What's the Pointe: A Study of Leadership during Organizational Change

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to observe the communication process of a newly appointed leader in a professional ballet company. Over the course of several scheduled research days, interactions with various stakeholders and one on one interviews with the new leader within the organization are observed and recorded. This study will provide insight on leadership and leadership change from the point of view of new leadership. This leadership exposure across the organization will provide better understanding to new leadership, finding leadership identity, employee commitment within the organization and how new leadership interacts in various situations and how he perceives himself within those situations. An overview of the literature will examine self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy styles of leadership, organizational change, and communication during leadership change.

Key Words: Leadership change, styles of leadership, organizational communication in leadership change, self-efficacy, leadership self-efficacy.

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Introduction

A change in leadership- it happens all the time. A CEO is forced to step down and a new one takes on the role. A football coach retires, and the recruiting starts to find a new and improved leader. An educational leader takes a position at another school and the department makes a mad dash to find the right replacement. Everything can change. Looking through the lens of the organization, there can be a whirlwind of chaos and restructuring. Employees, team members, and students are subject to a new point of view. Things could stay the same or they could be completely different; regardless of whether this change is effective, it still happens.

What if you looked through the lens of those who have stepped in and must make the changes? What is it like for them? What type of leader will they be? How do they decide what changes and what stays the same? How will they promote and get buy-ins? What happens if they “fail?” What is their definition of failure? More importantly, how do they maintain self-composure in the face of conflict and adversity? All are valuable and relatable questions in everyday life, and even more so in organizations. What does a new leader need to possess to be not just a new manager, but a new leader? Then there is failure. Failure is the lack of success or one’s inability to achieve an expectation. When you are first introduced to a new position in an organization, the likelihood of you succeeding is substantially less than the notion of failure. You must master the craft of the position given to succeed. The idea that someone would hold a novice to the standard of an expert. Failure is a crucial component in mastering any role, but particularly in a leadership position. Failure is part of the process. So, what if you fail? Without failure, you cannot succeed. Failure happens and is often internalized. When you try something and society considers that a “failure,” people tend to give up instead of resetting and trying again. While failing is part of the process, it can impact one’s self-efficacy in the work environment.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

Self-Efficacy

Understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses and the materials needed to handle the day-to-day processes in any given situation is the simple definition of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Perception versus reality comes into play. If an individual believes they are doing an effective job in the workplace, but peers do not perceive it that way, the level of efficacy for the individual is lower. If peers feel the individual is effective in the task at hand, the individual's efficacy increases. Many factors can contribute to self-efficacy in the workplace.

First, self-efficacy can be derived from experience. The length of time or the number of roles associated with leadership can be a factor in one's self-efficacy. Another way of looking at one's self- efficacy is to look at the individual's personal accomplishments (Bandura,1986). Making strides in the face of adversity and despair can lead one to believe that they have risen to a challenge and have accomplished something great. Whether they are right or wrong, this feeling of pride can be associated with higher levels of self-efficacy.

The second factor that can impact efficacy is exposure. Exposure can be in the form of a coach guiding and directing his athletes to a championship season. It can be a store manager who an employee looks to for guidance and confides in and considers them a counselor and trustworthy. All types of exhibitions can lead to an individual's influence and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986).

The final factor is mental status. "The better one feels physically and emotionally, the more efficacious one will feel" (McCormick et. al, 2002, p. 39). Any one of these factors can lead to a higher level of self-efficacy, but is that all there is to be involved? Outside of this, one needs to make his or her own judgment and know how to get the job done. The way an individual is perceived in his or her own workspace is in direct correlation to how they will respond and evolve in the workplace (Hackett & Betz, 1995).

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Those with intense self-efficacy are more often than not the individuals who seek out action and are goal oriented versus those who simply say they are going to accomplish something but have little or no follow through. Those individuals who are action- and goal-oriented are used to running into roadblocks and having to recalculate to achieve and exceed their goals (Gist & Mitchell,1992). “A person’s judgment that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the work group, building relationships with followers in order to gain commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change” (Paglis & Green, 2002, p. 217).

Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) is people’s confidence in their ability to carry out necessary leadership behaviors, such as delegating, making decisions, and motivating others. There is a direct correlation between LSE and the effectiveness a leader has in an organization (Bandura, 1997; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Leadership Styles

In research, there are poignant variables that assist in productivity and development and that is leadership (King & Anderson, 1990; Osborne, 1998; Shin & Mcclomb,1998; Schein, 1985). Leaders create an environment within their organization that encourages growth and development. Leaders are the spearheads for their followers and promote them to learn and succeed. With a leader’s support, a follower can blossom into a future leader and surpass all expectations (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Van de Ven, 1986). A leader’s role in an organization is to teach, train, cultivate, and have a checks and balances system to hold individuals accountable. They are the representation of their organization’s brand, the face of the company.

Their image and what they portray can hinge on an organization’s success. They are the pioneers for change—to grow, everything must evolve, and it is the leader’s responsibility to create the promotion for change and get the followers’ approval by persuading them for the need for change (Rousseau,1996; Schein,1985; Trice & Beyer,1993). Four distinct styles of

leadership emerge in every situation- *Transformational, Transactional, Servant, and Charismatic Leadership*.

Transformational leadership has been defined as behaviors that affect follower attitudes and enhance commitment to the organization's goals; these behaviors can be observed and learned (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Yukl, 1994). The transformational leader follows the growth of individual leaders and the individuals the leader oversees (Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swammy, 2014). Transformational leadership sees growth developed over time and is more concerned with its employees and how they develop and grow than the actual growth and credit of the leader. However, the transformational leader does look at the big picture and is very structured and organized for the future.

The recognition the leader receives is what each employee has learned under their tutelage. Transformational leaders believe their employees can emerge better and stronger than what they walked in as (Harris,1985). These leaders are seen as visionaries and lean in with their heart. Everyone under their direction is in on-going development and the goal is to make them better and "different" for the betterment of themselves and the organization. Imagine Jeff Bezos as the prime example of transformational leadership. He pushes his staff to create new products and pathways. Amazon is at the top of its level and cannot be touched with the guidance of Bezos.

Transactional leaders consider quantity over quality. It is not what you teach an individual employee, but how many employees you can develop. Transactional leaders are more goal focused and less development focused. People who identify as transactional leaders are considered very strategic in their leadership capabilities and this comes across in the proficiency of their organization (Waldman et al., 2001) however, the organization for this leader will never be a success without the buy-in of their employees. Thus, this type of leader relies heavily on the innovation employees have to offer (Lahti & Beyerlein,2000). Consider a co-founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates. He is the epitome of transactional leadership with a clear results

oriented work ethic and also product driven. His mission was to produce new and fast for company profitable gain.

Servant leaders are stylized as those who focus on developing and nurturing and are more concerned with the wellness of those around them to promote the future of the organization. These leaders make themselves readily available to their employees with an open-door policy. Their motivation comes from motivating others. In addition, they would never ask anything of other people that they would not do themselves. While they may be the face of the organization, their responsibility lies within the four walls of their organization and the individuals that compose the organization. The 16th President of the United States proved his servitude when he ran for office. Lincoln was more concerned about the individuals that made up the country rather than the prestige of being the President. His success was the success of the people.

Charismatic leadership defines its style by using a combination of verbal and nonverbal communication with finesse and persuasion. They choose their words and actions carefully in order to gain the trust and commitment of their followers. They can make you feel confident enough to accomplish any task given even when they did not think they could. They inspire loyalty and obedience with a gleam in their eyes and a smile on their face while using the perfect words and tone of voice to make sure employees get the job done. Though sounding manipulative, they are adversely inspirational- such leaders in this style of leadership include Martin Luther King Jr. and Muhammad.

No matter the style of leadership, these individuals have their core belief system, and they look beyond that to imagine a core value set up for their organization (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). A leader looks beyond their own wants and needs and looks to define what is best for the organization. All styles of leadership value some level of fusion with teamwork and developing that bond, the also inspire their organization by making roots to show it has a breath, allows its employees to aspire to better things (no matter the motivation) and allows them to be

recognized for their efforts- because any good leader will recognize that a win is a win no matter if it came directly from them, or by someone or something they represent (Kouzes & Posner, 1993).

Organizational Change

Examining communication during organizational change is an important area of study to develop (Jones et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2001). Change is inevitable in any given situation but in organizations, at times, it is deemed necessary. Without change, there can be no growth or development. With change, a bigger picture can be imagined and then brought to life. Change can allow individuals to feel comfortable speaking his/her mind and let their voice be heard. It is challenging- but for forward moving, necessary. No one can pinpoint the reason the change occurs, whether it be conditional or situational. It can be deduced that change is often derived from the organization's demand for a different perspective (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Organizational change does happen in an instant…and over time. It is a longitudinal process that has no clearly defined time.

Several models have been used to explain this process, but the clearest cut model is that of Lewin's 1951 model in three steps- unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. In the unfreezing process, the leadership and its team (if needed), will analyze the structure of the organization and discover what they feel needs to be tweaked or completely changed. Once these procedures have been identified, leadership actively seeks to change the process so that the organization can function at full, top notch capacity. Once this change has occurred, and it is proven to be effective, the procedure gets refrozen and does not get tweaked unless viewed as necessary. Organizational change needs to happen in a candid forum. No one truly likes to change and "if it ain't broke, why fix it?" But to move forward for progress and production, change will occur to some degree, but it is seen as a constant spinning wheel with new policies and developments happening everyday (March, 1981).

According to Orlikowski (1996, p. 65), “Organizational change is an ongoing improvisation enacted by organizational actors trying to make sense of and act coherently in the world.” Change can come down to simple trial and error. Change can also be a methodical developed process- it all depends on the situation and the individuals surrounding it. Somehow it seems more appropriate to not call it organizational change, but organizational changing.

According to Weick and Quinn (1999), modifying to organizational changing gives the identity of the never-ending cycle and recognizing that it is never a simple process and the changing in organizations is always deliberate. In a study conducted in 2008 by Johansson and Heide, researchers studied three different types of advancement in organizational change- including using communication as a tool and using communication as an acceptable practice.

Communication During Organizational Transition

Communication is the root of any effective change. The questions that need to be answered during this transition are “what,” “why,” and “how” of the change (Beatty, 2015). According to a study conducted by Nutt in 1986, he discovered that employees were more willing to adhere to the change if they felt that it was necessary. “What is in it for me” becomes a necessary concept. If an employee feels as if they are getting something out of change, they are more easily persuaded to adapt, given that they understand how they are valued and what they will be rewarded with. Employees want to be heard- so if the ideology of the new leadership aligns with the employees’ values, they have something in common and the employee is eager due to the fact they feel that their voice will be heard (Niehoff et al., 1990).

