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The Performing Arts
A Manual for Managers

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily engage the responsibility of the Council of Europe.

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PREFACE

This is the first publication in the STAGE Project, following on from the MOSAIC Project, which began the collection of manuals designed for cultural decision-makers, officials and administrators. It is the first in a series of books that will attempt to meet the same utility and efficiency criteria for the work of cultural workers in the Southern Caucasus and other European countries.

Each publication will deal clearly and in depth with a key theme of cultural policy and practice, endeavouring to provide readers with “turnkey solutions”, examples of good practice which have proved their worth in various cultural contexts. Of course, since the “locks” on the “doors” to cultural policies and strategies vary from country to country and region to region, different “keys” will have to be turned. However, given a reasonably large range of good practices, it may subsequently prove easier for cultural managers and administrators to “manufacture” the appropriate “keys” themselves, the tools best suited to a specific case, a specific national or regional context.

“The Performing Arts - a Manual for Managers” by Simon Mundy attempts to address one of the thornier issues of cultural policy, especially in the countries in transition. Performing arts managers in these countries are currently faced with the quandaries of transition to the market economy, namely a sudden transformation in the make-up and size of audiences in the post-totalitarian era due to the emergence of more or different types of cultural supply or to a swing in public interest towards the economic realm. How can an audience be reached under these specific conditions? How can managers secure audience loyalty, once they have been reached and convinced of the aesthetic and educational importance of the performing arts or quite simply captivated by the quality of the artistic performance?

What programming approach can provide the optimum response to the new expectations of a society in transition? How should we adapt institutional organisation and structure in order to achieve these aims? How are we to manage the corresponding budget, and how and where do we find the extra financing required? Last but not least, what pointers can we identify for improving our understanding of the artists who “stand at the centre” of all this activity, “sometimes creating the work, sometimes performing, sometimes interpreting”?

Simon Mundy’s manual attempts to answer these questions clearly and precisely, even though no such text can be completely exhaustive. Some of the facts presented seem obvious and the conclusions commonplace, but sound solutions often emerge from stating the obvious, highlighting the appropriate responses so that they become easier to formulate in a coherent manner.

We hope that “The Performing Arts - a Manual for Managers” will be very useful for all those who wish to “raise the curtains” on new practical strategies and solutions for developing the performing arts not only in the Southern Caucasus but also throughout Europe.

Vera Boltho
Head of the Cultural Policy and
Action Department

INTRODUCTION

To manage a performing arts organisation well has never been easy. It combines many of the most difficult areas of company management with a set of unpredictable and exasperating external relationships. It is perhaps like directing a huge department store or a restaurant without ever quite knowing whether the clothes and food will be allowed to arrive. There are so many competing pressures. Most of them, if you are running the organisation, seem to do with money. There is never enough to fulfil all the ambitions of the artistic programme or the expectations of the press and public. Politicians, bureaucrats, funding foundations and critics all expect the best and demand perfection – always unobtainable. The less money is available from whatever source – local and national governments, sponsors and the box office – the more committees have to be satisfied and impossible forms filled in. The manager is constantly under scrutiny by people who have no idea what goes into putting on a good show. There are plenty in authority over the arts who think that, just because they enjoy themselves and have read a bit, they therefore know all there is to know about production. They do not but perhaps it is the manager's job to maintain their happy illusion by presenting performances night after night that seem to appear without apparent effort.

This manual has been written to help the manager through the minefield. For those already at the top of the organisation it can be a refresher manual, reaffirming the basic tenets of the profession to which they belong. For the manager moving up through the ranks it can put the task ahead into perspective.

Senior managers may find it useful as a basis for discussion with their staff, who may not often have the opportunity to see themselves as part of the whole operation and to understand the importance of their work to the whole enterprise. This will be particularly true for those in front-of-house positions or posts which have direct contact with the public. For Board members and funders, it should be seen as a tool to measure the performance of the organisation as well as a reminder of the stresses that a manager has to deal with.

It is not possible in such a short number of words to give a comprehensive set of instructions for each art form or type of venue, still less to offer an answer to every problem which will arise. This is not an academic study and makes no pretensions to bibliographic respectability. However, I hope that many of my observations, gleaned from thirty years of experience at every level of the business (from box-office assistant to board member and from critic to director) will ring true and will provide a starting point for those who want to see the arts succeed.

My thanks to Vera Boltho and Dorina Bodea at the Council of Europe for their help and encouragement during the writing process. Thanks, too, to Paul James, General Administrator of the European Union Baroque Orchestra, who gave me sound advice on the contents as we toured China (to some venues

which badly needed the training), and to Jo Shapcott, who gave me the benefit of her long experience working in project management and funding agencies.

Simon Mundy,
Gladestry,
Wales,
2002.

The Audience

The Audience comes first in this manual for the simple reason that it has to. In the performing arts if the audience is not the first priority of managers, then none of the rest of the agenda will make sense. However good the organisation, the fund-raising, the artistic programme, the promotion or the staff relations, the audience is the target. Its members must leave the event with a sense that they have drawn as much benefit as possible from the artistry on offer. They must not have been distracted by sub-standard care at the venue or its surroundings. The show must have its full impact. The manager must always remember that the audience could be spending the time at home in front of the TV screen, in a restaurant, with friends or at somebody else's production. And it is no service to the authors, choreographers and composers to present their work badly. If the event receives public money, then there are issues of democratic accountability for taxes that have to be borne in mind. If there are no subsidies then the duty is that of any commercial operation to provide the best services to its customers it can. The audience has the right to expect the best the professional manager can provide, the artists have the right to expect that their own creativity will be matched by the professionalism of those putting it in context.

Reaching the Audience

In order to arrive an audience not only has to be informed, it has to be attracted. Its expectations of the event need to match those of the performers. Whether the intention is radical or conservative, the style, social context and level of the event have to be communicated effectively in advance. There is no point selling a show as being something it is not - the audience will be disappointed, the reputation of the company will suffer and it will be harder to bring people back.

Audiences always need to be renewed. It is not enough to assume that it will be self-generating in perpetuity, that fathers will pass their subscriptions - their *abonnements* places - on to their children and that the children will be grateful when they do. Eventually social habits change, people move away or die. There has to be a balance between providing the experience that satisfies regular attendees and giving newcomers the information and the care to ensure that they come back for more.

Marketing

When designing the marketing material, therefore - posters, subscription leaflets, press and broadcasting advertising, mailing list brochures, point of sale literature and (increasingly) online and e-mail - the message has to be enticing but accurate. The sense of the event, the intentions of the artists, the social context of the venue, has to be communicated. This is particularly important in 'outreach' work - introducing your work to young or unfamiliar audiences. If they are brought in by false promises and then left feeling ill at ease, out of place, or bored, then they will prove to be worse than if they had never come at all. They

will tell their friends and family that you and your art are rubbish. They will turn into negative agents whom it will take an inordinate amount of time and promotional money to reconvert.

Accuracy, though, is not enough. It is amazing how often a smart design grabs the imagination but still manages to hide the date, time and place of the event, how much the tickets cost and where they can be bought. The potential audience must be able to act once reached. They should not have to play the detective to track the event down. The same should be true of the information at the venue itself. It should be easy, simple and obvious to find out what is playing that day, to find the box office, and to discover the programme for as far ahead as possible. The diary should be posted on the outside of the building, other material should be easy to see inside and easy to read, not only in literary style but in design as well. Too often designers like to use small print which is hard for anybody over forty to decipher.

However ingenious the marketing it has to answer the basic questions:-

- What is going on?
- At what time and on which date?
- Who is performing?
- Will I like it?
- Should I come myself and bring other people?
- How much will it cost me?
- How do I get tickets?

The Media

The Press should always be seen as an ally, even when they are being critical. While, sadly, Oscar Wilde's remark that 'there is no such thing as bad publicity' is not quite true, it is a sound principle that all publicity can be turned to advantage. Surprisingly even destructive reviews can help. Except for the devoted few who follow artistic reputations closely, for most of the potential audience the abiding memory will be that they read about the event in the papers, heard about it on the radio or saw something on television. They often do not recall whether the coverage was positive or negative. Its appearance in the press lent glamour enough.

