Exploring Worlds of Innovation in the Performing Arts: An Oscillation Between Leadership, Micromanagement, and Participation

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Leticia Labaronne and Martin Piber

Leticia Labaronne is a Professor of Arts Management and Head of the Center for Arts Management at ZHAW.

Martin Piber is Professor at the Department of Organization and Learning, Innsbruck University, Austria.

Abstract

This study analyzes micro-innovation processes, aiming to shed light on the black box of (continuous) innovation of long-standing and well-established performing arts organizations. To that end, we look in particular at collaborative, co-creative, and participatory processes as well as leadership behavior. Our inquiry takes an ethnographic approach based on case studies that explore three highly renowned performing arts organizations: the Vienna State Opera, the Berlin State Ballet, and modern dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests. While the ethnographic reports of about 700 hours of observation represent the primary source of data material, several formal and informal interviews add to the validity of the empirical material. The preliminary analysis of the qualitative data (work in progress) highlights the emergence of organization-specific worlds of innovation that oscillate between leadership, micromanagement, and participation.

Keywords: innovation, co-creation, participation, leadership, performing arts organizations, micro-management

Introduction

Innovative practices are frequently perceived as a black box from outside an organization. But where does such innovation actually come from, and how is it (co-)created? We might assume that the roots of innovation are buried deep in the DNA of an organization and some of its key members. But what kinds of practices make up this DNA, and what can be learned from well-established organizations that revolve around innovation?

It should come as no surprise that we turn to the arts and cultural sector to explore how innovation is enacted and to understand better the interplay of intrinsic, intangible, tacit, and hidden contingency factors involved in innovation practices. Arts and cultural organizations, as part of the creative industries, have increasingly gained scholarly attention as an avant-garde field of innovation and knowledge-intensive production (e.g., Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000; Townley, Beech, & McKinlay, 2009). Because of the complexity of management models found in the multifaceted fields of arts and culture (and some interesting differences from the profit sector), scholars turn to the arts to study a field where trends such as project-based organizations, in which creative teams with permanent staff work temporarily with external collaborators, have a long tradition of continuous innovation (Adler, 2015).

This exploratory study analyzes (micro-)processes of innovation, looking in particular at co-creative and participatory practices as well as leadership behavior to answer the following research question: What kinds of innovative processes are found in highly renowned performing arts organizations, and what can we learn from these settings about innovation practices in general? In exploring these questions, we seek to shed light on the black box of (continuous) innovation by gaining greater insights into the creation practices entrenched in the production and presentation of the performing arts.

The Promotion of Innovation and Creativity

The existing literature elaborates on many aspects of promoting creativity and innovation. While "creativity" refers to the individual level – namely, the creative employee –it is widely agreed that "innovation" describes novel and creative action at the organizational level (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). More recent work identifies internal factors fostering innovation – technology, processes, strategy, organizational structure, organizational culture, employees, resources, knowledge management, and management style and leadership (Smith et al., 2008). Leadership plays an essential role in employee creativity and organizational innovation, and managers can influence employee creativity directly and indirectly (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003).

Since the early 1980s, leadership research has been shaped by charismatic and transformational leadership theories that are interested in integrating both emotional and symbolic aspects of leadership and the leader's influence on employee creative output (Yukl, 2013). Transformational leadership, in particular, has established itself as an indicator of employee creativity and organizational innovation (Jung, Chow, & Wu 2003). Charismatic leadership, however, has become increasingly disenchanted over the years; Nisbett and Walmsley (2016) even called it a "romanticized social illusion" (p. 9). Nevertheless, they claimed there was a more assertive personality cult within arts organizations compared to other sectors. Additionally, the discussion leaves the assumption of a dyadic relationship between one charismatic leader and one follower, allowing room for a more collective

understanding of charisma (see Shamir et al.,1993; Nisbett & Walmsley, 2016). Another strand of the literature focuses not on the leaders and followers as individuals but on the relationship and with the context in the foreground.

