Think:Act

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Leading thoughts, shaping vision

Think:Act #38 01|2023 ART AND BUSINESS PRICE $19.95

What can business learn from the arts?

How thinking like an artist can open up new ways of seeing – and how that could lead the way to making your business thrive

Culinary creativity
Super chef Ferran Adrià spills the beans

Conducting change
Marin Alsop raises the baton on a new era for music

Roland Berger

Art asks questions.

It reimagines. It reinvents. It disrupts and disturbs. It inspires and invigorates. Art is a powerful engine for change. Behind all great artworks that challenge and inspire the viewer, there is a creative process that draws on four key skills: vision, communication, innovation and performance. These are also the key concerns of business. So we have decided to turn over a whole issue to the arts, to learn from the artists who make – and shake – and break – the rules.

The painter's vision, the actor's performance, the musician's melody: They can all transform how you feel. The endless innovation and creativity of all artists – from chefs and writers to rock stars – serve as a source of inspiration. They all have skills and ways of seeing and doing things that you as a business leader can learn from. This collector's issue of *Think:Act* celebrates the arts. And it shows that they mean serious business.

To capture the spirit of dynamic creativity, we invited Dutch visual artist **JEROEN EROSIE** to help us capture and express the concepts behind this special issue. He came up with the wonderful graphic lettering that will guide you through the sections of the magazine. Erosie has a fresh attitude and innovative process which he has baked into his artistic discipline. He combines graffiti with conceptual art, illustration with graphic design and ideas with action – as you can see in his artistic alphabet which spells out our themes this issue. His style gestures at both the street and the gallery and brings them together, which is why we thought he was perfect in helping to bring the art and business worlds together - and we have embraced his unique visual language for four different covers to celebrate this special edition of **Think Act**.


Art can challenge.
Reveal truth. Open
minds — and hearts.
This issue, we invite
you to learn from
how artists work.
Think art —
to transform
your business.

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COMMUNICATION

"There's nothing I can do beyond my lifetime. I can only put the conditions in place that give it the best chance."

— Jem Finer, PAGE 12

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"There still are many firsts for women in the 21st century where there shouldn't be any longer."

— Marin Alsop,
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ART AND BUSINESS

Think:Act Ideas for Action
Sign up online to download this issue's Ideas for Action with insights on how the arts can provide businesses with inspiration and practical tools to become more creative and adaptable.
rolandberger.com/creativity

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Think *in* numbers

Putting a figure on ... NFTs

(According to a 2021 survey, 66% of people didn't know what an NFT was. Now most of us do – and the numbers around them are mind-boggling.)

$3.22
BILLION
The market cap reached by the Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT collection on December 30, 2021, before hitting a total traded volume of $1 billion on the OpenSea platform the following week.

•

$3.4
MILLION
The sale price of Bored Ape #8817 at Sothebys Metaverse in October 2021, the most expensive Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT sale to date.

•

$25
BILLION
The estimated total spending on NFTs during 2021, a 26,000% increase over 2020's estimated $94.9 million in sales.

•

8.7
MWH
The amount of energy French artist Joanie Lemercier calculated was used for his first NFT sale, the equivalent of two years of energy use in his studio.

SOURCE: HYPEBEAST, REUTERS, WIRED

Rethinking Beethoven

Beethoven: scoring for business

Although he claimed to be "a really poor businessman," the truth is that Beethoven was a sharp entrepreneur with an instinct for innovation as well as fine melodies. He and Taylor Swift might not cross over in their musical tastes, but when it comes to maximizing their IP they would surely be on the same page. Here is how Beethoven scored with some new innovations that were quite ahead of the curve.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NEW MARKETS
Advances in printing in the late 18th century made publishing sheet music practical. At the same time, an explosion of piano sales for the home created demand for more music – and Beethoven was among the first to take advantage of both trends.

BUNDLING
At the time, music publishers purchased music by flat fee rather than royalty. To maximize his value, Beethoven would sometimes group several pieces in a single sale. He once offered his publisher a 70-ducat bundle that included a septet for 20 ducats, a symphony for 20 ducats, a grand sonata for 20 ducats ("This sonata is a first-class piece, my dearest Herr Brother!") and a concerto for 10 ducats. Why all those 20 ducat prices for works of different lengths? "I find that a septet or a symphony has a smaller sale than a sonata, though a symphony ought unquestionably to be worth more," he wrote. As for the concerto, he was letting it go for the low, low price of 10 ducats, because "I do not consider it one of my best."

CROWDSOURCING
Although he usually sold his work to publishers, Beethoven also marketed to individuals, via subscription payable in advance – a variation of Kickstarter.

TIME WINDOWS
Sometimes, Beethoven would perform a work before he let a publisher have it, in order to build interest in the new piece. Other times, he would give a patron a six-month exclusive to play a new piece before he sold to a publisher, an approach not unlike today's staggered releases of hardback and paperback book editions. Or, to thwart piracy, he would arrange publishers in three countries to release a score simultaneously.

CUSTOMER FOCUS
Beethoven wrote a lot of sonatas geared to the growing amateur market. Many sampled tunes people already knew, a choice one musicologist said Beethoven usually made "not based on their structural properties but on their popularity."

MULTICHANNEL MARKETING
As with today's performers, who use recordings to drive concert ticket sales and concert sales to sell recordings, the sheet music helped his concert attendance and concerts pushed sheet music sales. The synergy between publishing and performing made it possible for him to charge three times the normal price for his concert tickets and gave him a revenue stream when his growing deafness made public performances impossible.

PLATFORM BUILDING
In Beethoven's day, the standard piano stretched only five octaves. When a British piano maker sent the star musician a new seven-octave instrument, the precursor of today's 88-key standard, Beethoven made it a win-win for everyone: John Broadwood got publicity for his new instrument, Beethoven, the performer, got a new draw for his concert – a piano with more range than most people had ever heard – and Beethoven, the composer, got a head start supplying pieces that could only be played on the new platform.

SOURCES: THAYER'S LIFE OF BEETHOVEN (WHEELOCK THAYER; PRINCETON 1967); BEETHOVEN AS BILL GATES (JOSE BOWEN; TEDXSMU 2011); BEETHOVEN FORUM 3 (LEWIS LOCKWOOD ED.; NEBRASKA, 1994)

PHOTO: UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES, GETTY

Thoughts *to live by*

"To know what you're going to draw, you have to begin drawing."

— Pablo Picasso

Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist and theater designer

Working **fact** *into fiction*

A maestro for all seasons

Frédéric Chaslin is a conductor, composer, pianist and author. He was born in Paris and educated at the Paris Conservatoire and at the Salzburg Mozarteum. In 1987 he became assistant to Daniel Barenboim at the Orchestre de Paris and the Bayreuth Festival. And in 1989 he became Pierre Boulez's assistant at the Ensemble Intercontemporain. As a published composer he has over 250 works including five operas, chamber music, symphonic music and piano music to his name. He is also an author having written an essay, ***Music in Every Sense*** *and a novel,* ***Being Gustav Mahler****.*

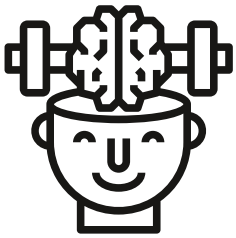
You are a multidisciplinary artist – conductor, composer, writer – what are your tips for switching between disciplines without losing momentum in your other creative areas?
To keep focused on one thing: All my activities are concentrated on music. So, as long as I keep my focus on music, I don't lose momentum. The secret is to divide the day into little portions for each of those activities. Even if I don't have the time to write a symphony, I try to write just a few bars of music – or even just imagine those bars of music in my head.

How do you keep the vision and energy contemporary as times change and those ideas remain rooted in the past?
Every idea from the past has the potential to be translated and transformed into a modern idea. That goes for cinema, literature, music and so on. There is no real "time frame" in the world of mental creativity and creation – it's just fashion and trends that depend on a time period.

In your novel *Being Gustav Mahler*, which meditates on the great composer, you examine the realm of "what could have been," such as what would have happened if Mahler had lived longer, what other brilliant works could he have composed. While your work is fictional, on a practical level, what can organizations do to keep that seed of continuity and retain the founder's vision and energy long after he or she passes on?
It depends if "seed of continuity" means a kind of archive or a thread of creativity. As an archive, keeping the founder's vision just requires keeping the source safe and avoiding too many new "critical versions," which pretend to be more true than the original – as well as avoiding new editions that might be cheap but which are full of mistakes. Now to keep the seed of continuity, from a creative point of view, is what we call the "school of." There was the Early Viennese School (Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, etc.) or the Modern Viennese School (Mahler, Berg, Schönberg, Webern). This is the case when disciples use the seed of the master's vision to continue his or her work but with his or her own personality.

How does conducting music inform your novel writing and vice versa?
Mahler said that reading books was more important than all the years he spent at music school in Vienna. I think so too. You can never be "too cultivated" to be a conductor, because you progress your ideas with words and the more you read, the richer a vocabulary you have. My conducting, on the other hand, has helped me to describe the conductor character Cornelius Franz in my novel better. I could be more accurate about what a conductor is doing from the inside and not just describing him from the outside – meaning from the audience point of view. Often, when actors play or writers write about conductors they make them say or do ridiculous things. I hope that I at least avoided that!

Best practice



How to think like an artist (and be better in business)

THE CREATIVE PROCESS can teach you quite a bit that could inform your business style and productivity. So what are the key lessons? First, making things is messy, but don't be afraid of the mess, because out of it will come something profoundly useful – even if that is how not to do something. Second, don't dismiss the "bad stuff" – build on it. You write good sentences from improving bad ones. Third, ask questions. The key to creating something new and delivering your very best relies on an endless curiosity and a desire to improve and learn. Fourth, protect your time. Guard it jealously. Most artists, from art stars to unknowns with several side jobs, only get to make what they want by ensuring they ring-fence time. Finally, go with the flow. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's book *Flow* set the marker down for this. All people at the top of their game are looking to get flow, where they occupy the area between too hard and too easy, challenging enough to stimulate but not so much as to demoralize. Find the happy medium.

PHOTOS: PR; GRANT FAINT / GETTY IMAGES

Economic impact

Reframing the art world's finances

GLOBAL BUSINESS LOSSES are estimated to have reached $59 billion as a result of Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In the art world, however, the price of the war is still being calculated as artists, museums, galleries and auction houses navigate not only their own political stances, but also the wider impact of Western sanctions. While representing just 4% of the world's billionaires, Russian oligarchs have deep roots in the art world, where accusations of "artwashing" their fortunes are nothing new. Back in 2020, it was uncovered that shell companies had purchased more than $18 million in art for Russian oligarchs even after the March 2014 US sanctions and that seven names connected to Russian interference in the 2016 US election gave $400 million to US art institutions including the MoMA and the Kennedy Center. Following February's invasion, however, London's Royal Academy returned a recent donation from Petr Aven, who had also stepped down as a trustee, and the Centre Pompidou announced that it was suspending a $619,000 donation from the foundation of Vladimir Potanin, who also resigned from the board of the Guggenheim. Among the auction houses, Russian-owned Phillips has faced particular criticism; it responded by donating the full net proceeds of $7.7 million from its March London sales to the Ukrainian Red Cross.

SOURCE: THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, DW, BLOOMBERG, ARTFORUM, BUSINESS INSIDER

ARTWORK BY JEROEN EROSIE


VISION

VISION

Standing the test of time

Art transcends time. And great artists have great vision to achieve that end. Jem Finer's ***Longplayer****, a sound art piece that has been created to play for 1,000 years, meets that condition. Its genesis – and the ambitions to sustain it – have a potent message: don't forget the long view.*

BY ***Farah Nayeri***
PHOTOS BY ***Muir Vidler***

AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER LEA, on London's eastern edges, is a brick edifice built a century and a half ago that is the capital city's only surviving lighthouse. If you take its narrow winding staircase all the way up to the lantern room at the top, you will get sweeping river views – and hear a track that its composer intends to be played for 1,000 years.

Longplayer, a musical art piece for singing bowls composed by Jem Finer, has been playing since the early hours of January 1, 2000 at the lighthouse on Trinity Buoy Wharf in London. It rings, chimes and echoes through speakers connected to a computer; the piece has been playing continuously since the dawn of the millennium. Visitors to the site, which is accessible free of charge, can also walk through a circular display showcasing multiple examples of the singing bowl – an ancient type of standing bell – with which the piece is played.

A LONG VIEW
Jem Finer looks out over London from the Trinity Buoy Wharf lighthouse where his Longplayer piece is installed.

Anyone experiencing *Longplayer* will inevitably launch into a reflection on time – the 22 years that have passed since the piece first started playing, and the 978 more years that its composer would like it to continue. The question that inevitably also arises in the visitor's mind is this: Given the exponential leaps in technology and artificial intelligence, and the prospect of machines replacing humans in the not-too-distant future, will there even be a planet Earth, and humans inhabiting it, in 2999?

THE LONGPLAYER INSTALLATION was commissioned from Finer in the 1990s by Artangel, an organization founded in London in 1985 with the aim of creating site-specific artworks. Its co-directors James Lingwood and Michael Morris were looking to mark the new millennium in some way, so Finer's musical proposal hit the spot. "We hoped that, from the initial concept, it would continue to gather meaning and speak to people in different ways," says Lingwood in an interview. "And I think that's exactly what has happened. It has really become a very important piece of contemporary art – a monumental piece of art, which is essentially a software program." Lingwood says the work is important because it is a reminder of "our own relativity in relation to a longer passage of time," be it biological time, historical time, or geological time. *Longplayer* is "philosophical, musical and poetic," he notes. "And it's monumental in a very self-effacing and modest way."

By the time Finer conceived and composed *Longplayer*, he was already something of a celebrity as one of the founding members of The Pogues, a celtic punk band established in the early 1980s. He was the band's banjo player, as well as playing saxophone and mandolin, and eventually became its lead composer. A subsequent interest in experimental music and the visual arts led him to create his 1,000-year-long musical piece.

Finer recalls that the original spark for *Longplayer* originated in his childhood. His father – the political scientist Samuel Finer, who had a deep interest in astronomy – bought him a telescope and took him to a spot in the countryside to look at the stars. He then told the little boy that what he saw through the telescope was →

ANCIENT ROOTS
Singing bowls serve as the instrumentation behind Finer's self-extending Longplayer composition.

millions of years old. The stars he was gazing at were located millions and even billions of miles away, and the light from them was taking millions and billions of years to reach the earth. "I didn't really understand that conceptually, but it evoked a very vertiginous feeling in me, a confusion of time and space," Finer recalls. "It also fascinated me." His parents continued to take the young boy to see a lot of "very old things" – castles that were centuries old, standing stones that were thousands of years old. "There was always this idea of things being referred to in terms of time [spans] of various lengths, but always much longer than a human lifetime," he recalls.

AFTER STUDYING COMPUTING and sociology at Keele University, Finer moved to London, aged 21, and had flatmates who played in bands and wrote music. He quickly realized that there was no need to be a virtuoso to play instruments, so he started playing in a few punk bands. He then got together with a friend and founded The Pogues. Notwithstanding the band's success and notoriety, Finer was always on the lookout for whatever was next in terms of music, composition and computing. He

> **"We hoped that it would continue to gather meaning and speak to people in different ways.**
>
> James Lingwood,
> Co-director of Artangel

became more and more drawn to experimental and contemporary classical music, then got his first computer – an Atari – and started composing with it. He realized that he could plug a synthesizer or a drum machine into the Atari and write programs and algorithms that would tell the device what to play.

Through his partner (who later became his wife), the artist Marcia Farquhar, he got to know the world of visual arts and began experimenting with a mix of sound and art. *Longplayer* is the fruit of that experiment. "I started to think that maybe there was a way I could make something that would plug my mind into these expanses of time – way, way beyond a human lifetime," he says.

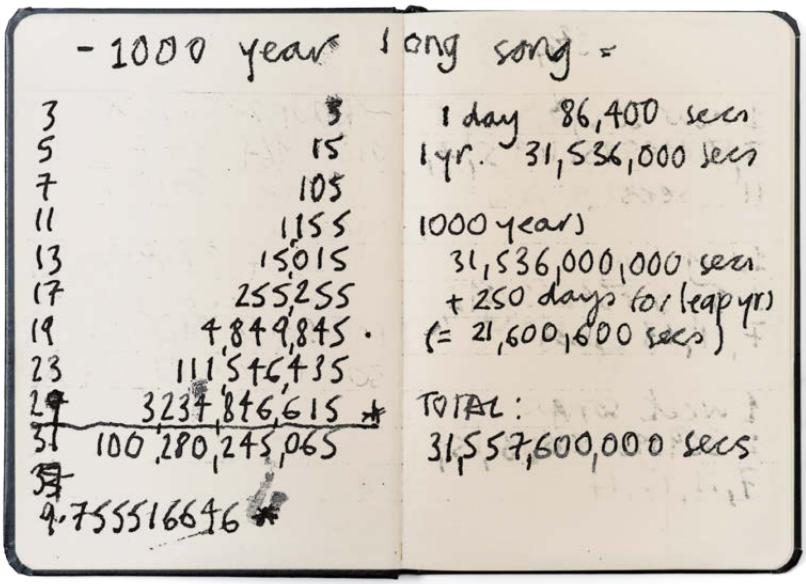
TIME WAS VERY MUCH part of the media and public conversation in the 1990s because the year 2000 and the new millennium were around the corner. Finer had always anticipated the year 2000 to be a moment of science fiction: a new, modern and super-technical utopia. But everybody else was "talking about having a big celebration for a few days. Nothing seemed to really look beyond the year 2000." He also realized that the figure of 2000 was "totally arbitrary anyway," because it wasn't the year 2000 for everyone, and the only reason that human beings fixated on multiples of 10 was because they had 10 fingers on their hands.

He decided to embark on an experiment to somehow create 1,000 years himself. He knew how to make pieces of music and could make them to any specified length. He suddenly had an idea: If he took little loops of music of different lengths, and started them at the same time, and chose the lengths very carefully, he could make the piece last a very, very long time until they all get back to where they started together – 1,000 years, in fact.

That, in a nutshell, is *Longplayer*: a piece of music in which six sections from six short pieces of music are played simultaneously, with a computer algorithm ensuring that no combination is ever played more than once within the 1,000-year time span. "Calling it music might be stretching a point – the clock-like sounds have no conventional harmony or melody, no discernible rhythm pattern," *The Guardian* noted when the piece first appeared in 2000, but added that "it marks time like a sonic Stonehenge ... There's no real rush to catch it, it will outlive you, but listening to it in that lighthouse somehow makes you a part of its determined beam of sound."

6 PIECES

As a composition, *Longplayer* results from precise rules applied to six short pieces of music. Six sections from these pieces – one from each – play simultaneously at all times. *Longplayer* combines these sections in such a way that no combination is repeated.



PLANNING AHEAD ***Finer's notebook shows the process with which he worked out how Longplayer could function for its 1,000-year lifespan.***

THE LIGHTHOUSE IS NOT THE ONLY PLACE where the piece can be heard. You can hear it online by going to http://longplayer.org. It has been performed simultaneously at listening posts in Brisbane, Alexandria and San Francisco. It was performed live for the first time ever at the Roundhouse in London in September 2009. Other live ensembles have played it since.

The big question is whether *Longplayer* will actually be played continuously for the next 978 years. A charitable trust is working hard to ensure its longevity through fundraising, which can be a challenge. "It's much easier to raise money for short things, but it's quite hard to go to people for money for keeping something going for what seems like forever," Finer admits. The trust has come up with a catchy marketing campaign. Given that the project costs $120 a day to run, members of the public can "buy time" by giving $120, or multiples of it, and keep *Longplayer* going. As Finer himself acknowledges, "there's nothing I can do beyond my lifetime" to guarantee *Longplayer*'s long-term viability. "I can only put the conditions in place that give it the best chance."

It will be up to successive generations to take on the legacy and the responsibility of it, says Artangel's Lingwood. They will be its custodians and will determine whether and how it will continue. At some point, the technologies used in it will become obsolete, so a decision will have to be made "as to how it should work best and most effectively continue to resonate in the future," says Lingwood. "We're optimistic," he adds, "that it will continue for a considerable period of time." ■

The art of ethical practice

Navigating the new terrain presented by sustainable working practices is a challenge, no matter your field. Luckily, some artists are leading the way and proving that protecting the environment can also serve to protect your business.

BY ***Farah Nayeri***

A TANGIBLE MESSAGE
In 2014, artist Olafur Eliasson sourced Arctic ice blocks to make a statement about climate change.

ARTISTS HAVE BEEN POLLUTERS of one kind or another since the beginning of time. With complete impunity, they have released their materials, tools, pigments and chemicals into the environment. In recent decades, some artists have been emitting CO_2 on an industrial scale, operating out of factory-sized studios and mass-producing works that are then shipped around the globe, sold by galleries, auction houses or at fairs and exhibited by museums in an ecosystem with disastrous environmental effects.

Today, those centuries of impunity are fast receding. Climate change has become not just a global emergency, but also a priority for a number of participants in the art world – artists foremost among them. Not only are they feeling the pressure to pollute less in the course of their daily practices, they are actually making art that is about nature. In some cases, nature is the art.

BUSINESSES BOTH LARGE AND SMALL may view art as a remote activity that is wholly disconnected from their everyday concerns. Yet some artists are showing the way when it comes to sustainability – and sustainability is a mission that no company in the 21st century can afford to ignore. More than 5,200 businesses have signed the United Nations' Race to Zero pledge to help cut global warming down to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest. A ranking of the world's 50 most sustainable companies, as compiled by The Corporate Knights, includes mammoth enterprises such as Apple, Samsung and Alstom.

Some artists are embedding environmental practice into the methodology of their work and their example could become part of a trend for all producers, makers and businesses. "We are going from being guided by the past to being guided by the future," notes the celebrated Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. "We need to create a future narrative that simply is better than the one we had yesterday. This is one that culture and artists can contribute to."

