



## WHAT INSPIRES THE ACADEMY: BOOK REVIEWS AND BEYOND

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### Why Art in Management Education? Questioning Meaning

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Why should we care about the arts in management education? Why are the arts part of reforms in developing future professionals? What is the fundamental value of the arts for developing tomorrow's manager-leaders? Our response is *meaning*—how the arts afford reflection, conversation, and challenge to the meanings and purposes of what we do.

In the following pages we elaborate this assertion through the story of one beautiful European management development institution: IEDC-Bled School of Management, Slovenia. The narrative weaves our reflections on our own stories—two individuals growing up worlds and decades apart—and how they have intertwined to bring meaning back to life in the management development classroom.

We start in that classroom, with the words of a student experiencing the meaning of an organization and what it does. Taking this account into the critical corridors of management literature, we discuss how the arts may address the dysfunction of commodification, dehumanization, and managing the community out of organizations. Our argument, one emerging from lives nourished through art and artists, demands that management education engage the arts to revitalize *meaning-full* praxis in organizing, managing, and leading.

#### OPENING THE STORY

##### Jeff and the Choir

It was in the final moments of the debrief session that Jeff, until that moment a shy presence

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in the leadership workshop, slowly rose from his seat:

I have to admit, I came to this workshop very skeptical. I could not imagine what could be in this for me, a business guy. I mean, the thought of learning from a choir, and learning from conducting, just did not make much sense. I'm not a musician; I'm not in the music business. I guess I thought it was another gimmick from our HR people, something unusual that was supposed to entertain us or something. But I have to admit, I feel inspired. It was the faces of the singers that did it. I was struck by the looks on their faces. They were happy. Well, more than happy, they were totally plugged in, in the moment, together, eyes wide, sparkling. There was an energy here I have not felt for a long time, at least not at work. I don't really know how to describe it, but it was amazing. It was about being human. For the first time in many, many years, I realized what we are really capable of doing when working together towards something that really matters. I just wanted to share that before the end of today. I think it's important that we think about that as a company.

Quietly, Jeff resumed his seat. An intense silence enveloped the room. People stared decisively at their feet. Slowly, heads rose, eyes met, and they began to nod to each other. "I think Jeff is right," came one voice. "Yes, we don't work like this choir," said another. "How do we change to be more like these singers?" queried another. What ensued was a conversation about the nature and meaning of how they worked together and what they were trying to achieve. They questioned how they thought and acted, the meanings behind what they did.

This essay is about how this learning space came to be, how a relatively young management school in Slovenia, IEDC-Bled School of Management ([www.iedc.si](http://www.iedc.si)), has been inspired by the arts to raise questions of meaning in management practice. In the broader spectrum, it is an argument supporting the need for the arts in leadership development and management education.

### Lake of Bled, Slovenia<sup>1</sup>



#### From Eccentric Room to Present Conversation

In a previous *AMR* issue Nancy Adler asked, “Why would we seek out the wisdom of artists? Why would we embrace beauty?” (2015: 491). Twenty years ago such questions—and the arts in general—inhabited an eccentric room of musings rendered inaudible at the periphery of business literature. Today, that conversation has become prominent, no longer viewed as a topic of eccentricity. What has fueled this change?

The answer lies within Adler’s self-response: “Because we passionately care about the future of our families, organizations, and country—because we care about our planet and civilization” (2015: 491). In short, it is because we care about the quality of the lives of others, as well as ourselves. This is a shift toward meaning: “working together towards something that really matters.” This raises *the* question worth probing in management. But is this what preoccupies most of our curricula? Or do we spend a disproportionate amount of our time with students talking about efficiency, profit, and growth? “Business-for-business-sake,” “the bottom line above all else,” “greed is good”—these remain

bright banners fervently flapping in the wind. They have become the guiding principles. We see these as subterfuge, excusing us from asking, “What really matters?”

We are far from the first to raise such concerns. Indeed, the voices of malcontent have been gathering for some time. Ghoshal (2005), Khurana (2007), and Adler (2010) have decried the “destruction of good management,” the commoditization of business education and its moral vacuum, the dehumanizing nature of contemporary organizations supported by a “dehydrated language.” Mintzberg has bemoaned the MBA (2004) and the dearth of “communityship” (2009) and has called for a rebalancing of society (2014). These scholars’ words articulate the need for something fundamentally different in management education—to rethink what business schools do and how they do it.

The arts have entered and found footholds in these debates. There is bold philosophizing—“leading beautifully” (Ladkin, 2008) and seeing the future as an artist before a blank canvas (Scharmer, 2007). There are discussions around storytelling (Taylor, Fisher, & Dufresne, 2002), creativity and craft (Austin & Devin, 2003; Taylor & Ladkin, 2014), and the music and theater of organizational change (Mantere, Sillince, & Hämäläinen, 2007; Mirvis, 2005). On the ground there are the practices of approaching leadership through

<sup>1</sup> All photographs are from the book *IEDC—A Creative Environment for Creative Leadership* (Stepančič & Walravens, 2013).

a choir, valuing emotion, purpose, beauty, and inspiration (Sutherland & Jelinek, 2015). IEDC-Bled School of Management is part of this chorus.

Recently, the refrains of the songs have called for an orientation to beauty (Adler, 2011; Ladkin, 2008; Taylor, 2013). While this sways us, we believe the fundamental value of the arts lies is something other than beauty.

Picasso's *Guernica*, Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, and the memento mori of medieval sculptors are not beautiful. Much art is not. It is not beauty that serves as its guiding principle; rather, it is the capacity to create meaning. It is art's ponderous prod, its ability to, as IEDC faculty member Pierre Casse often says, challenge our assumptions, raise in us questions about who we are, what we do, how we think and act, that is most valuable. This, too, is what managing and leading are about, raising those same questions in organizations: "Yes, we don't work like this choir," responded one of Jeff's colleagues; "How do we change to be more like these singers?" asked another.

