

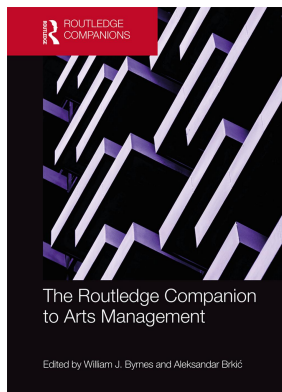
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 26 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Arts Management

William J. Byrnes, Aleksandar Brki

Getting on the Balcony

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351030861-11>

William J. Byrnes

Published online on: 26 Sep 2019

How to cite :- William J. Byrnes. 26 Sep 2019, *Getting on the Balcony from: The Routledge Companion to Arts Management* Routledge

Accessed on: 26 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351030861-11>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

11

GETTING ON THE BALCONY

Deploying adaptive leadership in the arts

*William J. Byrnes***Introduction**

The need for effective leadership and management in the arts has never been greater. Whether it is an intimate poetry reading or a huge city-wide music festival, there are expectations that leadership will be practiced which will routinely fulfill outcomes and achieve desired impacts. The process of creating and sharing visual and performing arts experiences that engage, educate, enthrall, and maybe even unsettle people occurs within increasingly complex and evolving social, political, economic, and technological environments. Boundaries are blurred between art forms and artists are exploring a variety of entrepreneurial pathways that continually change. Worldwide, cultural organizations are trying to adapt, change, and meaningfully respond while continuing to be creative forces for new ways of thinking and living (Caust, 2018, pp. 5–8).

What leadership methods and styles might be appropriate to help arts organizations thrive in these evolving environments? Does it make sense to focus on being a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1997, 1991, 2002) who uses a mix of transformative (Bass, 1990) and authentic leadership techniques (George, 2015)? Or, is using a combination of Path-Goal Theory (House and Mitchell, 1974) and Situational Leadership (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, 2013) going to be more effective in meeting the needs of organization and stakeholders? Leading using mindfulness techniques has been suggested as an option (Lippincott, 2016). Maybe using collaborative techniques embedded in the process of creating theatre, dance, or opera productions will produce the best results (Foster, 2018).

As an alternative to these leadership approaches, this chapter will explore whether the adaptive leadership model could be employed to assist cultural organizations to meet the challenges they face. Developing adaptive leadership practices could help cultural organizations thrive and become more resilient. The basic tenets of adaptive leadership will be explained and tested in situations often found in the arts. Lastly, the efficacy of adaptive leadership will be discussed in light of complexity theory, leader training limitations, the difficulty in identifying adaptive challenges, and the personal limitations leaders must confront when attempting to deploy this leadership model.

Overview of the adaptive leadership model

Adaptive leadership involves implementing a series of carefully planned interactions between leaders and followers as they confront difficult situational challenges their organization faces (Heifetz,

Grashow, A. and Linsky, 2009, p. 32). After assessing the types of challenges (i.e., technical, technical and adaptive, or adaptive), a leader engages in facilitating behaviors designed to help followers learn, adapt, and change their thinking, values, beliefs, and work patterns. Peter G. Northouse created a schematic of Heifetz's adaptive leadership model to depict the interaction of the situational challenges with leader behaviors designed to engage followers in processes that solve problems, and that can lead to lasting change within organizations (Northouse, 2019, pp. 260–271).

The six leader behaviors that are part of a diagnostic framework include:

- Get on the balcony
- Identify the adaptive challenge
- Regulate distress
- Maintain disciplined attention
- Give work back to people
- Protect leadership voices from below

These six behaviors are used to create opportunities for leaders and followers to work together to tackle the difficult issues that surround adaptive change. The leadership model calls for establishing a holding environment which is deemed a safe space to allow followers to work through potential solutions to the challenges being faced (Northouse, 2019, p. 261).

Adaptive change and leadership deconstructed

Let's explore in more detail the concepts that are central to this change process by starting with a definition of adaptive leadership. Heifetz describes adaptive leadership as "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009). That may mean the leader stands back and lets conflict and disagreements surface so that they can be addressed from the followers' perspective. The assumption is if the followers are not part of the adaptation process the organization will not be able to change successfully.

Adaptive organizational change is likened to the biologic processes of altering DNA. The organization preserves most of its core DNA needed for its survival, but the change process may require discarding or rearranging other parts of its DNA. This new DNA arrangement should enable the organization to adapt to changing environments. Those organizations not effective at adapting risk becoming extinct or stuck operating at a suboptimal level. Heifetz describes the use of the DNA overlay as a way to promote change, build on the past, and adapt as a result of trial, error, and experimentation (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, pp. 13–17).

Adaptive change and cultural organizations

An example of a difficult adaptive challenge faced by an arts organization and which requires it change and adopt new behaviors might be how it goes about becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Arts organizations aspire to be more diverse, but demographic research indicates that this is not the case (Cuyler, 2015). The challenge to become more diverse may be technical (where the job openings are advertised) and adaptive (attitudes and implicit biases make the organization seem unwelcoming to minorities).

