Chapter 12

Co-leading the creative process through collaboration

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Background

Introduction

The aim of this case study is to document the creative process of two artistic leaders during their artistic collaboration. The case study, located in Singapore,\(^1\) shows how the element of collaboration during their artistic process led to a successful relationship for the subjects as both artists and leaders.

Pick (1989) argues that governments support the arts for national glory, as an inducement or reward, as a placebo, in the name of education, in the form of welfare service, compensation, commercial value, and to assert its order and control. In Singapore, the government has been the dominant stakeholder in the development of the arts landscape. In 1988, the then First Deputy Prime Minister, GohChok Tong, announced the setting up of an Advisory Council for Arts and Culture (ACCA). The report produced by the Council in 1989 became a major blueprint that influenced the arts and cultural conditions in Singapore. It aimed to transform Singapore from a cultural desert to a culturally vibrant nation and a global city for the arts (Lim 2009). The strategy’s primary focus was the development of an arts infrastructure in Singapore and recommended the building of performing arts venues, museums and libraries. This includes:

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\(^1\)Singapore has a population of 4.987.6 million people. In 2008, the average household income of the 80th to 90th percentile of earners was S$11 190 and S$20 240 for the top decile (Singapore Department of Statistics 2009). The arts and cultural sector employs over 20 000 people and generates S$6 billion worth of operating receipts (Singapore Cultural Statistics Report 2009). The country is known for its political stability, trade, manufacturing, finance and service industries.
development of buildings such as the Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, the Singapore Art Museum, the Asian Civilization Museum, the Singapore Philatelic Museum and the National Gallery; the establishment of the National Arts Council, the National Heritage Board and the National Library Board; and funding and development for the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and the Lasalle College of the Arts to provide training/courses in both the performing and visual arts at the tertiary level.²

After the 1989 report, the subsequent papers constituted a series known as the Renaissance City Reports. The 1999 Renaissance City Report had a stronger and greater focus on developing the ‘software’ (i.e. the artists) as compared to the 1989 report, which was focused on the development of the ‘hardware’ (i.e. infrastructure). The speedy creation of an infrastructure plan in the early 1990s was a sign of the government’s decision to support the arts and culture in the ways that governments know best (Bereson 2003, p. 5; Frey 2002; Pick 1989).

Twenty years later, Singapore has been transformed into one of the most dynamic cities in the Asia Pacific region. One reason that is used to explain this phenomenon is the proliferation of the various international arts festivals and activities as seen in the Singapore Cultural Statistics Reports over the past couple of years.³

**Setting**

Three lecturers at LASALLE College of the Arts⁴ first met because Theatre Practitioner Elizabeth De Roza (E), Visual Artist Gilles Massot and Choreographer Melissa Quek (M) worked together in the co-delivery of a collaboration class in which the tensions between photography and dance were explored to reveal notions about effort and effortlessness. The three artists were interested in exploring how inter-disciplinary work within an educational setting, could expand the boundaries of performance and performance research. This resulted in a short 15-minute student work that was performed at the College’s Flexible Performance Space in May 2010. The work received comments on the skilful way

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² In 2008, government funding for the arts stand at S$70 per capita and cultural philanthropy showed over S$90 million contributed. It also showed a 70 percent increase in tertiary arts courses over the last 5 years (Singapore Cultural Statistics report 2009, pp. 13, 17).
³ According to the 2009 Singapore Cultural Statistics report, Singapore now has a vibrant arts scene and every day in Singapore there is a choice of over 80 arts and cultural activities that appeal to a diversity of preferences. Today, two out of five Singaporeans would have attended at least one arts or cultural event in the past 12 months. The Singapore Cultural Statistics (2004-2008) showed an increase in the attendance for ticketed performing arts activities. This refers to performing arts events that require a ticket for entry and the attendance of ticketed performance increased from 1,110,300 in 2004 to 1,538,000 in 2008.
⁴ Founded in 1984 by De La Salle educator, Brother Joseph McNally, LASALLE College of the Arts is a specialist tertiary institution leading contemporary arts education in fine art, design, media and performing arts in the Asia Pacific (viewed 10 January 2012, http://www.lasalle.edu.sg/)
in which the various art forms were woven together instead of existing as separate entities. Being inspired by the layers of complexity that were added with the introduction of each additional viewpoint, the artists wanted to explore this further in another collaboration.

