LEADERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES FROM ARTS MANAGERS

By

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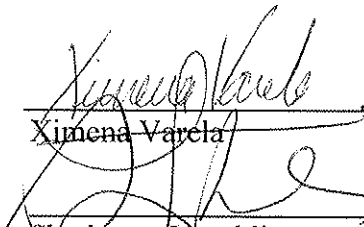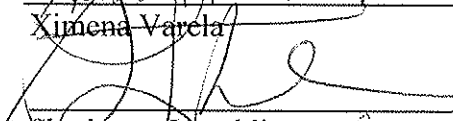in Partial Fulfillment of
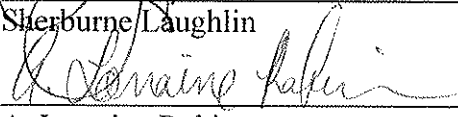
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ABSTRACT

Arts organizations face many challenges to survive. In order to ensure the future of our cultural capital, the next generation of arts leaders must be prepared to face these challenges and lead their organizations appropriately. While young arts professionals can read a wealth of information about leaders in other disciplines, their leadership experiences, and the leadership qualities that they value, little arts management specific information is available to them.

To increase the resources available to leaders, this study asked which qualities current arts leaders themselves consider to be the most useful in their own leadership experiences. Second, what leadership means to them in the context of their own jobs as well as if this view of leadership has changed for them during the course of their careers.

In conclusion, arts leaders value many of the same qualities as noted in other sources, with notable preferences toward passionate, visionary, collaborative leaders.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO LEADERSHIP

Leadership Defined

There is a very large number of books on leadership on the library shelves: leadership in business, leadership theories, and leadership in specific fields. However, books about leadership in arts management are much more difficult to find. In fact, most sources with specific information about arts management are not on library shelves at all, but hidden in obscure places on the Internet. The purpose of this paper is, first, to increase the resources available to young arts management leaders by asking which qualities current arts leaders themselves consider to be the most useful in their own leadership experience. Second, to determine what leadership means to them in the context of their own jobs, as well as if this view of leadership has changed for them during the course of their careers.

The obvious place to begin is to note how leadership is defined across a variety of established sources. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines leadership as "the office or position of a leader…a person who leads as a guide or conductor." This definition seems very circular and not at all clear. James MacGregor Burns states "leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns, 1978). Burns raises several interesting points about people who hold power. All leaders are power holders, but not all power holders are leaders. Peter Northouse offers another definition: "…the meaning of leadership is complex and includes many dimensions. For some people, leadership is a *trait* or *ability,* for others it is a *skill* or *behavior,* and for still others leadership is a *relationship"*(Northouse, 1979).

The difficulty in coming up with a single, clear definition of leadership arises from the fact that leadership means different things to different people, as evidenced by the enormously large amount of resources about leadership. The fact that so many people have chosen to study and to write about leadership shows what an elusive concept that it can be. In some cases, leadership is lumped together with concepts like power, management, and authority, while other sources specifically list leadership as its own phenomenon. By interviewing arts leaders about leadership, this study will contribute to our knowledge of what leadership means to arts managers.

<u>Trait Theories of Leadership</u>

One major point of research about leadership revolves around specific personal traits. Some sources believe that traits distinguish leaders from non-leaders while others simply believe that traits can determine a leader's effectiveness. Upon examination of six sources that list these types of traits, it is easy to see similarities among them. While the wording may not have been exact, many of the sources allude to the same traits. For example, Yukl asserts that being diplomatic and tactful as important skills for a leader while Bass lists social and interpersonal skills.

Table 1 lists a sampling of the traits and skills crucial for leaders that appeared most frequently across six sources. Similar traits are combined for clarity.

Table 1: Commonly Cited Leadership Traits

Traits	Skills
• Adaptable	• Communicative
• Ambitious/driven	• Conceptual

• Assertive	• Creative
• Charismatic	• Interpersonal
• Confident	• Management
• Cooperative	• Problem solving
• Dependable	
• Emotionally balanced/controlled	
• Honesty	
• Integrity	
• Intelligent/Knowledgeable	
• Organized	
• Sociable	

As to how important these items are, each source differs. Phillips and Loy suggest their eight character and values traits as a foundation. "If the foundation has cracks in it, or one of the elements is missing, the entire leadership structure can come crashing down (Phillips, 2008). Northouse, on the other hand, infers that the list of traits of leadership is so long, that it is a challenge to choose which traits are essential for leaders (Northouse, 2009).

Another study relates each of these traits to the Big Five personality framework. This framework suggests that all of the traits associated with leadership can be put into one of the categories of the Big Five framework that includes extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Of these five, extroversion emerges as the most important to a leader's success while agreeableness and emotional stability are less important (Robbins, 2008). The traits from Table 1 fit into the Big Five framework as shown in Table 2. Some traits or skills fit into multiple categories.

Table 2: Traits from Table 1 organized in the Big Five framework

Extroversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
• Ambitious/ driven • Assertive • Charismatic • Communicative • Confident • Cooperative • Management Skills	• Adaptable • Cooperative • Interpersonal skills • Management skills • Sociable	• Ambitious/ driven • Conceptual • Dependable • Honesty • Integrity • Intelligent/ knowledgeable • Organized • Problem solving skills
Emotional **Stability**	**Openness** **to Experience**	
• Emotionally balanced and controlled	• Cooperative • Intelligent/ knowledgeable • Problem solving skills	

Clearly, this is not an exhaustive list, but the Big Five framework is a convenient way to include

other skills that are not explicitly stated.

Transactional Theories of Leadership

Transactional leaders lead their followers by establishing goals, dividing tasks, and

clarifying roles (Robbins, 2008). One transactional theory of leadership is called the path-goal

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theory. Leaders in this style must use a leadership style that will best motivate and meet the needs of his or her followers. Path-goal leadership theorists believe that followers will work the best when their work goals seem attainable and worthwhile (Northouse, 2004). Basically, a leader must act to increase a follower's motivation. Path-goal leaders tend to have four main behaviors:

1. Supportive leadership – the leader shows concern for every follower and creates a genial work environment.

2. Directive leadership – the leader provides specific directions complete with defined rules, procedures, work schedule, and deadlines.

3. Participative leadership – the leader considers the followers' ideas.

4. Achievement-oriented leadership – the leader sets high goals for improvement and shows confidence that the goals are attainable (Yukl, 1994).

In path-goal leadership, the leader must exhibit some or all of these leadership traits, according to the needs of his or her followers to help them to overcome whatever obstacles they are facing (Northouse, 2009).

The leader-member exchange theory, or LMX, is different, but still transactional. In LMX, a busy leader creates special relationships with a smaller group of followers, the in-group. This group receives the majority of the leader's time and attention. This small group usually has ideas and qualities similar to the leader. Predictably, the small group usually has higher job satisfaction, higher levels of productivity, and lower turnover rates than followers who are not a part of the select small group, or the out-group (Robbins, 2008). Additionally, members of the in-group constantly look for ways to improve and are willing to work more hours and to do more tasks than required while members of the out-group complete the work that is required and fits

within their roles but do not seek out ways to contribute beyond (Northouse, 2005). The in-group and out-group usually develop when the leader does not have time to interact with all followers, but are chosen based on like qualities and perceived work quality. Perhaps unintentionally, leaders in an LMX situation are selecting an in-group whose employees are more likely to be successful, engaged, committed, and satisfied in their work situations. The out-group may or may not be dissatisfied with the leader, but they usually have a higher rate of work-related problems, spend less time decision-making, and are less likely to work more than absolutely required or to volunteer for other tasks (Bass, 1990).

<center>Other Theories of Leadership</center>

Sources on leadership list many other types of leadership theories. One of these theories is called charismatic leadership. Charismatic leaders are defined as having "extraordinary influence over their followers, who become imbued with moral inspiration and purpose." Charisma was first defined as a "special gift that gives ordinary people the capacity to do ordinary things" (Northouse, 2004, 170). Charismatic leadership points to a four-step process of influence:

1. The leader has vision for the organization's future and communicates a strategic long-term plan to his or her followers.

2. The leader sets high expectations for how to reach these goals and stresses that he or she is confident that the followers can reach the goals.

3. The leader models a set of values and behaviors for his or her followers.

4. The leader demonstrates "emotion-inducing and often unconventional behavior to demonstrate courage and convictions about the vision" (Robbins, 2008).

Charismatic leaders can be incredibly successful at amassing a large number of dedicated followers. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a great example of a charismatic leader who had a large following of people completely dedicated to his cause. Another charismatic leader, Adolf Hitler, also inspired a large number of people to his cause, but with quite different results (Robbins, 2008, 188). For this reason, the vision of the leader is the defining characteristic of a charismatic leader.

Somewhat related to charismatic leadership, transformational leadership that is a process that changes and transforms individuals (Northouse, 2004). These types of leaders encourage a more selfless approach in their followers, pushing the idea of working towards the good of the organization rather than for the good of self (Robbins, 2008). When introduced in 1985, the theory of transformational leadership included three main points: charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Basically, these components mean that a leader evokes strong emotions in his or her followers, creating a great sense of identification between the leader and the follower, then makes the followers aware of an issue and encourages them to see another viewpoint. Finally, the leader is supportive and motivating throughout the process for the followers to complete or work through the task at hand. Because the charismatic leader sets extremely high expectations and also communicates a high degree of confidence that his or her followers can achieve them, the leader increases the self-confidence and feelings of self-worth in his or her followers (Yukl, 1994). Transformational leaders encourage innovation and creativity (Robbins, 2008).

Methodology

To examine leadership from the point of view of the leaders themselves, six leaders in the arts in the Washington, DC area offered their opinions and insights to seventeen questions on

leadership. These leaders were chosen because they each lead prominent DC area performing

arts or arts management organizations. Additionally, these leaders each work as managing

directors or executive directors who are fundamental in working with the staff of his or her

organization, setting organizational direction and motivating staff.

- Dr. Brett Ashley Crawford, Managing Director at Imagination Stage in Bethesda, MD

- Maureen Dwyer, Executive Director at Sitar Arts Center in Washington, DC

- Brett Egan, Director of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC

- Debra Harrison, Chief Operating Officer at Washington Performing Arts Society in Washington, DC (at the time of this interview)

- David Snider, Executive Director at Young Playwrights' Theater in Washington, DC (at the time of this interview), currently Director of Artistic Programming at Arena Stage in Washington, DC

- Russell Willis Taylor, President and CEO of National Arts Strategies in Alexandria, VA

Each person interviewed in person during the months of February and March, 2012 with the

exception of Brett Egan, who responded via email on February 20, 2012.

The seventeen questions for the interviews focused on three main issues: biographical

information for each interviewee, their thoughts on leadership itself, and the types of traits that

they value or dislike in themselves and other leaders. Please see Appendix A for a full list of the

interview questions.

The responses to each question are aggregated according to topic. Some responses are

edited slightly, for clarity. Other inconsequential responses do not appear in the findings.

Additionally, some responses have been moved to a question for which the answer is better

suited than for where the interviewee responded. Full text for the responses to the leadership

questions appears in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 2

LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO ARTS MANAGERS

<u>Findings</u>

Education and Training

The educational backgrounds for these six leaders vary. Five of the six respondents have at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent in the following fields: Theatre and Math, Drama, multiple artistic studies, English and Russian, English Literature and Art History (Crawford, Dwyer, Egan, Snider, Taylor). Of these five, two have master's degrees in Arts Administration and Acting (Crawford and Snider, respectively) and one, Russell Willis Taylor, has a Scholar's Certificate from Cambridge University. Brett Ashley Crawford is the only interviewee to have achieved a PhD in Theater History and Criticism; she also has an additional graduate certificate in Women's Studies. Appendix B lists a more detailed look at each respondent's educational background.

Several of these leaders have also attended specialized training for leadership. Brett Ashley Crawford attended the Center for Creative Leadership training through Theatre Communications Group. Maureen Dwyer was awarded a place on the inaugural class of the Nonprofit Roundtable's Future Executive Director Fellowship Program in 2008 and 2009. Snider points to a variety of professional development, most notably Target Leadership, Leadership of Greater Washington, and an executive coach. Each of these people mentions that the connections that they make with other leaders through these programs is extremely valuable beyond the initial program itself.

Career Paths

These six individuals have had different paths with which to achieve their current positions. Two began their careers in the arts as professional actors (Dwyer, Snider) while others had early jobs in fields outside of the performing arts as a paralegal and a newspaper reporter (Crawford, Taylor). All respondents who listed each job that they have held over time listed a variety of different positions in various arts organizations including but not limited to producing, stage management, grant writing and fundraising, directing. Additionally, two interviewees listed current or former teaching positions at the university level (Crawford, Snider). Appendix C lists a more detailed list of each respondent's career path.

Debra Harrison, notably, does not have formal education beyond high school and worked in the arts for her entire career, beginning at age 15 as a cleanup assistant to a scenic painter and working her way through various positions at the Vancouver Opera from there. She strongly believes that on the job experience is the correct career path for any person who wants to be a good leader in arts management.

Definition of Leadership

It is clear from the sheer amount of research available on leadership that the term means different things to different people. Each source will define leadership slightly differently than another. For some, leadership is an office to hold. For others, leadership is a trait of a leader. Leadership may also need to be defined by a set of traits that lead to a successful leader. Just as leadership research employs competing definitions of leadership, the interviewees of this study also have varied opinions on leadership.

For Brett Ashley Crawford, there is a difference between a leader and leadership: "A leader is someone who inspires others to be the best that they can be." Crawford also emphasizes

the importance of leading an organization and a group of people to accomplish a goal: "What is leadership? It is providing the opportunities for an organization and a group of people to achieve their goals."

Maureen Dwyer places more emphasis on inspiration: "I think it's the leader's job to really inspire everyone involved with the mission of the organization. So that means, of course, the staff, but it also means every consumer, whether it's the audience coming or in our case, the students and families coming. All of the people who are dependent on the mission and also whom the mission are dependent on, so I think inspiring funders is absolutely critical for a nonprofit arts organization."