A second example of an adaptive challenge could involve a regional symphony orchestra with a traditional programming approach that is resulting in dwindling audiences. The leadership team (e.g., the music director and executive director) sees there is a need to change the

organization to better meet the programming interests of a broader cross-section of the community. The leaders may conclude that to connect more deeply with people in the community, the orchestra players, staff, and board need to adapt and change attitudes about what it means to be a classical music organization in the 21st century. These adaptive changes may include rethinking the mission and values of the orchestra, developing empathetic perspectives about who is being served (or not) by their programming, and exploring alternative concert schedules and formats. If the leaders try to force change from the top down, it would likely result in resistance by orchestra members, the staff, board members, and people in the community. However, by using adaptive leadership, the music director and executive director could engage everyone in a process that results in changing the orchestra in ways that make it more flexible and responsive to its community.

Change or status quo?

Adaptive change starts with an assessment of the status quo. Organizations develop cultures and social systems which constitute the norms and ways of doing things that align with the type of business it operates (Byrnes, 2015, p. 105). Therefore, before deploying adaptive leadership, the leader first must understand the current state of an organization. Typically, the impetus that drives planning and change is the perception that there are dysfunctions that need to be addressed in the organization. However, Heifetz notes that:

There is a myth that drives many change initiatives into the ground: The organization needs to change because it is broken. The reality is that any social system (including an organization or a country or a family) is the way it is because the people in that system (at least this individuals and factions with the most leverage) want it that way. In that sense . . . the system is working fine, even though it may appear to be “dysfunctional” in some respects to some outside observers.

(Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 17)

Examples of status quo situations that seem impervious to change could include the programming mindset of the previously mentioned symphony orchestra or an arts organization that says it values fiscal responsibility but continues to operate with a structural deficit. This same organization may publicly express the value it places on education and community engagement, but when requests are made for additional staff and budget resources to increase the impact of these activities, the funding never seems to be available. The point is, organizations create narratives to explain away and rationalize their shortcomings.

Technical problem and adaptive challenges

Heifetz originally proposed a framework for assessing the types of problems organizations face, tactics that might be employed to solve the problems, and whether the problems the leader had to confront were technical (clear solutions) or adaptive (requires learning) in *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (1994). This framework is still used and helps guide leaders in their initial assessment of the challenges faced by an organization. In an arts organization, an example of a technical challenge might be a data management software system that is difficult to use, and that is not providing the information needed to manage the organization effectively. The ticketing or membership software system may require a convoluted workaround to connect to the

bookkeeping and finance software and, to make matters worse, neither system is connected to the software used by the fundraising staff. The solution to the problem will likely be costly but, in the end, a technical challenge like this can be overcome.

The previous example of the software problem demonstrates how a challenge could also be both technical and adaptive. For example, each of the current systems will likely have a staff member or manager who possesses expert knowledge of how the software works. The new software will need to be acquired, and then training will be required across multiple departments in the organization. However, some members of the staff may see the change as a loss of control. Heifetz notes, “Habits, values, and attitudes, even dysfunctional ones, are part of one’s identity” (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002, 2017, p. 27) and resistance to change often becomes a broader concern about a loss of what is familiar. The current system may not work well, but the staff has become very adept at making it function. The system may be “broken,” but there is pride among the staff that they make it work.

Switching to a new software system will typically involve creating a request for proposals (RFP) which requires managers and staff to work together developing their needs and requirements. In this case, technical and adaptive leadership will be required by the project leader if all the interested parties are to collaborate and complete the process of acquiring and deploying the new software. Followers (staff) will need to actively engage with each other by exchanging ideas and sharing the problems they are trying to solve with the new system. Learning about how work is done in other departments can provide new insights among the staff. The goal is to use this cycle of learning and collaboration to diffuse the anxiety that often accompanies change.

A recent real-world example of facing technical and adaptive challenges by an arts organization likely occurred when three different opera companies changed their performance schedules from a typical fall and spring season to a summer season. For example, in 2016 the Portland Opera changed to a 12-week summer schedule after 50 years of operating a more traditional performance schedule (Stabler, 2014). Ft. Worth Opera also made a similar change to a summer festival season in 2007 (Bailey, 2009) and more recently, Opera Philadelphia presented its first summer festival in 2017 (Cooper, 2015). In all three situations, these opera companies had to grapple with adaptive and technical challenges that would be felt within the organizations, and that would impact audiences, donors, and their communities.

When reading about these dramatic programming adjustments, there was a common adaptive challenge each organization was trying to address: financial pressures that threatened their sustainability. Each faced adaptive challenges that required they make significant changes in how they operated. The 2009 magazine article *Darren Woods Leads Fort Worth Opera to New High* offers a glimpse into the process used in making change. The process was described by General Director Darren Woods as “a bonding experience for the staff, too, who had a real say in the company’s future” (Bailey, 2009). While there was no evidence of systematic use of the adaptive leadership model by these opera companies, the changes being made required adaptation and had an impact on the DNA of each company.

