

THE STUDIO THEATRE:
AN ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSION PLAN THEORY V. PRACTICE

By

Michelle White Linett

Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

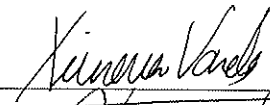
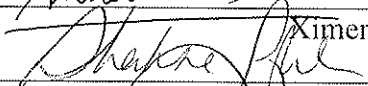
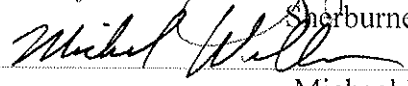
the Requirements for the Degree of


Master of Arts

In

Arts Management

Chair:


Ximena Varela

Sherburne Laughlin

Michael Wilkerson


Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Date

May 2, 2011

2011

American University

Washington, D.C. 20016

THE STUDIO THEATRE:
AN ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSION PLAN THEORY V. PRACTICE

BY

Michelle White Linett

ABSTRACT

Succession Planning is a concept that is becoming more necessary within organizations, especially non-profit arts organizations that have had a leader in their position for more than 25 years. The Studio Theatre in Washington, D.C., recently underwent a leadership transition of the Artistic Director position; a position that was, up until the transition, filled by a Founder who had been in the position for over 35 years. Founder-driven non-profit arts organizations tend to follow a certain pattern that sometimes described as “Founder’s Syndrome,” where the Founder tries to maintain all control of the organization and its departments. This project researches succession plan theories and analyzes these against the real-life case study of The Studio Theatre’s succession plan and its execution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE PROJECT AND ITS RELEVANCE.....	3
3. RESEARCH METHODS.....	5
4. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS	7
Succession Planning.....	7
In non-profit Organizations.....	7
In for-profit Organizations.....	10
Founder's Syndrome.....	12
Observations of The Studio Theatre.....	16
5. LESSONS LEARNED FROM STUDIO THEATRE'S TRANSITION...	23
Involve the Board.....	23
Long-term Planning.....	25
Involve the Staff.....	26
Leave Notice.....	27
6. NEW SUCCESSION PLAN GUIDELINES FOR THEATRES.....	29

7. CONCLUSION.....	32
APPENDICES.....	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	65

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“The founder position, of course, can never be taken away. It deserves respect and continued acknowledgement.”

-Susan Kenney Stevens, author of *Nonprofit Lifecycles*

Talking about a founder leaving is always an emotional task, especially for the people who have grown with the organization. I’d like to thank Joy Zinoman, Founding Artistic Director of The Studio Theatre; Susan Butler, Chair of The Studio Theatre Board of Trustees; and Roma Rogers, Director of Education, for allowing me to interview them regarding this subject. Their knowledge of, emotional attachment to, and utmost concern for The Studio Theatre are truly worth admiring.

INTRODUCTION

What happens to a theater company if the Founding Artistic Director of more than 30 years suddenly passes away? What happens to a dance company if their Executive Director of over 25 years announces his retirement? If these organizations do not have a succession plan in place to ensure a successful transition to new leadership, then the organization can suffer. Donors have been known to freeze donations to organizations in this situation until they feel trust in the organizations health and future again.¹ Without a plan in place, Board members may become panicked when the Artistic Director announces their retirement, or worse, if they suddenly pass away. Employee morale may decrease, and the success of the organization may halt.

As defined in Rothwell's book *Effective Succession Planning*, succession planning is "any effort designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization, division, department, and strategic application of key people over time."² On September 16, 2009, The Studio Theatre announced that Joy Zinoman, Founding Artistic Director for over 35 years, would on August 31, 2010. What does this mean for the organization? Is there a succession plan in place, and if so, does this plan contain

¹ S. Begin, "Following The Leader; Nonprofits Find Replacing CEOs From Within Could Save Money On Salaries And Training, Help Focus." (*Crain's Detroit Business*, April 28, 2008), 11.

² William J. Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*. (New York: AMACON, 2001), 10.

steps that have been claimed by experts to result in a successful transition? In this analysis, I will research recommended succession plans and analyze these steps against The Studio Theatre's plan.

THE PROJECT AND ITS RELEVANCE

On September 16, 2009, Joy Zinoman, the Founder and then Artistic Director of The Studio Theatre, held a reception in the Studio's 3rd floor atrium, where high donors, members of the press, foundation and corporate directors, artists, the Board, and staff were invited. In the invitation text, it did not specify the reason for the reception, simply the fact that there was going to be "an exciting announcement." When the Studio mailed the invitation, the staff received numerous calls asking the reason for this announcement; however the staff did not inform anyone of the secret behind the invitation. The evening of the reception, Zinoman announced her retirement, effective one year from that date, on August 31, 2010. The Studio had not named a new successor yet.

This thesis analyzes a case study of a founder-driven non-profit arts organization (The Studio Theatre) that underwent a succession plan and leadership change. This research is very relevant to the current cultural atmosphere of the arts management field, especially in Washington, D.C., because it will test the current succession plan theories that exist against a real-life case study. Based on the successes and failures of The Studio Theatre's succession plan, other non-profit arts organizations will have a better understanding of real-life application of succession plan theories. This research is important also because it is very timely; there are many other arts organizations, especially in the Washington DC area (like Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth, The

Shakespeare Theatre, Signature Theatre, and Synetic Theatre), that are founder-driven or who currently have leaders who have been employed for 20 plus years. These organizations will need to form a succession plan in the very near future, since it is an inevitable fact that the leaders of these organizations will retire, or pass on, very soon.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research collected for this analysis consisted of three source topics:

1) Literature on succession planning and contingency planning in non-profits, especially arts organizations; succession planning in for-profit organizations (for comparison); leadership in non-profits (roles, responsibilities, and qualities and strategies for effective leaders); founder-driven organizations/ founder's syndrome; organizational culture; and newspapers articles and case studies of other founder-driven arts organizations, or organizations who have leaders who have been employed for over 20 years who have recently gone through a major leadership change, with a focus on theaters in the Washington, D.C. area.

2) Interviews from three people who have expansive knowledge of the succession plan and/or the execution of the transition at The Studio Theatre. These participants include: Joy Zinoman, Founder and Former Artistic Director of The Studio Theatre; Susan Butler, current Chair of The Studio Theatre Board of Trustees; and Roma Rogers, Director of Education for The Studio Theatre. The full interview transcriptions can be found in the appendices of this thesis.³

3) I am currently employed at The Studio Theatre since August 2009 through now. I have been observing and participating in the leadership transition ever since

³ For appendices, please see page 33.

before Joy Zinoman announced to the public on September 16, 2009, of her plans to retire. My own observations will serve as a resource in this thesis.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Succession Planning

In non-profit Organizations

In *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*, Roche and Whitehead discuss successful steps an organization can take to ensure a healthy transition from one leader to the next: "as much as I love the stability in the organizations I serve, I have come to understand how important it is to see leadership transition as routine in the life of a healthy not-for-profit organization, just as it is seen in the for-profit sector."⁴ Roche and Whitehead suggest the following guidelines for a successful leadership transition: 1) hire a professional search firm; 2) create a search committee; 3) review records from previous searches, if applicable; 4) talk with other organizations who have recently undergone transitions; 5) determine if the organization will need an interim manager; 6) make an announcement of the CEO's retirement to stakeholders; 7) send a letter to stakeholders noting which search firm has been chosen; and 8) once a new CEO has been chosen, send a letter with new CEO's vitae.⁵ Roche and Whitehead also expressed that the Board must understand that it owns the process of choosing a new CEO: "this is not an opportunity

⁴ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 254.

⁵ Roche and Whitehead, *The Art of Governance*, 254.

for shared leadership of any sort. There are many ways of including other organizational stakeholders in the process of the search, but this is first and foremost a Board responsibility and must be seen as such by all concerned parties.”⁶

Other experts in the field, Carol Weisman and Richard Goldberg, authors of *Losing Your Executive Director Without Losing Your Way*, suggest the following steps to be included in succession plans: 1) be prepared in advance for when the Executive Director (ED) leaves; 2) acknowledge the response of the staff void; 3) Hire an interim ED; 4) decide how the Board will recruit and screen candidates; 5) Choose and hire the new ED; 6) Orientation of the new ED to all stakeholders; 7) Identify potential retention problems and fix them.⁷

In addition to The Studio Theatre, another theater in the DC area has undergone leadership transition recently. On March 24, 2009, Arena Stage’s Artistic Director Molly Smith announced that the Board of Trustees appointed Edgar Dobie as the new Managing Director. Stephen Richard, the previous Managing Director, left in Spring 2008 for a different job after serving at Arena Stage for over 17 years. He left to become Vice President of External Relations for the National Children’s Museum. Upon Richards’s departure, Arena Stage found an interim Managing Director (Guy Bergquist) to fill the leadership position until the organization found a permanent Managing

⁶ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 256.

⁷ Carol Weisman, and Richard I. Goldberg, *Losing Your Executive Director Without Losing Your Way* (California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004), 2-4.

Director. The organization hired a national search firm in the spring which resulted in the hiring of a new Managing Director, Edgar Dobie, who is still in the position as of today.

Another transition that occurred in the past few years was the retirement of Jerry Whiddon from the Round House Theatre in Bethesda, MD. After twenty years as the position of Producing Artistic Director, Whiddon, age 56 at the time, informed the Board and the public of his plans to retire. The announcement was received amicably by the Board, and according to the *Variety* article entitled “Whitton moves out of House,” the Round House “board topper Donald M. Boardman says he hopes Whiddon will continue working with the organization in an as an actor, director or other capacity. The board will begin a national search for a new artistic director next fall.”⁸

Having a succession plan in place is extremely important for non-profit organizations. When asked if it would have helped if The Studio Theatre had had a succession plan in place before Zinoman announced her retirement, Susan Butler, the Chair of The Studio Theatre Board of Trustees, responded “It was sort of always in the back of my mind and I remember, probably if I had thought about it more, we should have talked about it. I guess I always had a feeling that if something like ‘getting hit by a Mack truck’ happened, we really had three very strong guys; but it wasn’t smart not to talk about it.”

⁸ Paul Harris, “Whiddon Moves Out of House.” (*Variety*, Jun 7-Jun 13, 2004), Vol. 395.

In for-profit Organizations

In the for-profit sector, it is becoming more and more popular to groom successors from within the company for inevitable change in leadership.⁹ In Begin's article "Following The Leader; Nonprofits Find Replacing CEOs From Within Could Save Money On Salaries And Training, Help Focus," he discusses the succession planning of The Henry Ford company: "about three years before Steve Hamp signaled his intentions to step down as CEO of The Henry Ford, its Board of trustees began identifying internal successor candidates"¹⁰. On September 16, 2009, when Joy Zinoman announced her retirement, she also announced that the search committee is not considering anyone from within the organization's current staff for the position. The same three-member leadership team has managed the Studio for the past 20 years, alongside Zinoman. She expressed that although the rest of the leadership team are all qualified for the position, all three managers expressed that they wanted to stay in their current positions. Why didn't any of the other leadership want to become the new Artistic Director? Did Zinoman and the Board approach them to ask them? When asked to comment about why Serge Seiden, Keith Alan Baker, and Morey Epstein, the three senior managers, did not want to be considered for the position of Artistic Director, Joy Zinoman commented,

⁹ William J. Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*. (New York: AMACON, 2001).