Dwyer also draws a distinction between managing and leading, which she believes begins with inspiration: "By inspiring, I don't mean that you are actually giving passionate speeches. That's part of it, but I think a lot of it is listening and helping everyone involved develop their own passion, whether they're within or without, for what you're doing. So it's not always being the face of the organization, which is very important for the leader, but I think it's also being the ears of the organization. Having the open heart that can hear it all, put it all together, and then put it back out to everyone that you need to make it successful."

Debra Harrison struggles to find a clean definition. She relates leadership to her job at Washington Performing Arts Society and believes that " if any of my direct reports can do their jobs, their specific jobs, better than I can and if I've got somebody in jobs that I can do their job better than them, they're the wrong person in the job and we should have somebody better. And so what my job is, to ensure we have, to use the old 'get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus' is to make sure not just that those people are there, but they have the tools to communicate and share things and that we are bringing ideas to them." Harrison also

believes that that the leader is also crucial in taking bits of information from many employees and helping them to see a solution. She thinks that leadership is also "just giving people the space they need to do the best work they can."

David Snider also struggled to find a definitive way to discuss leadership. His first response was that "leadership is partially about making decisions. It's partially about making choices and choosing paths, sometimes for an organization and sometimes for you." Snider also believes that listening is a big part of leadership. By listening, he means that it is important to listen, not only to what is happening within the organization and its staff, but also to politics, community, local and international happenings, and all other things that could impact the organization and using that information to make the right decisions for the organization.

Russell Willis Taylor offered the following definition: "A leader is someone who people want to follow, first and foremost. That sounds stupid, but it's not. People have to want to go where you think you should go. My personal view of leadership is that it's highly collaborative. I think a really good leader creates situations in which people accomplish things they didn't think they could."   Taylor also believes that being a leadership cannot be about self-aggrandizement for the leader. She states, "you get people who are ambitious, but that's not the same as doing the right thing for the organization." Taylor also points to collaboration as crucial for a leader. She thinks that a leader must be willing to take advice from others who offer good advice.

Taylor is also quick to point out the human element to leadership. "If you're not laughing at least once a day, this is not brain surgery, we are not saving the world and if you do not have joy in the workplace, the leader is failing. I really believe that because when people can laugh together, they can trust each other and when people can trust each other, they can accomplish anything."

Additionally, for her final words on leadership, Taylor points out that leadership is "far more circumstantial than people like to think." She believes that an individual may be the right leader for an organization at one point in its development, but perhaps would not always be the right leader for the organization. She points to personal circumstances in her career where she was the right leader at the right time for an organization, but she also believes that " strong leadership is a lot more circumstantial than a lot of leaders want to recognize and I think that the challenge is to recognize, like Mary Poppins, when the wind has changed and it's time to go."

One similarity among all the responses is that each seems to define leadership by how the leader should behave. This idea is consistent with the final part of Northouse's definition: "For some people, leadership is a *trait* or *ability,* for others it is a *skill* or *behavior,* and for still others leadership is a *relationship"*(Northouse, 1979). Each of these leaders viewed leadership as a relationship with others at some point during their responses.

A notable difference, however, is that the leadership relationship that each describes is very different. Harrison, for example, believes that each person in her organization is the right person to do his or her job. Her job, as the leader, is to give her staff space to do their work. Where she comes in is to synthesize the information and to help guide the staff. Taylor, however, describes her workplace where every member of her staff is equally important in every decision. She mentioned that the executive/accounting assistant is just as involved in day-to-day decisions in within the organization as the vice president because as a leader, she values collaborative decision making like this.

As Russell Willis Taylor says, leadership is circumstantial, so perhaps the views of these people are based, in part on where they lead. Taylor leads a staff of about nine other people while Harrison's organization is much larger, with about thirty staff members. This fact alone

could influence how they each lead within their organizations. In short, this simple fact alone could be a big reason why so many definitions of leadership exist in literature. Leadership is circumstantial.

Arts Organizations v. Non-Arts Organizations

As most arts organizations are non-profits, they can function differently from organizations in other fields. There is little research about if and how leadership differs in arts organizations. These leaders responded to whether or not they feel that leadership outside of an arts organization is the same as inside of one. However, these responses are opinions only, as these leaders do not necessarily have experience leading a non-arts organization. Many interviewees also responded as if the question were asking if leadership is different outside of non-profits, instead of just outside of the arts.

Brett Ashley Crawford believes that leadership is absolutely the same inside and outside of the arts.   She is influenced by what she reads in *The New York Times* Business Section and the *Harvard Business Review* to look for ideas for herself. For her, "there is really not any difference in what I do except that I have less money and we have an income stream that they don't have. And we don't have a pressure to make a profit in the same way, so my decision-making parameters are different and my goals are different, but the means to get there are all the same."

Debra Harrison states that she thinks that leadership definitely should be the same outside of arts organizations. Relating to the differences between non-profits and for-profit organizations, Harrison brings back the concept of leadership as inspiration that both Crawford and Dwyer brought up during their definitions of leadership: "I think that we can inspire people; you have a much better chance to inspire somebody with a vision than with a dollar. . . I think

that in corporate America, even if you are inspiring the assembly line person to do their work, I think you still have to have a bigger concept, so how do you put that into a dynamic that could work in corporate America knowing that ultimately, all they want to do is make money."

Harrison also brings up a point of difference between corporations and art organization from when a business professor collaborating from Arizona State commented that Harrison's workplace, an opera company, was showing end of life symptoms. The professor pointed out that a corporation in the same situation would either close or change its product. Harrison says that instead of changing from an opera company to something else, the leader must decide "how far are you willing to change what you're doing and how you're doing it to stay relevant? That's the question. The end of life cycle, I would agree, we probably do show all of the symptoms, but if we are able to take that art form and say what else can we do with it, how far are we willing to go in how we present it, what we commission to be new, what we do and it's still opera, because if we don't believe it's still opera anymore, then you've just let the art form die. So it's finding that line."

David Snider also agrees that leadership should be the same in all types of organizations. He describes a meeting of National Arts Strategies' Chief Executive Program where the participants talked about why Sony lost to Apple and they concluded that Sony did not listen to the mood and desires of the country. He says, "so it feels to me whether you are running Sony or Apple or whether you are running a small nonprofit organization, there are certain things about listening to the moment, listening to what's going on nationally and internationally, listening to how your organization is even formed and what things might be needing to change or changing."

Interestingly, each respondent feels that leadership either is the same or should be the same for organizations outside of the arts. One interesting point is how Harrison describes that

even with declining popularity and profits, opera should remain in its current form, with some changes where possible. Snider seems to think more along the lines that it is important to take in the climate of constituents and base the organization on the needs of those involved. This type of conundrum is probably faced by a lot of arts organizations and would not be handled the same as it would be outside of the arts. In the case of Sony and Apple, Sony struggles to maintain market share just as many arts organizations may struggle. Perhaps, as Snider insinuates, arts organizations need to take care to listen to what is happening around them in order to stay current and solvent.   As Crawford points out, the organizations have different means to achieve similar ends.

<div align="center">Economic Crisis and Leadership</div>

The United States has been engaged in a financial crisis since 2008. It is clear throughout the country that times have been tough for organizations and businesses of all types. Some organizations have flourished while others have perished. Crisis is an interesting test for leaders. As we have not had a financial situation of this magnitude for many years, these leaders provide valuable insight as to how the financial situation did or did not affect their leadership.

Brett Ashley Crawford thinks that the economic crisis did affect her from time to time. She points to her own quality of remaining calm in a crisis as being very useful to her. She thinks that her "leadership style is not top down, it is very democratic, so [when] we have a problem, I think that the more brains we have at the table, the better, which is not true of everyone that I'm working with, so I think that I really led to that in a way that has helped the organization succeed. I don't believe that any leader has every right answer and if they think that, they'll be proven wrong eventually." She is thinks that these qualities were just what Imagination Stage needed to continue strongly through the recession.   She appears to feel lucky

as she states, "there are some leaders whose organizations perhaps didn't make it or are still struggling because they weren't able to do what is needed in this economy as a non-profit."

Maureen Dwyer thinks that it has less affected her leadership and more affected her focus. "I think my focus has to be pretty much 110% on fundraising which probably would not be my normal inclination in balancing how to lead an organization. I think it's what I go to bed at night thinking about, it's what wakes me up in the middle of the night, it's definitely changed my prioritizing." Her prioritization on fundraising has had an impact on how she leads her staff as her personal focus for the organization shifted.

David Snider does not think that the economic crisis affected his leadership, however, when he began his tenure as Executive Director at Young Playwrights' Theatre (YPT), the organization was already experiencing major financial difficulties. As this was his first job as an executive director, he thinks that he "sort of learned leadership in the crisis mode already. It was already in my DNA to think about zero based budgeting and how do we blow this all up to start over again. So I think I was trained already to deal with what's been happening across the board with the recession the last couple years."

He credits the economic situation with which the organization was struggling as a reason to "empower your people to actually build jobs and build an organization that people feel compelled to work for." He changed the YPT staff structure "so that everybody on staff is an artist and an administrator, they have both in their job description and they contribute to the mission across those realms and what that's done is to allow everyone on every level of staff to lead in some way from their seat." He thinks that in any situation, it is crucial to inspire people to lead their own work to maximize efficiency and to be extremely efficient with all resources.

Russell Willis Taylor did not change her leadership style due to the economic crisis. Like Snider, she came into a situation at National Arts Strategies (NAS) that she wanted to change. When she came to NAS, she "laid out for the board that the economic model that I want us to have." She wanted to have a small number of funders who give large, unrestricted sums two years in advance of when we need it. I said that I don't ever want this organization worried about cash flow." She was committed to raising enough money to get a big enough working reserve so that when the economy bottomed out, as she was sure that it would based on economic cycles, that NAS would have a reserve to depend upon as necessary.

She also thinks that NAS is a bit atypical because "we don't have any plans to go out of business, but we don't operate with the assumption of perpetuity, it's a different kind of culture. We're going to do the very best work that we can right now and if the moment comes where we think that we would be better to spend down the money and go away, then we would do that, and there's some people who don't like that."

While Crawford and Dwyer agree that the economic situation has affected their leadership styles, Snider and Taylor do not see a great affect on the way that they lead. However, Snider and Taylor admittedly arrived into situations at their current positions where great change was already happening. Snider had already restructured Young Playwrights' Theater and thus felt he had already weathered a major crisis. Taylor, on the other hand, restructured National Arts Strategies in such a way that they were set to be financially sound in the event of an emergency such as a financial meltdown. One could argue that even though Snider and Taylor think that the economic crisis did not affect their leadership styles, perhaps it did in their preparation for such an eventuality: Snider came into a situation that was already a

financial crisis and Taylor simply anticipated a crisis, so perhaps they simply anticipated financial issues and dealt with them early.

<p style="text-align:center;"><u>Reading about Leadership</u></p>

As there is such an abundance of books on leadership, it seemed appropriate to ask the leaders if they have any favorite literature resources that were of interest and help to them.

Brett Ashley Crawford is admittedly an avid reader. However, she tends to read so much simultaneously that she does not retain as much as she would like. She thinks that it is important to read "both management theory as well as philosophical theory" such as Margaret Wheatley and Pierre Bordieu. "The things that I like to read are things that address chaos theory and how ecosystems work. *Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Harvard Business Review*, *American Theater*, Tina Packer's book… Finding how things have meaning that aren't relevant, to me, increase your understanding of what you are doing."

Maureen Dwyer cited *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, books by Henry Allen, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni as a few of her favorites.

Debra Harrison is also an avid reader (though she regrets that she does not have enough time to read everything that she would like to read), but prefers fiction. She also favors *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, and mentioned that she has stacks and stacks of things to read, and that they have piled up since she arrived to Washington Performing Arts Society.

David Snider lists Michael Kaiser's book, *The Art of the Turnaround,* Howard Schultz, Joe Papp, *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson and Tina Fey as books and authors that he used in his the classes that he taught at American University in Washington, DC. He says that he doesn't "really read literature that's about leadership, I tend to read about leaders and understand who

they were or who they are, what's their biography. Reading about leaders can make you realize what you like."

Russell Willis Taylor reads about leadership, but in a somewhat non-traditional way. She prefers to find what she needs to know in literature. She and a few friends have a book club where they have created "a giant Bingo card and it's all the things you do when you get an MBA, all the courses, and we're filling in all the squares with novels you should be required to read before you can consider that course complete. So for example, nobody should be able to do Economics without reading *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope. Nobody should be allowed to do Strategy without reading *Moby Dick.*"

Taylor also says that at NAS, they read business books so that they can choose whether or not to recommend them others. She recommends books by Ron Heifetz, Clay Shirkey and Jim Collins because they "write very, very interesting things about the mechanics of running organizations**.** But I think that the challenge of leadership is it's very hard to unpack what makes a strong leader, there's a certain set of behaviors that you can [observe that more good leaders do than bad leaders], but then you'll come across someone who's a really extraordinary leader and they don't do that, so they don't fit the mold."

Obviously, leadership is hard concept to put down on paper. Based on the above comments, it seems that reading about literature, whether from the *New York Times, Moby Dick,* or Tina Fey's book *Bossypants,* aspiring leaders can choose to draw leadership tips from many sources and should find what works best for them.

<u>Isolation and Leadership</u>

The commonly used phrase that it is lonely at the top must come from somewhere. Being a leader often means making tough decisions (Snider). Leaders often have to make decisions that can be very unpopular or very popular, so they are often set apart from their colleagues at work.

Brett Ashley Crawford feels constantly isolated in her role as a leader. She has a unique perspective at Imagination Stage as she has had various roles over her 12 years of involvement with the organization. She muses, "When I'm the stage manager, I'm the person that everybody hugs. As managing director, nobody's giving me hugs. You feel isolated because you have to make certain decisions. I do believe that there is an intimacy that as you move up in management, has to be lost because you have to make decisions [like during staff lay-offs]. You can't do that if you are too emotionally attached."

She is quick to point out that as a leader, she supports people to a high degree. "I believe that I want you here and I will do what I can to keep you here. I did that last year for people who are part of the staff and if it's not working, I will help you find the job that's going to make you so happy, it just won't be here. I try to keep that attitude, but I recognize that it's not the same. So I think the isolation comes from that."