Adaptive leader behaviors

Let’s more closely examine the six behaviors that are part of the diagnostic framework a leader needs to use in assessing how to meet the adaptive and technical challenges an organization may face (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 74). Each of these behaviors seems to align well with how cultural organizations function.

Get on the balcony

For the leader to gain perspective about how the organization is functioning, they need to take the step of “getting up on the balcony” (Heifetz, 1997; Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009; Heifetz and Linsky, 2002, 2017). This leader behavior aligns well with an actual practice used frequently in the arts. If a director, choreographer, or designer wants to see what is going on onstage, they will often go to the balcony or move to the rear of the auditorium to gain perspective. Or, a conductor may ask the assistant to step up to the podium, so they can move to the balcony to hear how the ensemble sounds. A curator and the artist may step back and assess if the desired impact of the exhibit installation has been achieved.

Heifetz writes “achieving a balcony perspective means taking yourself out of the dance . . . even if only for a moment” (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002, 2017, p. 53). Being on the balcony “can include such things as taking some quiet time, forming a group of unofficial advisers . . . , or simply attending meetings as an observer” (Northouse, 2019, p. 263). Using the example of the software transition mentioned earlier, the leader might sit in on the RFP planning meeting to gain perspective about conflicts and divisions that may exist among the staff related to the software change.

Identify adaptive challenges

Adaptive challenges typically involve problems connected to values, beliefs, and attitudes held by people in the organization. For example, the leader may identify that the status quo of an arts organization (e.g., the symphony) is causing it to fall into programming patterns that are no longer exciting and that do not engage audiences. To better assess the nature of the adaptive problems, Heifetz identifies four archetypes associated with adaptive challenges (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, pp. 77–86).

Archetype 1: gap between espoused values and behavior

An opera company may have established its identity and reputation through high-quality programming of the “standard repertory.” However, attendance and sales have been slipping over three decades. To address the problem, the company adds Broadway musicals to its schedule. After another decade it finds that more than half its schedule is now musicals. However, the company continues to represent itself as an “opera” company. When a new music director is hired, they push for programming more modern operas and want the company to perform fewer musicals. The music director (MD) thinks the opera company has lost its focus by chasing ticket revenue and feels strongly that the organization needs to take a different programming direction. The diagnosis is that the opera company’s current programming conflicts with its core purpose.

Archetype 2: competing commitments

The opera company music director makes a compelling case to the artistic director (AD) that the company needs to be performing more modern operas and doing premieres of new works. They agree that the company needs to be doing more to develop future composers, singers, and audiences. They begin pondering from “the balcony” how to go about making this programming shift. However, some of the staff and a few of the board members are less certain

that this change is worth the risk. The advocates for keeping the programming pattern that has worked for years (mix of opera and musicals) become concerned that the proposed changes will financially hurt the company. At the same time, the artistic leadership and a few of the staff and board members are expressing interest in going in this new direction. The advocates for change and for keeping the status quo are beginning to solidify, and competing commitments are coming into focus.

Archetype 3: speaking the unspeakable

No one has been speaking up about the fact that the opera company is performing more musicals than operas. The status quo seems to be working fine. However, the music director is questioning what the mission really is. The most important thing the artistic leadership can do at this point is to encourage “speaking the unspeakable” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 82). Is opera central to the core programming of the company? If the opera company is to be a company, then the staff and board members need to be able to have an open dialog amongst themselves about the idea of changing the programming mix. Conflicting beliefs, values, and attitudes need to be discussed and addressed by the leadership. This is a critical time in the change process. The notion that *qui tacet consentit*, or silence assumes consent, can make the change process more difficult.

Archetype 4: work avoidance

If the leadership team is not careful, the adaptive change process may veer off course, and staff and board members who oppose the changes will slip into behavior patterns identified as “work avoidance” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 84). Signs of this type of behavior include not speaking up at meetings and the formation of subgroups or individuals who engage in disruptive passive-aggressive behaviors. For example, the marketing director may think that performing unknown opera premieres is folly and as a result, they dial back their creative contributions on how they might go about marketing and communicating about a new season of programming. Alternatively, there may be board members who are not committed to this programming change, and as a result, they might consider making smaller annual donations, or they may feel less passionate about advocating for the company when out in the community.

Regulate distress

The fictional opera undergoing adaptive change shows the need of the leadership team to regulate elevated levels of distress among the staff. Some mix of the four adaptive challenge archetypes is not uncommon in arts organizations. For example, the changes being contemplated would likely require an adjustment to the mission and vision statements. Disagreements about wording changes to the mission could derail the entire change process. The adaptive leadership model offers three methods for the leader to manage this expected distress: “(1) create a holding environment, (2) provide direction, protection, orientation, conflict management, and productive norms, and (3) regulate personal distress” (Northouse, 2019, p. 265).