Over time, the concept of leadership behavior has gained more scholarly and professional attention, but this has somehow evolved into an ambiguous and poorly specified role (DeRue, Ashford, & Cotton, 2009). What is deemed appropriate leadership behavior is often unclear and varies between contexts. An extensive list of expectations (authentic, charismatic, empathetic, strategic, transformational, and empowering; see also reviews by Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber 2009: Nisbett & Walmsley, 2016) influenced by a boom in leadership literature makes overwhelming demands.

While in general leadership research, concepts such as "distributed leadership" have long been discussed, others such as "post-heroic leadership," "post-bureaucracy," and "democratic organization" have not been explored in the context of arts and cultural institutions. Indeed, a traditional understanding of leadership still prevails in many organizations, which are hierarchically oriented toward the dominant figure of the Artistic Director or toward artistic direction (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber 2009); this is particularly true of long-standing visual and performing arts organizations. Having said this, leadership behavior in the performing arts is not altogether straightforward. Usually, no one-dimensional (profit-)target aligns different organizational aims – at least in some contexts. For example, scholars are increasingly challenging the common perception of orchestra conductors and artistic directors as the sole possessors of control and power. For example, Koivunen and Wennes (2011) argued that orchestra leadership cannot be associated with one person alone and should be understood as a relational process between musicians and their conductor. In the same vein, Krause (2015), who investigated power-based leadership in nonprofit orchestras, concluded that expert and referent power bases exert a stronger positive impact on artistic quality than other sources of power, such as legitimization through position.

Indeed, various studies (e.g., Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Khalili, 2016) have also shown that employees are more creative when the manager adopts a supportive role. In line with that literature, it seems entirely plausible that artistic roles can also be fulfilled better without micro-managing leaders and detailed scrutiny on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, Boerner and Freiher von Streit (2005) argued for a participative leadership style because art workers are more intrinsically motivated than others. However, arts and cultural organizations have long been institutionalized under traditional hierarchical systems, and many remain so even today (Kenney & Jung, 2023). Notwithstanding this evidence, simply advocating laissez-faire, flexibility, and personal freedom as guidelines for leaders in the arts and cultural sector is far too crude a solution. Aesthetic visions and creative thinking exacerbate a collective understanding between leaders and followers. Participatory/bottom-up leadership involves demanding work to make different artistic universes and visions commensurable – and fit the bigger picture. This view was supported by Eikhof (2014) when referring to oversimplified assumptions about the production of creative outputs triggered by flexibility and freedom from constraints. The question still remains: If the basis for creativity and innovation is increasingly being realized through co-creative and bottom-up processes, then how can they be practiced without the chaos of uncoordinated egos? Furthermore, how can different and seemingly incommensurable visions become a source of continuous innovation?

The above also suggests that despite an increased scholarly interest in the creative industries (e.g., Banks, Gill, & Taylor, 2013; Jones, Lorenzen, & Sapsed, 2015), research on innovation and leadership practices in the arts and cultural sector remains surprisingly scarce. There is indeed a need for more studies that examine practices in the creative industries and link them

to current debate in general management studies. A recent exploration of managerial practices in the creative industries that aims to link managerial themes emerging from this field to management studies debates points to different tensions in arts and cultural organizations that are worth exploring (Montanari, Della Torre, & Sikora, 2021). Despite the significant variance in typology and settings, organizations in the creative industries are all characterized by tensions that pose complicated challenges to managerial practices, such as the imperative for continuous innovation and the organization of such creative activity (ibid.). However, such studies tend to focus on the organizational level of analysis (see, for example, Stang Våland, Svejenova, & Clausen, 2021 on creative work as a subject of innovation and Cirella, 2021 for organizational shaping of collective creativity) and the individual- and process-levels of analysis tend to be neglected. Here, we understand collaborative creativity as an operative practice emerging due to manifold interactions between two or more persons. At the same time, we understand collective creativity as a metaphorical label for shared understanding and sensemaking within a group of people (see Haragadon et al., 2006; Glaveanu, 2011; Satama et al., 2022).

