Co-leadership and gender in the performing arts

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Abstract
Co-leadership has been a dominant form of management within sections of the arts industry for many years. Consisting of the artistic director and the general manager, the leadership partnerships within arts organisations, at first glance, might appear classically gendered: an heroic artistic leader and a facilitating general manager. In this research we identify the existence of these demarcations. However, we also find that the incumbents make no such association of gender specificity. We attribute this outcome to the characteristics of the performing arts industry more broadly and the people that are attracted to working in such an environment.

Biography
Kate MacNeill is a lecturer in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne and Ann Tonks is general manager of the Melbourne Theatre Company and, in that capacity, was also a participant in this research. Both Kate and Ann lecture in the graduate programs in arts management at the University of Melbourne.
Introduction

Leadership models within the major performing arts companies in Australia vary significantly. These companies include orchestras, dance companies, theatre and opera companies and circus. While the major performing arts companies were the subject of a major government inquiry in the late 1990s, including questions of board governance, there was little attention given to the internal management structures and dynamics of leadership (Major Performing Arts Inquiry 1999). Nonetheless a number of these companies share a particular leadership model: that of an artistic director and a general manager. Through a series of interviews with general managers and artistic directors our research explores the dynamics of this relationship as well as interrogating leadership structures and techniques in a creative context more broadly. We are particularly interested in the question of whether artistic leadership and managerial leadership require different styles and how these are employed in the day-to-day practice of co-leadership within a performing arts context.

In this paper we also examine the dynamics of co-leadership with reference to questions of gender that arise within these partnerships. The literature on co-leadership more generally tends to ignore this question – perhaps because the “partnerships” are often of the same sex. However, within the performing arts there has been a tendency for the artistic director to be male and the general manager to be female. This suggests another productive line of research on co-leadership. We have restricted the analysis in this paper to those organisations that exhibited clear co-leadership structures, language and processes.

The literature on management in an arts context

The literature on leadership in the arts emphasises the role of creativity and the demands of leading in a creative environment (e.g. Bilton 2007; Hartley 2005). In Australia, the necessity for creativity and entrepreneurship on the part of the arts leader has been thoroughly documented (Rentschler 2002). Often these studies emphasise the individualistic nature of creative leadership and locate this within the artistic aspects of an arts organisation’s operations. In other words leadership in relation to the management of an arts organisation tends to focus on the artistic product. Lapierre (2001, p. 4) refers to leadership being “rooted in the artistic product while management is subordinate to it” and that when art becomes a business enterprise it produces “an inevitable conflict” within the organisation between art and commerce (p. 5).

These discussions are based on certain assumptions about the nature of management and of leadership. Implicit in much of the management literature is the idea of a dichotomy between creative leadership of an organisation and conventional management imperatives. The evolution of arts management as a distinct discipline has resulted from the view that there is something unique about the arts. It also implies that there is a potential tension between the pursuit of artistic practice and that of managing an organisation (Royseng 2008). Separate structures frequently exist to serve the creative aspects of a company’s activities and its administrative responsibilities and external accountabilities (Chong 2002). Chong implies that bifurcated management structures arise from the increasing complexity and diversity of skills required by arts organisations. This inevitably produces the separation of the roles of artistic director and general manager. However, as our research demonstrates, the relationship between the artistic goals of the organisation and what might be thought of as “management” responsibilities is much more organic – and the prevalence of the co-leadership model may, in fact, be a consequence of this flexibility.

Complementary leadership models are not the sole preserve of the arts industry, and there is an increasing awareness of the way in which complementary leadership models are practiced in corporate settings: a common division is along the lines of responsibility for the external and internal environments (Miles & Watkins 2007).
Co-leadership has also been attributed with ensuring that “the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts” (Miles & Watkins 2007, p. 92). Critical factors in determining the success of co-leadership are considered to be communication and shared vision. Miles and Watkins argue that organisations need the four pillars of alignment in successful complementary teams: a common vision, common incentives, communication and trust. Ensley, Hmieleski and Pearce (2006) suggest that shared leadership is a particularly efficacious predictor of success in new venture performance, a finding which they considered to be consistent with prior research on shared leadership. They conclude that “shared leadership appears to be particularly important in the development and growth of new ventures... high profile cases of prodigal entrepreneurs, whose individual creativity and charisma have led them to fame and fortune, are more myth than reality” (p. 228).