Holding environment – The idea of creating a holding environment makes a great deal of sense if the leader is trying to keep the change process from turning toxic.

These types of organizational “safe spaces” have their origin in the field of psychology and counseling. (Modell, 1976) Heifetz describes the concept of a holding environment in an organization as “all those ties that bind people together and enable them to maintain their focus on what they are trying to do” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 155). A holding environment might be created at an offsite meeting space, (i.e., neutral territory). The important thing for the leader to do is to articulate this “space” is for experimenting with ideas, disagreeing, and even arguing but with the end goal of working toward solutions (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002, 2017, pp. 102–107).

Safe Space – A safe space for the opera company would be where staff and board members can express their differences and seek points of agreement. For example, if there are concerns about performing operas that are less familiar to the staff and board, then the leadership team might stage a short excerpt from one of these works and discuss it. Overcoming a lack of knowledge about new works and composers can be part of the learning process for everyone in the opera company.

Regulate Personal Distress – If adaptive change is going take place, the leadership team needs to be willing to listen and engage its stakeholders even if it means there are moments of discomfort. The holding environment may be messy and noisy at times, but if people in the organization value open communication, the potential for meaningful learning and change to take place is enhanced. The leader needs to help build consensus and diffuse conflict.

Maintain disciplined attention

The adaptive leader also needs to facilitate followers staying focused during the change process. For example, there could be three or four work groups organized to tackle various parts of the change process for the opera company. One group might be working on drafting revisions to the mission and vision statements and, in coordination with the marketing and development areas, they could be gathering feedback from key stakeholders in the community about the changes being considered. There could be another working group tasked with researching new operas that are influencing the repertoire around the world. The adaptive leadership team should be coordinating all these workgroups to make sure they are productive and are working toward meeting agreed-upon deadlines.

Give the work back to the people

The adaptive leader uses disciplined attention to also give work back to the opera company staff and board to engage them in the adaptive change process. If change is to be meaningful and lasting, the people who are part of the opera company need to feel and believe they are a necessary part of making these changes. New behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs do not come easily to people. If the staff and board do not feel they have a substantial part to play in re-envisioning the opera company, then the change process will be superficial. The leaders need to be willing to step back and let the followers grapple with the problems and arrive at solutions. The staff, for example, need to be able to say, “We helped write the new mission statement, and others of us wrote a marketing plan that supports our new mission and our programming direction.” The idea of “placing the work where it belongs” (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002, 2017, p. 127) may be a big leap to make if an organization has a history of being led by a top-down leadership team. Giving work back requires a level of trust that also must be cultivated and nurtured.

Protect leadership voices from below

The last leader behavior includes providing the opportunity for people without authority in the organization to be heard. If the leader is going to give back work to followers, they then must recognize that the authority and power structures in their organization may inhibit this process. If the leader says they want to hear from everyone, but the staff witnesses negative consequences befalling those who speak up, then the adaptive change process will be undercut. Heifetz offers a description of how a leader can go about protecting the “troublemakers” while at the same recognizing organizational structure may keep alternative points of view from surfacing. Trouble-makers tend to be isolated and are often ignored in organizations, but Heifetz notes that they may be “the only ones asking questions that need to be asked and raising issues that no one wants to talk about” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 168).

Creating and managing disequilibrium

As we have seen, adaptive leadership is multi-layered, and adaptive challenges demand the leaders and followers stay alert, engaged, and focused on the problems that go well beyond making technical changes to internal processes. Tackling adaptive challenges requires putting the organization in what is describe as a “state of disequilibrium” (Heifetz, 1997). The adaptive leadership model posits there is a Productive Zone of Disequilibrium (PZD) created when addressing adaptive and technical challenges and that a leader monitors and constantly tweaks the zone so that “enough heat [is] generated by your intervention to gain attention, engagement, and forward motion, but not so much that the organization (or your part of it) explodes” (Heifetz, 1997). The metaphor used is that of a pressure cooker with the idea that the heat setting needs to be constantly adjusted during the adaptive change process (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009).

The adaptive leader’s job is to start conversations and pose tough questions and create disequilibrium that will be unpleasant for a time. The PZD of the fictional opera company would allow for the pros and cons of producing fewer musicals and doing more modern operas and world premieres to be discussed without creating so much conflict that it becomes divisive. There could be several discussion threads about ways these adaptive challenges can be addressed. We saw that by regulating distress, using holding environments, by giving work back to peoples, and so forth, the leader can guide the followers through the PZD to reach the adaptive changes required to help the opera company address the existential issues it faces. The outcome of successfully navigating the PZD might be the reaffirmation the company’s commitment to fostering creativity and artistic excellence.