Although Gilles Massot was instrumental in some of the key ideas for their next work, he did not see the work to completion. Later on two other key artists were brought in – Brian O’Reilly (musician) and Koo Chia Meng (video artist). Even though these artists were also collaborators, they were not co-leaders of the project, as they were responding to the narrative that E and M had already created. Hence their roles were supportive in nature and therefore, this case study is about how both E and M jointly led the creative and collaborative process. This case study then addresses this question:

*How do dual artistic leaders lead the creative process through the element of collaboration?*

**The co-Artistic leaders**

Here is a brief background of the artist/leaders in this study:

After graduating from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, Melissa Quek performed with the Ad Deum Contemporary Dance Company in Houston, Texas. Melissa also performed Kuik Swee Boon’s *Silence*, at the 8th Asian Arts Festival in Beijing and in the SI Dance Festival in Seoul. In terms of choreography, Melissa has choreographed and produced a number of full-length works including *No Strings Attached*, a 2009 M1 Fringe Festival Commission. Melissa is the Programme Coordinator for the School of Dance at LASALLE and dance reviewer for the *Business Times*.

Elizabeth de Roza, on the other hand, specializes in movement-based performances, drawing from traditional Asian theatrical training/performing methods and contemporary practices. Over the last couple of years, she has been invited to present her solo works and working methodology at four major international Magdalena theatre festivals: Rhode Island USA (2005), Singapore (2006) Santa Clara, Cuba (2008), Transit – Odin, Denmark (2009). She presented a performance installation exhibition, *Un-written* in Belgrade, Serbia in Real Presence 2008 and attended and presented a performance cum lecture, *The KarangGuni Man imagines Utopia* at the 15th Performance Studies International (2009) in Zagreb, Croatia. Elizabeth is currently the Programme Coordinator for the BA (Hons.) Theatre Arts programme at LASALLE, and completed her Masters of Arts (Fine Arts) in 2008.


Approach

The creative work

The creative work was originally entitled Traces, and used the image of a Thumbprint to unpack concepts of identity and personhood. The reading of a thumbprint would reveal everything or nothing about a person and thumbprints are traces of evidence that existed in that time and place. Therefore, although created to be a performance experience, the set from Traces, also stands alone as an interactive installation artwork, which allows the audience to leave their mark on it. Traces is about interacting with the space and uniting with the audience to create a performance experience. The combination of the diverse disciplines makes this work unlike any of the individual works previously created by the artists.

The desired outcomes by the dual artistic leaders (i.e. M and E) were to create:

- a work that blurs the lines between Performance and Visual Art;
- a break in the barrier of audience perceptions about their understanding of contemporary art, as the sensory experience would make the performance both different and more accessible;
- an increased awareness of and appreciation for interdisciplinary performance works; and
- art that is made more accessible to the audience.

Subsequently, the final work was re-titled as RE:guna is Dead because the narrative was developed by E and M into a murder mystery and the audience were suspects to the crime. This then became a play about the death of a fictional person where the murder victim represents the loss of identity, history, etc. Hence the question is raised – who is responsible for this loss? This essentially became the essence of the work.

The substation’s performance call 2010

The Substation is Singapore’s first independent arts centre with a focus on contemporary arts. Established in 1990 by the late KuoPao Kun, it is known for its pioneering and experimental arts programming, and as an incubator for emerging Singaporean artists. Noor Effendy Ibrahim, The Substation’s Artistic Director, says:

5 The information for this section is extracted from the Media Release on 4 August 2010 by The Substation – Performance Open Call 2010 – RE:guna is Dead! by Melissa Quek, Elizabeth de Roza and Gilles Massot.
The Substation needs to acknowledge the artistry and creativity of the emerging artists who apply themselves in the performative arts. Performance Open Call is exactly that platform which we hope will expand the scope of The Substation's support for these artists.

For Performance Open Call 2010, The Substation selected *RE:gina is Dead!* by Melissa Quek and Elizabeth de Rozato to be staged at the Substation Theatre from 17 to 19 September 2010. Effendy further explains that for Performance Open Call:

…”the first work chosen to be presented needs to be one that sets the tone: exciting, thought provoking, interactive, progressive. *RE:gina is Dead!*, livingly, is all that and more.

One of the artists behind *RE:gina is Dead!,* choreographer and dancer, Melissa Quek, explains the show as:

…”a combination of visual art and performance. We hope to break down the barriers between performer and spectator, to tell the audience that it’s alright to think for themselves, and that they can construct meaning based on their own experiences and understanding.