Maureen Dwyer agrees that being a leader can be very isolating. To Dwyer, "it's a role where you want to protect people from a lot of things to help them to do their best work, so sometimes you really don't want to share your burdens. It's an interesting dynamic in that your boss is your board of directors and they are a body of volunteers. So speaking of keeping people inspired, you are trying to inspire them to support you, to feel confident in you, it's an interesting dynamic. So you want to share, but you don't want to over share." Dwyer feels lucky that she

has other executive directors with whom she can speak candidly as that help her to feel less isolated.

Brett Egan, on the other hand, does not feel isolated, but recognizes that isolation is a real danger for arts management leaders. He states, "I am lucky to be surrounded by many caring colleagues. I also joined several arts manager drinking groups in NYC."

Debra Harrison agrees that she occasionally feels isolated. She feels lucky that at WPAS, "though we're down two senior directors right now, [the Director of Marketing and Communications, the Director of Programming] and I are all really aligned in our thinking about where we want to go and what the company can be, so when I'm feeling isolated or when I'm feeling frustrated, I [talk with them]." Harrison also points to connecting with colleagues and attending conferences as a way to recharge.

David Snider has felt isolated, but "I don't so much anymore because I've been very lucky to have opportunities the last several years to connect with other leaders, so I've been through Leadership Greater Washington, class of 2010. Now I have really close friends from throughout greater Washington that I talk with and go to coffee with and lunch and all that jazz." He has even had opportunities to "connect with other executive directors and share our kind of loneliness in the role. It can be really lonely because you are the person who is going close your door and make those decisions about who am I laying off, which way are we going to go on this. Even if you have a deputy director or someone that you really trust that you want to kick it around with, that decision is going to live with you ultimately." It is these decisions, according to Snider that can make one isolated from the rest of the staff.

Overall, these leaders either occasionally feel isolated in their roles, or recognize that isolation can be a real problem for leaders. Three of the leaders point specifically to difficult

decisions and information as the main source of their isolation from others in the organization (Crawford, Dwyer, Snider). Additionally, each leader, whether in this question, or in others, recognizes the importance of having trusted colleagues or friends with whom they can discuss how they are feeling. Because their support groups cannot always come from within the organization, leaders must find peers whom they can trust.

Much of the leadership research in the opening section discusses specific traits of a leader, and trait theories of leadership appear frequently in leadership books across many disciplines. As most sources do not specifically speak of leading in a non-profit or arts organization, these leaders opinions can help to point out similarities and differences for traits that are valuable to leaders in arts management.

Brett Ashley Crawford values "things that are inspiring, that build trust, that are transparent, and energizing, not deflating." She also points out that it is important for her to be able to create a safe space where she provides the resources for her staff to accomplish their goals. Along those lines, her "job is to make it so you can do what you are going to do. I say, don't limit yourself because there is always a way to make something happen. A leader has to lead, but doesn't always have to steer."

Crawford also values transparency and honesty, but "a safe honesty, meaning that I might not tell you everything at this moment because I really can't tell you because of either the hierarchy, or it's not time, but you have to trust that when it's time, I'll tell you. That's part of the transparency and the trust, that's not fully honest, but as honest as I can be." Additionally Crawford references something from the *Harvard Business Review* that something like "It's not about planning, it's about decisions."

Maureen Dwyer values passion and conviction of the need for the mission of the leader's organization. She does not "think that a leader can be in it just for the job; I don't think you could lead. You could manage, but I don't think that you could lead unless you are truly passionate about what the organization wants to achieve. I think that is very true for arts organizations." Additionally, she admires listeners who do not think that they know everything.

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She lauds the importance of leaders who constantly seek answers through input and working toward consensus. However, she admits that when consensus is not possible, the leader must be the one to ultimately make the decision.

Dwyer also "admires a leader that loves and nurtures the staff and I don't think love is too strong of a word even though it may be inappropriate. I think there has to be a real concern for the people you are working with. It means that you are always trying to seek their best interest, but it can't supersede the best interest of the organization, but you can do both."

Brett Egan is brief but definite about the traits that he values: clarity, honesty, vision, and passion.

Debra Harrison values honesty, vision, the opposite of having an ego, openness, a team player, smart people who also are willing to learn, big picture people. She thinks "leaders that have that ability [to see the big picture], the vision that is bigger than what is here. That, to me, is critical to be successful as a leader. That would probably be proven wrong for many arts organizations."

David Snider prefers people who are decisive, inclusive, and decent at public speaking and presenting, smart, understanding of the financial connection to the artistic work and organizational development. He thinks that the "leader should delegate, but the leader should understand everything that is going on."

Russell Willis Taylor values integrity and an understanding of one's own biases. On biases, she knows "there are certain decisions I know that I do not take well. I am explicit about them with my staff, they know that in a particular situation, I will always lean in this direction and they have my permission and blessing to pull me back in the other direction. But

you have to know what they are and you have to be prepared to be honest about them. I tend to be optimistic about people doing what they say they will do and they're not always."

Going along with her earlier assertion that leadership is circumstantial, Taylor points out that qualities that were useful in previous positions would not be as useful in her current position. An example of this is being tough when necessary. While a useful skill at a large festival and the English National Opera when having a run in with the head of a union, that particular trait is not as useful while working at NAS.

Additionally, Taylor values a leader who is reasonably intelligent and interested in people. An interest in other people is particularly valuable for a leader because "everybody out there goes to work every day with an invisible bag that they're carrying. It has to do with their home life, with their aspirations, it has to do with their families, it may have to do with financial situations or relationships. They bring all of that in to work; they're human beings and it's not up to me to know about all that, but it's up to me to respect that that is taking up space in their heads. You have to recognize that this is work, but there's also life and life is important to these people too." Along with an interest and certain compassion for others, Taylor also values a high trust relationship with the others in her office.

It is clear that these arts leaders value intelligent, trustworthy leaders. Additionally, an interest in people comes through in many of these narratives. Particularly important for an arts organization is a passion for their organization's mission and goals. Harrison points out specifically that not having an ego is important while Dwyer alludes to the same by saying that the leader cannot just be in leadership for the job itself.

Harmful Qualities in a Leader

Crawford thinks that being too self-aware of being the leader is harmful. She continues "balancing being with your staff, engaging with them, versus being a leader and I think that you can sometimes go both ways too far. Having beer with bread, which we do once or twice a year with the apprentices, just hanging out with them. But I can't be cool like them. To empower them, but not empower them too much that they make decisions that weren't appropriate. I sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. The recession has made that very hard, particularly last year."

Dwyer thinks that being too removed from the workings of one's organization is a detriment. She recognizes that "it's a real tension because I think you have to be removed enough to constantly be looking at the whole and rely on the input of your senior advisors for the workings, but I think if you become so removed that you are just doing your leadership thing and not really aware, that's a real danger." Other qualities that are harmful to a leader, according to Dwyer, include a leader that does not seek input from others and being more concerned with one's own image as a leader rather than how the organization is led. Along those lines, she observes that "as a leader, you're concerned with the image of the organization because people's perception is really vital to the success of the organization, but I think that you could get really concerned with the bow and the wrapping and that could look really, really, really, good, but what's inside could be shattered once you shake the box."

Harrison, along with Egan, dislike ego in a leader. Harrison also lists lack of vision and a purpose that does not align to the mission or strategic plan of the organization. She continues by saying, "it doesn't matter how good of a leader that you are, if you are inspired to do something outside of the strategic plan, and the team is buying into the strategic plan, and the board is buying into the strategic plan, that's a real disconnect, you're going to have an issue. For me, the

strategic plan guides the direction of any organization. It is the plan to have your vision, to succeed in your mission, to get everyone on the same page. I mean, you have to have teamwork to get everyone on the same page, but if you end up with somebody who either comes in on different direction or all of a sudden changes where they want to go and doesn't develop that, it's hard for those who are under."

Snider uses himself as an example by outlining that his greatest strength and weakness is overwork. He also cites piling on too much work on the staff or having expectations that are too high as harmful. Leaders in particular, can suffer greatly from too much of a self-sacrifice tendency, according to Snider.

Taylor thinks that mixing up one's own ambitions with what is best for the organization is extremely harmful for a leader. She also finds ego, inflated thoughts of one's own importance, and the need for personal recognition to be poor qualities for a leader. Taylor thinks "the worst quality that a leader can cultivate is to lose sight of the fact that these are asymmetrical relationships you have with your employees. You have the power and you have to treat it in a respectful way. Bad leadership is not incompetence, it's bullying. I don't stand with bullying. Bullies are never good at their jobs, unless they're bouncers; I suppose you'd be good at that if you were a bully. I don't know very much about the bouncing profession." She also asserts that leaders "have to give people a chance to answer back, to tell you their side of the story; you have to think about that all the time. I think a lot of people forget that."

As with the positive qualities for leaders, the need for an arts leader not to have an ego or to be too concerned with self comes through clearly from the interviewees. Along the same line, refusing to take input from others is mentioned by Dwyer and alluded to by Harrison as a

difficult quality in a leader. Overall, many qualities listed say that leaders should not be too concerned with self, but must also be careful not to overwork and be overly self-sacrificing.

<p align="center">Reflections on Self</p>

Several of the commonly cited traits of a leader (Table 1) refer to traits of emotional intelligence and knowledge of self. Leaders should have some level of introspection to be an evolving, adaptable, ever-learning leader. Leaders should know their own strengths and weaknesses. As Taylor said during her interview, leaders must be aware of their own biases. Therefore, to know one's strengths is the first step to knowing one's own leadership style.

Crawford found out some of her strengths during her training with the Center for Creative Leadership training the Theatre Communications Group. She thinks that it is particularly helpful that she is a pragmatist. She says that on the spectrum between visionaries and people who are highly detail oriented, she "was a zero, I was exactly a pragmatist, so I can see both. I see the visionary, I can see the path and I see all the details. Then I have to sort of negotiate all those people around. So I think that being a pragmatist has served me well, seeing all sides." Crawford also thinks that she also tends to be right in the center of being left brained and right brained and that has also been helpful to her. She also cites her knowledge of theater as particularly helpful over the course of her career.

Dwyer and Egan both list passion as helpful during the course of their careers. Dwyer specifically thinks that her passion for her organization's mission helps others involved to feel passionate as well. Dwyer also thinks that she is very aware of what she does not know and willing and eager to learn from any sources possible. Egan also thinks that clarity and fairness have helped him as a leader.

<p align="center">30</p>

Harrison thinks that her sense of humor is both helpful and important. She tries not to take things to seriously for balance. However, even though she likes to keep things light when possible, she is "always keeping my eye on the ball which is: where are we going, how do we keep this relevant, why are we doing this, and I think always bringing it back to that." She also has found a focus on true teamwork to be important.

Snider thinks that his greatest strength lies in his work strong work ethic and his speed with which he works. Although, with this strength also comes the "need to understand that some people cannot work with the capacity that I work, I enjoy my work, maybe a little too much." From an arts standpoint, he thinks that his strong artistic background helps him to speak about matters relating to his organization from a very practical point of view. He thinks that his background helps him to inspire others as to why what they are doing for the organization is necessary and important.

Taylor feels that she is a good problem solver. When it comes to stressful situations, she thinks that she just does not feel the same amount of stress that others do. She feels that she "can empathize with the fact that they're feeling stress and I'm not dismissive of it. But that sort of pressure, being in a fishbowl, having to make a lot of decisions in a short period of time does not stress me out. I don't know why. I think because I'm lazy, actually, I am very emotionally lazy. I always think, 'Is anyone going to die? No? Then let's calm down.'"

Predictably, each leader lists very different qualities that he or she values internally. As leadership is difficult to define and circumstantial, it makes sense that each leader would value a different quality. During the interviews, many leaders had trouble narrowing down exactly how to describe the qualities that they appreciate intrinsically and instead described the qualities by telling a story or using an example. Again, leadership can be difficult to define.

Learning to Lead

Vince Lombardi famously said, "Leaders are made, they are not born." However, many people are called natural born leaders. Clearly, there is a disagreement. Judging by the incredible number of textbooks and resources available about leadership, there must be a lot of scholars who believe that people can acquire leadership rather than having only innate leadership ability.

Crawford agrees with Lombardi that leadership skill can be acquired. She thinks that people are naturally either a visionary or a pragmatist, for example, but that "you can learn, if you value how to be on the other side. The problem is when the leader isn't willing to listen to the others." She continues by saying that if someone is willing to be open and learn, they will be able to develop leadership, however it is also possible "have the instinct [to be a leader] and then screw it up."

Like Crawford, Dwyer believes that leadership skills can be developed, but that certain skills or traits, like charisma, are innate. She points to some qualities, like having an intense fear of public speaking, that could make becoming a leader of an organization difficult, but acknowledges that that particular skill is not necessary for all organizations.

For Egan , "leadership is hard to learn. I believe people become leaders when they are forced to by circumstances."

Harrison believes that some people have certain traits that make them stronger as potential leaders like a genuine interest in people and in seeing the big picture. In the arts, she thinks that if someone is scared of change, they might not be able to change that fear enough to lead an arts organization that is constantly changing. Harrison fears that a person who is very open and can see a whole picture of many small pieces, but is unable to visualize how those pieces fit together, leadership will be a difficult task. To Harrison, "if you're somebody who can

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only think on this little piece at a time, and putting those together is difficult, you won't get the big bow around it all. I think that is a bit of an innate thing. That ability to see patterns, to see synergies I think is a little bit instinctual."

Snider thinks that if someone has a drive and an internal reason for leadership, he or she can learn anything. To learn to be a leader, a person must be willing to do certain things, like decision-making, and to be open to learn. He thinks that the first step in learning to be a leader is have an attitude of just being willing to dive in head first and try something. Drawing from his own experience transitioning from the acting world into leadership, Snider comments, "I think that for a while, you have to be willing to work really hard to do what you're responsible for and to learn more at the same time. Build the plane while you're flying it. And to be very open about what you don't understand and what you don't know." However, he thinks that the one initial desire to learn to be a leader is probably the one trait that is innate and cannot be acquired.

Taylor thinks that leadership can absolutely be learned. Like the others, she believes that some personality qualities make someone more likely to wish to be a leader. She specifically talks about how leadership could be difficult for shy people because leaders are generally around people. In addition, she thinks, "being stupid, being shy, being very, very risk adverse. All of those things would make it very difficult. Having said that, being that I think that leadership is very circumstantial, I think that unlikely people can become extraordinarily strong leaders because everything aligns in a way that their strengths and their abilities are exactly what that situation needs."