Nonetheless, that is no excuse not to work diligently on the image the media presents. This is not just a matter of keeping the critics happy (though that is important). News journalists, editors, documentary makers and specialists in related subjects to the arts, like education and community relations, are invaluable when trying to plant a positive image in the public mind. Relations with the media go deeper than providing press tickets (always give two - remember that a journalist who has had a lonely evening is unlikely to leave happy). Good press coverage comes from building a constant and coherent relationship. A manager should be prepared to speak on the record as often as possible, should brief important journalists before a story can be damaging and should ensure that there is a good stream of stories available for feature coverage, communicated early enough for editors to plan properly. If you can avoid it, never say 'no comment'. Turn a difficult question to your advantage. The press and other media are

your best way of reaching the audience - far better than leaflets and advertising which only back up the image received in other ways. Editorial articles are more effective than advertising. A photograph is worth three hundred words. Ten seconds on the main television news bulletin draws more audience than an hour of worthy documentary. Radio is the cheapest and easiest medium to gain access to, though its very immediacy means that it is remembered less durably than print or television.

Education

When the arts are involved we are all in a continuous state of education. The process of discovery which is the aim of education and the reason for the arts is indivisible. However the arts do have to be prepared for. They are, by their nature, full of conventions and traditions that have to be learnt and made familiar before they can be enjoyed to the full. This does not mean that only the cognoscenti can derive pleasure or understanding. It does mean, though, that if there is no preparation for the conventions, the arts can seem alienating, exclusive and obscure.

Education for receiving, as opposed to participating, in the arts takes many forms and is applied at many different stages of knowledge. The period of formal education is important and performing arts organisations must ensure that they have strategies for remaining in contact with all levels of schooling - not just in offering tickets but in sending artists into schools and colleges to develop student work - and not just for the children who show talent or exceptional interest which may lead them into an artistic profession. It is actually the rest, the attracted but not

artistically professional, majority of the population who will comprise the bulk of the audience. Therefore making sure that they have to tools to make the arts approachable for themselves from an early age is just as much a priority for the performing arts manager as it is for the teacher.

Education does not stop at the school or university gates, though. People often deepen their involvement in the arts later in life and need to refresh or adapt the understanding they acquired when they were younger. In many ways the pressures of maturity - the need to be seen in control, the craving for respect and the desire not to be seen as inadequate - can make asking to learn about the arts more difficult. Managers therefore need to be careful to provide opportunities which feel like extra events rather than patronising lectures. So talks before events by the artists performing or the composers, writers and designers, special weekends of discovery, discussions with specialists and explanations from directors are all essential ingredients in reaching out to an audience that might otherwise feel that the art was not for them. Sometimes this will involve activity in the venue in which the performance is to take place. Equally often, though, it should embrace projects in other parts of the community - in public halls and suburban surroundings, in outlying villages, even in people's homes where volunteers can be found to host groups of potential audience members. There is no such thing as 'no audience' for an artistic performance. There is only an audience that has not yet been reached.

Keeping the Audience

While reaching new audiences is a task every performing organisation has to undertake in order to renew itself, it is equally important to keep and cherish the audience that already exists. There must be a balance between innovation to bring in new people who might feel excluded by those who are habitual members of the audience, and adherence to custom so that the core audience feels at home whenever they enter the venue. Going to a performance can often feel similar to a religious or social ceremony. It has its own rituals, its dress conventions, its rightful time and place. Disturbing these customs has to be managed carefully. But equally they must be monitored carefully so that they do not become socially ossified. If a venue continues to operate in a certain way just because that is what it has always done, it will soon slip behind other places of entertainment and forms of social interaction - like a restaurant that has not changed its menu, waiters or tablecloths for forty years. It becomes a curiosity and relinquishes its ability to be taken seriously as an agent of artistic insight and, in the process, its justification for continuing public subsidy.

Knowing the audience

Knowing your audience and understanding its constant as well as its changing needs is a necessity for a successful manager. Some of the knowledge comes with experience. Some comes from an innate understanding born of the professional's own enthusiasm for the art. But much also comes from good market research, surveys of those who

come (and those who do not), observation and conversation. Like a good hotelier, an arts manager should talk to the audience as much as possible. The manager should be in the venue for every performance if possible, and certainly for a high proportion of the events each week. It is important not just to sit in one of the best seats in the house. You should watch from the wings, move (silently) to the back of the theatre, listen from the worst seats as well as the best, be aware of the atmosphere as people arrive, leave and talk in the interval. Don't remain closeted with the sponsors, patrons and politicians (though they must be left with the impression that you are taking care of them). Be among the audience and be prepared to make minor adjustments either front of house or backstage in response to the mood. If something is wrong, correct it. Do not assume that nothing can change once the doors are open or the curtain up.

Audiences are made up of individuals, each with a different set of expectations, likes and dislikes. However once in a venue group behaviour tends to exert itself and audience members begin to coalesce into identifiable sections. These can base themselves on almost any social criteria - age, gender, wealth, sexual orientation, class, profession or state of knowledge - but each has to be catered for with equal diligence. Some will like the event, others will loathe it, but it is vital for the future of the performing company that they all leave with a sense that they have had the best experience possible in the circumstances, whether the show itself beguiled, baffled or annoyed them. It is the duty of every performance to stimulate and the reaction to the stimulus can be negative or positive. However, it is essential that the performer does not bore the audience and that the

management does not let them leave with the impression that they are an irrelevance. The show can stand or fall on its merits but the art form and the venue should survive with their reputations intact.

Caring for the audience

It is an axiom that you cannot make a bad show better by being pleasant at the theatre's entrance but you can destroy the impact of a good show by the slightest lapse in front of house care. A rude doorman, an inefficient and expensive bar, an inadequate printed programme, dirty toilets, trouble collecting tickets, tepid stewed coffee, no food and a long, cold wait to get home afterwards can all ruin a visit to the arts. Many of the reasons for attending the performance will be social - to do with 'going out' rather than appreciating the art. Especially if the audience is attending as a couple or as part of a group, the ancillary experience - the eating, drinking and conversation - will be as important as the performance itself. This is especially true for older members of the audience (over 35), whose tolerance level for anything that seems confusing or inconsiderate will be extremely low. And while the quality of the performance is out of the hands of the manager once the show begins, the rest of the event remains under the manager's control from the moment the audience arrives until they return to the street.

Most of the guidance to be given is really a matter of common sense. How would you wish to be treated if you were going out for a special occasion? Every member of the audience is just that - a member, each with a slightly different set of needs which may range from the very simple

(finding a list of the performers) to the moderately complicated (induction loop technology for hearing aids, proper facilities for those with physical disabilities). But even the most demanding requirement is predictable and providing it is merely an extension of good customer service.

Here is a sample list of the questions you need to ask and answer 'yes' to if you are to offer an enjoyable experience with confidence.

- Are the doors of the venue open early enough to let me meet friends, find some refreshment and read the programme?
- Is the box office easy to locate, with fast and polite staff (preferably capable of speaking two major languages) who know the prices and offer the best seats available at that price?
- Is it possible to leave coats and bags free of charge and pick them up quickly at the end of the show?
- Are all the public areas clean, well lit and at the right temperature?
- Can I find a reasonable range of things to eat and drink, at fair prices, without having to queue for so long that there is not time to consume them?

- Are there enough toilets to cope with a sudden rush before the show starts, and are they well equipped, clean and easy to find?

- Can I find a full and informative programme of the event? If it is an expensive souvenir brochure, is there a separate free sheet listing the main details - the work, its creator, performers and production staff?

- Are there scores and scripts or libretti available, either in the programme or separately?

- Is the way to the seats clearly marked and are there well-trained, smiling attendants available to help find them?

- Are all entrances and exits, facilities and areas clearly signed, and are there staff to help?

- Is information about future events easy to find?

- Above all, does arriving for the event lift the spirits, feel like something special and make the audience glad they came even before the performance starts?

If the answer to any of these things is 'no', if going to the venue feels like going to the railway station or the office, if there is a sense that the show is for the benefit of the management not the audience, then the audience is being short changed. The performers will have to work twice as hard to get their message across.