With this project, the artists depart from the conventional audience-performer relationships and explored performance as a holistic sensory experience, making the audience member a participant rather than a viewer. The performance was an interactive journey where audience members learned to sense performance rather than just watch it.

The interactive visual-performative experience was inspired by the television programme *CSI* and games like *Cluedo.* Audience members watching the performance were able to pick up clues to determine the details of the murder, and they were invited to use props such as chalk and clue cards to participate in the performance as it progresses. The performance was executed in episodic moments. A variety of props such as paper, overhead projectors and mirrors were used to recreate scenarios of the murder. The performers/artists moved from scene to scene, from one staged ‘room’ to another, delivering minimal monologues, carrying out physical dialogues through dance movements, and presenting mysterious symbols. By inviting the audience members directly into these scenarios, the performers/artists not only involves the audience in the resolution of a murder mystery, but also provokes them to piece together their own thoughts and feelings towards such novel contemporary performance work. There were three shows that were staged for three evenings from 17-19 September 2010. Each show was about 45 minutes in duration and allowed only 15-20 audience members to attend per show.

**Research methodology**

The documentation of this case is significant because, there is little written on interdisciplinary works that explores content that relates to the history of Singapore. This particular creative work had only received one newspaper review.
and one critical essay written about it.\textsuperscript{6} Besides the content of the work, it was also important to document best practices and evaluate these practices, so that the success may be repeated.

A good case study will gather data from a range of sources (Yin 2003) such as documents, interviews and observations. The use of multiple source of evidence is a key characteristic of a case study, and having a range of data sources and a number of case studies, will allow for triangulation to improve the validity of the data (Hammersley & Atkinson 2006).

The data collection methods for this case study include:

- primary data from semi-structured interviews, and
- secondary data from archival documents.

The data gathering from the dual artistic leaders (i.e. M and E) occurs through a multi-layered process. Individual interviews, as well as a combined interview with the duo, were conducted in December 2011. After the interviews, the author compared the interview findings with archival documents (Edelenbos & Erik-Hans 2006, pp. 437, 439). The data from the archival documents was multi-level and included the following:

- newspaper preview in the *Business Times*;\textsuperscript{7}
- video of performance;\textsuperscript{8}
- publicity information;
- journal notes from the choreographer/performer;
- project proposal to the Substation;
- media/press release of the production; and
- critical essay of the production by Richard Chua.\textsuperscript{9}

After the data had been collected, it was coded and categorized into themes (Tharenou, Donohue & Cooper 2007, p. 83). Then the author analyzed the coded data/themes (Stake 2006, pp. 45, 49), by establishing a chain of evidence and pattern matching (Yin 2003, p. 34). This data analysis technique commonly known

\textsuperscript{6} The essay by Richard Chua may be viewed at www.substation.org/regina-is-dead-artists-intervention-into-the-authoring-of-singapore-an-history.
\textsuperscript{8} Re-gina is Dead! 2010, video recording, Melissa Quek.
as ‘thematic analysis technique’ is widely used in qualitative research (Bryman 2004).

**Challenges**

**Literature**

Challenges for the project to achieve a successful creative outcome are embedded in the natures of both dual leadership and collaboration. Thus reviewing these two fields of literature is directly relevant to developing an understanding of the challenges involved and are considered below.

**Dual leadership**

The characteristics of dual leadership are similar in its definition and description to shared, participative, distributed and co-leadership practices. Shared leadership is when influence such as cultivating motivation, providing direction and support is distributed among team members (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone 2007; Pearce & Manz 2005). According to O’Toole, Galbraith, and Lawler (2003 p. 252, cited in Eckman 2006, p. 90), shared leadership occurred among 25 firms in their study. Nhamo (2009, pp. 475-476) notes that the co-leadership model is a hybrid leadership model, as dual leadership is defined as two leaders in an organization that share executive power and have equal rank. de Voogt (2006, p. 17) says that dual leadership is not just about two people having equal rank in the organization, but the fact that they are brought together to solve a management crisis. Heenan and Bennis (1999, pp. 5-8 cited in Nhamo 2009, p. 475) notes that the dual leadership model provides recognition to both leaders who undertake the real work. This differs from other models whereby the leader is often the only visionary. Heenan and Bennis’s (1999, p. 3 cited in Nhamo 2009, p. 474) view of leader and co-leader are that they are complementary in their skill and expertise. For example, the leader would be the visionary and the co-leader would lead the management and operations of the organization. Pierce (2000, cited in Eckman 2006, p. 91) observes that in the schools system where two principals are needed: one oversees the academic curriculum, while the other manages the school.

