

Working group 3:

### **Cultural Management – The Art of the Impossible (WG3)**

Friday April 24, 12:30 – 14:00

Moderator:

**Rod Fisher**, Director, International Intelligence on Culture, London

Speakers:

**Bradley Allen**, Manager, Hotel Proforma, Copenhagen and  
Coordinator of the Chapter 15 network

**Martin Cikanek**, Music Management Consultant, Prague

**Laure Guazzoni**, Co-director, La Belle Ouvrage, Paris and Et Bientot

**Laëtitia Manach**, Head of Arts, British Council, Paris

## **Introduction**

Although the intentionally jocular – perhaps even provocative – title of this working group session was presented as a statement rather than a question, it was always likely that the speakers would concentrate on the art of the possible; and so it proved.

The task of the workshop was not to justify the value or otherwise of management of the arts, but instead to focus on the skills and training needed today to effectively administer and lead arts organisations given the many challenges – not least financial realities and the relationship of professional practice to the wider creative economy – they encounter. Arguably, cultural management training provided in the academic sector has been a little slow in responding to these new challenges. Where innovation in skills development has taken place – for example in the focus on leadership training and new thinking on organisational development – it is often the result of initiatives taken in non formal and informal educational approaches outside academia or instigated by professionals themselves. This session provided an opportunity to learn about some of these new initiatives, as well as the experience gained through formal education in arts management. The overall aim was to demonstrate how training is responding, or needs to respond, to a new operating environment by rethinking the learning needs of performing arts managers and by addressing these in innovative ways.

The British Council's new Cultural Leadership International (CLI) programme has been designed to help a new generation of cultural leaders emerge and develop their skills and talent. Recognising that arts practitioners in different countries and regions have different training needs, this large scale initiative, being piloted from April 2009 – March 2010, will seek to build an international network of cultural leaderships through personally tailored activities, such as work based placements, creative collaborations and residencies, coaching and mentoring and experiential learning opportunities.

The promotion of professional and personal growth is also at the heart of the work of La Belle Ouvrage in Paris, which supports the exchange and dissemination of the experience, know-how and skills of practitioners. La Belle Ouvrage is part of the SPACE (Supporting Performing Arts Circulation in Europe) project on artists' mobility, part funded by the European Commission, which launched in 2009, a training programme for 'Performing Arts Managers *On the Move?*'. Through this initiative up to 30 young professionals working in the administration, production or touring of the performing arts in Europe are being invited to engage in a 16 month training programme. The mobility dimension is reinforced by the fact that the training is taking place in five European countries. One outcome anticipated, or at least desired, is the development of a common vocabulary to facilitate arts professionals working together in Europe.

The need for a common language for presentation of international performing arts work is also recognised by Chapter 15, a Danish network of producers of such work. Chapter 15 seeks to address a perceived lack of audience development skills in the Danish market by organising training seminars, dialogue and networking to improve the conditions for presenting international work. One model which might help to solve professionalism and infrastructure problems in Denmark is that of production houses. Successful production houses have a strong international network of partners, established distribution channels, focused marketing strategies and achieve economies of scale in terms of cost.

This is not to suggest there is not a place for formal training for the management of arts – indeed it is generally acknowledged that higher education training can open up new vistas and, especially when incorporating secondments to arts organisations, can provide valuable experience. However, it is increasingly recognised that a qualification in cultural management is not enough. Practitioners need access to a broad range of training to advance their capacity, skills and professionalism. One issue though which needs attention is the increasing number of young cultural management trainees seeking temporary work experience with performing arts companies. Undeniably useful for both trainee and host organisation, the management as such individuals nevertheless can put a strain on the resources of small performing arts organisations in particular.