Taylor definitely believes that it is possible to train people to be leaders as this is a large part of what her current organization works to do by providing theoretical framework toward leadership. She thinks that leadership training can give people the tools that they need to be

successful, but like Snider, she feels that, "you cannot train someone to be inclined to want to be a better person, they come with that. If they come with that, then they are leadership material."

Harrison and Egan think that teaching someone to be a leader can be difficult. Egan, like Taylor thinks that circumstances can force someone into becoming a leader. Crawford, Dwyer, Snider, and Taylor all feel that it is possible for a person to develop into a leader. However, they all hesitate to say that all people can develop leadership. Dwyer, Snider, Taylor all agree that there are qualities that may hinder a person from being a leader. Crawford, Dwyer, Snider, and Taylor all agree that to learn leadership, a person must have a certain openness and willingness to examine oneself and to learn.

<u>Leadership Over Time</u>

As most of the interviewees believe that leadership can be learned, it makes sense that leadership could also change over time. Perhaps as a particular leader grows, their style would shift as they learn new techniques and have new experiences as a leader. However, this can be difficult to observe since change may take place over a long time. Perhaps change may also be difficult for a leader to see in himself or herself as they are evolving as an individual also.

Brett Ashley Crawford says that she has definitely developed further as a leader. She thinks that she is more aware of things than she was before. She calls the recession "a compression for leadership." One noticeable change is that since the recession began, she notices that she is a bit more serious than she was when she began at Imagination Stage. About the recession, she says that she has been trying to read, learn, and adapt. She definitely feels that self-development has changed how she "looks at the problems and how I understand the variables that are forcing on it."

Crawford also has thoughtfully incorporated into her organization's performance evaluations a change for supervisees to give feedback to their supervisors. She also tries to give employees a chance to do the same on a monthly basis. Over time, Crawford has learned that "all leaders need to understand is that it's a two way street versus, I'm telling you what to do, go do it. I think that asking those questions is something that I've developed more in the last few years. Making sure I am being very literal and precise." She also thinks that opening up time for people to share has created a better work environment and an understanding that employees can come to her if they need assistance.

Maureen Dwyer thinks that her leadership has definitely changed and continues to change all the time. Prior to being the executive director at Sitar Arts Center, she was the deputy director and she felt that she "was a leader in my deputy position, but I felt my leadership had influence rather than authority, so that was one big change in becoming executive director for me and my leadership. An understanding of the authority that comes with the title, whether you've earned it or not, when you are the E.D., you are considered the expert within the organization, and to a degree, within the field. So I've had to become more comfortable and confident with being authoritative, and I don't mean bossy. I mean that when a decision has to be made, I have to make it and that's something I'm growing into all the time because my natural inclination as a person is consensus building." Dwyer also works to build confidence as a leader and continues to grow every day.

Brett Egan states, "I would like to think I have learned from mistakes. I have tried to become more patient and to use fewer adjectives and superlatives!"

Debra Harrison also thinks that she has changed over time in her leadership. One of her biggest struggles has been patience with processes. Harrison knows "that over the years, I

always wanted to hear people's ideas and I always wanted to dialogue in that, but sometimes it would frustrate me that I wanted to get going quicker. I've sort of had [remind myself that not everyone learns like I do]. Finding different ways for me to communicate, as well as giving other people opportunities to communicate in different ways has been very important to me."

Besides her struggle with patience, Harrison also has had to evolve to learn about the political side of things because, "Life is full of politics, until you win the lottery, because you're always going to have a boss. When you're the top of an arts organization, you're going to have the board. Even if you're the president of the board, there will be donors. Ultimately, there really is no end until you win the lottery and you have all the money, and then, it's beyond you."

David Snider also thinks that his leadership has changed over time. Snider learned, "people are built in different ways. People see the world in different ways; we each have our own snapshot of perception of what reality is. A lot of the time, communicating with people and understanding where people are coming from is copping to the fact that people are not just in the moment being difficult or just not listening, they're operating in the world in a different way." He is continually learning how to figure out how to work with different people in a variety of ways. Earlier in his career, Snider thinks that he may have perhaps dismissed someone as difficult and tried to work around them whereas now he feels that he can accept the differences to better work with all types of people.

Snider also has learned that sometimes, he needs to put things in writing for his staff. He cites a specific example where he stated to his staff that if they were to work late, they should feel free to come in later the next day. He noticed that it was rare for his staff to actually follow his policy about coming in late in order to take care of themselves. It was not until he put the policy in writing in the employee handbook that staff member started

Advice for Emerging Leaders

The leaders who agreed to be interviewed for this study did it with the knowledge that their words would be used to improve upon the research about leadership available for arts managers. Throughout her interview, Debra Harrison asserted the importance of on the job experience and having a mentor. Others expressed the importance of being willing and open to learn new things. While these leaders' entire interviews provide valuable insight for those who are at any stage of their careers in arts management, their next words provide specific advice.

To Brett Ashley Crawford, "Mistakes are important. Learn from your mistakes, just don't do them again. Learn from other people's mistakes and gains. If you see that somebody is doing something good, write it down. Whatever process you use to put good ideas into your head, and practice them, do that. Figure out how you can incorporate that thought into your world." She thinks that networking is important, but that more important is for arts managers to follow their passions and to take advantage of all leadership opportunities that present themselves.

Maureen Dwyer thinks that emerging leaders should follow the advice that no job is too small. She continues by saying that while it is not good to be stuck at an entry-level position, learning from the ground up can provide an emerging leader with many opportunities to learn leadership. For Dwyer personally, "Just knowing every role intimately has really helped me in supporting staff, in helping them to do better, in supervising the workings of the organization." She stresses the importance of having a mentor who will help you to succeed and to be constantly learning.

To Brett Egan, the most important is to, "Figure out three things you won't be happy if you do not do them. Look for opportunities that allow you to do all three. This will help you find people who can help you and make it easy for them to help you. It will also save you time."

Debra Harrison has different advice. Harrison believes that "some of the best arts managers I've worked with are people who grew up in the business, they're not people who went to school." Her main advice to people who ask her how to succeed is to take whatever money they would spend on school and spend it instead to live while offering to work for a person for free in order to observe them for a year. She thinks that following someone that the person admires and observing them at work is a much better use of time and money than most education. To Harrison, this method "is going to make you the best all around person in an industry to then build on your leadership skills. You'll see good leaders and you'll see bad leaders. I think that's the way to do it. Hang out with people that are in this business, go to conferences if you can afford it, be engaged, talk to people." She thinks that the university is too conceptual to actually prepare most people for a career in arts management. Harrison does acknowledge, however, that one advantage to going the university route is that students can get student loans to help with cost of living and that it is possible to augment one's education by interning with local organizations as long as the internship is a meaningful experience and not just getting coffee.

David Snider believes in the importance of having a trustworthy person to act as a sounding board. That person should be someone to whom an emerging leader can speak candidly and confidentially. Snider also thinks that some element of 'fake it until you make it' can go a long way. He thinks that sometimes a person has to throw himself or herself into a situation until they are comfortable and confident with the new role. Snider also encourages setting an example. Instead of asking others to take out the garbage, for example, the leader should do it to set the example for others to show them "that you are willing to do anything because you're going to ask everyone who works for you to do everything." His final advice is

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not to hide away in an office. A leader, according to Snider, must get out to connect the organization to the community.

Russell Willis Taylor feels strongly that people who are anxious about something relating to their work will not be good at their jobs.   For emerging leaders, she suggests that they "think about the thing at your job that you hope that a board member, donor, or anybody doesn't ask you and then go find out the answer because then you don't have to worry about it anymore. Then when they ask you, you're ready." Second, Taylor suggests that an emerging leader should "step back and look at the entire organization as if you didn't care about it." Then to find an area where the organization could better achieve its mission. If it is appropriate, the emerging leader should try to involve himself or herself in the change because, to Taylor, being involved in change is a way for a person to gain confidence in leading.

Based on the gracious words of these arts leaders, advice is available to emerging leaders if they seek it out. It is important to find mentors and to keep an open and willing spirit while learning to be a leader.

CHAPTER 3

SYNTHESIS

<u>Conclusions</u>

Leadership has many definitions across sources. After conducting this research,
Northouse's definition, "…the meaning of leadership is complex and includes many dimensions.
For some people, leadership is a *trait* or *ability,* for others it is a *skill* or *behavior,* and for still
others leadership is a *relationship"* emerges as the definition that is most encompassing,
however it still does little to provide a clear definition. (Northouse, 1979). Perhaps leadership is
a concept that will continue to elude scholars as it means something different to different people
at different times. As David Snider remarked, "People are built in different ways. People see the
world in different ways; we each have our own snapshot of perception of what reality is."
Because leadership is a phenomenon rather than a clear scientific concept, definitions will be
murky.

Theories of leadership like trait theories, transactional theories of leadership, and
charismatic leadership offer perspective on how a leader fits into the phenomenon of leadership.
However, upon examination of the leadership theories, it is nearly impossible to fit a leader into
one particular leadership label. A leader could be both a transformational and a transactional
leader depending on his or her circumstances and stage of life. As the interviewees in this study
showed, leadership and individuals can evolve over time and change based on circumstances.
Leadership theories provide a framework to understanding leadership, but are by no means
definitive.

<u>Leaders on Traits and Skills</u>

Many of the leaders referenced the commonly cited leadership traits as being important to them. Many of them also mentioned skills or traits that are similar, yet slightly different from the previous list. The table below illustrates which traits and skills seem to be the most important to these six leaders, based on comments throughout their interviews. Traits that are also listed on Table 1 are in italics.

Table 3: Traits Cited by the Arts Leaders

Traits	**Skills**
Assertive *Charismatic* *Confident* *Cooperative*/Collaborative *Honesty* - Inspirational *Integrity*/Trustworthiness *Intelligent/Knowledgeable* - Open - Passionate *Sociable* - Willing to learn	*Communicative* - Listening *Conceptual* *Creative* *Interpersonal* *Management* *Problem solving*

The arts leaders' list is very similar to the first list. However, there seems to be more of an emphasis on traits that connect the leader to the organization, like passionate and inspirational qualities.

While all of the skills from Table 1 also appear on Table 3, none of the arts leaders actually referenced creativity directly. This seems surprising coming from a group of people who work in the arts; however, these leaders live and breathe creativity on a daily basis. Many of their responses allude to creative skills when discussing reworking a staff structure or organizational framework to a format that will work better within the budget or community need. Creative skills seem inherent in so much of what these leaders revealed, that it deserves to be on the second skills table even when not directly referenced.

Some of the traits were definitely more popular among the arts leaders. Inspirational, passionate leaders definitely seem more important among the arts leaders than among the authors of the general leadership sources. The arts leaders also have a high emphasis on interpersonal skills. The arts leaders as a group seem very caring toward their staffs. They are concerned with staff well-being and tend to keep their best interests as a top priority. Most of the leaders also referenced collaboration as a central part of their leadership.

The interviewees also agree that there are traits that are harmful to leadership. The most cited quality that is harmful to leadership is ego or concern with oneself. Maureen Dwyer states the problem with concern for self eloquently by stating that the leader "could get really concerned with the bow and the wrapping and that could look really, really, really, good, but what's inside could be shattered once you shake the box." The leaders also agree, both in this particular question as well as throughout their interviews, that it is harmful to a leader if he or she does not listen to anyone else. The leaders continually discussed teamwork and

collaboration and how important those qualities are to a leader. Dwyer and Harrison specifically point out that refusing to take input from others is a detriment to any person who leads an organization. Additionally, Snider gives the advice that it is harmful to a leader who is too self sacrificing and prone to overwork.

<p style="text-align:center"><u>Leaders on Being a Leader</u></p>

Leaders encounter many obstacles while in charge of an organization, whether it is issues with unions like Russell Willis Taylor referenced from her time at the English National Opera or the current financial crisis that still affects many organizations in the United States. Crawford and Dwyer both noted that the United State's financial crisis that began around 2008 did affect the ways that they led their organizations while Taylor and Snider think that it did not affect them in a great way. However, Snider's organization had been in financial crisis before he arrived, so he weathered the biggest storm by restructuring his organization before the biggest part of the financial crisis. Taylor knew in advance that she did not want National Arts Strategies to struggle with money, so she set up a plan in advance to ensure that her organization raised money two years in advance. So while the economic situation did not affect them as it happened, one could point out that perhaps they just anticipated the worst and planned accordingly.

Isolation is a common feeling for these arts leaders, especially given all of the obstacles that they can face. They all agree that isolation can be a problem for leaders in the arts. Due to the need for leaders to make difficult decisions, they often need to distance themselves from the other members of their organizations. Dwyer points out that this is often also to protect the other staff members from information that they just do not need to know while Crawford asserts that the distance often comes from a need to be able to make tough staffing decisions. While

isolation is common, it is possible to combat it by creating a strong network of colleagues or other trustworthy people with whom to discuss tough issues.

With all of these obstacles and expectations upon them, the interviewees were remarkably optimistic about their own growth as leaders over time. Their honesty about their own growth shows that leaders are evolving and changing. As intelligence, both emotional and knowledge-based, is one of the traits listed as an important trait for leaders to exhibit, the growth that these leaders describe demonstrates their own levels of emotional intelligence as they continue to examine themselves and work to be the best leaders that they can. They also demonstrate that it is acceptable to have an area upon which to grow and that the best thing to do is to embrace the growth area and to learn how to make it better.

Learning to Be a Leader

While opinions vary, most of the interviewees agree that it is possible to learn to be a leader. Somewhat contrary to this opinion is Brett Egan who does not necessarily disagree, but thinks that leaders arise when circumstances force them to become leaders. Debra Harrison, however, discussed many traits that she feels are innate to a leader and not easy to overcome. The remaining respondents feel that as long as a person has drive, passion, and willingness to learn, they could possibly learn to be a successful leader. Many respondents agree that there are traits that a are more difficult to overcome, like shyness or fear of public speaking, that could hinder one's quest to learn leadership. Overall, the leaders agree that leadership can be learned, whether by circumstance or quest.