Studio Olafur Eliasson, the artist's sprawling atelier in Berlin, is an interesting case study – and one that can have lessons in it for business. Established in 1995, the studio produces art using methods and processes that strive to be respectful of the environment. Eliasson's art itself frequently incorporates nature and the elements. In 2003, he famously replicated the sun in *The Weather* ⟶

Project, a massive installation in Tate Modern's cavernous Turbine Hall that drew more than 2 million people to bask in its glow. In 2015, as the COP 21 United Nations Climate Change Conference got underway in Paris, he exhibited a dozen blocks of ice from the glaciers of Greenland on the Place du Panthéon; a visual metaphor for global warming, they melted before the eyes of spectators. Smaller-scale works included *Moss Wall* (1994), a bed of real lichen woven into a wire mesh and hung on gallery walls. Another popular early work was *Beauty* (1993), a miniature fountain placed in a dark room and illuminated at intervals by a sudden spotlight that highlighted the water droplets and the rainbows they formed.

Some 90 people work at Eliasson's bustling Berlin studio, a four-story brick building that used to house a brewery and a chocolate factory. At meal times, they congregate in the studio kitchen, where organic and vegetarian food is prepared on site. Homemade bread, soups, dips, salads and the other dishes served are all made with ingredients sourced within 10 miles of Berlin. The kitchen has its own cookbook, too.

ELIASSON SAYS HE STARTED WORKING with natural elements as a young artist in the early 1990s because he, like others of his generation, was fascinated by conceptual and avant-garde art and "very much into dematerializing and decontextualizing the art object." He continues: "This dialogue with nature was always there in the materials, but I have to admit that it took me a while to become sensitive to environmental questions."

Eliasson recalls that as a child, he split his time between Iceland, where he lived close to nature, and Denmark, where his living arrangements were more domestic and constructed. "I long thought of the two as separate realms, with nature on one side and culture on the other," he recalls. Later, he says, he then realized that "culture and nature are inseparable: in fact, they always were," and began revisiting the widespread Scandinavian notion "that we humans were exceptional – above nature, in a role of power, using and shaping earth and animals and resources to our own ends." He became interested in ecological debates led by activists, scientists and philosophers who, he notes, were thinking about these themes long before artists ever were.

Today, "we have to work through the fact that we're a little less exceptional than we thought. We must make space for others," says Eliasson. He acknowledges that the art and museum world is definitely keen to make change, but that sustainability is "very much new terrain" for people working within it. So, Eliasson explains, he has to play something of an activist role by adding a clause in his contracts to make sure that exhibiting institutions will behave sustainably and urge them to publicly endorse climate goals.

THERE'S A LOT OF INERTIA from doing things as they have always been done," he says. "It is necessary to constantly evaluate how we are operating and what can be done differently." One recent example of Studio Olafur Eliasson doing things differently was the 2020 exhibition *Sometimes the river is the bridge* held at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. To keep the carbon footprint down, no flights were used to transport the artworks to Japan. They were

Linking art and nature

OLAFUR ELIASSON

In addition to his studio practice, Eliasson founded the Little Sun solar energy initiative in 2012. He was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for renewable energy and climate action by the United Nations Development Programme in 2019.

THE SERPENTINE GALLERIES

The Serpentine began it's *Back to Earth* series curated by Rebecca Lewin in 2019. The ongoing series will investigate artistic responses to the climate emergency.

PHOTOS: STEFFEN JÄNICKE; 2017 STEPHANIE SIAN SMITH

> We need to create a future narrative that simply is better than the one we had yesterday.
>
> Olafur Eliasson,
> Artist

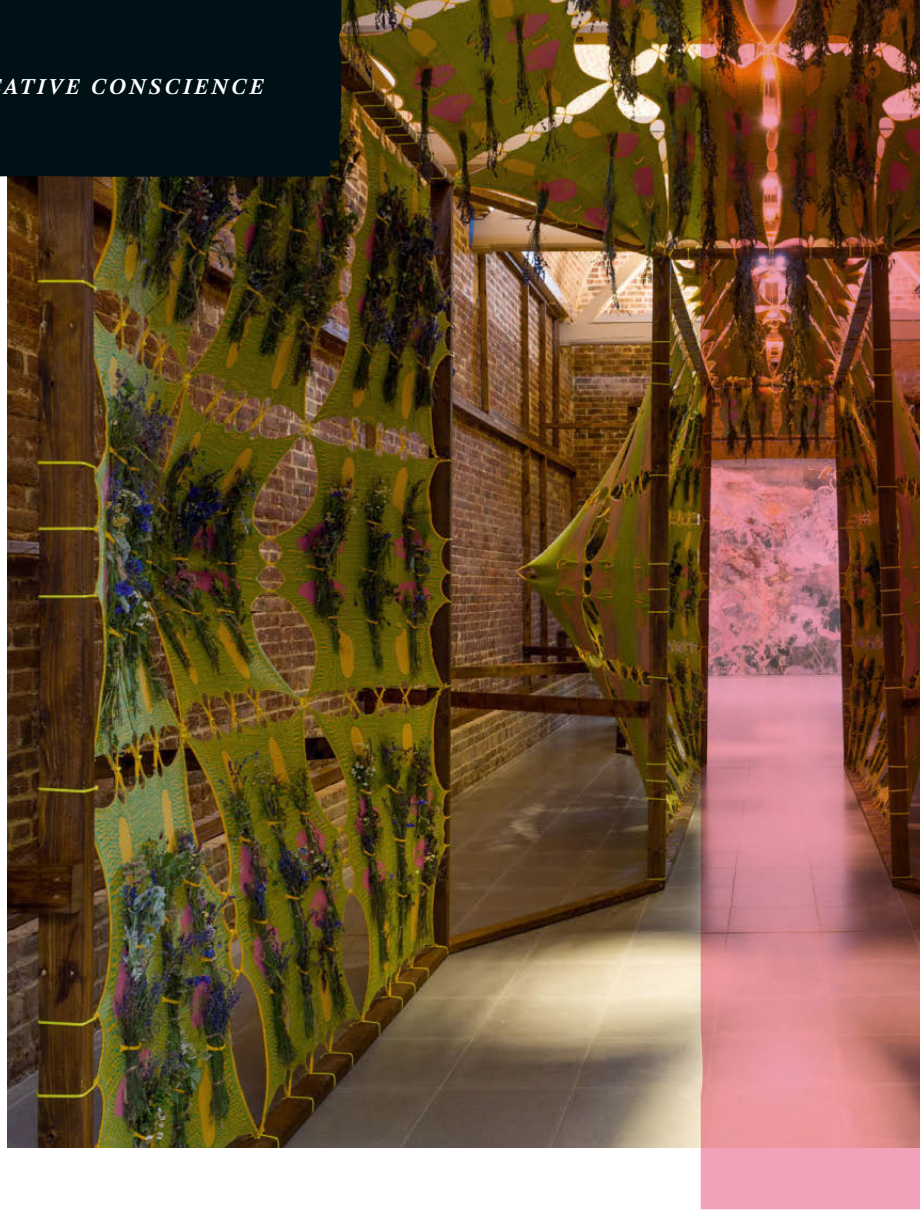
trucked from Berlin to Hamburg, then loaded on the Trans-Siberian Railway, where they were transported via Poland and Russia to the port of Taicang in China. There, they were loaded on a ship to Japan. "There were complications with our plans, and we had many long conversations with insurance companies to convince them to accept this combination of transport methods," Eliasson recalls. "One of the greatest challenges is simply taking the time to find the best alternatives and get the right information."

That same year, an internal study by the studio showed that the vast bulk of its carbon emissions were linked to moving people, artworks and art materials across the world. By April 2022, the head of design, Sebastian Behmann, was announcing to the world that the studio was aiming to become carbon neutral in the next decade. All of its contracts would now have a no-fly rule and ships would only be used as a last resort. Art would be transported by train and exhibitions would be installed via video conferencing, eliminating the need for teams of people to be flown around.

***MELTING AWAY** Eliasson's Ice Watch installation was executed in London as a circle of 24 Arctic ice blocks outside of the Tate Modern.*

BEHMANN EXPLAINED THAT EVEN WORKS such as the ice blocks shown during COP 21 in Paris had a heavy footprint – 30 tons of CO_2 equivalent – because they were shipped over in refrigerated containers and trucked to Paris. The studio now aims to gradually stop using emissions-heavy materials such as steel, which weighs a lot and requires transportation by ship as a result; and to find environmentally friendly crates and containers (for art packaging) that would not decompose in weeks, as current varieties of sustainable packaging do.

Eliasson may have had something to do with the fact that when his retrospective opened →



at Tate Modern in July 2019, the museum took the opportunity to proclaim a climate emergency and pledge to reduce its carbon footprint by at least 10% by 2023. This message was conveyed in dramatic fashion: A woman on horseback wearing a living grass coat rode into the Turbine Hall, leading a procession of artists, to mark the launch of the Culture Declares Emergency climate awareness initiative. "Maintaining large public buildings for millions of visitors, protecting the national heritage and shipping artworks around the world presents us at Tate with enormous challenges in terms of sustainability and we can't meet those challenges on our own," Tate Modern Director Frances Morris said days later, introducing a climate panel with speakers including Eliasson.

ANOTHER GLOBALLY WATCHED London institution has been doing its own thinking on climate. In 2018, the Serpentine Galleries started a long-term project called *General Ecology* to incorporate environmentalism in its everyday operations. The project is led by curator Lucia Pietroiusti, who is also overseeing the *Back to Earth* exhibition series of artist reactions to the climate emergency [see box p. 21]. *Back to Earth* curator Rebecca Lewin says the Serpentine Galleries had spent the past couple of years measuring their carbon footprint with help from Julie's Bicycle, a UK-based organization that works with cultural institutions. Without the report, "we wouldn't be able to begin to improve the process," she says.

When putting on exhibitions, the Serpentine's biggest emissions were from shipping, printing, construction materials and the post-exhibition waste generated by those materials, even though they were subsequently recycled. "What we hadn't done so much of was incorporating materials from one exhibition build into another," she says. For the *Back to Earth* series, all installation materials have been recycled from two previous exhibitions, international shipping has been avoided almost completely and the production has mainly taken place on site or in London.

The methods and processes described above may or may not be workable for businesses to adopt. How can a company operating in more than one country avoid air travel altogether and move its teams and products by train alone – and that too in a globalized world where consumers demand instant results and shareholders demand instant profits? How can all aspects of a business

RECLAIMING ART ***Artists Tabita Rezaire and Yussef Agbo-Ola in the Back to Earth exhibition series at the Serpentine North in London are working with recycled materials.***

> **“What we hadn't done was incorporating materials from one exhibition into another.**
>
> Rebecca Lewin,
> Curator of the *Back to Earth* exhibitions

PHOTOS: READREADS.INFO COURTESY SERPENTINE; STEVE TANNER; COURTESY: EDEN PROJECT

conceivably be conducted virtually? And how can plastic and steel be eliminated entirely? It all seems an impossible task.

AND YET SOME PRACTICES ARE WORTH considering and even adopting in a corporate environment, because as time goes by, the pressure to hit sustainability goals on a global level will only become more and more intense. There will come a time, in other words, when businesses will have no choice but to make some considerable changes – and that means that the sooner they act, the better. "Change on a larger scale will be dependent on more people being prepared to ask difficult questions and put in the time necessary to find better outcomes," says Eliasson. "This is what we need to do for a long time to come." ■

FARAH NAYERI is the author of *Takedown: Art and Power in the Digital Age* (2022) and a journalist based in London. She also hosts the CultureBlast podcast. She writes for *The New York Times* and was previously a *Bloomberg* correspondent in London, Paris and Rome.

Fertile ground for discussion

Artist Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg is putting the needs of pollinating insects above human tastes with an aim to change how we view our interdependency with nature.

ONE OF THE ARTISTS involved in the Serpentine Galleries' *Back to Earth* exhibition is Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg. Her work titled *Pollinator Pathmaker* uses technology to raise awareness of how the population of the planet's pollinators — bees, flies, beetles, wasps, moths, butterflies — is declining. Ginsberg and her team engage in planting that is designed by algorithm to appeal to pollinators' tastes, not human tastes.

Ginsberg is intervening in Hyde Park, near the Serpentine Gallery, and planting 4,471 plants that will bloom in early summer and help offset the diminishing population of pollinators in London and beyond. Her Hyde Park intervention — which will be on display for two years — is the third edition of *Pollinator Pathmaker*. The other two were installed at the Eden Project in Cornwall, England, and at the Light Art Space in Berlin.

Meanwhile, the Serpentine is urging communities, schools and visitors to adopt this method, to opt for plants that are "empathetic" to pollinating insects and play their part in combating their depopulation. Ginsberg says her art involves getting humans to design for nature, "but in a way that's not to benefit ourselves." She continues: "How do we put ourselves in the position of the organisms that we rely on? Can we use technology for their benefit, not for our own? It's all about perspectival shifting. The pollinators are the audience of the artwork, humans just the caretakers and the technology becomes a way to buffer us humans from our own choices."

A NATURAL CHOICE *Ginsberg stands with her Pollinator Pathmaker artwork at the Eden Project in Cornwall, UK.*

VISION

Word of eye – how street art went global

Banksy's birthplace, Bristol, is also the home of street art. Innovative murals and the anonymous artists who make them have managed to grab global attention by granting free access to their work and holding on to their authenticity. Their success offers a few lessons in branding and marketing success – and how to use social media to get your message across.

BY **Melissa Chemam**

PHOTO: MARCO BERTORELLO / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

***SHINING A LIGHT** Banksy's mural of a migrant child in a life jacket with a flare popped up after an exceptional high tide in Venice in 2019.*

STREET ART EFFECT

BRISTOL, MAY 2022: Europe's largest street art festival, Upfest, has invaded the streets of the formerly run-down, but now up-and-coming, area of Bedminster. It's the first full-on fest since Covid-19 and it's been hotly anticipated. More than 20,000 people came to see the latest murals and artworks created by hundreds of artists from all over Europe: Spanish artist Sabek, Britain's Squirl, Goin, Aches and local heroes FLX and HazardOne, billed as one of *The Guardian*'s top 5 female graffiti artists. Upfest was founded in 2008, originally conceived "to get a group of 20 like-minded artists together for a day of painting" in Bristol. Yet the first festival event immediately attracted 50 street artists – and soon enough, an international reputation.

Bristol has been a hotbed for graffiti over the past 40 years, as well as one of the leading-edge cities of this global movement from the early 1980s. It is the birthplace in the UK of pioneering artists, including 3D, Robert Del Naja's moniker, the first artist to define this movement in Bristol and a founding member of international hit band Massive Attack. It's home to Banksy too, who picked up a spray can ten years later and who cited 3D as his first inspiration. He is now indisputably the most famous street artist in history – and few people know who he is.

DESPITE BANKSY'S ANONYMITY, street art was "always a very social process." That's what Del Naja told me when I met him to write a book about Bristol's counter-culture a few years ago. "You painted it in a public space, or a warehouse, people experienced it in groups and it was shared socially by people photographing it and sharing further, with people going to spots to find the graffiti. Way before social media." Street art was created for public spaces, for free, to offer subversive messages to replace advertising. That's what made it a success over the years. A success that has arguably surpassed almost every other form of visual culture in the 21st century.

> **We live in a world of logos and commercial brands, so artists unsurprisingly started using them, then subverting them – first Warhol, then street artists.**
>
> Chris Chalkley,
> Founder of the People's Republic of Stokes Croft

This form of urban art as we know it today emerged from the mid-'70s in New York, Paris, London, Bristol, some parts of Birmingham, Amsterdam and Berlin. Some of the originators, from Lady Pink to Futura 2000, SAMO (aka Jean-Michel Basquiat) to JonOne, soon became the mouthpieces or spray can scribes for social and political messages. Then, in the early 1980s, the movement got linked to hip-hop culture and then associated with rap music collectives. This way, as 3D told me: "two of the most iconic art movements of the end of the 20th century were born."

3D, like his comrades Goldie, Inkie, Bio and Brim from New York's Bronx were inspired by Futura 2000, Basquiat and also Andy Warhol. So were their

PHOTO: LEON NEAL / GETTY IMAGES

A NEW KIND OF ART STAR
Epitomizing Banksy's particular brand of political humor, this mural in Dover, UK, first appeared in 2017.

followers: Shepard Fairey in Los Angeles (aka Obey Giant); and from the mid-'90s in Bristol, Inkie, Felix Braun (known as FLX), Nick Walker and Banksy himself.

Their common desire was to leave a mark, not only on the streets, but also in people's minds. The messages were very much anti-establishment, against the social order and policing – and anti-consumerist, too. It was to counter what they saw as the constant bombardment of messages telling people how to behave, what to buy and how to think. Their strength was referencing other artworks, using humorous messages, quotes and texts as well as borrowing symbols and logos.

It was, in a way, already looking to a horizon that lay beyond the 20th century and pushing into the 21st. "We live in a world of logos and commercial brands, so artists unsurprisingly started using them, then subverting them – first Warhol, then street artists," says Chris Chalkley, the founder of the People's Republic of Stokes Croft in Bristol – or PRSC – an organization promoting civil liberty with a particular focus on public space, using street art as an agent for change in the city. The work of the PRSC in Bristol has been cited by many as transforming the neighborhood into "a hub of confident and creative dissent."

WHILE GRAFFITI ART IS ILLEGAL, it has nevertheless gained respectability and immense popularity. So much so that now activists and commercial brands want to use its viral efficiency. "Street art is free, playful, provocative, sometimes even disruptive," says Chalkley. "That's why it talks to people."

Nick Walker, who is now known all over the world for his art and persona, The Vandal, tells how it started. "Personally, it was applying my work on the street; the city is the ultimate canvas. It was – still is – about finding that spot on a mad busy area and getting a piece up so the world sees it the next morning. That's the ego trip kicking in. Some people liked it. Some hated it. Ultimately we didn't give a f**k. It's always good if you have a blunt message or simply having a laugh – either way it's just about putting your thoughts out there." He created his alter ego in the same way comic book artists for Marvel created their superheroes. "The Vandal is this entity that would do the outlandish things that I couldn't achieve in my own realm."

When they started in Bristol, Nick Walker, Inkie and Banksy were quite close, all inspired by 3D. Banksy – who never gives interviews – chose to move to London in 1999 with his friend →

Behind the Bristol scene

3D and The Wild Bunch

Robert Del Naja, known as 3D, was also a member of The Wild Bunch, a collective of musicians and DJs that mixed elements of hip-hop, punk, R&B and reggae from 1982 until 1989. Their unique sound is credited with developing the trip-hop style.

Inkie and Banksy

Inkie began working as part of the Crime Incorporated Crew (CIC) in 1983. Inkie later organized Walls on Fire with Banksy, a legal event in 1998 that showcased Bristol's street art scene and served as a precursor to Upfest.

Steve Lazarides, who became a sort of manager for him. And Banksy thrived on his recipe: simple but provocative messages, the use of stencils for efficiency and speed. But also, the trademark and the power of maintaining absolute anonymity. "This came as Lazarides' genius strategy," says street artist Inkie. "Steve found the right marketing tools for Banksy and we were all amazed and overrun by the scale of all this. Once his anonymous ethos got spread in the press, it wasn't possible to go backwards on his identity. But the myth according to which he's a collective is not real. He is one man, not a collective, and he's a very talented artist. 3D and I know him and I am proud of him."

WITH BANKSY'S LEVEL of popularity and the mystery around his identity – plus the surprise element of his work suddenly appearing often with some media flurry around it – the success of street art was consolidated. This, from the early 2000s, coincided with the rise of the internet and the coming of social media. They provided new platforms for a real artistic explosion, resulting in an unprecedented interest in this contemporary form of art from the public away from the elitism of art galleries. Nicolas Laugero, collector of street art and art market specialist, explains: "Social media as we know it emerged at the same time as the emergence of the market for urban arts. 2005 was a turning point, when the sales boomed, art dealers for graffiti, auction houses, etc."

For Nick Walker, who has 26,000 followers on Instagram, the speed and immediacy of media content and the way everything is shared now is "insane." He continues: "Instagram has been an important tool in spreading the work wide and far. The second I finish a painting someone across the other side of the planet will be able to see it instantly." Indeed, artists have created new audiences for themselves very quickly. Banksy now has 11.1 million followers on Instagram, and only 127 posts. With

The writing on the wall

Humans have been painting on walls for millennia, but it's in the middle of the 20th century that graffiti art emerged before evolving into what we now call street art.

1930s

Paris-based photographer Brassaï begins documenting art written on walls with his extensive series *Graffiti*.

1970s

Graffiti writers start illegally tagging New York City's subway and streets, notably Lady Pink, Daze, Lee Quinones and Futura 2000.

1978-80

Jean-Michel Basquiat writes in the streets of New York City under the tag SAMO.

1981

French artist Blek Le Rat begins painting stencils on the walls of Paris.

PHOTOS: SEBASTIEN MICKE / PARIS MATCH VIA GETTY IMAGES (ABOVE)

OBEYING NO ONE
American artist Shepard Fairey built his name as Obey Giant before finding fame for his Obama 2008 campaign posters.

both provocation and purpose, each of these artists created a name for themselves and soon a "brand," not just to sell products – prints, posters or t-shirts – but to share ideals. Their strength in the eyes of the public remains authenticity and personal ethics.

Their work managed to utilize the virality of memes and social media, to travel across continents and create a global conversation – and a new art market. Some of them, like Obey, Banksy, JR, C215, Inkie, Vhils, INTI and Dran are more known to the youth of today than any of the contemporary artists that are exhibited in national institutions and museums. They have managed to have tremendous impact on their audiences simply through "word of eye."

YET URBAN ARTISTS' PIECES are now among the most expensive in the world – Banksy's *Love is in the Bin* sold at auction for $25.4 million in October 2021. Nick Walker admits to having created an artist's brand. "Yes, I did – though pretty unintentionally. Once you gain notoriety, your name becomes branded and people follow that name as a brand. Nowadays some artists' works have become commodities at auction." Laugero explains that one example of excellent branding is Obey's work for the 2008 Obama campaign. "Such an image was shared all around the world, millions of times. Street art become contagious, viral." Simplicity, speed and virality combined.