In light of the above, we mainly consider co-creative and participatory practices and leadership behavior when exploring the innovative micro-processes in performing arts organizations and what can be learned from these settings for innovation practices in general as well as across industries and sectors.

Methodology

This explorative study takes an ethnographic approach based on several case studies. Case study research offers depth, richness, and high conceptual validity, and it is also viable for understanding context and processes and linking causes to outcomes (Flyvbjerg, 2011). To acquire the largest possible number of insights, three case studies were chosen according to an information-oriented selection strategy based on their richness of information content (ibid.). To this end, two similar large dance companies were selected as the first two cases – the Vienna State Opera and the Berlin State Opera. The third – modern dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests – was chosen to attain maximum variation across cases. As a diametrically opposite case in terms of their organizational sketch, they were deliberately selected to add different organizational aspects to our study. The Appendix to this paper lists the key characteristics of each group.

For data collection, the first author conducted multi-site ethnographic participation in Vienna and Berlin (Labaronne 2019). Given that the basic operating unit of performing arts organizations is the single production, for which temporal collaborations are specifically assembled (Eikhof 2014), the creation process of a new piece was studied in each organization. About 700 hours of participant and nonparticipant observation were documented for data collection. During ethnographic research, key events were studied throughout the creation process of a new piece, such as kick-offs, studio and stage rehearsals, premieres, and formal and informal note-giving. Further, managerial meetings and work conversations were opportunistically joined, and notes on informal situations, such as corridor interactions and backstage activities, were recorded. To facilitate reflection about the ethnographer's stance as a researcher and former ballet dancer, the field worker's personal experience in the field was documented.

While the ethnographic reports represent the primary source of data material, several informal and semi-structured formal interviews add to the validity of the empirical material. For data analysis, we employed both researcher and data triangulation to further enhance the reliability

of our findings by leveraging diverse perspectives and validating data through multiple sources and researchers. Note that in the context of this paper, two researchers were involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The principal author and ethnographer was a professional ballet dancer before entering academia. This familiarity with the field facilitated otherwise unattainable access to world-renowned institutions and an understanding of the unwritten rules and habitual practices that can be difficult for outsiders to grasp.

An initial explorative analysis suggested it was impossible to describe significant common patterns of innovation across the three cases. Therefore, we will provide a rich description of the unique organizational, interactional, and artistic setting for each case; each case will be presented with a "thick description" (Hammersley 2008; Geertz 1973) of the nature of the innovation at hand, its triggers, and the social fabric in which it is embedded.

Berlin State Ballet

Established in 1742 with Frederick the Great's Royal Court Opera, the Staatsballett Berlin, now Germany's largest classical company, emerged after consolidating Berlin's three opera house ballet ensembles in 2004 (Staatsballett Berlin 2018a). Comprising 90 dancers, the permanent ensemble stages numerous premieres, repertoire revivals, and an international gala across three venues, drawing an annual audience of approximately 112,000 (ibid.). Reflecting the traditional hierarchical structures of many arts and cultural organizations (Kenney & Jung 2023), the Berlin State Opera, like its European counterparts, employs permanent administrative and artistic staff, collaborating with guest artists for specific productions. As a repertory house, the organization manages parallel productions with tight deadlines and budgets, shaping the parameters for artistic practices. In the words of the managing director,

> For me, a successful season is characterized by a diverse repertoire [...]. But then, one inevitably observes that, regardless of the venue in which we perform, the schedules are so tightly woven that there is no room to breathe. This means the bottleneck is always the stage... during rehearsals... in every aspect and every production. This is because we are not a seasonal operation [but a repertoire house]. Instead, there is one rehearsal on the stage in the morning, a different performance in the evening, and a rehearsal for yet another production the following morning. (Interview).