Eckman’s (2006, p. 98) findings note that the co-leadership model is a way ‘to provide stability and fill a void’. de Voogt (2006, p. 21) says that the practice of dual leadership whereby two leaders have equal power, is a special case that takes place when the person in charge does not have the full knowledge and skills to do the job required. He adds that the practice of dual leadership imposes a restriction on the power of the original leader. Conflicts naturally surface in any relationship and in Reid’s & Karambayya’s (2009, p. 1073) research, they examine the conflict between the artistic director and the managing director and how their conflict impacts on the organization’s ability to function. Eckman’s (2006, p. 89) findings show though that the application of the co-principal leadership model in schools has led to strong job satisfaction among both leaders.
The application of dual leadership is also seen in other writings: Etzioni (1965, p. 688) attempts to integrate the theory of complex organizations with the Bales Parsons model of small groups; Nhamo (2009) examines the possibility of adopting a co-leadership model to address the issues of Climate Change while de Voogt (2006, p. 19) applies the dual leadership model to two Dutch art museums. Eckman describes some of the challenges faced in the practice of co-leadership noting:

Problems in communicating, defining responsibilities, developing trust, presenting a unified front, and being ‘played against each other’ [by the other stakeholders], endless negotiation and a waste of precious time (2006, p. 102).

In addition, Brickley (1997, p. 2009) found that it was difficult to evaluate the individual performance of dual leaders and provide the right incentives, as reward and recognition is usually given for good individual performance (Nhamo 2009, pp. 475-476). Brickley’s (1997, p. 189) paper also examined the challenges and costs involved when organizations want to separate the titles and responsibilities of its dual leaders. He argues that the costs of separation are larger than the benefits for most large firms. Some of these costs include those related to information, such as having the organization change their succession processes and those incurred by inconsistent decision making when authority is divided among more than one person (Brickley 1997, p. 195).

Collaboration

According to Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000, p. xiii), collaboration ‘involves individuals or groups moving in a situation in which no party has the power to command the behavior of the others’. Collaboration has also been described as ‘the pooling of resources . . . by two or more stakeholders to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually’ (Gray 1985, p. 912, cited in Legler & Reischl 2003, p. 55). Marinez-Moyano (2006) emphasize that collaboration is a process where two or more people or organizations work together to realize shared goals and that most collaboration requires leadership.

Gajda (2004, p. 65-66) found these definitions of collaboration to be ambiguous, because of the difficulty for organizations to put collaboration into practice and evaluate its success. This is despite the fact that it is increasingly considered as the foundation and the means by which outcomes will be achieved. Legler & Reischl (2003, p. 55) explained that:

When resources are scarce, or when mutual problems are too large for any one stakeholder to address independently, the potential for cost sharing or ensuring access to limited resources can motivate stakeholders to collaborate.

Therefore, collaboration is described as an emergent process where stakeholders are interdependent – solutions emerge by dealing constructively with differences, joint ownerships of decisions are involved, and stakeholders assume collective responsibility for future directions (Gray 1985, cited in Legler & Reischl 2003, p. 56). One of Gajda’s (2004, pp. 67-69) research questions was focused on the
level/breath of collaboration that is needed to achieve particular outcomes. This question among others, led to the following principles and description of collaboration:

- Collaboration is imperative and is known by many names;
- Collaboration is a journey not a destination; and
- Collaboration develops in stages and the personal is as important as the procedural.

Black et al’s (2002) paper explores the elements of collaboration, trust and knowledge sharing in the design and implementation of a new information system. They found that as participants become more involved with the project, it led to an increase in collaboration and productivity. Etzioni (1965, p. 688) said that the likelihood of collaboration among leaders would decline if they do not hold organizational positions holding similar levels of ranking and accountabilities to the organization.

