing arts companies concluded that both artistic directors and managers shared the same level of concern as to the perceptions of their performance among their peers in the "high art cultural industry," an outcome that was explained by the fact that those likely to take up employment in the largely not-for-profit performing arts sector had already demonstrated that they were very much involved in the arts (Bhansing 2013, 23).

Our study suggested an additional explanation. The presumed conflict between art and economy may be already resolved by the fact that the sixty-three percent of the general managers interviewed in our research originally trained as artists and had transitioned into management, though rarely in the same company. These managers have a deep understanding and sympathy for the arts and for the role of the artistic director. Experience in the artistic side of the arts enabled them "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).

Of those general managers originally trained as an artist, half of this group had studied the particular art form practiced by their organization. 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). One general manager observed that their background in the specific art form had to be managed, "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). However, as one particular general manager noted, regardless of the particular art form studied/experienced, performing arts companies face many of the same issues: "I understand the artistic quandaries that

Organizations get into, because they're exactly the same ones...they inevitably come down to a balance between the artistic vision and the financial reality. So, they're consistent across the board" (GM25). In this instance the general manager acknowledges the dual imperatives of artistic vision

and financial stability, yet does not present these as inevitably in conflict, but rather as a site of constant negotiation in an arts company.

Knowledge of the organization's art form may also translate into awareness on the part of the general manager of the needs and modes of working deployed by the artistic director and a decrease in unproductive conflict. A common theme emerged from this study: that it was the responsibility of the general manager to adjust and adapt their own workstyle to complement and suit their artistic director. 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 my practices around to suit him... it's 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). The 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 director are central to the vibrancy of the organization; 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).

As noted, much of the management literature on dual leadership implies that the two leaders function in quite separate spheres of activity (Landry 2011; Alvarez and Svejenova 2005; Miles and Watkins 2007; Auvinen 2001). However, as Kuesters (2010) has suggested, and our analysis confirms, arts managers constantly switch between financial and artistic orientations. The interdependency between the financial and artistic is then mirrored in the interdependency that Archer and Cameron argue lies at the heart of the collaborative leaders' relationship: each needs the other to achieve their goal (2009, 11). The shared commitment to the artistic goals of the company observed in many of our interviews may also be a factor in the low incidence of unproductive conflict, a phenomenon we address in the next section.

On conflict

As noted, dual leadership in the arts is seen as a way of managing the twin imperatives of artistic excellence and good corporate and financial management. These imperatives are seen to be antithetical in much of the literature (Auvinen 2001; Murphy and Pauleen 2007; Cray, Inglis, and Freeman 2007; Røyseng 2008), and will, in turn, lead to conflict between dual leaders (Landry 2011; Miles and Watkins 2007; Alvarez and Svejenova 2005). The findings in our study did not support the contention that unproductive conflict is an inevitable aspect of dual leadership; when conflict was identified, it was seen as an opportunity for open communication. It is in this area that the characteristics of collaborative leadership emerge most fully, as collaborative leadership is premised on the basis that the potential for conflict exists but that there is something bigger at stake for leaders to ensure that any conflict is resolved. Trust is then built through this iterative process of finding an optimal outcome for both parties, described by Ullah as "an active and often difficult process of working with other stakeholders to achieve a common and shared outcome" (2011, 13). Archer and Cameron make a virtue out of conflict resolution, noting that conflict provides an insight into the needs of the partner and enables the collaborative leaders to "recognize the early signs of conflict as useful warnings of hidden differences in objectives or priorities" (2009, 11).

Many interviewees talked about differences and challenges in their relationship with their shared leadership partner, though only five (out of forty-six) described events or occasions that produced a "conflict." For one interviewee, it was their dual leadership relationship that enabled the conflict to be resolved, and having done so, provided a foundation for future activity:

I've not had a position where there has been a problem between myself and the artistic director. But the conflicts have existed, when you have passion, and we may have a different

point of view on, but we worked it out, we resolved them and in resolving we became quite clear about what we were going to do next and agreed on. (GM21)

Another redefined conflict from a negative concept to a positive one:

I wouldn't call it conflict, I think it's called, if I was being fair I think I would call it honest conflict where everyone's able to speak openly about what they like and don't like, what they feel is necessary and what feels not necessary, what we can afford and what we can't afford. (GM22)