While studying the organization, we observed the re-staging of Victor Ullate's modern version of Don Quixote for the Berlin State Ballet from the first rehearsal up to the weeks after the premiere. Although not a world premiere, the production fully revived Ullate's original choreography, embracing an entirely new staging, including music, costumes, lighting, stage sets, and performers. The Berlin State Ballet, having abstained from presenting the canonical work for over a decade, commissioned the revival of Ullate's version to "complete the classical repertoire," according to its Managing Director (Interview, p.174). In performing arts organizations like the Berlin State Ballet, it is customary for artistic directors to engage guest choreographers for new productions. While such appointments introduce a degree of uncertainty, the Artistic Director took steps to mitigate artistic risk by overseeing high-level arrangements such as shortening (some scenes of) the piece as well as aligning costume and set design with the company's aesthetic profile (Interview with Managing Director).

The comprehensive full revival and completely new re-staging process of Ullate's 1997 version for the Berlin ensemble entailed a multi-level and multi-dimensional collaboration of various crafts and services with project-based external and internal teams, triggering an innovative stance that crystallizes as a critical feature of this case study. Such a negotiated, collective innovation fosters the establishment of a unique universe of innovation oscillating

between co-created artistic vision and negotiated implementation. On the one hand, "the essence is to respect what the choreographer wants […] it's the signature of what we are presenting (Interview with Ballet Repetiteur[1]). As the Managing Director argued,

> I believe that all of us working in the theater have the duty to make everything possible. Of course, within the constraints of our budget and technical capabilities. But our task must be to bring to life what the artist envisions. It's clear that this may not always be achieved 100%, but I think the first step is to be open to a new product. Then, it may turn out that it's challenging here and there, but we consider alternative solutions to come as close to the vision as possible. (Interview).

At the same time, the choreographer's vision is limited by the organization's possibilities and further shaped by collaborators who are invited to be part of the creative process. In the words of the guest costume and set designer, "I first tried to understand his vision, and then I put mine" (Interview). At the same time as creating costumes and sets, the choreography was set up quite quickly in the rehearsal room, and the choreographer had a clear idea of the envisioned dance steps, style, technique, and musicality. He communicated his expectations effectively, with a continuous stream of precise and detailed instructions, corrections, or affirmations (but also praise when the dancers excelled in processing, sometimes even slightly adapting, all the information). As the choreography evolved, attention turned to refining details, emphasizing opening the space for co-creating micro-moments, particularly when working with soloists. As the premiere drew closer and all production elements came slowly together (dancing, music/orchestra, lights, sets, costumes, stage props) during the stage rehearsals, the whole team watched every rehearsal. During this intensive time, plenty of micro-adjustments took place in discussion and negotiation with the creative and technical teams, as well as in consideration of how a piece might impact the audience. As one ballet repertoire explained,

> It [just] happens. Let's say we all are sitting and watching, and somebody says this: The other one asks what they think about her shoes or the color of her tights. I would say we all work towards the result that we're aiming for, which will then be successful. And whether it's the color of the tights or costume or the lengths of the skirt, you know, the legs don't look long enough, she needs to have it shorter or whatever, these are all the details that I would say somebody with a professional eye will then suggest. (Interview)

To summarize, the Berlin State Ballet's innovation ecosystem oscillates between the creation process's institutional parameters and a co-created, negotiated collective vision that materializes through micro-adjustments until the day of the first show.

Sasha Waltz Company

Our second case is the Sasha Waltz Company (SWC) – called Sasha Waltz & Guests. It is a contemporary dance company founded by choreographers Sasha Waltz and Jochen Sandig in Berlin. The notion of "Guests" reveals that SWC relies on creative input from various guests and does not work with a permanent staff. Famous for its innovative and interdisciplinary approach to dance, the company collaborates with artists from multiple disciplines. Sasha Waltz has a clear role its Artistic Director, leading project-specific teams of skilled dancers and collaborators, which is why the case is appropriate for contributing to the broader field of leadership influence on innovative practices. At a glance, the organizational structure emphasizes creativity and experimentation, fostering a dynamic environment for artistic exploration. The target audience for Sasha Waltz & Guests includes contemporary dance

[1] Person in charge of the rehearsal when the choreographers are not present.

enthusiasts, art connoisseurs, and those drawn to avant-garde performances that push the boundaries of traditional dance forms. In this vein, some creative productions enable the audience to have flexible places on the stage themselves and meander between and around the dancers, becoming an integral part of the performance. With an internationally acclaimed reputation, SWC appeals to a diverse audience interested in the intersection of contemporary dance, movement, and music. We observed the rehearsals leading to the premiere of Sasha Waltz's creation "Exodos" – produced to mark the 25th anniversary of Sasha Waltz & Guests. Contemporary dance performances address issues of human mobility on several levels.