For *The Street Art Manual* author Bill Posters, who creates digital art and deep fakes under the name Brandalism, street art still allows the maker to interrogate persuasion, power and identity. He subverts advertising spaces to draw attention to the negative impacts of consumer waste and fast fashion, for instance, and turned his social criticism into a brand to use social media, urban art and online messages to achieve virality, while still remaining radical. The best illustration: his Brandalism logo, using a "detournement" or hijacking of other ultra-famous logos, such as Disney and McDonald's.

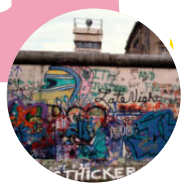
Street art created a strong branding for itself almost by accident. While the publicity strategy might not have been intentional, getting the message out there was. The secret ingredients for its success have been creating a sense of intrigue along with the key elements of free access, authenticity, provocation and purpose. And those elements have proved more efficient than anything else in building a global brand and developing a devoted international audience. Marketing gurus might not need to pick up a spray can, but they could do worse than take note. ■

VISION

1983
3D paints his first mural in Bristol, England, *Graffiti Style*, kick-starting one of the most prolific graffiti scenes in Europe.

1984
American photojournalist Martha Cooper and Henry Chalfant's book *Subway Art*, documenting New York's graffiti scene, is published.

1985
3D is at the center of the first graffiti exhibition in Europe at the Arnolfini international art center in Bristol.



Mid-1980s
The western side of the Berlin Wall becomes a canvas for street art.

1986-87
Graffiti scenes emerge all over Europe: London, Birmingham, Paris, Amsterdam.

1998
Banksy paints his first noted murals with Inkie at Glastonbury Festival, then settles in East London.

2006
Banksy's major exhibition in Los Angeles sees film stars start buying expensive pieces of his art, changing the financial game for urban artists.

2011
Street art is used in Tunis during the revolution. The art has become global, used in the rest of the Arab world as well as in Latin America.

2021
Banksy's *Love is in the Bin* sells for $25.4 million at Sotheby's Contemporary Art.

ROSE HARTMANN / GETTY IMAGES; TOM STODDART / GETTY IMAGES

ARTWORK BY JEROEN EROSIE


COMMUNICATION

The Beatles business school

They made music together for less than a decade. But in that stunningly brief time, the Beatles broke records and defined an era. They created a cultural landscape and achieved unparalleled global success which persists 60 years later. It's not all about the music though. Their story provides valuable lessons for business leaders too.

BY ***Mark Espiner***

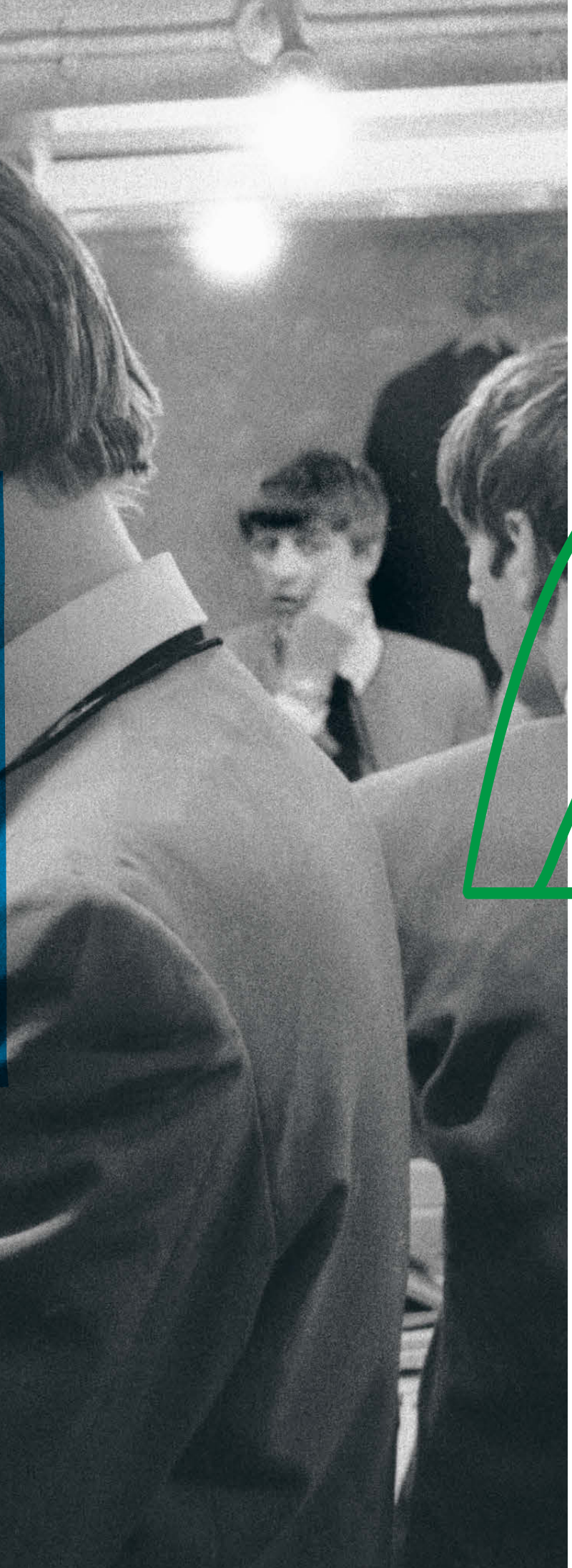


PHOTO: PHILIP JAMES GRIFFITHS / MAGNUM PHOTOS / AGENTUR FOCUS

One, two, three, FOUR!

"WHEN JOHN AND I WERE KIDS in our early twenties," Paul McCartney confides to me, in a long and winding conversation about how the Beatles created their distinctive music, "we heard that the pharaohs of ancient Egypt had scribes to write things down." He becomes very animated at the memory. "We thought: We'd be pharaohs!" he says in a triumphant voice, explaining that he had never wanted to learn how to write the notes down and emphasizing instead how the most successful band of the 20th century made music by collaborating and creating together, without the need for the academic process of scoring and notation.

It was a recipe that worked. In their eight short years recording together, Lennon and McCartney wrote close to 300 songs, produced 13 multimillion-selling albums and scored 20 number one hits. Until recently, however, there has been no real window on their creative process, no revelations of the secrets of their success besides the flawed 1970 documentary film *Let It Be*. It was an early example of a "fly-on-the-wall" exposé and when it was released in 1970, after the band had broken up, it seemed to show the breakdown of communication between the four musicians. That was the received wisdom. The truth is a little different.

When Oscar-winning *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson was asked to make a new film and was given access to the original film footage tracking 21 days in January 1969, another story started to emerge. As he trawled through the 60 hours of filmed material, instead of finding angry disaffected bandmates arguing with each other, he saw joyful creativity, dynamic music making, ambition, risk-taking, vision and determination. The result was *Get Back*, a three-part miniseries – a stunning document that casts light on how they worked.

The eight or so years the Beatles spent at the top of charts – and the decades of success that followed – provide a legacy full of lessons. Business leaders should also take note. From their first tentative recordings to the final court case to conclude their split, there is plentiful evidence of a group at the top of their game. Here we look at what a world-class team does to overcome obstacles and instinctively focus to ensure success. In short, the Beatles story offers us a lesson in management style, productivity and innovation. →

Get back to where you once belonged ...

(and don't forget why you're doing it)

AS THE TECHNICIANS set up the drum kit and load in the speakers on January 3, 1969 at Twickenham Film Studios, where the band are being filmed in rehearsal for the *Let It Be* film project, guitarist George Harrison looks on and says they could set up a stage and an amplification system just like they had in the Top 10 Club in Hamburg. It's a throwaway line, but it taps into the deep roots of the band. Because Hamburg was where the band forged their sound and skills.

As John Lennon put it, before they went to Hamburg they played hour-long shows, but in Germany they were on stage sometimes for eight hours. "We got better and got more confidence. We couldn't help it with all the experience playing all night long," Lennon said. Malcolm Gladwell's bestselling book *Outliers* cites the Beatles' Hamburg days as going some way to providing the band with the crucial 10,000 hours of practice to hone their craft to perfection. The Beatles went to Hamburg five times between 1960 and 1962. On their first tour of duty they played a staggering 106 nights for five or more hours per night.

George's wish to recreate the feel of those Hamburg days by rebuilding the stage says something about wanting to get back to the band's roots. And his isn't the only expression of that same desire. Throughout the days of playing and recording, the band constantly circle back to the songs that they played in their Hamburg days, with tunes from the old rock'n'roll standards that they played night after night in the small hours and long shifts of playing. They play them for fun, to pick up the pace, to reminisce.

In a bid to capture that early edgy energy, perhaps, the band dusts off an old Hamburg-era song of theirs, *One After 909*, which predates their first records and they have never released. You can see the band wake up as they play it – and as they perform it for what is probably the first time in a decade, it captures the mood of the band as it was almost ten years before. When they perform it at the rooftop concert it brings the youthful vitality of their early days into their last more mature performance.

TO FIND YOUR PURPOSE connect with your past. If you are struggling to see where to go next, get back. Remember where you came from and what it has taken for you to get from there to here. Try to recapture something of what drove you to create in those early days and build it into your mission.

Help! I need somebody ...

(why we all need support systems)

WHILE THE TECHNICAL team didn't immediately take up George Harrison's suggestion to recreate the stage of the Hamburg nightclub the Beatles played at in 1960, they did nevertheless go the extra mile in providing crucial support systems that ensured the smooth running of the creative process – or at least helped to make the artists comfortable enough to be able to create.

Some might at first seem trivial or banal, but they are in fact key components for success. For example, Mal Evans and Kevin Harrington are credited as "roadies" in the film and their presence

in the room feels constant. They seem innocuous and their help isn't obvious at first, but they are in fact catching every request and oiling the wheels of the creative Beatles machine.

Kevin, for example, is often seen bringing in tea and toast, sandwiches, orange juice – making sure that sustenance is at hand. Hydration and energy bursts help creative action and stopping for a quick bite or drink can provide just the right amount of space for an idea to emerge. If those breaks are on hand and on tap then the breakthrough moments are more likely.

Mal acts like a scribe for Paul McCartney – fulfilling his early wish to play the pharaoh – taking dictation for lyrics and scribbling them down on a clipboard before typing them up for the singer to perform with. When McCartney casually says they should have a hammer and anvil to produce a sound effect for his new song *Maxwell's Silver Hammer*, they magically appear within hours. This kind of sensitivity and speedy response keeps the creative flow going and while the support of toast and marmalade might seem trivial, it is in fact vital.

INNOVATION needs support: simple and specialized like Paul McCartney's scribe catching lyrics as he extemporizes them. Don't limit the great talents you might have in the room, help them with as much assistance as you can afford.

PHOTOS: DAVID HURN / MAGNUM PHOTOS/AGENTUR FOCUS; KOH HASEBE / SHINKO MUSIC / GETTY IMAGES

... Help! Not just anybody ...
(or why producing talent matters)

HELP DURING THE SESSIONS for *Let It Be* comes in many forms. Not just tea and toast, of course. It also comes in being able to get the ideas down. And that is the role of a producer. In *Get Back* you can see two producers at work. George Martin, who produced all of the Beatles work, is on hand, but he is taking a backseat to a younger producer, Glyn Johns, who is more in control for this project. Both are in the rehearsal room observing and listening to the music, trying to help improve it and being ready behind the taping machines when the band is ready to press the red button – and even to record them when they are not aware in case it is an unrepeatable gem.

But the role of a talented producer has been part of the Beatles history from day one. Paul McCartney is very ready to credit the producer's role but also quick to put me straight on where the actual creative ideas come from. "The producer's role isn't necessarily to come up with ideas. I think that is one misconception – that the producers gave us the ideas," he says. He then goes on to articulate perfectly how the overseeing role of a producer enables the creativity of the group to flourish. He recalls how George Martin was in the Royal Navy before he was a producer. "I asked him what he did and he said he was an observer. And I said what is that?" McCartney recalls. "So I said: You didn't navigate. He said that's true. You didn't fly the plane. That's true. You didn't do this, that and the other, but you observed. So if you think about it that's what a producer does. He doesn't fly the plane, but he's in charge. He was the perfect producer in the entire galaxy for the Beatles. There couldn't have been anyone more ready to produce the Beatles." →

WHEN YOU ARE CREATING or innovating, a coordinator with a talent for listening can be indispensable. Find the person who can catch the gold as it falls from the creatives – and who can draw the most out of the best talent.

COMMUNICATION

With a little help from my friends ...

(enhancing teamwork and collective intelligence dynamics)

AFTER THEY SPLIT UP, none of the Beatles went on as individuals to repeat the success they had enjoyed as a group. All of them might have had their own hits (to a greater or lesser degree), but arguably nothing on the scale they had created together. Their example seems to prove the rule: A good team is greater than the sum of its parts. Nevertheless, the *Let It Be* project exposed cracks in their relationship with an actual split occurring only a few days into rehearsal. It takes a special kind of internal process – and bonds built up over the years – to help resolve that kind of conflict. But there is a question that hangs over the Beatles: Could a group of such stellar talents and high achievers be hard to manage?

Anita Williams Woolley, an associate professor at the Carnegie Mellon Tepper School of Business and the co-author of *Collective Intelligence in Teams and Organizations*, has some useful observations. In sports teams, she says, you can sometimes have "too many stars," which leads to people's talent being used to figure out who should be the leader. In addition to that, you might have "two very talented people who are also vying to be in control." The partnership of Lennon and McCartney didn't seem to suffer that problem, but with the further talents of Harrison and to a lesser extent Ringo, then a problem can arise. The way to solve this, she suggests, "is if you can make their work less interdependent so they don't have to deal with each other so much." The Beatles instinctively seem to do this. Each of them working discretely on their own songs before sharing them with the group, thus reducing potential frictions.

Then there is also great value in shaking up the team – or gently provoking it to be more productive by introducing outsiders. A different "thinking style" from outside an established group can "enhance the ability of the other people to collaborate." Woolley's own work has also seen the benefit of female presence in a group. "What we have observed over time is social perceptiveness – which is a specific ability within social intelligence. Women show more strengths in this than men. And that seems to be a big part of the reason for having more women in a group – it makes people more attuned to verbal and nonverbal cues about what other people are feeling or thinking." That female presence also has a different impact. "Both men and women behave differently in same-sex groups than they do if you bring in one member of the opposite sex," says Woolley. "The same-sex group is often not as well-behaved if it's just the girls or the boys."

Both of these elements seem to be at play in the Beatles group in *Get Back* – although probably unwittingly. John's partner Yoko Ono is a benign female presence in the room during filming – and she is perhaps altering the dynamic for the better. And Black keyboard player Billy Preston, who had shared the stage with them in Hamburg and who is invited in almost as "a fifth Beatle," not only offers a direct channel to their shared past, but brings a diversity that didn't exist before. The mood in the room visibly and audibly changes with his contribution. →

KNOW THAT THE BEST TEAMS are greater than the sum of their parts. Engender that spirit and introduce catalysts to enhance and reinforce the dynamics of a successful working group.

PHOTO: COURTESY EVERETT / DDP IMAGES

> **The producer's role isn't necessarily to come up with ideas. I think that is one misconception – that the producers gave us the ideas.**
>
> Paul McCartney

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION

I've got a feeling ...
(some Beatle lessons in productivity)

PERHAPS THE MOST startling, and useful, element from the eight or so hours of witnessing these musicians at work, is what you can learn about productivity from the Beatles process. The group display a number of tricks and techniques that open up creativity and innovation.

Switching from one song to another as a means of warming up, the band can be seen rapidly writing music and trying song ideas out immediately, reiterating the good points and eliminating the bits that don't work. When he's stuck for a few minutes and desperate to come up with material, Paul McCartney brings the song *Get Back* to life in front of everyone's eyes. It's like a magic trick, but it comes from keeping up energy and focus and speed.

In contrast to this rapid prototyping method, they also use long gestation periods, allowing a song to cook. A little bit of work on it today, bring it out later tomorrow. Or as John and Paul work on *Don't Let Me Down*, contributing ideas and bouncing back and forth, George says, "I think it's awful actually." Their reaction is swift: come up with something better then. That is a useful rule; don't just destroy: create.

They also keep their eyes open, from following the newspaper to fuel lyrics for a song to looking at what the actual building they are in can offer as a performance space – including the roof, which then served as the iconic performance piece of the Beatles' whole career.

As their deadline looms, McCartney reaches for order. "We can't carry on like this indefinitely," he says. "What we need is a serious program of work. Not an aimless rambling. What we need is a schedule." John's reaction is harsh and a little deluded: "You're hard to live up to, Paul," he says. But they do impose a structure just in time to pull all their ideas together into a cohesive performance.

PRODUCTIVITY AND CREATIVITY is in the playing. Don't be frightened to play and don't judge your work too quickly, but do know when to stop.

I saw a film today, oh boy ...
(why content is king and data is everything)

IN EIGHT OR SO HOURS *Get Back* reveals, in slow motion, the creative vision of the Beatles at a unique point in their history. But *Get Back* is also in and of itself a creative vision – and a work of art. Jackson has taken the original *Let It Be* film and the footage shot for it and reconstructed a compelling narrative. He drives his film with a looming deadline and creativity under pressure plus the ticking time bomb of a band about to implode – all of which makes a gripping story.

But unlike the Beatles who let their music flow, Jackson is not creating something out of nothing. He's working with the material that the original 1969 director Michael Lindsay-Hogg filmed. And if Lindsay-Hogg had not been so meticulous and ambitious, we would not have the epic narrative and historical document that Jackson has delivered.

For the whole rehearsal process, Lindsay-Hogg used multiple cameras filming almost constantly for three weeks. The result is that a film that feels driven by short-term time pressure is itself an example and a revelation of long-form creativity. Without the hours and hours of footage, we would not see the process, nor experience the extraordinary emotional pay off as everything coalesces in the rooftop concert which finally makes sense of all the tortuous wrangling that preceded it.

Jackson's other epics include *They Shall Not Grow Old*, a documentary of the First World War. It has a similarly immersive quality where he pulls together thousands of sources to make the film. In *Get Back*, it's hundreds of hours of audio and images which recreate the world in front of our eyes. Without those precious hours of film and the multiple camera angles, *Get Back* wouldn't be half the film it is. ■

INFORMATION IS GOLD. Catch all the data. Catch as much of it as you can. You might not have the tools or be able to make sense of everything now, but someday someone else might.

COMMUNICATION

The long and winding road ...
(Paul McCartney's life in music is an inspiration for all managers)

JOHN MIGHT HAVE found it hard to live up to Paul's ambition, but Ringo could see the positive productivity Paul brought to them all. "If Paul hadn't been in the band," he said recently, "we'd probably have made two albums, because we were lazy buggers." Paul drove the band. Before the Beatles he had drive, and it was undimmed after their demise too. He carried on making music including three solo albums where he plays all the instruments. He's played in most countries around the world, toured the US in 2022 and played at the UK Glastonbury Festival just a week after his 80th birthday.

He was the de facto manager of the Beatles in the latter stages of their career; it wasn't a role he was comfortable in, he didn't like "being the boss" and he has been held responsible by some for breaking up the band. But his life's work is unparalleled, the fruits of his labor – both creative and financial (he is music's first billionaire musician) – unsurpassed.

DON'T SIT BACK, keep on creating. Keep on making. Keep on innovating. Never stop.

PHOTOS: COURTESY EVERETT / DDP IMAGES; DISNEY PLUS

GUIDING THE JOURNEY
In addition to his work with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim has also conducted the Staatskapelle Berlin at Carnegie Hall.

PHOTO: ALEX TREBUS

Strike the right note to work for cultural change

COMMUNICATION

The act of listening and collaborating can bring unexpected progress and even help resolve conflicts. Can business learn some tips from the maestros?

BY ***Simon Broughton***

REGARDING THE IDEA behind his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which combines Israeli, Palestinian and Arabic musicians, conductor Daniel Barenboim says: "Whenever one plays music, one has to do two very important things simultaneously. One is to express oneself. The other is to listen to the other musicians – an imperative fact of music-making." It's an orchestra that since its creation in 1999 has literally broken down borders, enabling musicians to travel to territories where they're not officially allowed to go and create a dialogue that would otherwise be inconceivable. "The impossible has always attracted me more than the difficult," says Barenboim.

If music can be a force for healing, then Barenboim's project is emblematic of that power and ambitious in its scope. Musicians who have a history of conflict play in harmony; the image of them playing together – as well as the sound – offers hope of resolution and ⟶

reconciliation. And while drawing a conclusion for business advice from a decades-long conflict using Barenboim's orchestra as an example might seem trivial, there are useful learnings from this project. A large-scale business and a symphony orchestra both involve many people doing very different things in pursuit of a common aim – and cultural exchange and understanding through collaboration for a shared objective can unleash a powerful creative force.

Conductor Roger Nierenberg has arrived at a similar conclusion. He has drawn on his musical background and applied it to leadership in what he calls The Music Paradigm, an experience he created for all types of organizations. It's important that conductors, or leaders, don't tell people what to do, he says, but inspire them to do it. But while a conductor or a company boss generally tries to make – or inspire – his or her organization to work more effectively and harmoniously, Barenboim felt that music could do something more.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT has been the persistent sore in the relations between the Arab world and the West. In his book *Everything is Connected: The Power of Music*, Barenboim says: "Often in societies suffering from political oppression, or from a vacuum in leadership, culture takes a dynamic lead, changing external circumstances by influencing the collective consciousness of the people." He cites *samizdat* writing in the former East bloc, South African music under apartheid and Palestinian literature amid the conflict.

He explains that he and Palestinian writer Edward Said created the orchestra not just as an ideological gesture, but with a practical intent: "Culture encourages contact between people and can bring them closer together, fostering understanding." *The West-Eastern Divan* is a collection of poems by Goethe, one of the first Europeans to be genuinely interested in other cultures. It was published over 200 years ago in 1819, the same time as Beethoven was writing his 9th Symphony, his testament to the brotherhood of mankind. "The art of playing music is the art of simultaneous listening and playing, one enhancing the other," writes Barenboim. "This takes place both on an individual and a collective level and one voice is enhanced by another."

