Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Theatre, Dance and Performance Training

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rtdp20

‘Trust me, kid’: leadership style and how we train directors to talk to actors

Donna Soto-Morettini

To cite this article: Donna Soto-Morettini (2023) ‘Trust me, kid’: leadership style and how we train directors to talk to actors, Theatre, Dance and Performance Training, 14:3, 326-338, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2023.2243173

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2023.2243173

Published online: 04 Oct 2023.

Theatre, Dance and Performance Training, 2023
Vol. 14, No. 3, 326–338, https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2023.2243173

'Trust me, kid': leadership style and how we train directors to talk to actors

Donna Soto-Morettini

This article considers some of the most relevant literature in business organisational studies and sports performance studies to see how we might apply work in these areas when training directors. While the protocols and practices are very different, business leaders and sports performance coaches are (like theatre directors) looking to manage creativity and teamwork, hoping to find inspired creative solutions to complex problems, and attempting to nurture the best possible performance from every team member. And while the success or failure of any performance will be judged against distinct criteria, the journey toward that success or failure will be determined largely by the ways in which a creative collaboration is led. Looking very specifically at the ways in which the communication between director and actor is determined by a specific leadership style, this article considers implied leadership styles that may be intuited in some contemporary books in theatre directing. Finally, a consideration of the theory of 'motivational interviewing' from a sports performance point of view suggests some possible ways forward.

Keywords: theatre directing, performance, leadership styles, managing creativity

Compared with other disciplines perhaps, theatre has been relatively slow in seeing a single figure as artistic leader, with most accounts agreeing that the idea of a director as we recognise it at least in a Western, Global North context currently emerged in the late nineteenth century. But as Moliere's witty and chaotic seventeenth century account of a rehearsal in the play *Impromptu at Versailles* demonstrates, it was not that there was *no* leadership. Rather, a leadership role seemed to be taken by playwrights or company managers. There is little to discover in terms of

how these early leaders worked and perhaps Moliere's (or Hamlet's) instruction to the players is as close as we may get to understanding the role in earlier times. Still, there are several books available on directing styles in the 20th and twenty first century (four of which I consider here). But the role that leadership style itself plays in terms of communicating with a company seems neglected. Here, I want to suggest that the question of how we train directors to relate and talk to actors could very profitably be more prominent in director training itself. In the main, I refer to work in text-based theatre, but what I consider can apply to training directors for any kind of theatre.

Of course, the role of the director is itself a relatively recent one in theatre history, and the training of directors is itself a particularly new concept. As Sidiropoulou finds, it is inevitable that both the role and the training of directors evolves, since:

> given the valorization of ensemble practice and devised forms over the empire of the director-auteur, some have hinted at the director's weakened role in the theatre. However, although the network of individual readings and creative contributions is quite complex, directors hold strong, refusing to let go of the master key of interpretation .... [T]he director is expected to provide the preliminary structure on which everyone can start building. He or she functions as a catalyst, who makes the interpretation happen, a guarantor and a facilitator of connectivity. (2022, n.p.)

If we take the latter part of Sidiropoulou's description and see the director as the person providing that preliminary structure and being the catalyst, it is here that most directors begin thinking about their craft. Most training programmes are thus structured in a way that helps a young director to navigate and acquire the many skills required of the role, from literary analysis to communicating with designers and creating the *mise en scène*. Beyond such aesthetic considerations, there is an evident need to consider very specifically the ways in which directors lead and communicate within creative teams, a consideration which also entails an understanding of leadership 'styles'. There appears to be little theatre scholarship in this area, but much has been written about how leadership styles impact performance in the areas of business and sports.

In what follows, I review some of the most relevant literature in these alternative areas to see what we might learn and apply when training directors. But what might experts in the areas of business or sports have in common with theatre directors? There is no doubt that the protocols and practices are very different, but like business leaders, theatre directors need to manage creativity and teamwork; hit specific targets against deadlines; find inspired, creative solutions to complex problems with multiple, conflicting cues/clues; avoid 'group think' or 'bias confirmation'. And like sports performance analysts or coaches, theatre directors seek to nurture the best possible performance from every actor, and to coach confidence, ownership, and determination. While the 'success' or 'failure' of any performance may be judged against distinct criteria, the journey

toward that success or failure can also be determined largely by the ways in which the creative collaboration is led.

