

Performing Arts – Performing Organisations

- go beyond the metaphors of music

By Peter Hanke, Artistic Director, Centre for Art & Leadership

For some years the metaphors of leadership in the performing arts have generally become a part of the language used in the corporate world and leadership. Everything from “orchestrating” and “conducting” to “staging” and “jamming”, just as characters like “prima donna”, “soloists” and “ensemble” have entered the huge amount of buzzwords in the management development.

To make these metaphors work and to be used more efficient, it is feasible to go beyond the talk and learn how to cope with the practical communication of the music language. What is regarded as “tacet knowledge” is very much “sounding knowledge” if you ask a musician, as the communicating skills are implemented without words. It makes sense to create a learning environment around the music practise and extract this “tacet knowledge”, by giving a language to the extremely detailed and highly developed organisation, represented by a musical ensemble.

For the last two years I have experimented with the rehearsal techniques of the classical music in this context. Focusing the inner state of the choir, the orchestra and the string quartet, and their different needs in the process of creating an artistic result, everybody could learn important things about timing, initiative, ad hoc leadership, teams, expression and listening abilities.

Different from the normal situation of dividing the artists and the audience, a ritual discourse of the last 150 years of musical practise and art institutions, the close and intimate connection created around the **rehearsal** rather than the performance itself, the listener is offered an opportunity to be a part of the musical process. We avoid the entertaining perspective and enhance the state of building up the emotional logistics. This way the border between “performer” and “audience” becomes irrelevant, as the demands for appreciative listening and emotional participation turns in the direction of a learning environment.

Take into consideration that we never compromise on the artistic quality and the repertoire complexity, but open up the rehearsals to be exploited by others - this is the good news for musicians. They feel accepted and needed not as entertainers, but as knowledge partners, when their skills as musicians and comes to life in a musical meta-context. Or perhaps just re-creating the state and mentality from former periods of integrating intellectual power and art (the bloom of German culture in early 19. century - before music became industrialised as the best example).

For the Centre Opening Conference the first of three developed concepts is presented and demonstrated with help from the singers in Voces Copenhagen. The music will be:

J.S. Bach: Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf

J.S. Bach: Singet dem Herrn

Poul Ruders: Preghiera Semplice

Three different concepts

Choral Conducting for Managers - a visible and listening leader

Matches the form of a genuine conductor's masterclass, strengthening the individual performance for the leader and develop the ability to communicate with non-verbal means, gestures and body language. The Conductor as the Ideal Leader will be explored – visible and listening leadership.

A group of 4-5 participants work as conductors - other members of the organisation could join. Depending on the duration of the workshop, 6-8 trained singers can be added to enlarge the musical possibilities. The choir is conducted by the participants under the supervision of Peter Hanke. Video recordings can be used.

Result: Experiencing the conductor's role the leader will develop his/her communication skills on an artistic level.

The Force of an Ensemble - team building à la choir and orchestra

A day of inspiration for a group or an entire department. Explore the orchestra and ensemble way of co-operation, communication, initiative ad-hoc leadership within a frame of highly disciplined artistic freedom.

The group's strategy for development and common goals serves as an agenda for a number of exercises to stimulate the human energy and explore the common experiences exactly as members of a music ensemble do every day. Music exercises with percussion or choral singing/conducting combined with the Appreciative Inquiry techniques to maximise the effect of the brain storm.

Result: A solid development of the team spirit and the team's ability to formulate future common goals and strategies.

String Quartet Working Discipline - a powerful meeting facilitation technique

Short meeting facilitation technique workshop inspired by the string quartet rehearsal techniques. Learn how to act like four specific individuals in delicate interplay, where every member's contribution is highly necessary both in the verbal and non-verbal sense. The metaphor "a gifted musical conversation" will be explored.

A group or department with a regular meeting schedule is trained in joint decision making, keeping focus, initiative, listening and ability to bring a discussion further. A role-play matching the 1st and 2nd violins, viola and cello parts in a musical form-language. Cases from daily life in the organisation can be used.

Result: The bad habits and stiffness of corporate meeting culture is challenged – boring meetings transformed to exciting events with chamber music qualities.