The arts remonstrate the avoidance of meaning. Listening to the orchestral shrieks, howls, and wails of *Threnody*, we are brought to the precipice of it, and there is nothing beautiful about it. There is truthfulness inherent in those strains that speak to the acts of August 6, 1945. Standing on that precipice, there is no excuse, no flapping banners, just the experience of what the destruction of Hiroshima meant for so many. In so doing, art has the ability to remind our humanity about our inhumanity.

This is an apocryphal example but one that makes the point clear: those enacting management

and leadership cannot avoid questioning the meanings of their actions.

Bringing this back to our domains of business management and leadership, we remind ourselves that such thinking is not new; it was present in modern capitalism's foundational thinkers:

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the future of others, and render their happiness necessary . . . though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it (Smith, 1759: 47).

Adam Smith, by his own estimation more a moral philosopher than an economist, points to the positive potential of our thinking and acting on others and the principles of our nature that desire it. The question Smith's words imply is "How do our actions affect the lives of others?" Does current management education adequately encourage this? Or are the pervasive contents and pedagogies of our curricula focused more on preparing managers suited for Louis Blanc's definition of capitalism: "the appropriation of capital by some, to the exclusion of others" (1850: 161).

It is not that efficiency, profit, and growth are meaningless. Where we err is not asking what those meanings are and how our consequent actions affect others. It seems that when artists do ask, we are alerted to other truths.

This is what Jeff experienced with the choir. Experiencing the work of the choir gave Jeff and his colleagues the opportunity to see their own organization and practices reflected. That reflection, by comparison, was painful, ugly, and shamefully petty. That level of engaging with meaning is the core value of what the arts bring.

But where does this leave beauty? In what follows we reflect back on our stories, asking what has inspired us and compelled us to bring arts, management, and leadership together. In so doing, we relay the journey of building arts-based programs at IEDC and how our paths combined. Much is about beauty, but beauty as a means to critically examine meaning.

### DANICA'S STORY

When I ask myself about what inspires me, the concepts of meaning, mission, and beauty come to the fore. They have guided my work in founding

**Tone Kralj, Lake of Bled, 1928**



and growing the IEDC-Bled School of Management and my daily work as a dean. They have been, and remain, informing concepts for my actions and decisions.

Yet, as we argued above, meaning precedes beauty. Take a simple definition of beauty: "the quality . . . in a person or a thing that gives pleasure to the senses or . . . the mind" (merriam-webster.com). This is a "what" definition—the identification of the quality or qualities that are perceived as being beautiful. Beauty is an evaluative concept affording us the ability to judge the world around us, including our own thoughts and actions, those of others, and those of the organizations we are part of. This must be applied to meaning.

We understand meaning as an interpreted goal, intent, or end—the "why" of what we do. Perhaps the most human of meanings is found in the Smith quote above: the rendering of others' happiness as necessary to one's self. It is imperative for us to provide students with experiences that connect this with the practices of business—to connect the betterment of others, ourselves, and societies in general to how we do management and leadership. It is a question of the meanings informing our decisions and actions and asking whether or not they are beautiful.

This is a towering imperative. It implicates daily managerial decisions, how they affect the lives of a vast array of people, both close at hand and far away. It implicates our roles in local and global issues. It demands we focus close-up and on the distance, balancing concerns of immediate economic benefits with systemic problems. Art helps. It affords reflection on the dimensions of our existence—history, concepts, ideologies, assumptions, and habits—and does so through creativity and originality. In this a sense of beauty may give us direction, goals, and ideals, elevating our demands of self and others.

This seems an unfair imperative to live up to; perhaps it is. Yet to aim any lower returns us to the amoral terrain critiqued by Ghoshal, Khurana, and others. To not lift our intentions higher is to continue to erode the great promise of the professionalization and development of management, to continue to commoditize what we do as we forsake greater meaning.

When I began the journey of founding a new management school thirty years ago, I sensed the importance of providing students with artistic experiences as a way to foreground meaning,

cultivating beauty as a way of judging the meaning of managerial practice. I wanted to develop pedagogical practices in which, through art, students were confronted with beauty and ugliness so they would consciously know their touches. I wanted students to be able to feel the quality of the meanings behind the managerial decisions they make, to regard their work as "meaning-making in a community of practice" (Drath & Palus, 1994: 4).

What I relate here is a reflection on what has informed this direction. It is a historical progress, in order to understand what inspired me and us at IEDC-Bled School of Management and our focus on the arts. It begins as a personal story joined by many actors along the way.

### What Has Formed and Inspired Me?

I am a child of the postwar period, born in Yugoslavia, in what is now the Republic of Slovenia. Reflecting back on those early years, both at home and at school, I became innately aware of the importance of, and differences between, ugliness and beauty. It was my good fortune to have been born into a family that fought against the "ugly"—the scourges of World War II. Family members devoted their lives to meaningfully creating a more beautiful world for all of us, our communities and societies.

It started with my father, a blacksmith who took time away from forging tools to take the stage in theatrical performances. I proudly recall his performances in village operettas like "The White Horse Inn" and the "Mountain's Flower," community performances with the local workers' orchestra.<sup>2</sup> It continued with my mother, crafting the most delicious cakes from meager ingredients and sewing dresses for the village children. In these difficult times they understood the meaning of these actions—that they made the lives of others better.