Remember that those attending for the first time may find going into an arts venue intimidating. One unhelpful or disdainful member of staff at the door may put them off the experience for life, especially in a highbrow arts venue like an opera house or symphonic hall.

The Atmosphere

The atmosphere, the feel, of the venue is an important ingredient in the build-up to and the experience of the event. A well-chosen venue - whether purpose-built (theatre, concert hall, etc.) or adapted for the occasion (an ancient or palatial site, converted factory or salon, for example) can enhance the immediacy of the artistic experience. The setting itself can provide as much of the excitement as the work within it. It can, effectively, be an event in itself. Choosing the context is half the trick of good festival direction. For those who do not have the luxury of selecting a special venue it is important that they make sure that the atmosphere of the hall matches the feeling of the show. If the venue feels like an airport, the chances are the audience will treat it with the lack of affection they would give an airport. Once again, a miserable venue makes the performer's job harder. Conversely, a wonderful venue - the Arena in Verona, the lakeside at Bregenz, the Opera House at Drottningholm, the Cable Factory in Helsinki or Bath Abbey, for example - gives the performers a head start. It always used to be said that the singers could sing what they liked after the dinner interval in the gardens at Glyndebourne Opera: the audience would be too happy to notice.

For the big arts centre complexes developed across the world from the 1960s onwards, this poses particular problems. They will have several events taking place simultaneously, usually divergent in style and art form. The audiences will be different too, in age, social expectation and artistic sophistication. The centres have a choice, therefore, as to whether they try to build an atmosphere of their own which gives a standard feel to the audience, whatever is taking place - or whether they stay as neutral as possible and allow the event to dictate the context. The danger of the former approach is that the centre itself overshadows the art - its cafes, bookshops and foyers relegate the show to a supporting role. The danger of the latter is that the show's influence is not strong enough to offset the blandness of its context. In the end, the successful manager will find a balance that makes the centre welcoming while enhancing the power of the event. Then the long-term importance of the venue will depend on the quality of its programme.

Programming

Make your programme policy clear and stick to it. Don't confuse the public. They may not get exactly what they want but they should know the risks involved. It may seem an obvious point but often a programme will be less successful than its contents deserve, not because the work is too inaccessible, but because the audience expected something different or felt the work and its location were mismatched. There will be some companies and venues which specialise in radical arts, some that concentrate on the familiar, others that cover all manner of artistic styles, from string quartets to cutting edge physical circus. Each, though, must have a clear identity and project an awareness of the audience conventions that operate for them.

Balancing a programme

A good programmer will earn the trust of the audience. Such trust will give the artistic director the freedom to perform whatever work seems valid, to explore and re-explore, to present the familiar and make it fresh, to offer the new and make its acceptance feel inevitable. Good programming is an act of leadership. It stretches the audience's taste and the limits of its experience. The difference between entertainment and art is the element of change it seeks. The entertainer is content to reaffirm the attitudes and assumptions harboured by the audience – which knows what it is about to receive and seeks nothing more than to consume it pleasurably. The artist will often be entertaining but that will just be one of the tools used. The artist would rather fascinate and beguile, sometimes shock,

always surprise. The purpose is to change the perception of the audience, however slightly: to alter the way each person thought about the elements within it. Sometimes these elements will be abstract – colour, spatial alignment, counterpoint or rhythm. At others they will be humanist – relationships between people, characterisation and private motive. Sometimes the intention will be social or political. But in all cases change will be sought, the opening of eyes and hearts to an unexpected level of awareness.

A balanced programme will mix the old and the new, the well-known and the element of discovery or re-acquaintance, whether it is in a single event (the works in a concert, a three writer poetry reading or a varied dance evening) or over a season (of opera or plays). A good rule of thumb is to offer one work or performer that the audience will not have come across before, one that they know very well and one that they know something about but are likely to want to explore further. This might be, in a classical concert for example, a rare work by a composer they are familiar with. The same formula works with combinations of performers. One to discover, one to refresh and one to explore. If the programme has these three elements in equal measure, it will never go stale.

Placing the Programme

It is the programmer, the artistic director's, role to schedule the work skilfully so that it is able to achieve its maximum effect, with as little resistance (either actively in the hall or passively by not turning up) from the audience as possible. Performing is not a matter of reproduction, of exactly copying a previous version so that a member of the

audience can recapture an old experience. It is instead an act of re-creation, of presenting work anew. When this is successful the audience should be able to hear or see details and structures in the work which have not been noticed before, even when it is known intimately.

For this to happen there are two preconditions. Firstly, and perhaps obviously, the performers must be capable of imparting the vision to the audience. They must have the intellectual as well as the technical skills to manipulate the material effectively. Selection of the performers is therefore of paramount importance and a mistaken selection is usually the reason why a production fails to achieve all that was hoped of it. The second precondition is the right context for the work. There are some questions associated with this.

- Is the performance part of a special series (for example a festival) or the ordinary monthly programme?
- Is the performance following a theme or one of a few themes that characterise the season?
- Is the performer or the work itself seen as the main audience draw to the event?
- Is the event in the tradition of the venue or is it a new and surprising departure?

Each of these questions raises different issues for the programmer and will require different techniques for presenting the events to the audience, bearing in mind that the aim is always to keep the audience you have already cultivated while appealing to those who have never crossed the threshold before. It would be hard to list all the choices the programmer has to make – especially since there are

some which are specific for particular art forms. However there are general points that can be made in each case which should provide a guide to the direction decisions should veer towards.

If the event is part of a special series it should stand out from the crowd, either by virtue of the work itself or the calibre of the artists performing. This could mean the first performance of a piece, or the presentation of a production which has earned notoriety elsewhere, or the appearance of an artist or ensemble famous enough to merit their arrival being seen by the press and public as a special occasion.

If the show is part of the usual run of seasonal performances it should be used to reinforce the standard quality of the programme. This can be done in many ways, for example by giving the home ensemble a new production, introducing rising young talent, performing works which are established classics but performing them with unusual flair and imagination, pairing standard pieces with the highly unusual, playing around with standard presentation formats or performing a version of a standard work which is different from the usual one.

Whatever is being performed – whether part of a special series or not – the audience needs to feel involved and excited. Tell them about what you are doing and why – not just in the press and publicity, but with special talks and presentations (some can be on video in the venue or on the website). Performers generally like to talk about what they are working on so give them the chance to do so. They can be interviewed before or after the show, they can be

persuaded to meet influential members of the audience (perhaps members of the Friends scheme or sponsors). One concert hall in London had the brilliant idea of running its own audio station live for concert goers as they arrived. They would hire headsets which received signals from infrared sensors around the hall while a live presenter explained the music for the evening, talked to the artists and in a friendly way guided the listener through the concert. Originally it was meant for those who were visually impaired and so would have trouble finding out what was happening on stage. But it soon became clear that it was a popular service with a much wider public. It was expensive, though, and needed a generous sponsor or an increase in public grant, neither of which was forthcoming so the experiment was abandoned after a year.

If the event is part of a theme for the season or festival, it will offer the chance to explore the juxtapositions between works in an innovative way, and to programme pieces which rarely find their way into the repertoire. This might include minor or shorter works by the composer, playwright or choreographer being explored. It could involve commissioning work in another art form (perhaps poetry or physical theatre) taking up the theme. Or it could take works from different ends of a tradition – mediaeval with contemporary music, for example – which throw surprising light on the theme's development. It was a wise festival director, though, who said that 'themes make good servants but bad masters'. In other words if the theme becomes a hindrance to the freedom of programme (for instance, every work presented in the year being from one country) then it is in danger of alienating the audience and boring the

performers. On the other hand a deftly applied thematic touch can allow the artistic director to explore work which the audience might otherwise reject as too unfamiliar and the critics deride as of second rank. The broadening of the repertoire and the shape it can give to a series often makes thematic programming very attractive and allows the organisation to build a clear identity in the public mind.

If the work is the main focus of the event, then the marketing and the press briefings must concentrate on that aspect. It also helps to build the context, so that the main work (whether it's music, dance or theatre) is not presented in isolation. Subsidiary events like readings, workshops, lectures or small-scale performances of related works surround the main event itself. This is no different from the back-up material for an exhibition of a particularly famous picture. One would also display the sketches, biographical material about the artist, related works from the same time or the associated artistic movement. The principle is the same in performance. The more the audience is helped to understand the importance of the work, the more engaged and supportive it will be.