Creating common goals is an important step in collaboration and allows for institutionalization of collaboration (Lauber et al. 2011). Sharma and Kearins’s (2011, pp. 168, 180-182) study investigates inter-organizational collaboration and sustainability and found that people start to collaborate with the intention of minimizing costs, but they soon discover that collaboration can be an extremely tense, frustrating and time-consuming process due to diverse expectations and agendas. Other problems with collaboration include distrust of others and lack of commitment to the collaboration due to previous negative collaboration experience. The benefits of collaboration include learning, relationship building, joint problem solving, joint innovation and value creation, efficiency, resource sharing, cost saving, capacity building and survival (Sharma & Kearins 2011, pp. 191, 193).

Legler & Reischl (2003, pp. 61, 64) have said that the elements necessary for successful collaboration are interdependence/resource sharing, diversity, communication, planning/coordination and the right climate. Once these elements exist and are acknowledged, collaborators will become motivated to work towards shared goals (Legler & Reischl 2003, pp. 64-65). Archer and Cameron (2008) list the qualities for successful collaborative leaders as those who:

- have a personal reason for collaborating;
- have the ability to enable their staff to understand complicated situations;
- know how to handle conflict;
- are aware of who they can work with and are fearless and bold in action;
- are able to balance the delivery of outcomes with bonding that is built with the other collaborators;
are able to share recognition and rewards;

- are confident in one’s own leadership style; and

- are able to discuss and work through tough and sensitive issues while building significant partnerships.

In the evaluation of collaborations Legler & Reischl (2003, p. 58) added that:

One way to measure the effectiveness of collaboration would be to measure the amount of activities in which coalitions engage to address their mutual problems.

When disagreements and conflict occurs, individuals may be reluctant to cooperate due to a fear of compromising their values (Bryan 2004). This can be problematic, as studies have shown that many successful collaborative attempts are dependent on a willingness to compromise (Selin & Chavez 1995).

Although Eckman (2006, p. 103) said that the co-leadership is one model that uses ‘a collaborative method to leadership’, the gap in the literature shows that that there is little written that discusses dual leadership models with collaboration to show how dual leaders lead the creative process through collaboration. The concept of dual leaders leading through collaboration is also supported by Nhamo (2009, pp. 474-475) who said that:

*Teams of capable and dedicated leaders and co-leaders working in collaboration are required to get the job done.*

Eckman (2006, pp. 102-103) said:

*By sharing problems and responsibilities and collaborating on decision-making, the co-leaders are no longer the single isolated leader of their organizations. There is always someone to “brainstorm with about same site issues”. The co-[leadership] is one model that utilizes a more distributive and collaborative approach to leadership.*

Thus, the process of analyzing and documenting the practice of dual leadership through collaboration will need further exploration in this case.

The elements of developing trust (Eckman 2006; Sharma & Kearins 2011), shared decision-making (Brickley 1997; Eckman 2006) and the impact of conflict on the leaders’ ability to function (Eckman 2006; Legler & Reischl 2003; Reid & Karambayya 2009) have emerged through the literature as challenges faced in both the dual leadership and collaborative processes. Therefore a question raised with the dual leaders during the interview process includes finding out how trust between them and their collaborators was established, demonstrated, retained and increased. It is also important to understand their decision-making process, how they came to a consensus with their artistic vision, their aesthetical approach and the methodology they used in creating the work. In terms of conflict, questions were framed about if they experienced any conflict while working together and how they handled that conflict. The data collected from the questions shows further details on how the dual leaders cope with these challenges during their collaboration.
Outcomes

The findings show that the elements of collaboration are embedded in the dual leaders creative process. These elements have surfaced through the interviews and review of the various documents described earlier, such as press releases, the video of performance etc. These elements are important as they contribute to the successful collaborative relationship of the dual leaders. In order for the dual leaders to be able to repeat the success of their collaborative relationship, the author has analyzed and defined how the elements appear, take shape and develop.

Shared vision and ownership

Effective vision can be achieved by dual leaders (Reid 2009, p.1096) and this was necessary for effective collaborations. M wanted to work on interactive experiential performance whereby the audience is not passive but engaged and E was interested in the influence of multi-disciplinary and cross disciplinary work as well as the active participation of the audience. The artistic leaders came together because they were interested in exploring similar ideas and concepts. E said:

*It was not a forced collaboration; we really wanted to work together.*

This supports Heenan and Bennis’s (1999, pp. 5–8 cited in Nhamo 2009, p. 475) findings that dual leaders share aspirations and the desire to work together.

As a dancer/choreographer, M could have left the narrative to E but M did not want to be told what to choreograph so she played an equal role in shaping and influencing the narrative. M said:

*There is less ownership if I left the narrative to someone else.*

This brings the collaboration from the peripheral level to a higher and deeper level. It also enabled both artists to have a shared vision which led to their ownership of the shared creative process and outcomes.