It is interesting that shared leadership should emerge as a focus of management literature at a time when the very concept of what makes for good management is being re-assessed – together with its gender specificity. One particular theme recasts management in a way that emphasises “feminine leadership”, and argues that women in fact bring particular skills and attributes to their roles as managers which in turn produces “more humane, relations-oriented, flexible, participatory and caring institutions” (Billing & Alvesson 2000). As Billing and Alvesson note, there is a tendency in this literature to essentialise women, suggesting that women adopt different forms of communication, are more corporative, have a view of power that is more relational than individual and are better able to mobilise human resources (pp. 147–149). They go on to observe that some of these “feminine” values have been described as “the prioritizing of feelings … the importance of the imaginative and creative” (Hines 1992, p. 314). At the same time, imagination and creativity, together with charismatic leadership might equally be applicable to notions of artistic leadership, reinforced by the growing literature on creativity and innovation (Florida 2003; 2005 and others).

Lapierre (2001) suggests that artistic and theatre directors behave very differently when meeting with artists than when they deal with the administrative team, which implies that management behaviours, be they creative or otherwise, are not inflexible. However, while noting these very different approaches to leadership, he neglects to examine how the key leaders of their respective areas of the organisation (artistic leadership and organisational management) negotiate this dynamic. Certainly there is a perception that a tension exists because of the inherent characteristics of an arts company, conveyed through references such as “organisational schizophrenia (between the artistic and administrative sides of the company)” (Fitzgibbon 2001, p. 70). Perhaps because of this, the need for mutual respect between the executive director and the artistic director is emphasised. The interdependence of their fortunes is reflected in Mehta’s observation that “the executive director must respect the music director’s point of view, since it is on his [sic] shoulders that the ultimate responsibility for a season’s success rests” (Mehta 2003, p. 5). Liking the dynamics between the executive director and the music director to that of a marriage, he notes the complicating factor that while they are forced to live together they do not necessarily do so by their own choosing (Mehta 2003, p. 5).

Attributing individual characteristics to success in management runs the risk of reinforcing gender stereotyping, a matter that we directly address in our research. There has been little research specifically on women in management in the arts industry, and Foley (2005) noted that this may in part be because “most studies seem to have concentrated on women in more clearly defined management roles in, for example, manufacturing companies, and do not seem strictly applicable to a creative industry with a less hierarchical career structure” (p. 242). Certainly there has been significant attention given to the gendered nature of certain industries, and arts administration or management is widely regarded as a female dominated occupation.
Nonetheless, as Foley notes, sex segmentation does arise within the arts industry, frequently revolving around the artistic director/managing director partnerships and this is borne out in our study of the major performing arts groups. The capacity to impute gender specific requirements to the respective roles of artistic director and managing director is all the greater because of the frequent references that are made to arts organisations as “families” and the role of the two leaders as being the mother and father of the company. However, as our analysis demonstrates, these are far from traditional families and it is therefore not surprising that we find that any preconceived ideas of sex/gender stereotypes were not supported in the research.

**Methodology**

While the literature acknowledges the need for both creative and managerial leadership, the way in which these components are incorporated into leadership models and position descriptions varies considerably across company forms and size. Indeed there has been little attempt to reconcile the literature on creative leadership with actual management structures and, in particular, to examine the effectiveness of complementary or dual leadership models within the context of gender relations and the division of labour.

Our research involves in-depth interviews with the artistic and managerial leaders of Australia’s major performing arts companies. The analysis of this data draws on Katz’s (1983) analytic induction method: an initial hypothesis is formulated based on the existing literature. This is tested against the content of the interviews. The hypothesis is then revised and its fit against the data re-assessed. This iterative process is repeated until an explanatory framework is found that can accommodate the accounts contained within the interviews.

The principal research question that we are investigating in our wider research project is whether the model of leadership and its implementation within arts organisations is consistent with those models described in the management literature more broadly. We hypothesised that the context within which leadership roles are exercised will influence the particular models adopted and the style of leadership that is practiced. In this paper we also focus on one specific aspect of this research, namely the role of sex and gender in the dynamics of the creative and managerial leadership partnership. Based on the literature, we hypothesised that these factors would play a role where the partnerships consisted of one male and one female. In our interviews with members of these partnerships we asked whether their partner’s status as a member of the opposite sex was relevant to the leadership dynamic and in what ways.

**Findings**

At this stage we have completed sixteen interviews with each of the artistic and managerial leaders of eight performing arts companies. The co-leadership partnerships in seven of the eight organisations consisted of a male and female partnership: two leadership teams consisted of a male general manager and female artistic leader, and five leadership teams consisted of a female general manager and male artistic leader.