When a new work or production is premiered, many committed members of the audience appreciate the opportunity to discuss their reactions to it afterwards, either immediately or in the days following. While this can be quite an ordeal for those artists involved (and some may find it too stressful to deal with), in most cases audiences will tell the artist if they enjoyed the work. Even those who absolutely hated it will feel better for having said so and are more likely to remain loyal supporters of the organisation

than if they were made to go home without the chance to say anything. If the artist finds the thought of facing the audience too terrifying then the job falls to the programmer or artistic director. While it can be a gruelling experience, it will also help identify your supporters and work out where the vocal opposition to your policy lies.

If the main attraction to the event is not the work itself but the artist performing, then the focus is different, aimed not at uncovering reality but at building up the mystique of the performers. This may mean putting the emphasis in his or her fame in the repertoire, on the precociousness or seniority of their talent, on their rarity value. It may even mean consciously increasing their notoriety, spreading a few stories about how difficult they are to work with, how their genius has resulted in a chaotic personal life. It is not usually necessary to be cynically exploitative but a judicious heightening of the public's awareness of artistic reputation is important to building the sense that the organisation producing the event is at the cutting edge of contemporary life.

If the event is in the tradition of the venue, then the public will know what to expect. The task then is to make it visible or exciting – not so much part of the routine that the audience barely remembers it and the management cannot quite recall what is playing that night. This is where groupings of events within the schedule helps, effectively making every show part of a larger scheme, a series or mini-festival. This is particularly helpful when dealing with revivals of familiar productions of standard repertoire works in opera, ballet and drama. Works like *The Marriage of*

Figaro, *The Nutcracker* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sell themselves, in theory. However over-reliance on them can make the theatre seem unimaginative and too bourgeois to uphold the house's artistic integrity. At the same time it makes good financial sense to programme standard works and indeed a mainstream theatre which did not keep the great works in the repertory would be failing the public just as badly as a house which never put on anything new. The way to keep them fresh is to promote the productions as classics and to make the public feel that seeing them is an essential part of their cultural reference. For the most critical among them and the regular attendees, casting can be the key to continued interest: either offering a performer who is legendary in the part or continually recasting so that comparing the new team with the old becomes an experience in itself. There is one long-running three-man show in London which changes its cast every nineteen weeks and has audience members who make a point of seeing every new line-up. It works and the variations in the way the play is interpreted make it richer every time.

Finally, if the event is outside the normal tradition of the venue, then the battle is to make the regular audience attend and enjoy it, while bringing in the new audience who usually go to that sort of performance. It may be that the venue itself is out of the ordinary – a tent, a disused factory, a old palace. Each has to be programmed in such a way that the novelty of the venture pays off. In the case of a venue that is not usually used for performance, the venue itself becomes part of the event, as fundamental to its success as the scenery. The transformation that lighting, acoustic manipulation and set dressing bring to the venue makes it an

artistic statement that complements the message from the stage. People come for the setting as much as for the content of the show. Inventive siting is one of the most potent weapons in the programmer's armoury, especially for the festival director trying to create an out-of-the-ordinary atmosphere with a programme that needs an extra ingredient to make it more than averagely interesting.

It can be just as effective a tool for confounding expectations when the venue is familiar but the style of work within it is not – performing contemporary circus in a concert hall, for example, or using a rock venue for early music. While only a few of the usual clientele may turn up for the change in style, many of those who regularly follow the alternative art form will be drawn to a place which for them is either a new venue or from which they are usually alienated. In terms of breaking down social and artistic barriers within the potential audience, programming against tradition can pay great dividends, both creatively and politically. The aim will be to retain the loyalty of some of those who have come for the first time so that they return for the normal programme in the future. It may be several years before they are tempted back but the most difficult part, that of cutting through long-held cultural prejudice, will have been achieved. However it has to be prepared properly and managed with extra care – with more than normal attention to the needs of the audience. Otherwise the experiment will be seen as merely a gimmick and the failure will be even more newsworthy than if it had been a conventional flop.

All of the ideas above will not deliver a successful season or festival unless the quality of the performance and the integrity of the creative work matches the ingenuity of the programmer. The juxtaposition of works so that they throw light on each other, the stroke of good casting which makes an average production special, the translation of an event to a location that is in itself remarkable can help generate the buzz that any performance needs. Clever marketing, though, will only mask bad acting or an uninspired script for a short time. However brilliant the playing, an ill-composed piece of music will leave the audience dissatisfied. But the reverse is also true. A good work can be made into something superb by the imaginative enhancement of its context, both artistic and physical. And in the right setting a fine performance can be lent a touch of magic.

Organisation Structures and Finance

Managing the Board

There are some arts organisations that still do not have independent management boards and where the manager is directly responsible to city, regional or national authorities. In these cases the manager may have very little control over the way the relationship is handled, except in terms of negotiating the budget and ensuring that day-to-day artistic and personnel control is devolved from the authorities. It is vital that where the political or bureaucratic structures of the state retain the staff and are solely responsible for funding, the manager is able to operate without constant interference. This may be hard to achieve and it is always tempting for those with authority to use it. They may be under considerable pressure themselves to do so. There may be political pressure over the amount of money being spent on culture, over standards (either artistic or, in the case of theatre and opera, matters of freedom of speech and expression) and over the political views of members of staff. There may also be pressure from senior officials to follow an artistic line or to adopt a structure that serves their interests rather than the company's. In these circumstances it is the manager's difficult role to try to preserve as much of the company's independence as possible. It can be a thankless and exhausting task, with the manager caught between relentless forces from above and rebellious artists. Nonetheless such battles have to be fought if the long-term health of the organisation is to improve.

Not all such relationships are confrontational, of course. There are many instances where benign officials and

politicians have presided over adventurous and well-resourced companies, producing superb results for a public that regards such arrangements as the natural order. For this to work, though, there has to be a social contract between the political masters to allow artistic decisions to remain with the artists and between the political powers and their electors that heavy direct spending on performance is an accepted function of government. When resources are plentiful and tax revenues high, there is rarely a problem. When resources are tight and support for taxation is under question, then the position of the directly controlled arts organisation will become vulnerable.

The advantage of direct responsibility is that any questions over the financial state of the organisation can be referred back to those with the ultimate authority to do something about it, whereas if there is an intervening layer of semi-independent board members, the blame for any failure can be shifted from the highest political and official levels. The disadvantage is that such a direct relationship can hamper the management's ability to seek alternative sources of funding and to make changes to the internal structures when new situations make them necessary. The organisation can find itself hampered by webs of regulations applied in a blanket way across all directly employed sectors, from rubbish collection to the police. There is also no way of circumventing regulations designed to protect the financial position of the bureaucracy rather than the interests of the arts organisation.

For these reasons it is usually best to allow arts organisations to be run by an independent Board of

Management, even if some seats on it are reserved for politicians or officials. The Board is then in the firm position that its foremost responsibility is to the arts organisation it governs, rather than to other interests. While members of the Board may well be appointed by others, once they join they should act solely for the benefit of the organisation they are governing. It is important, in ensuring the independent authority of the Board, that it has the right to select its own President or Chair. In many countries this right is often retained by government. In reality this always leads to a conflict of interest, without providing the guarantees of management probity which the government hopes its direct patronage will provide.

It is also helpful if the Board can remain relatively small (less than 15 members) and does not have to be made up entirely of representatives with outside interests. Its efficiency will also be served if its meetings are kept reasonably short, are not more frequent than once every two months, and if the manager does not overload the Board members with information that they do not need to see (though it should be available in case they want to see it). While the Board should have all the material so that they can fulfil their legal duties, they should not be obliged to look at every piece of paper that might be of significance. If they do demand a very large amount of documentation it can be taken as a sign that they have lost confidence in the manager's ability to do his job. Such a loss of trust should be dealt with head on so that the reason becomes clear. It may be that a decision has been taken which makes the Board feel it has to protect itself. However it may also be that there is an over-meticulous Board member or one with

a personal dislike of the manager. Either way, it is important to find out and resolve the situation before the manager gets to the point where there is more time spent keeping the Board happy than in running the organisation.