Leadership styles

There are several ways in which we can talk about leadership and many different studies that identify distinct kinds of leadership. A simple start, perhaps, is to consider the difference between vertical and shared leadership (Lyndon, Pandey, and Navare 2020). Vertical leadership suggests a hierarchy: there is someone at the top who leads a group. Shared leadership of course is the kind that can be shared out amongst a team of collaborators. Truly shared leadership would require a group that has a strong collaborative vision upon which all members of that group agree. It also requires that all members of a group are capable of leadership at various points. But studies have shown that shared leadership results in a high level of creativity, since, as Lyndon et al. note 'there was critical appraisal of every idea, so we went into detail and, in the process, we learned how to look at the same problem from different perspectives' (Lyndon, Pandey, and Navare 2020, 1815). But this strongly collaborative vision may bring its own risks. Matthew Syed's *Rebel Ideas* (2021) considers a range of research that highlights the dangers of trying to solve problems within a homologous group. Syed argues that effective solutions to creative problems require group diversity, and the kind of diversity that may not always be found within a company.

Vertical leadership has advantages in that the voice and eye of the designated leader remains somewhat apart from the group. This allows a buffer between the leader and the group and might help to avoid what Kahneman, Sibony, and Sunstein (2021) have identified as 'noise' within group decisions. In this case, decisions are generated by the well-researched cognitive phenomenon of the tendency of groups to conform in terms of social influence, which can reduce the diversity of opinion in a group while still maintaining 'collective error' (Kahneman et al. 2021, 99). This tendency creates a rather fine line between harvesting the surprising accuracy that diverse groups can yield (as Syed's book attests) and resisting the pressure of social conformity to reify 'blind spots' and to diminish the width of the perspectives included.

Whilst shared leadership is a relatively rare occurrence in theatre, there are clear advantages to both styles of leadership identified above. If those who train directors are generally training them to take a vertical leadership position, it is worth considering the implications of that leadership we might thereby promote and how we might encourage directors to think more specifically about how they lead. And, frustratingly, depending on what is read of the literature, there may be as few as four basic styles or ten or more. The point here, however, is that communication between leader and group both forms and is formed by the ways in which a leader positions themselves in relation to the group they lead. I suggest that there are six leadership styles that have to most relevance to theatre practice: Transactional, Paternalistic, Autocratic, Bureaucratic, Charismatic, and Authentic as outlined below.

Transactional leadership concerns reinforcing and correcting (Young et al. 2021). Transactional leaders make clear what kinds of behaviours will result in reward (which may be financial in a business context or praise in the case of sports or theatre) and what kinds of behaviours will result in 'punishment' (which may be a loss of job or promotion in a business context or rebuke from coach or director in sports or theatre). This might be experienced in theatre when directors use praise as reward and negative or lack of feedback as 'punishment'. Transactional leadership can thus sometimes stifle individual creativity and can dampen motivation. But it has advantages in that team members can quickly learn what behaviour results in reward, and this can lead to a sense of being individually valued by the leader. An example of this style might be found in Hauser and Reich (2008) advice for praising actors. Rather than simply instructing:

> DON'T: The costume looks great, but you're not keeping your hat up, and we can't see your face.
> DO: The costume looks great, and when you keep your hat up, we can see your gorgeous face. (47)

In Hauser and Reich's view, actors respond well to praise, and their advice is always to use it to secure your objective. For the leader it invariably results in a culture of performers who wish to please. In this sense it can be a very popular leadership style for directors who feel confident in their own ideas and are not looking to receive much feedback or, indeed, pushback from performers who might not necessarily agree.

Paternalistic Leadership is a benevolent form of Transactional Leadership. The paternalistic leader tends to see their team as children who respond well to reward and punishment but who need a lot of guidance along the way. Pellegrini and Scandura (2008) invoke film director Francis Ford Coppola as a strong example of the style as he would create 'a family of his cast members, who address him as "Papa" or "Godfather"' (568). It may not develop individual creativity as the 'children' may focus predominantly on gaining 'parental' attention. It does not promote or expect individual ideas as it tends to channel efforts with a guiding vision; it can therefore be a very 'hands on' or 'micro' management style. In the short term, like Transactional Leadership, Paternalistic Leadership makes clear the kind of behaviour that results in approval or reward. Again, Hauser and Reich advise directors how to 'cope' with actors:

> do not expect too much too soon. Many good actors just cannot implement the simplest actions or directions right away .... Give them a day or two to assimilate what you tell them .... If they still don't respond, don't criticize. Gently remind them of what they did right in the past; a reference to their fantastic work "last Tuesday" can provide just the right balance of positive reinforcement and corrective suggestion. (42)

This sounds very much like a guide to good parenting. In the view of Hauser and Reich, even line readings – a practice that is generally discredited in directing these days – are acceptable to actors:

> it is okay, after you have had a run-through or two, to sit people down again and analyze a scene line by line … . In this situation, line readings somehow do not seem intrusive or inappropriate to most actors. They are often grateful for the guidance. (51)

Autocratic Leadership might be described as 'single vision' leadership, in which the leader lays out a goal and makes all decisions on the path toward reaching that goal. With autocratic leadership, there is a clear chain of command and decisions can be reached very quickly. The term 'autocratic' may suggest inherent judgement about this style, but as Rast, Hogg, and Giessner (2013) point out, in certain contexts – particularly when group members are feeling uncertain in themselves – autocratic leadership can be welcomed. It can improve productivity but often stifles creativity and can alienate some team members as this style of leadership does not promote or expect creativity or autonomy.

Autocratic leadership may create negative morale in a team so is not suited to long term management but might also work very effectively under time constraints when clear direction is needed. An example of this appears in Katie Mitchell's *The Director's Craft* (2009), where she advises directors on the casting process:

> give a brief description of your working process and ask whether they would be comfortable working in that way. Most actors will say that they would love to work in the way you describe because they want the job – so scrutinise them carefully as they answer this question and look for any information that may belie what they are saying. For instance, you may see a sudden eye flicking, or an involuntary movement of the hand to the mouth or a twitch of the foot. Describing how you work will also provide you with an insurance policy for the future. You can remind them of what you said in the audition if they complain about the working process during rehearsals. (100)

Of course, this positions the actor in a certain way in audition and makes clear Mitchell's primary approach to the director/actor relationship. Whilst it may be useful, as here, to ensure that an actor is open to new ideas or specific ways of working, Mitchell's advice goes beyond the 'single vision' hallmark of autocratic leadership and implies that directors should be somewhat wary of actors from the outset. At the very least, the passage suggests that actors may be disingenuous and complaining and precludes the idea of positioning the actor as a creative colleague. Indeed, once in rehearsal, Mitchell describes a curious kind of positioning of the actor as 'other', finding that 'you might not be able to immerse an actor in the character accurately and you might begin to feel defeated by the struggle to do so' (124). Whilst it can be contested whether the job of a director is to 'immerse' an actor in a character and whether this can be done 'accurately', such ideas make sense within the 'single vision' framework of an autocratic approach.

Bureaucratic Leadership is a version of autocratic leadership, but instead of adhering rigidly to a leader's 'single vision', it adheres to a set

of rules and regulations that are constant. According to Al Khajeh (2018), such leaders are 'strongly committed to their processes and procedures but not to their people' (6). Whilst a useful style of management for highly regulated industries or situations where rules and regulations are vital to business sustainability, bureaucratic leadership does not promote creativity or autonomy except insofar as individuals are able to follow systems without close guidance. It can work over the long term if team members feel comfortable with highly structured environments. An example of this might be found, again, in Mitchell's advice about how to position communication between leader and team, where she proposes:

> it is best to introduce the actors to your language from the first day of rehearsals and stick to that language until the last night. It will be a stable reference point for the actors and supply them with steady goals to aim for. (125)

Such a position makes clear the ways in which language and leadership styles are so concretely connected. In management terms, we can infer that Mitchell's style – as it is revealed in her book – is a combination of bureaucratic/autocratic leadership.

Transformational Leadership focuses on developing individual team members and tends to take a long view of the well-being of team members, beyond the project at hand. I suggest most directors working in actor training should work in this way, since their focus is necessarily on how a particular play or project leads also to the development of the actor. According to Turnnidge and Côté (2018), transformational leadership is at the heart of effective sports coaching but can also apply in a business context. This style requires that a leader commit to the idea that refocusing specifically on developing the 'performer' (sports, business team member, or actor) will ultimately result in delivering the objective, whether that is a successful product launch, a better time in the one hundred-metre run, or a great production of *King Lear*. One example of developmental leadership might be found in Michael Bloom's *Thinking Like a Director* (2001), where Bloom claims:

> a sports coach is an apt metaphor for a director. A coach observes and shares his perceptions with an athlete. He suggests adjustments to improve the performance. And, perhaps most important, he encourages and inspires, keeps the athlete honest, and urges her to stay the course. (126)

Bloom reinforces that, in terms of communication, the director role is to suggest improvements and supply motivation.