Within an orchestra, all the violins need to be playing as cohesively as possible, while contrasting timbres like wind and brass may need a very different attack [in terms of how the player uses their instrument for dynamics] and sound, but they still form a coherent piece of music. It's not hard to extrapolate these ideas into business, depending on the nature of the enterprise. Barenboim extends the idea to the conflicting faiths of the Middle East.

Learning from experience

DANIEL BARENBOIM
Before founding the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Barenboim served as music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris and La Scala in Milan.

ROGER NIERENBERG
After prior engagements as music director of the Stamford Symphony in Connecticut and the Jacksonville Symphony in Florida, Nierenberg made his New York conducting debut at Avery Fisher Hall and later created The Music Paradigm.

PHOTO: CHRIS LEE

> **The art of playing music takes place both on an individual and a collective level and one voice is enhanced by another.**
>
> Daniel Barenboim,
> Founder of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

A NEW VIEWPOINT
The Music Paradigm creator Roger Nierenberg inspires organizations to think differently about leadership.

"The dialogue between intellect and emotion can also temper an unquestioning attitude to religion, forming an important voice in counterpoint to the potential monotony of religious fervor. The Old Testament, The New Testament and the Quran are all sources of infinite wisdom when read from an independent, questioning point of view."

NOW WE HAVE A NEW WAR, the first state on state war in Europe since World War II. Its resolution is still to come, but one of the prevailing images that went viral was of a 7-year-old Ukrainian girl singing solo a song from *Frozen* while sheltering in a bunker in Kyiv. One posting on YouTube clocked up 15 million views in two days. Amelia Anisovych managed to get out to Poland where she became a star performer in a concert in Łodz in front of an audience of 10,000 which was broadcast to 40 countries. Or look at the result of the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine soared ahead with 631 points, the biggest score in the televote there has ever been. And everyone recognizes this wasn't because *Stefania*, the Ukrainian song, was really the best, but because they had the audience's sympathy and support. Music sadly can't win the war, but it certainly can win hearts and minds.

It's a similar idea that lies behind Morocco's Fes Festival of Sacred Music, started in 1994 by Faouzi Skali, a Fes-born Sufi who observed the polarization of the Arab world and the West after the first Gulf War in 1991. "Muslims had a stereotypical view of the West and vice versa," says Skali. "I wanted to create a place where people could meet and discover the beauty of each religion and culture. So in Fes people could see another image of Islam. Fes has a message which it can pass on to the world today."

Sufism is the mystical, musical and poetic side of Islam espousing tolerance and peace, very different to the extremist view of Islam so often depicted in the media. The idea of the festival is simple – to include music and performance of any faith and creed and put them on an equal platform. American gospel, Tibetan Buddhist dancing, Sephardic Jewish romances or West African song. Hearing these things, admiring them and maybe even getting to understand them a little changes our perceptions.

IF YOU'VE ENJOYED THE MUSIC, art and culture of another people, you become connected with them. You have more understanding and less fear. "An enemy is just someone whose story you haven't heard yet," goes an old Quaker saying. If George W. Bush or Tony Blair had been to the Fes Festival, would they have invaded Iraq? On the whole, senior politicians don't go to mind-opening music festivals. Maybe that's the problem. The Førde Festival in Norway [see box p. 43] has been recognized by the European Festival Association as one of Europe's five best festivals – regardless of genre. It doesn't have the spiritual ambition of Fes, but its scale and success is some achievement and is indeed a way of bringing people together, breaking down borders and inviting collaboration.

Hilde Bjørkum was the festival's managing and artistic director for 29 years until 2019. "Musicians are very ready to listen, to learn from each other and to collaborate. They are very open and that's the key," she says. "There's a lot that we can all learn from musicians." She feels it's more to do with personalities rather than genres or musical links. "These musicians have spent a lot of time practicing, thinking about how to express themselves and do things perfectly. In different ways, the same challenges are there for everybody ⟶

but generally it's the people who are least egotistical that succeed best."

Conductor Roger Nierenberg shares this perspective but has taken it a step further and applied his experience to practical situations. "I have people sat in chairs amongst the orchestra," he says, "but then I bring some of them to the podium. Then they discover there's so much more going on than they were aware of from their chairs." He continues: "Every chair has blind spots. This is a perfect analogue to organizations. People take what's in their inbox, process it, and put it in their outbox without any awareness about where it came from in the value chain of which they are just a part." He is aware his example is a simplification, but nevertheless an important lesson for organizations. "Of course businesses are much more complex than an orchestra," he concedes.

> **Of course businesses are much more complex than an orchestra. Businesses are all over the place. But they do have to coordinate like an orchestra and they do have to synchronize.**
>
> Roger Nierenberg,
> Creator of The Music Paradigm

"Businesses are all over the place. But they do have to coordinate like an orchestra and they do have to synchronize."

OTHERS ARE BRINGING such practical examples into a business environment, too. Colombian organization Marimbea is using Afro-Colombian music to create social improvement in a very deprived region of the country. And they are also taking music workshops into businesses to help with team building. The music uses a marimba (xylophone), played by two people, two types of drums and guasa (shakers). Anyone can play the guasa, it's easy. The cununo and bomba drums are also quite simple once you get the rhythmic patterns into your head. The marimba parts are more challenging, but can be learned in a few hours.

The sense of mutual creativity at the end is extraordinary – you may just be

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT
Daniel Barenboim believes business and music both require sensitive listening skills to achieve top performance.

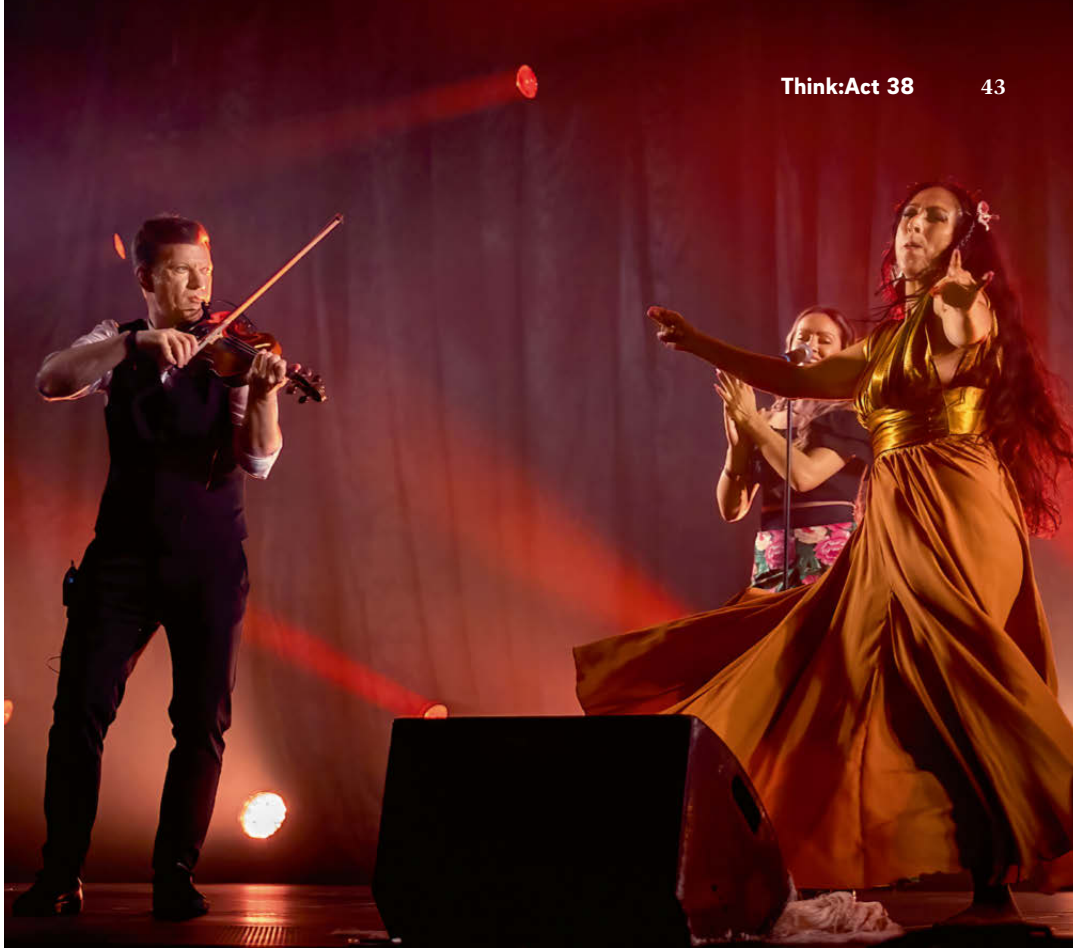
shaking a guasa, but you are an integral part of the team and it does wonders for integration. "It's a cooperative and collaborative exercise," says Adrian Sabogal, who runs the Marimbea project. "You might be doing something very well, but you have to synchronize with other people. It's a powerful tool for building a community. There are several enterprises looking for these experiences."

Edgar Helou, general manager of Amazon Web Services in Colombia, first tried a Marimbea workshop himself and now is planning to organize one in the company: "We all have different roles, but the impact is achieved with the small contributions of everyone. Companies usually evaluate individuals on their performance, but I have conveyed the idea of assessing the team without needing to evaluate each person as such. There are many metaphors to put into practice in the corporate world."

NOBODY IS GOING TO CLAIM that music can solve the world's problems, but it can work toward changing them. The Free Nelson Mandela movement was driven essentially by music. And there were generous offers from Portugal and Germany to accommodate Afghanistan's musicians after the Taliban regained power last August. And look at the response to the events in Ukraine on YouTube and in Eurovision and people's willingness to take in refugees.

What music is good at when the emotions are right is consciousness-raising – and that's something worth recognizing. "You can't make peace with an orchestra," says Barenboim, but clearly one can learn a lot. Music shares with business the common point that both are collaborative enterprises which demand top performance and sensitive listening. When it comes to learning lessons, Barenboim believes music can "create the conditions for understanding" and "awaken the curiosity of each individual to listen to the narrative of the other." That's surely something we should all aspire to. ■

PHOTOS: ALEX TREBUS; PER OLE HAGEN / REDFERNS



COMMUNICATION

A story in song

With 250 artists representing 25 countries, Norway's Førde Festival has now been running for over 30 years. Since day one, its annual theme has been aimed at getting its message across.

FØRDE FESTIVAL in Norway is the largest festival of world and traditional music in Scandinavia and has been running since 1990 with around 25,000-30,000 visitors each year. The festival is themed and this year it's "Music in Times of Crisis." This was in place even before the invasion of Ukraine, with artists from Afghanistan, Armenia and Turkey (playing together), Iran and Palestine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia and more. "It's important to show what music can do in such times," says former managing and artistic director Hilde Bjørkum. "We can see the emotional response to what's happening in Ukraine. Business often forgets the emotional side of things. How people act is not only to do with money, but has a lot to do with what you feel, what you think and what you experience. It's not only the brain, but also the heart." Current director Per Idar Almås agrees: "Music unites people and transcends geographical and cultural divisions. Music creates community spirit and identity and there are many examples showing that music is a key element in resistance movements."

Afghan singer Elaha Soroor, now based in the UK and performing at the festival, says: "Unfortunately, in the eyes of the world, Afghanistan's identity is associated with terrorism, war ... [My band] Kefaya and I have attempted to identify other sides of Afghanistan, other stories, a different life philosophy, the rich culture, my beautiful native tongue, Farsi, and the diversity of our music."

COMMUNICATION

PHOTO: RICARDO RUBIO / EUROPA PRESS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Surviving the rock of ages

The band that plays together stays together. Or does it? "Creative differences" and other hazards can split up any successful collaboration, but the techniques some bands have used offer lessons that entrepreneurial business partnerships might also employ.

BY **Michael Hann**

WHO WOULDN'T WANT the life of the rock'n'roll band – hailed at each turn by adoring fans, indulged in every way, celebrated as a genius? More truth comes from a rock song from 1975: "Getting old, getting grey / Getting ripped off, underpaid. Getting sold, secondhand / That's how it goes, playing in a band." Looked at that way, the odds against a band staying together are ridiculous. The distinctive vocals that rasped those words in *It's a Long Way to the Top (If You Wanna Rock'n'Roll)* came from a band who have since endured decades of vicissitudes – including death, dementia and hearing loss – yet AC/DC remain one of the world's most popular and lucrative concert attractions.

DECADES ON TOUR ***Metallica had already visited Spain more than 700 times when they took to the stage at Mad Cool 2022 in Madrid.***

Their survival is almost an exception and their list of deprivations in that song are just the tip of the iceberg. Things can get even worse when you consider all the other variables that need to fall into place: band members with enough mutual respect to spend a couple of hundred days and nights together each year years on end, enough selflessness to cope with battling egos, and – most important – enough talent to be able to write and play songs that people want to keep listening to.

WHAT DOES KEEP A BAND TOGETHER? The shortest answer is money: Just as in business, a successful product keeps on running. So there are plenty of groups whose continued existence is owed less to a belief in their continued creative greatness and more to an acceptance that artistic integrity turned out to be less important than a ready supply of cash – which itself buys the conditions to make staying together tolerable. As the late Dusty Hill of ZZ Top put it when asked how that band had stayed together without lineup changes since 1970: "Separate tour buses."

At the heart of band life is conflict. Conflict with each other, with record labels, with promoters, with the outside world – and at the heart of it is usually money. That means the best thing any young band can do is seek outside advice: The old stereotype of the teenagers signing their futures away to a record label persists for a reason. Which is why Tara Richardson of the music management firm Q Prime, who look after Metallica, Muse and Foals among others, says, "Get a lawyer first, not a manager. That's the safest way to do it." Bertis Downs, who managed R.E.M., agrees: "Get a lawyer. Because people will ask you to sign things and commit to things that you might later regret. Just from a completely defensive standpoint, you don't want to do things that you can't reverse later."

Downs' former charges are often held up as the exemplar of longevity in music, largely thanks to two policies which ensured all money and all power was shared: They credited all their songs to all four members, regardless of the actual writer – which meant the biggest part of their revenues, from music publishing, was divided equally; and all members had to agree on all matters affecting the band. "I don't know if the right word is democracy: They worked by consensus, they agreed that they would agree, then they would keep →

talking about it until they agreed," Downs says. "Generally, even though they all had a veto, they rarely used it." Downs' message is that managers have to force a band to talk through issues; how they arrive at the decision is less important.

That veto model has been celebrated: the way to make sure every band member feels valued. And R.E.M. had few visible traumas through the years – their drummer, Bill Berry, left amicably in 1997 to become a farmer, the only lineup change. Other managers say that chemistry is not transferable. "The best bands are always dictatorships," says Jamie Oborne, who manages festival-headlining pop act The 1975. Bands need a semblance of equality and defined roles to make sure what needs to be done gets done. "But in my experience it's not very often you have four people with a vision. It's much more common that one or two people have a vision and are surrounded by people who buy into it."

Even that can be too much, suggests David Gottlieb, manager of MGMT and The Hold Steady, who celebrate their 20th anniversary next year. "Democracy does not work, and a two-headed snake does not work." He says that for The Hold Steady's singer, Craig Finn, taking leadership of that band gave it a new lease of life after half a decade of listlessness and discontent – and he was prepared to be ruthless about it. Finn called a hiatus, lasting a year or so. "I didn't think The Hold Steady was over, but I thought we needed a good long break," Finn says. "If I'm being honest, I thought it would probably be good for some people to realize what life would be like without the band and how hard it is to get other things going. And I think lessons were learned on that front."

KEEPING IT GOING *R.E.M. (right) played together for 31 years before disbanding while Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band (bottom, pictured in 1985) have played as a group since 1972.*

IF BAND HIERARCHIES need to be made flat for them to thrive, so does the distribution of money. Thanks to bands such as R.E.M. and Coldplay, it has become received wisdom that the way to keep everyone happy is to split royalties – including songwriting royalties – equally. And with the massive revenues those bands have made over the decades, there's little for anyone to complain about. Even if you wrote the song alone, taking 25% of the income from a huge smash is a lot of money. If you're only getting 25% of a song you wrote that wasn't a huge smash, however, it is easy to get aggrieved.

The simple fact is that songwriters tend to believe they should earn the most, because without them there would be nothing to play. But non-writing members, equally, take the view that without their contributions, the songs wouldn't have been as popular. Reach a compromise, suggests Steve Van Zandt, Bruce Springsteen's long-term "consigliere" in the E Street Band. "I think if you're together a long time, a little publishing doesn't hurt, you know?" he told me in 2017. "Just a little bit – give everybody a taste, even though they may not be writing. The drummer and bass player might never get a credit as songwriters, but if you've

been together a long time and they're good, they're probably contributing to the arrangements, so give them 5% or something. Give them a little taste."

ALL OF THIS IS SOMETHING a good manager will navigate. Too many bands accept the first manager who shows an interest, forgetting the truism, outlined by Jamie Oborne, that labels sign managers as much as bands – and he wears both hats, as head of the Dirty Hit record label. While interviewing bands from the British heavy metal explosion of the late 1970s and early 1980s for my book *Denim and Leather*, I heard the stories of scores of bands whose careers were derailed by poor choices of manager. Diamond Head, viewed by the press as the best band of all, employed the singer's mom and her lover. Saxon's management took their cut of gross, not net profits, leaving the band out of pocket. It's no coincidence that the two bands to break out from that explosion were looked after by experienced, powerful managers: Iron Maiden had Rod Smallwood; Def Leppard had Peter Mensch and Cliff Burnstein of Q Prime.

The simple fact is, most bands break up sooner rather than later. There is too little money – less than ever now – too many egos and too much proximity. Imagine if, at the end of your working day, you had to climb in a van with all your coworkers, share a cheap motel room, then get back in the van for several hours with the same people. And you might do that 250 nights a year. How long would you stick it out? Yes, I feel the same. ■

PHOTOS: LUCIANO VITI / GETTY IMAGES; RANDY BACHMAN / GETTY IMAGES; IFC FILMS / COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

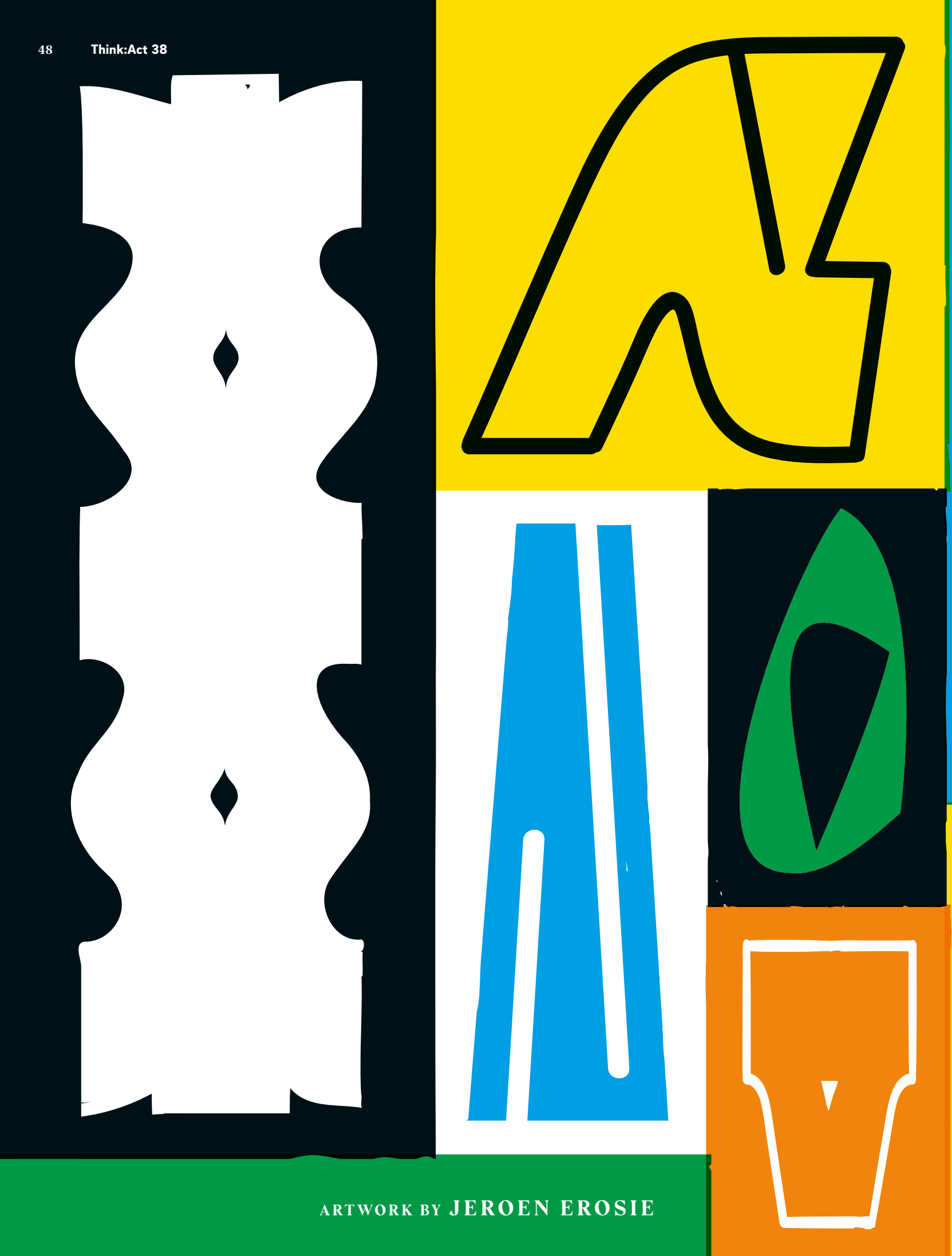
Metallica: a band in public crisis

*The 2004 documentary **Metallica: Some Kind of Monster** shone an unforgiving light on what happens when a band starts to disintegrate.*