Sustaining and thriving as an adaptive leader

An adaptive leader needs to be highly self-aware and connected to their purpose and values. We have looked at the processes used by an adaptive leader, but there is value in looking at what it takes to put this leadership model into practice. Heifetz notes that:

There is no reason to shoulder the difficult work of leadership if you do not have compelling, higher purposes to serve, whether saving the world, renewing your organization, or helping your community meet long-standing challenges and thrive through tough times.

(Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 233)

Mission and vision-driven arts organizations seem an ideal environment in which to deploy a leadership model and system designed to engage people who share values shaped by a belief that the arts are a force for good and bettering the world. Adaptive leadership stresses followers need to do more than follow; they must engage in helping realize the potential of the organization through the adaptive work everyone must do (Northouse, 2019). Also, the adaptive leader needs to be courageous, inspiring, and willing to experiment continually while taking care of themselves in order to personally thrive and survive (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, pp. 233–255).

Purpose

An adaptive leader, or any leader for that matter, needs to be monitoring and strengthening the shared purpose of the people in the organization. For example, if a leader sees the need for an intervention to build a stronger culture in an organization, there would still need to be work done to sustain this change. Constant communication about the shared values and instituting new rites and rituals in the organization would need to be done to reinforce the new values and beliefs (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 237). For example, the Portland Opera general director would have likely needed to stress the mission-driven reasons for changing to the summer season to help focus the staff on the positive aspects of the new schedule.

Courage

Heifetz points out that adaptive leaders need to refashion working relationships with people in the organization. Getting on the balcony may mean a leader will need to alter expectations colleagues may hold about them (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, pp. 248–251). Sticking to an agenda that is driven by change will not be easy or painless. Heifetz warns that the change process “calls for building the stomach for the journey” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 260). The personality trait of being a people pleaser, for example, is not likely to produce adaptive change.

Inspiring people

Developing and strengthening communication and listening skills are important if an adaptive leader is going to build trust and inspire people in the organization to take risks and make the technical and adaptive changes needed to help the organization fulfill its purpose. Some of the suggestions offered by Heifetz and his colleagues for inspiring people echo concepts offered by Robert Greenleaf in his book *Servant Leadership* (Greenleaf, 1977/2002). Various techniques that can be explored include authentically sharing ideas with followers and being open to input. Being nonjudgmental and engaging in deep listening can help inspire trust (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 266).

Experiment

“Everything you do in leading adaptively is an experiment” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 277). Leaders are often placed in situations where they are expected to have all the answers. However, some of the paths taken in the change process may fail to achieve results. The fear of not being right and of failing makes leaders and managers risk-averse. Therefore, being open with followers about why choices are being made can help mitigate the anxiety generated when trying out new ideas and processes.

Thrive

If a leader is personally struggling with too much to do and is suffering from burnout, the time and energy needed to be effective in the role of an adaptive leader is going to be difficult to find. Heifetz and his colleagues offer suggestions to achieve a work-life balance. They also suggest the leader have a few confidants to confer with when grappling with the repercussions of the change process being managed. The idea of creating a personal holding environment is explored along with balancing being realistic and optimistic (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 292).

Looking at adaptive leadership from a different balcony

Adaptive leadership, as we have seen, is a complex process with many moving parts. There is much to learn if one is to be effective and successful leading an organization through a cycle of change. Using a basic understanding of adaptive leadership as a process and the expectations placed on an adaptive leader, let's "move up to the balcony" for another author's perspective on adaptive leadership.

Four types of organizations

Juan Carlos Eichholz's 2017 book *Adaptive Capacity – How organizations can thrive in a changing world* expands on Heifetz's model. Eichholz creates a grid diagram to depict how four general types of organizations go about the process of adaptive change. Communal, Innovative, Bureaucratic, and Action-driven organizations reside at each corner of a grid which is framed by a horizontal continuum that spans from participatory to hierarchical processes and orientations that vertically span from internal to external in their focus (Eichholz, 2017, p. 58). For example, communal organizations can include NGOs and NPOs which tend to be driven by a "sense of belonging" as expressed by values such as "inclusion, caring, and consensus" (Eichholz, 2017, p. 62). Innovative organizations, which could include those in the arts, are driven by creating an "impact," and their values may include "creativity," "collaboration," and "meaning" (Eichholz, 2017, p. 62).

As an adaptive leader of an arts organization, it would seem wise to analyze and assess where the organization tends to function within Eichholz's framework. For example, a state-run arts or cultural heritage museum would likely have the driving forces and values associated with more bureaucratic organizations (e.g., "safety" and values such as "formality, tradition, and regularity") (Eichholz, 2017, pp. 59–61). Therefore, a starting point for building adaptive capacity is going to be different from a more communal or innovative organization. Eichholz notes that "not all companies and institutions are expected to be equally adaptive, and he adds "organizations should all try to be more adaptive or increase their adaptive capacities within the limits of their nature" (Eichholz, 2017, p. 66).