While it is often necessary to take a wide selection of views into account (especially if the organisation has an exalted place in the local society) this can usually be accommodated more effectively by having an Advisory Board separate from the Board of Management. The Advisory Board can pass on its views on artistic direction and policy to be taken into account by the Board of Management. But it should be for the Board of Management to take final decisions and for the Manager to be free to implement them as seems fit.

A good relationship between the manager and the President or Chair of the Board is essential to the smooth running of any arts organisation. Only then will there be a proper match between policy (set out by the Board) and activity (guided by the manager). It also ensures that those working for the organisation are prepared to submit to the authority of the manager, knowing that his or her decisions will be backed by the Board. Such backing should not be abused, however. If controversial decisions have to be taken, members of the Board should be consulted informally and the manager's reasoning set out, so that they are aware of the issues before they are asked to ratify the decision formally at a Board meeting. A strong alliance between the Board and the manager will be reflected in quick and defensible decision-making. Even if it turns out to be the wrong one in the end, the procedure will have been correct and both Board and Manager are likely to survive any

investigation. However if there is a split between the Board and the manager, others will seek to widen the division for their own ends. These others may be within the organisation or outwith it (politicians, press or officials). If this happens, then sooner or later either the manager or the Chair's position will become untenable and somebody will be forced to resign.

Staff

Arts organisations work best when the smallest possible proportion of their income is taken up with paying long-term wage bills, pensions, social insurance etc.. In other words operating with a small but adequate administrative staff, light office structures which are as flexible and un-hierarchical as possible, and the shortest chain of command between the manager and the performers. It is vital that all members of staff, from finance officers to secretaries, from box-office clerks to cleaners, feel involved in the artistic aims of the company are included in discussions on a regular basis. Often low-ranking members of staff will be the ones who deal most directly with the public. Therefore they must feel that they have a special responsibility to make the public image a positive one. To do this the manager must take extra care to talk to them, listen to their views and make it clear that their loyalty is valued, even though their pay may not be very high. This is hard to do on a daily basis but the good manager will be the one who carries the staff with him or her through difficult decisions because there has been sensible consultation early in the process. Staff who feel insecure, or who are constantly surprised by events, are unlikely to stay loyal when the organisation is under public pressure.

While there are a few technical positions in organisations which are building-based that merit permanent posts, for the majority of positions it is healthier for the organisation not to have people in the same post for more than seven years. If contracts are too short, then there is not enough time to build loyalty or make an effective mark on the direction of the organisation. If they are too long, however, there is the danger that staff will stagnate and a culture of doing things a certain way just because that is how they have always been done will grow. Arts organisations, like any other, need to be able to change internally with the minimum of disruption. If staff members do the same job for too long it will prove hard to change fast enough. This does not mean that the equally destructive culture of hiring and firing should be adopted. People may work effectively in organisations for many years but they should be encouraged to move within it, or to leave, retrain and come back with their experience broadened. There should always be the hope of promotion to urge them on. If it becomes clear that they cannot take on more responsibility and are unlikely ever to progress further, then they should not remain in post for more than one or two years after they have reached the ceiling of their capabilities.

For those organisations used to the old management styles of the 'jobs for life' structures – essentially civic and state traditions that grew out of the old aristocratic systems of patronage but that were then transferred to the communist and social democratic municipal systems alike – moving to a more flexible way of working can be difficult. However, as in all things, a balance is necessary. Staff need to know

the policy of the organisation, be aware that they cannot expect to occupy the same desk for ever, and plan their careers accordingly. The Manager must make sure that the end of employment is handled fairly and with sensitivity, otherwise staff insecurity will soon lead to signs of obstruction and rebellion, both of which can be badly damaging to the organisations artistic, as well as its corporate, reputation.

Ideally the performers themselves, along with the creative and senior directing staff should be contracted season by season or production by production. Orchestras pose slightly different problems and once a player's musicianship is proved it is only fair to offer some security of tenure. However all performers should be aware that their performances are always under review, not just by the press but by those in artistic authority as well. A show is only as good as its worst performer, and however skilful the management and dedicated the rest of the staff, an arts organisation will not remain eminent for long if standards on the stage or platform drop on more than a very occasional basis. Dealing with the performers and non-performing creative artists is discussed in greater depth in the 'understanding artists' section.

Part-Time Staff

Many of those who work for arts organisations do so part-time. Some will do so because they have young families or other outside commitments; others because the work does not require them to be there all day, every day, others still because they are only needed close to the performance. However many hours each week they work, though, they

are still an integral part of the company life and must be made to feel so. In reality part-time workers often given more time than they are actually paid for, working extra days or an hour or two here and there. If they are good at what they do, they will often extend the remit beyond the strict job description.

There are difficulties for a manager in dealing with part-timers, though. It becomes quite difficult to remember who is working on which days and even more difficult to schedule internal meetings or ensure departments are co-ordinating with each other as fully as one would like. Sometimes the part-time worker can feel semi-detached from the company and will take longer to settle down in the job or to integrate with other staff. Occasionally there will be staff who never meet each other because their patterns of days are different, which can be disconcerting for those who are working full-time. Equally if a job is shared between two or more people, their hand-overs must be seamless and they must learn to understand each other's working methods and approaches so that the job seems uniform from outside. Contacts from outside may be disconcerted by rarely being able to find the person they need, when they need them.

There can be legal difficulties when the manager wants to change the times a job is undertaken – either extending or contracting the hours. Managers soon come to realise that too many part-time staff create an imbalance in the organisation. While there are certain tasks that can be undertaken very successfully and unobtrusively by part-time employees, it is often better to have one permanent member

of staff with a wide ranging job description than two or three occasional members delivering a smaller task each.

Volunteers

Many of those who work most enthusiastically for arts organisations do so for nothing. Indeed, because the arts are labour intensive and short of money, it would be impossible to run most festivals, support organisations or rural productions without an army of volunteers. They will sell programmes, act as drivers, give hospitality to visiting artists, raise money, make sure the arts are at the centre of social life, serve on committees, distribute publicity – in fact do anything which needs more time and hands than there are paid staff to take care of. Volunteers are inescapable but handled properly they can be an immense asset, not just in terms of what they do practically but as allies and supporters. Often highly influential members of society are quite prepared to undertake relatively menial tasks so that they feel part of an art form which they love but in which they cannot participate in any other way. They will be a secret weapon for your cause, spreading the good word about performances and artists among their friends and business contacts. If word of mouth is the best publicity, then the volunteers are the ones to spread it.

They cannot be taken for granted, however. It is sensible to have a full-time member of staff whose job it is to recruit, train and look after the volunteers, otherwise the manager can spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with small domestic problems. While it is important for the manager to have a good relationship with those offering their help, it is also important not to become so involved

that the volunteers have the same attitude to the manager as that of a member of staff. A discreet distance needs to be preserved. The best reason for this is that it is very difficult to get rid of a volunteer without causing offence. The volunteer may be useless at checking tickets on the door but she or he may be a much loved supporter whose life revolves around the company. Upset them and you upset all the others. Volunteers then become harder to find, they will not work so much for you and the rumour machine – so effective when everybody is in favour of you – proves just how vitriolic it can be once turned against you. The manager who loses the support of the volunteers is in real trouble and may not last long in the post. On the other hand, the manager who is respected and liked by the volunteers will have an important safety net when the critics start their attack. Taking care of the volunteers is not just a matter of smiling at them occasionally. They will need events of their own as a way of saying ‘thank you’. They will want to have some connection with the performers so that they can feel like company insiders – and therefore see themselves in a superior position than other members of the audience. And they will want some form of public recognition. Organisations have various ways of doing this. Some give rehearsal passes or invitations to first-night parties. Others offer a special badge or title. A listing in the programme or souvenir brochure is always welcome. A gift for several years’ service presented at a small ceremony attended by the performing stars is valued highly. The volunteers can be the organisation’s best and most loyal friends.

Advisers and Consultants

It is never good for an arts organisation to work in complete isolation, assuming that the answer to every problem can be found within its own staff resources. There will be occasions when some temporary outside help is needed, either to strengthen the permanent team for a short period, or to help develop a change in policy. For this advisers and consultants are a useful and sometimes necessary addition to the manager's weaponry.