Based on these responses to the specific topic around the relational dynamics between the dual leaders, we sought to understand what militated against the type of conflict that might undermine an organization's morale and success. Some clues are provided by Reid and Karambayya (2009) when they concluded that, where conflict management is contained within the dual leader team, it can in fact be productive: "A vision is honed and evolved for the organization as the arguments within the duo explore the fuller possibilities of the vision" (1096). In other words, the conditions of the dual relationship itself were conducive to conflict minimization and/or resolution. This is consistent with Sally's (2002) writing on co-leadership, which supported joint decision making for successful relationships, highlighting that coleaders should have "veto power over any decision" (92), meaning decisions are truly collaborative. Together with a "willingness to sacrifice," decision making is not a stand-alone activity but occurs within a framework of a continuing leadership relationship of give and take (Sally 2002, 93).

We might think of the conditions under which the dual leader team operate to be conducive to successful leadership. In other words, the relational context of the leadership roles gives effect to particular leadership practices. Elsewhere, we have speculated that the relationship demands authenticity in the respective leaders, largely as a result of their proximity to the "other" (MacNeill, Tonks, and Reynolds 2013). The ongoing nature of the dual leadership relationship can in itself build trust, as each occasion of potential conflict is resolved and the leaders come to negotiate the extent of their shared and separate roles. Archer and Cameron (2009) propose that, in relation to collaborative leadership within groups, group members go through the stages of inclusion, control, and openness (197). Parallels arise in dual leadership relationships. Not all will reach the level of openness, but a number of the dual leader teams in our study demonstrated the interdependence and honesty with each other about their "hopes and fears for the joint enterprise," which Archer and Cameron identify as characteristics of the advanced stages of collaboration (198).

Conclusion

This research has sought to gain an understanding of the relationship between dual leaders in Australian performing arts organizations and analyse the extent to which it is consistent with, and/or diverges from, the characterization of dual leadership in the literature more generally. As noted, the study did not extend to the visual arts sector, as galleries and museums, with rare exceptions, do not embrace a dual leadership model (MacNeill and Tonks 2013). Intensely collaborative partnerships were observed between general managers and artistic directors across all art forms that were studied, with the exception of symphony orchestras. These cooperative relationships demonstrated a number of the characteristics identified in the literature on dual leadership. However, there was little evidence of the conflict that is presumed to underpin the relationship, given the twin imperatives of artistic excellence and organizational stability. This led us to propose that, in a

number of relationships, we were observing collaborative leadership, a special practice of dual leadership.

The most compelling feature of collaborative leadership was the inherent interdependency between the two leaders. The success of the company relied upon both entities meeting their own imperatives—artistic excellence and financial sustainability—and that one could not be met at the expense of the other. Achieving the win-win outcome for the organization overall required give and take, which when repeated over iterative decision making built trust and respect in the relationship. A high level of familiarity was evident in the mode of communication, being of the type found in interpersonal relationships, more resembling an ongoing conversation than a formal discussion. We suggest that it is for this reason that the least collaborative dual leadership relationships were found in organizations where this close working relationship was absent; namely, orchestras with conductors who were only present in the organization for finite stretches of time.

In most companies, potential conflict was managed through the existence or emergence of trust, shared values, ongoing communication and respect, and an appreciation on the part of the general manager of the artistic imperatives of the company. In our study, conflict was mentioned in only a few instances. Our finding that sixty-three percent of general managers had trained as an artist sheds light on the assumed conflict between the twin imperatives of artistic creativity and financial sustainability. Rather than dual leaders representing their “own” interests, a shared appreciation for the arts is likely to be at the foundation of the more collaborative relationships.

The vast majority of leaders we interviewed were in dual leadership relationships that clearly worked. However, a number of interviewees made reference to relationships that had failed. Further research on what causes these failures could determine with more refinement whether the cause was fuelled by internal or external factors or more personal issues, such as the capacity of leaders to respect, communicate, and trust each other. Such research would contribute to the appropriate content of arts management studies to ensure that arts managers of the future display the high level of respect for both the arts and their partner, as reflected among our interviewees. A more comprehensive survey, on the scale of DiMaggio’s 1980s research, could identify the current backgrounds of arts managers and seek to determine if indeed there is a statistical correlation between a background in the arts and success as an arts manager.

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