"A second useful barometer of an organization's adaptive capacity is the way in which authority is exercised" (Eichholz, 2017, p. 112). The same grid is used to align authority with the four types of organizations. Communal organizations tend toward the use of "conciliatory" authority with a goal to make sure everyone "feels included and heard." Meanwhile, bureaucratic organizations may use authority more paternalistically, and action-driven organizations often use directive authority (move fast and seek results). Innovative organizations tend to use authority "in a facilitative way, by providing space and resources for people to deploy themselves and generate impact" (Eichholz, 2017, p. 112). The key insight here is that "observing the mode in which the authority is exercised in an organization is a simple and effective way of analyzing

its adaptive capacity” (Eichholz, 2017, p. 113). For example, the leader of a state-controlled bureaucratic cultural heritage museum could use directive authority to nudge people toward taking more responsibility for elements in a change process.

Getting on the balcony to assess the realities of being an adaptive leader

The concluding section of this chapter will move up on the balcony to examine various obstacles that an arts manager may face when contemplating deploying the adaptive leadership model. The model will be briefly assessed by looking at four critical areas that could be obstacles to deploying it: the complexity of the process, training an adaptive leader, identifying adaptive challenges, and what leader attributes and personal skills are required to be an adaptive leader. A case study (see Box 11.1) describes how the leadership team of the Sacramento Ballet is going about exploring elements of adaptive leadership as an approach to chart a path of change.

Complexity

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky have created a leadership model that has been described as a “subset of Complexity Leadership Theory” (Northouse, 2019, p. 259). Arts organizations are complex adaptive systems (CAS) and fit the description of “neural-like networks of interacting, interdependent agents who are bonded in a cooperative dynamic by common goal(s), outlook(s),” and “need(s), etc.” (Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey, 2007, p. 299). Being an adaptive organization implies there is an awareness among all the stakeholders (leaders and followers) of the overlapping systems and subsystems that power it. Without this self-awareness, the adaptive capacity of the organization, as Eichholz pointed out, will be reduced and change and adaptation will come more slowly, if at all.

An arts manager using the principles of adaptive leadership will be required to make a significant commitment to learning how all the systems and subsystems work (or don’t) in their organization. The mindsets and habits driving operating processes will need to be confronted, and changed and traditional top-down bureaucratic structures may need to be mitigated. There may be fewer levels of management in an arts organization, but there is still structure and hierarchy that can be resistant to change. There also may be an underlying culture of conflict between the aspirations of an artistic director and more risk-averse followers and board members.

Box 11.1 Ballet Company Leaders Learning and Implementing Adaptive Leadership

The Sacramento Ballet, founded in 1954, recently underwent a leadership change that afforded the organization the opportunity to confront its status quo and increase its adaptive capacity. In the spring of 2017 the board of directors moved ahead with replacing its long-time co-artistic directors (Crowder, 2017). The new artistic director Amy Seiwert and executive director Anthony Krutzkamp took over the leadership of the ballet company for its 2018–2019 season (Browning, 2018). At the urging of board president Andrew Roth, this leadership team undertook the study of adaptive leadership. Roth first encountered adaptive leadership through an executive development

program offered by his employer, the California State Teachers Retirement System (Roth, Seiwert, and Krutzkamp, 2019). Roth proposed that the three of them undertake a year-long collaborative reading of *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (2009). The trio met to discuss the concepts of adaptive leadership and as a way to bond as a team. Reading and discussing adaptive leadership unfolded through a process that allowed them to shape a framework for change that was a good fit for the ballet company. For example, the Seiwert and Krutzkamp focused on aligning staff functions and breaking down autonomous work groups that were in place. Dealing with issues of loss and change (the previous co-artistic directors had been there for 30 years), and the need to turn up the heat on new ways of doing and thinking among the staff were slowly introduced. Adaptive leadership was being implemented in a way that allowed for it to take root organically. The leadership team took a strategic, or what could be described as a choreographic approach, to implementing the adaptive leadership by testing and assessing (rehearsing) it before considering an organization-wide rollout of the full process.

Leader training

The Practice of Adaptive Leadership (2009) is a comprehensive, practical guide to the leadership model, but it is questionable if one would attempt to adaptively lead without intensive preparation, training, and coaching. Heifetz and his colleagues have created a consulting firm which offers support services and workshops on how to implement and engage in adaptive leadership. Lacking the resources to hire a consultant, an arts manager would need to undertake a lengthy period of self-education before trying to use this complex and multi-level model. For example, a new self-taught adaptive leader might start with testing and demonstrating various elements of the adaptive leadership process. They might work with the staff and board to teach them how to use the diagnostic tool of observing and interpreting what is really going on inside the organization. Then the focus could shift to exploring the types of challenges the organization may face.