We were steeped in the works of our local artists. Almost daily we sang enchanting Slovenian melodies, sketched local settings, and recited the poetry of our land, from the national poet Dr. France Prešeren (1800–1849) to the young social

<sup>2</sup> "The White Horse Inn" is an operetta by Ralph Benatzky and Robert Stolz, while "Mountain's Flower" was authored by Slovene composer Radovan Gobec. The performances referred to here featured the factory orchestra of "Tovarna volnenih izdelkov Majšperk d.o.o." (Factory of Wool Products Majšperk).

activist and expressionist Srečko Kosovel.<sup>3</sup> His words have remained with me across the years:

A staid man walks the field, he is as cold as autumn, he is as sad as autumn. Faith is humanity. To me it is a second thought. A speechless silence is like sorrow. I am no longer sad for I do not think of myself (Kosovel, 2004: 120).

To refrain from silence and dwell on others rather than one's self is a more poetic rendering of the thoughts of Smith and, I think, the experience of Jeff, with which we began. It has given me courage many times across my career. Starting what is now IEDC-Bled School of Management was no simple feat. The school began in 1986 in socialist Yugoslavia. Notions of commercialism, management, and executives were anathema to the political climate; management was understood as a technocratic tool to control and suppress people. The school was originally one for "leading workers." Yet Kosovel gave me the energy to do what I could to develop and professionalize the practice of organizational management. More than this, it gave me the courage to do management education differently than traditional Western models, which, in my estimation, have not changed much. That difference was bringing the arts—whether paintings, plays, or musical performances—to our students; to provide opportunity for beauty, its inspiration, and, through this, to dwell on meaning.

I learned this focus on others, of helping managers see what they do in a much broader context, from my high school<sup>4</sup> teachers as well. My French teacher inspired me to go to Paris to study its history and culture, so I found myself at the Sorbonne in the mid 1960s. Later, my English teacher helped me to study in the United States. At home I studied and worked in the Yugoslav capital Belgrade, at the time a nexus of international artistic life. For four years I soaked in as many films, art exhibitions, operas, and theater performances as I could.

After completing my Ph.D. I returned to Slovenia, becoming a university lecturer in labor relations and organizational behavior at the Faculty for

Organization and Work. This was my first opportunity to bring the arts into education. At the faculty I dared to facilitate an exhibition that juxtaposed literature on labor with sculptures formed from the guns of World War II.<sup>5</sup> Here I began to see the transformative capacities of art. I was enthralled by the juxtaposition of subtle sculpture with tools of war, how an artist transformed symbols of our inhumanity into artwork fully testifying to our humanity. This caused pause for reflection. What did this say about the meanings of labor, organization, and management? I found art prodding me to reflect on the nature and meaning of myself, my actions, the world around me, and what I could do to change it.

In 1985 I was approached by the Slovene Chamber of Commerce with the offer to revitalize the School for Leading Workers. This was my sculptural opportunity; the pieces of my life's puzzle were finding form. I grasped it and from those roots built the first modern management school in Central and Eastern Europe. What eventually became IEDC-Bled School of Management was the vehicle for my ambitions to create an international setting, a meeting place of the world, nourished by the arts, where we could develop managers who would benefit their organizations and society at large. I set to work, focused on professionalizing management, taking a "best from the West, but leave the rest" approach. To start, our faculty came from abroad, bringing first-class knowledge and international experience. In those early days the students were executives from the Yugoslav republics. The school was originally located in a hotel at Brdo pri Kranju, connected with the nearby state residency and grounds for state protocol visits and meetings (until his death in 1980, President Tito was a frequent presence). Within this setting, with the Julian Alps as background, we created our first home, decorated with beautiful paintings of regional masters.<sup>6</sup>

Although the natural and artistic beauty available was inspiring, I wanted our students to have more meaningful experiences, so we organized exhibitions and theatrical and musical performances as extracurricular activities. I also heard of renowned Slovene violinist Miha Pogačnik,

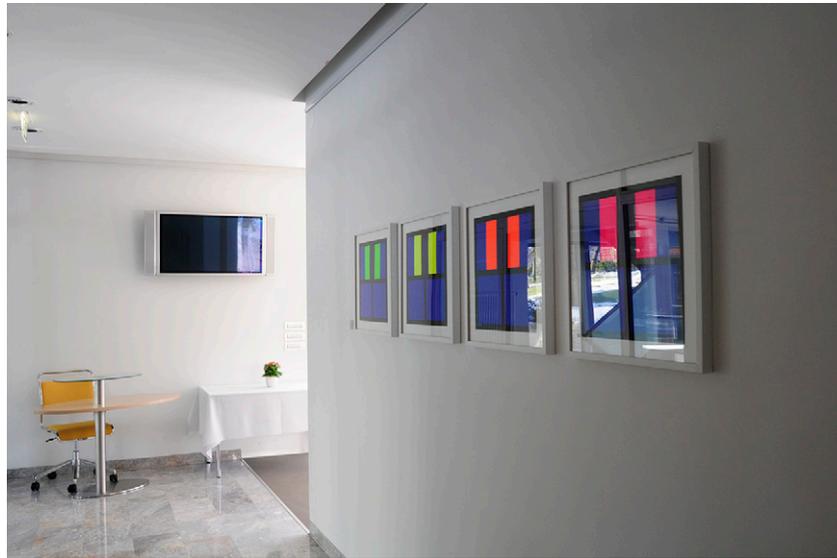
<sup>3</sup> Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926) was a Slovene poet whose work evolved toward avant-garde forms.

<sup>4</sup> I attended the "Second Gymnasium" in Maribor (the capital of the Slovene district of Štajerska). Established in 1949 as the second high school in Maribor, the modern and progressive school was known for its prowess in sport, dance, and choral music.

<sup>5</sup> This exhibition featured the works of author-sculptor Ivan Svetina and sculptor Jože Volarič.