There is a difference between the two functions. An adviser should be used to help the manager think through problems – whether structural, financial or artistic. The adviser should be on hand, devising solutions, suggesting ways forward, and operating as a discreet friend to the manager – and sometimes an extra pair of ears, able to pick up signals from staff, audience and press that the manager is either too preoccupied or too isolated to detect. Advisers can serve long or short terms, can be offered a retaining fee and can be important contributors to the organisation's diplomacy and adaptability.

The consultant's role is rather different. The consultant may be an independent operator or part of a commercial team. The brief is usually to write a report on a particular aspect of the organisation and put forward options for the future. Using consultants is often necessary, not for the excellence of the report and its findings, but to reinforce the position of the manager to the board or the organisation to its funders. It supplies an outsider's view in a package of expertise that those who may be unsure about the organisation's direction

or management can accept. If the manager is competent, a consultant's report will rarely provide an answer that has not already been thought of. However it will supply the ammunition to fire at critics and a plan for implementing change. If a consultant comes to conclusions not envisaged by the management, then there was probably a serious problem with the way the manager was operating or the consultant will have been steered by those wanting a different outcome.

Bringing in consultants is always a gamble for a manager. If the result is one which fortifies the intended position, then the manager can look at the report as vindication. If it throws up unwanted conclusions, or (far worse) leaves the situation unresolved, then the manager will wish the consultants had never arrived. Either way two things can be guaranteed. Dealing with consultants will be time-consuming and expensive. While they may only spend a few days in the organisation's offices, the consultants will send a flurry of requests for information, statistics, policy documents, historical documents, free tickets and audience research. They will want to interview staff and board members. They will test the manager's patience as well as knowledge. There will be many times when the manager will wonder just whose side the consultants are on. The answer will not be made clear until the report arrives.

Despite all the irritation the consultants do perform a useful function, as long as their services are used sparingly and appropriately. No organisation can survive the continuous scrutiny of external examiners. On the other hand there may well be solutions to problems which were either missed or

which were given a lower priority than they should have been. A good report can bring them out. For most of the time, though, a well-argued report can demonstrate that the manager was moving in the right direction in the first place and serve to unify the various competing forces among the board, officials, politicians and funders.

Sponsors

Sponsors will never replace either public funds or money from the box office as principle sources of money (however much politicians would sometimes like them to) – except for a limited number of festivals and a few organisations with very low overheads. Nevertheless, since the middle of the 1970s sponsors have become an ever more evident fact of life for most arts managers.

There are a few myths about sponsorship which need to be dispelled. The first is the myth that sponsorship is the answer to all funding problems. It is not. It rarely accounts for more than 10-15% of a fully professional organisation's costs (in the case of a company resident in a building). For festivals and non-building based organisations the figure occasionally rises to nearer 30%. However a manager would be doing exceptionally well to reach such a figure and it would rarely be sustainable for more than a few years. The second myth is that big international businesses are always happy to sponsor the arts. This is not true either. Business leaders usually sponsor out of personal enthusiasm and usually in their home country. It is normally the chairman or chief executive who decides to associate the company with a specific arts organisation. If the request passes through the marketing department, the amounts are likely to be small,

precisely targeted on a particular project, and made available only under a short-term contract.

Nonetheless, if the expectations are right and projects are sensibly selected for sponsors, then business funding is a vital tool in producing activity that cannot be funded from other sources. Many of the high profile events, special series, education and outreach projects that a modern manager will want to promote will be suitable for sponsorship. They are often the elements in an artistic strategy which make the organisation look exciting and innovative. There is an excellent guide to approaching sponsorship in this series so this is not the place to discuss the subject in depth. However there are a few suggestions which a manager should bear in mind when dealing with sponsors, especially in relation to the rest of the audience.

Keep sponsors happy with plenty of attention and good service. Don't, though, treat them so exclusively that it alienates the rest of the audience. If there is special hospitality at an event, hold it in a private area, not one simply roped off in a public part of the foyer. It will be resented by patrons who are not invited.

Make sure the amount of publicity given to the sponsor is proportionate to the amount of money given. Too little visibility will make the sponsor feel cheated. Too much and other funders – especially governments and their agencies – will feel that their basic contribution is not being recognised.

Unless the amount of money being offered is so spectacular that it changes the nature of the organisation, avoid linking the sponsor so firmly to the organisation that its own identity is at risk. Changing from the Ruritania Philharmonic Orchestra to the Mundy Sanitation and Brewery Company Ruritania Philharmonic will irritate the audience, make difficulties for those trying to market the orchestra and will leave the sponsor looking greedy and insensitive to artistic traditions.

Be clear what you want from the sponsor and what you are prepared to offer in return. Most sponsors do not expect mass publicity from the arts. They can get far more exposure from sport. Usually they are looking for a 'feel good factor'. They want to be noticed by opinion-formers and a particular target audience (which can be anyone from the very rich to students). They want to be associated with excellence, innovation, community tradition, new ventures, fame, excitement, and a good night out for their customers and friends. Make sure this is what you are able to deliver.

Be careful how closely you involve sponsors in the real life of the organisation. Often tired performers will not want to attend the sponsor's after-event reception. They would rather relax with each other or with friends and they may be unable to hide the fact from the hosting sponsor, who will then feel hurt and unfairly used. Business people and artists do not always share the same values and however close the match between show and the company, the personalities may not work so well together. It is also a mistake to assume that the business methods used by a sponsor can be transferred to an arts organisation, with very different

objectives and traditions. While there are many instances where transferred expertise has been immensely helpful, there are just as many where the business adviser seconded from the sponsor has returned to the commercial company disillusioned and baffled.

Politicians, officials and agencies

The majority of arts organisations in Europe will be at least partially dependent on public taxation. If this is indirect (for example private promoters using halls and theatres owned by civic authorities) there will not be many aspects of the manager's career on which the influence of politicians, their agencies and officials does not impinge. This is natural, and in a democratic society where government is accountable for the money it spends on the public's behalf, it is quite proper. However, while the political powers have the right and authority to decide which organisations to support and with how much money (according to published strategies with transparent processes and criteria), they do not have the right to dictate the content of the artistic work, nor to censor it beyond the limits set out in legislation that is in accordance with international treaties. In other words, government can state its view but no more than that. Most of the time, however, the skirmishes between officialdom and the performing arts institutions take place at a less exalted level: day-to-day disputes about the use of funds, the meeting of criteria and agreed targets, adherence to policy or – all too often – changing and contradictory policies and regulations. Such battles are all but unavoidable. The secret is to conduct them in such a way that the health of the organisation is protected and its development not impeded.

There are few constants and no guarantees in such relationships. Inevitably artists see it as part of their role to challenge the complacency of society while satisfying its craving for a more fruitful life, government (oddly enough) tries to do the same but by very different methods. Officials and agencies are more interested in compliance with their regulations than with the purpose, either of government or the arts. Often then, the arts will find it easier to discover common ground with the politician, even when there is serious disagreement. Artists and politicians frequently understand each other even where the dislike is mutual.

All of this means that the manager has to ensure that there are cordial relationships with those responsible for public money. Elected allies in all political parties need to be cultivated and informed over a long period. Today's junior member may be next year's arts or finance minister. Yesterday's opposition spokesman may next year head an important committee. Most of all, if the politicians have not been kept informed by the organisation itself, they will have only the press, officials and competitors to turn to when forming a point of view.

With arms-length agencies (like Arts Councils) and officials from cultural ministries, there is likely to be a permanent state of armed friendship. The officials will never be able to provide exactly what or everything that the arts manager wants. Equally the interests of the organisation will rarely match precisely those of the officials. However, without each other, neither would have a job so it is in everybody's interests to reach fair agreement. The successful manager

will often be the one who is most skilful at filling in the grant application forms, however excruciating the process, irrelevant the questions or however much reality has to be bent in order to fit the bureaucratic box. Finding something to say that matches the regulations, even if they seem to have been drafted on a different planet and designed for the transport industry, is often the secret of a trouble-free life. The manager has to be aware that official policy is no more constant than any other part of life but once the enmity of an institution is raised, it is almost impossible to dispel even when the personnel change completely. Official attitudes persist whoever is holding them.