A new leader cannot just go in like a bolder and start restructuring things to suit his or her needs- they need not only need to explain the why behind the new foundation, but also the how. Communication must start from the beginning and continue through the entire process of change. This should be done face to face with employees as most simple written documents (like an email), can seem far too impersonal to employees and they need to know that new leadership can put a face to the name- making leadership humanistic and approachable.

Being able to get on the same level as their associates allows employees to comprehend that leadership is aware that transitions are not always the smoothest and that while there may be rough times ahead, there is in fact a plan to make this time as easy as possible for all parties involved. It also allows leadership to give a clear-cut timeline for their developmental plan for reconstruction. This gives the employees an indication of how long they will be in a changing pattern, and they can adjust accordingly (Beatty, 2015).

Research Questions

Based upon the literature reviewed as well as the opportunity to access a top ballet company, the following research questions are posed.

RQ1: How is leadership enacted during organizational change?

RQ2: How does the leader maintain a personal leadership identity?

RQ3: How does the leader's style adapt to the organization's varied stakeholders?

Chapter 2

Methodology

After multiple decades of dedication to the Ballet Company, the current Artistic Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is retiring. The Assistant Artistic Director has been offered, and has accepted, the position of Artistic Director and CEO of the company. Having contacted the newly appointed director and communicated back and forth via email and Zoom, they have agreed to allow the researcher to follow and observe day-to-day processes of not only leadership transition, but the communication process within the company. The Ballet Company was founded in the 1980s and over the past 40 years, has become a top-25 professional ballet company in the United States. Admission for observation in this type of organization is very unheard of. The Artistic Director has agreed to allow full access to the researcher (excluding dancer evaluations due to the communication of personal and personnel information, and board meeting(s) that potentially would include a voting process).

Research was done in a qualitative, ethnographic manner. The researcher immersed themselves within the organization without being a willing participant in day-to-day activities. The researcher understood that there could potentially be biased to this study due to their ever involvement in the performing arts world and being a performing arts enthusiast. However, the researcher from the very beginning learned how to separate their passion from the professional. When the researcher was in observations, they were acknowledged by the AD but no questioning or introductions were made. While it did seem natural to be in that type of environment, the research never implanted personal opinion or judgement as to what was going on within the organization. The researcher studied organization and culture change within the Ballet Company. Observations were made—no opinions or personal opinions within the research. In addition to observations, the researcher will be conducting interviews with the Artistic Director/CEO only (see Appendix for questions). The researcher will not be interviewing anyone else within the organization due to the nature of the study as looking at leadership

change. If there was any communication made throughout the organization whilst the researcher was conducting observations (outside the AD), it was directly to the AD's administrative assistant so that the researcher could align days of observations with bot the researcher and AD.

Participants

Having received permission from the newly appointed Artistic Director/CEO of the Ballet Company and completed the application with the University of Tennessee's Institutional Research Board (IRB), the researcher will arrange to start observation.

Observations will be conducted over the course of two months. The researcher will observe the Artistic Director/CEO in what a typical day includes at the Ballet Company. Observations include one-on-one meetings with staff and other directors within the organization, group meetings with education staff, directors of leadership and additional meetings with individuals within the metro community. The researcher received permission to observe an annual Board of Directors meeting because a vote will not be conducted. All observations will culminate in two days of observation at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, where the company performs its annual production of The Nutcracker.

Observations

Concluding the Zoom meeting to finalize details of the study, the researcher was put on the Artistic Director's Calendar for a two day period of observation. These initial two days, totaling 16 hours, would consist of meetings with various stakeholders both inside and outside of the organization with the goal being to observe the new leadership in everyday work procedure without interference of the research. The Artistic Director also agreed to allow admission into the annual Board Meeting that would go over annual goals and accomplishments as well as finances leading up to the annual performance of the Nutcracker (researcher was emailed a link to Zoom but if able, were allowed to conduct research in person). Once the researcher was on site to conduct observations, the Artistic Director allowed the researcher to

schedule additional days based on the researchers' availability as well as the Artistic Director's. An additional four days were scheduled and as a result, the research had six days with 70 hours to conduct observation.

Interviews

Interviews were only conducted between the researcher and the Artistic Director. Opinions of his leadership were not intended or needed to be included in this study and so all questions and conversation were directed towards the Artistic Director. Over the series of the six days with the organization, the researcher sectioned off the IRB-approved questions to conduct interviews. No additional questions needed to be submitted to IRB during research due to the nature of the original questions. To the delight of the researcher, questions formed for this study aligned with the Artistic Director's organizational interactions. Each day's observations determined which questions from the interview guide were most appropriate. The questions were asked out of order so that the researcher could clearly connect the observation and interview data. On each observation day, the Artistic Director had scheduled 45 minutes to an hour for the researcher to ask him questions. This allowed for a more candid interview process as it allowed both the researcher and the Artistic Director to talk about what had just occurred during the day with little opportunity for lapses in memory.

Analysis

While the researcher was conducting interviews and day-to-day operations, common themes would emerge throughout the business day. Research was maintained in four separate notebooks and coded with one-on-one interview questions, daily meetings, rehearsals, and miscellaneous activities within the day of observation. Once these common areas were recognized, the researcher would make a note of it in one of the notebooks and highlight it. Within 48 hours of an initial research day, the researcher would then go through all four notebooks and color code the coordinating themes. Any important/valuable information that

could be included with the research was given a notation within the notebook so that the researcher could recall what had happened in the moment.

From the beginning stages of the thought process for this research, the researcher was certain that this entire paper would be grounded in self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy. They were pleasantly surprised that this was not the case after a few hours at the organization. What emerged and required analysis was the type of leader the Artistic Director is and what he wants this organization to become. The overwhelming theme that emerged was relevance—not just within the location of the organization, but also of the Artistic Director as a leader and how he maintains that relationship with all stakeholders. The researcher, instead of recording interviews (due to the fact that they did not want the meaning of anything to be lost in translations), took detailed notes with all observations and provided trigger words in the notes so that when the time came to start analyzing the information, the researcher could reference the specific details. Once all data were collected, they were organized in the fashion to tell a story from an ethnographic standpoint so that whoever read it would get the pointe. As noted previously, themes began to emerge within daily observations—while the findings and discussions may not have happened in chronological order, themes did. Themes were highlighted with the same color code within the notebooks that had recorded findings and then were strategically merged together to tell a story.

Chapter 3

Findings and Discussion

The Ballet

Everyone has a case of the “Mondays” and true to style, I have arrived too early and have no clue where to go. No one knows exactly what to expect- including myself. An email, a 13-minute Zoom call in my first semester of graduate school, and a second Zoom call later, I have managed to land myself in the lobby of the Ballet Company. My inner teenager is screaming, and I constantly remind myself not to completely lose my composure. This is a first, and not only for the researcher—Access Granted—to a world that only gains admission at the cost of a theater ticket. Over 30 years of the researcher’s life had been dedicated to this world, on the performance and creative side. This is a whole new venue and opportunity; now she is here to find out what really is the pointe.

A door behind opens and the Executive Assistant of the Artistic Director/CEO (AD) leads me up the hallway stairs and introduces me to a line of faculty members. Every single person there is elated by my presence, and I am taken aback by the welcoming. A voice from an open office allows me entrance to the room. Deep Breathe. It all starts now. The silence in the room is deafening. “You caught me in the middle of figuring out next season’s schedule. I am currently running on draft ‘C’.” AD motions to put my things down and sit at the extra table with chairs; I obliged. AD wipes his brow and continues to stare, almost burning a hole in his laptop. He’s nervous. The sight of this reminds me of the moment we first met on Zoom almost a year ago. What an absurd request for a graduate student to make: to follow a new Artistic Director transitioning into the first year of leadership. “I welcome the fear,” keeps ringing in my head. Just as I thought he was going to dismiss my outlandish request, four small words changed everything and here we both are—welcoming the fear.

Adagio

"I may have to have you leave the room for this first meeting. If needed, I'll have you step out. I am going over personnel information." The one stipulation. It was bound to happen. "I have set aside some time before lunch this morning for you to ask any questions." There was my reminder that anything can and would change in an instant. I was originally sent an email with an itinerary and interview time was slated for the next day. Where did I put my questions? Panic has set in. 30 seconds of anxiety go by and I am slapped back into the reality that there is always a copy on my laptop—crisis averted. It is still so silent in this boxed office, a faint sound of piano starts. AD's office overlooks the organization's in-house black-box theater where the master company conducts rehearsal throughout the week. The soft sound of the ivory keys drowns out both of our nerves, but not for long. Naturally, I am a talker. I can make small talk.

Somehow now I am feeding into the tension. Still nothing. The nerves are starting to kick in and the silence has now started drowning the excitement and activity from the Black Box Theater. There is a sudden sound from his desk. He gets up from his desk and walks out. He starts pacing the hallway back and forth as he checks his messages on his phone. The phone starts buzzing again. The first meeting is via phone with his current CFO.

Small talk commences. Catching up with the weekend and talking about "Plan C" of the next season. As soon as that phone rang, all his nerves seemed to dissipate. He had now become the only person in the room. Calm and collected. He speaks very calmly and in a controlled manner. From a nonverbal standpoint, it is clear this is a meeting he might not have planned for; through the entire conversation, he portrays confidence. Before he gently leans back into his chair, he grabs a pen off his desk and begins to tap it against his laptop. He then starts swiveling back and forth in his chair. The AD makes small jokes throughout his end of the conversation, showing his humanistic side. Although the observation is one-sided (as I never saw the CFO's face and heard only minimal sound from the other side of the conversation), the

echo on the other end of the conversation seems to take what the AD is saying in stride. Out of respect for the matter being spoken of, the call was not taken via Zoom or speaker phone.

The conversation transitions to expenses for the organization. AD and CFO begin to discuss allocation for marketing. AD's demeanor never shifts. His tone of voice never elevates; when he speaks; it is as if he is merely breathing and pacing himself, much like performing a dance piece or a calming piece of music. When dancers perform, they are not expected to give up all their best moves in the first few moments of the piece. Dancing is much like a marathon. You must take your time so that the entire set of what you are performing is as strong in the middle and end as it is in the beginning. If all the strength of a performance is shown right out of the gate, a performer will lose stamina and the dance falls apart.

Much like this phone meeting, he paced and prepared himself for whatever COULD have been said so that he did not lose focus of the result. The phone call ends, and the amazing insight is that this man was focused on the person and not the business. The person and not the business. The work/life balance of one individual was more important than anything at that moment. It is a theme that I would continue to see throughout the day (really my entire research with the organization); the way this man talks and operates is purposeful. He does not look at the bottom line first, he wants his employees to be happy at work and happy outside of the office space. If someone needs to take more time off to take care of family (as did his personal assistant as she was expecting her first child and the AD rearranged her entire workload himself so that she could focus on her family), or an employee wanting to further their education (the AD asked one of his newly appointed leaders that he would restructure anything to accommodate her going back to school for her MBA). Very similar to a servant leader, his success relies on the success of his staff.