¹⁰ S. Begin, "Following The Leader; Nonprofits Find Replacing CEOs From Within Could Save Money On Salaries And Training, Help Focus." (*Crain's Detroit Business*, April 28, 2008), 11.

I think you would have to ask them. I think they had their individual reasons. I think they are complex – I think they also observed other transitions which had been unsuccessful when somebody on the inside or somebody who had been the second to the leader had been taken over with negative public stuff, things that you have to overcome...I think that influenced them to some extent. I think some of them didn't have interest in being a front person, I think their reasons were different.

Susan Butler, is the current Chair of the Board of Trustees, however was not at the time when the three managers were approached. When ask to comment about how the managers were approach, Butler commented,

I would say that for those of us who were Board members, I would say it took a little while for us to really understand the interconnectedness among Joy and the top three people – we really didn't understand that, although Joy might have said she was sick and tired of explaining it to us. It took a little while for us to catch on, or to really deeply understand that. We had to be sure, had to get clear signals some Serge, Keith and Morey that they did not want to be Artistic Director. I wasn't Chair of the Board at that point, so that was Joy and Janet, who was Chair of the Board at that time. If I had been Chair of the Board I would have done it, but it was Joy and Janet sitting down with each one of them separately, and it became clear that none of them was interested in doing that. Once that was off the table, which I think was maybe the first or second year of our discussion, but it was great that it happened – it was the only way we would have known and that was important as well.

Although an internal succession plan (which is a concept for popular in the for-profit sector) did not work at The Studio Theatre, other theaters have incorporated other tactics that are usually only seen in the for-profit sector. For example, another for-profit tactic is when the current Artistic Director hand-picks their successor, without any job search or consideration of other candidates. Intiman Theater, for example, hired a new Artistic Director in June 2009 where Bartlett Sher, the outgoing Artistic Director, hand-selected Kate Whorinsky to become the new leader. In the New York Times article

“Seattle Theater takes no-frills approach to filling a top job”, Patrick Healy explains “Mr. Sher pledged that if she (Whorinsky) were hired, he would stay until she had settled fully in,”¹¹ and Whorinsky and Sher would run the theater together through 2010. This partnership, however unusual, saved the theater thousands of dollars by not having to conduct a professional employment search.¹² This tactic is very much frowned upon in the nonprofit sector, since the replacement of the Artistic Director is the responsibility of the Board, and might be construed as nepotism.

Founder’s Syndrome

Joy Zinoman founded The Studio Theatre in 1978, 35 years ago at the time that this paper was written. Founders of non-profit organizations tend to have a certain reputation for trying to control all aspects of the organization, even when the organization is no longer in a start-up phase, and that “building consensus and balancing and sharing power are not the norm for founder behavior. Instead, founders tend to dominate and control the direction of the organization they started.”¹³ This behavior has been given the name “Founder’s Syndrome,” which is defined as “a cluster of behaviors, reactions, and thought processes, exhibited...to preserve one’s organization and further one’s self-

¹¹ P. Healy, “Seattle Theater Takes No-Frills Approach to Filling a Top Job.” (*The New York Times*, p. C1. August 17, 2009), C1.

¹² Healy, “Seattle Theater Takes No-Frills,” C1.

¹³ Stephen Block, *Why Nonprofits Fail: Overcoming Founder’s Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success* (California: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 136.

interest as the organization's leaders and key decision maker."¹⁴ When asked to comment about the transition and if the department heads at The Studio Theatre will learn how to operate as a department, and not under the direction of the founder, Susan Butler, Chair of The Studio Theatre Board of Trustees said, "I think what will have to be seen is whether the real heads of those departments will be able to step up and do what heads of departments do, not only with ideas, which is of course important, but the execution and management of that department." Joy Zinoman also commented on the adjustments that Studio leadership will need to accept in order to succeed:

Adjusting... what it would mean, what had to be strengthened in the institution, what jobs I needed to give up earlier, how other people could be prepared since I was a founder and was the Artistic and Managing Director. I had a lot of jobs, so it was about getting other people prepared, mostly Keith and him really taking on the Managing Director functions; and just in general divesting myself of all controlling kind of powers there were.

Susan Kenny Stevens gives a very accurate description of founder behavior which fits Zinoman's behavior: "Founders, like many entrepreneurs, march to their own drummers. They need no one's approval. They defy conventional methods. They know how something must be done, even though they can't tell you how to do it. They believe in themselves and in whatever they are working on at the present moment. They are

¹⁴ Stephen Block, *Why Nonprofits Fail: Overcoming Founder's Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success* (California: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 137.

usually never satisfied. There is always more to be done and never enough time or money to do it.”¹⁵

After David Muse began as the new Studio Theatre Artistic Director, The Washington Post published an article on January 23, 2011 regarding the transition, where Peter Marks states,

Muse was also coming into an organization whose next tier down was completely filled with Zinoman's trusted picks, a trio of men who no matter how much they liked and respected Muse... had absorbed a management philosophy from his predecessor. The arrangement suggested that the leader would have to learn an awful lot from the led. And more than that, he'd surely feel pressure to maintain Studio's health as he sought to capitalize on its past successes.

In reply, Muse states

How can you not feel some anxiety about that? Because it's true: In a sense, she wore all the hats at the theater. She was artistic director, director of development, head of production....They will call a meeting, and no one's quite sure how to start it and that's because it would have been Joy-led.

Susan Kenny Stevens also describes the “Three Stages of Founder’s Separation”.

In the first stage, the founder’s first step towards separating herself from her organization is called “delegation.”¹⁶ In this “delegation” stage, the growth of the organization requires the founder to expand her staff, after her realization that she cannot do it all by herself. In stage two, the founder goes through some sort of experience that leads her to realize that her identity is separate from the organization she founded. This stage is called the

¹⁵ Susan Kenney Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, second edition. (Minnesota: Stagewise Enterprises, Inc., 2008), 79.

¹⁶ Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, 81.

“individuation” stage. In this stage, the founder separates her personal identity from the organization’s identity. She accepts that the organization she created now has a life of its own, and that she must now share its identity to the other constituents of the organization, “the founder’s gift has gone public. It is now co-owned by the community represented by the Board and staff.”¹⁷ In the third and final stage of founder separation, called the “institutionalization” stage, the founder separates herself from the organization by passing on her position to someone else. This last stage is also known as succession or exit planning. Luckily, Zinoman did not exhibit the symptom of wanting to hand-pick her own successor, and allowed the Board to make the final selection. According to Stevens, “too often though, founders, by default, end up single-handedly orchestrating their own succession. As much as a founder may want a role in conceptualizing or even choosing his or her successor, the final transition should not be left to the founder alone. The process of facilitating the founder’s positive and honorable succession belongs to the Board.”¹⁸

Founders are also known for not responding well when their Board of Trustees challenges their power, or when Boards try to enforce rules upon them. In *Why Nonprofits Fail: Overcoming Founder’s Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success*, Stephen Block states that “founders are often criticized for their independent

¹⁷ Susan Kenney Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, second edition. Minnesota: Stagemwise Enterprises, Inc., 2008, 83.

¹⁸ Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, 84.

style, being more concerned about personally achieving their organizational goals and objectives than about others achieving the same goals and objectives. This characteristic of taking control and not depending on others is a major factor in this theory.”¹⁹

Observations of The Studio Theatre

The Studio Theatre’s Founding Artistic Director Joy Zinoman announced her retirement to the Board of Trustees at the annual retreat in March of 2006, leaving five years of planning to find a new successor. In Roche and Whitehead’s book, they express the importance of giving advance notice of leadership transition: “I believe the best leadership transition model is one in which the current CEO gives a year’s notice of his or her intention, a committee is formed, and the new CEO is chosen before the current one leaves.”²⁰ After Zinoman’s announcement at the retreat, the organization’s leadership and Board researched different professional search firms before hiring one. According to The Studio Theatre’s press release on August 25, 2010, “the [Transition] Committee led a nation-wide search, assisted by Becky Klein and Mark Tarnacki from the national executive search firm of Phillips Oppenheim.” When asked to comment on why The Studio Theatre decided to use a professional search firm instead of conducting the search themselves, Susan Butler responded, “the thing that really sold us on it was the idea that

¹⁹ Stephen Block, *Why Nonprofits Fail: Overcoming Founder’s Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success*. (California: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 146.

²⁰ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 259.

they are the ones that say ‘no’...that was very appealing. You really need it because you have relationships with these people into the future, hopefully, because some of them are great directors and we hope they will come and direct at Studio Theater.”

After Zinoman announced her scheduled retirement to the Board, together she and the Board created three Board committees to help during this time: a Leadership Transition Committee, a Leadership Selection Committee, and a Retirement/Past Service Committee. The Leadership Transition Committee existed to help in all facets of the transition, including planning the special events, announcements, and meetings associated with it. The Leadership Selection Committee existed to conduct a search for the next Artistic Director, and once the committee selected its top candidates they proposed their recommendation to the rest of the Board for nomination. In a Studio Theatre press release on August 25, 2010, it stated that the Transition Committee members consisted of, “Zinoman, Managing Director Keith Alan Baker, Associate Producing Artistic Director Serge Seiden, Executive Director of Institutional Development Morey B. Epstein, Board and Committee Chair Susan L. Butler, and Board Members Harriet Blum, Michael Higgins and Jaylee Mead—was tasked with the responsibility for preparing the Theatre for the leadership transition.” Blum and Mead are both former Board Chairs, Higgins is the Vice-Chair of the Board, while Butler is current Board Chair, and Baker, Epstein, and Seiden are senior management.

When asked to comment about the purposes and differences between the Leadership Transition Committee, and the Leadership Selection Committee, Susan Butler replied,

We formed a Transition Committee of present Board Chairs, former Board Chairs, Michael Higgins (who had gone through a transition at another theater on the west coast) and the top leadership of the theater. We really spent three years talking out (and we met quarterly). Out of the four years (since the first year we did nothing), then three years really talking over every aspect of the transition, sometimes talking about it over and over again. Then the fourth year is when we did the search. As a member of the Transition Committee I felt that my role was to listen to the concerns of the top management. To learn about how the management team worked because that was very important to what we would be looking for, I thought I understood it but of course it was much more complicated than I ever knew. A lot of that time was spent learning about that and having to figure out what would be appropriate for the next Artistic Director. A lot of it was to listen to the concerns of the top management especially for Keith, Serge and Morey.

In a Studio Theatre press release on August 25, 2010, it stated that the Selection Committee members consisted of “Board and Committee Chair Susan L. Butler, Board Members Keith Alan Baker, Michael Higgins, Jaylee Mead and Gerry Rosberg.”

When asked Susan Butler if she was responsible for leading both committees, she responded, “I think in reality Joy was in charge of the Transition Committee as it should be. Then the Selection Committee – I was Chair of that committee.”