Additionally, these six leaders were willing to share their time, experiences and advice. Many of them suggest finding a mentor and to network to increase opportunities to observe leaders and to seek their advice.

Relating to Leadership Research

It is difficult to ascertain from this study what theories of leadership might relate to these leaders. It is easy to see relationships to several of the theories through the leaders' comments. For example, the four behaviors that leaders tend to have in a path-goal relationship are evident throughout many of the interviews. Russell Willis Taylor, specifically discusses her preference for a genial work environment and concern for her staff members that a supportive leader would have. David Snider, Taylor, and Debra Harrison spoke at length about the importance of collaboration that a participative leader would exemplify.

Many of the leaders touch on the importance of charisma. While only Maureen Dwyer is the only leader to say the actual word charismatic, several leaders reference the importance of likability, public speaking ability, vision, and passion that most charismatic leaders embody. However, without further study of each leader and his or her organization it is difficult to determine if he or she is a charismatic leader. Perhaps defining these leader's actual leadership style is less important than examining their thoughts on leadership.

These leaders definitely upheld that leadership is difficult to define. For many of the questions about defining leadership and its traits, interviewees struggled to grasp a concrete answer. Many of them answered with examples or very long explanations while Brett Egan simply said that he does not have a definition of leadership. Perhaps the definition of leadership is that it is circumstantial as Russell Willis Taylor stated and that leadership means different things at different times and locations.

Recommendation for Further Research

It would be wonderful to have the interviews of even more leaders in the arts management field, from other cities and specialties within the arts. As research in arts

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management grows, hopefully knowledge of leadership within art management will also grow to give new leaders another way to learn from more experienced leaders. While it is a great and important thing to be able to observe and learn from leadership in person, as an employee, and intern, or a student, the more written research and thoughts from successful arts management leaders that is available can only help by broadening the scope of all who are interested in learning about leadership. A combination of both the practical and theoretical, as well as the right circumstances are the best conditions for leadership to grow.

Additionally, a study from the viewpoint of the staff members of these leader's organizations would be interesting. As leadership is two-sided, as Crawford pointed out during her interview, staff members who are not considered to be leaders of the organization would also have valuable insight about what qualities they value in a leader. A study examining both sides of leadership within the same organization could provide insight for both the leaders and the staff members.

This study is encouraging to any arts managers at any point in their careers. The insights of these leaders provide validation of one's own ideas as well many viewpoints that may be new or different. Most of the leaders believe that arts managers can learn aspects of leadership, given that they are willing to learn. Arts managers, when presented with the circumstances in which their skills are appropriate, can choose to seize the opportunity to lead, regardless of the scale of the leadership opportunity, and can continue to grow and mature as leaders in arts management.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Biographical

1. What is your educational background?
2. Work experience/career path?
3. What are your future career goals?
4. Why did you pursue a career in arts management leadership?
5. Do you view yourself at a leader in arts management?

Leadership

6. What is your definition of leadership?
7. Is this definition the same for leadership in an arts organization as well as outside of it?
8. Did/does the economic crisis affect your leadership style?
9. Have you had any specific leadership training?
10. Have you read any literature about leadership? Do you have any favorites?
11. Do you feel isolated in your role as a leader? How do you combat that?

Leadership Qualities

12. What qualities do you value in a leader?
13. What qualities do you see in yourself that are particularly helpful to the leadership of your staff?
14. What qualities are harmful to leadership?
15. Can new leaders develop these qualities, or do you think that they are natural to good leaders?
16. Do you think that your leadership style and/or qualities have changed over time? How?

Other

17. What advice do you have for an emerging leader in arts management?

APPENDIX B

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND
CAREER PATH DETAILS

Dr. Brett Ashley Crawford, Managing Director at Imagination Stage in Bethesda, MD.

Education:

- Undergraduate degrees in Theatre and Math, Northwestern University

- MFA in Arts Administration

- PhD in Theatre History and Criticism

- Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies

Career Path/Experience:

- Became a paralegal for a few years after undergrad

- Worked in various theaters as stage manager, production manager, general manager, managing director

- Taught at various places, currently teaching arts management at Towson University

- Currently in her fifth year as Managing Director at Imagination Stage.

Maureen Dwyer, Executive Director at Sitar Arts Center in Washington, DC.

Education:

- BA in Drama, Catholic University of America

- Some graduate work in social work

Career Path/Experience:

- Acting, with side jobs

- Acted as a corporate concierge

- Taught Early Childhood classes

- Sitar Arts Center: Grants Manager, Deputy Director

- Currently the Executive Director at Sitar Arts Center

1.

Brett Egan, Director of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

Education:

- Cultural theory, film studies, literature, architecture and gender theory

Career Path/Experience:

- I did not have a path! I don't think they exist in this field.

Debra Harrison, Chief Operating Officer at Washington Performing Arts Society in Washington, DC.

Education:

- On the job training

Career Path/Experience:

- Scenic painting clean-up beginning at age 15

- Various positions at Vancouver Opera over 24 years: Painter's Assistant, Scenic Painter, Scenic Carpentry, Associate Technical Director, Technical Director, Director of Production

- Washington National Opera: Strategic Budgeting

- Kennedy Center Fellowship

- Opera America: Production Tech committee

- Left her position at WPAS in June 2012

David Snider, Executive Director at Young Playwrights' Theater in Washington, DC

Education:

- Undergraduate degree from Dickinson College in English with a Russian language minor

- MFA in Acting, New York University's Tisch School of the Arts

Career Path/Experience:

- Shakespearean acting in England

- Professional acting in New York City

- Temp positions and administrative work in New York City

- Teaching and directing in New York City

- Shakespeare Theatre Company: running education programs

- Completed seven years as Executive Director at Young Playwrights' Theatre

- Taught on the Arts Management Faculty at American University

- Currently Director of Artistic Programming at Arena Stage (as of May 2012)

Russell Willis Taylor, President and CEO of National Arts Strategies in Alexandria, VA.

Education:

- Liberal Arts degree (AB) in English Literature and Art History

- Scholar's Certificate from Cambridge in Britain

Career Path/Experience:

- Newspaper reporter and photographer on the eastern shore of the United States

- Illinois Institute of Technology: Assistant Director of Admissions, worked on recruiting engineering students

- Rush Presbyterian: Fundraising

- Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago: Director of Development at age 25

- Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago: Co-Director of the museum at age 26.

- English National Opera: Director of Development for five years

- Consulting work in Britain, Singapore

- Year of Opera and Musical Theater in England

- English National Opera: Managing Director

- Currently Executive Director of National Arts Strategies

FULL TEXT OF ANSWERS TO LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS

What is your definition of leadership?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

There is a difference between a definition of a leader and leadership. A leader is someone who inspires others to be the best that they can be. Also that they are effective in leading an organization and a group of people to accomplish a goal. Leadership itself, hopefully the leader has.

What is leadership? It is providing the opportunities for an organization and a group of people to achieve their goals.

Maureen Dwyer:

That's a really hard question. I have to think about that for just a minute. I guess the first word that comes to my mind in leadership is inspiring. I think it's the leader's job to really inspire everyone involved with the mission of the organization. So that means, of course, the staff, but it also means every consumer, whether it's the audience coming or in our case, the students and families coming. All of the people who are dependent on the mission and also whom the mission are dependent on, so I think inspiring funders is absolutely critical for a nonprofit arts organization.

I feel there is a big distinction between managing and leading and I think inspiring is probably where a lot of the difference comes in. And by inspiring, I don't mean that you are actually giving passionate speeches. That's part of it, but I think a lot of it is listening and helping everyone involved develop their own passion whether they're within or without for what you're doing. So it's not always being the face of the organization, which is very important for

the leader, but I think it's also being the ears of the organization. Having the open heart that can hear it all, put it all together, and then put it back out to everyone that you need to make it successful.

Brett Egan:

I don't have one.

Debra Harrison:

I don't know if it's a clean definition, but when I think of my job with the team here, the way it works is we've got the board, we've got our President/CEO, we've got me, and then the senior directors report to me. And my belief has always been that any of my direct reports can do their jobs, their specific jobs, better than I can and if I've got somebody in jobs that I can do their job better than them, they're the wrong person in the job and we should have somebody better. And so what my job is, to ensure we have, to use the old "get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus" is to make sure not just that those people are there, but they have the tools to communicate and share things and that we are bringing ideas to them. And that a leader brings concepts, like "how can we take all the pieces that you guys are doing, have you thought about thinking about it this way." I think it's just giving people the space they need to do the best work they can.

David Snider:

That's a big question. I think that leadership is partially about making decisions. It's partially about making choices and choosing paths, sometimes for an organization and sometimes for you.

I think it's about listening. One of the things that I think that I've gotten better at over the years is really listening especially to your collaborators, to your staff, to the organization. I think that leadership partially is about listening at large, listening to a moment that you're in. A professional moment that you're in, a political moment that you're in, really listening to what's happening in the community, what's happening in the world, on the international, national, and local scales, digesting all that and then figuring out through your experience, through your own context what you need to do. Not to just react, but to get in front of those things, to see trends, in some ways to have a vision for what's going to happen and prepare people for what's going to happen. To be the person who has the broadest view of the organization and the broadest view, perhaps of the community in the context of which the organization is working and being able to communicate to your board and your staff and all your stakeholders what you need to do about that. Because in some ways, the leader is the center conduit for everything because the leader has the most information about the organization and perhaps about the context of the way you're working. And is the most able, therefore, to make those decisions.

Russell Willis Taylor:

A leader is someone who people want to follow, first and foremost. That sounds stupid, but it's not. People have to want to go where you think you should go. My personal view of leadership is that it's highly collaborative. I'm not the leader of this organization, Gail and Jim and I are the leaders of this organization.

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I think a really good leader creates situations in which people accomplish things they didn't think they could. On the rare occasion where I feel like I've done that, that's when I say to myself, "Today, you were a real leader."

I don't think that leadership is about self-aggrandizement. I don't think that the whistle pulls the train. It's very difficult when you're running very large companies, and I've experienced this first hand, everybody wants you to be a ceremonial figurehead, they want you to have all the answers. It's very, very difficult in the large organizations, if you are the leader, to convince people that *they* must take responsibility. I mean, you get people who are ambitious, but that's not the same as doing the right thing for the organization.

So I think a leader is somebody who people want to follow, that demonstrates (I mean you make lots of mistakes, I make mistakes all the time) that you're prepared to take the best advice from people, that you listen to people. There are very, very few decisions, I've been here 11 years, that's the longest I've ever done anything, and there're very few decisions that I've solely taken here. Probably four or five in the entire time I've been here, and most of them at the beginning when I had to sit a group of people down and say, "You've been doing this and it's become a failure, and you're doing this and that's going to be the focus of the business and it's going to be a success. Who's with me?" Most of those decisions were ones that I had to take early on when we were restructuring the business. But a good leader, a smart leader pays attention to what people say to them because this idea that the leader is a hero of some sort in the final moment with the valiant, solitary decision is pretty much crap and it's how we've gotten into, in the financial services industry, really extraordinary difficulty that has cost a lot of people their security. I'm not talking about people in the financial services industry having their security threatened; I'm talking about average people. The idea that one person sees things that other

people don't see, I think by and large, unless you're a scientist or an artist, is pretty much rubbish. Most of the good business ideas that we've pursued here have not come from me.

One of the thought experiments that I wanted to run with a company was to see what would happen if you hired overqualified people into every single job, if you paid them enough that they didn't resent it, but you made them part of every business brainstorming session. When you have a small team of people, you can do that. We have ten people, so you can do it here. So when we talk business strategy, [the Executive/Accounting Assistant] is as involved as [the Vice President/COO, the Vice President] and I because she has a fresh point of view. It's a slower way to manage something, but in my view, it's a better way.

We also have a personal philosophy: if you're not laughing at least once a day, this is not brain surgery, we are not saving the world and if you do not have joy in the workplace, the leader is failing. I really believe that because when people can laugh together, they can trust each other and when people can trust each other, they can accomplish anything. We sometimes have people come and observe staff meetings because we run then in a slightly different way. They usually stand around and say, "You guys are crazy!" But you know, you spend more time with the people that you work with than your family, so they should be enjoying themselves. And sometimes things are tough, but they should be enjoying themselves. I feel pretty strongly about that.

I think that good leadership is far more circumstantial than people like to think. I think people like to imagine that, "I am inherently a strong leader, therefore, any situation that I am in, I will be a strong leader." I was exactly the leader that the English National Opera needed at that moment in time. I'm a very unlikely person to run an opera company. I was not the usual suspect by any stretch of the imagination. Because everybody knew me and because I never

appeared to be particularly ambitious, I was able to make that transition [even though they never advertised the job.] Of course, I went in as interim and ended up staying when we hired a general director but, had I stayed too long, I would have been the wrong leader for that organization. I was there to do a couple of things: calm them down, reorganize and refocus. The people who are running the company now are probably the best leaders that the ENO has ever had, ever! They're phenomenal, and they are what are needed now. I was the right leader for this organization when it had run out of road on one thing, but it had a brand that had a particular kind of value. It had no idea as an organization how to scan the outside environment and say, "Here's something that you could do that's useful with these resources." Would I have been the right leader for this organization when they were running stabilization projects? God, no! I would have been a disaster. So I think that strong leadership is a lot more circumstantial than a lot of leaders want to recognize and I think that the challenge is to recognize, like Mary Poppins, when the wind has changed and it's time to go.

Is this definition the same for leadership for a non-arts organization?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

Absolutely. I spend much of my time reading *The New York Times* Business Section, *Harvard Business Review*, those pieces, to look for ideas, confirmation, etc. I feel that there is really not any difference in what I do except that I have less money and we have an income stream that they don't have. And we don't have a pressure to make a profit in the same way, so my decision-making parameters are different and my goals are different, but the means to get there are all the same.

Maureen Dwyer:

Yes.

Debra Harrison:

Well, I think it should. Having never worked in corporate America, ever, you know, as someone who takes pride in that, I think it should, I really do think it should. I think that we can inspire people; you have a much better chance to inspire somebody with a vision than with a dollar. I believe that, maybe it's nuts, maybe that's why I work in the arts and never will make a million dollars and I rely on the lottery to retire. I think that in corporate America, even if you are inspiring the assembly line person to do their work, I think you still have to have a bigger concept, so how do you put that into a dynamic that could work in corporate America knowing that ultimately, all they want to do is make money.