Acker’s (1992) framework of “gendered processes” in organisations has proved a useful way of thinking about our own processes and the way in which we are seeking to engage with the interactions between women and men in our small sample and seek to come to some understanding of how these dynamics are both formed by, and play a part in forming, the organisational culture.
Managing creativity

Managing in a creative environment is widely understood to be a uniquely challenging role. Once confined to the arts, the notion of the creative workplace has now spread more widely and is indeed becoming a dominant framing of “best practice” management. Goffee and Jones (2007, p. 79) say that to manage clever people:

You need to be a benevolent guardian rather than a traditional boss. You need to create a safe environment for your clever employees; encourage them to experiment and play and even fail; and quietly demonstrate your expertise and authority all the while.

The management style required to enable creative people to work effectively is frequently described in similar terms, as an “almost entirely supportive or facilitative function” (Davis & Scase 2000 p. 20). In fact the co-leadership model in the performing arts very much complies with the concept of the servant/leader model, a model in which leadership is subservient to the greater cause – in this case the art (Spears 1995). But in the arts organisation the greater cause is personified by the artistic director with the general manager being the quintessential “servant/leader”. The status of the artistic director, embodying the essence of the organisation’s entire rationale, can take on heroic connotations.

The art comes first

Certainly our interviewees saw the roles of artistic director and general manager as distinctly different – although absolutely interdependent. The most emphatic expression of their respective status was the widespread view that the artistic director must, of necessity, be the CEO of the company. Reasons for this lay with the absolute belief that the organisation’s primary role and distinct character derives from its status as an arts organisation:

Who’s the person who’s most important to the organisation? The artistic director and therefore they should be, within broad frameworks and limits and budgets, bigger than the general manager. ... Because the organisation only exists because it’s an arts organisation. ... If you’re destroying the output of the artistic director, therefore you’re undermining your very existence. [GM 4]

Furthermore it was considered necessary to reinforce this aspect in the public’s perception and with external stakeholders:

But I think even on a symbolic level the important thing about the CEO position sitting with the artistic director is that it’s symbolic. It says that at the topmost level of governance, whether it’s speaking outside company or within the Board, it’s saying: this is what the company’s here for. This is the primary impulse. [GM 2]

The primacy of the art and hence the artistic direction is reinforced by the acknowledgement by many of the participants that the artistic director should have their choice of general manager:

It’s absolutely crucial that the Board ensures that each new artistic director has their own general manager. ... I would recommend to any Board of any organisation that the most important thing that a theatre company does is to employ an artistic director. So it’s absolutely crucial that they have in mind that the artistic director will pair themselves with a person that they want to work with. [AD 2]


**Equal and different**

It is clear that while we write of a model of co-leadership, the bottom line is that a hierarchy does exist, even if it is never referred to or utilised other than at the moment of the arrival of the artistic director and again at the time of their departure:

> But I had my resignation on the table to the Board so that they could feel free to pick whoever they wanted to pick, who could then say and I want to bring x with me. So of the shortlist of candidates eventually I knew there was at least one person who had someone they would want to work with as general manager. [GM 4]

The concept of leadership from behind was mentioned by one interviewee – indicating the ability to create space and to be:

> willing to let somebody else get the obvious rewards of doing things in terms of both the art and the company, [while you are] doing all the sort of hard edged, analytical, financial, right brain stuff. [GM 4]

In other words the role of general manager is viewed as facilitative, one that enables the company or the creatives to get on with their primary role of creating – serving the art:

> Really the fundamental job of the general manager is to enable the art to be made. [AD 2]

> ….the primary job of management is actually to facilitate artistic vision. [GM 2]

The necessity of the general manager role, and the dependence on that person by the artistic director, was reinforced when an artistic director’s described themselves as lacking in certain skills:

> the company wouldn’t run with just me as the CEO – it would be – fall apart into a chaotic shemozzle fairly quickly. … [AD 6]

Similarly general managers were very clear about their specific skill set and contribution:

> [The artistic director is] just not interested in budgets and dealing with sponsors and strategy and policy development and all those sorts of areas. …I get excited about trends and looking back at the information and churning figures through to see where we might be heading. [GM 7]

At the same time there was a notion that the artistic director role was an intuitive role, one of necessity unmediated:

> it’s just arts coming out of my head whereas the general manager’s role is much more complex. [AD 6]