It is recommended by Roche and Whitehead that the Board Chair and Vice Chair should serve on the search committee, and that the current CEO (or in the Studio’s case, the Artistic Director) should not serve on any search committees. By forming these committees, The Studio Theatre is upholding another important criteria the Roche and Whitehead have expressed is critical; however Zinoman was very active in the search for

a new Artistic Director with the search committee. At the September 16 speech, Zinoman expressed that she would help search for a successor, but that she would step down from this search and let the rest of the committee take over. This concept contrasts with the recommendations of Roche and Whitehead who state that, “the current CEO should not serve on the committee. Another staff member chosen in a manner that is deemed fair and appropriate can add enormous value.”²¹

In addition to the Leadership Transition and Leadership Selection committees, The Studio Theatre created a third committee as a result of their succession plan, which was called the Retirement/Retention Committee. When asked Joy Zinoman, who requested the committee to be formed, what the purpose of this committee was, she replied,

There was a Compensation Committee first of all to deal with salaries they had to deal with, then there was a group that had to deal with retirement compensation for me, and I wanted some protection of the other leaders who had been here for so very long to make sure that if they ... after 20-25 years of service that if things didn't work out, they would have some money to get a new job. They would have like a year's salary or slightly more but around that to look for another. They would be protected in that way, and that Russell would also be compensated for the work that he had done for no money. I had nothing to do with that after saying what I wanted.

The Retirement/Retention Committee voted on, and the Board approved, a retirement package for Joy Zinoman, Artistic Director, and Russell Metheny, one of the co-founders of The Studio Theatre. Retention packages were passed for Morey Epstein, Executive Director of Institutional Development, Keith Alan Baker, Managing Director,

²¹ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 258.

and Serge Seiden, Associate Artistic Producing Director. The packages would be given to the three managers after two more years employment at The Studio Theatre, which would be August 2012. When asked Susan Butler if there was any opposition from Board Members with the result of the Retirement/Retention Committee's decision, she said, "that is a really interesting question. There were a lot of questions because it was something we had never done before. There were two that were definitely against it and one that just wanted to be very, very careful, and make sure it was for the good of the organization."

Since Joy Zinoman is the *Founding* Artistic Director, The Studio Theatre never went through a transition in leadership. What is even more interesting to learn is that the Studio has had the same four-person management team for the past twenty years, and therefore has *never* gone through any sort of transition of a major employed position. Since the Studio has no sort of past institutional knowledge for conducting an employment search for a critical leadership position, the team has to rely upon other organizations' and Board member knowledge and recommendations for this process. It is interesting to witness this event first-hand as the Studio treads through uncharted waters.

In the past few months, Serge Seiden, the Associate Artistic Director of The Studio Theatre took upon the responsibility of ensuring that every department at The Studio Theatre created a departmental handbook. In these handbooks, employees were meant to describe each and every task and duty they were responsible for and how to complete these duties. It is curious to consider why the Studio did not conduct this project

sooner, since the theatre has been operating for over 35 years. Would not it have been beneficial to create these employment manuals 30 to 35 years ago? Yes, but this lack of instruction manuals might have been due to the startup of the organization, or the fact that a situation never presented itself where senior management thought it necessary to retain institutional knowledge in the written form, such as a change in leadership. Regardless of the reason or timing, the Studio was wise to want to retain institutional knowledge before a new leader came into power. As William Rothwell describes in his book *Effective Succession Planning*, “the only way that individuals can be prepared as replacements for key positions is to clarify first what the key position incumbents do and what kind of characteristics they possess.”²² Even Zinoman, with the help from the Board, updated her job description and duties in preparation. When asked Zinoman if she offered any training to David Muse, now the current Artistic Director, she said,

Absolutely, he had a whole list that he created of topics and questions, and we spent a lot of time just going through those one at a time, and I think there were also some very formal things that had to do with money, management things that we went through. Then he also kind of shadowed me in all the meetings for a couple of weeks, came to a staff meeting, come to a weekly money meeting, came to the middle managers meeting – very much yes. There was a lot of overlap.

In October and November of 2009, The Studio Theatre’s Leadership Transition Committee formed a plan to conduct “stakeholder events.” Stakeholders are “the people

²² William J. Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*. (New York: AMACON, 2001), 184.

who work for and care about your organization,”²³ which can include close donors, artists, Board and staff. According to The Studio Theatre’s press release on August 25, 2010, “The Studio Theatre held three stakeholders events at the homes of Board Members Jaylee Mead, Albert Lauber and Board Chair Susan L. Butler in the fall of 2009. These events gave the press, artists, board members and donors the opportunity to discuss the transition and to be updated on its progress.” The Studio invited stakeholders to participate in discussions to express their concerns and opinions regarding the transition. Select Board members held these events, also known at the Studio as “leadership transition discussions,” at their homes, to promote a more intimate setting. By conducting these stakeholder events, the Studio created an important outlet for members of its community. People were able to express their concerns and fears, ask questions, as well as express their hopes for the future. These events were crucial in order to have the Studio’s stakeholders on Board with the transition decisions. If the Studio did not have these events, then the stakeholders might assume that something is not going right with the transition, even if the truth is that everything is going well.²⁴

²³ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 258.

²⁴ Roche and Whitehead, *The Art of Governance*, 258.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM STUDIO THEATRE'S TRANSITION

When evaluating “founder’s syndrome” with the Studio’s leadership, Zinoman portrays a lot of these characteristics in her leadership style. She had a major role in selecting her successor, and sometimes micro-managed the planning of the stakeholder events. Zinoman was very protective and possessive when it came to The Studio Theatre, and this transition was no different from any other goal. Roche and Whitehead suggest that during these times of transition is a good time for organizational growth, “I now understand that such times of transition offer unique opportunities to engage, reflect and rebuild.”²⁵

When comparing Roche’s leadership transition steps as discussed earlier, to the process of The Studio Theatre, it seems that the Studio has carefully evaluated these recommended steps themselves. They have executed similar plans to the ones listed above, and future plans seem to lead that ways as well.

Involve the Board

At one of the Board meetings a few months prior to her departure, Zinoman gave a report on the employment search. At that time, one Board member interrupted and asked Zinoman what the Board’s role is in selecting a new Artistic Director. Zinoman,

²⁵ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 254.

looking somewhat confused, explained that the Board transition committees that they created represented the entire Board in this process.

According to Susan Butler, Chair of the Board of Trustees, there were a few Board members who felt “left out” of the entire process of securing the new Artistic Director. When asked what she would offer as advice to other theaters creating a succession plan, she replied,

I would say involve your Board more probably more than we probably involved our Board. I think there were a few hurt feelings on our Board, that I just walked up and announced that it was going to be David. Some search processes have a couple of candidates and they say this is the way to do it, but some search processes are when you get down to your last two candidates and you have a meet and greet with the Board or something. I think the Board was a little put out by not being included a little more, so I think that might be a place where we should have done a little bit more, and part of that was just the history of the way our Board was run. I think I would include the Board a little bit more, not just five people.

The feeling of marginalization is common among individual Board members when the entire Board is not directly involved in the search. Roche & Whitehead explain that although the entire Board should be updated on a regular basis for the transition, only a committee should be active in the process: “Although the full Board has to vote to accept the search committee’s recommendation for a new CEO, the full Board cannot actively participate in the process. This is problematic because it creates some incredibly active and engaged Board members to feel marginalized.”²⁶ Roche & Whitehead go on to explain that it is critical that the search committee should inform the full Board all

²⁶ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 259.

aspects and updates of the process, but it is also important that members be actively engaged in desirable traits in candidates. Board members are happiest when they have important duties and feel like the organization they serve hears and understands their input.

Long-Term Planning

Roche and Whitehead review different tactics that organizations can do to ensure that discussion of succession is less scary. Some of these items include including leadership succession as a regular part of the organization's strategic planning.²⁷ When asked Susan Butler if she thought it would have been helpful if the Board included succession plan as part of their long-term plan (before Zinoman had ever announced her retirement), Butler responded, "we probably should have talked about it more. I guess I always had a feeling that if something like 'getting hit by a Mack truck' happened, we really had three very strong guys. But it wasn't smart not to talk about it." Including succession plans in long-term (5-year) plans is something that every non-profit Board should do.

Other things that the Board can do include doing periodic job evaluations of top management, including a line in the budget for transition expenses, and keeping records

²⁷ Roche and Whitehead, *The Art of Governance*, 254.

of all searches for new management.²⁸ By completing these steps, organizations can ensure that they do not have to reinvent the wheel every time they replace a critical position.

Involve the Staff

While Zinoman was still the Artistic Director, she and the transition committee really tried to reach all constituencies, especially for the stakeholder parties. It seems she and the committees really wanted to include all the people who were close to the theatre. However, one constituency fell to the wayside, and that was the staff. While Zinoman was AD, there were only two gatherings where the staff as a constituency were involved, and that was the annual Board retreat where all staff and some Board members participated in a 1-2 hour “leadership transition” session; and then there was an end-of-the-fiscal-year staff party. However these outlets did not provide the same type of question-and-answer forum that the other stakeholder events had. When asked Sarah Branzelle, Director of Administration and the event coordinator for all the stakeholder events if she thought that the staff were adequately represented as a whole during the transition, she replied, “It’s hard. I think if one constituency has been taken care of the least it would be the staff, but I kind of think that’s also been necessary in a way.” Susan Butler was not even aware that the staff did not have their own outlet forum, “That is

²⁸ Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead, *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 254.

interesting, especially with the founder leaving. That probably would have been a good idea... I guess we felt that the staff was represented by Keith.”

Once the new Artistic Director, David Muse, began employment, separate lunches were scheduled between him and all the departments as a “meet-and-greet.” This was a great way for every staff member to get to know the new AD, and for him to get to know the staff. This attention to detail and personal interest was a great morale booster for the staff, and perhaps this sort of one-on-one department lunch would have been good for the departing Artistic Director as well.

Leave Notice

Joy Zinoman gave five years of notice to the Board of Trustees, and staff, of her impending retirement date. In the first year, the Board and the staff did not take any steps in the succession plan, as they just wanted things to sink in. Then the next three years included the Transition Committee meeting quarterly to discuss the transition plan. Then in the last year, the Selection Committee was formed and the search for the new Artistic Director began; also in the last year were the stakeholder events.

When asked Susan Butler if she thought that 5-years was an adequate time period to plan for a succession, she replied,

Maybe four years is too long, but one year might not be long enough. It was probably in reality too long, but I think that the four staff members really, really needed to talk. Some talked more than others as we know, but they really needed to be able to express themselves. Maybe they could have done it over two years meeting every other month.

While one year might not have been enough time at The Studio Theatre to plan for the transition, five years was probably too long. During such a long period of time, many variables can affect the effectiveness of the transition, such as staff and Board turnover. Also, during the five years, the process may feel too “drawn out” and might reduce transition efforts and sentimental emotions. In this particular succession plan, it would have been beneficial to have a two-year time period for the transition.

NEW SUCCESSION PLAN GUIDELINES FOR THEATRES

No Impending Plans for a Transition

1. Include two succession plans in long-term/ strategic plan, which include:
 - a. Contingency plan for unexpected departures
 - b. Succession plan for expected departures
 - i. Departing Founder should give one to two years notice to the Board and the public, but not more than two years.
 - ii. Departing Founder should not return to the organization in any capacity for at least one year.

