

**SHARED LEADERSHIP AT FINNISH  
CLASSICAL MUSIC FESTIVALS**

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis

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<b>Abstract</b>  <p>Most of the classical music festivals in Finland are led by a duo of leaders formed by an artistic director and a production director. Following the shared leadership model, leaders are responsible for their own functions, yet they act equally as the top directors of the organization. The model is widely used in arts organizations all over the world.</p> <p>This thesis examines, how the artistic directors of Finnish classical music festivals share the leadership role and collaborate with festival producers. There are both significant benefits and conflict causing factors involved in shared leadership. The shared leadership model has a critical impact on the strategic decision making in festival organizations, because the influence of strategic decisions has to be evaluated from both artistic and managerial point of view.</p> <p>The qualitative research data was collected from four in-depth semi-structured interviews with artistic directors of classical music festivals in Finland. The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis as the analysis method.</p> <p>The results gained from this study support the conclusion, that overall classical music festival management in Finland is satisfactory from the artistic directors' perspective. The shared leadership model works in practice as artistic directors and producers work together to achieve the best possible outcome for their festivals. The results present the important qualifications that artistic directors expect from classical music festival producers in Finland.</p> <p>The relevance of this thesis to festival management is for twofold: first of all, it provides a better understanding of the aspects that shape the shared leadership model in the Finnish classical music festival field and hence contribute to building more collaborative relationships between artistic directors and producers. Secondly, it asserts general factors and concepts that affect the whole festival organization and contribute to its overall success.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> shared leadership, dual leadership, festival management, decision making	
<b>Additional Information</b>	

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the study

Finland boasts a lively classical music scene, which includes the many classical music festivals all around the country. These festivals are an essential part of cultural life in many rural towns and spread high quality classical music outside the urban areas especially during summer time. The range of festivals is vast, varying from small weekend festivals to festivals that last for weeks and have dozens of concerts in the program.

The festival audience gets to enjoy a series of concerts, which have progressed from an idea in the artistic director's head to a finished product, an actual festival. The amount of work and inputs from different people in this process has been extensive. From the arts management perspective, it is interesting to study what happens during the process, especially because the festivals usually have two directors, an artistic director and a producer, whose actions are equally important to the success of the festival.

In this study, I focus mainly on the actions of artistic directors, producers and their collaboration regarding the different aspects that are required during the process of creating a classical music festival. For the purpose of simplifying the abundance of titles that producers in the field have, the term *producer* is used in this thesis to describe people who work as managers responsible for the production of the festival, regardless of what their title is in practice.

The artistic decisions are in the hands of an artistic director, while the managerial tasks are administered by the producer. Producing festivals with high artistic and operational quality requires coherent and effective co-operation between artists and producers, as most of the classical music festivals operate using a shared leadership model. In this model the artistic directors and producers both take care of their own functions, but at the same time they are equal leaders working

together towards common goals of the organization (Reynolds, Tonks & MacNeill 2017).

Overall, the amount of studies concerning shared leadership and strategic decision making within the arts management discipline is very limited (Cray & Inglis 2011), but the Finnish music festivals provide a relevant context for studying leadership processes in the creative industry in practice (Luonila 2016, 21). The concept of shared leadership and its effects in the Finnish classical music festival context are therefore intriguing, and deserve to be studied in detail.

## **1.2 Organizational Background of Classical Music Festivals in Finland**

During recent years many festivals have evolved from small ideological events run mainly by volunteers to more coherent and complete productions that are professionally managed, utilize a variety of networks, and focus on customer experience by providing the customers something more than just a concert (Luonila 2016, 23-24). This chapter provides background for understanding how the festival organizations function.

### **1.2.1 Key Decision Makers in a Festival Organization**

Depending on the size, volume and financial status of the festival, there are a number of employees in decision making roles in the festival organizations. The smallest of festivals do subsist with only an artistic director who also takes care of the production, while the largest and most established organizations are able to employ enough people to divide productional tasks between many different employees, each responsible for their own field of expertise.