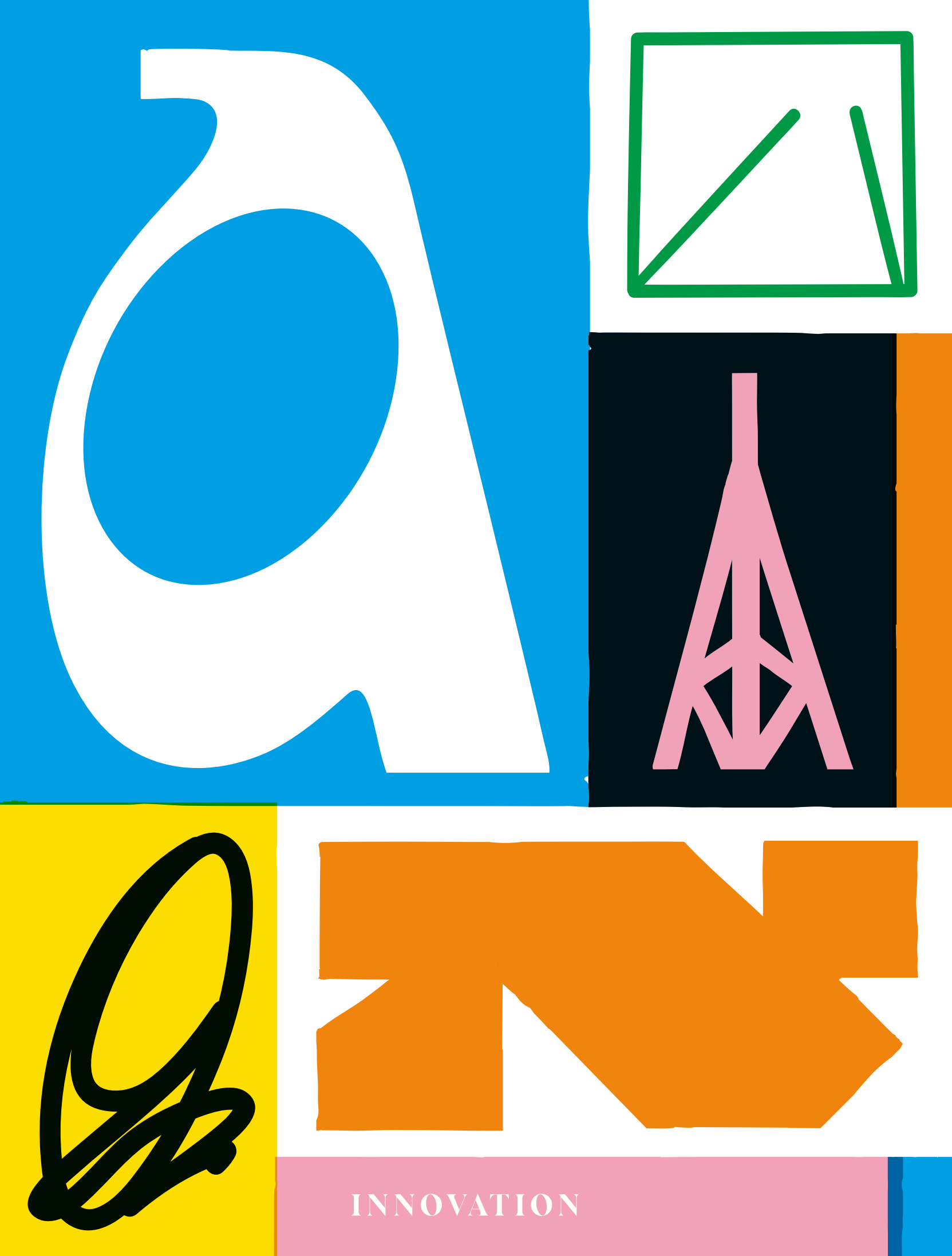
IN APRIL 2001, Metallica invited filmmakers Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky to document the recording of their latest album, except no album was being recorded. Their bass player had left; Q Prime management had hired them a performance coach to ease their relationships; and they didn't have any inspiration. The band's two founders, James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich, were at each other's throats over everything; there were addiction problems; there was the identity crisis lots of bands go through as musical fashions change.

The documentary highlights both the incredible tedium of being in a band and the difficulty of walking away from it. By this point, Metallica were one of the biggest bands in the world, but a decade of unaddressed problems had built up and exploded in front of the cameras.

So what held them together? We never really see them sort out their difficulties, despite all the talk. But it's not difficult to conclude that, to take a phrase from another industry, Metallica had become too big to fail. No member would walk away and find equivalent success and remuneration and too many other people had an interest in them persevering – the way their therapist keeps insisting it needs to be a long-term project, on a big fee, is distinctly unappealing. The real lesson is: being in a big rock band can become the ultimate pair of golden handcuffs.



ARTWORK BY JEROEN EROSIE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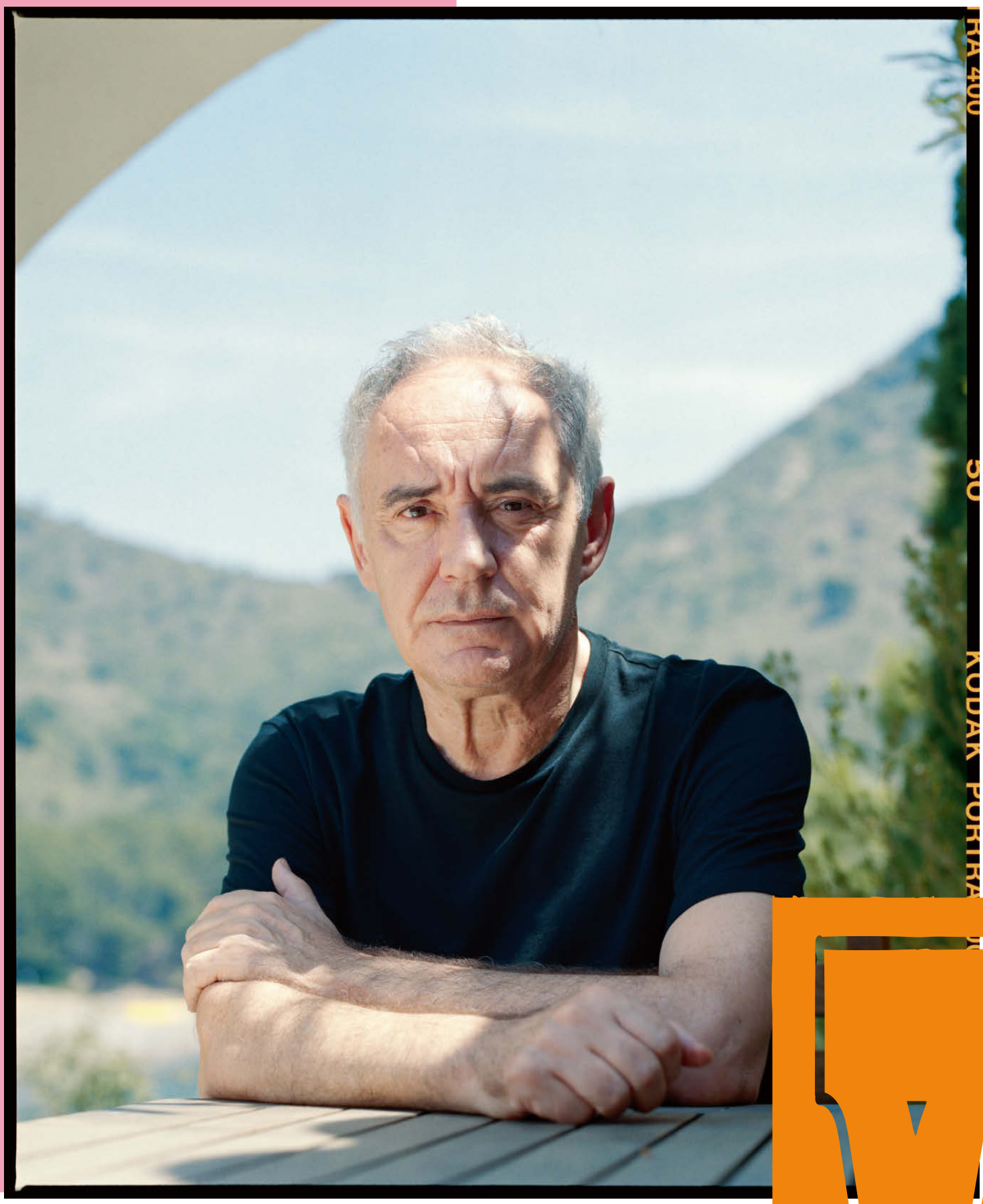
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Meet the culinary world's Picasso

He pioneered a new gastronomy and his restaurant was considered the best in the world. But what was the secret to the El Bulli founder and visionary chef's success? Creative imagination, bravery and a clear desire not to repeat himself. We meet Ferran Adrià and gather his thoughts on why cooking is an art and how innovation matters.

BY ***Lisa Abend***
PHOTOS BY ***Gregori Civera***

THE PERPETUALLY SPARKLING waters off Cala Montjoi in the northeastern corner of Spain are even more dazzling than usual on this particular June morning. Ferran Adrià stands outside in his trademark black t-shirt and black trousers and watches as a small group of similarly black-clad men screw industrial tubing into something that looks half switchboard, half jungle gym. It is, in fact, neither of these things. It's art. A sculpture, in fact, intended to visualize the synaptic processes that link sensory reception and the human brain. "Welcome," Adrià says by way of introduction, "to the Forest of Creativity."

LOOKING AHEAD Ferran Adrià, shot here at the site of the former El Bulli restaurant, is now working on new forms of experimentation.

In some ways, that's what El Bulli has always been, at least since the mid-1980s, a few years after Adrià, an intensely energetic man whose restlessness extends even to the remarkable speed with which he speaks, had become head chef at the tiny restaurant on Spain's Catalan coast. Driven, he says, by a desire "not to get bored," he began experiments with cuisine that would, in time, lead to nothing short of a gastronomic revolution – one that redefined not only the experience of the diner, but also expanded what it meant to be a chef.

What was at first one very quirky query – Question: What happens if we attach a bicycle pump to a tomato and fill it with air? Answer: It explodes ... but first, it foams – would soon open the door to a host of inquiries that interrogated every assumption about food and fine dining: Why does dessert come after the savory courses? Why does a soup have to be liquid? Why is it rude to eat with your hands? Why can't ice cream be hot?

SEATED ON THE SAME whitewashed patio where guests once enjoyed edible cocktails as they gazed out onto the bay, Adrià, his head of curls now gray, speaks eloquently about his restaurant's trajectory. "At first, we didn't know why we were experimenting – it was more visceral than rational," he says. "But we went from that very naive position to asking why, and then from why to who, what, where and when as well."

The questioning would lead to dramatic new cooking techniques and dishes – "caviar" made from globules of mango juice; an edible paper made from cotton candy; spaghetti made from squiggles of parmesan sauce, lots and lots of foams – and give the world a new style of cuisine with the unlovely (not to mention, unloved) name of "molecular gastronomy." It would also push Adrià and his team to reinvent other aspects of how restaurants are run, from service to staffing to financing. "People always talked about El Bulli's techniques, about deconstruction, spherification [a characteristic El Bulli technique that turns liquids into semi-solid globules]," he says. "But no one talked about how we stopped serving bread as an accompaniment to the meal. For me, though, that was much more important because it changed the paradigm." →

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART of the El Bulli revolution – and the one with the most relevance to fields outside of cuisine – was the emphasis it put on creativity. Where chefs in the past had been positioned as craftspeople, responsible for faithfully reproducing the same dishes night after night, Adrià privileged imagination. And then he staked his restaurant on it: By the end of the 20th century, the restaurant had instituted a lengthy tasting menu whose 35-plus courses would be utterly reinvented from one season to the next. No longer did diners – at least those lucky enough to snap up a reservation among the 2 million who tried each year – return to El Bulli hoping to repeat a favored dish; now they came to see what was new.

By the time the restaurant closed in 2011, El Bulli had topped the World's 50 Best Restaurants list a then-unprecedented five times and Adrià had confirmed his place as one of history's most influential chefs. Since then, he has been working to transform El Bulli into a foundation with a museum devoted to the restaurant's legacy and hosted residencies that will bring together leaders in different disciplines to work on collaborative projects. It, along with that Forest of Creativity, a kind of sculpture garden devoted to the mechanics of the creative process, is scheduled to open to the public in 2023.

ADRIÀ'S INTEREST IN CREATIVITY all started, he says, with the simplest of maxims. When he was dining in the renowned restaurant Negresco with a few Spanish colleagues, someone asked chef Jacques Maximin how he defined creativity. "He said, 'to create is not to copy,'" says Adrià, recalling the lightbulb moment. "And that was the beginning of everything: 'don't copy.'"

At El Bulli, they applied the maxim to extend to not copying their own work as much as anyone else's. The kitchen replaced à la carte menus with a 35-plus course tasting menu that changed completely each season – a transformation that required roughly 100 new dishes each year. Maintaining that pace of invention, the team at El Bulli soon realized, would require a revision of common understanding of the creative process. Rather than relying on inspirational lightning to strike or the muse to declare herself, they would need a system to reliably foster new creations.

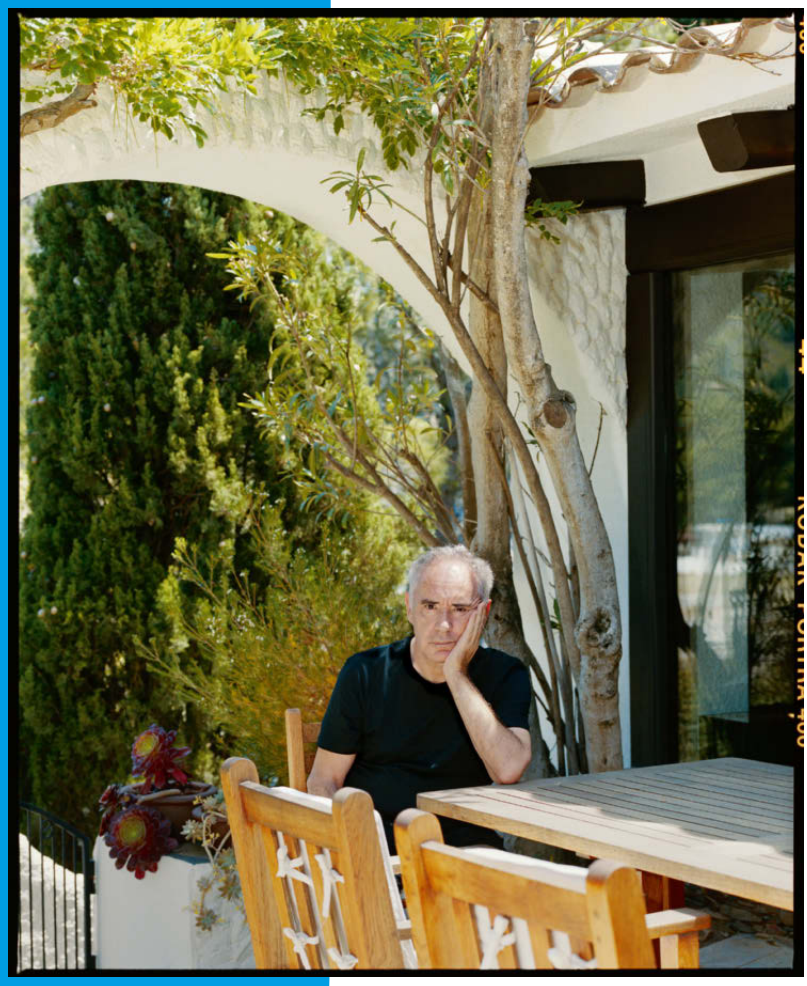
That system required some dramatic changes. Although it is now fairly common for ambitious restaurants to keep a separate test kitchen for developing new recipes, when El Bulli opened its "workshop," as they called it, it was an unprecedented move. So too was the decision to close the restaurant six months of the year so that they could work on innovation. But some of the most effective measures were also the most mundane. "Documentation was fundamental," Adrià says, referring to the reams of notes and files of photos that the team took of their work. "We catalogued everything – every recipe and technique we tested, failures as well as successes. That way, we could always go back to things that hadn't quite worked out and try them in new ways. And we created so much that we needed the catalogue to remember what we had done. The documentation helped ensure we weren't copying ourselves."

And because El Bulli wasn't just developing ideas but serving them nightly to paying guests, it also meant reconciling the drama and excitement of the new with the tedious work of, say, squeezing drops of mango juice into a solution to create each sphere of "caviar" or extracting the germ from kernels for a corn "risotto." "There is a relationship between the creative and the mechanical," Adrià explains. "It's the same with painters –

FERRAN ADRIÀ

began his culinary career at age 19 after being drafted into military service and working as a cook. He joined El Bulli as a line cook at the age of 22 in 1984, becoming the head chef 18 months later. Often eschewing the label "molecular gastronomy" to describe his creations, Adrià calls his cooking "deconstructivist" and has compared the experience of having dined at El Bulli as being akin to a night at the theater.

> **“To create is not to copy. And that was the beginning of everything: don’t copy.”**
>
> Ferran Adrià, Spanish chef



A RECIPE FOR INNOVATION
Adrià believes the secret behind his success was a mix of teamwork, talent and bravery.

think of all the mechanical work that went into a Picasso painting. There's always something routine inside creation."

THE REFERENCE TO PICASSO isn't random. Adrià was frequently compared to the artist because his work was so groundbreaking – and perhaps more than any other chef in history he had considered the question of whether food could also be an art form. In 2007, in fact, he was invited to the renowned documenta contemporary art fair as guest artist. Convinced that his authentic work could only be experienced in his restaurant, his contribution had him flying two of documenta's visitors to El Bulli for dinner each night.

That notion taps into his essential belief that creativity is something that can be learned. "It's true that creative talent matters, especially if you're working at the maximum level, where you're trying to change paradigms," he says. "But you can also train it, you can improve it," he says. It's exactly what Malcolm Gladwell said about the 10,000 hours – you train it by doing."

These are the kinds of questions that Adrià and his team have been exploring since closing El Bulli as a restaurant and transforming it into something that, in its own way, is just as unprecedented. They've spent the last decade developing a methodology, called Sapiens, for thinking comprehensively about cuisine, and then using it to compile an encyclopedia – the Bullipedia – of gastronomic knowledge. "In a certain way, we did it to explain ourselves to ourselves," Adrià says. "We had to create a method of understanding what we did."

When the El Bulli museum opens in 2023, complete with a high-tech visual history of the restaurant's dishes, a spectacular conference room that looks like it was transported from Tolkien's Middle Earth and those weird and wonderful sculptures overlooking the bay, it will make concrete the otherwise ephemeral legacy of El Bulli and the man, now 60, who made it the most innovative restaurant of all time. When he looks back on what allowed him to achieve what he did and maintain that incessant creative energy across decades, he comes up with a three-part formula: respect and admiration for the team that helped him realize the vision, serious effort as manifest in all those hours of work testing and retesting and, then, that ineffable sprinkling of talent.

But asked how others in different fields might also remain open to constant change, he remembers a fourth pillar. "You have to be brave. Ninety-nine percent of the businesses out there don't innovate; they just adapt models that are already successful. If you want to truly innovate, being brave is the most important thing." ■

10,000 PAGES

The number of pages in the El Bulli General Catalogue, which documents all the dishes served at El Bulli Restaurant from 1987 until it closed in 2011.

LISA ABEND is a freelance journalist and author. She has contributed to *The New York Times,* the *Los Angeles Times* and *Time Magazine.* Her book, *The Sorcerer's Apprentices: A Season in the Kitchen at Ferran Adrià's El Bulli,* was published in 2011.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE
See the Short Takes interview video with Ferran Adrià online:
rolandberger.com/en/adria

Conducting the future

The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra has recorded 71 albums, won three Grammy awards, toured 46 countries and performed for 50 years – and it's done it all without a conductor. Does it hold the secret to a leaderless future? And does that mean the music is about to stop for the CEO?

BY ***Bennett Voyles***
PHOTOS BY ***Alex Trebus***

TEAM PLAYERS

Since 1972, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra has thrived using a structure that moves its members between a number of different roles.

BACK IN 1972, a group of young and idealistic string musicians had an idea. Rather than take jobs at orchestras, where they would have to play everything the way the conductor wanted them to play, they would form their own group and do it all their way. This by itself was not unusual – serious music students often form groups. What was unusual about the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra is that the young musicians thought they could do it without a conductor – a move as radical in its way as deciding to run a company without a chief executive.

But what happened next was even more unusual: They succeeded. Even as any number of the communes and organic food co-ops founded in those years floundered when ideals ran up against personalities and practicalities, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra not only survived, but thrived: To date, they have recorded 71 albums, toured in 46 countries and won a number of Grammy awards. Their success has inspired imitators elsewhere in the classical music world and caught the eye of many executives and business scholars eager to learn the secret of how Orpheus has managed to make beautiful music together for 50 years without a leader.

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST REASON Orpheus succeeded is that members considered the alternative so unappealing. Classical musicians typically train for years to be soloists, interpreting the music in a very personal way, but when they reach the world of professional music, they join orchestras, where the job is to follow the baton. "You have been trained to perform and pour out your soul on stage and all of a sudden you become a member of an orchestra and what that means is, you have to give up your ego completely ... if you're part of a string section, you shouldn't be heard [individually], you should be part of it. And that's hard for a lot of musicians," says Alexander Scheirle, Orpheus' executive

> **"The educational training for musicians is really not aligned with the professional realities.**
>
> Dana Kelley,
> Orpheus violist

VARIED ARRANGEMENTS
Violinist Laura Frautschi (center) is one of many members who has stepped into a three-year term as artistic director.

director, a professional administrator who manages the business with three musician-directors.

While some musicians find they can make that transition to an orchestral career with no problem, for many, it can turn out to be more of a soul-crushing experience. "The educational training for musicians is really not aligned with the professional realities. When you're in school, you're playing concertos all the time and in real life, you know, there are 10 people that are regularly playing concertos with orchestras," says Dana Kelley, a violist for Orpheus. "There's definitely that reality check/emotional wall that you hit when you realize that you haven't actually learned to do what professional orchestras are asking you to do," she goes on to explain. "It's difficult."