Once Artistic Director gives Notice

1. Make an announcement of the Founder's retirement to the entire Board.
2. Create a search committee.
3. Hire a professional search firm.
4. Review records from previous searches, if applicable.
5. Consult with other theatres in the community who have recently undergone transitions.
6. Determine if the theatre needs an interim manager.
7. Make an announcement of the Founder's retirement to the public.

8. Schedule at least one party/ dinner per stakeholder type. Different stakeholder types can be mixed for the parties, or just invite one type of stakeholder.

Stakeholders include:

1. Board
 2. Staff
 3. Donors
 4. Patrons (long-term subscribers, and long-term single ticket buyers)
 5. Artists
 6. Local community
9. Schedule one-on-one lunches with the outgoing Artistic Director and every organizational department, for them to have an outlet forum.
 10. Have the final three candidates meet the entire Board of Trustees.

Once a new Artistic Director is chosen

1. Announce the new Artistic Director first to the Board, and then to the public.
Send a letter to all stakeholders.
2. Schedule at least one party/ dinner per stakeholder type. Different stakeholder types can be mixed for the parties, or just invite one type of stakeholder.

Stakeholders include:

- a. Board
- b. Staff

- c. Donors
 - d. Patrons (long-term subscribers, and long-term single ticket buyers)
 - e. Artists
 - f. Local community
3. Schedule one-on-one lunches with the new Artistic Director and every organizational department, for them to have as a “meet-and-greet.”

CONCLUSION

Succession planning is a very important topic for a nonprofit Board to discuss early on, before it is ever an immediate issue. Literature sources recommend a myriad of different things a Board should do when creating a succession plan and preparing for a leadership change. Because The Studio Theatre had such a long leave notice to prepare for the transition, the committees had the luxury (and curse) of time, and were therefore able to thoroughly research the different steps they needed to take.

By utilizing these succession plans, organizations undergoing leadership transition will not only find a suitable successor, they will also promote a healthy organizational climate. Although some think it to be a “scary topic,” nonprofits should include succession planning into their strategic plans. “It may be popular to say that organizational change is scary and that people in organizations resist change because they fear the unknown. But like it or not, change will occur.”²⁹ By approaching these plans in a forward-thinking, proactive way, nonprofits will promote a healthy future for themselves, ensuring that succession plans will ensure that passing of leadership be a smooth transition, no matter what the circumstance.

²⁹. Stephen Block, *Why Nonprofits Fail: Overcoming Founder's Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success* (California: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 3.

APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW WITH JOY ZINOMAN, FOUNDER AND FORMER ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR OF THE STUDIO THEATRE

Michelle: Thank you so much for agreeing to do this, that was so nice. I will be asking you a series of questions as it relates to the succession plan that is occurring and has occurred from your position – the Artistic Director position at the studio theater. As you know, I am currently employed here so I have my own knowledge of what has happened. I have my opinions and I would like to hear it from your point of view, obviously I know about it but I would like to hear it from your words. If you could state for me your name and your title as it currently relates to The Studio Theater.

Joy: My name is Joy Zinoman, I think I am now the Director of Teacher Training and Curriculum Development. I was the Founding Artistic Director.

Michelle: How long have you been employed total at The Studio Theater?

Joy: Since 1975.

Michelle: What was your title before your current title?

Joy: Before being Founding Artistic Director I was the Artistic Director and before that I was the Artistic and Managing Director for many years.

Michelle: As former Artistic Director and founder of The Studio Theater, if you could describe for me the process of your decision to step down as Artistic Director, what were the instances that led you to that decision?

Joy: I think basically my age was the principle determining factor, because as you know I decided five years before I actually left. I appreciated the enormous difficulty of founder transitions relative to other kinds of transitions. I felt that it would take a long time to educate people and to prepare the theater for the change. We educators have an annual retreat and that retreat in my opinion

was the time for me to make announcements and to rethink the role of the theater from scratch every single year, and so it was in preparing for the retreat five years ago that I made the decision and set the date. When you say, I think you are actually asking is a more deeper question and my generic answer to that is I did not want to feel that I had overstayed my welcome. I did not want to feel that anyone thought that I stayed too long that was very important to me. I wanted to make sure that I was doing it my timetable and when I still had time to travel and be with my husband and grandchildren.

Michelle: I know you mentioned that you did it at the annual retreat, but how exactly did you inform the Board of your decision?

Joy: At the retreat, it was a complete surprise to everyone. It was announced at the retreat.

Michelle: In front of the staff and everyone?

Joy: Everyone.

Michelle: You already answered that question and you gave five years notice ahead of time before you decided to retire, and what steps did the Board take at that time after you announced it five years prior?

Joy: I actually asked for many things in that moment of announcing retirement, I asked for there to be no action taken for one year, and for people to just think about it and get used to the idea and to also not talk about it. That was very hard, but they didn't – it was amazing we kept it from the press for all that time. Peter might have commented on that a couple times, he was actually pissed off that nobody knew but given the large number of people that knew it was amazing. I said I didn't want to be a lame duck for five years, and I didn't want to have people second guessing or competition all that thing, so for one year absolutely nothing happened and then I set up some groups that included the Board and the staff. A major group called the transition group that was made up of ex-Board chairs, three ex-Board chairs and the current leadership staff of the theater, and the vice-chair of the Board – that group met every three months for four years and really was the place that directed the actual transition from the Board and staff. Adjusting what it would mean, what had to be strengthened in the institution, what jobs I needed to give up

earlier, how other people could be prepared since I was a founder and was the Artistic and Managing Director – I had a lot of jobs, so about getting other people prepared, mostly Keith and really taking on the Managing Directors functions and just in general divesting myself of all controlling kind of powers there were. Then, planning the transition itself, there were long discussion whether we do it ourselves, whether we would hire a firm – it all took place in that transition committee which was Serge, Morey, Keith, Butler, Jaylee Mead, Harriet Blum, Michael Higgins and myself. We met in this room and it big time tables and I would come in every three months with lists of things I thought needed to be considered, it was a lot of talking and planning and figuring, when announcements would be made and a lot of things changed in those discussions. Originally I had thought we would do it ourselves, so there was a real transition in my thinking to hiring a search firm, and finding a search firm and what the process would be and so forth and so on.

Michelle: Whose idea was it to hire the search firm?

Joy: I don't know it was anyone's idea, it was more an evolution in really coming down to – first we asked Keith, Morey, and Serge and met with them each individual and asked if they wanted to be considered. When they didn't then it was well now what, and then I think it really came from one, the idea that read a lot. In reading about transitions this notion that you would have to talk to so many people, and interface with them directly, and deal with the disappointment without any kind of middle man. I think that eventually was very a persuasive argument. Also just by chance, the wife of a lighting designer here Michael Incans wife was top headhunter in New York, and not one of the two theater headhunters conventionally who do work in the whole field. I did not feel comfortable with either of them, so I wanted something more unique, more original, someone I thought would be more sensitive to what we needed not just a generic kind of search. It just so happened that person came to town, I think she called me because she was doing a search for the new managing director at The Washington Ballet, so it was a chance collation of circumstances that we were considering, and she called to ask me a question in her professional capacity – I asked her if she would come to lunch and just help me through this understanding even what it was and how you work with it. That was very revelatory, so it changed course.

Michelle: You mentioned that you had approached the other senior management Morey, Keith and Serge, why did they not want the position?

Joy: I think you would have to ask them actually. I think that is a good question to ask them, I think they had their individual reasons. I think they are complex, and whatever – I think they also observed other transitions which had been unsuccessful when somebody on the inside or somebody who had been the second to the leader had been taken over with negative public stuff, things that you have to overcome, I think that influenced them to some extent. I think some of them didn't have interest in being a front person, I think their reasons were different.

Michelle: You kind of answered what were your main concerns, or requests you made to the Board in regards to the transition, you kind of touched on that but is there anything or were there any other, other than keeping it quiet and don't do anything for a year. Were there any specific requests you made to the Board in terms of selection, or searching?

Joy: I took a lot of control over it myself - I have never been one to ask for a lot of help. In certain areas like in the P.R. and fundraising I asked them to have these series of shareholder dinners, in the next to the last year I asked them to create a selection committee which was not the transition committee that would step in at a certain point, I asked them to make the final choices without me included in that group, I asked them to take responsibility for the selection, I asked them to have one senior staff member on the selection committee which is not the common thing at all, but I felt it was important that there was a representative of the leadership group who had founded the theater, and worked at it that it not be a pure Board selection. There were a lot of things I asked for.

Michelle: When did the actual search begin for your successor?

Joy: I am sure Keith would have records on that, but about six or eight months.

Michelle: Before you were to retire?

Joy: Yes.

Michelle: Eight months before?

Joy: Yes, it was the last year of the search action, we kicked into high gear.

Michelle: Do you know how many applicants applied?

Joy: Yes, like 120 or something like that.

Michelle: And did most of them come through the search firm?

Joy: All came into the search firm, anyone that came to us we sent to the search firm so that was the centralization of it, that was the great thing about the search firm. We gave them many many names, not names of candidates but names people have asked about. We called through lists of directors, and association members in New York directing institutions, TCG theaters, people we knew – we gave them lots and lots of names. They wrote to many people, they contacted many people personally and then they started to receive and they also put out the breakouts, however it is they do that. Ten they started to get the resumes back and they controlled the whole search at that point but then Serge, Morey and I narrowed that list of 120 or something to 25 maybe. I don't know how many people I met with, I did the next – we either eliminated them or I met them, so I met with many many people and then my meeting with them then that was a part of the discussion again with Morey, Keith, Serge and I and we cut the list from 25 to five. At that point, I stepped out.

Michelle: And it was given to the selection committee?

Joy: Yes, it was given to the selection committee.

Michelle: I guess you already answered who made the ultimate decision who to hire for the role of Artistic Director. So that would be the selection committee.

Joy: Which was not the same as the transition committee.

Michelle: What were you looking for in a successor? What qualities?

Joy: The two main qualities were one an artist, somebody who would care about the work, who would be vigilant about play selection and choosing actors, directors, and signers and have taste. I think an artist was the first issue. I think secondly someone who was willing to fund raise and wasn't afraid of that and wasn't going to say that is a terrible thing – I think those were the two

things. Everything else in some ways is things the senior leadership team can do, but those two things the person had to be willing and able to do.

Michelle: Were you looking for someone who had fundraising or management experience?

Joy: Not necessarily. Just someone who we thought had the capability, was charming and knew something about the audience. That was helpful, but not essential.

Michelle: The Washington City Paper, Tray Graham on April 30, 2010 announced who the other candidates were who weren't selected after I think it was the day before the public announcement for David Muse. I guess it wasn't your intention that the other candidates weren't supposed to be announced to the public like that?

Joy: Not at all. I don't even remember if he had them right, or them all.

Michelle: Pam MacKinnon, Ed Gero, I think those were the other two.

Joy: There were actually five and one of the five was actually a duo so he only had half. It was particularly unpleasant since it wasn't accurate. It was held for a long time, I was impressed by how long all of it could stay private, and we never confirmed any of that – like I say it is not fully true.