<sup>6</sup> Among others, these included the works of Maksim Sedej and Riko Debenjak.

### Ivan Picelj, *Ulm Variations*, 2006



who used his music and performing as a tool for leadership development. Miha is an inspiring person; some call him a charismatic dynamo. However, I was as much taken by his ideas as his energy. One thing struck me deeply. He pointed out that for artists "excellence" is the starting point, whereas for managers it is the end point. Like Miha's thoughts, many artists speak of a life spent struggling for excellence in pursuit of perfection, knowing perfection is unachievable. This is what makes the towering imperative discussed above approachable. While one's leaderly practice may never be perfect, that is not an excuse to be imperfect. With a flash of insight I saw that such thinking, emerging from the arts, could be directly relevant to management and leadership development.

In the second half of the 1990s, I decided we needed a bespoke building, one founded on art. The location was an easy decision: Bled, home to one of the most beautiful lakes in the world. I convinced celebrated Slovene architect Vojteh Ravnikar<sup>7</sup> to build a campus not as a monument to business but as a creative environment for creative leadership. He succeeded. Through a modern rendition of a traditional alpine villa, Ravnikar's design was founded on an art gallery concept.

<sup>7</sup> Vojteh Ravnikar (1943–2010) was a lauded architect, designer of many of Slovenia's best known modern buildings and winner of numerous local and international awards, including the Plečnik Award (1987), the Prešeren Award (2003), and the Herder Prize (2006).

Walking into the school, if you did not know where you were, you might guess an art gallery. For sure you will find well-appointed classrooms with the finest IT equipment and learning resources, but you will also find the halls, lobbies, and classrooms bedecked with original art. Focusing on modern art from the region, this collection is intended to draw the eye and question the mind. The building itself is also a work of art. The open spaces, large terraces, and broad windows and glass make the interior an enlivening space where the beauty of nature also folds into the classroom. IEDC has now stood in Bled for fifteen years and boasts a permanent collection of more than 200 paintings and sculptures, living reminders of our commitment to the arts (see Mljač & Stepančič, 2013).

The move into our new campus accelerated my desire to discover scholars and artists with whom I could learn and cooperate. Peter Drucker was chief among them. Drucker's reflections on Japanese art and the relationships of art to self-awareness, management, and leadership moved me: "Learn more about yourself . . . you cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first" (Purg, 2009: 7). With Nancy Adler I found the conceptual and theoretical voice for what I had felt and done intuitively, confronting ugliness with beauty and seeing the artistry of leadership as facing reality, seeking possibility (Adler, 2006, 2011). The way Schein articulated the connection sums up exactly why the arts are essential to

### Živko Ira Marušič, *Dreams*, 1996



business, management, and leadership education. Art and artists “stimulate us to see more, to hear more and to feel more of what is going on within us and around us. Art is shocking, provoking, and inspiring” (Schein, 2013: 1).

All through these experiences—the ups and downs of founding a school, building a new campus, and meeting inspiring colleagues—I was aware of the growing concern and critiques of what business education had become. What had become traditional in business education was robbing business’s soul. The critiques of Khurana, Ghoshal, Mintzberg, and others really struck home. I started to understand that “leaders are trapped by a focus on hyper rationalism and instrumentality” (Sutherland & Walravens, 2011: 4)—the infirmity of pure transaction and profit.

I knew I could do something about that. The words of Slovene poet Kosovel sounded again in my ears: “A speechless silence is like sorrow” (2004: 120).

### The Sarajevo Experience

Give me the latitude of a narrative tangent, one that will bring form to these reflections. Some years ago Prof. Jonathan Gosling contacted me. Jonathan was designing a leadership development program for a large defense company. He wanted to take executives on a learning journey where they could viscerally connect with the reality of their industry and the meanings that lay behind what they do. He wanted to confront defense executives with the meanings, the real-world consequences, of what they were leading. The idea was set to bring them to Sarajevo. This was not long after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Now, as then, I believe everyone should have the privilege of visiting this remarkable country. I committed to doing everything possible to make the program a reality.

In Bosnia they met with business and political leaders who, in the most difficult times, acted to provide food, electricity, and medicine for the people of Sarajevo. While providing such life-saving means, they also tended to life-giving means, supporting cultural activities and artists throughout the siege. Knowing some of these artists, I gathered together musicians, theater professionals, poets, and cultural leaders. Through stories and performances they recounted how, in the face of mortal danger, they held rehearsals, concerts, readings, and plays. In the midst of death, in candlelit underground shelters, they shared art with their fellow human beings, to keep the meaning of being human alive. This presented participants with leadership meanings quite distant from efficiency, profit, and growth (Gosling & Purg, 2007).

Those days in Sarajevo, the basis of a program we have now run many times, were catalytic. Seeing, hearing, feeling the spirit of Sarajevo, its business and political leaders, people from the street and artists, struck the hearts of managers we brought there, growing in them new managerial mindsets. It raised fundamental questions about the meanings of their organization and the purposes and practices of leadership within.

### Back to School

All of these experiences and inputs came together, and the artistic heart of IEDC formed.

### The IEDC Premises



From my earliest memories of my father, mother, and teachers, I knew the precedence of meaning as the core to what needs to inform our actions. It was, as Kosovel urged, to go beyond myself to think on the betterment and happiness of others through beautiful action. From friends and colleagues I understood this action as confronting the ugliness of the world with beauty, the importance of self-reflection, and the power of art to form and inspire the understanding of the self and the meaning of working with others. Reflecting on my experiences with theater, film, music, and visual arts—focused with the words of Schein—I knew the ability of art to do this not by being beautiful alone but by shocking and provoking us to see, hear, and feel more of the world around us.