Charismatic leadership generally describes an individual rather than style and proceeds from an inspirational personality, whose own vision is powerful enough to motivate team members to do their best. Mangundjaya and Amir (2021) note that 'charismatic leadership is defined as the capability of a leader to stimulate enthusiasm and action in their followers over the individual attributes, behaviours, and outstanding qualities of the leader' (403). This kind of leadership can work well in terms

of creativity but, unlike Transformational Leadership, tends to be effective only during the time of a given project, as it may lead to some dependence upon the charismatic leader on the part of the team members.

The very idea of charismatic leadership raises the question of what it is that engages the trust of a company of actors in a particular director. In their review of how managers or leaders gain the trust of those they lead, Lyndon, Pandey, and Navare (2020) conclude that trust in a leader is of two varieties:

> affect-based trust arises from the social interaction and emotional connect between two parties where one party is willing to be vulnerable to the other party (Chua et al., 2008; McAllister, 1995). On the other hand, cognitive trust is a result of knowledge that the other party has professional credentials and belief that they can be relied on for satisfactory role performance (Chua et al., 2008; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Wilson et al., 2006). (1808)

In the case of charismatic leadership style in theatre directing, it follows that as a production evolves, an effective director gains both cognitive and affective trust from a company. Yet, just as we might find it difficult to describe charisma, it is difficult to describe how exactly charismatic leadership works in terms of style or communication; one can only imagine that individual charismatic leaders must have both the ability to clearly articulate an inspiring vision, and a compelling individual style of communication and leadership.

Control and its consequences

As tutors, and presumably directors ourselves, we may see the role of directing defined simply as leading, but we can help the directors we train see the value of shifting their understanding of leadership, even of letting go of control at times. When asking students to consider leadership styles, as tutors we can suggest that they consider the more fundamental question of just how much we have to lead, and how much is or should be in our control. Might it thus be a good idea to suggest that stepping back from leading or controlling from time to time might generate some real benefits? Experts in leading creative teams certainly think so. Todd Henry (2018) outlines the dangers of 'leading by control', positing that:

> there are two things creative people need more than anything else: stability and challenge .... You set broad, vision-based guide rails and allow your team to work within them, understanding that temporary shortcomings are to be expected as people push themselves to try new things. When you lead by control, any shortcoming is intolerable, so you clamp down and correct any mistake before it can reflect on you. (53)

His point is that when we lead by control, we often jump in before creative minds – and actors – can find solutions for themselves that might be exciting or unexpected or, simply, very well played because the actor

feels a sense of ownership over the ideas. In some theatre traditions, as tutors we have ourselves often been taught (and therefore often teach) that being the person in control of things all the time is simply what we do as directors. But might we be missing some significant possibilities when we fail to encourage other, diverse contributions in the rehearsal room?

As Syed points out, a 'single vision' has significant risks. Syed considers we should expect creative teams to operate as 'emergent systems' in which the individual contributions of the group can create something that transcends its parts. It is diversity of opinion, Syed finds, which is the key to success when we are faced with complex tasks. In the first instance, it can help avoid 'perspective blindness', which may emerge with single-vision leadership; secondly, seeing a problem from diverse viewpoints means that, through discussion, the full complexity of issues will emerge. This can mean a greater and broader consideration of the possibilities when formulating any creative solution.

Kahneman, Sibony, and Sunstein (2021) offer the contrasting idea that group decisions might also lead to a bit of 'noise', as:

> while multiple, independent opinions, properly aggregated, can be strikingly accurate, even a little social influence can produce a kind of herding that undermines the wisdom of [a group] … if people care about their reputation within the group, they will shift in the direction of the dominant tendency, which will also produce polarisation. (105)

Optimally, tempering the input of varying points of view with some informed judgement is required of directors if they wish to harvest the value of diversity. Taking Kahneman et al.'s views into consideration, perhaps encouraging multiple ideas around a complex problem is best done early and carefully managed. But they also propose what it is that makes for confidence in judgements, asking 'when do you feel confident in a judgement? Two conditions must be satisfied: the story you believe must be comprehensively coherent, and there must be no attractive alternatives' (202). This seems important to directors who must make creative/aesthetic judgements all the time, and means, I think, that when training students to lead creative teams through complex problems with multiple cues, it is important to remind them that is to their definite advantage to elicit and listen to 'attractive alternatives'.