Michelle: I don't really need to go into that but it is interesting that someone would have leaked that.

Joy: Painful to those people.

Michelle: Now that you are back as Master Teacher, can you describe for me how this transitioning from Artistic Director to employee?

Joy: I think you have to understand the origin of the theater to understand how I feel. The theater acting conservatory predates the theater by three years and was my own profit before I gave it to the theater. The school is the origin of it all, it is very close to my heart, I have a lot of feelings and most of the people in the school many of them have been here for almost as long as I have. I don't feel like an employee first of all, it's theater – I feel like the role that I have taken on to improve the curriculum and to train teachers and to get the

school back at a high level is something that really needed to be done for like 10 years but I just didn't have time to do it at all. It was something I felt was a real need, something that I was particularly qualified to do since I worked the curriculum and frankly, when I announced my retirement I said I wasn't leaving the school and I think one of the things, even in terms of the selection was that the candidates knew that although I was giving up the Artistic Managing Directorship of the school, I was not giving up my involvement in the school nor have I. The question was then, how that would work really, and we would figure that all out. That was a hard and weird thing, but I think we have done pretty well at least right now I am highly engaged in hiring and firing teachers, and training them, fixing up the curriculum and doing that. That is really interesting to me, and feels rigorous. It does make me feel, it is the right amount of work at this point. I am also teaching four classes which is really a lot this semester. I think a few things one, the transition going away for four months was the smartest thing I could have ever advised anyone, to really just leave totally and then come back and having a defined role and figuring out how to do that, I think it is pretty good from my point of view. It is very important for me to not get in anybody's way in the theater that is important. I have a whole lot of other things to do, so I am not missing.

Michelle: The month that David was here and you were here at the same time, did you?

Joy: I don't think it was a full month, but anyway go on.

Michelle: The time that you were both here, did you give him any oral training or written documentation?

Joy: Absolutely, he had a whole list that he created of topics and questions, and we spent a lot of time just going through those one at a time, and I think there were also some very formal things that had to do with money, management things that we went through. Then he also kind of shadowed me in all the meetings for a couple of weeks, came to a staff meeting, come to a weekly money meeting, came to the middle managers meeting – very much yes. There was a lot of overlap.

Michelle: Part of my thesis is going to be geared toward other theaters that still have founders as Artistic Directors which is very many in DC, so this is an inevitable subject for them. It is very timely, so what would you tell them, tell

those organization who want to create a succession plan, who know that their founding director is going to be leaving soon. What would you tell them, what advice would you give them for those people in those beginning stages?

Joy: That is a hard question I would say that it is important to really walk away and to make the break be a very clean one. I think people need some time internally to adjust, so I think not being too sudden about it, I think worked out very well. I would recommend they use the same search firm because I think they did a very good job. I don't know what else, I think every place is very different and have their own particular challenges about who makes the selection, and how it is made, and all of that. I think it is important, in this case I thought it was very important for the Board to buy in and really the only way to do that was for them to make the choice, have the responsibility, and then be tied to the success of the next person. In this case, since I actually chose the Board – handpicked them, everything needed to shift a great deal when they became the employer of the next person as opposed to the founders, who generally have more power than successors, so that transition of getting the Board ready to assume more power and responsibility, just on the simplest level. No one ever decided what my salary was, I never had a contract or any of that, but they had to take on those responsibilities which were knew to them, negotiating, contracting, and all of that stuff. In very practical terms, not only the staff had to adjust but the Board had to adjust too.

Michelle: In your opinion, I know that you aren't here anymore in the same sense that you were before, but how do you think the other Board members feel about how the transition went, I don't know if you have had conversations with them about that.

Joy: I think they think it has gone very well, my impression is that they are all very positive, many of them are my friends, or I have spoken to them and they are all. I don't know that they tell me the truth, but my impression is that they are extremely happy with how it went. There was complexity in the selection committee, but that is their business, not mine.

Michelle: You mentioned the selection committee and the transition committee, were there any other committee's of the Board committee's that helped with the succession plan and the transition?

Joy: I don't think so, we kept it pretty close.

Michelle: What do you think, I guess this is kind of repetitive but what specifically do you think worked very well in the way that the succession plan was implemented here?

Joy: I think it was never any big hassle of fights, it was important to keep the Board together I think, and there weren't schisms that was very very important to avoid and to have the process be one that resulted in the Board taking ownership and feeling like they were empowered.

Michelle: What do you think, if you could go back in time and do things differently, is there anything you would have done different to improve the process?

Joy: On my end, no.

Michelle: I know that the retirement committee that was created also during this process, can you just comment on what their duties were?

Joy: There was a compensation committee first of all to deal with salaries they had to deal with, then there was a group that had to deal with retirement compensation for me and I wanted some protection of the other leaders who had been here for so very long, and to make sure that if they – because one serves by the Board, so I felt somewhat protection because the Board would be involved. But the other two serve under the Artistic Director and I wanted to make sure that after 20-25 years of service that if things didn't work out, they would have some money to get a new job, they would have like a year's salary or slightly more but around that to look for another – they would be protected in that way, and that Russell would also be compensated for the work that he had done for no money. I had nothing to do with that after saying what I wanted, and also took the five years to make sure the money was there so that could happen. That was studying the history of other theaters where there had been Artistic Founding or Artistic Searches that had been in place for such a long time like The Dance Company of New York where the founder had such a large impact, not all organizations have the same history but in this organization there was a very powerful founder and then there was also years and years in salary. I didn't ask them to raise the money, it took five years to try and secure the money and also I asked the

Board to do those protections for those other four people, so that committee did that and that was a very hard job. It took them a long time but they did it, so it all worked out, again without schisms and without losing any Board members.

Michelle: Did any Board members force any opposition to the results of what the committee decided?

Joy: That wasn't my thing, you will ask them.

Michelle: One last question, was there any books or resources that you and the Board consulted to research succession plans?

Joy: There was a bunch of stuff, but I couldn't tell you exactly what it was but again Keith might know. There was a lot of pamphlets and stuff from organizations and yeah a lot of stuff that we read. I have some at home.

Michelle: Did you review it together?

Joy: We just gave people things to read, and people read it on their own and researched on their own and would bring it back to these years of transition meetings.

Michelle: Great, I think that is all I have.

Joy: What is the rest of your paper? How long is it first of all?

Michelle: It will probably end up being about a hundred or more pages, it is really just geared towards like I mentioned before there are other DC theaters who have founders as Artistic Directors, so this is a just a very timely situation to write about. Basically it is just taking the succession plans that are recommended in books and resources and articles, and comparing it to what happened here and saying these plans worked and what didn't work, and what would be recommended. That is basically what it is about.

Joy: I have gotten calls from other people asking me things which are very interesting too, other founders in other cities. There is a lot of interest.

Michelle: There are a lot of founders still, it is just going to be this wave of new people in these positions.

Joy: Washington, are you counting Michael Kahn as a founder?

Michelle: I am trying to stay with founders, but I am also going to be looking at organizations that their Artistic Director has been there for 20+ years.

Joy: That is an almost.

Michelle: Yes.

Joy: That is him and Howard Chilo, who else?

Michelle: There is the Signature and the Synetic Theater.

Joy: Is that 20 years?

Michelle: The founder is still there. There were a couple others, I can't remember off the top of my head.

Joy: For some it has already happened, Round House and Fords had transitions from the founder.

Michelle: I am going to be looking at those.

Joy: Jerry Whitten to Blake Robison and whatever that woman names was too. I am not the first one.

Michelle: Oh no. Well great, thank you.

END

APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN BUTLER, CHAIR OF THE STUDIO THEATRE BOARD
OF TRUSTEES

Michelle: Thank you very much, I really appreciate it. I will be asking you a series of questions about the succession plan that has and still is happening to you. As you know, I am employed myself here at The Studio Theater, but I would really like to hear things from your point of view, not as though I don't know anything but just from you. If you please state for me your name and your title as it relates to The Studio Theater.

Susan: I am Susan Butler and I am Chair of the Board.

Michelle: How long have you been Chair at The Studio?

Susan: I have been Chair twice, I was Chair for five years and then I was not Chair for two years, and the person who replaced me as Chair moved to New York City so they asked me to come back as Chair, which I guess was three years ago today.

Michelle: Describe for me in your own words what the process was for the leadership transition between founder Joy Zinoman and Artistic Director, just the general overall process.

Susan: Joy announced at a retreat five years before she was going to leave that she had planned to leave, and she outlined and is really what we followed – what happened in those five years. So the first year was do nothing, and then we formed a transition committee of present Board chairs, former Board chairs, Michael Higgins who had gone through a transition at another theater on the west coast and the top leadership of the theater. We really spent three years talking out (and we met quarterly), and we spent three years. The first year nothing, three years really talking over every aspect of the transition,

sometimes talking about it over and over again, and then the fourth year is when we did the search.

Michelle: Did it come as a surprise to you when she had announced it?

Susan: Without question, a total surprise.

Michelle: Just to announce it at a retreat?

Susan: She just announced it and asked us to keep it a secret, and we did which is pretty amazing, because not everyone who was employed six years ago was employed all the way through those five years and they still kept it quiet. That was pretty good loyalty toward the institution.

Michelle: Can you just describe what your role specifically was in the leadership transition?

Susan: Sure, as a member of the transition committee I felt that my role was to listen to the concerns of the top management. To learn about how the management team worked because that was very important to what we would be looking for, I thought I understood it but of course it was much more complicated than I ever knew which is the way it should be, right. A lot of that time was spent learning about that and having to figure out what would be appropriate for the next Artistic Director, a lot of it was to listen to the concerns of the top management because especially for Keith, Serge and Morey there could be a seat change for them, to ask questions and to give opinions, and to give ideas. That was like the transition part and then as Chair of the Search Committee – as well call the selection committee that is a whole different set of issues and skills to bring to that.

Michelle: You were in charge of both, essentially you were in charge of both committees?

Susan: Right. I think in reality Joy was in charge of the transition committee as it should be, as the way she ran the theater, any topic could come up and it seems to me every topic did come up – not once, not twice, three times so that was fine. Then the selection committee – I was Chair of that committee.

Michelle: What sort of issues came up for – you said repetitive things that came up for those three years?

Susan: I would say that for those of us who were Board members, I would say it took a little while for us to really understand the interconnectedness among Joy and the top three people – we really didn't understand that, although Joy might have said she was sick and tired of explaining it to us. It took a little while for us to catch on, or to really deeply understand that. How to play it to the public and all the transition planning of how to deal with all of that, as we call stakeholders all of our constituents – Mission and Scope were part of it, whether The Studio wanted to book it ourselves as a national theater, an international theater, a local theater, a regional theater, national reputation, international reputation – so we discussed all of those issues. There was a lot, I think size and scope was interesting to try and understand and know what we really wanted to do and to know what was appropriate to a theater of our size, etc. I think in the transition as we had to write a job description and in that is the issue of size and scope, whether we wanted to become more.

Michelle: The audience?