Variations

As an individual who happened to be a bi-product of a yelling environment, AD does not wish to invoke that level of fear. "It's something I don't aspire to do." He believes that you can

deliver the news- both positive and negative in the same manner and it can still be effective. You do not have to yell to get your point across. He can understand what his “team” is going through- because he’s been there. The interesting dynamic about this leader is that he has played the roles he is now developing in the Ballet Company. Having been with the company for the better part of a decade, he quite literally has experience with all organizational leadership roles; as a result, he is able to (quickly) adapt to every leader he encounters.

The next meeting of the day is with the organization’s Production Manager. This meeting is taking place via Zoom as the Production Manager is traveling back to town and will not be in person until the following day. Before the meeting begins, there is once again small talk. Why was small talk ALWAYS so important in the beginning? It is about finding compassion in the workplace. “For some people, this isn’t the be all, end all”—it’s just a job. Being able to make the time for his employees, even if it is small talk, gives him a way to reimagine the workplace and foster a community within those walls for employees to find space to grow. For the AD, his life is work. As he puts it, “I was meant to do this.” His entire life was about the living and breathing for ballet. For him, his work/life balance was his balance. His mindset is geared to a 12+-hour workday, a balance that had never been geared to a social life. The AD considers himself an introvert. In fact, being an introvert is what got him into the ballet world in the first place. Ballet and dance were what he needed to foster his identity as a person.

When taking on this new role within the organization, the AD wanted to lead with as little disruption as possible. The AD soon realized that it was not about what “Nick needs” but what the company needs. Change is scary and change is challenging for all individuals in some way. The AD used these casual conversations (small talk) with everyone to gain a greater sense of empathy within his employees. As a result, the AD was able to set clear expectations amongst and has clearer understanding within the organization. These small-talk conversations have assisted in yielding clarity and assisted in yielding a lot of transition. The AD for himself has learned that he must “shut down” ballet. He understands that he is a workaholic, but when he

leaves the building, he has left the building. He now trains himself not to be consumed by work when he is not in the building. He occupies his life balance with fostering outside friendships, Fantasy Football, and completing at-home projects—whatever he decides to do outside of work, it is not related to ballet.

Keeping with the flow of individual leadership meetings, the Production Manager Zoom meeting continues. This individual is incredibly knowledgeable about her role within the organization. Researcher assumes that the aggressive tone in the Production Manager's voice seemed to be very argumentative via Zoom. However, it is merely a tone. Having the opportunity to meet her face to face the following day and how she physically interacts with the AD, it is resolved that this individual speaks and works with passion and the speed at which her brain operates is faster than the typical human being. It is almost as if it is the Production Manager's job to think five steps ahead of everyone else. The tone of voice this individual is exhibiting is passion, a passion with which the AD identifies.

Having worked with the Project Manager (PM) for an extensive amount of time, both individuals feed off each other's excitement as they begin to discuss the next season's performance line-up. The Project Manager is all in for the upcoming season, which solidifies buy-in for the two most important organizational roles, AD and PM. Due to the excitement, other questions emerge, such as financing and budget costs—will this season be the most effective to absorb costs and be able to capitalize on profit versus expenses. The meeting ends with a need for more information, more excitement for the future, and more questions. The group Leadership Meeting the following day will hopefully bring insight and better prospects for finalizing the upcoming season.

Toward making an impact on the future, the AD has made a bold move in hiring his new Assistant Artistic Director (AAD). Appointing the AAD to this position allows the organization to fuse classical ballet with contemporary ballet, a controversial and aggressive move from the AD in the movement for change and development. The plan is to dip their toes into the

contemporary world of ballet and integrate its principles within the classical world. The idea is to be competent in both. With the addition of the AAD and hiring outside choreographers such as New York City Ballet choreographer, this company is well on their way. This morning's meeting is to discuss upcoming travel at the end of the month to Mexico for research for the AAD's (next season's) original production inspired by Dia De Los Muertos. This production is a pivotal movement within the organization because it will allow a very visible community culture to achieve a new level of engagement with the community. A new level of engagement and outreach of the community was mentioned in every meeting observed that day. This meeting was to go over concepts for this production. Because of the potential timing and production dates, the entirety of next year's season might have just moved to "Plan D." The elephant in the room is that the AD is planning on bringing Dracula to the stage. This dead and monstrous production has not been seen by local audiences in almost a decade and would be the first time the AD would bring it to life. The initial thought process for Dracula was for it to end next year's season and set the cultural piece around Cinco De Mayo. However, with the inception of the AAD's Dia De Los Muertos production, potentially it would make more of an impact if both productions were highlighted in the month of October. "Plan D" has emerged.

The fear of the Mexican "Day of the Dead" production is that it could be conceived as "too contemporary," and he wants to know how far down that rabbit hole they plan on going. Collaboratively, they decide that the decision would ultimately be best to stick with classical with contemporary elements. Both the AD and AAD also agree that this would be an interesting fusion experiment if they utilized both the Ballet Company and the apprentice company, NB2. The apprentice company was designed, in conjunction with the ballet school, for dancers who are of age (17 plus) to test the professional world of ballet by serving as an apprentice for one to two years in NB2. While these dancers are not paid professionals, they get the opportunity to have the same level of exposure and experience as paid professionals.

These two individuals are incredibly compatible with each other. Even though their personalities are similar to yin and yang, they complement each other's style of leading nicely. As I heard the AAD whisper once, "That while the Artistic Director is very quiet, I am very Loud." However, the AD considers himself very much a collaborative leader and it shows. There is a healthy level of conflict between the AD and AAD, but the conflict is not undermining in nature. In this rehearsal, the AAD is serving as an assistant for the AD so that she can conduct post rehearsals and even though she is questioning potential choreography, the questioning is in a manner for clarification instead of questioning his skill (i.e., she questions hand positioning for a partner lift rather than saying "Why are you having him lift her that way"). For the AAD, this is her first commissioned position in a professional company of this size. For her, there is respect and trust to be gained. When reminiscing on his time as an AAD, the AD said it took several years to get the buy-in and gain the trust of the second company. No one could know that better than the AD. He, in fact, served as Assistant Artistic Director before the promotion announcement. The AD understands the ups and downs of earning the dancers' trust. There is also an element of buy-in with a new director. There have been a lot of conversations between AD and AAD to lead to this level of familiarity and honesty—always knowing from the AD's point of view that the AAD is completely gifted. The AD knew that she was the right candidate for the position because he wanted "someone who understands you but someone who does not always agree with me." That is what makes this partnership unique—they both have such powerful (but different) personalities, they both have more to offer the organization. Beyond one being quiet and one being a louder presence, they separate themselves when it comes to processing information. The AAD very much leads by her heart and interprets the validation from others words. Every research day within the company, whether planned or unplanned, would require assurance from the AD to allow the AAD to know that she is doing her job correctly. In direct opposition, the AD is very aware that not everyone is going to like you and that is just fine.

For the Artistic Director, there is no greater job on the planet. He gets to bring together his talents of being an artist and his business management education, working with both sides of his brain. He gets to help a dance community that gives him so much strength and confidence and he also gets to engage with the thing he loves most in the world all day, every day. When approached with what style of leadership he considered himself, the AD felt he always identified with Servant Leadership.

The Artistic Director feels he was led to help others in this organization. No such example could be better than his relationship with his Director of Artistic Operations and Strategy (AOS). This individual has a captivating story within the company. The AOS started with the Ballet Company as a member of the apprentice company, NB2, and as a professional dancer with the company for 13 years; she also went to college where she graduated top of her class in Business Administration. She retired from the stage in 2021 and became the Events Coordinator. Now, she serves as the Artistic Operations and Strategy manager. For the AD, this individual is seen as a mentee. Having the same aspirations as the AD does, he has taken the AOS under his wing and is guiding her development in the organization's leadership. Being able to witness the AOS officially being promoted in the AD's office was an honor as she was being recognized for all the work she does and has accomplished. When the folder was handed over with a new promotion and money, the AOS gladly signed. The relationship between these two is quite incredible. In addition to the promotion, the AD finds the opportunity to express his gratitude and recognize the AOS's accomplishments with additional fundraisers, such as the Nutcracker Tea (a tea held for audience members of all ages to get a chance to meet the cast and see a small preview of the Christmas show) or coordinating a performance at metro University hospital for the children's wing. If there is an opportunity to let the AOS shine, he allows the moment.

The opportunity to watch the interaction with the two of these individuals happened more than once. The AD believes that all leaders are created. Leadership to the AD is the process of

individual life moments. Growing up, he was not shown what leadership was through family life. He gained the knowledge of what it took to be an effective leader through life experience. He found (and now gives) guidance around sharp corners so that he can ease, and help others ease, into difficult situations, as opposed to how he puts it, “Hitting the brick wall.”

The ease with which he can work with the AOS is again as simple as breathing. The transitions that they have with each other are as seamless as a beautifully constructed Pas de Deux for the stage. They interact with each other just like a dance. Truly fascinating is the communication process. While his verbal tone does not change between employees, the level of comfort does. With comfort comes trust. To watch this relationship, is to watch transformational leadership in action. These two can be laughing about a post made on Instagram one moment and then the next moment, they are talking strategy for the annual Ballet Ball. The two are very calculating in what they say to each other, but it is a well-planned dance. The AD has so much faith in the AOS because he has trained her to do so.

But what about his dancers? As the Artistic Director for the Ballet Company, he oversees two separate working companies. For the AD, maintaining the top professional company almost comes second to developing future/potential professional members. A day filled with dancing is a beautiful concept, if only the pianist would show up on time. Live music is always a seductive element in dance rehearsals, but recorded music instead of live will have to suffice for NB2 until the pianist arrives. Before entering the dance space, through the glass doors, dancers can be seen engaging very little with each other. Then the AD enters. All mannerisms change. Thes tiny dancers are captivated by the mere presence of the Artistic Director. Small talk aside, the dancers approach the bars, and the class can begin. As the dancers begin the first sequence at the bar, the AD moves around the room to watch the technical structure of each dancer. He gives directions above the sound of the music; the tone of his voice is clear cut and solid. The words are “matter of fact,” but at the same time, he is still very soft spoken, as if it were a “test” for the dancers to see if they are listening. The only way to see if they are listening is to witness

whether they make the corrections. The pianist finally arrives, and the class continues. A combination of nonverbal cues, such as particular motions with the hands (the hands act as feet) and verbal cues (sound, not words) is used to instruct the company. There is a single dancer in the left corner of the room. In between each combination, the AD adjusts (gives feedback) for the individual dancer. This dancer, in particular, looks as if they are recovering from an injury, so specific instructions need to be communicated to avoid further injury.