Connecting all this together, I understood the value of the arts in management education as connecting us to our humanity. We facilitate this by affording students experiences like the Sarajevo program not only to reflect on themselves but to see reality more artistically, both the good and the bad. Moreover, these experiences give them the ability, like artists, to not be blinded by probability and the status quo of transaction and profit but to see the infinite possibility of human nature and what we can do together.

Across the backdrop of these events and thoughts, I brought together a cadre of artist-educators to

develop an Art and Leadership program as integral to the longer programs and degrees at IEDC-Bled School of Management.<sup>8</sup> Prof. Dr. Arnold Walravens engages students in observational exercises using the school's paintings and sculptures. These exercises help students reflect on themselves and their own leadership practices by metaphorically exploring them through various art styles (impressionism, realism, expressionism, etc.) and through how artists see and express the human condition. Via these metaphors students open up, becoming better observers of themselves and each other, coming to important discoveries about who they are and how they see their own leadership behaviors. As Paul Robertson, British violinist of Medici String Quartet fame and former musician-in-residence at IEDC, says of art and music: in them "we recognize that there is always an opportunity to find the most beautiful part of ourselves" (2009).

Through film, Prof. Haris Pašović, award-winning director and theater professional from Sarajevo, takes students to the blackness the world can present. Discussing issues of conflict, genocide, inequality, and oppression, he guides

<sup>8</sup> Longer programs at IEDC-Bled School of Management involve the five-week General Management Program, as well as the degree programs delivered through the Postgraduate Studies Faculty, including the MBA and Ph.D.

classes through scenes of ethical and moral crises faced in leadership. Violinist Miha Pogačnik, a continuous collaborator, uses masterworks of the violin repertoire to draw students into the vivacity of musical creativity. Like Prof. Arnold Walravens, he develops observational skills, drawing attention to the centrality of listening in leadership. Through the conflicts and resolutions in music, he weaves the real-life tapestry of leadership, its highs and lows, aspirations and achievements. After an experience with Miha Pogačnik, participants say they will never listen to music in the same way again. Music becomes a new resource for their future leadership development.

Also working with music, Danish conductor Peter Hanke foregrounds the performance of leadership—how it is not just an activity of minds but a fully embodied practice. Seeing the great value of conducting as a space for leadership development, I also engaged Marko Letonja, celebrated Slovene orchestral conductor, who has given numerous presentations on leadership from the podium. With him I created a video case translating lessons in leadership from music to business.

Today, much of the arts-based activities are led by Dr. Ian Sutherland, Associate Dean for Research at IEDC. In addition to being an educator and researcher, he is a pianist and choral conductor. Ian works closely with many of the aforementioned faculty but also commands his

own portfolio of arts-based pedagogies. Approaching change management from the artistic perspective, he takes managers on listening journeys through Beethoven piano sonatas, teaching them to hear and experience the unfolding of organizational change through the metaphors of harmony, dissonance, transformation, and resolution. Using group compositional exercises, he opens executives up to the essence of creative processes as they compose unique performance pieces. However, he is perhaps best known for exploring leadership in action. He does this through the activity of choral conducting in workshops like the one Jeff experienced. Through singing, choirs, and conducting, he leads participants to see how simple actions of connecting with others through shared meaning and purpose, beautifully oriented, are the heart of what organizations can achieve together (Purg & Walravens, 2015). Here I hand the baton to him.

### IAN'S STORY

Like Danica, during childhood I was surrounded by creative work and the arts. I came into the world to a comfortably middle class Canadian family in a small coastal town on the island of Newfoundland. From the start I was encircled with the arts: my father's expansive library, school music ensembles, family vacations to the galleries, museums, and concert halls of Europe. Between the ages of ten and twenty-five, I spent

### The IEDC Center for Innovative Learning



my life at the piano, eventually completing bachelor and master's degrees in music at Memorial University. I was, and remain, a devotee of the arts, trained as a professional pianist and choral conductor.

As nice as this may sound, in reality, the life of a pianist is a focused clamor of solitude. It is lonely. I first found a counterbalance in choral music. From chorister to accompanist and eventually conductor, I found inspiration and fulfillment in a community of people achieving together. Yet the experience was not simply about what we were doing together; it was about what our collective activity brought to the world and why we did it. A choir is an organization with a deeply social meaning—to bring music to life, bringing the enjoyment of it to others.

These experiences, the social dimension of music making, brought me into a world of community music. My work became helping others experience the joy of making music together. I worked as a choral conductor and conservatory director, and I coordinated a large international music festival. I learned much about organizing, project management, team dynamics, motivation, budgeting, accounting, event planning, and logistics. Unknowingly, I became a manager.

Later, I returned to academia, completing a Ph.D. in cultural sociology under Prof. Tia DeNora at the University of Exeter. Here a job opportunity landed me in leadership studies. Seeing a fit with my musical background, arts management experience, and base in sociology and philosophy, Prof. Jonathan Gosling (the same person appearing above in the Sarajevo experience), then director of Exeter's Centre for Leadership Studies, hired me to manage a project on leadership in the creative and cultural industries. Gradually, I found a new focus: leadership studies.

This began as a difficult relationship. I found the field both intellectually stimulating and shallow. I assumed leadership should consider meaning and purpose and not be so preoccupied with getting things done. From my musical background I *felt* leadership was about collective achievement and benefit to others. Yet much of what I read in leadership, management, and organizational theory seemed to, as Ghoshal has asserted, propagate "ideologically inspired amoral theories" (2005: 76). There was a disavowal of sociological questions—"who controls and the consequences of that control" in favor of

instrumental questions and "how to understand and thus design efficient and effective organizations" (Hinings & Greenwood, 2002: 413). In light of our discussion here, this was a disengagement with questions of meaning behind managerial and organizational actions in favor of a mechanistic view to the bottom line above all else. I will always appreciate early conversations with Jonathan about this. He guided me toward more subtle, emergent, cultural understandings of leadership—studies approaching leadership through ethnomethodological and social constructionist lenses. I was taken by the concepts of shared, collective, and distributed leadership. These spoke much more to my lived experience as a musician and arts manager.