Susan: The audience size and scope, so whether we wanted to bring in someone with a national reputation that might be a springBoard to making us more nationally known, and have to think of those questions when you are looking at your pool of applicants as well. We really brought in a wide range of applicants I think, some with national reputation, some with local reputation, I think size and scope was a very interesting part. Then we had to be sure, had to get clear signals some Serge, Keith and Morey that they did not want to be Artistic Director.

Michelle: Did you speak with Serge, Keith and Morey directly at any point to talk about it?

Susan: I didn't – I wasn't Chair of the Board at that point, so that was Joy and Janet, who was Chair of the Board at that time. If I had been Chair of the Board I would have done it, but it was Joy and Janet sitting down with each one of them separately, and it became clear that none of them was interested in doing that. Once that was off the table, which I think was maybe the first or second year of our discussion, but it was great that it happened – it was the only way we would have known and that was important as well. There was a lot of discussion about what happens when the founding director of any

organization, what that means when she is not the director anymore – Artistic Director anymore, so there was a lot of discussion about that.

Michelle: You mean like her coming back at a new position or just in general?

Susan: In general what happens when a founding director, whether it is a social service agency or school.

Michelle: I am sure you did a lot of research on the topic?

Susan: We did, we did a lot of it – TCG has quite a bit of information, I will have to try and find those books for you but one of the articles, it was a Midwest Arts Council that did two publications about leadership transition, and we used those a lot. Do you have those?

Michelle: I don't think I do.

Susan: If I can find them, I can't even find my watch but if I can find them I will, because it might be interesting to you because you are doing this subject in particular.

Michelle: Great, do you think – I mean five years is an awful long time, do you think it was an appropriate amount of time to really plan?

Susan: It was probably in reality too long, but I think that the four staff members really really needed to talk and among those four some talked more than others as we know, but they really needed to be able to express – maybe they could have done it over two years meeting every other month. It was a quarterly thing so we all had time to go back and think about things. The first year we did nothing, but Joy is all about process, so you know.

Michelle: Do you have any other Board experience?

Susan: Yes I was Chair of the Board of an organization called Watching the Projects for the Arts. I was on the Board of one of my children's schools for quite some years. I was on the Board of Overseers which is not really a Board, it is not a judiciary responsible Board and right now I am also on the Board of an organization called SMILE which is Sex for Minority Youth that works consistently with gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender. I have been on a University Board – yes so I have been on some Boards.

Michelle: Have you ever had any experience with Boards and succession plans?

Susan: No.

Michelle: It was never a topic?

Susan: Oh I take that back – SMILE just went through that, but I was such a new Board member that I really, I mean I came on the Board and that Board meeting was to dismiss the current executive director. I was not really involved in choosing, I was listening to what was happening but I wasn't really – I don't even know if I was interviewed as a Board member because I was so new. When the consulting came in I don't think I was interviewed. What did I know, that was the only other one that I had been involved in.

Michelle: Do you think it would have been helpful if The Studio had discussions about what would happen if a leader actually left before it became an issue. Some resources recommend that Boards try and talk about it, what would happen if the leader left.

Susan: It is interesting because I always call it 'The Mack Truck' scenario, have you seen the Canadian broadcasting series called *Slings and Arrows*, which is when the Artistic Director in the first episode gets hit by a Mack truck. It was sort of always in the back of my mind and I remember, probably if I had thought about it more, we probably should have talked about it more. I guess I always had a feeling that if something like getting hit by a Mack truck happened, we really had three very strong guys, but it wasn't smart not to talk about it. It was always that in a crunch we had some guys there that could run it as well, but I am not disagreeing with you.

Michelle: After Joy announced her intention to retire, I guess you already answered the question – that you didn't do anything for a year.

Susan: Right and then we formed the committee, and that committee was the selection committee and the only difference – everyone, four out of the five members on the selection committee had been on the transition committee – Gerry Rosberg was the only member who had not been on the transition committee, so it took a little while to sort of integrate. It took a little time to integrate him in but he caught on very quickly.

Michelle: Can you talk a little bit about the experience that you and the Board with the search firm?

Susan: Yes, a search firm – I think is a bit of an unusual search for them as well. Search firms often come in and they access the Board and they talk to the Board members and stuff that we had already done. I think that was unusual. As far as I can tell they did a very good job, beating the bushes to find the good candidates that they found for us. I think that I can go either way on the topic of whether at least one person of the selection committee should have been involved with Keith, Joy and Serge and Morey – I can go either way to be perfectly honest. Those are the guys that know the art, and know the field but part of me feels like it would have been good to have one of us, it wouldn't have had to be me but one of us in on that. I can sort of go either way on that – I can see it both ways and it turned out the way it turned out. One of my discussions with Becky, in the end we got all the information that applies and how it went down so in the end we saw it all. In the end it looked pretty great. I think there was one other person I thought should have been in the final five or six, but that is not a big thing. I thought the two of them were very forthcoming and I don't think they were hiding anything from us. I thought we worked very well together, and they worked hard. They were they down here, they held our hand through the process which is what they are supposed to do, they were very good in post interview discussions, counseled us on not how to ask questions but what sort of questions we should be thinking about. I thought they were a really good service.

Michelle: Whose idea was it to hire a search firm?

Susan: That is interesting, one of the things we talked – I forgot this topic, but one of the topics during those years was whether to have a search firm and of course we were going to do it ourselves right, instead of hire someone to do all the administrative stuff and then luckily, I think Becky called Joy about another position at another theater and wanted some ideas, it was something like that and they had lunch and Joy talked about our transition on the QT with Becky and Becky did a great job. When I saw the letter that she sent to us and to Joy, a lot of it I think was just divine. The thing that really sold us on it, but the idea that they are the ones that say no was very appealing. You really need it because you have relationships with these people into the future,

hopefully because some of them are great directors and hope they will come and direct at Studio Theater, or whatever. That came up maybe in the year three. That was a topic that we went over.

Michelle: Do you know how many applicants applied?

Susan: My memory is that there were 75 really applied, that is my memory. There were many more inquiries, there were a couple people who were willing to be considered if they really didn't have to apply and they didn't do that. My memory is 75.

Michelle: Who made the ultimate decision of which candidate you choose?

Susan: It was the committee, it was a unanimous choice.

Michelle: Joy wasn't part of that?

Susan: No she was not part of that. None of the staff were voting members of the selection committee, it doesn't mean we didn't talk – I take that back, Keith was a member. Keith was a member, so I am not saying there weren't discussions with Joy but she was not part of the final decision. It was up to the committee.

Michelle: What qualities and qualifications led to the decision to hire David Muse?

Susan: That is a really good question. We had five – six, there were two people who applied as one, let's see. The question is what led us to David in particular?

Michelle: Yes.

Susan: Talk about it a little bit generally and then they would get a little more specific, we were looking for a really terrific audience. So everyone that we talked to were directors, only two out of the five I think had run institutions but that is okay, they didn't have to be institution people. We were really looking for someone who was a real good artist, we were looking for someone who was willing to raise money, people say they are and then it's tough – but that was really important, and of course managerial skills because we had this artist/manager model. It was an interesting process in the beginning.

Michelle: Did you look for candidates that had fundraising as experience?

Susan: No, because a couple of them really did not. Some of us on the committee had done a lot of that work and we can get a feel as to whether someone can do that, it doesn't mean you are right but you can get a feel for it. I know that Keith and Serge and maybe Joy and the final candidates, I believe they did make sure that they saw something as a director and of course, we have seen David's work either at The Studio or at The Shakespeare. In our first set of interviews it was with everybody, and then we narrowed it down to three – and then those people sat down with Keith to look at our budgets and sort of get a sense of that, then we interviewed those three. This is what I say about David is that we knew his directing skills, we knew his communication skills, and I really felt he understood the budget – I really felt with some of his comments back to us, he didn't just understand the budget but understood the implications, the way we run slowly and appropriately and carefully – it's not slowly but it is appropriate to our size, it is appropriate to our goals of 200 seat theaters, not \$75 tickets. You could raise a lot more ticket money if you raise our ticket prices, right – you may have a fall off on people who come I understand that, but I am just saying Arena Theater had \$95 tickets just drives me absolutely, that's off the record. So he when understood the scope and scale which we talked about in our five year plan, that was part of the five year plan – I felt that in some of his ideas for ways he would like to move the theater which were totally, none of the candidates can be made to stick with what they said in the interview, but still the just thoughtfulness. It felt just right for our institution. I want to use the word duration, but we felt like he wanted to be at the studio, some of the other candidates had other commitments coming up that would take them away from the studio, or they wanted to make sure they didn't have to give those things up which is totally understandable. We just felt that he was expressing a commitment to being at the studio and that is where we ended up.

Michelle: Part of my thesis is going to be geared specifically other DC theaters who currently have founder's in their Artistic Director positions and want to make a succession plan because there are a lot of decisions when they reach retirement age, it going to be inevitable of course.

Susan: Which ones, Signature?

Michelle: Signature and Synetic and then I am also going to be doing case studies of ones that have just happened. There are more.

Susan: In a way, Michael Conn although he is not the director he has been there long enough, he came when we moved downtown – he is one.

Michelle: What would you tell having just undergone this, what would you tell other Board members?

Susan: That is a very interesting question, what would I tell them? That is a really interesting question. I would say to plan, maybe four years is too long but one year might not be long enough. I would say really plan for it. I would say probably involve your time management in ways of these discussions, different theaters have different organizational charts. But I would say, hire a good firm. I would say I haven't talked to Becky in a long time, but hire a good firm. I would say involve your Board more probably more than we probably involved our Board. I think there were a few hurt feelings on our Board, but I just walked up and announced that it was going to be David. Some search processes have a couple of candidates and they say this is the way to do it, but some search processes are when you get down to your last two candidates and you have a meet and greet with the Board or something.

Michelle: Would you recommend something like that?

Susan: I am not sure, I know schools do that. I have a friend who just went through a search for her University. I might suggest that. I think the Board was a little put out by not being included a little more, so I think that might be a place where we should have done a little bit more and part of that was just the history of the way our Board was run. I think I would include the Board a little bit more, not just five people – I think that would be part of it. You have to give it some time, it doesn't mean you have to announce to the world that you are doing it, but I would imagine that – but if they are doing this or whatever they might already be talking about leadership succession at some of those theaters I don't know. Generally those would be some of the suggestions I would give.

Michelle: This is something I just talked to Sarah about, now the stakeholders that were involved in the process – she said they did a really good job of involving the

owners, and involving the artists. I had a question if she thought the staff felt as a whole considered the stakeholders?

Susan: I was actually going to ask you of what you thought of the process, but I don't know whether this subject up at staff meetings or departmental meetings – so I don't really know what went on with all the staff. I gather from your question, not much.

Michelle: I think it was more a conversation of the retreat.

Susan: That's right. That is interesting because as I said, make sure you involve the upper staff. Now that I think about it, not to do it as a whole staff thing but to do it as maybe departmentally.

Michelle: Right.