Trust and risk

Trust is a necessary element in any collaboration (Bachman & Zaheer2008 cited in Sharma & Kearins 2011, p. 173) and both E and M had already started to build this trust prior to working on this project as they were colleagues at work and their students had worked together before. Therefore, they had the prior opportunity of observing each other’s working styles. E said:

*There was a lot of trust – we were just going to do it. And the trust has increased after working together on this and there will be more future collaborations with each other as this is an interesting way of working.*

The process of collaboration was very much based on risk taking and trust on the part of the leaders. This was achieved through a balance of task oriented vs.
process-oriented collaboration in this case. This is similar to what Etzioni (1965, p. 689) advocated – there are two kinds of leaders in a group: one who is expressive (social, emotional), while the other is instrumental (or task oriented). From the findings on this case, task oriented collaboration was focused on collaborative decisions that had to be made and these collaborative decisions had mainly to do with resources and its allocation (e.g. finances), logistics, and operational issues. M was mainly responsible for these decisions. She was the contact point for the Substation. But even though decisions were operational and administrative, this was still discussed by both of them. Process oriented collaboration on the other hand allowed for experimentation and discussion of the creative ideas and concepts through dialogue (i.e. meetings and rehearsals).

The duo recognized that their collaborative experience has enabled them to increase their trust in each other thereby allowing them to share knowledge and skills. This was a necessary first step because dual leaders need and rely on each other’s skills and knowledge to complement one another (O’Toole, Galbraith & Lawler 2003, p. 254, cited in Eckman 2006, p. 90).

**Shared decisions and roles**

M who was the initiator of the project provided the leadership for the formation of the partnership (Legler & Reischl 2003, p. 57) and convinced the other stakeholders of the need to collaborate. Subsequently, E became an equal collaborator and artistic leader in every sense as decisions made were joint decisions and E had the power to influence the creative outcomes as well. Both of them demonstrated traits of leadership as they were each willing to accept the consequences of decisions and actions (Philips 2009, p. 4, Stogdill 1974, p. 81, cited in Nhamo 2009, p. 469). E said:

> It’s more exciting to share the decision-making process as it’s effective.

Eckman (2006, p. 102) also found that respondents in her research highlighted that the strength of the co-leadership model was the ability to share the decision-making process and outcomes with an equally respected peer. What makes E and M dual leaders is also the willingness to share their roles. E said:

> In terms of artistic and creation, we shared that by defining the parameters of our co-leadership.

Building upon the trust that they already had and the understanding of each other strengths, they were able to share their leadership roles. This meant that where M was allowed to work directly with the musician, E worked with the video artist. M was in charge of the movement/dance while E directed the happenings that took place in some of the rooms (For example she looked into what each room represents, what props are to be in the rooms, what will happen in the rooms, etc.). This sharing of roles approach complemented and completed their working relationship.
Conflict, problem solving and communication

The probability for conflict among dual leaders is higher, as there are two leaders rather than a single leader. E said:

Our conflict was not aggressive. It was due to the different aesthetics and different choices that we wanted but we knew that conflict was necessary for the work that we produced...disagreements were always resolved by talking it through and we were comfortable to do that. Criticisms were not taken personally.

M said:

The way we resolve disagreements was to ask each other to just try it and to go for it because with aesthetics, we can only imagine what is going to happen, but it does not always work that way, so the only way is to try it out and if it doesn’t work, to abandon the idea and not hold it against each other.

Even at the rehearsals, E said:

We spent most of the time talking and it had to be done. This is one of the first few times (working on a piece) that I spent most of the rehearsal time talking.

During the numerous meetings where brainstorming, negotiation, consensus seeking and validity of creative ideas took place, the dual leaders talk and discuss extensively about what is the journey that the audience will take.

M said:

The process of talking (i.e. discussions) was laying the groundwork so that it leads towards the same direction.