> He’s the left and I’m the right side so it just balances each other out [sic – sides reversed from the “theory” but point stands]. So in terms of the artistic vision and what the company can create, that very much comes from [the AD] and his
knowledge of all things theatrical. Mine is about the pragmatic, how do we actually get there, what do we have to do to get there? [GM 8]

These descriptions of the respective roles of artistic director and general manager suggest that different skills are required for carrying out the functions attached to each position. This has lead to the tendency in the literature to presume that, by implication, these positions might be gendered. At first reading, the artistic director role is emphatically that of a leader – one that might be characterised within, the now somewhat outdated, notions of leadership as the “single, heroic leader” whose influence is “uni-directional”, that is, starting from the appointment of the general manager, the artistic director is firmly in charge and influences the entire operations of the organisation (Yukl 2002, p. 431)

In contrast, the general manager is there to serve – to serve the art and to serve the artistic leader. Their role is to keep the machinery of the organisation functioning so as to enable the artist to maintain a single vision, without being distracted by the day-to-day matters of “housekeeping”. The general manager carries out activities that are often associated as being “feminine”, namely “listening, collaborating, nurturing and behind-the-scenes peacemaking” (Meyerson & Ely 2003, p. 134) as well as organising and book-keeping. In other words, it is possible to conceive of this job demarcation between artistic director and general manager as being gendered: the artistic director’s role requiring skills and behaviors that we might deem “masculine” and the general manager of performing functions and roles that we might consider “feminine”. We should emphasize that we use the terms of “masculine” and “feminine” not to attribute these to a particular sex but with reference to the literature which demonstrates the way in which characteristics, behaviors and job functions are frequently described in terms of gender (see Billing and Alvesson 2000, pp. 152–54).

The popular framing of co-leadership as a type of marriage further encourages one to regard the respective roles and competencies of each partner as being complementary and hence different – an assumption that we address in the following section.

*Co-partnership as marriage*

Miles and Watkins’ attributes of successful complementary teams, namely common vision, common incentives, communication and trust are apparent in the way in which our interviewees describe the nature of their relationship with their co-leader and with the organisation. The common vision is implicit in the way in which the general manager interviewees prioritise the needs of the artistic director, and in the ways in which the artistic directors speak of their commitment to the art as their driving motivation.

While Billing and Alverson (2000, p. 144) and others, have referred to the way in which leadership is frequently constructed in masculine terms, a framework which renders more intimate and familial interactions to the margins of management behaviors, the language of our interviewees was dominated by the emotions of “passion” and “love”. This is consistent with the observation made by Fitzgibbon (2001, p. 32) that work relationships within the arts management literature “[call] on the concept of family or friendship or even love, dimensions on which the bulk of management literature is silent”.

*A labour of love*

The notion that working in the arts is a labour of love is not unproblematic – but is nonetheless pervasive. Royseng’s case study of the financial rescue of a Norwegian theatre company, emphasised the need to balance the purely business approach to solving the company’s problems with ensuring the primacy of its artistic activities, the
new manager stating that she believed that it was important for her to “love theatre” as well as be an effective business economist and to do otherwise would have “damaged the whole theatre” (Royseng 2008, p.44). Far from being at the boundaries of management practice, in these particular co-leadership relationships and within the arts workplace more generally, what might be considered to be more “feminine” values are at the center of workplace dynamics.

You’re working for love basically, so you actually have to enjoy what you doing. [GM7]

I think the motivating force is a general love of [name of organisation]. [GM6]

The passion that one has for the form spills over into the dynamics between the employees:

I can’t work with anyone I don’t love in this business. If I’m not in love with my artistic director I can’t do it. And so there is automatically a relationship that is deeply personal and deeply respectful. [GM 5]

Beyond this common vision interviewees would, without prompting, emphasise their absolute trust in the other.

Communication

Equally strong is the way in which communication between the co-leaders is described as being almost intuitive. In this way, we might see successful co-leadership as avoiding the problem that Bennis (1997) suggests is inherent in structures that rely on two or three part leadership or “distributed leadership”, namely that it leads to increasingly bureaucratic processes. In fact, in the relationships that we explore, there appears to be a minimum degree of bureaucracy in the dynamic between the current leaders, a situation that arises from an implicit understanding of each other. Arts organisations are unlikely to develop rigid bureaucratic structures. This is principally because of the way in which the organisation will inevitably change as the artistic leadership changes hands and, along with it, the general manager. The notion that the arts industry consists of flexible modes of organisation is borne out by the dynamics described between partners in each of the co-leadership examples studied. The negotiation of relationships is a fundamental element of the arts industry:

each one of the productions is an organism and there is a new set of interesting personalities that arise within an organism and so the relationship of the senior executives to each of the groups of playmakers is different every time. [GM 1]

There appears to be a heightened awareness of the importance of communication and interpersonal dynamics so much so that, in a number of circumstances, the co-leaders offered information as to what personality type they are (for example, using a Myer Briggs framework), and appear to have a sophisticated analysis of the way in which their communication operates.