In some respects, adaptive leadership could be viewed as yet one more prescriptive methodology for leading that is part of what Harvard professor Barbara Kellerman calls the “Leadership Industry” (Kellerman, 2012, p. xiii). Kellerman is skeptical about the ability of most leadership training programs to deliver on their promises. However, she does note that Heifetz is among those experts who have “developed ways of teaching how to lead that had particular resonance” (Kellerman, 2012, p. 181). However, Kellerman also notes that teaching leadership has “too many competing experts offering too many competing pedagogies, most of which are based neither on empirical evidence nor on a well-established theoretical tradition” (Kellerman, 2012, p. 174).

The challenge of identifying adaptive challenges

The diagnostic method described by Heifetz for identifying the types of challenges is dependent on the leader and the leadership team being astute and willing to ask tough questions. Trying to ascertain if there is a collective will to solve problems that require making substantial changes can be equally daunting. The comfort zone created by the status quo can be hard to break out of. Heifetz’s notes that “yesterday’s adaptations are today’s routines” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 49). The opera company example mentioned earlier at some point decided to

add musicals to its schedule, and now that is the norm. This means that uncovering the true nature of the type of challenges an organization faces is going to take a significant amount of effort because it will also involve breaking through the routines that are deeply ingrained in the organization's culture.

In addition, getting up on the balcony to do this kind of assessment can be easier said than done. The people in artistic and strategic leadership roles often are also enmeshed in operations. For example, an artistic director of a theatre company may be directing one or more shows in a season which can then lead to extended periods where strategic questions are put on hold. It is difficult to get up on the balcony and assess the whole organization when one is already on a different balcony looking at things such as how the staging is working in a scene. That is not to say it cannot be done, but realistically, every leader has their limits when it comes to where they will be able to concentrate their time.

The adaptive leader's attributes

The last set of issues that need to be faced include the capabilities and skills of the person in the leadership role. Being adaptable is often cited as a highly valued management and leadership skill (Basadur, Gelade, and Basadur, 2014, Northouse, 2019). Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky offer a series of strategies, recommendations, and practices that a person can use to develop and sustain themselves as an adaptive leader (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, pp. 181–203). For example, they suggest a leader needs to see themselves as a “system” and to be aware that “you are actually made up of several role identities,” and that you need to manage “multiple and not always clear or consistent values, beliefs, ways of being, and ways of doing” (2009, p. 182). They also focus on the personal aspects of being an adaptive leader and offer suggestions on how best to “deploy yourself” (2009, pp. 230–231). The suggestions to “stay connected to your purpose,” “engage courageously,” and “inspire people” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, pp. 233, 247, 263) are seen as behaviors to cultivate to be an effective adaptive leader. While all these practices seem reasonable, even Heifetz and his colleagues admit that “many of the techniques we suggest may be outside your own behavior norms” (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009, p. 231).

This observation introduces an interesting dilemma. How does one behave as an adaptive leader? If the process for deploying oneself requires behaving outside your norms, then there is another layer to the process of becoming an adaptive leader which would need to be addressed – the adjustments needed in a leader's identity and personality. If for example, a person assesses themselves as not being well-versed in engaging people “courageously,” or if they feel they lack the communication skills to “inspire people,” then what steps will need to be taken to strengthen these behaviors?

Changing behavioral patterns is difficult and is often unsuccessful. For example, trying to improve how you “deploy yourself” could entail using the techniques found in the *control-theory model* of the self. This model “proposes that people regulate their behavior by making a series of comparisons against preexisting standards until the behavior matches the standards” (Carducci, 2015, p. 429). For example, if a leader wants to be able to inspire people, they would first need to examine the impact their current communication style is having on followers. Based on their analysis of their ability to inspire followers, they might need to seek outside coaching to hone their communication skills.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the many processes and techniques needed to develop one's readiness level, regulate behavior, and to lead adaptively. This leadership model assumes that an adaptive leader will self-assess and then work to close the gaps that might

undercut their efforts. However, these behavior patterns may be easier to envision than to do. Helen Delaney noted in an article entitled “Identity Work in Leadership Development” that:

The majority of identity and leadership development research tends to offer a largely positive and unproblematic picture of doing identity work in leadership development. Perhaps this positive bias is symptomatic of a trend in leadership studies whereby many leadership scholars are also directly involved in facilitating or designing leadership development initiatives, which may make it difficult to gain critical distance.

(Delaney, 2017)

In some ways, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* follows a similar positivist bias. Ultimately, trying to build an organization that can be truly adaptive seems destined to be a frustrating process given the realities of organizational complexity and the exigencies of human behavior. Enormous will, stamina, and a great deal of practice would be required of someone attempting to lead adaptively.

Conclusion

This examination of the theory and practice of adaptive leadership was motivated by an interest in investigating options arts managers and leaders might explore when seeking to build the capacity of cultural organizations to change. While not a definitive study, it is hoped that further research can be undertaken to explore the efficacy of adaptive leadership and cultural organizations.