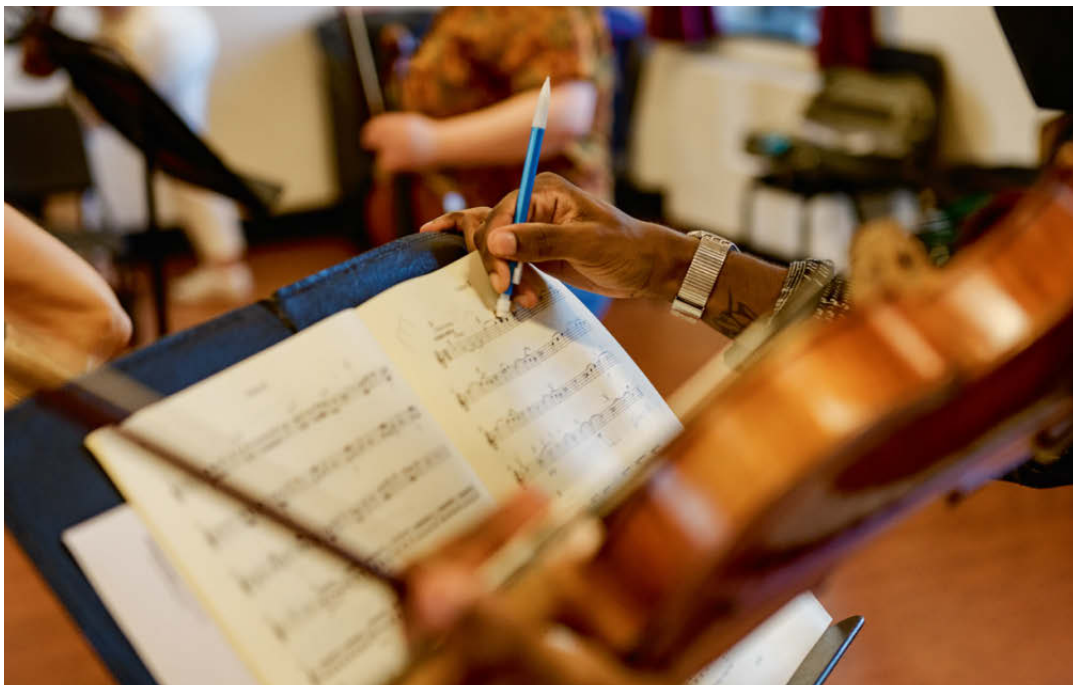
NOR DOES IT GET EASIER for the veteran players. The late Richard Hackman, a professor of organizational psychology at Harvard University and author of a case study on Orpheus, found that in general orchestral musicians have lower job satisfaction than flight attendants or prison guards. But the desire for a more fulfilling creative life is not enough, of course. There are plenty of amateur musicians who burn to be stars and are stuck in their garage, held back by a cruel world that is not hiring.

Even the professionals at Orpheus almost didn't make it. But they were pioneering a different approach – and it was a learning process. In the group's first year, rehearsals were a free-for-all. "Everyone would talk and rehearsals would go on until the early morning hours. The only thing that ended that process was that there was a concert at the end of the week and they had to be ready to play it," recalls Scheirle.

Eventually, they came up with a better approach: The first players of each section would come together and figure out how they wanted to play the piece. Once they worked out the main details, they would invite the rest of the orchestra to join them and sort out the rest. This might have meant replacing a dictatorship with an oligarchy except for one thing: While seats at a major orchestra are guarded as closely and altered as rarely as tenured professors' chairs, Orpheus musicians swap parts all the time. Someone may be a first-chair violinist for the first piece of a concert but play the second-chair part for the second piece.

ORPHEUS MUSICIANS say they love the arrangement because everybody gets a chance to interpret a piece. Audiences also love it because the performance isn't an unchanging human juke box performance: Orpheus's performances change. A particular Haydn symphony played one way one year may be played in an entirely different way the next year. Having this ever-evolving hierarchy "keeps it fresh, keeps it exciting, and keeps everyone on their toes, because it never gets stale," says Scheirle.

Although the orchestra is unionized, its members also participate in ⟶



REWRITING THE RULES
The orchestra's structure allows for a piece to be played in very different ways from one year to the next.

decision-making at the executive level as well. The musicians elect three of their number to serve out three-year terms as artistic directors. Terms are staggered, with an election for one of the new directors taking place each year. Each put in roughly 10 hours of work a week, making the many artistic and practical decisions that need to be made, from choices of programming to hiring substitute musicians when a member can't make a concert or a tour.

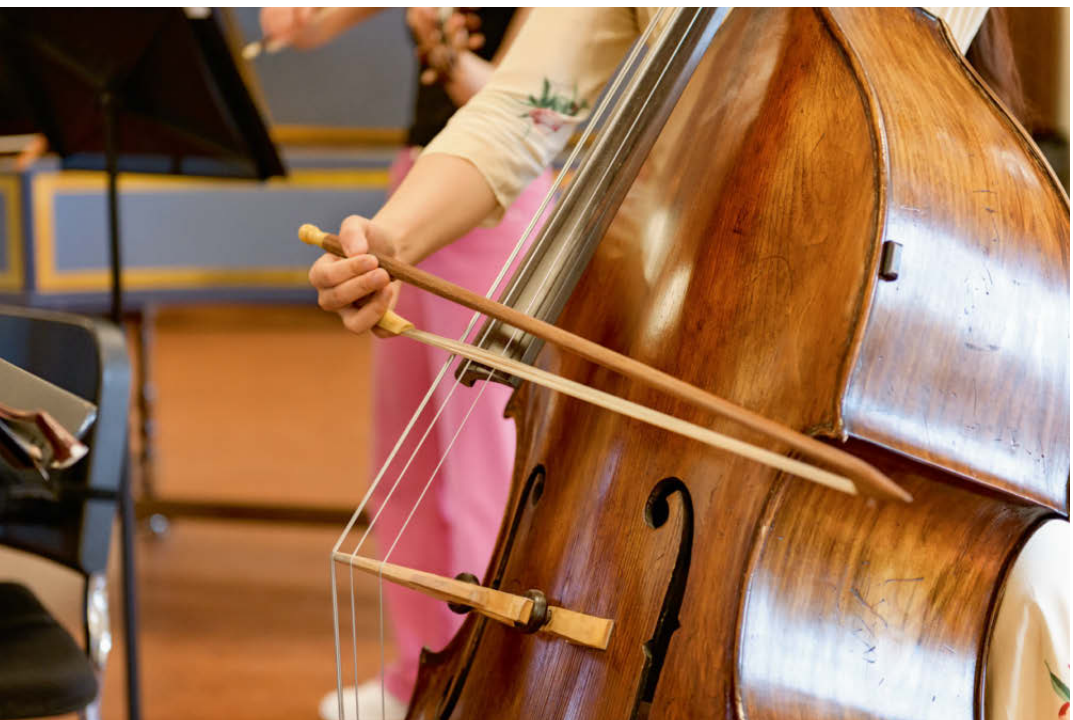
THE RESULT IS A CULTURE that Hackman called "as fine an example of shared leadership and coaching as I have encountered." But the Orpheus way is not for everybody. Kelley, one of the former artistic directors for Orpheus, says that musicians who are attracted to the group are "invested in not only playing great music and playing on the highest level, but being involved in the process of making music and presenting the music and working behind the scenes in shaping how the orchestra will turn out in the future."

Not every musician, however, wants that level of involvement. Whereas in a traditional orchestra, each one of the musicians will discuss their playing only with the orchestra's conductor, Orpheans can – and do – tell each other what they think, even out of their section. "If I don't like what an oboe player is doing in a regular symphony orchestra, I never get a chance to communicate with them, but in Orpheus, we can have a conversation and it's back and forth," Kelley says.

The feedback is always given in a respectful way, according to Kelley. "I think everyone trusts each other to be listening for things or watching for things that they know will add to that final picture. It's not just, 'I think I'm better than you, so play it like this.' There's never attitude," she says. "There have been heated moments for sure – someone thinks that their idea is the way it should go and then someone else says, 'Well, let's try it that [other] way.' And there's definitely some head-butting that happens." In the end, however, they resolve those differences, sometimes by trying both options. "Let's say, I want to play a piece much faster than someone else, we could play one concert in the tempo that I want and another concert at the tempo that someone else wants," Kelley said.

The orchestra's success with this particular kind of collaboration is, in fact, a rare enough occurrence that John Almandoz now teaches workshops to managers for the Orpheus Leadership

> **“There's very little feedback given in many organizations. This is something they miss and want.**
>
> John Almandoz,
> Workshop leader at the Orpheus Leadership Institute



THE RIGHT TONE
Maintaining the give-and-take of creative feedback in an open environment has been critical to the orchestra's success.

A CREATIVE EXPLORATION
Like many Orpheus members, Madeline Fayette (center) and Eric Bartlett (front) also work with traditional orchestras.

Institute – a venture of the orchestra sponsored by Sage – that demonstrates Orpheus' approach to collective leadership. He has found that the executives who take part in his workshops always seem to find themselves struck by how much feedback the musicians give each other. "The first thing they tell you is that there's very little feedback given in many organizations, that this is something that they miss and they want," says Almandoz, who is a professor at the New York campus of the IESE Business School of Barcelona in the Department of Managing People in Organizations.

WHEN EXECUTIVES WATCH a clip of how Orpheus operates, they find it "almost magical," he says. They tell him, "'I wish we could have something like this in our organization, where people could share feedback in such an open way and that there would be no defensiveness, always giving and receiving feedback without the aim of hurting anyone.'"

The other thing executives find impressive about Orpheus, Almandoz says, is the fact that the musicians don't get attached to a particular idea. "They're not afraid of trying different ways of doing things and then making a decision," he explains. They also like the way the musicians keep their eyes on the overall goal and listen to everyone else and find the rotation of leadership roles interesting in the way it gives everyone the chance to shine, according to Almandoz.

But perhaps the biggest takeaway of all regarding the Orpheus case might not play well in each and every C-suite: Almandoz says he once heard Hackman say that not having a conductor gave the group more leadership rather than less. Or as Almandoz puts it: "In a way, you're always preparing people to be conductors, paradoxically, because they end up developing their insight, their creativity." ■

The creative potential of the many

The Orpheus Leadership Institute in New York City focuses on equipping teams with the tools and mindsets that enable collaboration and creativity even in the most complex environments. Using guided observation sessions and interactive experiences, the institute is built around sharing the philosophy of the orchestra – namely the development of ideas in an environment of constructive critique, tracking what is needed in each moment, stepping in and out of different roles to better serve the whole and mentoring new members – while both making that philosophy adaptable to business environments and strengthening the structures that exist at the core of a team's ability to deliver something extraordinary as a whole.

INNOVATION

Beating blocks

Turning an idea into a fine-tuned vision is at the core of each successful endeavor – yet encountering a few hurdles along the way is often an inevitable part of that process. Here leading creative practitioners share their strategies for moving past those bumps and getting back to the matter at hand.

BY ***Chris Wiegand***
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ***Nigel Buchanan***

WHO HAS TIME these days to sit back and wait for the muse to strike? Among those who make a living in the arts, it's not many. Moments of frustration, disillusionment, confusion and downright despair are an unavoidable part of the creative process and everyone has discovered their own hard-won solutions for overcoming them. A comedian, a choreographer and a composer – plus a short-story writer, a playwright and a director – share their personal tips here on how to beat those creative blocks. From finding a fresh new perspective and favoring flexibility to shrugging off the fear of failure, embracing your inner improviser and listening to all the voices in your head, they offer some learning points if you are stuck in a jam. So ask yourself "what if?," stay playful and prepare to embrace the pause with these expert tips.

Pippa Evans

Comedian, star of *Showstopper! The Improvised Musical* and author of *Improv Your Life*

IMPROV is about working with what is available to you in the moment. Improvisers use the principle "yes, and" which means: I agree with what you've offered me and now I'm adding to it. First, make sure you have agreed on what you're all trying to achieve. Then establish a "yes, and" environment for half an hour when no idea is stupid. You are creating a space where people don't feel failure. You need to let ideas breathe before you cut any down. It's easy to instantly dismiss something but however ridiculous an

changing your position will allow you to respond because our bodies are connected to thoughts and emotions. In a meeting, ask everyone to move around the room. Working at home? Get up and do a little dance in the kitchen.

If there's someone with more experience or authority in the room, like your boss, that's great and useful but it can stop new voices coming forward. Improv is truly collaborative and overrides any power dynamic. At the Comedy Store Players, where I perform as a guest, we remind ourselves it's not a competition – I'm not allowing their greatness to intimidate me and they're not allowing my newness to unsettle them. Levity is always helpful but be mindful of making jokes about individuals' contributions. The best levity acknowledges difficulties we're all facing. Stress will never solve the problem.

For those who work alone, remember you yourself are many people – you can play "yes, and" on your own. We all have different voices in our heads – why not utilize them? But you may well want to find a private space rather than do it in the office ...

idea might appear, it may grow useful. Never be afraid of being obvious – what seems obvious to you, may not be to someone else.

For *Showstopper!*, where we improvise a musical each night, we say "if in doubt, move." If you have a blank on stage, physically

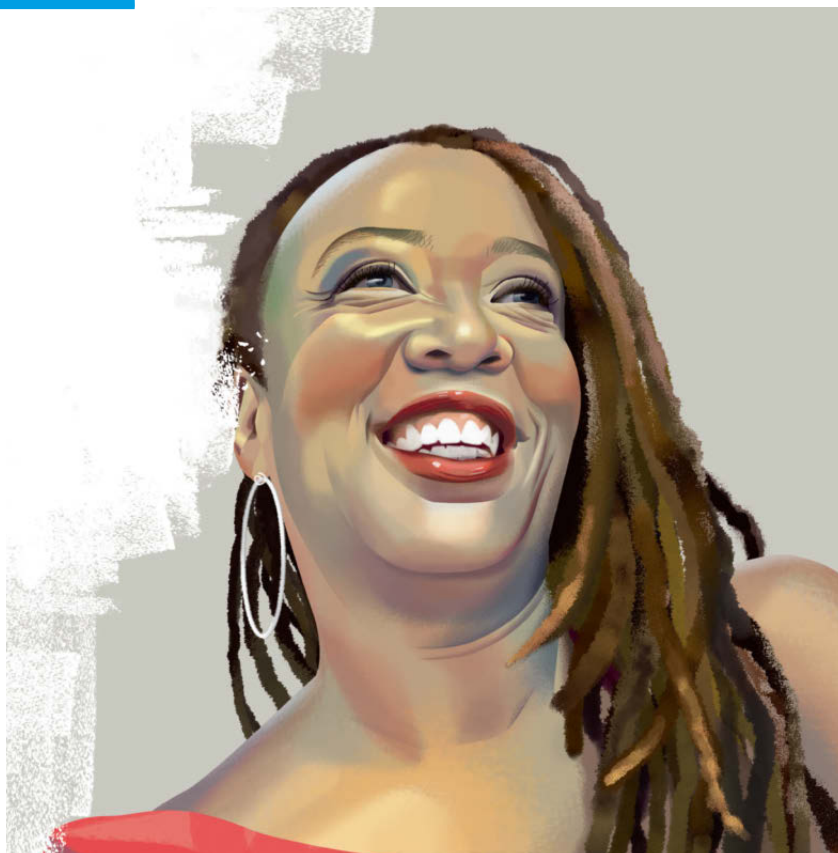
Deesha Philyaw

Writer and debut author of the short story collection *The Secret Lives of Church Ladies*

I STARTED WRITING a novel in 2007 and have yet to finish it. I lost interest in the book as I had outlined it, but kept trying to force it. A "block" suggests something we have to push through, but it's better to interrogate what is causing us to pause. I realized I had written a character frozen in time. My interests and skills as a writer had changed.

Pauses – as I prefer to call blocks – are an integral part of the process. Things need time to marinate. Give yourself a lot of lead time for a project. Ask "what if?" to experiment with possibilities. Embrace revision. When I started writing, I would try to perfect that first chapter. You'll write that first chapter for years if you do. First drafts are rarely if ever brilliant in their entirety, but get it all down start to finish if you can. For one of the stories in my collection I wrote a 15-page draft and, when I came back to it, only used two of those paragraphs but I don't consider that time wasted. They became the foundation for another story.

I was a stay-at-home mom before becoming a writer. Taking care of kids teaches you a lot about having grace for yourself and others. Children will wreck your plans for the day – build in some flexibility and don't beat yourself up if you don't accomplish everything that you planned. →



Hofesh Shechter

Choreographer and artistic director of his eponymous dance company

CREATING IS NEVER a smooth process. When I feel stuck or frustrated, that becomes the subject of what I'm making – like my show *In Your Rooms*, in which a creator tries to understand what they're doing. I bring a light energy to the studio – playfulness keeps people positive and effective. If you're too serious, there is the feeling that you're trying to do something correctly. Through foolishness, you discover interesting things.

Making work is like solving one big problem. Your subconscious keeps trying to make sense of it and knows when the work has to be presented and I believe things will arrive in the right place at the right moment. That is perhaps the only ingredient really necessary for creation: belief that it will happen.

David Yazbek

Composer and lyricist whose stage musicals include *The Band's Visit*

WHEN PEOPLE COMPLAIN of writer's block, it's as if they're constipated. But creative energy doesn't come from within the individual – the entire universe is creative energy, that's what keeps it moving. The question is what is standing in the way to keep that flowing through you. I meditate which is a good way of clearing the decks.

Like everyone else, I've done a lot of work over Zoom in the last years. But being in the same room together is much more productive, especially if you like the other person and laugh a lot. There are vibes and all kinds of nonverbal mini-signals, probably even pheromones being exchanged.

The quality of other artworks can spark you to do really good quality work. When we were in rehearsal for *The Band's Visit* there was a Mark Rothko exhibit nearby. Every morning I'd go there and almost have a spiritual experience – then in rehearsals I'd try to tap into whatever that source was.

Jack Thorne

Screenwriter and playwright of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

I GET VERY FRUSTRATED being a writer but I've never just stopped. It is psychologically cyclical: There is a time when you're happier and a time when you're angrier. Thirteen days out of 14, I leave my desk and am cross with myself. The best writers' rooms for TV have a wide array of people with different skill sets, all challenging the show in different ways. When they work less well is when it's quiet and everyone's very worried and anxious.

Sometimes I have two or three projects on the go in different stages of development. If a TV show is shooting, you might deal with the fact that a four-page scene needs to be cut to two pages. That might happen while I'm writing a play. When I was doing *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, I was also writing a TV show called *National Treasure* about historic sex crimes. They complemented each other in a weird way because they were so different.

Generally I'm doing an eclectic mix of projects and that helps me. When I've had a bad day on one, the ability to swap to another and feel like my palette is cleansed – and that I'm perhaps not as much a failure as I think I am! – is very nice.

Katie Mitchell

Theater and opera director

AS A DIRECTOR, I'm a secondary artist. Primary artists start with a blank page; I can always hide behind the work of the primary artist that I'm directing. Any blocks will be related to a failure to interpret someone else's material. To safeguard against blockage, I have lots of systems and structures in place. I always apply a rigorous analysis of the original material. Imagine the play as the engine of a car: I take it all apart, look at every component and put it back in. Examining the play is a mechanical task – one of those little components of the material could yield the interpretative concept.

You could say the analysis is like welding because all these sparks, which are by-products of the process, come off. A weird spark may come up like "everything should be yellow." I visualize the staging for the whole piece through that idea which requires a lot of drawing, maps and diagrams.

I'm very curious about things. That keeps me going. Blockages can come because feelings – fear, for example – get attached. Marguerite Yourcenar's book *Memoirs of Hadrian* is a life-changer – one of her observations is that whenever there is a tangle or problem or difficulty, you ask yourself: "What is the advantage of that?" ■

Think quick on the draw

Stuck? Why not pick a card? Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt have made a case for the power of unexpected interventions since the mid-'70s.

IN SLACKER, the 1990 cult film by Richard Linklater, a woman presents a pack of cards to a passerby in Austin, Texas. He takes one and reads it quizzically: "Withdrawing in disgust is not the same thing as apathy." This wry aphorism is one of the Oblique Strategies created by musician Brian Eno and painter Peter Schmidt – a deck of cards that has fueled creative thinking for almost half a century.

Eno and Schmidt were friends who discovered they had independently compiled lists of simple instructions and suggestions to aid the creative process. In the mid-'70s, they teamed up to create a set of more than 100 "worthwhile dilemmas" for others to use. "If you're in a pressure situation, especially in a recording studio where the clock is ticking and it's all very expensive, you tend to get a little bit desperate and lost in the details," Eno explained in a BBC interview. "To be able to step out of the situation and look at it in a bigger way is hard to do."

Originally the strategies were laid out as a list, but Eno decided that plucking a card from the pack provided a more useful, unexpected and often tangential prompt for a new direction. Examples include "Work at a different speed" and "Try faking it." Eno used the cards when recording songs for the album Another Green World. They have since been revised and released in several different editions. The cards can be used separately or, as the woman in *Slacker* suggests, you can draw a second one to "buffer your last thought – or think about something new."

Five oblique strategies:

1. **Look at the order in which you do things**
2. **Honor thy error as a hidden intention**
3. **Use fewer notes**
4. **Remember those quiet evenings**
5. **Reverse the tape**

ARTWORK BY JEROEN EROSIE


PERFORMANCE

The power of story-telling

Throw away that PowerPoint deck – you don't need it. Storytelling takes a bit of skill but with improvisation techniques you can discover how to think on your feet. Take a few lessons from the pros and the results could be transformative.