We did a study in Arizona with a CEO at Arizona State University, and one of the senior professors out there and his honors students and he was looking at opera and the audiences and the trends and stuff like that and he phone me one day and said, "I'm not sure I know how to tell you this, but your opera company, and I suspect most opera companies in North America are showing all of the symptoms, not just some of the symptoms, all of the symptoms of an end of life cycle in corporate America. Which would mean, in corporate America, you would quit doing or making whatever it is you are doing or making and develop something new to do."

Well, you can't exactly stop doing opera and the difference is, you can't stop doing it, but you can change what you're doing. How far are you willing to change what you're doing and how you're doing it to stay relevant? That's the question. The end of life cycle, I would agree, we probably do show all of the symptoms, but if we are able to take that art form and say what

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else can we do with it, how far are we willing to go in how we present it, what we commission to be new, what we do and it's still opera, because if we don't believe it's still opera anymore, then you've just let the art form die. So it's finding that line.

Particularly in opera, we're not bringing new people in, we're not allowing people with younger visions and younger minds to actually stay in these companies for longer periods of time so they are actually taking over these companies that are pushing these boundaries, so I think the opera companies are going to have a really hard time. Because there are a lot of these general directors that are now retiring or dying in their offices, which some of them are, they're 70 years old and they have no number two. They have nobody who's going to come in with number two and they've set up these companies in a way that to start making these transitions now is getting harder and harder.

David Snider:

I think so. I actually think in leadership, there are certain sorts of foundations of leadership that cross all lines. In Ann Arbor [at the meeting of people in National Arts Strategies' Chief Executive Program], we talked a lot about Sony and Apple and talked about why Sony lost the battle with Apple and why are they as an organization not really able to listen to what was going on. Why were they fragmented so much? Or why did their fragmentation as an organization lead them to not really see what was headed their way. And so it feels to me whether you are running Sony or Apple or whether you are running a small nonprofit organization, there are certain things about listening to the moment, listening to what's going on nationally and internationally, listening to how your organization is even formed and what things might be needing to change or changing.

The Provost at AU was in the faculty meeting with us a couple of weeks ago talking about this survey they are doing at AU about what does AU look like in 2030 and to get suggestions about what redundancies there are and what structures at the university level exist right now that are outdated and we're just not dealing with the fact that they're outdated. Even in terms of schools being siloed, of information being siloed, faculty being siloed into certain departments; with the way things are flowing now in the world, maybe that doesn't make sense and being able to say, "we really need to question the structure of all of this."

I think that's one of the tenants of leadership too - being the person who has the brain that can really say, we could challenge all of this, any of this could go, and being comfortable saying that any core thing that we are doing right now, why are we doing it, does it really make sense. The ability to see all those points and to make decisions and to listen to the organization and the context and to make decisions is boundless.

Did/does the economic crisis affect your leadership style?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

It has had an effect from time to time, I think that my leadership style has been very useful . . . I have been told that I am calm in crisis and that has been, I think, useful. My leadership style is not top down, it is very democratic, so [when] we have a problem, I think that the more brains we have at the table, the better, which is not true of everyone that I'm working with, so I think that I really led to that in a way that has helped the organization succeed. I don't believe that any leader has every right answer and if they think that, they'll be proven wrong eventually. I think that those qualities helped get through the recession. There are some leaders whose organizations perhaps didn't make it or are still struggling because they weren't able to do what is needed in this economy as a nonprofit.

Maureen Dwyer:

It's definitely affecting my focus. I think my focus has to be pretty much 110% on fundraising which probably would not be my normal inclination in balancing how to lead an organization. I think it's what I go to bed at night thinking about, it's what wakes me up in the middle of the night, it's definitely changed my prioritizing.

Brett Egan:

No.

Debra Harrison:

Doesn't affect me. Not my leadership style, anyways.

David Snider:

I don't think so. I think that the first time that I lead an organization with YPT, the organization was already in crisis, so I sort of learned leadership in the crisis mode already. It was already in my DNA to think about zero based budgeting and how do we blow this all up to start over again. So I think I was trained already to deal with what's been happening across the board with the recession the last couple years.

I think one of the things that it did, and one of the things with leadership too, is to empower your people to actually build jobs and build an organization that people feel compelled to work for. So one of the things that I did at YPT was revamp the staff structure so that everybody on staff is an artist and an administrator, they have both in their job description and

they contribute to the mission across those realms and what that's done is to allow everyone on every level of staff to lead in some way from their seat. That's another thing - to allow people to lead from their own seat, their own place, not just asking people to follow, but you're inspiring people to actually lead their own work. Building an organization of artist administrators has built a lot of efficiency because everybody's driving the work all the time, everybody's able to collaborate as equals and peers. There is still a staff structure to the place, but we don't have siloed jobs, like when I came to YPT, there was still an office manager, somebody on salary who was basically ordering supplies and answering phones. I thought to myself that with five or six people on staff, we can't have one of those people be a receptionist, basically, that doesn't make any sense.

I think the recession has been a relearning of the fact that you've got to be really efficient with your resources, be really clear about which niche you're in. I think it's good that we already learned through our crisis mode that we've got to say that we are the only professional theater in DC dedicated entirely to arts education, we've got a very specific niche and as other organizations were lopping off arts ed, we stayed true to that and we're the one place funders could go for a professional theater that does arts ed entirely.

Russell Willis Taylor:

No. To be fair, I laid out for the board that the economic model that I want us to have. We had 250 funders, some of them $1000 a year, I said, "For an organization of this size, that is way too many funders. We can't service them, we can't cultivate those relationships, I'll have to hire two people just to go get that money. I want to move to a different model. I want to have a small number of funders who give large, unrestricted sums two years in advance of when we

need it." Because I want us to have in the bank two years, three years, running money so that if we never raised a penny, we could spend down and go out of business because this organization (not this one, but [the previous organization]) was not supposed to be permanent. But I said that I don't ever want this organization worried about cash flow. That is not what you are hiring me to do, so I will go out and raise the money (it's not that much money that I have to raise every year, it's a couple million) but I'll go out, I raise the money, I'll get the working reserve behind us (we had some resources when I started), and that's the way we're going to do it. That way when things bottom out, because England has much shorter economic cycles than the United States, the United States has been unique among world economies in that its economic cycles are longer which is why politicians are able to say, "periods of prosperity," they're mostly circumstantial, but you have much longer cycles than we do in other places, or we used to, I don't know if we will going forward.

So you could see, in 2005, that at some point, we were going to have a mess on our hands. Now I had no idea it would be a big a mess as it was, but you knew it was coming. And we're funded almost entirely from foundations, well, we have some corporate money, but we're almost entirely funded by foundations and they have a three year spending cycle, so that is how I chose the three year margin because I thought they feel the pinch after the markets feel the pinch. So we were able to create a different economic model, which you can do with a small organization, it is very difficult to do with a large organization. Also, we don't have any plans to go out of business, but we don't operate with the assumption of perpetuity, it's a different kind of culture. We're going to do the very best work that we can right now and if the moment comes where we think that we would be better to spend down the money and go away, then we would do that, and there's some people who don't like that.

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Have you had any specific leadership training?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

I went to the Center for Creative Leadership training through TCG (Theatre Communications Group) two years ago. Otherwise, it's self taught and mentored by observation and pursuit. For instance, when I was managing director in New York, the only other female managing director around that I knew of was Lynn Meadows at Manhattan Theater Club.

I think that the theater industry, I'm not sure about the arts industry otherwise, they haven't encouraged women to be managers. There's not like a women's group for arts management in the same way that you might find in an executive development program at a for-profit. …Interestingly, many of my friends who are in the for-profit side are also executives, . . . they're my peers. So when I have a marketing problem, I call my friend who is a vice president at *Parade* and say, "How are you doing with this." Or I call a friend who is and executive at Boeing who dealt with a lot of personnel management and say, "Can you remind me how you dealt with that union issue because we've got this…" It's been peer training more so than anything other than that particular workshop.

Maureen Dwyer:

I have. Yes, I participated in the Nonprofit Roundtable's Future Executive Director Fellowship Program in 2008 and 2009. So that was my most direct and intensive. That was a yearlong program; it was two days each month. We had a mentor, we had a stretch project, and it was very focused on leadership skills and styles, management as well, but more leadership. I've done a lot of other trainings here and there. It (Fellowship program) was a competitive

process, it was the first time that they did it and I think that about 150 people applied, so I felt really lucky that I got to do it. I found it really useful on a lot of levels, not least of which is having a network. We were a class of 20, and I think that right now, about six of us [are executive directors].

Brett Egan:

No.

David Snider:

Various professional development and management trainings. Target Leadership, Leadership of Greater Washington. Exponent Award gave us a year of connecting with each other. I have an executive coach.

Have you read any literature about leadership? Do you have any favorites?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

I'm one of those people, probably because of my phD, I read everything, and sort of simultaneously which is not always good for retention. I am a big believer in reading both management theory as well as philosophical theory like Margaret Wheatley's book and Pierre Bordieu.

The things that I like to read are things that address… chaos theory and how ecosystems work. *Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Harvard Business Review*, *American Theater*, Tina Packer's book. I like reading theory & philosophy as much as management. Finding how things have meaning that aren't relevant, to me, increase your understanding of what you are doing.

Maureen Dwyer:

Good to Great by Jim Collins, Henry Allen, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick
Lencioni

Brett Egan:

No.

Debra Harrison:

     I read all the time and it's all fiction. I mean, *Good to Great* [by Jim Collins]*,* I love that,
that's a great book. I read so much and this is my stack of all the things I need to read and I'll
get to that at some point, it's been growing since I got here. In Vancouver, I had boxes, one box
for every year, and I would just put everything in the box at the end of the year that I had said I
was going to read and then keep them, so somebody has 24 boxes of stuff in Vancouver.

David Snider:

     I don't know that there's anybody that I've really hearkened to. I've used Michael Kaiser
in class, *The Art of the Turnaround.* That's just a good example of several case studies of
someone coming in and going, "OK, how do I nurture the work that this organization does really
well already and get the word out in a stronger way?" And think about long term planning and
not just dealing with a crisis, which I think that he is very articulate with. In my producing class,
right now I am teaching an Art of Producing class, we just talked about Howard Schultz, we're
reading Joe Papp, *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson**.** I don't really read literature that's about

leadership, I tend to read about leaders and understand who they were or who they are, what's their biography. We read Tina Fey in producing class, to just examine where these people come from, what is their biography, what were key moments in their biography that shaped them as leaders and as producers and what can you adopt or reject from their style of leadership or producing. Reading about leaders can make you realize what you like.

Russell Willis Taylor:

It's interesting, yes I do, but it's not going to be what you think it ought to be. I think you can find most of what you need to know about leadership in literature itself.

In fact we have a kind of game here. I have a friend from the University of Virginia in the Darden School. I'm part of this book club, it's a bunch of high-powered women and me in Washington and we can never get organized to get together. I have this thing that's like a giant Bingo card and it's all the things you do when you get an MBA, all the courses, and we're filling in all the squares with novels you should be required to read before you can consider that course complete. So for example, nobody should be able to do Economics without reading *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope. Nobody should be allowed to do Strategy without reading *Moby Dick.*

We read all the business books because it's part of what we do. We read them to tell people this is worth reading or this is not worth reading. I think people like [Ron] Heifetz, I think people like [Clay] Shirkey and Jim Collins, people like that, write very, very interesting things about the mechanics of running organizations**.** But I think that the challenge of leadership is it's very hard to unpack what makes a strong leader, there's a certain set of behaviors that you can say, "Well we can observe more good leaders than bad leaders do this." But then you'll

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come across someone who's a really extraordinary leader and they don't do that, so they don't fit the mold.

Do you feel isolated in your role as a leader? How do you combat that?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

Constantly. Part of it is the position, I wonder about that at times. Being at this institution, I've had a variety of different roles over my 12 years. When I'm the stage manager, I'm the person that everybody hugs. As managing director, nobody's giving me hugs. You feel isolated because you have to make certain decisions. I do believe that there is an intimacy that as you move up in management, has to be lost because you have to make decisions. We had layoffs last year, we did a restructuring, basically, but that included letting some people go who weren't meeting those…we were still trying to fashion how they could be part of this organization, and it was just a square peg, round hole problem. You can't do that if you are too emotionally attached.

I support people to the end of the day and I believe that I want you here and I will do what I can to keep you here. I did that last year for people who are part of the staff and if it's not working, I will help you find the job that's going to make you so happy, it just won't be here. I try to keep that attitude, but I recognize that it's not the same. So I think the isolation comes from that.

Maureen Dwyer:

Yes, it's a role where you want to protect people from a lot of things to help them to do their best work, so sometimes you really don't want to share your burdens. It's an interesting

dynamic in that your boss is your board of directors and they are a body of volunteers. So speaking of keeping people inspired, you are trying to inspire them to support you, to feel confident in you…it's an interesting dynamic. So you want to share, but you don't want to over share. Although, I feel that I am very open with our board, I feel that's vital. I do feel that I am lucky that I have other executive directors that I can talk really candidly with.

Brett Egan:

No. But there is a danger of that in this field. I am lucky to be surrounded by many caring colleagues. (I also joined several arts manager drinking groups in NYC.)