Finland Festivals, an umbrella organization for the established festivals in Finland,

presented some compiled statistics and key figures regarding the employment situation in the field. According to this data, in the year 2014 the 79 festivals studied employed 174 permanent employees, 1,587 part-time workers, and 7,373 volunteers. (Finland Festivals 2016).

All of the festivals in Finland are not members of Finland Festivals and thus not a part of these figures, but the data, however, provides a comprehensive figure of the situation in the field. Since the 79 festival organizations involved employ 174 permanent employees, on average there are 2,2 permanent employees working for one festival in Finland. In many cases, the organization employs permanently only the producer, and the artistic director has a fixed-term contract. The low number of employees creates enormous pressure for the festival's ability to operate successfully with the limited employee resources.

#### ***1.2.1.1 The Producer***

The producer works in the heart of the festival organization, in many cases as the only permanent employee. At a small festival, a producer can be titled festival director, general manager, secretary general, production manager, or something similar. However, as long as they are responsible for the productional decision making at the festival, they are referred to as producers in this study for the purpose of simplification.

#### ***1.2.1.2 The Artistic Director***

Almost all classical music festivals do employ an artistic director who is responsible for planning the program. The artistic director often also acts as a front figure of the festival in media and marketing actions. Many festivals are founded by artists themselves, who have then become artistic directors of those festivals. Typically, the artistic director also performs at the festival, but the main task of an artistic director in the festival organization is to create the festival program and plan and book the artists to perform it.

### *1.2.1.3 The Board of Directors*

Most of the festivals are non-profit organizations, or associations by the Finnish law. The law requires an association to have a board of one chairman and at least two other members. By law, the board has the highest authority in the organization and they are personally responsible for possible malpractice or financial losses. (Yhdistyslaki, 1989). The board is also the governing body of the festival organization and the employer.

Studying the board of directors' actions and managerial role in an arts organization would be an interesting study of its own. However, in this study, I have made a limitation not to include the board's decision making process and actions here, because I am mainly interested in the collaboration between artistic directors and producers.

### 1.2.2 Managerial Characteristics of a Festival Organization

A typical classical music festival organization in Finland consists of the three governing bodies, the producer, the artistic director, and the board of directors, whose individual roles were described in the previous chapter. In this study, I will focus on studying only the shared leadership and decision making between producers and artistic directors. However, the board's role is especially significant, because they make the highly important strategic decisions of hiring the producer and the artistic director (Cray & Inglis 2011).

Colbert (in Towse 2003, 288) mentions the specific characteristics of management in the arts sector by stating that “since many arts activities assume the form of individual projects, the organizations that produce them must be extraordinarily flexible.” A festival organization produces a festival, typically one per year, and each festival is an individual project, or rather a set of individual concerts combined together, so the flexibility within the organization is a prerequisite.



Colbert goes on to state that the discontinuous nature of arts production has remarkable consequences to the way that human resources are managed. Because the events take place on an occasional basis, the organization does not need to have the creative resources in use constantly. Therefore arts organizations hire their creative resources mainly from outside the organization whenever they are needed. (Colbert in Towse 2003, 288). The discontinuous nature of production is reality in a festival organization. Other than the artistic directors, the creative resources, i. e. the musicians, are merely performing at the festival during a short period of time on a project basis.

The special characteristics of a festival organization also pose challenges to the decision making.

The manner in which arts organization operate is remarkably consistent with Mintzberg's theory about the way organizations are structured. The organization is managed by a strategic apex comprising the board of directors, the artistic director and the administrative director.” (Colbert in Towse 2003, 288).