Susan: That's right – that is very interesting, especially with the founder leaving. That probably would have been a good idea. As I said, perhaps I should have asked the question during the ten years we were at this, perhaps I should have asked the questions of what were being done for the staff. I think the retreat is a pretty open form, but it is only open as much as people want it. It can also feel too open, a little too vulnerable. That is interesting, perhaps so. I wouldn't do it as a full staff thing, I think I would do it a little more intimately.

Michelle: Would you recommend that for a candidate before?

Susan: No, I think that is totally appropriate. I know you said you had met professors, etc. and that is a model, but probably not.

Michelle: How should they meet?

Susan: You mean how should the employees meet the Artistic Director or be involved in it more?

Michelle: Yes.

Susan: I guess we felt that the staff was represented by Keith, it is a very interesting question – I will have to think about that for a little bit okay.

Michelle: Along the same thinking lines of what would you recommend to other non-profits going through this – what do you think worked very well in this succession. What do you think The Studio Theater did extremely well through this transition?

Susan: I think that through the transition, before the selection committee – I think it might have been too long but I think it made it very very clear what we were looking for. There were a few things that it made it very clear to us what kind of person we needed to fit into the way that we are organized, the way the staff is organized, and I think the preparation is really top notch through the transition committee, to the stakeholders committee, to the work of the development team. I think that worked really really well and that brought us three really excellent candidates. So the preparation worked for the idea that this side of the transition in David having departmental lunches, I think that was a good idea. I think now, maybe not right now, but coming up in the next year is when we will start to see some David ideas and some David things. Bringing Adrian in, so I think we will begin to see that. I can't get a word out of him about the next season, but I have a feeling it is going to look like a Studio season, and every season will like a Studio season which is great.

Michelle: I read in a book that it is really wise for the Board Chair or someone else who is involved to check in with the new Artistic Director six months to a year, kind of like an evaluation, a wellness track – how do you feel about that and is there a plan to do that?

Susan: I have been meeting with David about every two months for lunch, and besides all the other meetings we are in together and other phone calls, etc – so yes, we have been doing that. I assume the real evaluation will come January or February, it seems a little early but we are having intense conversations every month, every couple months but there are all sorts of other things that are going on within meetings in stuff, so yes we are trying to be and I am doing that with Keith as well. Try to understand what is going on and why and how it is working out.

Michelle: Who is going to conduct the evaluation?

Susan: It is the Chair, well I think the little portion would be the Chair of the Board, and we have not made the instrument yet, so I have gotten some from other

theaters and we are going to try and figure that out. I haven't evaluated any other Artistic Director so this will be something new.

Michelle: Will it be you or are you going to have one of the committees?

Susan: We have a compensation committee, so I think it will be that – we also have an HR committee now, so it might be a combination of the two of them. I think talking to the Chairs of the committee or actually, I think it would be planning committee. It would be one person talking to David it is not going to be a court session or something like that. I think the planning committee would really be the one.

Michelle: Cool, going back to the question I asked before – on the other side, what do you feel didn't work very well for our successor transition?

Susan: Did not work well?

Michelle: Or could have improved if you could go back in time what would you have done different?

Susan: Right, I think what I said involving the Board, you brought up perhaps talking to the staff a little bit more on the first half of it, or the first 4/5th of it. The jury is still out as to how well we connected with our owners on this side of it, I think we did a pretty good job through the stakeholder owners, but we don't know yet as to whether there will be people not getting to those dinners, there are people that we really have to make sure we have contact with and some are hard to reach. The proof is we still don't know how well it has worked on this side of it. I think we reached out to a lot of people and I think we have done the best we could. Some people can't come to those dinners, then they can't come to those dinners but that means that you have to go out and attack them in other ways. My expertise, if you can say that is sort of in the evolving area. I got a sense of how it is working, but it has really only been six month – so it is a little hard to get. It is still just six months. I think a transition really is a couple of years. I don't know if people are just being nice to me, I don't mean people within the organization – I mean outside the organization. I don't know if they are just being nice to me but they all congratulate me – us on having David as our new Artistic Director, so I hope they are not just being nice. The jury is not totally out yet, I really do feel like we did a good job but

there are places where we might have been able to include the organization both staff wise and Board wise a little bit more with the transition. We have a lot of new Board members so who knows, there is some more to come I think.

Michelle: Yeah.

Susan: Right. Oh yeah what time is it? Oh this says we have done it for 42 minutes and 36 seconds.

Michelle: We have time for more. In my readings I have been doing a lot of the characteristics of the founder's and just in general – they are so much the departments of heads of everything, so they are in charge of the finances, they are in charge of the artistic stuff, they are in charge of the fundraising and with that in mind, do you think that the structure, in your opinion of that transition.

Susan: I think that is a really good question, and I am not there but I think what will have to be seen is whether the real heads of those departments will be able to step up and do what heads of departments do, not only with ideas which is of course important or ideas, execution and management of the department. Although I assume they were sort of managing their departments, Joy didn't know what the lowly P.R. system was – maybe she did, I don't know. So you are right, and we don't know that yet whether those heads of those departments will be able to step up and really be heads of departments, that is a really good question. Maybe you have a sense of it already, but I don't have a sense of that. You could say that a bit about the Board committees as well, I think I have felt a bit of a shift in the HR committee. I saw Joy do this do too, when she really didn't have the answer, let's say it was the investment committee – she and Keith really knew nothing about investments and really listened to what the investment committee had to say, and let the investment committee do its work. I felt that with the HR thing is that it was sort of new, and how to handle some things – I really felt like Keith and David were really listening. We know there is that model and we know that Joy did that as well, but there are other places where we could see also whether the Board committees will step up and offer some real leadership and some real guidance. That will be part of the transition as well. I think we really need to revamp, we have our special events committee but we really need to think what the Gala committee should look like, you are intimately involved with that right? That is a space where I think Joy really liked to keep it small, have

about four people who did all the work. We have to sort of figure out how to spread with non Board members as well as Board members. I think for both staff and Board it is going to be interesting to see how we pick up the leadership and be part of that.

Michelle: The fundraising committee's in particular, in your opinion how are they functioning now?

Susan: Well they aren't. That is some place we are going to really, and it was a Board thing and we were told over and over again we are not a fundraising Board, and that is something that is probably going to have to change. It didn't mean that you did bring in your friends, or your corporations, or lead a staff to people that could contribute but we were always told – I was really the first Board chair to ever do fundraising. Jaylee didn't fundraise, Harry didn't. It is not, one way we are but in another way I would imagine that the development committee on Arena's Board – I can say any theater, that they are really out raising funds for their whatever and I don't think we really do that. It is really an Artistic Director or this kind of operation and we fill in where you want us to fill in. I think that is something that needs work a little bit.

Michelle: What about special events?

Susan: The special events committee is totally, but that is like \$2500 here, \$5000 there. I am talking about, but if we have a capital campaign then we have to see that the Board takes part in it.

Michelle: Can you, I asked Joy about this but can you talk a little bit about what the retirement committee is doing and why they were formed?

Susan: Actually it was part of the transition, it is not unusual when someone who is at the top of her own organization that he/she sees that, we are calling retirement, but like a bonus if you want to call it. We were really charged with figuring out what was the appropriate amount, which is funds that we had available and that we also thought it was important that Keith, Serge and Morey would be with the organization through the transition. That is why we started talking about two years that they would be part of the transition. That is what the tension is all about and then the retirement package with Joy, it is

also historical right that there were many years in which we didn't have a 401K or whatever it is that is appropriate, so it was historical as well as appreciative. Appreciative isn't the right word but that is the one I can come up with, it was historical as well and we all felt really well with that. That is why, this committee just thought it was important to honor Joy and as part of a successful transition to keep the top management. That is what that committee was charged with. Does that sort of jive with what Joy said?

Michelle: Yes. Was there any opposition with other Board member from the results of the retirement committee?

Susan: That is a really interesting question, there were a lot of questions because it was something we had never done before, so of course there were a lot of questions. I would say there was one Board member who was against it but more about a process question than that, and there was a question that he asked the lawyer at the meeting – I think the lawyer was absolutely right, but it just didn't convince him. There was one person who was absolutely against it, one person who at first I won't say was against it but just wanted to make sure that he felt it was for the good of the theater which is what the Board is all about, judiciary responsibilities that are good for the theater, and he was absolutely convinced it was good for the theater. I will say there were two people who were absolutely against it, okay. It was a lot of hard work for Gerry and me, because first of all coming up with the right number and engaging the lawyer and all that bit of stuff that was one bit of hard work, but the other part was dealing with the Board. It was really a moment in which we were growing up into a Board that had to really make a decision on its own. I mean we have made decisions on our own, it is not like we were infants, it was really for our first MAJOR decision like this which was a lot of money, we had the money – I am convinced of that. It was a lot of money, it was a task but it was a task in the end I think was really well worth it because it made our Board become a slightly different kind of Board. It really gave Gerry and me a chance to meet the Board members in a way that I know worked out okay. There were two that were definitely against it and one that just wanted to be very very careful, and make sure it was for the good of the organization. At first, it might look like – because it is a lot of money, but we had it so I am not worried about that. Also we had to do things like – I really formed the right committee, the tax committee – they brought up stuff and we

would just sit there and go okay. And to bring in a really top notch who had been one of Albert's partners – who really is a non-profit tax lawyer, we really did it right so it was really kind of interesting. I learned all sorts of things, like when you have to pay taxes on this stuff, it was incredible. I don't want to leave out Russell, something for Russell he really deserves a lot.

Michelle: Okay thanks. I think that is all I have.

Susan: How long of a paper will this be?

Michelle: All of you have been asking me that, it will probably end up being over a hundred pages.

Susan: We all get signed copies right?

Michelle: Sure, if you want it.

Susan: Signed and dated so when you are a famous something or other, we can say we have something signed by Michelle.

Michelle: Sure, I will send you one.

Susan: Absolutely.

END

APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW WITH ROMA ROGERS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AT THE
STUDIO THEATRE

Michelle: If you wouldn't mind, I will be asking you a series of questions as it relates to the succession plan that has happened and is still occurring here at city of theater for the role of Artistic Director. I am currently employed here at the theater and have my own opinions, I would just like to hear it in your own words the answers to these questions. Also, I will be using the phrase "succession plan" and "leadership transition" interchangeably but are for the most part mean the same thing. If you could please state for me your name and title as it relates to the Studio Theater.

Roma: My name is Roma Rogers and I am the Director of Education.

Michelle: How long have you been employed at the Studio?

Roma: About 15 years or so.

Michelle: That is a long time. Did you have a different title before Director of Education?

Roma: Yes I did, most recently it was Director of Education and Director of Administration.

Michelle: Before that, were there any other titles?

Roma: Before that it was Director of Hiring.

Michelle: You have been in charge of the education department for how long?

Roma: Eight years maybe.

Michelle: Can you just describe for me in your own words what the process was for the leadership transition between founder Joy Zinoman and Artistic Director David Muse just a recount in your own words of what happened?