Debra Harrison:

Oh sure, there are times. I think we all do, but I think again, here, the team that is here, though we're down two senior directors right now, [the Director of Marketing and Communications, the Director of Programming] and I are all really aligned in our thinking about where we want to go and what the company can be, so when I'm feeling isolated or when I'm feeling frustrated, I stick my head out my door and I say, "Guys, helooo!" I also still have quite a few colleagues, not as much now that I'm not in opera, I mean, I go to the Opera America conference every year, and I think connecting with people in that way. You hear, "Oh, you get so recharged at a conference," and I think that's really very, very true. But, my partner is from this business, so I can go home and whine and complain, I try not to do that, I actually try not to take work home. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

David Snider:

Sure, I mean, I don't so much anymore because I've been very lucky to have opportunities the last several years to connect with other leaders, so I've been through Leadership Greater Washington, class of 2010. Now I have really close friends like Jeff and other E.D.s from throughout greater Washington that I talk with and go to coffee with and lunch and all that jazz. There have been opportunities where I've been able to connect with other E.D.s and share our kind of loneliness in the role. It can be really lonely because you are the person who is going close your door and make those decisions about who am I laying off, which way are we going to go on this. Ultimately, like I said, you are the person who needs to be making those decisions, you're going to make those decisions. Even if you have a deputy director or someone that you really trust that you want to kick it around with, that decision is going to live with you ultimately. You're going to be the one to say, "I think we need to do this," and there's nobody else making that decision, so there's always some level of disconnect between you and the rest of the staff, or you and the rest of the organization.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

Leadership qualities would be things that are inspiring, that build trust, that are transparent, and energizing, not deflating.

Creating a safe space. One of the things that I say that I do as a managing director is that I provide the resources to accomplish your goals. I do not determine what your programming is. My job is to make it so you can do what you are going to do. I say, don't limit yourself because there is always a way to make something happen. A leader has to lead, but doesn't always have to steer.

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A part of it's honesty. I do think that transparency and honesty are there, but it's also a safe honesty, meaning that I might not tell you everything at this moment because I really can't tell you because of either the hierarchy, or it's not time, but you have to trust that when it's time, I'll tell you. That's part of the transparency and the trust, that's not fully honest, but as honest as I can be.

Making the hard decisions. It's not about planning, it's about decisions (from Harvard Business Review).

Maureen Dwyer:

I value a leader that is indisputably passionate and convinced of the need for their work and their mission. I don't think that a leader can be in it just for the job; I don't think you could lead. You could manage, but I don't think that you could lead unless you are truly passionate about what the organization wants to achieve. I think that is very true for arts organizations. I admire a leader who listens and doesn't think that they have all the answers, and knows that other people often have the answers so are constantly seeking input and working towards consensus, but when you can't reach it are also able to make the decision. I admire leader that loves and nurtures the staff and I don't think love is too strong of a word even though it may be inappropriate. I think there has to be a real concern for the people you are working with. It means that you are always trying to seek their best interest, but it can't supersede the best interest of the organization, but you can do both. I think honesty and transparency are super, super important.

Brett Egan:

Clarity, honesty, vision, passion.

Debra Harrison:

Honesty is always number one for me. Vision. I would think, what's the negative of not having an ego? Somebody who is open, somebody who is wanting to be a team, who wants to have everybody's ideas and come up with the best idea. Personally, I like very, very smart people, and not necessarily smart about everything, but smart about people, smart about the business, smart about how you engage, just thinking big picture. I like big picture people. I think leaders that have that ability, the vision that is bigger than what is here. That, to me, is critical to be successful as a leader. That would probably be proven wrong for many arts organizations.

David Snider:

Decisiveness, inclusiveness, decent public speaker/presenter, smart, understand the financial connection to the artistic work to the organizational development and work on all those planes. Leader should delegate, but the leader should understand everything that is going on.

Russell Willis Taylor:

The single most important quality for a leader, after integrity, which I think is *the* quality, is an understanding of your own biases. There are certain decisions I know that I do not take well. I am explicit about them with my staff, they know that in a particular situation, I will always lean in this direction and they have my permission and blessing to pull me back in the other direction. But you have to know what they are and you have to be prepared to be honest

about them. I tend to be optimistic about people doing what they say they will do and they're not always. Having run a couple things that were large, the Festival and the ENO, it's not a question of my not being able to be tough if I need to be, but that's not appropriate here. I don't need to do that, I don't need to face down the head of the musician's union or the head of the technical union; I don't need those skills here.

I think that you have to be smart. I mean, I don't know that I'm the smartest person in the world, but you have to be reasonably intelligent to be a good leader. And I think that you have to be interested in people. Unless you're a scientist or something, I think you have to be genuinely motivated in what motivates people. Everybody out there goes to work every day with an invisible bag that they're carrying. It has to do with their home life, with their aspirations, it has to do with their families, it may have to do with financial situations or relationships. They bring all of that in to work; they're human beings and it's not up to me to know about all that, but it's up to me to respect that that is taking up space in their heads. And to watch to see when someone is getting to a point where they're not going to be able to do as good of a job because they're obviously preoccupied about something. So we need to make a little space, not necessarily for them to confide in me, because I'm a quite private person. You have to recognize that this is work, but there's also life and life is important to these people too. Part of the reason that I like running a small organization, is that no one [in our office] has ever had to miss a school play, a family funeral, a wedding, nobody has to do that because they can say, "I need this time." People can work from home when they need to be able to concentrate on something. We have a very high trust relationship. I haven't had to fire anybody from this organization in five years because when somebody comes here who breaks the trust, I don't have to get rid of them, they get rid of them. They're out.

What qualities do you see in yourself that are particularly helpful to the leadership of your staff?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

There were two things that came out of the Center for Leadership that I found interesting that I think are useful for me. There's sort of a spectrum and on one end, you have visionaries and the other end, you have high detailed people and then at the apex, or the middle, you have the pragmatists. I was a zero, I was exactly a pragmatist, so I can see both, I see the visionary, I can see the path and I see all the details. Then I have to sort of negotiate all those people around. So I think that being a pragmatist has served me well, seeing all sides.

I am similarly a left/right brain person. I'm right in the center. I think that has helped as a leader. It may also help the sympathy; you're not falling on one side or the other. As a theater manager, I think that my knowledge of theater has helped. I'm sure that there are people on my staff who would say at times I get irritating, because I'll say, "Well you know, back in 1930, they would blah blah blah." It's not like we're doing anything new here. But I think it's also helped keep ideas moving forward because I never think an ideas is dead . . . if we bring in a new staff member, they'll say, "have you tried this," and I'll say, "we have, but what do you think?" We're just waiting for the person to bring the solution that we haven't been able to think of. The historian in me has helped.

Maureen Dwyer:

I think I'm passionate about Sitar's mission and I think that helps others to feel passionate. I think I'm very aware of what I don't know and I'm eager to learn.

Brett Egan:

I try to be clear and fair and passionate.

Debra Harrison:

For me, my sense of humor is very important, as you might tell. And my toys, I have many toys. So, I don't take things too seriously. I think for me, always keeping my eye on the ball which is: where are we going, how do we keep this relevant, why are we doing this, and I think always bringing it back to that. And I think that's why the economic challenges, it's just that you have less dollars but what you are focused on, it's still the same thing. I do strongly believe in teamwork. And true, not just sort of teamwork.

David Snider:

I think my greatest strength is my ability to work, the speed with which I work. I'm quick and I come from Protestant work ethic, Pennsylvania farmer, my grandparents were moving stones out of their fields, put your shoulder into it – that's sort of in my DNA, so that's the way that I do work and the reason why I'm able to have two jobs right now. Sometimes I need to understand that some people cannot work with the capacity that I work, I enjoy my work, maybe a little too much. The amount of work that I'm able to do and the example that I'm able to set by that.

Also that I come from an artist background is my greatest strength in the fact that I talk about financial management, board development and organizational development from a very

practical point of view and for why it needs to happen and what is the reason for the work that needs to happen. Because I come from an actor point of view, I'm more able to inspire people than some leaders about why this is necessary or why we're doing all this.

Russell Willis Taylor:

I am pretty good at sorting out problems and I don't know why this is. I don't feel stress in those [chaotic] situations the way that other people do. I can empathize with the fact that they're feeling stress and I'm not dismissive of it. But that sort of pressure, being in a fishbowl, having to make a lot of decisions in a short period of time does not stress me out. I don't know why. I think because I'm lazy, actually, I am very emotionally lazy. I always think, "Is anyone going to die? No? Then let's calm down."

What qualities are harmful to leadership?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

From my personal standpoint, I think sometimes being too self-aware that you are the leader. Balancing being with your staff, engaging with them, versus being a leader and I think that you can sometimes go both ways too far. Having beer with bread, which we do once or twice a year with the apprentices, just hanging out with them. But I can't be cool like them. To empower them, but not empower them too much that they make decisions that weren't appropriate. I sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. The recession has made that very hard, particularly last year.

Maureen Dwyer:

I think it's a detriment when you become too removed from the workings of the organization. And I think it's a real tension because I think you have to be removed enough to constantly be looking at the whole and rely on the input of your senior advisors for the workings, but I think if you become so removed that you are just doing your leadership thing and not really aware, that's a real danger. I think thinking you know all the answers is a real danger. I think being concerned about how you are viewed as a leader rather than how the organization is led. Concerned more with image than with content or what you're actually achieving. As a leader, you're concerned with the image of the organization because people's perception is really vital to the success of the organization, but I think that you could get really concerned with the bow and the wrapping and that could look really, really, really, good, but what's inside could be shattered once you shake the box.

Brett Egan:

Ego.

Debra Harrison:

Ego, and lack of vision. A purpose that doesn't align to the company's mission or strategic plan. One of the worst things is when you have a strategic plan and the leader of the organization, if their vision is not the vision of the strategic plan, it's a dog's breakfast, you can't work like that. It doesn't matter how good of a leader that you are, if you are inspired to do something outside of the strategic plan, and the team is buying into the strategic plan, and the board is buying into the strategic plan, that's a real disconnect, you're going to have an issue. Then when you get the big ego that goes with that I don't care what the strategic plan says. For

me, the strategic plan guides the direction of any organization. It is the plan to have you vision, to succeed in your mission, to get everyone on the same page. I mean, you have to have teamwork to get everyone on the same page, but if you end up with somebody who either comes in on different direction or all of a sudden changes where they want to go and doesn't develop that, it's hard for those who are under.

David Snider:

My greatest strength and weakness is overwork. To pile on or to expect a lot from staff. Self-sacrifice tendency

Russell Willis Taylor:

First and foremost is confusing your own ambitions with what is best for the organization. I think we have a lot of examples of that, but I don't need to name any names. People who think that it's all about them; I have no patience with that. I have no personal ambitions to be famous or recognized. That was the one part of the ENO job that I hated. When I got on the Underground and someone would recognize me as the "opera lady." I thought, "Leave me alone, I've worked fourteen hours, don't talk to me." But there are people who really like having their name in the paper.

I think that the worst quality that a leader can cultivate is to lose sight of the fact that these are asymmetrical relationships you have with your employees. You have the power and you have to treat it in a respectful way. Bad leadership is not incompetence, it's bullying. I don't stand with bullying. Pretty much everybody that I ever fired at the ENO, a couple were

criminally corrupt and one guy who tried to kill somebody, but pretty much everybody that I ever had to fire as managing director was because they were bullies. Bullies are never good at their jobs, unless they're bouncers; I suppose you'd be good at that if you were a bully. I don't know very much about the bouncing profession. Bullies are never good at his or her job and bullies are not always men. So that's the quality that would worry me most. It's like dealing with (I don't mean that they're children, because they're not) it's like when you're with a child. They don't have the same power that you do, but these are grownups and what is that like? I've been a leader, a director, or in charge of something since I was 24 years old, so I have less memory of that, so I have to be extra vigilant that I never forget that. You have to give people a chance to answer back, to tell you their side of the story; you have to think about that all the time. I think a lot of people forget that.

I also think that when you're running a big organization, to say that you are single-handedly leading it is just deluding yourself. A really big organization has a centrifugal force that always goes towards the status quo, that's always change averse. Part of the reason that I, when I look back over my career, I naturally gravitated towards situations where things that were a mess when I went in.

Can new leaders develop these qualities, or do you think that they are natural to good leaders?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

I do think leadership can be developed, I think many of them are like we said, either you're a visionary, or you're a pragmatist. You can learn, if you value how to be on the other side. The problem is when the leader isn't willing to listen to the others.

They can [develop leadership], but not everybody can. You can if you are willing to open yourself to it. It's a process. I think that you can have the instinct and then screw it up.

Maureen Dwyer:

I think you could develop a lot of leadership skills. I think some things are innate. Some people are so incredibly fearful of public speaking and I think that would really be a hindrance to be a leader of an organization, but then, I guess some organizations you don't need to do that, or you could hire to that. I think a lot of leadership skills can be developed. Although, I think there is a level of charisma that is a little bit innate.

Brett Egan:

I think leadership is hard to learn. I believe people become leaders when they are forced to by circumstances.

Debra Harrison:

I think there are basic instincts that make you a stronger leader. Like truly liking people, truly liking bigger thinking. I think if you're somebody who doesn't like change, who likes the tried and true, and I'm speaking from the arts perspective here, if you're somebody who's scared by change or you just want to focus very specifically, I don't know that you can learn to be different than that. It's sort of what your personality is. If you're somebody who is open and wanting to explore many different things in many different ways, but can't focus that when you need to, it's like this ability to go big or go small. When do you need to bring it down, when do you need to talk bigger picture. It's going back to that communication thing: how does this

person need to hear what I'm trying to say. If you're somebody who can only think on this little piece at a time, and putting those together is difficult, you won't get the big bow around it all. I think that is a bit of an innate thing. That ability to see patterns, to see synergies I think is a little bit instinctual.

David Snider:

I think you can develop what you don't have if you have something. If you have a drive and a reason for why you're doing this, you can learn anything. I think that part of the willingness has got to be to be learn and to engage in things like decision making. If you're going into a leadership position thinking, "I'm not sure if I can do this, but I'm willing to try, I'm willing to do it," that's the first thing. Then doing it, making those decisions, a year later, you'll realize that this sometimes happens, I have to fire people.

People have to be open to what they don't know, to engage in what they don't know and learn it. As long as people have the drive and the desire, I think that they, like me, coming from an acting background, they can learn a lot on the job. I think that for a while, you have to be willing to work really hard to do what you're responsible for and to learn more at the same time. Build the plane while you're flying it. And to be very open about what you don't understand and what you don't know. Saying, "I don't actually know how to do that" opens you up to learn how to do it as opposed to faking it. I don't know if the fire in the belly and desire to actually do it can be learned, so that's probably the thing that you either have to have it or you don't.