Motivation and leadership

The importance of opening out the conversation with a creative team seems clear, but much of the work that young directors do will involve conversations with actors on a one-to-one basis. Here, research in sports psychology may be helpful. Like theatre directors, sports team managers must balance feedback to a team with the feedback given to individual players. According to Rollnick et al. (2020), they look for the same kinds of performances as theatre directors; as the Introduction to *Coaching Athletes to be Their Best* declares, 'I want my athletes to be up there, free

of doubt, trusting each other, feeling fit, rested, and raring to go' (4). Rollnick is one of the co-creators of a behavioural change technique known as 'motivational interviewing'. This method was originally aimed at helping psychology counsellors charged with helping people manage personal change. Early in the book, Rollnick et al. identify a tendency of athletic coaches to go for a quick fix when coaching performance. They describe some of the unwanted behaviours (resistance or short-term change) that can result from what they call the 'righting reflex', or a 'fixing style', which is summed up by the coach's intention that 'I plan to solve this problem for them' (16).

I suggest this 'righting reflex' is encountered often in theatre and, as tutors, I think we often train directors to do just this. We assume a director should pause rehearsal to 'fix' a decision or choice that an actor has made when it seems in some way not to support the director's particular vision. But as Rollnick and others explain, the difficulty with the 'righting reflex'/'fixing style' is that it can often create a slight resistance from the athlete – and thus performer – as they feel the need to defend what they were doing. In their view, the more effective and truly transformational approach is to help the performer *self-motivate* change through effective questioning. The authors go on to explain how motivational interviewing can lead to internal decisions that can spur behavioural change in a more lasting way. They begin from the belief that when the athlete/performer can inspire change for *themselves*, they gain a sense of ownership over their own progress and that ownership in turn inspires confidence and depth of commitment. This can be as true for someone coaching an actor as it is for someone coaching a sprinter. Finding the ways to inspire performers to persuade themselves is the business of motivational interviewing, and the techniques can be used both with teams (such as a full company) and individuals.

The basics are simple and designed to help coaches/counsellors – and thus perhaps directors – to restrain the impulse to fix and instead open out the issues with listening, questioning, and reaffirming. With teams, this works by including everyone into larger challenges and by making sure the 'notes' coming from the leader are positive and reinforcing. In theatre terms, perhaps this means simply encouraging young directors to make sure that when they give company note sessions, they leave no one out. It also means encouraging the director to allow the company to have a voice on how a moment or a scene might work better. With individual actors, directors may want to ensure that their most important exchanges do not occur in a large 'notes' session, but perhaps on the spot in rehearsal, or in a one-to-one session after a run.

The techniques involve an interrogative approach. One type of motivational interviewing is known as OARS, which is an acronym for a strategy of Open-ended question, Affirmation, Response and Summary. An example of this approach might sound like this:

> **Director:** [*Open-ended question*]: How did that opening exchange with Laura feel?
> **Actor**: Okay. I think it was okay?

Director: [*Affirmation]* It's feeling okay for you right now. [*Open-ended question*] Anything else you might want to try there?
Actor: I don't know. What if it's more ominous? What if I make her feel like I know something right from the start?
Director: [*Response*] That could work. [*Summarise*] Yes, you could make her a bit more unsure maybe? A bit more worried about what you know. Let's try it!

Some motivational interviewers practice a similar technique in which the interviewer is looking very specifically for 'change talk' from the interviewee, which signals the fact that the performer is now thinking for themselves about changes that they want to make. The steps here are to ask, listen, summarise, and then ask again. An example of this approach might be:

Director: [*Question and listen*] So how did that feel for you?
Actor: I don't know, something's just not clicking. I'm not getting what I need from Amanda.
Director: [*Listen/affirm*]: Right – you don't feel like you're getting what you need here.
Actor: I don't. I'm trying – I just feel like I'm getting nothing back.
Director: [*Summarise*]: So, the exchange isn't really working for you.
Actor: No. [*Change talk*] But maybe I can try a more powerful action there – I can push her harder with that question and make her feel like I know she's lying.
Director: [*Ask again*]: You think that might make her defend herself more aggressively? Let's try that again.