After studying the empirical material, one predominant fact became apparent: The Artistic Director herself refined a leadership style oscillating between firm "micro-commands" and some elements of micromanagement while still inviting feedback and active participation. Such an intensive environment is an excellent breeding ground for innovative action. However, we will explain this oscillation based on several representative quotes from the field notes.

> "As they start again, she keeps walking around, approaching the different duets all over the stage, giving individual corrections." (Fieldnotes, p. 10). "She gives some notes about the formations and the spacing." (p. 10). "Everyone stay where you are; I will come and fix the spacing" (p. 13.). "She explains that there is not enough time for the group to go up and down the balcony. Is too fast?" "It was f***ed up and wrong," she says in an apologizing manner." (p. 24). "Sasha Walz (SW) claps her hands to mark the tempo. Then she says aloud that not everyone is at the same tempo." (p. 24) "She repeats that they should use the films [specific props that reflect light] to interact with the public and to please use the light. "Go to the places where there is a spotlight so that the film can reflect the light." (p. 35). "Be a bit more sculptural. Maybe this is a good metaphor to use in this movement." (p.37). "She then explains that she wants everyone to be strong, clear, and determined in that part." (p.50.)

Sometimes, but less often, she also asks for feedback from other participants in the rehearsal:

> "Let's take it from the sub-groups," she suggests. Then she asks the dancers whether they need to speak about the (movement) patterns in the groups before (p. 26). SW asks everyone questions about the opening scene, where the dancers are split between the two halls. How do they manage to bring the public from one hall to another? (p. 32). Also, because she thinks there are still some traffic problems – that is, people are still running to each other at some points. She is not happy with that. She wants to know why there are still some traffic issues. She then asks the dancers to give her feedback about this. "Can you give me feedback? Genuine feedback?" (p. 51).

During the weeks leading to the premiere, 75 micro-commands were observed. SW also asked for feedback 20 times; only once was feedback offered without her asking for it. The dancers do not seem to take the multiple commands negatively. As a dancer stated,

> I think the artistic quality is fine. From the way we talk, from the way we communicate, from the discussions we have, from the subjects, from the quality of people, what each one brings to the table, the idea of freedom, the open mind, that everybody is working together. (Interview).

This implies that participative practices are deeply anchored in the key processes. Regarding these creative processes, Sasha Waltz added,

> It's very, very different, for example, if I work with existing music, like, uhm, a written score, an opera, or a symphonic work, this is very different to creative process work, you know because you need to exchange, you don't know the language, […] I don't know how can I say […], and you have to understand something, […] we have to discuss with words, images that are not even there yet, or energies, or, you know, ideas, that have not yet materialized. (Interview).

In summary, the innovative power of SWC relies mainly on its Artistic Director's vision and orchestration skills. Guests continuously contribute fresh ideas, but they must be integrated into the bigger picture. Sasha Waltz pinpointed the relevance of the overall vision:

> Sure. I mean, it's me and the company, you know, that are standing and asking different artists to collaborate. Uhm, but for sure, the responsibility […] and also the universe we want to create, it's out of my vision, where we are going. Because I'm choosing what is in and what is out (Interview).

However, to implement her vision, she needs this oscillation between closing down (taking firm and sometimes spontaneous decisions) and opening up (co-creating, accepting ideas from the team, and actively asking for feedback).