Networking

In all the battles - whether political, bureaucratic, financial or artistic – the arts manager is not alone. There are associations, networks, contact groups and societies, not only nationally but on a European and international basis, part of whose function is to offer professional support and guidance, highlight good practice, and offer a degree of solidarity to the hard-pressed professional. The cross-border element is particularly important because it is often hard for managers to discuss their difficulties with colleagues in the same city or nation. There is too much rivalry to make it comfortable. However there needs to be dialogue so that new ideas can circulate and alliances be formed. The arts are international and local in equal measure and a manager's contacts throughout the world are a vital resource. It is important that funds are earmarked for networking. Travel costs to meetings, subscription fees and sometimes the cost of hosting events in one's own organisation are not only legitimate, they are essential to the company's good name

and visibility. Boards of Management need to be persuaded that such items are not luxuries. It is not enough, though, just for the most senior manager in the organisation to network or have the contacts. It is just as important that those in the middle ranks of the organisation have the time and resources to build up their own professional profiles. A confident and well-known team will be as good a set of ambassadors for the organisation as the performers themselves.

Balancing the Money

It would be perfect if every arts organisation could live off the income from tickets and a few generous donations from wealthy supporters but it would also be a miracle. The reality is that multiple sources of finance will make up the budget and that none of them can be guaranteed to increase or even to stay at the same level for more than a year or two. The luckiest managers are those who live in one of the few European countries where public subsidy budgets are fixed several years at a time. At least in these cases the manager knows the worst and can plan accordingly – either sitting comfortably on the cushion of a generous grant or looking elsewhere with plenty of time to make up the shortfall.

Budgetary balance varies from country to country and tradition to tradition. Almost everywhere, however, there is pressure from public authorities on managers to reduce the proportion of subsidy relative to earned and donated income. As governments are expected to achieve more with less tax, this pressure will almost certainly increase. There is also a political division between those free-marketeers who believe culture should be supported rhetorically and

legislatively but not financially, and those from the centre-left tradition who believe that large scale public investment and revenue funding is right and proper. In between there are many nuances as there are cultural departments. It is possible, though, for a manager to design a budget where the programme is reasonably protected from a sudden decrease in any area of income, as long as the proportionate dependence is not too high. Therefore even if the state is happy to provide 90% of the overheads, it is wise to plan to either make do with less or programme for expansion.

Ideally for most building-based companies and the larger festivals, the range is likely to fall within the ratios of 10-20% sponsorship and donations, 20-40% ticket income, and 30-60% public money (often from a range of local, regional and national sources). The remaining 10% is likely to be made up from a mixture of unpredictable ancillary income, for example catering, publications, recordings, media fees, secondary rights and touring. The difficulty any manager faces is that any one of these sources can drop significantly without the others increasing fast enough to cover the shortfall. And in an economic downturn all sources are capable of dropping simultaneously. To protect against this effectively is very difficult within the annual budget process. The only long-term way to do so is to build up a separate endowment trust, independent enough not to be considered by other funders as an excuse to leave the field, but sufficiently close that the organisation is its primary concern. In the good times the income from the endowment can act as an alternative to sponsorship for desirable but not essential projects. In the bad times it can come to the rescue. Endowment Trusts take a long time to build up and the

money should not be squandered, nonetheless they are likely to be the answer to survival for many arts organisations as this century moves on.

Understanding Artists

Managing the arts has more to it than managing a budget and an office. It needs belief, patience and an unshakeable sense of purpose. The arts manager is a merchant of human responses who can guarantee neither the product nor the result. Only a passionate commitment to the idea that the art being offered is once in a while transforming and always worth encountering will make the struggle with money, the politic fights and the internal squabbles tolerable. At the centre of all this the artists stands, sometimes creating the work, sometimes performing, sometimes interpreting, occasionally all three.

Creative Artists

In this context these are the people who generate the work from the beginning, the composers, writers, choreographers and designers. There are many others in the process of mounting a performance whose creativity is essential to some degree, but for the moment the discussion focuses on those who conjure up the basic material. A surprising number of performing organisations operate with barely any contact with those whose work they produce. This may be because the programme concentrates on work from the past, or because there is no policy of including the artist in the performing process when new work is staged. Such a policy is short-sighted, depriving the performers of an opportunity to explore the work from source, the organisation of being at the forefront of its own time, and the artists with the chance to develop. It also allows audiences to consume the art of previous centuries without challenging their own perceptions.

Working with the creators requires flexibility and trust on behalf of the manager. The flexibility may be the most exasperating aspect. Creation is not a commodity and cannot always be delivered on a certain day to exact specifications and costings. The ten minute overture may turn out to be a symphony, the chamber orchestra may suddenly need a twenty-strong percussion section. The part for middle-aged contralto in the opera may appear recast for impish soubrette. The play may last six hours in its first draft and twenty minutes in its second. The expensive designs ordered by the choreographer may be half-made by the time he decides to dance the whole thing in front of a white curtain, lit by a car headlight. After the moment of horror has passed, the manager has to decide whether to give up, adapt or negotiate. Adapting often means changing the publicity, finding more money and explaining to other artists that their services are no longer needed.

Artists will work in myriad ways. Some will produce material fast and have it ready for performance within months. Others will need years to produce a concrete result. Some will want to collaborate with the performers, encouraging improvisation and synthesising more than they originate. Others will want no contact outside a tightly knit group and will be jealous of revealing anything before it is finally ready. Deadlines may come and go unheeded. The secret of dealing with all of this is to find out how the artist usually works before parting with the commission fee and drawing up the contract. There is no point scheduling a play for next season if the writer habitually takes three years to finish a script. Equally it is pointless to expect artists to run

workshops with the audience, or put them into a classroom with thirty ten year-olds if they are hopelessly shy and hate talking about their work. Not wanting to take part in the extended activities of the company – social inclusion projects, education schemes and audience preparation – does not make their art any worse. The Art and the artist are often best separated.

However the reverse is often true. There are many artists who are superb with audiences and who thrive on collaborative projects. Their talents should be used to the full and these people make excellent additions to the company as artists-in-residence, often combining their creative work with directing and teaching. Creativity is expensive, though. The days when it was romantic to live in a hovel and write have long gone. Artists expect to and should be paid fees which reflect their talent and professional status. They do not seek patronage in the old charitable sense, waiting for the great to throw them a purse for their offerings. They are not servants. An artist of renown is in the same category as a senior doctor, lawyer or corporation director and will expect to be treated and paid as such. Fees should therefore reflect the amount of time and work that will be needed during the process of creation, as well as any extra activity the artists undertakes to engage in. Unlike a normal job, however, time and hours worked do not equate to amount produced. Invention is an elusive ability, inspiration even more so and the artist may spend longer getting beyond the first page or the catalytic image than is needed for the rest of the process.

There will often be agents and publishers to negotiate with and secondary rights (film and TV, radio and recording, translation and reproduction) to be sorted out. It may be possible to include a period of exclusive performance in return for the commission. It may also be that the cost of the whole package is prohibitive and that co-production with another organisation is the only viable solution. This is where the effectiveness of the manager's networking really counts. Finding the right partners for the production is often as important to its success as finding the right creative team.

The Performing Artists

To say that there is an unbridgeable gulf between those performing and those managing the arts would be too sweeping a statement. There is no doubt, though, that the stresses and strains of the two roles are very different. The performer is only as good as the last performance. The insecurity which derives from that pressure colours the performer's life, from the adrenalin highs and lows before and after the show, stage nerves and swings in temperament to the obsession with small rituals and superstitions, the concern that they are being ignored or are under-appreciated. Only at the very top of the profession are the financial rewards for performing really substantial – and even then only for those lucky enough to have film, TV or recording contracts. For the rest, especially those dependent on live performance, low pay is a fact of life. Experienced and well-regarded professionals will only rarely earn anything like the sums that their equivalent contemporaries could expect in the financial services, IT or legal industries. The greatest worry is sudden physical incapacity. For a

dancer, actor or musician any malfunction or accident – ones which would be laughed off as trivial by somebody working in an office – can mean the end of a career and (because of the emotional demands of performing) lasting psychological damage that is just as dangerous. Such insecurity has to be understood by the manager and has to be alleviated as far as possible. It will have its effect on all negotiations over fees, working times, touring dates, backstage conditions and hospitality. It will explain the terror of singers of being in a cold room or a room in which someone has a cold. It will explain why they say the wrong things to sponsors and have disastrous love lives. It will also mean that the ambition of the performer, the desperation to succeed and be publicly recognised, outstrips self-awareness. Perhaps it is lucky that it does. If performers had entirely objective views of their own abilities it is likely that many would lack the courage to walk onto a stage again.