Serendipitously, Prof. Donna Ladkin, an oboist and former orchestra manager, was also a member of the faculty. At the time she was working on connections among music, leadership, embodiment, and authenticity. She wrote about the embodiment of mastery, congruence, and purpose, identifying the *nourishing* capacity of leadership focused on beautiful goals (Ladkin, 2008). Her words were what I had felt as an arts manager and as a conductor. She challenged leadership to ask, "Is the purpose of one's leadership beautiful?" This raises the meaning question by invoking beauty as a criterion for judging the quality of the meaning in the same sense that the musician—pianist, conductor, or otherwise—does.

Up to that point my musical studies were a search for meaning and beauty, doing something amazing with communities of people. My sociocultural studies were a means of understanding that practice through the active presence of the arts in everyday life. My work in leadership was an exploration of the meanings, purposes, and practices of leadership in the arts and creative and cultural industries (see Sutherland & Gosling, 2010). This was a chain—music, cultural sociology, leadership studies. It unified as leadership linked back to music, the value of the arts to help develop leadership.

Through Donna's work I was introduced to a growing host of others' thinking with and through the arts for leadership and leadership development. The arenas of embodiment, aesthetics, craft, and artistry in management and leadership began to unfold.

In 2010 three events accelerated this thinking: a performance, an email, and a trip to Montreal. The performance and the email crystallized the

connections between leadership and art; the trip to Montreal was a gateway to Slovenia and what I do now.

Sometime early in 2010 I was visiting London. I indulged in a choral performance at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. I do not remember what choir it was, but I do remember their final work, Thomas Tallis's *Spem in alium*. If you don't know the piece, it's readily available on YouTube. A work intimately known to me, on this occasion it took on new significance.

*Spem in alium* is a uniquely impressive, unfathomably complex piece. Composed in the late sixteenth century, it is a forty-voice motet. We all have a mind's ear concept of four-part harmony (soprano, alto, tenor, bass); Tallis's masterpiece multiplies that by a factor of ten. It is a work of forty-part harmony—forty unique and independent voices weaving in and out of harmony and dissonance, creating a tapestry of vivid colors and emotions.

*Spem in alium* is a musical treatise on organizations. It is a diverse assembly of people working toward a collective goal through planned tasks and actions, a complex division of labor, providing a service to others. When you change your perspective and view a choir as an organization, you see the refined, beautiful power of a human organization. Some will argue this is a metaphorical trick—that companies and corporations are different. I fully disagree. Like a corporation, a choir is a group of people coming together to achieve something they cannot do alone. Choirs have products and services (recordings, concerts, merchandise), sold to customers (audiences). They have defined organizational structures and processes carried out through sections, functions, and roles. They are concerned with marketing, sales, budgeting, accounting, and strategic planning. They exist in a competitive marketplace vying for market share, focusing on audience (customer) development. However, as far as I can tell, there is one fundamental difference: the basic logic of how it all fits together.

All the structures, functions, and financial and strategic concerns of a choir serve a goal that has nothing to do with profit; they facilitate a community of purpose: the enrichment of the lives of people. It is the meaning of the organization—enriching the lives of the organizational members, the singers, and the wider public and societies in which the choir operates. The

choral organization is a real embodiment of what Mintzberg has called communityship: "Community means caring about our work, our colleagues, and our place in the world, geographic and otherwise, and in turn being inspired by this caring" (2009: 141).

The meaning behind the beauty is the art organization's focus on these higher-order values, seeking not the lowest common denominators of transaction and profit but the highest common denominator of what organizations can do: enriching the lives of others.

Sitting there listening to the familiar sounds of *Spem in alium*, my experience, if only for a few minutes, was nourished, transformed for the better. I understood what the arts bring—a visceral, real-world case study of the positive affect and power of organizations, *if we challenge ourselves to do no less*. This ability of the arts to connect with such meaning, more than beauty, is the fundamental value. A past research informant said this better than I can: "When you see something that's amazing, or that you're part of something that's amazing you have a cultural or creative experience that has made you think and act differently . . . that's its power really" (quoted in Sutherland & Gosling, 2010: 22).

Seeing and being part of that amazing performance helped me think differently about organizations. It was a call to action, to find ways to help others have similar experiences.

The second event of 2010 was an extension of the first. It reframed leadership. An email popped up on my screen with the subject line "you have to see this." A colleague had sent a link. Clicking it, I was redirected to a YouTube video. The screen flashed with the text "185 voices . . . 243 tracks . . . 12 countries . . . Lux Aurumque . . . Eric Whitacre." A kitschy red digital curtain parted, revealing a black-T-shirted conductor, Eric Whitacre; a virtual camera panned from conductor to a host of 185 individuals singing from living rooms, kitchens, and studios. It was the Virtual Choir. Sitting in my office, I cried. The tears came from the meaning of this form of organization and the leadership that lay behind it.

Eric Whitacre has created a global organization where anyone with a webcam, internet connection, and a love for singing can join. I have followed this organization for seven years, watching it grow from a start-up of 185 singers from 12 countries to a mature company of 5,905 singers from 101

countries. Like experiencing *Spem in alium* at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, I experienced the highest ideals of human organizing, but with an inspirational leadership insight.