While this apex should share a common management strategy, each of the three parties involved may also have their own interests at stake. The board is responsible for supervising that the organization functions in the way it has been designed to work, budgets are monitored, and no delinquencies occur. The producer is anticipating financial success from the festivals, which guarantees the continuity of his or her job. That is why it is in the producer's interest to save the costs and offer concert programs that interest large audiences. The artistic director's goal is to promote high artistic quality and integrity. Matching the sometimes differing interests of producers and artistic directors together is a potential source for conflicts (Reid & Karambayya 2009). Moreover, there are no quantitative measures for judging artistic quality, which makes it challenging to fit the possibly differing interests of artistic directors and producers together (Cray, Inglis and Freeman 2007).

However, the financial success of the festival is reliant on the artistic decisions, since those decisions shape the core product, which is the concert program of the festival. Therefore the board and producers have a high interest in the artistic decisions, and their opinions and views should not be ignored when the strategic decisions on the artistic content of festivals are made. As Chong (2010) points out, the board is responsible for setting the limits for managerial and artistic activities, and the constraints do sometimes cause inevitable conflicts (Chong 2010, 95).

### 1.2.3 Characteristics of Non-Profit Festival Funding

Most classical music festival organizations are non-profit organizations, meaning that the noble reason for their existence is not to maximize profit, but to provide for a general good. Some distinct characteristics affect decision making in a non-profit organization. They cannot be managed in the same way as for-profit organizations because of the different social mission. (Colbert in Towse 2003, 289).

Funding, for instance, must be obtained from different sources, typically involving a significant proportion of grants, government or municipality aid, sponsorships, and other kinds of donations that would not be key sources of income for for-profit businesses. Finland Festivals' statistics from 2014 demonstrate, that 28 % of overall festival funding in Finland came from those outside sources, and 8 % of funding came from sponsorship, leaving the proportion of self-financing coming from the festivals' own sales to a mere 64 % (Finland Festivals 2016). It is thus evident, that most festivals in Finland would not survive without outside funding.

Because the financing and hence the survival of festivals is dependent on so many different interest groups, their interests cannot go unnoticed in the decision making. For example, the local municipality may invest in the festival, because hosting a renowned festival there builds the municipality's brand, makes it a more attractive tourist location, and thus brings tourists' money to the local community and businesses.

A good example of this is a survey from 2013 conducted by Pirfest, an umbrella organization that brings together 36 festivals in Pirkanmaa region in Finland. They studied the impact of festivals and cultural attractions to the region, and found out that the festivals and cultural attractions brought 2,5 million visitors to the events. These visitors contributed a total amount of 253 million Euros to the local economy. Out of this, almost 140 million Euros were brought by tourists coming from outside the region. (Pirfest 2013). Thus, the economic impact can be considered significant, and a relatively small investment from the local city or municipality can result in significant return of investment in the local community.

Since a majority of festivals do enjoy direct funding from government, public grants, or both of those, their accountability to the general public is evaluated on a year to year basis. Government support, as well as many of the grants, are granted based on the festival's ability to provide meaningful experiences to the public. Therefore the non-profit festivals are not only accountable to their members, but also to the general public (Kidd 2009).

A significant interest group that should not go unnoticed when discussing funding of non-profit festivals are the philanthropists, sponsors, and business partners, i. e. wealthy individuals and businesses. The funding of arts is dependent on these parties, although in Finland their role as funders is not as significant as in the United States, for example. However, they contribute an average of 8 % of festivals overall income, and thus are also an interest group that the festivals need to notice when decisions are made.

Recent studies on sponsorship and its mutual benefits to the organizations involved suggest, that the role of companies is increasingly shifting away from the traditional philanthropist's (donating money for a general good) and sponsor's (giving money in exchange for company visibility) roles towards a partnership role. As a partner of an arts organization, a company does engage in a collaboration with the organization, which has both external and internal impacts on the company's operation. In comparison to a business engaging in a traditional sponsorship role, a business that partners with arts has been proven to gain more

significant benefits from the partnership in terms of positive relations with the community and stakeholders. (Lewandowska, 2015).