Russell Willis Taylor:

Yes! Oh, yes, absolutely. I think this myth that managers are made and leaders are born, it's such a *man* thing, isn't it? God! I was a trailblazer without ever meaning to be one. Yes, I'm a feminist. I never had any feeling of, "I'm doing this for the sisterhood." I make damn sure that women who work for me feel well treated, you can be sure of that. There are lots of things people don't like about me, the list is long, but that would not be one of them.

I think that there are some personality qualities that lend themselves to leadership situation. I'm reserved, but I'm not shy and there's difference. That's why I liked England - everyone is so repressed. I think for very shy people, leadership is very difficult because you have to be available to people, emotionally successful in some way.

I think for people who are extraordinarily risk adverse, leadership is probably difficult. Well, not if you're at NASA, we want risk adverse people; we'd love to have more of them in the military. There are situations in leadership where you never have enough information to make a decision, so sometimes you just have to take the information you've got and make the best decision you can at the moment. Sometimes delaying a decision is worse than not making a decision.

 I think that there are certain personality traits that would make leadership more challenging for some people. I think being stupid is a big handicap if you're a leader. It's not, obviously a barrier to being a leader; I don't know what your politics are, but George Bush is stupid, in my view. So being stupid, being shy, being very, very risk adverse. All of those things would make it very difficult. Having said that, being that I think that leadership is very circumstantial, I think that unlikely people can become extraordinarily strong leaders because everything aligns in a way that their strengths and their abilities are exactly what that situation needs. Do I think that you can train people in particular leadership abilities? Well obviously I

do because that is what this business does. We don't do the personal developments; we do the more theoretical, framework side of things. I think that you can make people more responsive to other people, I think that you can make them aware of their biases, I think you can give them the tools be more emotionally intelligent. You cannot do any of that if they don't want to. You cannot train someone to be inclined to want to be a better person, they come with that. If they come with that, then they are leadership material.

I used to teach fundraising at various places in Europe. People would say that they wanted to hire a development person and I would tell them that they have to be likable. That's the single most important characteristic for a director of development. There's another list, they have to check those boxes too, but if they do not pass that first hurdle, if you do not want to spend time talking to them, do not hire them. Fundraising is about talking to people. If you don't like them, chances are, your donors won't either.

For leaders, if you don't have someone who is interested in someone else being successful, they might get lucky, they might have circumstances in which they get to be a strong leader, but I don't think that it's going to last that long.

Do you think that your leadership style and/or qualities have changed over time? How?
Brett Ashley Crawford:

I think that I've developed further. I've been a little more conscious of things. I would call the recession a compression for leadership. Things that are inherent in me are still there. I like to make jokes. My first year here, I think that Bonnie's comment was the she didn't think that we'd ever laughed this much in an executive staff meeting. Until the recession was in its

third year, we don't laugh quite as much anymore. The qualities are still there, but I've definitely been learning and reading and trying to adapt to the situation.

When I was managing director at St Bart's, it was the 90s recession and I kept saying when this one started, "This is so damn familiar." I think I've matured in how I look at the problems and how I understand the variables that are forcing on it. Yeah, it's from self-development. I've seen a lot of leaders, if they're not interested, they just don't change. The expect others to do that for them. Or it takes a long time; they're not trying to move.

Something that we've incorporated into our performance evaluations, I try to do it on a monthly basis, but we do it annually, is you say to your supervisee, "Is there something I can do for you? How can I help you do your job?" And I think that's something that all leaders need to understand is that it's a two way street versus, I'm telling you what to do, go do it. It's "I know what you're doing and I support you, but I need you to tell me specifically." I think that asking those questions is something that I've developed more in the last few years. Making sure I am being very literal and precise.

I think it has opened up opportunities for people to share, and sometimes it has nothing to do with their job. It has created an environment where they do know that if they need help with something, they can ask me.

Maureen Dwyer:

I definitely have and I continue to all the time. I felt that I was a leader in my deputy position, but I felt my leadership had influence rather than authority, so that was one big change in becoming executive director for me and my leadership. An understanding of the authority that comes with the title, whether you've earned it or not, when you are the ED, you are considered

the expert within the organization, and to a degree, within the field. So I've had to become more comfortable and confident with being authoritative, and I don't mean bossy. I mean that when a decision has to be made, I have to make it and that's something I'm growing into all the time because my natural inclination as a person is consensus building. I love input and I really am skeptical of not receiving input, but I've realized that there are just times when I just have to, even if the input is very valid, there's a piece of information that I have that no one else does and I have to make the decision and it's not always information that I can share for whatever reason. For me, confidence is something I have to grow in every day. In exuding confidence. I'm a small woman, not young, but on the youngish side and I constantly work with that, sometimes against it.

Brett Egan:

I would like to think I have learned from mistakes. I have tried to become more patient and to use fewer adjectives and superlatives!

Debra Harrison:

Yeah, I do, I think that one of the things I still constantly struggle with is having enough patience, not with people, but with processes. Like, why is this taking so long? I think for me, having more patience to have more time for people to germinate ideas. I thnk that over the years, I always wanted to hear people's ideas and I always wanted to dialogue in that, but sometimes it would frustrate me that I wanted to get going quicker. I've sort of had to say, "Wait, not everybody learns the way you do." This is a big thing for me. Some people learn by reading, some people learn by writing, some people learn by talking, and incorporating that in how I am

getting my information. Finding different ways for me to communicate, as well as giving other people opportunities to communicate in different ways has been very important to me.

So the patience, and the patience with the politics of it all. There's a lot of politics. Life is full of politics, until you win the lottery, because you're always going to have a boss. When you're the top of an arts organization, you're going to have the board. Even if you're the president of the board, there will be donors. Ultimately, there really is no end until you win the lottery and you have all the money, and then, it's beyond you.

David Snider:

Yeah, I think so. One thing that I have learned is that people are built in different ways. People see the world in different ways; we each have our own snapshot of perception of what reality is. A lot of the time, communicating with people and understanding where people are coming from is copping to the fact that people are not just in the moment being difficult or just not listening, they're operating in the world in a different way. People are wired differently, we all have a slightly different frequency that we operate on. So accepting that or learning how to help people play to their strengths and learn from their challenges is something that I think I've learned a lot over the years. Whereas in early years as a leader, I think I would've said that person was just difficult or this person is just a challenge and I've got to figure out how to work around or work with them in some way, but they're kind of that way. Now I think that I can hear in a more sophisticated way what people are needing, what they are saying, what they're perceiving maybe. Understanding the differences in the way I'm wired and the way other people are wired and that both are ok and we just need to work in slightly different ways, slightly different paces, slightly different approaches.

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As part of company culture at YPT, I've learned that other people need fun at work, candy on their desk, break times and blasting music in ways that I don't and I just need to make space for that, I just need to be ok with it. It's not something that I necessarily need, but I don't need to get in its way or judge it in any way. I need to make space for other people's process while looking at their outcomes and notice that they're doing really amazing work and need to blast that music once a day and to be ok with that. It's actually really good for the company, for people to be able to work in their own styles and have space for it.

One of the things that I've learned in recent years is you can say things like, "We all need to take care of our selves. If you work late, feel free to come in late the next day." But until you make it policy, people don't actually do it because it's too easy for people to think, "Well, David said that in a staff meeting, but when the rubber hits the road, I'm going to feel guilty if I come in late tomorrow" or "I don't really understand, because it's not in writing anywhere, if I'm actually allowed to do that." So it wasn't until we put it in writing in the handbook, until we operationalized it, that it actually happened. That is where I would get really frustrated

What advice do you have for an emerging leader in arts management?

Brett Ashley Crawford:

Read, watch, learn from mistakes. Mistakes are important. Learn from your mistakes, just don't do them again. Learn from other people's mistakes and gains. If you see that somebody is doing something good, write it down. Whatever process you use to put good ideas into your head, and practice them, do that. Figure out how you can incorporate that thought into your world. Going back to Margaret Wheatley, which I do believe, is simply by introducing that into my brain, and putting it there in a solid way, it will have an impact. And it may not have the impact I expect it is going to have. So pursuing those ideas is important.

Networking is important, but as much as that, I think it's following your passions and your heart. Take advantage of every leadership opportunity you get.

Maureen Dwyer:

No job is too small. You can be shocked at what you can learn from an entry-level position. Not that you want to be stuck in an entry-level position, but I think that there's a misconception that you have to walk in and immediately rise. I think what I learned from the ground up at Sitar gives me a big edge in my leadership now, because I've done everything there is to do, from cleaning the toilets to writing the first grant to running out to buy supplies. Just knowing every role intimately has really helped me in supporting staff, in helping them to do better, in supervising the workings of the organization. Whatever role you get as your entry, be really open to it, to what you can learn from that role. Seek mentors because I think they'll go a long way to help you to rise if they believe in you. Always be learning. Just learn, read, talk to people, look at different models. Constantly learning.

Brett Egan:

Figure out three things you won't be happy if you do not do them. Look for opportunities that allow you to do all three. This will help you find people who can help you and make it easy for them to help you. It will also save you time.

Debra Harrison:

I truly believe that some of the best arts managers I've worked with are people who grew up in the business, they're not people who went to school. I think that a couple of folks who

come in and have spent time with me and they say, "should I do an MBA, should I do this, should I do that?" And my response is frequently take the money you would spend doing that, go somewhere and go to somebody and say, "I want to follow you around. I want to be there, I will help you, I will do anything to be with you and to be in your presence for a year." That is going to make you the best all around person in an industry to then build on your leadership skills. You'll see good leaders and you'll see bad leaders. You learn as much from good theater as from bad theater, that's always my mantra. I think over the years, I've seen phenomenal leaders and I've seen horrendous leaders and I take this, and that, and not this, and that and put it all together. I think that's the way to do it. Hang out with people that are in this business, go to conferences if you can afford it, be engaged, talk to people. There are a lot of people like me who just like the sound of our own voice, so we talk about anything, but talk to people. Certainly in the arts, talk to people who are truly doing what they say they're doing. I think that's a key thing, that hands-on. We've had a few people who would get an undergrad degree in theatrical design and they'd come to the theater in lighting design and I'd say, "Go focus that light" and they'd say, "I don't know how to focus a light." Dude, if you don't know how to focus a light, how are you going to design a light? That's it, if you know how to wash out the paint bucket, then you're going to know how much paint it takes and where do you buy the paint and then you're going to learn how much it costs. All the pieces start building together and in a university environment where you don't actually do it, it's just conceptual. I don't think that's the best way. And if you are going to do that, augment. Like [our intern]. She comes in here, she works in the afternoons a couple days a week and hangs out and gets paid a little bit. But she interned here. I think internships are great, as long as they're good internships. If they're really bad internships where all you do is get coffee and you're not allowed to sit in the meeting, that's a

bad internship. The money is not what's important. I mean, it's important because if you go to

school you can get loans, which you can pay, get the loans to live.

David Snider:

I think it's really good to have people that you can trust, people that you can be totally

honest with and have conversations about "God, I'm really scared about this," or "I don't

understand what this is." Pick those people really carefully, whether that's your spouse, whether

it's your deputy director, whether it's somebody else on staff, or someone that you worked with

formerly as a colleague or a friend. You have to have a sounding board, and to do that

confidentially, not to air your self-doubt or your conflict on decisions with the whole staff.

I think in some ways, in contrary to some of what I said, it's important to fake it until you

make it, to go, "I can do this, I can actually do this." I think that's one of the reasons why, in

some strange ways, my acting background, my acting MFA serves me so well because you have

to take on the role for a while until you actually do it and then you go, "Yeah, I'm actually

comfortable in this skin." But you have to just kind of throw yourself in there and do it.

I think that you've got to set an example, which is also one of the things that I think I've

done well early on as a leader. You have to take out the garbage. You have to do things that you

want other people to do and not just say, "You do it." So it's not just a top-down "just do that

thing." Especially if you're in a fairly small organization, where people are going, "if we're

really collaborating, why is there this kind of hierarchy and ultimately, you do want to delegate,

that's really important so you're not doing everything all the time, but you have to set the

example to people that you are willing to do anything because you're going to ask everyone who

works for you to do everything.

The other thing that I think is getting out there, not just hiding in your office. If you have the impulse to hide, fight it by setting up appointments, setting up lunches, getting out there. You've got to be out and about connecting that organization to other things, other people, other resources, anything and everything. You've got to hit the ground running.

Russell Willis Taylor:

Yes I do, I have two. Every new employee of the ENO, I used to meet. There were 1500 people, but I wanted to meet them all, even if just for five minutes, I wanted to meet them all. I thought then and I think now that it's important if you are the boss, that you've shaken their hand and said welcome. I don't care if they were there to be one of the housekeepers or [anyone else]. Welcome, I'm here, if you don't feel like you can talk to anyone else but me, talk to me. If you can talk to anyone else but me, don't talk to me, but we're glad you're here. I used to say to every single person and I said it to every person here, I want you think of, when you start a new job, and think of the three things you pray nobody asks you because you don't know the answer and then go find the answer. Your instincts about what you need to know for your competence are right and people who are operating on any level of anxiety will not be good at their jobs. So think about the thing at your job that you hope that a board member, donor, or anybody doesn't ask you and then go find out the answer because then you don't have to worry about it anymore. Then when they ask you, you're ready.

The second thing is for anybody who is starting out, step back and look at the entire organization as if you didn't care about it. Think of yourself as a consultant. Say, "Where are the areas that this organization could achieve its mission if they did this better. Is it appropriate or is there an opportunity for me to be involved in that improvement." The way that people get the

confidence to lead something is to be involved in changing something. Then you realize it's not as scary as you think.

I was extremely fortunate in my career that I was pushed into these positions around change management, so early in my career, I got the confidence (probably wrongly placed, it has to be said) to say, "Let's try that and see if it works." That is a characteristic of a leader, that by the item you get to the top of the tree and you're running something really big, if you are prepared to say to somebody really young to try it. I'm going to put enough boundaries around you so that if you fail, it's not the end of your career. If it doesn't work out, I'll take the heat, if it does work out, you get the gold star. You can only do that to people (and I think that is how people should be managed) if you've personally managed the anxiety of implementing a change when you don't know what's going to happen. If you step back and look at your organization and identify something that if could be doing differently and if you can be part of that, that's a really good exercise because when you are leading something, that's what you do every single day. You look at the big picture and ask yourself where you need to improve.

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