However, in the case of SWC, the micromanagement/leadership part was definitely more pronounced than the co-creation part. SWC does not have permanent dancers, so more need for alignment arises, along with more creative input from various individuals. Furthermore, closer examination revealed that co-creative input was more frequent in the early stages, while micromanagement became more frequent as the date of the first show approached.

Vienna State Opera (work in progress)

The history of the Viennese ballet spans nearly 400 years, during which there have been periods when its work was ground-breaking. Among the artists who worked in Vienna are legends such as Marie Taglioni and Rudolf Nureyev (Wiener Staatsoper, 2018a). In 2005, the ballet ensembles of the Wiener Staatsoper and the Volksoper Wien merged, creating the Wiener Staatsballett, which performs in both houses. Comprising about 100 dancers (first soloists, soloists, demi-soloists, and corps de ballet), Austria's largest ensemble performs 87 shows per season to an audience totaling approximately 150,000 (ibid). The company usually performs three full-length premieres, ten revivals of repertoire pieces, and an international gala during the season (ibid.). We observed the creation of Davide Bombana's new Roméo et Juliette during our study. This piece uses the symphony of the same name by Hector Berlioz (instead of Sergei Prokofiev's popular score for ballet).

It has become evident during our ongoing case study that the one key aspect of the Vienna State Opera involves "managing the divas." While there is a focus on famous dancers, it is also necessary to integrate them into the ensemble. While divas are an abundant source of innovation, they can monopolize (or even inhibit) innovative processes in a specific direction.

Ecosystems of Innovation

In this section, we aim to reflect the unique ecosystems of innovation in the three cases. We investigate how the "new" unfolds and how innovation is triggered in different length waves of oscillation between opening up the creative participation process and micromanagement practices involving swift and precise decision-making.

In the case of the Berlin State Ballet, innovation emerges in an interplay between guest choreographers and long-standing functional departments, crafts, and services within the organization. This includes costumes, make-up, lighting, sets, and live orchestral music. The Berlin State Ballet has developed its expertise in cooperation with various internal and external partners over the years. Innovation is somehow "negotiated" between these experts, the choreographers and the dancers, and the internal and external teams. We can label this a "negotiated co-creation" of new ideas. This co-creation relies on the mutual endorsement of organizational skills of the various crafts, the vision and leadership capacities of the (guest) choreographers, and the refined physical work of the dancers. During rehearsals, the collective vision materializes through micro-adjustments and co-creative practices.

As apparent from the case description, Sasha Waltz & Guests has an internationally acclaimed reputation, is located in a metropolis, and has public funding at federal and city levels. The main differences between SWC and the Vienna and Berlin state ballets lie in its shorter history and – regarding resources – that Sasha Waltz & Guests does not employ a permanent ensemble, nor does the company own its performance venues. In addition, the company's repertoire consists solely of works of its eponymous founder and resident choreographer. This special innovation ecosystem is based more closely on the Artistic Director's vision and skills since she embodies both the institutional perspective and the project's leadership. Sasha Walz has developed a sophisticated way of combining her own ideas and judgments with the practice of collecting feedback from the rehearsal ecosystem. These feedback loops create space for manifold micro-commands, bringing the performative action closer to the bigger picture of the overall vision. The outcome is a balanced innovation system that oscillates between strong leadership, participative co-creation, and continuous feedback. The later in the process, the more significant the influence of her authoritarian leadership and decisive micromanagement. To a certain extent, this adds a new twist to seminal studies emphasizing the supportive and non-controlling role of leaders to encourage creativity and innovation (see Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Khalili, 2016).

Finally, in the case of the Vienna State Opera, innovation is enacted as an oscillation between the integration of long-standing, highly skilled, and well-known individuals in the permanent house ensemble (the "stars" of the organization, such as acclaimed designers and successful hedge fund managers, which embody to a large extent an institutional perspective) and external project leadership from the guest choreographers. The "managing divas" label reveals innovation potential but carries a risk since the personal standing of celebrity stars can jeopardize the whole project.