BY ***Brian Logan***

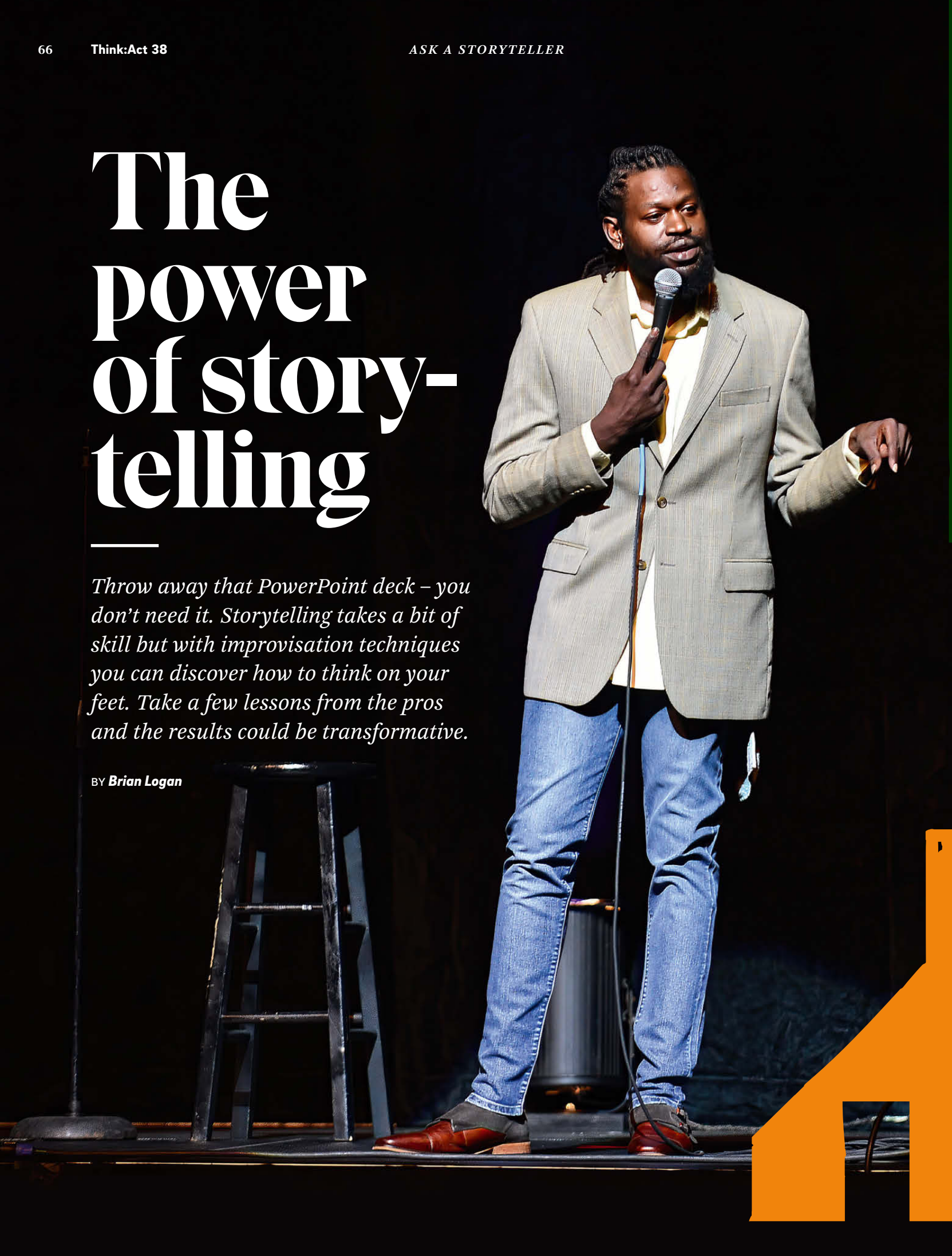


PHOTO: JOHNNY LOUIS / GETTY IMAGES

PLAYING TO AN AUDIENCE
Comedian Blaq Ron performs at the James L. Knight Center in Miami, Florida in May 2022.

WHEN MAX DICKINS, a jobbing stand-up comedian, attended his first improvisation workshop, it was with a heavy tread. "I smiled weakly, my heart sinking," he recalls with a shudder in his 2020 improv-for-business manual *Improvise!* "There was no escape now." So, a decade on, he understands when, bringing improv into the corporate world, he meets with occasional resistance. "Of course there's pushback," he tells me. "'Why do I have to know how to be funny? Why should I pretend to be a tree?'" That's a reaction familiar to Boz Temple-Morris, director of storytelling-for-business producer Same River. "It's a struggle. Lots of people don't get it," he tells me. "But way more people do than when I started. Because they're seeing it happening. They're seeing lots of organizations having great success when they use storytelling in interesting ways."

That matches Dickins' experience, too. While at first glance storytelling and improv may seem like imperfect fits with the cutthroat business world at best, they're now established tools in the fields of corporate leadership and organizational transformation. Stanford Graduate School of Business has courses called The Power of Story and Leading with an Improv Mindset. Neil Mullarkey, co-founder of world-renowned improv troupe the Comedy Store Players with *Austin Powers* star Mike Myers, is a visiting lecturer at Bayes Business School as well as being an expert in the overlaps between business, storytelling and on-the-hoof performance. He cites a couple of business management books and adds that some of them concluded that "the leader's job isn't to know the answer, it's to manage the process of not knowing," and then adds: "That's where improv comes in."

Temple-Morris is at the cutting edge of this thinking with his company Same River, which specializes in storytelling for organizations by "producing creative projects that engage audiences and generate meaningful impact." No one's had a career quite like Temple-Morris, who ran an experimental theater company in the 1990s while also producing and marketing Death cigarettes, a British brand devised to satirize the iniquities of mainstream tobacco advertising. Such was the project's notoriety, that it remained – even after it was wound up in 1999 – something of a legend in the world of marketing. "I wanted to go straight back to theater," says Temple-Morris. "But the commercial world was always saying to me 'can you come and help with this?'"

With what, exactly? "What they call 'branding,'" he says, "but what I think of as just 'meaning.' Where you ask: How do you get a group – an internal group within an organization, or its customers – to fully understand the meaning of this thing such that they want to engage with it?" To Temple-Morris, the answer was clear: storytelling. "I make theater over here and films for corporations and charities over there. But it's all storytelling. It's the same skills and very similar processes. The core skill is to divine the inner meaning of something, then relate that in a way that's relevant to the audience you want to talk to."

THAT'S WHAT SAME RIVER now does for big companies and tech giants alike. For one such company, Temple-Morris says, he worked with GirlUp, a movement to advance girls' skills and rights, which resulted in 10 short films shot in different countries that tell the story of a young female change-maker. And for a UK youth charity it created Trust Us, a series of theatrical experiences, audio-visual installations and activities staged in Westminster Academy in London. "These projects arise out of very simple questions or principles," says ⟶

PERFORMANCE

Temple-Morris. "What's the purpose of your storytelling? What's the change you want to make? It could be: We want more people to buy our stuff. But what I'm saying is: People will like you, and buy your stuff, if you do good things. So, do good things and let's tell a story together about the good thing you've done."

Neil Mullarkey's first and ongoing love is improv – but when he followed the logic of the improv skills he taught, it led him to storytelling. "People often think improv is chaos, but it's the opposite, really," he explains. The more he extemporized for audiences, the more he learned about which narratives are satisfying and which aren't. "In a business context," he says, "storytelling can mean better presenting." One of his offers is a course called Enrich Your Pitch, which is about "getting rid of the myth of the elevator pitch. Much more often, the elevator pitch is just the beginning of a conversation." So many people, he says, "get back to me a few days after the course and say, 'I did what you suggested. I got rid of my slides, all the boring stuff, and just told a story.' Or, 'we had fewer points to make, but we listened more to the client.' Those are the small wins for me."

LISTENING IS A KEY SKILL improv training imparts. Dickins runs London's first improv theater and biggest improv comedy school, Hoopla, with whom he spreads his gospel to companies including Shell and Facebook. Just as storytelling finds a more receptive audience in corporate environments, Dickins sees more openness to what he calls the art of acting without a script. "How much of our life are we forced to perform without a script?" he asks. "When we're building relationships with clients, when we're trying to land ideas in the room, if we're pitching or solving problems together. We do all that without scripts, and improv offers you a methodology to understand how that works and get better at it."

That's all the more essential, he argues, in a business environment that is more contingent than ever. "We're

A REAL CONNECTION
Shared laughter brings people together, even in difficult circumstances.

PHOTO: DIMITAR DILKOFF / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Release your creativity

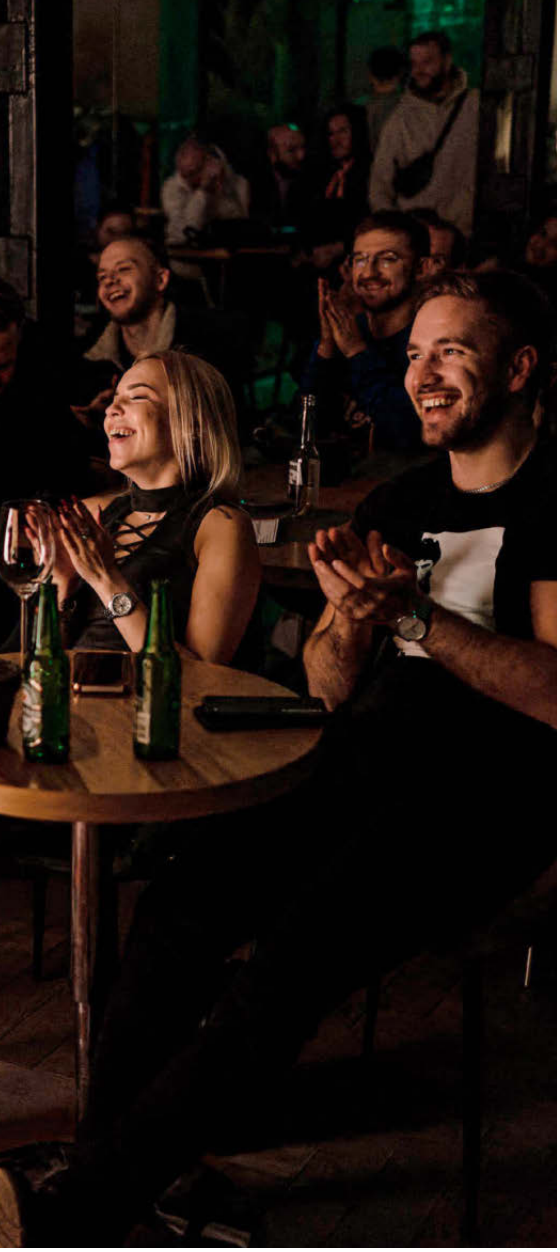
These five short improv exercises are useful in the performing arts – and they have business potential, too.

"Yes, and" ... what's next?

The keystone of all improv: You and a partner exchange 'offers,' accept and build. Positivity is the point; 'no' is against the rules.

One-word stories

A group or pair of players tell a story together, each person adding only one word at a time. It's about listening, spontaneity – and banishing self-censorship.



in a VUCA world," he says, citing the managerial acronym of the moment – it stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. "The way people are working is more collaborative. Hierarchy is less relevant. People are being asked to be more creative and more comfortable with moving really quickly."

IT'S A CONTEXT THAT INCREASES the value of improv skills – like "self-awareness about your relationship to being in the moment and to control," says Dickins. "The world of businesspeople is about having everything planned. But when the plan hits reality and doesn't land as you'd hoped, how do you react?" Improv training means "you can trust that the resources available to you in that moment are as valuable as the resources you've prepared in advance."

That's just the tip of the iceberg. Improv's long list of business-relevant skills includes listening, "which we define as 'the willingness to be changed by what you hear,'" says Dickins. "Being flexible, humble, prepared to take on ideas, being really present. Not just doing 'active listening' like you're taught in business school, which is putting on your listening face and making listening noises." Dickins also addresses fear of failure, and how to overcome it; playfulness and creativity; and overcoming the strictures of status and hierarchy.

All of which has a direct application to businesses looking to operate more effectively – belying the fact that improv is often, initially, just a bit of team-building fun. "People like improv training," admits Dickins, "because it's very different to the 'here's a PowerPoint, let's watch a video' approach. You're doing stuff all the time. It's fast-paced, energetic, you get a lot of laughter in the room. But then, the learnings are also quite profound. The team-building is a Trojan horse, really, into more substantial learning outcomes."

That's certainly the experience of one of Dickins' customers, Craig, a performance manager whose company, a major energy retailer, worked with Hoopla earlier in May this year. It was the first global gathering of Craig's department since Covid. "We wanted to reestablish some human connection, not take ourselves too seriously – but also encourage ourselves to be more creative, courageous, and to move at speed, he says." Craig quickly points out how over one day's workshop they managed to foster a climate for risk-taking, positive thinking, dealing with change and deep listening. "It's about how can you be supportive in a team and cheer one another on even if there is an element of competition in there," he adds.

Bringing in the storytellers, Craig says, is "not something we'd normally do: We're a bit of a stiff company. But it really paid off. Everyone enjoyed it and everyone pushed themselves outside their comfort zone. The event for me personally was a stake in the ground. We will take forward the things we did, and use them daily." He's not alone: More and more leaders and businesses coming into contact with improv and storytelling are finding the results transformative. "I feel very passionate about this," Craig concludes. "These are really valuable things for businesses to do." ■

> **The world of business-people is about having everything planned. But when the plan hits reality and doesn't land as you'd hoped, how do you react?**
>
> Max Dickins,
> Director of Hoopla

PERFORMANCE

Forum theater

Real-world problems or challenges are addressed by dramatizing them. Audience interaction is encouraged – the exercise stops and starts as new ways to deal with an issue are explored.

What's in the box?

You have 60 seconds to pull as many imaginary items as you can from an imaginary box. What do you find? This game illustrates spontaneity, and what can obstruct it.

Follow the follower

Players stand in a circle. Every facial expression and action made by one person must be mirrored by everyone else. No one leads; selflessness is required; teamwork is king.

PERFORMANCE

CASTS OF CHARACTERS

Shakespeare's analysis of universal truths serves as a source of inspiration for those looking to understand the nature of human interaction.

Playing the part of a leader

Shakespeare was the master of stagecraft and he still has something to teach leaders of all kinds. We take some lessons from seasoned actors who use the Bard – and their skillsets – to help business take center stage.

BY ***Geoff Poulton***
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ***Thomas Cian***

A PIXELATED IMAGE on a small laptop screen in front of me, Ben Walden is hundreds of miles away. Despite this, he has an undeniable presence. His voice is clear, varied and engaging. There are no "umms," "errs" or awkward hesitations. As a passive spectator on Zoom calls, it can be all too easy for the mind to wander. But Walden commands attention, drawing in the viewer with his storytelling. "Henry has a plan: to seize the port of Harfleur before marching on to Paris and being crowned on Christmas Day. But it all goes wrong," Walden says, pausing briefly and fixing the camera, and me, with a steely stare. "He soon finds that he's wildly underfunded and has been set a completely unrealistic strategic target in an unworkable timeframe. This will be the ultimate test of his leadership skills."

It helps that the story Walden is telling was written by one of the world's celebrated writers, William Shakespeare. But it also helps that Walden is an experienced actor. Once a regular on British television and London's West End, his decades of experience make him a powerful and captivating communicator. Now, Walden is a workshop leader at London-based Olivier Mythodrama. The company was founded in the late 1990s by Richard Olivier, son of the renowned actor Laurence Olivier, and combines a range of techniques and insights from acting, psychology and Shakespearean stories to help global business leaders to perform better.

PERFORMANCE

THE STORY WHICH WALDEN is outlining – *Henry V* by Shakespeare – happens to be packed full of valuable lessons for modern executives, he says. In a typical Olivier Mythodrama workshop, whether in person or, increasingly, online, participants are introduced to an overview of the story and use it as a frame of reference to explore topics like purpose, vision and motivation while learning how to improve their emotional intelligence and communication skills. As Henry ponders whether to fight the much larger French army at Agincourt, for example, we discuss how to manage fear and uncertainty, changing doubt to inspiration and the importance of sharing ownership of a vision.

The integration of archetypal psychology into Olivier Mythodrama's work enables managers to better understand underlying traits that may be prominent in their leadership approach – or, on the other hand, may rather be missing. You may be a rational and strategic "sovereign" type ⟶

Find and master your part

or a goal-driven "warrior," for example. "Most people tend to be more skilled in the planning and doing areas of work but far less capable in imaginative and emotive areas," Walden explains. "Being a good storyteller and making organizational ideas engaging for others is an important way of solving problems collaboratively."

That may sound a little 'artsy' to some, but Olivier Mythodrama's blue-chip client list suggests there's plenty that today's executives can learn from the world of drama and theater. After all, in business everyone has a role to play. And the more senior you are, the more roles you'll likely have to master, from the public speaker, inspiration leader and trusted colleague to the ruthless decision-maker and wise mentor.

But as Geoff Church says, this isn't about teaching business leaders how to act, "It's about being more authentic." Church is the co-founder and co-director of Dramatic Resources, a UK company that draws on techniques from theater to improve business communication. "In great acting, actors are channeling themselves into the task of a particular role. And I think it's the same for business leaders. You've got to step into different roles, but if you do it without bringing yourself, then nobody really buys into it. By learning acting skills, you can find parts of yourself that relate to the role you need to play."

AT LEAST 90% OF SOCIAL MEANING is derived not from what we say, but how we say it. That's according to Deborah Gruenfeld, professor of organizational behavior at Stanford Graduate School of Business and author of *Acting with Power: Why We Are More Powerful Than We Believe*. This makes things like pitch, emotion, eye contact and posture hugely important – all fundamental parts of the dramatic toolkit. Church and his colleagues work with a range of international clients, from banks and business schools to nonprofits. Common topics include public speaking, handling nerves, tackling self-consciousness and ways to go about boosting engagement with others. It's totally normal to find these things challenging, Church says. "In my entire career, the only actor I've ever met who says he doesn't experience nerves is Ian McKellen. But actors have a set of practiced skills to handle it and turn destructive tension into creative tension."

This can involve something as simple as breathing exercises or quick bursts of vigorous movement that settle the body's fight-or-flight response. "Preparation is vital," says Church. "So many business leaders run from one event to the next without giving themselves time to prepare physically and mentally." Having a pre-performance routine, whether for a keynote speech or a small internal meeting, can make all the difference.

A key part of acting is knowing how and where to direct your attention. Much like nerves, self-consciousness is common. "What actors learn to do is focus their attention on other actors or the audience, rather than themselves," Church says. "So, think about how you want to make people feel if you want them to reach a desired goal or outcome. Do you need to excite them or shock them?"

Observation is also important, says Christine Kelly, a senior lecturer in managerial communication at the MIT Sloan School of Management. "Acting exercises bring to bear the whole physicality. It's full-body listening. By being aware of what other people are doing – their posture, their level

55% FACIAL

How much the successful communication of a message depends on body language and facial expression.

Henry V

"All things are ready, if our mind be so"

William Shakespeare's exploration of the human mind offers universal insights that still resonate after nearly 500 years.

AGAINST ALL ODDS, King Henry V overcomes an assassination plot, defeats the French army and returns triumphantly to London to unite the two nations. The historical play is packed with leadership lessons, from selling a vision and motivating demoralized teams, to managing fears and doubts and inspiring success against the odds.

Julius Caesar

"Your wisdom is consumed in confidence"

THE ULTIMATE TALE of politics and influence: Jealous conspirators assassinate Caesar with the help of his friend Brutus – before perishing themselves at the hand of Mark Antony. Key themes include emotional intelligence, how to use power and navigating the world of organizational politics.

The Tempest

"What's past is prologue"

THE SURVIVORS of a shipwreck are tormented on a magical island by Prospero and his slaves, before being initiated into a new way of being that is more attuned to the needs of the time. The Tempest provides an ideal framework to explore the many different phases of change management.

Hamlet

"To thine own self be true"

HAMLET IS INSTRUCTED by his father's ghost to gain revenge for his murder and kill the new king. Hamlet feigns madness, ponders life and death and eventually decides to act, resulting in a bloody end. The lessons of this play highlight the pivotal role of decision-making and the importance of wise external counsel.

Macbeth

"What's done cannot be undone"

THREE WITCHES tell the Scottish general Macbeth that he will be king. Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth takes action, killing the king and taking the throne. Wracked with guilt and paranoia, he kills more and more people to protect his position, resulting in civil war. A tragic portrayal of ambition, self-awareness and picking your battles.

of eye contact, their gestures – you can sense the mood and create a better interaction."

Beyond raw acting skills, there are further benefits managers can gain from the world of theater. In Kelly's class called Enacting Leadership: Shakespeare and Performance, students form their own theater company and then put on a production. "Working within these creative constraints really inspires communication and collaborative decision-making," she says.

OLIVIER MYTHODRAMA and Dramatic Resources were founded in the late 1990s. In recent years, both Walden and Church have noticed certain changes in how and what clients want to learn. The mass-shift to remote work since Covid-19 has also added an extra element to their work. As Ben Walden has already demonstrated, acting skills can still be an effective way to improve your presence in a virtual environment. "Your visual performance should focus on building intimacy and trust with your audience," says Church. "Consider how to evoke emotion through evocative expression or even different music or camera angles."

38% VOCAL

How much the successful communication of a message depends on vocal inflection and tone.

While the benefits of many techniques from the world of acting and theater will vary according to the location, audience or general situation, there is one fundamental principle that Church, Walden and Kelly feel business leaders should always bear in mind. "So many of us are afraid of being vulnerable, exposing who we really are," says Kelly. "But to be a good actor, you have to be vulnerable and show yourself."

When people take the risk to share more of themselves, the result is that it often has a bigger impact both for the people around them and for themselves, adds Church. "The business world is typically very conservative around sharing – people worry about bringing all of themselves to work. But if you take the risk of sharing more of yourself, of being vulnerable, you will create better connections and reap the rewards." ■

PERFORMANCE

PHOTO: BIGHIT MUSIC

The new kings of pop

It might seem like trivial pop music, but the commercial success that K-pop has managed to generate in just a little more than a decade has some powerful lessons for non-pop business.

BY **Eamonn Forde**

JUST LOOK AT SOUTH KOREA'S BTS if you want some proof of how big a pop phenomenon can be. It is, by some distance, the biggest K-pop act in the world. BTS alone generated a staggering $4.65 billion for South Korea's economy in 2019, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*. Statista claimed this was equal to 0.3% of the nation's GDP, noting that Korean Air, the country's largest airline, contributed 0.7%.

The K-pop business is dominated by a handful of multidisciplinary entertainment companies that bankroll, develop and mastermind a dizzying range of acts. Chief among them are Hybe (previously Big Hit Entertainment), SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment and YG Entertainment. This is pop music on an industrialized scale, making the US factory line music model pioneered by Berry Gordy at Motown in the 1960s seem positively quaint.