As the class continues and the piano finally sounds, the AD's walking pace around the dance space increases so that he can observe all the dancers in class. His words of advice are to "Use the easy combinations." All the dancers looked puzzled. "Take the opportunity--don't not take advantage of the easy combinations." Still, the dancers are not connected to what is being said. The answer: "If you are going to slack on the simple combinations at the beginning of class, what do you think will end up happening with the more difficult combinations as the class continues?" A silent "Aww" roar seeps throughout the walls. At last, the dancers connect the need to control their frame and take the opportunity to use this control with the simple tasks because it will prepare you for the more difficult combinations along the way. "Take advantage of the opportunity to push yourself ahead. Don't miss out on those opportunities. It could be the difference of five extra minutes in your career." The life of a dancer is very short lived- from the time they are of age (17 or 18) until they are ready to retire, it is generally 10-15 years and of the small percentage of dancers that become professional to those who actually perform on the professional stage, is even less.

AD moves along and tries to put things into place as quickly as possible. He uses minimal movement and instruction for the dancers; yet, each dancer understands his instructions entirely. He uses a combination of shared language, sound (verbal) and gestures (nonverbal) to instruct the company. This is shared amongst all who are in the room, so it makes the class flow more effectively. Verbal communication is essential to the professional

performing arts world because it allows the performers to know what they can physically improve so that they are considered valuable to an organization.

When a performer is given verbal feedback, it is assumed by the receiver that they will physically correct themselves. However, if a performer (receiver) makes a correction and that correction is received by negative nonverbal cues, it can potentially harm the performers' demeanor (for this instance, the classroom). Or better yet, if an individual dancer is not given ANY feedback at all (neither positive nor negative).

The demeanor of the performer can also be effective. An example of this is the tiniest dancer in the classroom. All the dancers crave the AD's attention—it is only natural. His evaluation of individual apprentice dancers affects their placement within not only the organization, but also potentially other dance organizations across the country. The tiniest dancer was not an exception. As soon as the AD noticed her and indicated her gratitude toward her, she immediately lit up. You can see the spark and glow from her eyes, and she grows six more inches. Suddenly when she starts dancing again, she performs larger than anyone else in the room and you cannot take your eyes off of her. Every dancer in that building craves attention, especially the apprentices. Attention and feedback mean they are noticed.

As the combinations get more complicated, a more descriptive use of verbal/nonverbal communication commences- the AD starts to physically demonstrate along with verbal instruction. He gives an analogy to his dancer "Create your audience and tell your story to that audience." As the dance bar combinations end and they move out to the center of the floor, these dancers crave more and more attention. They lean into every word that he says and physically push themselves (whether the movement is correct or not). If they were drooling like a labrador, you would see it on the floor. It is as if they have been given a personal spotlight every time they are noticed.

Toward the end of class, the AD asks them to grade themselves based on their performance in class that day. He actively engages with them and wants to know what their

definition of a “C” (grading scale) looks like. The pointe of this is for them to start actively thinking about their next movement. There are blank stares across the studio. No dancer knows how to respond. Body placement is everything. If they were in front of an audience, what would the streaming of combinations look like and what would be the picture they would want to create? If the dancers were leading this class, what would their expectations be for their students? Basically, how well did they perform in class that day and how will they make themselves go further? Throughout the entire class, the AD is incredibly charming. It seems almost impossible for the dancers not to want to be a part of this organization—it is incredibly charismatic.

The Artistic Director refers to the dancer’s body as an organization—one that can be shaped to adapt to almost any circumstance or position. Demonstrated on original choreography commissioned by the Music Hall of Fame. The Dance is inspired by a painting installed at the Music Hall of Fame titled, “The Sources of Country Music.” There are two sets of couples in the room. The direction for the AD from the commissioner of this piece was that the female dancer needed to look spritely or elfish and the movement needed to be playful.

Dancers for this piece are selected from NB2 and no one can deny that the female dancer is the epitome of spritely. In addition to that, this female dancer is considered creative, self-driven, and has a strong sense of determination. Her male counterpart fits this mold as well and the two together are “no brainers.” For this piece, the dancers will use their universal imagination, essentially giving the dancers the allowance to use their own imaginations to convey the mood of the dance. This technique was trained and taught by the former Artistic Director (Now Emeritus Artistic Director). The smallest moments matter. Every moment counts. “When dancers are on stage, every moment matters. When they are on stage, it counts- it’s not just the big steps that matter.”

Body language is vital in a professional performance setting. When dancers receive verbal feedback, the goal is for them to make corrections accordingly. The end result is based

on how the dancer interprets the feedback and responds accordingly. The interpretation of the feedback given is performed nonverbally using physical body movement. Improvement is based on the dancer's interpretation of the verbally communicated feedback.

The front half of this piece was set on dancers from a previous session and this session is to conclude the choreography and make any necessary choreography changes. AD does not focus himself on the dancers initially—he studies the music. As he studies, the dancers go over the previously established combination. He walks over to the dancers and intentionally communicates through sound (noises emulating the music that the dancers are using). He is completely phonetic and then he moves towards the dancers. The pair is nonverbally inquisitive (they tilt their heads to the side, and they start walking closer to the AD, almost trying to get his attention to break the silence). They try to see what direction the AD is going by attempting to move through his phonetic communication.

AD zones back into space and begins to talk. He makes deliberate pauses in his speaking, to find the correct words. When he speaks to his dancers, the tone is not harsh or critical; it is soft in nature and comes across as supportive toward his dancers. AD draws himself closer to his spritely female dancer and starts manipulating her body. The idea that what he is thinking in his head is being communicated onto the dancer's body; in this instance, the AD begins to create movement on the dancer and guides her through the motions. Quizzically, the male dancer looks on, not exactly sure as to guide the female dancer but also where to guide himself. The whole concept of this piece is flirtation and desire for the other partner and yet the male dancer seems to be more concerned about his surroundings rather than the (female) dancer next to him.

Formulating the correct words for criticism, the AD tells the male dancer, "She's giving you hard vibes and you're like, 'Look at my feet.'" The male dancer acknowledges the statement made but does not seem to correct it on his body. Up to this point, the female dancer is clearly in charge of this story. "The transition comes from you…I know it's challenging." The male

dancer struggles throughout this session to truly be an equal for his partner; as a result, the AD seems to be running interference throughout his time with the dancers. He gives them a five-minute break to compose themselves and reset. This seems to help the male dancer's focus. The AD cracks his knuckles, starts pacing and thinking. The AAD turns the music on, and the AD starts to listen to hear how much music is left. Seven, eight counts and then the tag. This piece will be concluded, but nothing is set in stone. What is astonishing in this process of creating a piece like this is that the AD instructs with sound and not words. The relationship between a dancer and music is key in a performance. Both music and dance are structured in, and around, timing. The correlation between dance and music is why dancers can create movement to the sound and give music any explanation. The same can be said in reverse for music. Using words is communicating through written text or sound. Music is how we speak (i.e., tone, expression, volume and pitch), dance is how you express communication through body language. When a dancer moves, they do not just do it, they move through it.

The instruction commences and the AD continues to instruct with sound and not words. However, in this back half of choreography, if the AD does use words to instruct the dancers, it is so soft that only the dancers can audibly hear him. An additional set of dancers in the room learning the choreography is never directly communicated with by the AD. If they forget a step, they are not corrected; if they make a mistake, it is not acknowledged. Every choreographer is allotted so much time to set a piece on dancers; it is a timestamp for payment. The AD is no different; just because he heads the organization does not mean he gets whatever time he wants. He treats time the same as he treats choreographers (in house or out) without making special allowances for himself. Time is allocated for dancers after choreography is set to allow corrections and adjustments to the set piece. In this venue, more attention is paid to alternates. The alternate dancers get the time needed, as well as the cast dancers, to perfect the movement given. Ballet is a language and there is versatility in the language of ballet.

The AD has deemed this first year as the year of “Yes” to create a larger presence in the community, AD has a Zoom Meeting with another nonprofit organization (NP) who wants to combine efforts in creating a satellite program for the Ballet Company. The organization would be considered an anchor partner with this nonprofit organization as they use resources to bring the culture and voice of dance into underprivileged sections of the community. Unfortunately for the NP, while they thought they had come prepared to this meeting, they had not. The conversation over Zoom was very dysfunctional. AD was under the impression that the partnering organization would have a breakdown of information to present to the group (they did not), and once this information was received by all parties, they could begin to finalize plans and break ground on the development of this fusion project. Unfortunately- this is not the case. Without the proper communication, the NP assumed that the burden of finance and development, as well as finding a location, would fall on the shoulders of the Ballet Company.

Clearly, this was not what the AD had envisioned. He is all in for becoming relevant in all communities in his city, however, both parties were on separate pages when it came to the vision becoming reality. The NP assumed all resources would be given freely from the Ballet Company. While both are in the business of serving (The Ballet Company does fall under the nonprofit organization), as the old saying goes, “You can’t get something for nothing.”

While the Ballet Company could potentially bring in the body count, the resources given to this project would conceivably remove resources from the organization (i.e., money, time, faculty and teachers). Ultimately, the NP had no preparation coming into this meeting; while enthusiasm was surrounded by conceptions, there was no solid voice of foundation. The collaboration was put on hold until more information was researched and presented. Until that time, the Ballet Company cannot’ give their perspective on the project.

While this meeting is happening, the AD never shows his frustration. He does admit that you always need to be prepared for what you want to bring to the table, and you need to have clarity of intention. “There are so many ways to skin a cat.” It always comes down to the bottom

line. If it is a yes, “Tell me what you want to do, and I’ll go along for the ride.” The AD does speak in numbers. For him, it always comes down to finances as he is no stranger to having to make cuts for financial reasons.

Having taken the position of Chief Executive Officer in September 2022, one of the first obstacles was the financial hurdle. He needed to close the gap on the board loan by making a one-million dollar cut. Considering the average nonprofit organization’s salaries make up 65% of the operating budget and the average nonprofit organization brings in around five million dollars a year, a 20% cut in finances seems unfathomable. When he transitioned into the new role, he knew that there were going to be personnel changes. He accounted for five to six people leaving over the course of a year to help lessen the million-dollar gap. What he was not expecting was that five to six would be gone within 90 days. He knew from a personal standpoint that change was going to happen.

In fact, his “A-ha” moment was when he knew that the transition HAD to happen from a business standpoint. Initially, AD tried to make the transition within the organization a positive one, but it became wishful thinking. He decided to stop being positive and started becoming honest with everyone, including himself. He was upfront with the organization and let them know that cuts had to be made. The reality was, “I walked into the building knowing someone was not going to be there by the end of the day. I walked into an office to someone who had been with the company for over 20 years and when they left at the end of the day, they were unemployed.”