A performer is by definition a public person, to an extent the property and plaything of the audience. Some performers crave this, others hate it. Many confuse being in the limelight, the gossip columns and the celebrity magazines with having talent. For the manager the quandary is clear. Should the artist be booked who will fill the pages of the lifestyle magazines and the features sections of the newspapers, or the one who will deliver the performance with greatest integrity? If the two things are the same, there is no issue to be resolved. If fame and ability are at odds, the choices are more difficult. Sometimes, if there is a long-running production, the manager will establish its reputation with the famous star, then opt for the obscurely talented once ticket sales are flowing nicely. There is the option of

manufacturing a touch of stardom for the little-known artist by hiring a good publicist and creating a minor scandal or two. Or the manager can sell the show on the strength of the work itself, stress that the performers are an ensemble rather than a group of stars, and aim for a rather more than averagely sophisticated audience.

The balance between fully-employed performing artists, guest artists and self-employed performers who have a recognised association with the organisation varies from country to country. Those which derive their structures from court or municipal servant traditions – the ‘Statstheater’ model – often have a large number of permanently contracted performers. Those countries and institutions that are either independent of public authorities or which operate on the ‘stagione’ system (with artists on short contract) are likely to rely on guests and self-employed performers. In the case of the latter the manager will often have as close a relationship with the performer’s personal agent as with the artist. This can be important, not only in terms of financial and contractual negotiations, but also in matters of casting, last minute artist replacement and talent scouting. Agents can be the bane of a manager’s life. They can also be a godsend, which is why so few visiting artists, especially in classical music, opera and theatre, are happy to operate without one (although most conversations with artists will soon turn to the iniquities of the agent). It is usually important that the manager can achieve a good working relationship with agents without becoming dependent on them. Keep an ear to the ground and a catalogue of who is good, available and up-and-coming. There is no substitute for knowing the business.

Watching the best managers in action, the qualities needed to succeed are a mix of discretion, hard-headed financial acumen, passion for the arts, pleasure in the company of artists, compassion, bloody-mindedness, encyclopaedic knowledge, political agility and consistency with staff. The greatest gift of all is that of the impresario – knowing how to please the public and excite the press before they themselves what they want. Somewhere in there too has to be the ability to over-ride the natural caution and petty bureaucracy of officials while incurring their respect, not their enmity. In the end, though, what matters most is the belief that in promoting the best dance, opera, theatre and music that can be brought to the public, the lives of the audience will be handsomely enriched.

Summary of Advice

The Audience

1. Put the audience first. They are the purpose of performing at all.
2. Communicate the character of the presentation accurately and imaginatively.
3. Always seek to renew the audience – it is not enough to relax when the house is full.
4. Aim to attract first-time audiences and turn them into regular attendees.

Marketing

5. Ensure the marketing message is accurate as well as attractive.
6. Make certain all the relevant information – date, time, venue, ticket contacts – is easy to see on publicity material.
7. Always display the upcoming programme and the events of the day on the outside of the venue, even if it is sold out.
8. Be certain the marketing information answers the questions the audience will need to have answered.

The Press

9. Treat the press as allies in your work, not as the enemy.
10. Pay attention to news management, not just feature and review coverage.

11. Give two complimentary tickets to reviewers whenever possible.
12. Editorial coverage is more important than advertising, though good advertising needs to back up the message and help audiences find out what is happening.
13. Make pictures count in the press and on TV. They will communicate more than words.

Education

14. Education is a cornerstone of audience building.
15. Every arts organisation should have a strategy for working with schools.
16. Aim to offer educational opportunities and activities to all age groups. People often learn to appreciate the arts most later in life.
17. Take work into the community, to places where performances would not normally reach. It is good public relations but also good audience building.

Keeping the Audience

18. Balance innovation and tradition to attract new audience as well as reassure the already committed.
19. Make the conventions (whether of dress or behaviour) associated with attending the arts as easy and accessible as possible for newcomers without destroying the accepted atmosphere.
20. Collecting market research should be a continuous process. It is essential to know the audience in as much detail as possible.
21. Attend the majority of performances yourself as a member of the audience and be open to criticism.

22. Front of house care is as important as the show itself in providing a proper experience. It smoothes the way for the performers.
23. Treat everybody in the audience as you and your family would want to be treated on an evening out.
24. Think of the venue as part of the scenery for the performance.

Programming

25. Have a clear programming policy and make sure it is communicated to artists, audiences and the press.
26. Seek an exciting balance between the new and the old, the familiar and the unfamiliar.
27. Make sure the important events in a programme are properly highlighted.
28. Standard repertoire performances should not be seen as routine but used to reinforce the general reputation of the company.
29. Include audience development projects in the core programme.
30. Help the audience to interact with performers as closely as possible.
31. Build the context for the main themes of the programme.
32. Allow opportunities for audience feedback.
33. Make casting a fundamental part of programming, even in ensemble productions.
34. Use the choice of venue as an artistic device and statement.
35. The quality of the performance must justify (and ideally surpass) the finance and effort spent on it.

Organisation, Finance and Structures

The Board

36. Preserve as much independence from supervisory authorities as is politically possible.
37. Aim to have an independent Board of Management which elects its own President.
38. Keep the Board large enough to do its job but small enough to work effectively (7 or 9 are ideal numbers).
39. Do not spend so much time keeping the Board informed that you do not have enough to devote to running the organisation.
40. Use an Advisory Board to maintain contact with the wider community and influential people in the profession.

Staff

41. Operate with as light an administrative staff as is efficient.
42. Involve all staff in the artistic aims of the organisation.
43. Prefer medium-term contracts to life-time employment for most staff.
44. Do not keep staff in the same posts for too long. Move them up or out before they become part of the furniture.
45. Be sensitive in handling dismissals – for the sake of the morale of those that remain.
46. Do not rely too heavily on part-time staff, though working-time flexibility is important.

Volunteers

47. Develop a strong list of volunteer supporters but appoint paid staff to oversee their work.
48. Make sure volunteers are rewarded for their loyalty by devising special activities and opportunities for them in the life of the organisation.

Advisers, Consultants & Sponsors

49. Know the difference between advisers and consultants and use them appropriately. Remember that you are still the decision-maker, whatever they suggest.
50. Keep sponsors happy but do not alienate the rest of the audience by becoming too identified with them.
51. Do not lose the organisation's identity to that of the sponsor – i.e. by attaching the sponsor's name ahead of the company's.
52. Match the sponsor's requirements to the elements you are best-placed to deliver.
53. Be careful in bringing sponsor's staff into an artistic organisation on secondment. Business and the arts often have very different working cultures.

Politics and Officialdom

54. Keep politicians informed. Work as much with political enemies as with allies.
55. Do not make official bodies regard the organisation with enmity, however difficult the relationship between individuals.
56. Network effectively with fellow professionals and earmark funds to do so.
57. Make sure all management staff also have the opportunity to network at their own professional level. It

helps the organisation be seen as an active force in artistic life.

Finance

58. Aim for a budgetary balance of 10-20% sponsorship, 10% miscellaneous income, 20-40% box office, 30-60% public money.

59. Build financial independence through a linked endowment trust.

Artists

60. Work as closely as possible with primary creators.

61. Pick creative artists according to their strengths and do not expect them to work like administrators.

62. Make sure fees for creative work reflect the time and development involved.

63. Understand the fundamental insecurity of a performer's life.

64. Establish good relationships with artist's agents without depending on them too closely.

65. Keep your own faith in the work and maintain your professional integrity at all costs.