Partnering with festivals can thus be greatly beneficial to the businesses, because their image and relationship with the local community can increase. However, the effects of such partnership should not affect the festival's artistic integrity, and therefore the partnership process has to be carefully managed.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The idea for conducting this study has evolved over the past years, during which I have worked and collaborated with classical musicians under different circumstances, mainly at classical music festivals. During these years, I have witnessed more than a few occasions where the lack of understanding and dysfunctional co-operation between festival producers and artistic directors has affected the festival organization in a negative manner. Therefore, I wanted to study the elements that contribute to the collaboration between the artistic director and producer to make the relationship work in a more optimal way.

The aim of this study is to explore, how the shared leadership model works at Finnish classical music festivals in practice from the artistic director's point of view, how it affects the festival organizations' decision making, and how the artistic directors view the collaboration with festival producers.

My main research question is:

How does the artistic director collaborate with and share the leadership role with a festival producer in a classical music festival?

The secondary research questions supporting the main question are:

What kind of qualities and actions do artistic directors of festivals expect

from producers?

To what extent do producers understand artists' visions and vice versa, and do the possible contradicting visions lead to conflicts?

What kind of a role does the artists' age and experience play in the above?

I hope that this study will benefit producers and artistic directors of classical music festivals by providing insight into the shared leadership model, its effects on decision making in a festival organization, and the overall qualifications that artistic directors expect from producers to collaborate more efficiently in a classical music festival environment.

## **1.4 Research Approach**

The research is based on the theoretical framework founded on theories of shared leadership and strategic decision making in non-profit organizations. The empirical part of the research has been collected in four in-depth semi-structured interviews with artistic directors of different music festivals. The data has then been transcribed and analyzed based on the theoretical framework, to find the important themes for this research.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters, followed by the list of references. The first chapter introduces the subject to the reader. The theoretical framework is described in the second chapter. The third chapter explains the method of the research, and the fourth chapter presents the analysis and results of the study. The fifth chapter draws conclusions, and the final chapter discusses the importance of this topic from the Arts Management discipline's perspective.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework of this thesis is founded on literature and studies of arts management and leadership. However, Colbert points out that management as a science is relatively new, and the research of arts management is even younger. Researchers did not begin to publish studies on management of arts and cultural organizations until in the early 1970's. (Colbert in Towse 2003, 287).

Although some studies on the collaboration between artistic directors and producers in different art contexts do exist, the topic of strategic decision making under shared leadership is not widely studied in the arts management context. Therefore the arts management literature alone is not sufficient enough to provide a solid theoretical framework for the study.

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical framework, which begins by defining the shared leadership model in arts organizations followed by a review on strategic decision making in non-profit organizations. The last sub-chapter combines elements of these theories and brings them into the festival context.

### **2.1 Shared Leadership in Arts Organizations**

This sub-chapter begins by defining the concept of shared leadership in the arts context. The definition is followed by theoretical considerations of the most important challenges and benefits that arise from the use of shared leadership model in the arts field.

#### **2.1.1 Definition of Shared Leadership**

According to Chong (2010), it has been a common practice in arts organizations in the post-impresario era to share the leadership between dual executives. One

executive assumes responsibility over the artistic matters, and another is in charge of the administration. (Chong 2010, 160). In many classical music festival organizations, the leadership is shared between the artistic directors and producers exactly in this manner.

By definition, shared leadership means that “leadership functions, activities, responsibilities, but first of all knowledge and skills are distributed among several expert actors” (Eriksson & Ropo, 2000). While this kind of shared leadership model is considered an unusual and not a well-functioning management structure in many other industries, it is widely in use in many organizations operating in the creative field (Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

Chong (2010) uses the term *bifurcated management structure* when he discusses shared leadership and management. Chong (2010, 156) states, that leadership and management “are complementary systems of action” but describes the difference between the two in the context of previous studies adapted to arts field as follows:

Management is coping with complexity, planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, controlling and problem solving [...]. On the other hand, according to Kotter (1990), leadership is coping with change, setting a direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring. (Chong 2010, 156-157).