In summary, we believe that different interplays between institutional settings and leadership behavior trigger and shape worlds of innovation with varying oscillation wavelengths between participation and micromanagement.

Preliminary Conclusions

Our (ongoing) study explores innovation practices in performing arts organizations within the unique context of the primary author's insider status as a professional dancer. While offering valuable insights, this insider perspective introduces inherent limitations that must be acknowledged. The cultivation of reflexivity in writing and analysis becomes paramount to address potential biases stemming from the ethnographer's familiarity with the field. In this light, it is crucial to recognize the balance between the advantages gained from this insider status and the potential limitations it imposes on the ability to perceive certain phenomena. To this end, a second researcher was, as already explained, involved in data analysis, interpretation, and conceptual development of the findings.

Our (ongoing) study attempts to shed light on the black box of continuous innovation by gaining more significant insights into the creation practices entrenched in the production and presentation of the performing arts. By doing so, we aim to stimulate current academic and practitioner debate on creative industries as well as connect these emerging insights to broader debates in management studies, thereby offering novel implications that can potentially influence managerial practices across various industries. While our emerging findings derive from three in-depth cases, these are limited to the context of dance companies and, more generally, the performing arts. However, the selected cases provide an extreme case for organizations striving for continuous innovation in the creative industries, by which the salient focal dynamics facilitate concept building. The three cases here show the definite

relevance of practices that allow for a sophisticated "oscillating dance" between controlling leadership, participative action, and organizational skills that foster specific and unique worlds of innovation. We expect that the dynamics described can provide insights into other organizations with complex production processes, high levels of uncertainty, and knowledge-intensive production across sectors and sectors, thus enriching the theoretical and practical discourse on the management of creativity and innovation.

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Appendix

CASE STUDY	VIENNA STATE OPERA	BERLIN STATE BALLET	SASHA WALTZ & GUESTS
Type	Large, classical dance company. Autonomous entity of public law.	Large, classical dance company. Autonomous entity of public law.	Small contemporary dance company. Privately owned company.
History and Reputation	The history of Viennese ballet spans nearly 400 years. Among the artists who have worked in Vienna are legends, including Marie Taglioni and Rudolf Nureyev. Austria's largest ensemble.	The tradition of the Staatsballett Berlin dates to 1742 when Frederick the Great founded his Royal Court Opera. Germany's largest company and Berlin's only classically trained ensemble.	Founded by Sasha Waltz (resident choreographer and director) in 1993. It is Germany's foremost contemporary dance company and one of the most renowned in Europe. International and constantly evolving network of production and guest artistic collaborators.
Repertoire	Classic repertoire with neoclassical and modern pieces.	Traditional story ballets with increasingly contemporary works.	Mainly works by Sasha Waltz in co-creation and collaboration with guest/partner artists.
Own Performing Venues	Wiener Staatsoper; Volksoper Wien	Deutsche Oper Berlin; Komische Oper Berlin; Staatsoper Unter den Linden.	No own venues but long-standing partnerships in Berlin and around the world.
Funding	Approx. 60% direct subsidies (federal and city); approx. 40% self-earned revenue (box office and fundraising).	Approx. 70% direct subsidies (federal and city); approx. 30% self-earned revenue (box office and fundraising).	Approx. 50% direct subsidies (federal and city); approx. 50% self-earned revenue (touring and international co-productions).
Ensemble	One hundred dancers (first soloists, soloists, demi-soloists, and corps de ballet).	Ninety-four dancers (first soloists, soloists, demi-soloists, corps de ballet, and character roles).	No permanent ensemble; employment of dancers as independent contributors.
Season	About 87 performances, including three full-length premieres, ten revivals of repertoire pieces, and one international gala.	About 88 performances, including four full-length premieres, eight revivals of repertoire pieces, and one international gala.	Approximately 70 performances per year and 20 repertoire pieces performed internationally.
Production Observed	Davide Bombana's new *Roméo et Juliette*.	Victor Ullate's new realization of *Don Quixote.*	Sasha Waltz's new creation, *Exodos*.