This flexibility and informality is also evident in the type of communication that happens between the two leaders and there was a very strong emphasis on informal communication. This would, in some cases, contrast to the way in which they communicated with other workers within the organisation:
It’s informal simply because a structure wouldn’t ever work. [GM 4]

Most of that communication just takes place without making meetings. He might say what you doing for lunch, let’s have a coffee and we’ll talk about a few things. [AD 3, p. 6]

We have a lot of coffees – which sounds big wanky but it’s actually good to get out of an office environment and discuss particular issues. [GM 8, p. 8]

He rings me every lunchtime. … and then maybe once a week we’ll see each other in the evening. Or half a day on the weekend. … Because we discuss everything. [GM 5, p. 9]

While it is tempting to pursue the metaphor of marriage, to do so would bring on a debate about traditional roles and traditional values. For while the image of marriage came up time and time again, it was to a thoroughly reconstructed model of marriage that the interviewees referred:

I don’t think that gender really plays a part in it – it might provide a convenient psychological paradigm for the rest of the company who might like to refer to “mum and dad”, but in the theatre of course one could have same-sex parents and it wouldn’t be that surprising. [GM 2]

We know each other. We know each other’s nuances. We also know which buttons to … it’s a very respectful relationship because we know how to take each other and what buttons not to push. And that’s not about being all sweetness and light but it’s about understanding each other and the commonality of goals. [GM 8]

A very modern marriage

References to marriage were in terms of identifying the qualities of a successful relationship, rather than to a gendered hetero-normative model of partnering:

We respected each other and I think you have a responsibility to be quite careful with each other but that’s just being grown up – like being married. [AD 3]

So clearly I think the analogy is more in terms of the successful negotiation between two human beings, marriage is a reflection of the sort of intensity of the kind of relationship that arises in these jobs… [GM 2]

Although the mum/dad metaphor might help explain the co-partnership model, it’s a very modern marriage with a rupturing of “feminine” and “masculine” roles and functions from the biological sex of the person in the specific position. Nevertheless, the artistic director is often away from the office on a regular basis (in rehearsals) and not around for the day-to-day discussions and problem-solving while the general manager stays at home.

…..you end up being Mum and Dad in an organisation and I’m possibly the more nurturing, encouraging, more access to, … and AD’s much less effusive with his praise but when it comes, it’s more important and meaningful. [GM 7]
Our discussion has highlighted the distinctive characteristics of the respective roles of general manager and artistic director. It has not been our intention to test the validity of sex stereotypes in our research, and we have certainly not set out to reinforce them. In fact, while the metaphor of family, mother and father is pervasive within the language of the interviewees there is often a very self-aware approach to the fact that the terms are not intended in any essentialising manner. Indeed, many of our interviewees actively sought to disassociate themselves from any sex-based stereotypes.

**Girly girls and blokey blokes: blokey/girly people**

The performing arts industry itself has a relatively healthy balance of male and female employees. In 2006 women made up 43% of the total number of employees in the categories of “music and theatre productions” and “performing arts venues”, and 46% of the total employed in all cultural occupations were women (ABS 2006, p. 9). This is in contrast to the many areas of industry which are predominantly female, for example health care, education and retail, or predominantly male for example manufacturing, construction and transport (ABS 2006, para 59 u.p.). It is possible that the presence of strong female role models and non-stereotyped male role models in one’s career may also discourage a sense of gender specific skills and attributes. Two of the men that we interviewed offered examples of having had significant experience of working with women as peers, an experience that may be enriched and reinforced by the very flat structures of arts organisations:

> I was also infinitely fortunate to have [a woman] as my first artistic director. She had basically been given the job of putting the company back on its feet. [GM 5, p.1]

> In contemporary [art form], particularly in Australia there’s this whole range of really strong women who had set the thing up and there was this really strong struggle for gender balance. And we still have gender balance in the show. [AD 6, p. 7]

As Pringle (2008) has suggested, much of the literature on gender and the workplace is actually heterogendered – it imposes a model of gender drawn from a heteronormative framework. We may have set out with a similarly heteronormative framework, encouraged by the descriptions of theatre companies as “families” and sought to find a distinct division of tasks along a male and female divide, often associated with the transference of domestic divisions into the workplace.