One obvious area that needs further analysis is how an arts manager attempting to deploy adaptive leadership might go about mobilizing followers who may be part-time staff or members of a bargaining unit. An arts leader could be dealing with followers made up of at-will employees, independent contracted artists (e.g., designers, directors), union employees (actors, musicians, dancers, stage-hands, and so forth), part-time seasonal staff, and volunteers. It is not hard to imagine a circumstance in an arts organization in which follower subgroups would conflict with each other. Therefore, building an adaptive culture in an arts organization would likely entail working with multiple interest groups and in some cases, followers with sporadic engagement and who might never be part of the change process.

Regardless of the change and adaptation process used by the leadership team, it is important to remember that understanding what the tolerance level is for change in the cultural organization is critical. Expanding the adaptive capacity of an organization is demanding work that will take considerable time and effort. It is essential that there is ongoing diagnostic work being done to understand how the organization really works (or doesn't).

Overall, the collaborative leader-follower foundation of the leadership model seems suited for the cooperative and creative framework found in arts organizations. Empowering people to question the status quo can become the status quo. Building a creative organizational culture which makes the practice of regularly getting up on the balcony to see what is really going on seems to be an achievable goal and one that can help organizations thrive.

References

- Bailey, M. (2009). *Culture feature: Darren Woods leads Fort Worth opera to new highs*. [online] Available at: <http://digital.360westmagazine.com/article/Culture+Feature%3A+Darren+Woods+Leads+Fort+Worth+Opera+To+New+Highs/128499/13966/article.html> [Accessed 28 Sep. 2018].

- Basadur, M., Gelade, G., and Basadur, T. (2014). Creative problem-solving process styles, cognitive work demands, and organizational adaptability. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50(1), pp. 80–115.
- Bass, B.M. (1990). *Bass & Stogdill's handbook of leadership*. 3rd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- Browning, K. (2018). *Sacramento Ballet introduces new artistic director, pledges innovation*. [online] Available at: www.sacbee.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article211755624.html [Accessed 11 Jan. 2019].
- Byrnes, W.J. (2015). *Management and the arts*. 5th ed. Burlington: Taylor & Francis.
- Carducci, B.J. (2015). *Psychology of personality – view points, research, and applications*. 3rd ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Caust, J. (2018). *Arts leadership in contemporary contexts*. New York: Routledge.
- Cooper, M. (2015). *Opera Philadelphia's new seasonal structure caters to bingeing*. [Online] Available at: www.nytimes.com/2015/10/21/arts/music/opera-philadelphias-new-seasonal-structure-caters-to-bingeing.html [Accessed 28 Sep. 2018].
- Crowder, M. (2017). *Big changes announced for Sacramento Ballet*. [online] Available at: www.sacbee.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article125760194.html [Accessed 11 Jan. 2019].
- Cuyler, A. (2015). *An exploratory study of demographic diversity in the arts management workforce*. [Online] Available at: www.giarts.org/article/exploratory-study-demographic-diversity-arts-management-workforce [Accessed 12 Oct. 2018].
- Delaney, H. (2017). Identity work in leadership development. In: J. Storey, et al. eds., *The Routledge companion to leadership*. New York: Taylor & Francis, p. 574.
- Eichholz, J.C. (2017). *Adaptive capacity – how organizations can thrive in a changing world*. 2nd ed. London: LID Publishing Ltd.
- Foster, K. (2018). *Arts leadership: Creating sustainable arts organizations*. New York: Routledge.
- George, B. (2015). *Discover your true north*. Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Greenleaf, R.K. (1977/2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R.K. (1997/1991/2002). *Servant leadership*. Mahwah: Paulist Press.
- Heifetz, R.A. (1997). *Leadership without easy answers*. Cambridge: Harvard Press.
- Heifetz, R. and Linsky, M. (2002/2017). *Leadership on the line*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., and Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Hersey, P.H., Blanchard, K.H., and Johnson, D.E. (2013). *Management of organizational behavior*. 10th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- House, R.J. and Mitchell, R.R. (1974). Path-goal theory of leadership. *Journal of Contemporary Business*, 3, pp. 81–97.
- Kellerman, B. (2012). *The end of leadership*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Lippincott, M.K. (2016). *A study of the perception of the impact of mindfulness on leadership effectiveness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Modell, A.H. (1976). The 'holding environment' and the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis. *Journal of American Psychological Association*, 24, pp. 285–307.
- Northouse, P.G. (2019). *Leadership theory and practice*. 8th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Roth, A., Seiwert, A. and Krutzkamp, A. (2019). Adaptive leadership at the Sacramento Ballet [Interview] (4 January 2019).
- Stabler, D. (2014). *Fort Worth opera to Portland opera on changing to a summer festival: Expect higher costs*. [Online] Available at: www.oregonlive.com/performance/index.ssf/2014/10/portland_opera_can_take_a_less.html [Accessed 28 Sep. 2018].
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., and McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, August, 18, pp. 298–318.