In both examples you can see that the director is not rushing and not fixing. Instead, questions and affirmations allow the actor to think through the problem and perhaps come up with a solution that they have decided might work. Ownership of the approach matters a lot when it comes to confidence and deepening a sense of belief in what an actor does.

A leadership style for a theatre director?

In looking at the motivational interviewing examples above, it may be apparent that the reason a 'quick fix' is so tempting is that it is, of course, quick! Certainly, any director under pressure is unlikely to have the leisure required of such techniques in the final phases of rehearsal. We would probably not be serving our directing students well, then, if we were to suggest that they simply choose one style of leadership when directing. I would suggest that it might be better to persuade them that a good director needs more than one leadership style during a production process. Might not the best approach be one that sees actors as creatives in their own right and exploit the value of diverse opinions early in the rehearsal period, then narrow the window of contribution in the final phases of a rehearsal and 'tech' processes when time grows tighter, and decisions must finally be set?

The leadership styles that have been considered here have been around long enough to engender a significant amount of research and opinion. In all cases – even those like Autocratic or Bureaucratic, which may seem by their nature to be undesirable models – one can make the case for their effectiveness in specific circumstances. But most of the research done on these variants are focused on traditional business models, and not focused on creative team leadership. As Todd Henry points out, leading creative teams requires more flexibility in approach, because:

> the actual mechanics of leading creative work are way more complex than our neat, plausible cliches can handle. There is very little black and white, or even shades of grey … If you've hired brilliant, driven people, it's … like herding tigers, powerful beings who cannot be corralled but must be carefully, individually, and strategically led. (2–3)

Henry's final chapter focuses very much on the importance of leading with integrity; he advises 'your greatest impact comes not from the work you do – it comes from changing lives, including your own' (223). This idea sounds very much like the description of Transformational leadership above, in which a leader trusts that developing individuals will lead to an outcome that is best for all. But while a theatre director may well want to focus on the individual development of each company member, they are also responsible for so much more within an overall production, including larger questions of interpretation, design, and so on, and must also do this under time constraints. Perhaps the leadership style that may best fit the director is what has come to be known as 'authentic' leadership.

The idea of 'authentic leadership' has grown significantly in organisational studies in the twenty first century, but as Gardner et al. (2011) reveal in their survey of the literature, definitions are broad and varied. To apply the idea in terms of theatre directing I refer to Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005), who define 'authentic leaders' as being 'deeply aware of their values and beliefs, they are self-confident, genuine, reliable and trustworthy, and they focus on building followers' strengths, broadening their thinking and creating a positive and engaging organizational context' (374). There are similarities in definition to be found in several sources: these suggest balance and transparency in decision making, and in processing of information (particularly when it comes to conflicting team ideas), a high degree of self-awareness and willingness to take responsibility, and a clear moral perspective in dealing with others. Authentic leaders are mission-driven but still very conscious of individual team member development. This style of leadership may veer into other styles from time to time, but always through transparent communication of what is driving any change. It means that such leaders must be particularly clear about when and why they may sometimes narrow the window on decision-making or contribution.

Some descriptions of authentic leadership move into discussions on 'moral' frameworks that may be intrinsic to this style (Lemoine, Hartnell, and Leroy 2019), but, for our purposes, we can take 'moral' as the decision to value the contributions of others, to be open about one's own learning, and to be transparent in communicating decisions. These things

alone might distinguish authentic leadership from the other approaches discussed above. By adopting such a style, directors could certainly reap the benefits of 'team-focused inclusion' in early stages of rehearsal and, as productions progress, could begin to employ more sharply focused decision-making if they communicate clearly why they are doing so. This style of leadership could also employ the kind of open-ended questioning of 'motivational interviewing' techniques in the early stages of rehearsal that might not only encourage diverse opinion but also actively demonstrate the value of that diversity. This latter idea is important, as research has demonstrated that it is not enough for leaders simply to encourage diversity, but they must also create the conditions in which it becomes clear to creative teams that diverse opinions are valued.

Perhaps what is missing in the books considered above, and those which are aimed at training directors, is a sense that building some (perhaps 'authentic'?) uncertainty into directing is beneficial. Might it not be that courting some uncertainty for a while in rehearsal might lead to some interesting dynamism in performance? Might the rush to solve or to control creative problems or decisions before we get into a rehearsal room work against our ability truly to exploit the possibilities presented in collaborative work? When we read some books on how to prepare for rehearsals is it really the case that we want to encourage directors to start by imposing a concept on a play? There can be a greater consideration of the relationship between the director who 'imposes' and the kind of leader who begins with more fluidity and adaptability. The latter director sees the journey of directing as something inherently able to embrace the contingent. To be human is to be learning at all times. We learn as we go, and great literature – as plays sometimes are – acknowledge the inherent uncertainty in life. This suggests that a great director must have the ability to adjust course while pursuing an objective. That adjustment may just include the ability to absorb and exploit emergent possibilities when tapping into collective creativity.