As evidenced by the quote above referring to same sex parenting, which reminded us that families are not restricted to the male and female mum and dad, many of our interviewees rejected gender stereotypes. While the terms “mum and dad” or “parents” were used, women did not necessarily consider themselves to be the “mother”, or even the “mothering” type – in contradiction with a gendered approach to the role of general manager as being the organising, administrating, facilitating and relationship builder.

> I don’t think that […] is a really blokey bloke or that I’m a really girly girl. [GM 7]

The intelligent, well-educated women under discussion may choose to work in arts organisations because of the nature of the people they are likely to work with, as well as having a passion for the output. Men who choose to work in arts organisations aren’t necessarily people who are chasing power or money, and the men that women get to work with are more likely to be collegial rather than competitive:

> I guess you’d say that they’re fairly ideologically sound men or politically reconstructed men or feminist men or what have you. [GM 6]
Many of the men whom we’ve interviewed to date either describe themselves, or are described, in words that imply that they are pro-feminist. For example:

I consider myself to be a fairly reconstructed man. [GM 1]

He's calm and collaborative and he likes everyone to be happy. [AD 2]

Marshall has used the following terms to describe male leadership values: self-assertion, separation, independence, control, competition, focused perception, rationality, analysis (Marshall, 1993). While some of these could be considered values of performing artists (self-assertion, focused perception); and others the necessary requirements of management (rationality, analysis), it also appeared that a number of the values aren’t so important or don’t carry as much weight within a performing arts organisation. Male artistic directors would consistently acknowledge the analytical skill set of female general managers but did not classify these skills as masculine. In fact, they are more likely to see the range of skills required by a general manager to be generalist and therefore perhaps “feminine” compared to the single-mindedness of the artist. But even the artist's single-mindedness must be tempered by the reality of functioning in a sector which is financially stretched. While artistic directors were happy for the general manager to carry the burden of this, they were nonetheless resigned to the fact that they were not pursuing unconstrained creativity.

Conclusion

The key issues that we have addressed in this paper are whether co-leadership in the arts industries appears to replicate that which is described in the management literature, whether the roles of artistic director and general manager are gendered, and the ways in which sex and gender, love and marriage are manifested in the leadership structures of the organisations studied.

The initial descriptions of the activities and functions identified by the artistic directors and general managers suggest that these roles are very different. However, these differences do not appear to have produced the “organisational schizophrenia” (between the artistic and administrative sides of the company) alluded to by Fitzgibbon (2001, p. 70) at the level of the organisation’s leadership. Our interviews have only focused on relationships at the peak of the organisation, so it is not possible to state that this holds for all levels within the organisation; however the lack of overly hierarchical structures within arts organisations could lessen the likelihood of such divisions arising.

The interviews also suggest that the binaries of masculine and feminine qualities are absent in the way the interviewees discussed their co-leadership arrangements. This is not to say that the interviewees were not aware of the manner in which attributes are assigned to each gender, but rather revealed a level of self-awareness and knowinglyness around questions of gender. Billing and Alverson (2000, p. 148) note that there is a wealth of literature that supports the view that at heart there is little difference in management style between men and women, with both sharing similar aspirations, values, personality traits and behaviours. However this literature also notes that in leadership positions the attributes, skills and behaviour that both men and women exhibit remain “masculine” and a number of our interviewees described their management strengths with words that fit within a more masculine management set.
Equally there are characteristics of the way in which artistic activity takes place that militate against the singular heroic vision. Based on our analysis so far it would appear to be the case that the environment within which these co-leadership roles are exercised has influenced the particular models adopted and the dynamics between the co-leaders. The environment may also be the explanation as to why the participants failed to identify specific gender dynamics in their experience of co-leadership. Some respondents referred to influential role models of either sex in their career development and in future research it would be useful to examine in more detail the degree of sex segmentation in the arts labour force at a variety of levels and across the different art forms.

The companies that we examined are performing arts companies in which teamwork is more important than separation or competition. Control in the sense of financial constraints is balanced by the requirement to be free for creativity to flourish. Even when competing for government grants or corporate sponsorship or donors or audiences, performing arts organisations are more likely to cooperate and share information and resources. Perhaps the nature of the non-profit performing arts industry requires a less gendered set of underlying leadership values if these mutually advantageous relationships are to be maintained.
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