Järvinen, Ansio, and Houni (2015) recognize the challenge of defining the concept of shared leadership, and instead use the term *dual leadership*, which is quite broadly used by many scholars. They suggest, that the term *shared leadership* is not universally agreed upon, and present some alternatives for the term, which have emerged from past literature. These are *ensemble leadership*, *co-leadership*, *invited leadership*, and *merged leadership*, depending on the author, definition of the leadership roles, and context in which the authors have used the term. (Järvinen, Ansio & Houni 2015).

Reynolds, Tonks, and MacNeill (2017) introduce a term *collaborative leadership* as a form of dual leadership, and Yukl (2006) has used the term *collective leadership* to describe shared leadership. He states that “instead of a heroic leader who can perform all essential leadership functions, they are distributed among different members of the team and organization” (Yukl 2006, 449). While this quote stems from the business world where organizations are generally bigger and leadership exists on many different levels within the organization, a small arts organization would seek to employ people, who possess capabilities to be perform the essential leadership functions as two shared leaders.

The amount of terms used to describe shared leadership is vast, which makes it complex to define the concept precisely. Furthermore, leadership and management are different terms, but in this context it is reasonable to combine them. This is because the festival organizations in Finland are small organizations with a few employees and the key roles usually involve a multitude of leadership and managerial tasks. Because the roles between the personnel in key positions are not characterized by strict boundaries, shared leadership suits the context better than any of the other terms defined above. Hence, in this study I have chosen to combine the leadership and management functions and use the term shared leadership to refer to the division of roles and tasks between people in key positions.

### 2.1.2 Features of Shared Leadership in the Festival Field

The shared leadership model is widely, and also somewhat uniquely, used within in the performing arts field (Reynolds, et al. 2017; Reid & Karambayya 2009). In the Finnish classical music festival field, the model is widely adopted by the festival organizations, although some festivals have also chosen differently.

Like every other leadership model, shared leadership model also has its advantages and disadvantages. In their study of shared leadership in Finnish theaters, Järvinen et al. (2015) found, that many conditions have to be fulfilled before the



shared leadership model is can function effectively. A common understanding, support, and trust has to prevail between the leaders, and in order to lead the organization as a coherent unit, the leaders will have to avoid bringing the possible conflicts and challenges to the whole organization, but instead solve them with each other. Open communication and frequent conversations between the leaders were seen as crucial. (Järvinen et al. 2017). Although they studied leadership in Finnish theaters, classical music festivals in Finland operate in the same way, making these findings applicable to the festival management context as well.

A characterizing feature of the shared leadership model is that the leaders are dependent of each other. Even though the artistic director is mainly responsible for creating the program for the festival and booking the right musicians to perform it, he or she is dependent on financial resources, which are mainly managed by the producer. The producer, on the other hand, is dependent on high quality artistic content, which guarantees audience participation to the festival, donations, sponsorship investments, and other sources of income. This feature is recognized as interdependency between the leaders and it prevails the shared leadership model despite the fact that both leaders have separate responsibilities on paper (Reynolds et al. 2017; Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

Due to the nature of the leadership model, it seems evident that conflict is unavoidable in the arts organizations that have two leaders. But to what extent the conflicts affect the organizations, remains unclear based on the existing literature. The findings by Reynolds et al. (2017) indicate, that the unproductive conflict is not an inevitable aspect related to shared leadership, unlike Reid and Karambayya (2009) suggest. Instead, Reynolds et al. (2017) demonstrate, that artists and arts managers see the shared leadership as a way to address the twin imperatives and tackle the challenges related to the field so that both artistic excellence and solid organizational management can be achieved. However, their study also recognizes, that other views, namely those that stress the conflict creating nature of shared leadership, have emerged from the past studies. (Reynolds et al. 2017).