But how did K-pop, once supposedly a niche concept, become such a staggering success? And what can the world of business learn from it? For one, K-pop production houses are complex machines, covering every creative and business aspect of the acts they handle, from records and tours to merchandise, branding deals and social media. A range of complementary and competing acts coexist under the same umbrella at these production houses. "It's like creating a movie," explains Shin Cho, the head of K-pop and J-pop for Asia at Warner Music Korea. "There's a universe in there and there are characters that are integrated."

MOVING AHEAD *K-pop group BTS has proven that bending the music industry's established rules can lead to the top of the charts.*

THE CAREERS OF THESE ACTS are intricately planned in advance, often stretching eight or nine years into the future, Cho explains. "The companies map out how this universe and how these storylines play out." This approach is taken for every act they represent, meaning some will have careers running in parallel and newer acts will be developed to replace others as their appeal wanes. "These labels not only work on your music, your management and your brand deals, they are often housing, feeding and dressing the stars," says music writer Jeff Benjamin who has been covering K-pop since 2011.

Hybe looks after BTS along with TXT, Enhypen, Seventeen and Yehana to name just a few. Its website feels less like that of a record label and more like that of a hedge fund, with one section devoted purely to investors. SM Entertainment, meanwhile, represents pop acts, actors, models and athletes. It has over 40 musical acts currently in its roster. All these acts are precision-tooled to appeal to multiple audiences simultaneously, creating a mélange that runs counter to the traditional rules of pop. "Strategically you can put [groups] into different units," explains Cho. "You can have vocal units of four guys or more singer-songwriter acts; you can also put rappers in there and dancers. You can put the different puzzle pieces together."

Blackpink has a mere four members, BTS has seven, Seventeen is something of a misnomer in that it has 13 and Neo Culture Technology has an astounding 23 members that break into subunits that can target multiple audiences concurrently. Benjamin argues this hybridization is a calculated feature rather than a desperate and scattershot strategy. "A key point of K-pop is making sure these groups, or even the solo singers, can appeal to multiple interests," he says. "I remember hearing my first K-pop song and being blown away by the fact that it had moments that sounded like a ballad, it had moments of rap, it had a dance break, →

PERFORMANCE

it had autotune. If you lean towards rap, if you lean towards R&B [or other genres], you can still find something in so many of these acts."

Having multiple focal points both across your products and within your products becomes symbolic of a new strategy for success. With the moving parts centrally controlled, companies can have products that are emerging, peaking and sunsetting simultaneously, with one stepping in to replace the one before it as it approaches the end of its life cycle. Apple understood this with the iPod where product differentiation allowed consumers to move differently through the portfolio depending on their requirements. A stable of K-pop stars is no different.

WHAT MAKES K-POP DIFFERENT in business is how it industrializes fandom and positions fans as part of the project, not just passive consumers. "The K-pop companies start off with the core audiences," explains Cho. "From the get-go, it's about creating fandom rather than building awareness first and bringing fans through that way," Benjamin concurs. "In K-pop it's about making sure that all things go to the fans first," he notes. "It's just so competitive that you can lose your fans to another group any day. That's a big business play."

A WIDE APPEAL *BTS fans (above) gather outside the Staples Center before the group's 2018 concert in Los Angeles; BTS members (right) join White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre during a daily briefing in 2022.*

Weverse is a prime example of this dynamic in action. It is a bespoke social platform created by Hybe in 2019. It controls and owns all the fan data rather than running everything through a third-party platform. "It is a brilliant platform as it was the first time BTS members got to individually speak to fans," says Benjamin. "Previously they had their Twitter account that all seven of them posted from." Weverse comes with exclusive content and a merchandise store, making it both a community hub and retail outlet. "They are reaping the benefits of keeping all that in-house, which leads to greater profit margins," argues Benjamin.

Cho suggests that BTS created a sea change in fan engagement and now others are slipstreaming what they did. "It was half-and-half before, keeping

PHOTOS: CHELSEA GUGLIELMINO / GETTY IMAGES; OLIVER CONTRERAS / POOL VIA CNP/MEDIA PUNCH

some mystery but at the same time super-serving the fans," he says of the older management approach. "BTS went above and beyond, having interactions with the fans that led up to the [modern] K-pop strategy where you have to constantly put out content that people cannot be bored of."

THE OLD RULES OF ANGLOPHONIC POP are crumbling and both K-pop and Latin music are changing the rules of linguistic engagement. In 2020, the Learn Korean With BTS tutorial series started on Weverse, giving non-Korean fans a new entry point into better understanding this world. This tied into a growing trend on YouTube where Korean fans translated pop videos and interviews for non-Korean speakers. K-pop fandom exists as a hybrid of English and Korean, with fans becoming polyglots as a necessary part of their fandom.

This is the ripple effect of K-pop companies and artists encouraging fan-generated content. The view is that UGC (user-generated content) and official content are not in competition; they are two sides of the same coin. "K-pop in Korea started with less strict copyright rules than other Western markets," states Cho. Fans are not there just to be sold to; they are rewarded as evangelists for recruiting new fans. BTS fans call themselves the ARMY for a reason – it also stands for Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth. Making lots of content available for free does not necessarily dilute the price of things when you want to charge, either, as BTS's livestream in October 2020 proved with just under one million paying viewers and grossing an estimated $35 million. Free can become a runway for paid.

K-pop companies are certainly about forward propulsion, but they are not about chasing the latest market trends to try and appear omnipotent.

BTS: breaking records

16.3 BILLION
The number of streams BTS had collected on Spotify by April 2021, beating out Coldplay.

45 MINUTES
How long it took BTS to reach one million followers on Instagram.

108.2 MILLION
The number of times BTS' *Butter* video was viewed on YouTube within 24 hours.

They will carefully weigh up new opportunities and technologies, deciding when the optimum moment to pursue something is, such as Hybe creating Weverse. Equally, they will withdraw from something if it feels wrong or if it, after further investigation, could fall short. JYP Entertainment, for example, had planned to work with technology company Dunamu to create an NFT platform for its acts. Some due diligence later and the project was off. "At this moment, we have decided to terminate our business contract with each other after mutual agreement," they said in a joint statement.

IT IS RARE THAT COMPANIES will publicly admit they made a mistake, but the powerful survival instinct in K-pop companies sees admitting where they were wrong as being as strong a virtue as proclaiming where they were right. They also see what are ostensibly rival companies as entities to invest in rather than entities to compete with. In 2021, Big Hit Entertainment invested in rival company YG Entertainment. Collaboration, they argue, can be more profitable than competition.

The major economic contribution of K-pop to the Korean economy and its cultural export potential has given K-pop companies significant soft power with regard to government policies. It represents a new Korea, sitting alongside the international success of TV shows like *Squid Game* and films like *Parasite*. "That was a huge part in *Gangnam Style* and PSY breaking out in 2012," says Benjamin. "I think it really got many people into this idea that music in Korean could be fun and interesting." Cho regards K-pop as the global manifestation, both culturally and economically, of a new type of national pride in the country post-independence in 1948. "Korean culture started off with a 'we can do this so let's do it together' mentality," he says. "The government has always been supportive of this idea of Korea performing on the world stage."

The government has put considerable money and resources into promoting its cultural products globally, seeing it as a tactical investment that will boost the economy on a long-term basis. The impact is such that the government was recently debating if the members of BTS should be excused from doing national service, something that was previously only considered for internationally successful sports stars. K-pop is a powerhouse business not just because it breaks old rules; it is a powerhouse business because it is constantly writing entirely new ones. ■

The show must go on

The pandemic took its toll on the performing arts, but resilience and resourcefulness have helped them survive.

BY ***Sarah Hemming***
PHOTOS BY ***Manuel Harlan***

PERFORMANCE

MATTHEW WARCHUS, the artistic director of London's prestigious Old Vic Theatre, is looking back to March 2020 when the doors slammed shut on UK theaters, bringing the whole live performance industry to a screeching halt. The pandemic hit his building, and his theater generally, extremely hard: Venues were closed for months and subject to stringent restrictions when they did reopen.

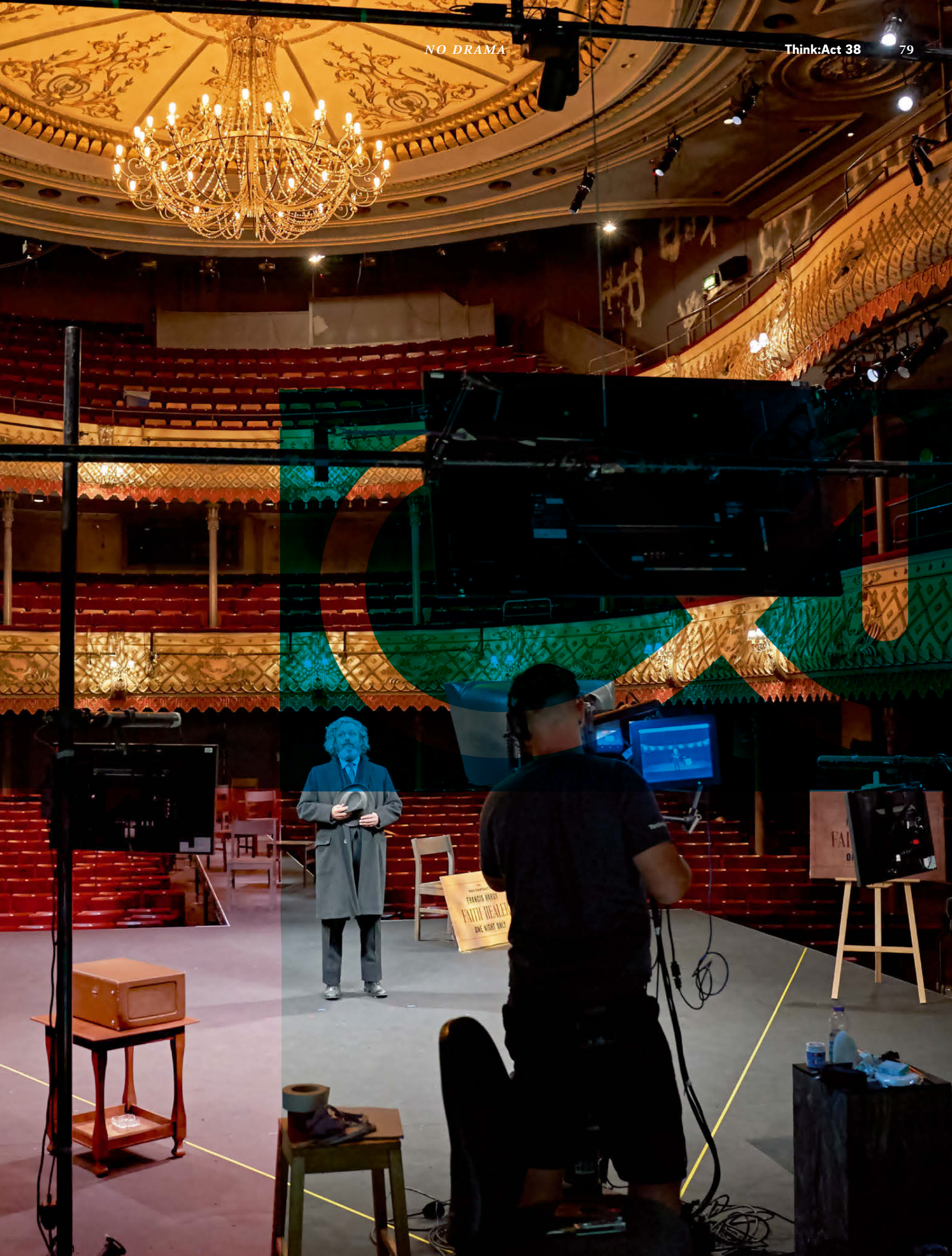
For many, lockdown was an existential threat, cutting their income to near nothing overnight. Institutions struggled to survive, some went under and many of the thousands of freelancers who make, produce and deliver stage shows left the industry entirely. Yet what was remarkable was how quickly a fighting spirit emerged. Companies and individuals were soon demonstrating extraordinary ingenuity and resilience, finding new ways to create work for employees, to reach their customers and to generate income. In September 2021 Andrew Hill, senior business writer for the *Financial Times*, suggested that businesses could learn from the theater industry's response to lockdown. "Theater professionals are the epitome of the flexibility and adaptability that other workers need in tough times," he wrote.

The initial instinct from many theaters was to keep faith with audiences trapped at home by digging into their archives to stream filmed productions. But many turned a necessity into a new opportunity for learning, innovation and evolution. Some sought to replicate the excitement of the shared experience that is at the core of live theater. The National Theatre in London led the way by streaming on YouTube, free to access, encouraging online "watching parties" among audiences. As the shows went "live" for the first time there was a sense of anticipation, people counting down to the timed online release and sharing photographs on social media of their outfits and interval drinks. Going out, but staying in.

OTHER ARTISTS BEGAN TO DEVELOP WORK for the new medium of Zoom, experimenting with different formats. Perhaps the most advanced innovation came from the Royal Shakespeare Company, which created a pioneering event fusing live action with virtual technology [see p. 80]: an example of using a crisis to push through new ideas and forge new partnerships. For Warchus at the Old Vic, being locked down forced theater artists to reflect on their core purpose and find new ways to deliver it. For him, that USP was "liveness." He came up with a season called Old Vic: In Camera. Actors would perform every night, on the stage of the empty theater, with a remote audience tuning in via Zoom. The theater sold tickets and the show would go out, as with a regular production, at a fixed time. "That liveness was the thing about In Camera which differed from some of the other projects happening," Warchus explains. "Every performance that we did was livestreamed and in the moment. So you made an appointment to turn up at that time and you couldn't press pause or do anything else. I decided that the precariousness of that, the high-wire act, is a crucial part of theater."

The experiment took nerve and determination. An in-house team used minimal equipment and there was no editing: Any mistake was broadcast live. It lent a real buzz to the event, but for Warchus it was a challenge to think outside the company's normal working practices and priorities. "Normally we pride ourselves in fabricating very high-end, polished production values," he says. "This was more like street theater: anything could →

A NEW "LIVENESS" ***Michael Sheen performs to an empty house, but live via streaming, in a production of Faith Healer at London's Old Vic Theatre in September 2020.***


FRANCIS BARRY
FAITH HEALER
ONE NIGHT ONLY

happen. It wasn't about total expertise: It was about being game and willing to have a go as a team. It was a very steep learning curve for everybody," he adds. "Because it was a new form, nobody had done anything like it. As much as anything – and perhaps this is where there is wider relevance [for other businesses] – it was a group act of courage and trust in the people we were working with."

TRUST IN YOUR TEAM is the takeaway, says Warchus, together with the courage to risk something new: "We were using our instincts for improvisation which is a big part of theater-making. It confirmed the importance of being flexible, being responsive and being resilient. It wasn't about being ready to do it – we weren't ready to do it. It was about getting out there and doing it anyway." Tom Littler echoes that emphasis on flexibility. As the artistic director of London's tiny Jermyn Street Theatre, he mounted an array of lockdown works including eye-catching events such as *15 Heroines*, in which leading actresses starred in contemporary versions of Ovid's *Heroides*, captured live on video for ticketed streaming. "We were never not busy," Littler says. "Because we thought, 'Well otherwise, what's the point?' Very quickly it became about 'How can we look after our freelancers, how can we stay in a financial position to survive and how can we entertain that isolated audience?'"

Littler found that taking risks, being bold and thinking ambitiously – reaching out to big names, for example – could turn a challenging situation into something positive. For Jermyn Street, which has a capacity of 70, programming boldly during lockdown raised the theater's profile enormously, brought in a vastly bigger audience and increased the theater's pool of collaborating artists. He was even able to make work that might be too costly in normal times. "The kind of producing flexibility that that period afforded was interesting: You could make a show happen on Zoom, with famous actors, for about $14,000, whereas the equivalent in the theater would have cost $97,000."

But for Littler, what the period clarified most was the critical role played by freelancers in the industry. "The pandemic exposed the underbelly of how it all gets made and an enormous amount of that is freelancers," he says. "It really forced us to renegotiate that relationship. I think that is something for anyone whose business model relies on a lot of freelance work to think about really hard: to work towards a less exploitative, more collaborative model with your freelancers. In our case one direct legacy is that we've changed our governance: We now have an advisory board and several of the people on that board are practicing freelancers."

A virtual reaction

The Royal Shakespeare Company's *Dream*, a 50-minute show based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, featured actors in motion-capture suits moving around a physical space, sending their onscreen avatars around a virtual forest on the audience's screens at home. Sarah Ellis, the RSC's director of digital development, said at the time: "The purpose of the project is to really push innovation, to push the technologies as far as we can."

AS LOCKDOWNS EASED, returning again to in-person performance produced a new challenge that also demanded a speedy and flexible response: the risk of the cast contracting Covid and the show going down. Christmas 2021 became the season of the understudy, when these emergency cover actors often kept shows on the road. Ruby Ablett, an understudy for the West End show *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, described in an article for London's *Evening Standard* how the cast of 16 went down to 12, then 10. She took on a leading role with just 48 hours to learn the lines and movement. "Coming into work each day, not knowing what might be required of you, is a constant anxiety," she wrote.

The show *Life of Pi*, based on Yann Martel's award-winning novel, had just opened in the West End to rave reviews when the Omicron variant hit. The company took steps to cope, hiring six extra staff members: two actors, two puppeteers and two crew. The expense, says producer Simon Friend, far outweighed the financial cost and reputational damage of shutting down. When the show did have to close for 10 days because both lead actor and his alternate became ill, the impact was traumatic: "It cost us, we estimated, just in hard costs, around $700,000 – not to mention any kind of damage in terms of sales momentum."

Friend estimates that in the early months of 2022, around 75% of performances featured at least one change. Because many of the actors in *Life of Pi* also operate puppets, this meant directors

> "It wasn't about being ready to do it. It was about getting out there and doing it anyway."
>
> Matthew Warchus,
> Artistic director of the Old Vic Theatre

PERFORMANCE

having to restructure the team almost daily, with actors sometimes learning they would have to take on new responsibilities not long before curtain-up. This called for enormous flexibility, trust and concentration: They needed to adapt swiftly and be able to deliver that confidently in front of hundreds. It has been a huge exercise in resource management, he says: "If there's one thing other industries could learn, it's that ability to really have people thinking on their feet. This was an extreme case of thinking on your feet, from the business side, the logistics side and the creative side."

***IN THE MOMENT** Indira Varma (above) and Michael Sheen (left) performed from the stage of London's Old Vic Theatre to an audience in lockdown at home.*

THE PANDEMIC PRESENTED the theater industry with an existential dilemma: find new ways of working, presenting work, connecting with audiences and safeguarding staff – or mothball. The resourcefulness with which many even found ways to innovate within the restrictions could have lessons to offer other areas of business. And there have been some lasting benefits: Some companies attracted new audiences and raised their profile; some made technological advances; some have retained the practice of livestreaming drama; some expanded their network of working partners. Many demonstrated extraordinary resource management just to keep the show up and running. That has had a legacy in highlighting the indispensable role of freelancers. It's also prompted discussion about incorporating understudies more fully into companies to create more flexible working practices that could encourage a more diverse, more inclusive talent pool both onstage and offstage.

For Max Webster, director of *Life of Pi*, this turbulent period has raised far-reaching questions for all businesses about supporting flexibility and valuing your team. "The health pandemic, coupled with a global racial reckoning, has started to create a real change in how people are thinking about putting together teams," he says. "Increasingly, questions of care and of different access and needs are moving from a peripheral concern to closer to the center. I think that's very positive. The pandemic has caused a huge amount of suffering and stress, but some of the conversations it has generated have been very important." ■

PHOTOS: THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY; MANUEL HARLAN / ARENAPAL

PERFORMANCE

Raising the baton

Marin Alsop decided at age 9 that she wanted to become a conductor – a profession until recently closed to women. After making headlines as the first female musical director of a major US orchestra, Alsop is pursuing her passion to put more women in leading roles.

INTERVIEW BY ***Steffan Heuer***

Marin Alsop is chief conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra. She started her own orchestra in New York in 1984 and the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship in 2002.

↘ Your appointment as the first female music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 2007 was met with some pushback. Why are there still so few female conductors at the helm of the world's orchestras?
I think it's partly to do with societal hesitations to have women in leadership roles. We still haven't had a woman as American president – there still are many firsts for women in the 21st century where there shouldn't be any longer. There's some kind of lag about accepting women in these important and clear leadership roles. From my point of view, it's a matter of comfort. We have to get used to seeing more and more women in these roles, and then it becomes less threatening or intimidating.

↘ Conductors have to lead teams with dozens of strong personalities and creative minds. What's your secret?
Anyone who deals with a workforce that's extremely accomplished and talented, with healthy egos invested in the outcome, has to balance being authoritative and accountable with the utmost respect and compassionate listening. I don't have a strict kind of interpretation that I can't deviate from. I've often been inspired by something a musician has brought to the table and then we've elaborated on that. To be a great leader, you have to respect the people you're working with and have to be a good listener. And you need to have a good and healthy sense of humor about yourself.

↘ You've compared musicians to a prototype for the ideal 21st century human being as they possess all the necessary skills. What exactly are those?
We need creative thinkers, people who can find solutions to problems, and we need the great skills that musicians bring to the table. They're self-motivated, they know how to practice every day, how to self-assess and self-critique. Musicians know how to budget their time, and on the job, they know how to listen to each other, when to step back, when to step forward. All of those skills are critical to collaborative work. Also, they learn about finding solutions. The show must go on and there's always something catastrophic that's about to happen. Musicians are experts at all of this – that's why they would be the best people to lead us. ■

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE
See the Short Takes interview video with Marin Alsop online:
rolandberger.com/en/alsop

PHOTO: SCHAUN CHAMPION / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX/LAIF

IN MEMORIAM

*This issue is dedicated to **Blasius Thätter**, who helped create this magazine. Friend, creative genius and one of our own. We will miss him a lot. — The Think:Act family*

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