The artists were confident of their own rigor and craft and the process of discussions showed that they had to confront similar problems (Turcotte 2000 cited in Sharma and Kearins, 2011, p. 171). Their problems were solved through discussions and improvisation, as they did not want to compromise on the quality of the content. M and E secured the collaborative process through high levels of interaction with each other (Chrislip2002). In their discussions, they identified and defined the issues, generated options, and agreed on the creative criteria before evaluating options and reaching an agreement. Eckman (2006, p. 102)says that good communication skills, similar to those needed in a marriage, are needed for the co-leadership model to work. Their conflict was resolved quite easily, as they were both willing to act as both mentor and student when required (Heenan & Bennis 1999, pp. 64–273 cited in Nhamo 2009, p. 478), and asked each other for input, guidance, and opinions. They understood each other’s role and were interested to listen and embrace each other’s values while working as individuals as well as a team. Eckman (2006, p. 93) comments that:
The personal and professional attributes affect the role dimensions of role conflict and role commitment, which in turn contribute to or affect job satisfaction.

Future: Stakeholders as collaborators

Another element for successful collaboration is having a climate that is supportive of collaboration. M said:

Substation was supportive of the risks that we were taking.

Substation provided the environmental structure and climate that supports collaboration and experimentation (Rubin 2009). This was in addition to Substation being the producer and funder of the work. As the work was dependent on the audience participation and response, the audience became an important stakeholder as they too influenced the outcomes of the work for each show. The artists also indicated that they are serious about taking the audience views into consideration for the re-staging of the work in the future.

The supporting collaborators were also stakeholders. E said:

The integration of video and music was at the peripheral level as it was merely highlighting what was being created.

Therefore, the duo is interested in the future to include other collaborators on the same leadership levels in terms of influence and power. This would change the dynamics of the dual leadership model as they move towards a multiple leadership model, with the inclusion of more leaders.

Conclusion

M and E had a shared understanding about the nature of collaboration and the variations and complexities that surround it (Gajda 2004, p. 68). In addition, they went through the stages of collaborative development from the assembling and forming of their team. They had to go through the storming (discussions/ conflict) and order before moving into the norming and performing stage and finally to the final stage of transforming and adjourning, as described by Gajda (2004, p. 70).

M and E shared their decision-making process, they shared the responsibility, authority, accountability and recognition of the process and outcomes and this did not lead to inconsistency in outcomes as Brickley (1997, p. 195) had found, but rather it heightened the quality of the relationship among the dual leaders and the content of the outcomes.

E said:

Collaboration is the way to work in the 21st century because the work is pushed to another level.

M and E understood the concept and strengths of power sharing and delegation (Heenan & Bennis 1999, pp. 5-8, cited in Nhamo 2009, p.475). And, they were able
to manage their egos and take their bows together (O’Toole, Galbraith & Lawler 2003, p. 259, cited in Eckman 2006, p. 90).

None of the difficulties that could arise through a dual leadership relationship was seemingly present. For example there were no power struggles, no unequal workload, no inconsistent messages, no inconsistent work ethics, no inconsistent decision-making with shared authority (Brickley 1997, p. 218) because their leadership styles were compatible and interactions and communication with each other throughout the process was consistent. This enabled the collaboration process to be mutually beneficial (Legler & Reischl 2003, p. 56).

Finally, M and E’s collaboration led to mutual learning and value creation (Sharma & Kearins 2011, p. 172) as the outcome was an integrated performance. It cannot be defined as a dance performance or a theatre performance. The work has truly exemplified their working style and collaborative efforts and approach, which was shared and integrated at all levels. This requires co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration (Gajda 2004, p. 69). They have managed to move from being single discipline artists to multi-discipline until their final work was inter-disciplinary.

E said:

_The two art forms dance or theatre can’t be identified. You can’t call this a theatre or dance performance as the work had moved beyond one genre to another._

This concurs with the highest level of collaboration known as integration described by Gajda (2004, p. 71) – unification whereby a single structure is formed.\(^\text{10}\)

Even though both artistic leaders started with differing aesthetical backgrounds and experiences, their ingredient for success was their ability to share the same wavelength about their creative work and its outcomes. By constructively dealing with their challenges, they have managed to mesh their contrasting talents to find the same thread and commonality. Given their success, this could be the start of a collaborative relationship that has the potential to become both on-going and highly beneficial to both artists. There are indeed already examples of brilliant artistic partnerships such as the collaboration between Martha Graham and Isamu Noguchi or John Cage and Merce Cunningham, so there is no doubt the process can work to everyone’s advantage.

\(^{10}\) The levels of integration begin with level 1-networking, level 2-co-operating, level 3-partnering, level 4-merging, and finally level 5- Unification (Gajda 2004, p. 71).
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