After the loss of employees (willingly or not), he began to invest in his people in the building. He had a goal for this organization and for the employees within the organization. He allotted four percent for individuals in the building. This way, he could reinvest in the employees and not elsewhere, or in new employees. He created vision boards: three to be exact—one for himself, one for his board of directors, and one for faculty and staff. First time walking into his office, you cannot help but notice the oversized Post-Its on the wall revealing the rainbow of smaller Post-It colors. From what first looked like an artistic collaboration on the walls came

thoughts and ideas in different handwriting styles. Some were single words of inspiration while others were novels of ideas. The goal was to get EVERYONE involved with the growth of the Ballet Company. The vision boards went over external conditions impacting the Ballet Company, 10 years of accomplishment goals, and how the board of directors can support the organization. This begged the question—what is the pointe and how are you (AD) going to get there?

The overwhelming theme that emerged during the research was “Relevance” and where do you toe the line between being not relevant enough and being too relevant. Being too relevant within the community means the organization is saturated in day-to-day events and that ballet is not accessible enough throughout the community. Being that if the company was to get too much funding from the city through artistic grants and saturation throughout the community, they would become too relevant and less accessible to the metro community. The organization would become too elite and only a certain percentage of the community would be able to afford admission or be granted access to any ventures within the organization. On the other hand, not being relevant enough would be not having a voice within the community; without a voice comes the inability to be given funding so that the organization can be promoted in both the local community and larger dance world. Where does the organization find the balance; more importantly, how does the AD find this balance for himself and the organization?

Brainstorming: not every idea is a bad idea, but not all ideas will work best in this organization. Leadership Meetings are where the entirety of the organization’s leadership faculty meets weekly to discuss and collaborate concepts (both current and future) for the organization’s promotion and future. After a rundown of the annual performance of the holiday classic, “The Nutcracker,” the group moves forward in strategizing for the end of the season leading into the next season. While at this pointe, the next season is still on “Option C” of what is to come and has not been announced officially, this current season concludes with the time-honored production of “Romeo and Juliet.” For the organization, this production needs to

capitalize not only financially, but also needs to capitalize on the community buy-in. AD is open to all ideas because there are no bad ideas. The question is asked, “How do we bring in the community and get them involved with also brining in a profit?” The usual customary response of a character meet and greet is suggested in the VIP Lounge for patrons of the company with the addition to the possibility of photos taken with the cast. “That already gets done with ‘The Nutcracker’ performance, it would be overkill.” (Comment not from the AD, but from a Director within the Leadership Meeting). Awkward silence kicks in . . . then the entire table of Directors look at the youngest participant in the room. “What if we tried and partnered with an online app-maybe we could partner with Bumble and collectively benefit us and the dating app? Maybe we could help them with adding online profiles or maybe speed date?” Almost everyone’s jaw drops when they realize what a potentially brilliant campaign could do for the organization. Not only would the collaboration help bring in the metro community but would also put them in a position of relevance with an international organization (Bumble) and put the organization on a larger platform. The whole group has become more engaged in the conversation of promoting the company to the point that it does not seem like they are talking about “work.” They are talking about being involved on multiple levels and it is exciting. AD knows when to give credit where credit is due. While he turns his head in the young leader’s direction, he softly smiles and says, “I really like that idea. Good Job! Let’s run with it and see where we can go with this.” The soft smile on the leader is the indication and validation that the AD needs to recognize that by giving the allowance for professional development amongst his leadership, he is cultivating a culture of nurturing and growth for the organization. Within all meetings with leadership, AD allows his leadership to guide the meeting’s direction by giving them the opportunity to be a leader within the group and allowing each director to have true accountability for their department.

There are absolutely times that the AD needs to reign in the group as from time to time he needs to facilitate the structure and flow of the meeting. For instance, after having a solo meeting with the Marketing Director (MD) and knowing they had excellent ideas that would

benefit the leadership, he encourages them to speak up and take accountability for their words, allowing the Marketing Director to have a voice amongst the meeting. AD says, “The MD had a great idea from her earlier individual with me, let’s discuss it with everyone else,” allowing the MD to speak up and be a leader within the group and not just a face at the table. Providing a space for other leaders to have an identity is beneficial on two fronts for the AD’s leadership identity within the company: 1) allowing others to have a voice and giving them the opportunity to take ownership of their position within the company and 2) allowing an individual to create their own pathway in their career. According to the AD, the average lifespan of an employee in a nonprofit organization is 18 months to three years. A nonprofit position is not necessarily considered to be a permanent choice for life-long work stability and a nonprofit is not considered a career-building type of organization. Unfortunately for nonprofits, such as performing arts caliber, they simply do not have the resources to cultivate positions within the organization beyond a director’s position, which is why it is so important for the AD to allow his leadership of directors to have the opportunity to develop the organization by developing themselves (with the guidance and acceptance of top leadership). If the AD’s leaders are developing and continuously challenging themselves, this affords him the time to look past what is going on in the walls of the organization and take an active and aggressive step forward in recruiting and hiring members for the organization’s professional and apprentice companies. Beyond that, he is also building connections with his leaders and not only allowing those leaders to commit to the organization, but also have a commitment to him as their leader. It refers to the individual’s involvement and the positive outcomes associated with an individual within that environment (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Saks 2006, there is a wealth of research revealing that a strong employee commitment leads to constructive outcomes, both for the individual employee as well as the organization. Two common themes that appear in all communication studies in reference to employee commitment: 1) employees’ mental, physical, and psychological immediacy when conducting their duties within an organization and 2) the continuation of that

immediacy within the organization for the individual employee that allows them to maintain interest and productivity within the organization (Robinson et al., 2004).

In this principal year as the AD/CEO, he has restructured his way of recruiting and, by recruiting, the reference to building the organization's benchmark in professional performers. Initially the AD thought of recruiting along the same lines as staffing administration; hiring is a numbers game and there is safety in numbers. Instead of playing the numbers game, he decided to be more strategic and think like a coach. Nick Saban to be more exact. As a football coach, Nick Saban has defined his accomplishments in the art of sport and recruiting is centered around “The Process.” This concept focuses on the determination of work ethic and pinpointing and perfecting details instead of pressures based solely upon the result. Saban stresses to his team that they need to concentrate on the little things, like practice drills or a single pass in a game—the pointe is that the result, and winning, means nothing if you do not have the skills to back it up.

The AD started creating his playbook for recruiting professional dancers; while it is true there is safety in numbers, the numbers are meaningless if they lack quality amongst them. In one month alone, the AD attended more than 20 auditions across the country. Classical ballet is at the peak of its finest, but the desire to find more diversity in bringing the contemporary aspect of ballet to both of his working companies makes it more difficult. Because of ballet’s predominantly white history, this element of racial diversity will always be a work in progress. He has put his name (and face) out there not only nationally, but internationally as well, by going to auditions, conducting master classes across the globe and starting the conversation with Grand Prix. Ballet Grand Prix was founded in Scotland nearly a decade ago to provide upcoming dancers with advancement opportunities around the globe. The professional ballet community can sculpt future performers by acting as mentors, judges, and recruiters to help develop professional ballet organizations around the world. Getting the opportunity to teach or recruit one of these dancers through this elite company is truly an advantageous opportunity. The

Ballet Company and the AD can put this growing organization on the map by showing potential prospects who they are, what they stand for, and what they want to accomplish.

New “blood” is an essential element to a professional dance company’s success. From the AD’s perspective, “Firing” a professional dancer is not a “bad” thing, if it is something that needs to be done. Something that he has decided to do differently this year is to hold evaluations earlier in the performance season. At the time when this research started, evaluations had already been slated on the calendar. Although the researcher was not allowed to witness dancer evaluations, the upcoming meeting between dancer and AD always looms at each visit; while specifics are not discussed, there is always a hint of tension in the air. By conducting evaluations mid-season, the AD has allowed each individual dancer the time to improve; for himself, he has the allowance to see if they (dancer) took evaluations to heed and is actively making themselves better.

One thing that is certain is change. It can cause conflict, both within an organization and within an individual. Change can cause worry and anxiety for individuals and create tension in the work environment. In 2006, Lewis et al. stated that there was a clear difference between publication and research identification when it came to communication in the workplace during change. Both parties noted that there needed to be participation throughout the organization for it to be effective, meaning that employees wanted to be part of the process. Communication needs to be given and received with an open mind and in a timely manner- no single person is a target for change, but all individuals want their information as soon as possible. Finally, communication needed to have clarity. When something is going to change within the organization, there needs to be a thorough explanation as to why it is going to happen and how it will impact the organization.

Opportunity is a huge element in the professional dance world. The structure for the professionals in this company follows. In addition to the ballet school that is available to the metro community, once a dancer is of age (typically the age of high-school graduates), dancers

are selected to become a part of NB2, the apprentice company, will, on average, spend one to two years in this company before they are selected for the professional company, or they are promoted to another working professional company. The uniqueness in this company is that once a dancer is promoted into the professional company, there is no other consideration—all professional dancers are of equal rank once they hit the professional level at the company. Most professional dancers must serve in the corps before they are promoted to soloist and then principal dancer. Ballet Company is unique—all dancers have equal opportunities to be highlighted throughout the season. This year, the AD has decided to mix things up with roles in each production. For example, this year in “The Nutcracker,” a female veteran dancer of the company is paired with a rookie male in the company. The reasoning was two-fold: 1) it allows a new dancer experience in an elevated role, and 2) it allows the veteran a chance to be a mentor and leader for the rookie performer. The combination only elevates the performance (as seen in many run throughs in rehearsals leading up to the annual performance).

The amount of trust that the veteran is allowing the rookie partner to have is unfathomable for many dancers considering they have only danced as partners for a couple of months. Most dance partners take multiple years to have that level of comfort and trust with each other; the dance pair has been in the same elements together for years and not months. By watching the pair dance and interact with each other, you would never know that this was their first major performance together. Much like the Artistic Director and his Assistant Artistic Director, the two complement each other well and the performance together is seamless.

Communication is the root of any effective change. The questions that need to be answered during this transition are the “what,” “why,” and “how” of the change (Beatty, 2015). Employees were more willing to adhere to the change if they felt that it was necessary (Nutt, 1986). “What is in it for me” becomes a necessary concept. If an employee feels as if they are getting something out of change, they are more easily persuaded to adapt, given that they understand how they are valued and how they will be rewarded. Employees want to be heard; if

the ideology of the new leadership aligns with the employees' values, they have something in common and the employee is eager because they feel their voice will be heard (Niehoff et al., 1990).

Leaders cannot just go in like a boulder and start restructuring policies and procedures to suit their needs. They not only need to explain the "why" behind the new foundation, but also the "how." Communication must start from the beginning and continue through the entire process of change. This should be done face to face with employees as most simple written documents, such as an email, can seem far too impersonal to employees and they need to see the new leadership to put a face to the name. A humanistic approach is more important during organizational change.