Perhaps by encouraging students to adopt this more authentic, more initially fluid style when in training, we may be helping to improve not only the way that directors communicate with and value input from actors, but also encourage them to see the importance of being themselves in the rehearsal room, whether that means having creative solutions or simply knowing the best way to cultivate the ground from which they can sow and harvest the best creative ideas.

ORCID

Donna Soto-Morettini http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9163-3601

References

Al Khajeh, E. H. 2018. "Impact of Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance." *Journal of Human Resources Management Research* 2018 (2018): 1–10. https://doi.org/10.5171/2018.687849

Bloom, M. 2001. *Thinking Like a Director*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.

Gardner, W., C. Cogliser, K. Davis, and M. Dickens. 2011. "Authentic Leadership: A Review of the Literature and Research Agenda." *The Leadership Quarterly* 22 (6): 1120–1145. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.007

Hauser, F., and R. Reich. 2008. *Notes on Directing: 130 Lessons in Leadership from the Director's Chair*. New York: Walker Publishing.

Henry, T. 2018. *Herding Tigers: Be the Leader That Creative People Need*. New York: Penguin.

Ilies, R., F. Morgeson, and J. Nahrgang. 2005. "Authentic Leadership and Eudaemonic Well-Being: Understanding Leader-Follower Outcomes." *Leadership Quarterly* 16: 373–394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.002

Kahneman, D., O. Sibony, and C. Sunstein. 2021. *Noise*. London: William Collins.

Lemoine, G. J., C. A. Hartnell, and H. Leroy. 2019. "Taking Stock of Moral Approaches to Leadership: An Integrative Review of Ethical, Authentic, and Servant Leadership." *Academy of Management Annals* 13 (1): 148–187. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0121

Lyndon, S., A. Pandey, and A. Navare. 2020. "Shared Leadership and Team Creativity: Investigating the Role of Cognitive Trust and Team Learning through Mixed Method Approach." *Personnel Review* 49 (9): 1805–1822. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-05-2019-0262

Mangundjaya, W. L., and M. T. Amir. 2021. "Testing Resilience and Work Ethics as Mediators between Charismatic Leadership and Affective Commitment to Change." *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 8 (2): 401–410.

Mitchell, K. 2009. *The Director's Craft*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Pellegrini, E. K., and T. A. Scandura. 2008. "Paternalistic Leadership: A Review and Agenda for Future Research." *Journal of Management* 34 (3): 566–593. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316063

Rast, D. E., III, M. A. Hogg, and S. R. Giessner. 2013. "Self-Uncertainty and Support for Autocratic Leadership." *Self and Identity* 12 (6): 635–649. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2012.718864

Rollnick, S., J. Fader, J. Breckon, and T. Moyers. 2020. *Coaching Athletes to Be Their Best*. London: Guildford Press.

Sidiropoulou, A. 2020. "Rethinking Authority, Creativity and Authorship in Twenty-First-Century Performance: The Director's Revised Role." *The IATC Journal/Revue de l'AICT* 22 (December).

Syed, Matthew. 2021. *Rebel Ideas*. London: John Murray Publishing.

Turnnidge, J., and J. Côté. 2018. "Applying Transformational Leadership Theory to Coaching Research in Youth Sport: A Systematic Literature Review." *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 16 (3): 327–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2016.1189948

Young, H. R., D. R. Glerum, D. L. Joseph, and M. A. McCord. 2021. "A Meta-Analysis of Transactional Leadership and Follower Performance: Double-Edged Effects of LMX and Empowerment." *Journal of Management* 47 (5): 1255–1280. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320908646

Donna Soto-Morettini *has served as Director of Drama for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Head of Acting and Dance for Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, and Head of Acting at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London. Her books include* The Philosophical Actor *(2010)*, Mastering the Audition: How to Perform Under Pressure *(2012),* Mastering the Shakespeare Audition *(2016), and* My Character Wouldn't Do That *(2022)*.