I am a choral conductor. I even used to be a good one. The conductor's art takes place in rehearsal, where we work together with the individuals who have chosen to sing with us. In the rehearsal space we obsess over every fine detail, spending hours shaping and molding each phrase. Conductors have more than once been accused of being controlling perfectionists. What Eric Whitacre did was the opposite. He let go. He created a space and let others fill it.

In the format of the Virtual Choir, Whitacre chooses a piece, gives general guidelines to singers, but then relinquishes his power to control to the thousands of singers who choose to join the organization. Each autonomous singer prepares his or her own recording of his or her individual part from which the performance is created. The Virtual Choir accepts all. There are no rehearsals. There are nowhere near the command, control, coordination, and compliance mechanisms typical of most organizations, and certainly not choirs. The result is spectacular.

The music is good, really good. With each new iteration its excellence approaches perfection. Anecdotes from the singers tell of deep commitment and immense effort. They spend hours refining their contributions, recording and rerecording themselves dozens and dozens of times to get that perfect take. They have grown local and global support groups, Google Hangouts, workshops. No singer in any choir I have been involved with, and I implicate myself in this statement, ever worked that hard or showed such self-motivation.

By relinquishing control, Whitacre maximized engagement and commitment. Why? There are two reasons. The first is the line developed above: the beauty of the organization's meaning. The Virtual Choir exists to enrich the lives of its members and its audience. It is an organization founded on the highest common denominator of human experience—a community caring for its work, colleagues, the world. It is, in turn, inspired by this and it grows.

The second is the approach to leadership. Whitacre leads to create a space for others to achieve. The leadership is not about him. It's about them. It is not a leadership reducible to charisma, authenticity, and transactional or

transformational behaviors. It is a leadership focused on others, a leadership of letting go.

Contrast this with the general cult of corporate leadership: "Decades of short-term management, in the United States especially, have inflated the importance of CEOs and reduced others in the corporation to fungible commodities—human resources to be 'downsized' at the drop of a share price" (Mintzberg, 2009: 140).

Whitacre's efforts are not short-term management focused on maximizing performance. Whitacre knows he is literally nothing without the organization. A conductor is the only musician who makes no sound, much like no CEO actually makes a product or service. We are nothing without the people who define our ability to lead. This is a humbling realization.

The third experience of 2010 was about action. At home in Newfoundland, I unexpectedly received a phone call from Danica Purg. Our mutual friend Jonathan Gosling had connected us. She told me she was at the Academy of Management annual meeting in Montreal and would like to meet with me. Could I come tomorrow? At this point I realized two things about Danica. One, she is a woman of action. Two, she does not take no for an answer. Within forty-eight hours I arrived in Montreal. Over the course of a day, meandering around galleries and museums—I particularly remember an exhibition about Miles Davis—Danica told me the story of IEDC and its artistic soul. She invited me to visit IEDC to explore possibilities of working together. I took up that invitation, visiting IEDC several times in the coming months, contributing to the school's programs. That included the Sarajevo experience. I was moved, deeply.

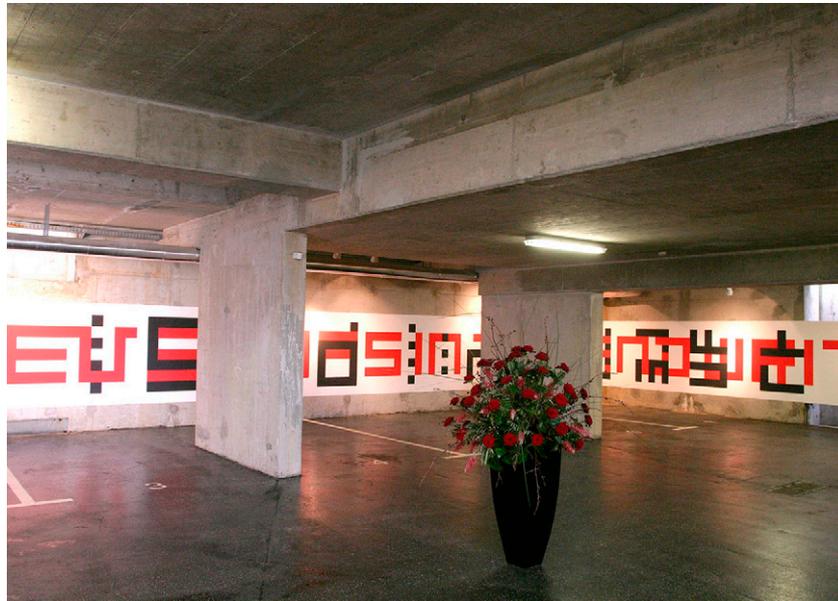
I knew then that joining IEDC was what I had to do. It was the opportunity to realize the potential I heard in *Spem in alium* and the Virtual Choir. It was a courageous faculty where we could really do things differently.

In January 2011 I became a resident of Slovenia.

## BRINGING IT TOGETHER AND INNOVATING

Our stories converge around the search for meaning and the experience of finding it through the arts. Together we work to bring that to management development, to form learning environments where participants are inspired and have the opportunity to pause, reflect, question, and search for meaning. At IEDC-Bled School of

### Eduard Čehovin, Europe 2020, 2004 (IEDC Garage Wall Painting)



Management, the arts, along with sustainable development and ethics, are a pillar of the school's philosophy. The meaning of what we do is helping others develop into managers and leaders who will strive for and seek out the highest common denominator of what organizations can achieve: enriching the lives of others. We seek to provide them with the abilities of excellence and the determination to strive for such perfection.

Jeff's story, where we started this narrative, revolves around what we call a "leadership masterclass," bringing practicing managers into contact with a professional chamber choir. It is a culmination of all the experience, intuition, senses, thoughts, research, and practice that have brought us together.