Being able to get on the same level as their associates allows employees to comprehend that leadership is aware that transitions are not always the smoothest and that while there may be rough times ahead, there is in fact a plan to make this time as easy as possible for all parties involved. It also allows leadership to give a clear-cut timeline for their developmental plan for reconstruction. This gives the employees an indication of how long they will be in a changing pattern, and they can adjust accordingly (Beatty, 2015).

Even though there is buy-in with a new leader and everything seems to be spinning in the right direction, not everyone will get the point. Most interactions with staff at the organization are seamless and productive with everyone on the exact same page and on the exact same sentence. What happens when you have a group that thinks that they are on the same page, but they are on an entirely different book? AD engages in coaching and guiding his organization while still allowing them to lead what they have been hired to do.

What if a group wants all the answers, but does not know what answers they want? The opportunity to see this faculty group in action twice was a highlight for the researcher. Few opportunities exist to see the negative side of theories in real time—at least while you are studying it simultaneously. Conflict in action is always an interesting concept. A group of

employees within this organization crave the AD's attention. That much is clear. What this group lacks is information clarity, the information they are given does not warrant a positive response, but the end result for them is resolution. With change in leadership comes new ideas. In this ethnography, it includes expansion to a second location in the community. There have been talks for a satellite project and this part of his staff wants clarification and guidance as to the resolution of space, cost, sustainability factors, and what this faculty's role will be in this project. This project is in the infancy stages, ideas have been formulated without concrete ideas set; however, this group is only concerned about "what's in it for them." The meeting where these concerns were aired was not scheduled by the AD. This meeting was created by staff to address concerns. And more than likely simply to vent; no specific ideas or plans were brought to the table other than "What did a second location mean for this staff?" There are many voices presenting concerns and personal opinions, but there is not an identifiable member of this group. In the meeting's confusion, the researcher wrote down. "What is attainable for this group?" The concern that there was no understanding of why the meeting was to be held in the first place was finally answered by the AD after the meeting concluded. The AD does not want to give this section of faculty any hollow or false hope by letting them hear what they think they want to hear. He understands they want results, and they want more; however, they are not focused on what is right in front of them. The AD's tone changes when he talks to them. Somehow it is kinder than I ever heard. To anyone else, this would have created the utmost frustration to the point of reprimand. That never happens. He does have to get his perspective across so that his words are heard. Straight and kindly, "Just focus on the moment and your location, not about something that hasn't happened yet." The room is enchanted with every syllable that comes out of his mouth. A lightbulb comes on that it is not about the information that they are "demanding"; it is about the person they requested the meeting with. They just want to know that the Artistic Director is on their side and that they have a voice. It is not about resolution; it is about visibility. Because he does not want this side of the organization to be so

concerned about the future but the here and now, he attempts to reassure them without damaging their dreams or them. For the time allotted, it works. Giving a group visibility can also lead to more tension and conflict.

According to Saks (2006), research reveals that strong employee commitment leads to constructive outcomes- both for the individual employee as well as the organization. There are two common themes that appear in all communication studies in reference to employee commitment- the employee's mental, physical, and psychological immediacy when conducting his or her duties within an organization and the continuation of that immediacy within the organization for the individual employee that allows them to maintain interest and productivity within the organization (Robinson et al., 2004). "What's in it for me?" New leadership must attempt to keep employees engaged and have their continuing commitment for the organization they are a part of—how?

There was a pleasant surprise (and genuine excitement), the second time there was interaction with this same section of faculty. They came prepared. They came with a specific agenda. They came with legitimate concerns and specific intentions. The specifics of this meeting were drawn out and spoken by a single representative. Is this the same group from a month ago? The group's concern is about a single individual within this group that is causing issues within this section of faculty. Other side comments are interjected with the unanimous response that everyone is having difficulty with this one individual. The single representative is trying to communicate (verbally) with the Artistic Director regarding this individual, who is not acting like a "Team Player." The AD asks for specific examples. This representative has written examples of how this employee is not only not only harming this section of the faculty's work culture, but also in their (the entire group's) minds, this individual has the capability of crippling the order of this section of the organization's day-to-day operations. This group has come up with solutions leading up to potential separation of the company. Looking at the AD, he is not at

all caught off guard with the accusations being brought before him. He does not hesitate; what comes out of his mouth completely changes the viewpoint and purpose of this meeting.

He begins to coach the group. He listens to everything they have to say. He hears their opinion for solutions. He advises the group that he wants them to consider this from a Human Resources perspective because this employee they are voicing concerns about has been with the organization for less than 90 days. This group feels this is a major concern requiring Human Resources' involvement. Less than 90 days is not even the length of a probationary period. In three months, what has one person learned to destroy an entire group? 90 days in this type of organization is barely enough time to go through a training period; mistakes are going to be made, which is why the purpose of training is to help them understand how the organization works. The AD tells the group that he DOES understand and that he will move forward with this meeting. He promptly surveys the individuals in the meeting, thanks them for their time, gathers his things and swiftly leaves the conference room. He rushes up the stairs to his office. He catches his breath and begins to talk.

"What's the next step in stability?" To him, there is such a balance when it comes to concerns and change. His desire is to not have to go through too many changes; when it comes to this group of faculty, it could become necessary. He loves that this group has passion for the organization and their program, but there is still confusion on how he is going to get them to the goal—or if they will ever be able to reach that goal. The fear is that they may not have the capacity of complete understanding and that he may not be able to use traditional solutions. All he knows to do is to keep reminding them that he is appreciative of their talents and commitment to the organization. He does not seem to understand that the way he communicates to this group is completely charming. They hang on to every word he says, almost as if this was the first time in a long time that they had been noticed and appreciated. However, the AD knows he cannot stand for "bullying" a new employee. When it comes to professional performing arts, there is not a map or diagram, or even an outline, for this kind of

training. Every professional arts program is different. How does he step in to resolve the human resources issue this group has created, knowing that it affects someone who had no knowledge of not only a meeting, but also these employees' feelings. Unfortunately for the AD, he understands a solution is not guaranteed.

Adjusting to new leadership can have its challenges, especially if the former leader is in the building. Even though the responsibility of being the CEO/Artistic Director of this company is no longer in the hands of the former, their presence is still known, both in structure and physical presence. A candid opportunity to witness interaction with the AD and the Emeritus Director (ED) began with one-on-one meetings in the AD's office. There is an extensive and meaningful relationship between these two, due to the AD's eight-plus years with the company. There is great ease, much like the relationship between Marvel's Magneto and Professor X. Both are disciplined and skilled in their own right; while there is a mutual respect for one's abilities, there is a hint of rivalry. It is hard not to feel reminiscent and nostalgic for what once was your career- the living history of what the ED has built. The amount of respect and loyalty and buy-in the AD has created in such a short time is quite impressive, which is only possible because of the clear connection between mentor and mentee.

The two begin with small banter and in conversation, the AD mentions that morning's Board Meeting. This specific meeting with the Board of Directors included the rundown of all numbers. There is a vast collection of metro community individuals amongst the Board, and it has been vital to the AD to keep diversity among the organization's corporate sponsors. This allows him to build a portfolio of metro sponsors to identify where and how the organization will stay relevant in the community.

While the President of the Board was spearheading the meeting, the AD's presence was in every step. This year's mission for Ballet Company is to inspire the community through dance, another element of bringing relevance to the metro community. During the meeting, the AD is given time to summarize for the Board what the professional performers have done thus

far in the season to inspire through dance. The AD captivates the Board with the overwhelming increase in ticket sales and introduces his newly hired Chief Operations Officer (COO), who is only in her second day on the job. The AD has been very selective about who he wanted to fill this position from the beginning, and he believes she is the perfect fit for the organization and the job. Within the meeting, the AD takes the opportunity to give credit where credit is due yet again. Being so close to the holidays for this end-of-the-year meeting, he promotes his fundraising director as well as giving recognition for the organization's recent wins. He is setting priorities and also reminds the Board to notice the growth in fundraising during this holiday as there is a 30% increase in donations during holiday seasons. Finally, he reiterates to the Board that while his goals are ambitious for the company, they are important for the organization's development.

The AD and the President give the Board an opportunity to strategize in smaller break-out groups. While they are in the midst of conversation with each other, a moment of conversation happens between the AD and President. Audible words are not necessary in this captured moment, as it is a very genuine connection the two have with one another. They allow themselves to drop their guard and giggle. At the end of this meeting, the objective is clear: the goal and bigger picture is globalization for this performing arts organization.

The meeting adjourns and the AD rushes up to his office to begin meetings with the ED. Once the small chat about the Board meeting is concluded, the two shift the conversation to "Plan 47" of the next season as well as the rest of the current season. The AD listens to the advice and ideas of the ED knowing at the end of the day that it is ultimately his decision about what he believes is best for the future season. The ED continues his presence in the building throughout the day, with a second meeting with a potential partnership to bring in acting to the company for the next level of performing.

Given that this metro area is a prime residence to actors due to its proximity to large filming districts, the idea of bringing this type of exposure to the organization is relevant to the

AD. Allocation needs to be considered before confirmation and this idea can come to fruition. The partnership of dance and film will eventually be a reality for him in the community, but the obstacle is always resources.

After follow-up meetings and a Day 2 impromptu meeting with the new COO fills the better part of the day, but before a final round of run-throughs happen and they move "The Nutcracker" to the stage, AD wants to take the time with the COO. On day 2, the relationship between the two is already in sync. The AD understands (even on day 2), that he needs to know what the conversations with his COO look like. He needs to identify her pointe in this organization's community. Personality-wise they can get along, but what is their business relationship going to look like? They bounce off each other's thoughts and their ideas are very parallel. Not having a COO partner has stressed the AD and he is not afraid to share that with the COO. That stress has become visible behind closed doors. But he is tired of running from the idea that "We've been through a lot." Yes- there has been change and he has had to wear multiple hats in addition to his new role of AD and CEO. Is it nice to just be in the moment and know not only has he made the right selection for his COO given that on day two, but they also already have a unique partnership forming. The organization has gone through a lot with new leadership and new employees in the building and different individuals have different roles in the company (consider the promotion of the AD from his previous role as AAD and the former Artistic Director in his new role as ED). Now that the relationship between himself and the COO is forming, their partnership will help build the mission of bringing ballet and relevance to the community. The impromptu meeting concludes, and it is off to Studio A for a run through of "The Nutcracker"- with the partnership of the ED.

Coda

This is the 15th year that this production has been brought to the stage and the first for the new AD. However, it is the brainchild of the ED, and his character is sprinkled in every scene. Understanding that the ED has always been an artistic creation character and the AD

has been more of a business mind, it is only natural that the ED is guiding this rehearsal. The presence of AD is secondary to the ED and his vision. This is articulated multiple times during run throughs and Tech Week of "The Nutcracker." In the last rehearsal in the studio before moving to the theater, leadership talks together in between the first and second act of the show. When the conversation begins, all eyes and ears are turned to the ED and not the AD. There is actually no moment for the AD to interject with feedback as the ED controls the conversation. As soon as ED is finished speaking, music begins playing and the second act begins.