Roma: This was part of a five year plan for the Studio and it actually had begun five years before it actually happened, so there were different phases within the plan. I don't remember specifically what those are, not in accurate basis. For me it was work as usual with extra meetings pertaining to this transition. I think the last year was really the year that it actually dominated just about everything that happened because there were lots of parties, lots of farewells, and at each farewell there was like one every month, and at each farewell there would be people who gave speeches that was relevant to their work and relationship to Joy, so going through that was kind of like a mourning for a whole year. By the end of it, I experienced the whole thing, every time I would cry because it is kind of emotional when you have worked with someone that long – you know the person very well, so it is like a part of you is no longer existing. Joy is very posh, she is many many things and we have had so many varying relationships. She was my teacher, acting teacher, she was my directing teacher, she was my boss in the work place so we had that relationship, and a couple of years ago I started training to teach here so she was my teacher for that, she was also my friend because she has come to birthday parties, she has had special parties at her house, so I also knew her somewhat on a social level so there were many levels to our relationship. Going into her not being around on a daily basis was kind of hard to imagine when reality hit, so there was a lot of emotion. Hearing the stories of about her relationships with other people was just so heart-wrenching. There were times when I could just punch her in the face or cuss her out and walk out, there were definitely those times but you don't work with somebody for all these years and not have closeness like that, not in the way that we work in theater. It was really hard, but by the end of the mourning year at the last party we were just so exhausted from all the parties and all the good-bye's that we were like okay, leave already. Then in retrospect I am pretty sure that is how she planned it, because she kind of knew what the affect would be by the end of it. This is coming into the reality of the transition.

Michelle: What has been your role specifically in the leadership transition, if any? What have you directly had to do, did you have meetings about it with other people or did you contribute in any way to the succession plan?

Roma: Not really, except that there were many times we have announced to the teachers and I am supposed to be in charge. We are still announcing. I had to be part of the party planning - I don't think I had a role in the actual thing when it happened.

Michelle: Now that Joy is back as Master Teacher Chair, how has that been – founders of non-profit organizations have a tendency to be the department head of every department because they have to be, so they are in charge of the finances and management and the artistic side, so this transition is probably a big one for her. So coming back as something completely different and in your department, I guess I would just like to hear how you think it is going?

Roma: I think it is forming itself as to what exactly her function is going to be, what it might be right this moment may not necessarily be what it will be a year from now. I think that is evolving, I don't think she really knows what it is. There are times when she wants to be, especially when she first got back, she wanted to have access to certain information and I told her no, you don't have access to that information. That is my information and you don't need this information.

Michelle: What information?

Roma: She wanted to know how the registrations were going, so I was very vague – I said oh, everything is fine. She wanted to know specifically what class, how many, who and there is a place where I keep all that information and I knew she wanted it. She came over to my desk and she was just looking for it, she had her eye on it and she didn't know how to say it. When I saw her looking at it, I just pushed the book back. I was still talking to her but I looked her in the eye and pushed the book away. Then she couldn't help herself, she came right out and said can I see the book. I said to her, I said that is not information I give teachers and then we had this moment. It was actually a fun moment, because I knew what she was going through and I didn't feel at all threatened in any way. We both looked at each other, and she goes well I am the Director of Curriculum and I want to see my classes so I know what

curriculum to prepare. It was the lamest thing she could come up with, then I said okay and she just looked at her class. Eventually she found out what was going on everywhere, but I made her work for it.

Michelle: Has there been anything else that has been confrontation with your duties?

Roma: I wouldn't even describe that as confrontation, it was a moment when she realized that she had laid down the law that she was not going to be doing this, and so then I wasn't going to encourage her to do it. But with decisions and everything, she has been calling me every day. Sometimes she calls and I am like what more could we have to talk about. It is her trying to find out what her role is. I know Joy always has to be someone in charge so I am not fighting that, I just want her to discover what it is she wants to do.

Michelle: With Joy taking off the four months after she "retired" from Artistic Director and now it was only a four month span before she came back – do you think that four months was a good amount of time for her to be away, or do you think it could have been sooner or later, I know one source tells us that you should sever all ties from the organization for at least a year for everyone else to settle into their roles.

Roma: That is me imaging things, I should probably state right here that I didn't see why she had to totally retire just so you know where I am coming from. I didn't think she had to retire, it is my personal opinion that she could have just been a figurehead and if she needed more time with her family, find that time and do the work to find a little balance even if the balance tipped toward her family. She could totally cut back and still be Artistic Director, in my opinion. She could come for opening night, she doesn't have to do this 80 hours a week schedule, she doesn't have to be involved in every little, itsy bitsy little decision that is being made. This is my opinion, that is a tough question to answer – I think that her staying away a year from the school would have been hard because she is a teacher, what she teaches is very important to the curriculum and the growth of the students so I think a year would have been too much from the school. I think she could probably back off a little bit in terms of what she is trying to do right this moment, I think she could spend more time with her family right this moment now that she is back – and actually she is with her family this weekend. Again, she has to find out where her balance is - I highly respect her because it takes a lot to

run, to start an institution, and it takes a lot to sustain yourself for 36 years. I also come to this with the highest respect that I could give anybody. Also sometimes she is quite the witch on heels, maybe that is what you got to do.

Michelle: Besides Joy, the other people here at the Studio do you think it would have been beneficial, or do you think it was just fine the way it was for four months, being away for everyone else to settle into their roles.

Roma: For everyone else to settle into their roles, a year would probably be good. But I think that would have been hard, so I think the four months is somewhere in between.

Michelle: This will be my last question, do you see any major differences in the way the Studio Theater is operating now that David Muse is here instead of Joy, in terms of just the administrative atmosphere?

Roma: Yes.

Michelle: How so?

Roma: I can get into trouble for this, it is not as fast paced as it was. There is definitely a more relaxed air. Are you going to make me comment on what I think about that?

Michelle: No that was good, unless you would like to further comment?

Roma: No.

Michelle: I think that is all the questions I have for you – thank you very much.

END

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albert, Sheila. *Hiring the Chief Executive: A Practical Guide to the Search and Selection Process*. District of Columbia: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 2000.
- Begin, S. "Following The Leader; Nonprofits Find Replacing CEOs From Within Could Save Money On Salaries And Training, Help Focus." *Crain's Detroit Business*, p. 11. April 28, 2008.
- Bernstein, Philip. *Best Practices of Effective Nonprofit Organizations*. New York: The Foundation Center, 1997.
- Block, Stephen. *Why Nonprofits Fail: Overcoming Founder's Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success*. California: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Brown, Howard H., and Donald L. Ruhl. *Breakthrough Management for Not-for-Profit Organizations*. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003.
- Byrnes, William J. *Management and the Arts*. Massachusetts: Elsevier Science, 2003.
- Cheng, Willie. *Doing Good Well: What does (and does not) make sense in the nonprofit world*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2009.
- Connerly, Mary L., and Paul B. Pedersen. *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment*. California: Sage Publications, 2005.
- Connors, Tracy Daniel. *The Nonprofit Handbook: Management*, 3rd ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2001.
- Conte, David, and Stephen Langley. *Theatre Management*. California: EntertainmentPro, 2007.
- Crawford, Robert W. *On Board: Guiding Principles for Trustees of Not-for-Profit Organizations*. New Mexico: Western States Arts Federation, 1991.
- Denhart, Robert, Janet Vinzant Denhardt, and Maris Aristigueta. *Managing Human Behavior & Nonprofit Organizations*. California: Sage Publications, 2002.

- Dym, Barry, and Harry Hutson. *Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations*. California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005.
- Grady, Jamie. *A Simple Statement: A Guide to Nonprofit Arts Management & Leadership*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2006.
- Healy, P.. "Seattle Theater Takes No-Frills Approach to Filling a Top Job." *The New York Times*, p. C1. August 17, 2009.
- Herman, Robert D., and Richard D. Heimovics. *Executive Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations*. New York: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991.
- Hodgson, Phil, and Stuart Crainer. *What do High Performance Managers Really Do?* London: Pitman Publishing, 1994.
- Howe, Fisher. *The Board Member's Guide to Strategic Planning: A Practical Approach to Strengthening Nonprofit Organizations*. California: Jossey-Bass, 1997.
- Howe, Fisher. *The Nonprofit Leadership Team: Building the Board-Executive Director Partnership*. California: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Ingram, Richard T. *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Board*. District of Columbia: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 1996.
- Jackson, Peggy M. *Nonprofit Risk Management and Contingency Planning*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006.
- Kaiser, Michael. *Leading Roles: 50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask*. New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 2010.
- Kearns, Kevin P. *Private Sector Strategies for Social Sector Success: The Guide to Strategy and Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. California: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Knauff, E.B., Renee A. Berger, and Sandra T. Gray. *Profiles of Excellence*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991.
- Laughlin, Frederic L., and Robert C. Andringa. *Good Governance for Nonprofits: Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board*. New York: AMACOM, 2007.

- Letts, Christing W., William P. Ryan, and Allen Grossman. *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999.
- Lysakowski, Linda. *The Development Plan*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2007.
- Manzini, Andrew O. *Organizational Diagnosis: A Practical Approach to Company Problem Solving and Growth*. New York: AMACON, 1988.
- Matejka, Ken, and Al Murphy. *Making Change Happen: On Time, On Target, On Budget*. California: Davies-Black Publishing, 2005.
- McCool, Joseph Daniel. *Deciding Who Leads: How Executive Recruiters Drive, Direct & Disrupt the Global Search for Leadership Talent*. California: Davies-Black Publishing, 2008.
- McLaughlin, Thomas A. *Nonprofit Strategic Positioning: Decide Where to Be, Plan What to Do*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2006.
- McLaughlin, Thomas A., and Addie Nelson Backlund. *Moving beyond founder's syndrome to nonprofit success*. District of Columbia: BoardSource, 2008.
- Mount, Lisa. "Transition and Evolutions." *GIA Reader*, 21, no 1 (Spring 2010), <http://www.giarts.org/article/founding-artistic-director-transitions-and-evolutions> (accessed January 16, 2011).
- Napier, Nancy K. *Insight: Encouraging Aha! Moments for Organizational Success*. California: Praeger Publishers, 2010.
- Nicholson, Nigel, and Michael A. West. *Managerial Job Change: Men and Women in Transition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- O'Neill, Michael, and Dennis R. Young, ed. *Educating Managers of Nonprofit Organizations*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988.
- Phills, Jr., James A. *Integrating Mission and Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Radbourne, Jennifer, and Margaret Fraser. *Arts Management: A Practical Guide*. Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

Roche, Nancy, and Jaan Whitehead. *The Art of Governance: Boards in the Performing Arts*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005.

Rothwell, William J. *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*. New York: AMACON, 2001.

Sorcher, Melvin. *Predicting Executive Success: What it Takes to Make it into Senior Management*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1985.

Stevens, Susan Kenney. *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, second edition. Minnesota: Stagewise Enterprises, Inc., 2008.

Taubman, Joseph. *Performing Arts Management and Law*. New York: Law-Arts Publishers, Inc., 1977.

Teegarden, Paige Hull, Denice Rothman Hinden, and Paul Sturm. *Nonprofit organizational culture guide: revealing the hidden truths that impact performance*. California: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Waldo, Charles N. *A Working Guide for Directors of Not-for Profit Organizations*. Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1986.

Weisman, Carol, and Richard I. Goldberg. *Losing Your Executive Director Without Losing Your Way*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004.