It begins with a conversation about the relational aspects of leadership, discussing leadership as a situated, social phenomenon and opening dialogue about emotional connectivity, purpose, presence, and meaning. Then we are flash mobbed by a choir, and everything changes. The participants are confronted with a community of practitioners whose meaning exudes beauty. For the remainder of the day, the managers and singers form one learning community discussing the why and how of the choral organization, the role and practice of leadership, and the wider meanings of what an organization is and can be. Most important, each managerial participant has the opportunity to come forward and conduct the choir, to *feel* what it is like to lead this kind of company.

What can occur in this space, and did occur for Jeff and his colleagues, is a nourishing of the human condition. When enveloped by the sounds of a beautiful organization at beautiful work—like an operetta in a village production, *Spem in alium* at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, or the Virtual Choir on your screen—the meaning of what we can achieve together is tangible, palpable. In these moments the banners of "business-for-business-sake," "the bottom line above all else," and "greed is good," appear for what they really are, embarrassingly paltry and lifeless.

Yet the global industry of business education, for the most part, would have us ignore this, arguing that efficiency, profit, and growth should be our foci. They may be means, but they are not ends. The arts, by contrast, refuse to let us ignore this, reminding us that art, music, and culture are more than means; they give meaning to life. They inspire and form our best possible selves as individuals, managers, leaders, and organizations: "And hence it is, that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfishness, and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature" (Smith, 1759: 30).

Today, together, we both continue to be voices and advocates for the involvement of the arts and artists in management education. We travel the world, together and separately, speaking to executives, HR professionals, and fellow academics—anyone who will listen—about the value of the

arts for business education, management and leadership in particular. We tell the stories of our experiences with the arts and listen to those of others. Along the way, we find inspiration from others involved in the practice in an ever-expanding and connecting community.

At IEDC-Bled School of Management, we are developing a robust research agenda around the arts, bringing together faculty and Ph.D. students to explore arts-based pedagogy, learning processes, and the longer-term impacts of artistic business learning.

The greatest inspiration for us both is seeing and hearing our students learn and develop through choirs, painters, and film directors as much as through case studies and finance, marketing, accounting, and strategy courses. Today, more than 75,000 individuals, coming from 82 countries, have participated across the school's many programs, extending the approach and philosophy of IEDC-Bled School of Management around the globe. Their stories carry the work forward. This enrichment, a reconnection to the human spirit of organizations, is what pushes us to continuously invent. Poets and philosophers, architects, designers and dancers have become familiar actors in our classrooms. As managers open to the possibilities of what we can achieve together, to companies of community, to business enriching the lives of others, and as they become dissatisfied with the lowest common denominators of what management has become, we are inspired. We are formed and reformed.

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## The Making of a Classic Ethnography: Notes on Alice Goffman's *On the Run*

By John Van Maanen, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Mark de Rond, University of Cambridge

It is rare for a scholarly ethnography written by a young, untenured professor to generate the sort of buzz ordinarily reserved for the progeny of Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, Philip Roth, or Margaret Atwood. Yet Alice Goffman's (2014) *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* has more or less done precisely that, and drawn more positive attention than almost any social science work in years. The book—her first—has been widely praised for its gut-wrenching, incisive representation of the social life of young African American men hounded by the police in a poor, inner-city Philadelphia neighborhood—a world most of us have limited, if any, knowledge of. Reviewers hailed it as “a remarkable feat of reporting” (Alex Kotlowitz, 2013, in the *New York Times* Sunday Book Review), and “extraordinary” (Malcolm Gladwell, 2014, in the *New Yorker*), destined to become “an ethnographic classic” (Christopher Jencks, 2014, in the *New York Review of Books*).

But, as might be expected given the acclaim and attention generated since its publication, the book has also come in for some sober criticism, the majority of which has come from legal scholars and

journalists. Indeed, any book that raises important questions about research ethics coupled with the near impossibility of specifying consensual rules surrounding ethnography is bound to stir controversy. Who, for example, has the right to study, analyze, and describe the lives of marginalized segments of society? How is the Herculean task of telling what it is like to be someone else best accomplished? What is the right mix of involvement and detachment, reportage and interpretation in the setting? How far does one go to protect the identities of those one is close to in the field? How can Alice's claims to truth be assessed in light of the anonymity cloak that covers her representation?

The questions raised are many, and they are provoking. There are no easy answers, since ethnography is always a messy affair. What to one reader is a virtue of the work is, to another, a vice. In this footnote to *On the Run*, we chase down questions of veracity, betrayal, exploitation, and participation that surround the work. These are matters of particular relevance to a number of organizational and occupational researchers who regard their fieldwork and textual practices as well within ethnographic traditions. Few studies offer a better, closer, or more intense depiction and forthright confrontation of the moral dilemmas that are more or less baked into immersion ethnography. This is the sort of work in which the fieldworker subjects herself—her own body, her own personality, her own social situation—to the life contingencies of those studied, seeing not just what is happening in the research site but feeling it, bodily and emotionally. Since various occupational and organizational ethnographies are making something of a splash of late in the management research literature, a close look at this high-profile ethnography is warranted, especially in light of the inordinate commentary, both praiseworthy and blameworthy, it has generated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have in mind here a number of book-length ethnographies published over the last ten or so years that have received considerable attention from various scholarly communities in the management and organization research worlds. A small sample includes Barley and Kunda (2006), Anteby (2008, 2013), Ho (2009), Kellogg (2011), Lane (2011), Nadeem (2011), Sharone (2013), and Turco (2016). Considerable ethnographic work is found in the area journals as well, albeit edited to reflect the presentational penchants (“asphalting”) of particular journals, including this one—predilections that cover such matters as acceptable length, format, framing, research design, presentation of findings, method and analysis discussion, theory development, and so on.

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