After each act of the ballet, feedback is given to the professional dancers (company students in the production receive feedback from the dance faculty during their separate rehearsals). The AD squeamishly slides into the background for the ED to take center stage for his critiques with the professional dancers. The AD becomes one of the *corps de ballet* like the snowflakes in the final scene from act one while the ED takes on the role of the Snow King. The AD seems to wither and melt just like the snow falling (inside) from the ceiling. The ED, like the Snow King, commands the stage. During these interactions, the ED is giving dancers direction from a performance perspective and the AD is giving feedback from a technical, supporting angle that comes across as "cowardly." After all this time, why is the AD now hiding in the shadows when all this time he has been in the spotlight and has not missed his mark once? "The way I look at it is from a hiring standpoint. When the ED is in the building, when he is with the professional dancers, he is the same as a contracted, hired choreographer. My job is not to suffocate my creatives. I've paid for their time and their vision. I have my time as a choreographer, so I step back and give them that moment, whether it is the ED or someone else."

Stepping aside in the shadows was never what it was. It was a given opportunity for his professional dancers to get advice from an outside perspective and interpretation because that is what they get paid to do. There will always be opportunities for them to get advice from the AD through evaluations and casting as well as classes he will teach. Through his choreography,

he is giving professional performers the advantage of speaking his voice. With casting, he gives dancers a chance to be seen where they may not have been given the moment under different leadership or circumstances.

"I let my ego go. I am sharing the space to develop my company. I don't have to be the most relevant in the room (by being "invisible). They know I am in the room." The AD lives by the notion, "Fish for a man and feed him for a day, or teach him to fish, and he will eat for life." While he initially thought that taking on this position was all about him and making the decisions that would make him look the best- it was not. His voice is the voice of his professionals. It will be seen in every hire he makes to make this organization relevant enough in the community. It will be seen in the opportunities he gives to his dancers through casting. It will be seen in the past, present, and future. He does not have to perform to be relevant- he is a supporter and guide for his company for the organization to be relevant. That is the pointe.

Chapter 4

Research Questions

This study set out to address three research questions as part of the Ballet Company ethnography. The first research question concerned how the new artistic director enacts leadership as he transitions into the role. Next, the research question addressed how he develops and maintains his personal leadership identity given that he was in the organization under the previous CEO's leadership. The last research question focused on how the artistic director communicated with various stakeholders to see how he adapted his communication based upon the situation. Each of these is discussed in turn beginning with the relevant literature and closing with the connection between that literature and the data.

Enactment

Transformational leaders are nurturing and are incredibly self-aware of not only themselves, but also everyone under them (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Transformational leaders want their employees to think outside of the box and discover creative ways of solving problems and innovative ways of exceeding business plans. They are considered inspirational leaders, building their loyalty through not only their words, but also their actions. They are seen as cerebral and therefore need constant incentives so as not to get bored. They thrive on the unification of their followers, as it is always an aspiration to fuse them together (Bryman,1992).

Kouzes and Posner further defined transformational leadership as having five obvious and teachable standards: challenge the organizational process, inspire a vision amongst its followers, all employees to perform in alliance with the organization's (and leader's) vision, design the path for followers to travel, and promote followers with accolades (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). The same can be said about the AD's leadership. Having shown multiple elements of leadership within the company, the AD emerges with yet another type of leadership—Transactional Leadership. Transactional leaders consider quantity over quality. It is not what you teach an individual employee, but how many employees you can develop. Transactional

leaders are more goal focused and less development focused. People who identify as transactional leaders are considered very strategic in their leadership capabilities and this comes across in the proficiency of their organization (Waldman et al., 2001). However, the organization for this leader will never be a success without the buy-in of their employees. Thus, this type of leader relies heavily on the innovation employees have to offer (Lahti & Beyerlein, 2000).

Transactional leaders are results oriented, so strategy plays a vital role in their success. The way their organization operates and the information the leader brings to the table are a constant turning of the wheel (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Because these leaders are considered results driven, the relationship between the leaders' results-oriented mind and their innovative employees goes hand in hand—one cannot rely on their own individual skills (Amabile et. al, 2004). The idea of sharing information and goals to be met leads the transactional leader to produce a checks and balances system—a rewards structure.

Rewards are important to this leader and as a result, the relationship between the leader and employee can be ongoing, emphasizing continuous collaboration. Rewards are not only through financial gain, but also through hands-on recognition. Verbal recognition for an employee under this type of leader gains admiration and loyalty. There is a certain amount of power this type of leader carries; an employee might prefer the verbal reward versus the monetary one (House & Aditya, 1997). With this type of recognition comes power. Power is not often given in any situation; having that knowledge and power within an organization is very valuable (Brown & Duguid, 1991).

Transactional leaders are thought to be effective due to the reward system they can create for their organization. Setting and monitoring goals, collaborating assignments, and meticulous follow through are all part of the process (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). For the transactional leader, this is when their followers thrive the most. They are stretching their minds and skill sets to be the most effective employees for their leader; as a result, followers are

continuously encouraged to push past their boundaries and their goals to gain more experience and knowledge (Lu et al., 2006). There is no lack of will, drive, and talent when a transactional leader has the full attention of followers.

However, if the employee is not meeting and exceeding goals (i.e., an evaluation of an employee's performance), will more than likely take place and potentially performance evaluations will come into play (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Amabile et al. (2004) (1983) argue it is paramount for transactional leaders also possess creative or subject expertise as well as motivational skills. This type of leader is strictly business—they are driven by results and production. Because a transactional leader is so willing to share their skill set to its followers, the expectation for them is not to fail, but to always succeed and surpass (Stembert & Lubart, 1999). It is frustrating for this type of leader to not accomplish goals, especially since it has given everyone all the information possible to reach the target.

Charismatic leadership is a crucial factor in organizational communication. The Greek philosopher Plato, who was the pioneer in the creation of a structured political and administrative system, noted that charisma was essential in leadership (Takula, 2007). According to Weber (cited in Gerth & Mills, 2014), charisma is about grace as a gift to others. Charisma describes unappointed individuals who have a following of members who are in despair and need guidance and see the individual as the authority to solve their crisis. Charismatic leaders are incredibly energetic and outgoing, can break stereotypical boundaries, and are career trend setters (Gerth & Mills, 2014). These types of leaders are seen as having the ability to resolve problems and thus always emerge during chaotic and crisis-filled situations and are generally viewed as an invented type of solution. Because the charismatic leader is not necessarily an authority who is typically sanctioned, they are not part of the general daily operations. They look beyond the monotony of everyday tasks, and they (and their ideas), become the motivation for the progression of the organization (Aaltio-Marjosola & Takala, 2000). In the context of today's production in organizations, charismatic leaders aren't

necessarily known for financial and planning—they are typically the “idea man.” However, they do think outside of the box with their innovative planning, they give the organization freedom to develop the ideas into successful implementation and stability (Butler,1991).

According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), a reliable leader portrays four features- (1) *Self-awareness*: an individual’s own personality/individuality and the ability to understand their individual strengths and weaknesses, (2) *Relational transparency*: being able to be candid and honest with your relationships. Within an organization, it is the leader’s ability to be clear and consistent and relatable with their policies and procedures as well as being transparent with its employees, (3) *Processing Information in a balanced way:* being able to analyze information at every angle and come to a well-informed decision that is best for the organization, (4) *Internalized moral perspective:* genuine (reliable) leader often fuse their personal moral viewpoint when coming to the best conclusion for the organization.

The level at which any form of leadership plans to display to its organization becomes a vital role in how that organization will implement this form of genuine communication. In this form of leadership, individuals display their own strengths and weaknesses to their organization; they need to be vulnerable so that they can openly admit their mistakes in the leadership process. They need to allow themselves room for criticism towards the ideas that they bring to the table. They also need to allow themselves to be the expression for their organization (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Within leadership, employees are appreciated for their furor, allow themselves to be vulnerable with leadership and candid with their ideas and expectations. This exchange of information and ideas allows for full disclosure in the workplace environment, allowing more offspring of ideas and productivity (Stirton & Lodge, 2011).

According to Mazutis and Slawinski (2008), there is not a large amount of research that demonstrates this type of culture in an organization to be consistently true; however, the research that has been completed, demonstrates how the reliability of leadership within an organization increases the culture of the organization to be transparent and productive society

(Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).. For an organization's employees to have an increased confidence in its leadership, they (leadership) must gain the faith of the organization across all realms- not just with the organization, but with employees, groups and teams, and the organization, there must be a consistent level of lucidity (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). The goal for this type of leader is to use their communication so effectively that it inspires the ones who follow them to reach their specific target. With a creative mindset, they will use their words to design a bigger image in the minds of their followers and inspire them to keep pushing forward (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Part of this process includes the allowance of shared information and ideas as well as decision making.

In organizational terms, a manager is an individual who has authority over everyday operations in a section of (or whole) company, including its employees. Often, a manager oversees a small portion of a larger company and reports to a higher level of governing. For example, a choir director in a local high school is the classroom manager and reports to either an Assistant Principal or the school's principal directly. Retail managers have control of day-to-day operations and their employees at the location, yet they report to a District Manager who governs a portion of managers in a territorial area. A manager has certain roles to adhere to in an organization.

Depending on the situation the AD finds himself in during the day, he will decide what characteristics and styles of leadership he is bringing to the table. Although the AD is a self-proclaimed servant leader, he exhibits every style of leadership presented in this focused material. During the Zoom meeting with potential new partners to expand the company in the metro area, the other party did not come to the meeting prepared. All the AD wanted to know was the bottom-line numbers and those could not be provided. If there had been better, finite details from the other partner, this particular Zoom meeting could have resulted in a partnership. This meeting was considered very transactional for the AD; as a result, he shifted his way of

thinking to that style. “What’s in it for the Organization” and the bottom line were essential for him to make a decision; there was no result and therefore, he could not take action.

While his overall goal is to inspire his team of employees to want more and to bring the world of dance to the surrounding community, the AD presents unique ways of transformational leadership, particularly with his AAD and his AOS. Since this is a first-time residency for his AAD, the line of communication between the two is constant and daily so that he is able to encourage her at each step of her journey with the company and so she feels secure in the position of leadership she is holding. Without his encouragement and follow up, the potential for floundering would become evident. With his AOS, he has known her for many years and there is a mutual level of trust, respect, and admiration. The AD is very aware of the AOS’s career goals and her wanting to one day have the position he currently holds. He supports her in every venture, including supporting her desire to further her education. She, in turn, brings her best ideas and knowledge to the table and is always prepared for a challenge. As an example, he had entrusted her to hire a new Company Manager. Even though the decision would ultimately be his, he values her opinions and information from the interviews. Working together as partners makes each other better.

The AD’s charm shines through with his interactions with his apprentice company. He is a man who understands the value of his words. He learned very quickly, “Once you put something out there, you can’t take it back.” Because he understands that value, he is able to select the most appealing words for his apprentice company class to get the results he wants. By telling them to “Do not miss the opportunity in the simple combinations,” he gives them insight on how not to take advantage of the small things, but to take advantage of every opportunity when they are allowed to dance. He understands their craving for attention and the desire to be promoted into a professional company, which is why he teaches these classes to begin—he wants to be a part of their process, to become the best professionals they can be.

It is a bold statement that for any leader to be a successful one, the foundation of the leadership needs to be grounded in reliability. A leader being their truest self in any situation is vital for an organization to gain one's trust. It is a remarkable one to witness as well. Throughout the research study, no matter if it was with leadership, dancers, teachers, or Board members, the AD never changed who it was to accommodate who he was in the room. He values every single one of his interactions. With the deepest sincerity, as much as a dancer craves attention and recognition, the AD wants the same level of success for the organization, but without changing his character. Beyond being a reliable leader, he is also a leader with integrity.

Personal Leadership Identity

In organizational terms, a manager is an individual who has authority over everyday operations in a section of (or whole) company, including its employees. Often, a manager oversees a small portion of a larger company and reports to a higher level of governing. For example, a choir director in a local high school is the classroom manager and reports to either an Assistant Principal or the school's principal directly. Retail managers have control of day-to-day operations and their employees at the location, yet they report to a District Manager who governs a portion of managers in a territorial area. A manager has certain roles to adhere to in an organization. First, there are i*nformational roles*, which are a monitoring position or a representative of the organization. Managers are direct representations of the location overseen. They are responsible for rules and regulations as well as operations and bottom lines of their domain. It is their responsibility to make sure everything runs smoothly. Second, managers with *interpersonal roles* act as a liaison between corporate and local properties. If information is given at the corporate level, it is the manager's duty to administer that information to the base level (to their employees). It is also the manager's responsibility to act as a role model and make sure they are an example to their employees. Finally, a manager has *decisional roles*. In this role, the manager acts as the resource for the location. Any decisions that have been made through the hierarchy system in the organization must be implemented

through management. As such, the manager becomes the authority for all decision making and strategic planning for the location so that each location runs smoothly (Rice University, 1999-2003). But is a manager a leader?

Most studies would contradict that a manager is a leader. In fact, a debate that has gone on for decades is that managers are individuals who can be trained and created, and leaders are given the trait from conception (Greenberg, 2013). Leaders can inspire and pull motivation from their peers and followers. Leaders are visionaries who can physically create their vision amongst their team. Leaders are considered individuals who can give natural support and encouragement to the team they manage and inspire those teams to be their best.

Both a manager and a leader have a controlling stake over a group of employees—the debatable difference being that while leaders can be managers, not all managers are leaders. Managers often have limited ability to control what they are responsible for. Managers oversee projects and locations while leaders have the individual capacity to be innovators and think and react differently. Managers answer to a hierarchy chain of command while leaders can be considered the top tier of that hierarchy (Waters & Johnstone, 2022). Managers lead with their head and leaders lead with their heart.

The AD understands that the buck starts and ends with him. which is why on the last day of research, he was still configuring next season's line up and was on "Version Oh Who Even Knows at This Point." While he wants his organization to have a balance and he is aware that he needs to give himself a break from ballet, this has not stopped him from being the job every second. Understanding that you may not satisfy everyone all the time, you can indeed try for the best outcome in any situation. Because he has been on dozens and dozens of versions of a performance season, he looks at that line up not only from a dancer's perspective (he does-because casting matters), but also from financial, production, and community standpoints. Whatever the end result for that season line up will be, it will benefit all parties, including the AD.

Stakeholder Communication

Verbal messages are communicated in both spoken and written words to give and receive messages. Verbal vocabulary is considered shared information amongst individuals. Verbal communication is usually spoken communication; however, there are times where it is considered written as well. Verbal communication is language. Verbal communication is rule-governed. “The ability of human language to convey an infinite number of messages and to form and develop new concepts is based on the unique and universal properties of the verbal code” (Lanigan, 1994 p. 15). Examples of verbal communication include talking, emotions (such as laughing or screaming) and text. Verbal messages are the audible words sent and received to one another. They are shared information among individuals. Verbal communication typically is audible communication, but it can also be considered written word. Verbal communication is about language. Verbal communication is ruled by rules. Examples of verbal communication include audible emotions (such as shouting or whispering) and text. In the professional performing arts venue, verbal communication is vital as it allows the performers description of what they physically can make improvements on.

Nonverbal communication is the exchange of messages or signals using no sound. Examples include eye contact, gestures, posture, facial expressions, and body movement/placement. Body language is a huge element when it comes to a performer (receiver). While with the Artistic Director, there were several instances where nonverbal communication could be interpreted. For example, having received information from the very first day of observation, that the AD was trying to plan out the following performance season, there were often in down times that while the researcher was observing the AD, you could see that he was stressed and potentially wiry due to him holding his forehead in his hands or tossing back into his chair and throwing a pin down on his desk. In meetings (in particular with his disorganized staff meetings), you would oftentimes see him leaning into his chair and crossing his arms, noting the frustration he might have been feeling. While the tone of his voice never

changed and he was consistent throughout observations with the same tone with all employees, he did show signs of nonverbal cues that would indicate frustration or stress.

The researcher stands by the comment that the AD never changed who he was depending on what situation or who he was working with. However, what the researcher does recognize is that it was not about changing who he was, but noticing the nuances that came along with certain interactions. The AD is not just the Artistic Director of a metro community professional dance company. He is a recruiter who must interact with other directors from across the country and understand that all directors are vying over the same dancer that you want- because they want the best too. He's the Chief Executive Officer of a non-profit organization. He answers to a Board of Directors—a Board with which he has created a marvelous relationship. The small joking banter seen between the President and the AD/CEO during breakout sessions of a meeting showed the level of comfort the two have with each other- and it also showed his value as a leader. The excitement from an executive board member who happenstance is an alum of the researcher's university. This board member did not have to be so generous with their words of the AD. The smile on her face said enough- they were thrilled to have them there as their principal lead.

With the positive in leadership, there are negative aspects of any job. That does not faze this leader. When communicating with his haywire group of staff members in multiple meetings, he knows that they just want to be heard; he listens and tells him as much. They straighten up in their chairs and they gleam with excitement. While he is honest with them and tells him that he does not have all the answers, he does know that everyone wants to be seen and heard and that it is good to be heard by the leader and although the researcher did misinterpret the AD stepping into the wings of the curtain and allowing the ED to have his solo moment center stage- he was merely giving a choreographer, a hired creator the opportunity to take their moment center stage- because that is what any creative is hired to do.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to see leadership change through the new leader's eyes and to fuse the passion of learning with the passion of the creative arts—more specifically, the voice of dance. It was simply to enact communication study through dance. The opportunity fell into my lap by pure happenstance. A simple internet search provided the opportunity to create a connection. A single email led to a Zoom call. A 13-minute Zoom call led to a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Admission to a professional dance company does not happen. The elusive and exclusiveness of these types of organizations is rare, if it happens at all. It is a privilege to get the opportunity to perform professionally. Many researchers study leadership and changes in leadership because they occur frequently; the chance to study leadership change as it is occurring is much more elusive.

Two gaps exist in the literature. First, without seeing change in real time, you do not truly know what it looks like. Second, having this much insider access brings challenges associated with not becoming part of the organization and influencing the people involved, their behaviors, and the data collected. In this case, personal attachment to the Ballet Company and its new leader was not compromised. We shared many conversations that allowed my interview questions to be answered; in fact, on the last day of our time together, the artistic director had set aside time to answer the remaining questions and there was only one left. The passion for the performing arts and desire for organizational knowledge fueled the study to find an authentic voice.

The true test of leadership change is time. It can be the enemy or friend. It can fuel the fire or extinguish the flame. It takes time for change to happen, especially if that change is implemented correctly. Ideas need to be formed. Relationships need to develop. Things must be let go or removed from the organization. For a new voice to be heard, an old one needs to go

silent. They say it takes time and it is true. Three years, 36 months, reveals where a (new) leader will land, and the difference will be noticed.

Future research potential could be stifled due to allowance into an organization. If there is future research, a relationship between the organization and the researcher needs to be established and developed. An impression needs to be made- on both ends. If permission is granted, a follow-up study is suggested to record how leadership change has impacted the leader and the organization. This type of study can be conducted in any type of organization, the difference being that if one did not witness the first act, how can/will they be able to witness and record the second act? Future research (in any organization) will show if leadership change affects organizations in different ways and how different leadership styles develop organizations. Further research could also expand into this type of organization by allowing researcher admission to the performing arts organizations. The limitation being that not every company would allow themselves to be this vulnerable for this type of research and it is very rare that this type of contact could be made. Having said that, it could be possible for admission to these types of organizations now that this study has been observed and recorded. It is difficult to be the first, but it is easier for others to join in this level of vulnerability.

Most research on leadership change is conducted through the eyes of the organization and not the leader. Future research could include research on other leaders transitioning into new roles- the limitation being that you never know when that is going to happen, and just like this researcher, another researcher might have to stumble upon it.

This study was to tell a story about the present moving into the future. That’s the pointe.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What's your leadership style?
2. How do you think your leadership style will impact the company?
3. What do you think your biggest obstacle will be as Artistic Director?
4. What has been the hardest transition and why? What has been the easiest and why?
5. What's the most important goal you've set for yourself in the first year?
6. What similarities do you and previous leadership have? What are the differences?
7. What made you apply for, and ultimately accept, this position?
8. What's the most impactful change you have for the organization? Why do you feel like it's important?
9. What do you think is your greatest strength? Why? How would you ever consider this a weakness?
10. What is one motto you live by as a leader and why?
11. If there was one thing you could change about yourself as a leader, what would it be and why?
12. Where do you see the organization in 3-5 years? What steps will you take to accomplish this?
13. What type of growth (expectations) do you have for the company?
14. How do you recruit? What do you think the best tips/tricks are for recruiting?
15. What is your ultimate goal for yourself?
16. What has been your biggest asset during this transition? Why?
17. What made you choose this organization?

Vita

Traci Lively began he higher education at the University of Memphis, where she studied Communication, Film, and Dance. After being accepted into the University of California, Los Angeles for a second degree in Film, Traci put her masters work aside and moved to California to pursue writing in California. After a twenty year absence from higher education, Traci will complete her masters in 2024, and start her PhD in Communication Studies at the University of Tennessee in the fall of 2024. Traci Lively plans to focus her research on performing art education in the public school system.