The role of conflict is also dependent on how it is viewed within the organization. Others see it as a deteriorating factor for shared leadership (Reid & Karambayya 2009), while others see it as a benefit if the leaders challenge each other every now and then (Reynolds et al. 2017). The next two sub-chapters will address the challenges and benefits of the shared leadership model in the context of this study in more detail.

### 2.1.3 Challenges of the Shared Leadership Model in an Arts Organization

Due to the possibility of conflicting interests between the leaders, the shared leadership model is acknowledged as a challenging and ineffective model (Reid & Karambayya, 2009). The downside of the model is that unless the top leaders of the arts organization share the same artistic vision and at the same time understand the limiting factors that affect that vision, the shared leadership model can begin to work against the organization. As Yukl (2006, 449) points out, the collaboration between the leaders must be coordinated and complementary to be effective. If the parties only follow their own agenda, the benefits of shared leadership are effectively lost.

By assigning two or more equal leaders to the top of the organization, the organization should acknowledge a risk, which is that mismatches between the leaders can easily lead to clashes between them. Even if the leaders share the same vision about where the organization should be heading to, they may very well disagree on the means with which that vision will be accomplished. (Reid & Karambayya 2009).

Based on previous research on the subject, Reid and Karambayya (2009) have defined five different features which provide reasons for understanding leadership conflict between the artistic director and management director in an arts organization. These features are:

- 1) integrating artistic plans together with audience expectations and funding,

- 2) difference of personal values between the leaders,
- 3) shift of organizational priorities from artistic direction towards managerial competences,
- 4) lack of an organizational assessment criteria to judge the validity of its strategy, and
- 5) the interdependencies between the artistic and management director.

The first feature, integration of artistic plans with audience expectations and funding, is without a doubt common in almost every festival organization, as the limited monetary and productional resources dictate boundaries for artistic decisions. A non-profit organization's success is evaluated based on how well it is able to meet the demands and expectations of its audiences and other constituencies (Kaplan 2001).

Therefore, the artistic content is a success factor, which has to reflect the festival's strategy. A festival has to find its own niche, concentrate in fulfilling the audience expectations within that niche, and adjust its strategy accordingly. If the festival is aiming for high audience counts, the program has to be crowd pleasing and attractive to appeal to large audiences. If the goal is, for example, to experiment boldly with modern music and commission new compositions, the audience count will likely be smaller, which means that the festival has to find alternative ways to finance its operations.

The second feature causing conflicts is the difference of personal values between the artistic director and producer. Artistic decision making and artists' behavior is often considered spontaneous and irrational, while producers are rational and systematic (Reid & Karambayya 2009).

To some degree, the conflicts arising from differing personal values are unavoidable. However, if the leaders share similar personal values, it can help them to co-operate instead of conflict. Therefore, it is the board of director's

responsibility to pay attention to matching the personal values of potential leaders together when recruitment decisions are made (Reid & Karambayya 2009).

The third of these features cannot be avoided in a festival organization; it is simply a question of shifting organizational focus from the artistic to the managerial issues. The focus can also shift in the other direction, depending on the phase which the festival cycle is in. There is evidence, that arts managers are actually shifting their focus constantly between the artistic and financial orientations because the managers' goals are interdependent (Reynolds et al. 2017), which indicates that this feature would cause conflicts only in cases, where the leaders do not understand why the focus has to be constantly shifted.

The fourth conflict causing feature can be resolved by creating proper assessment criteria for the organization's strategy. If the leaders within the organization do not share the same strategy, or understand the importance of decision making from the strategic perspective, their ability to work towards a common goal is compromised. In such a case, the personal values and perspectives of the leaders will begin to play a role in decision making instead of agreed strategy which the decision making should be based on, and that will lead to conflicts (Reid & Karambayya 2009).

The fifth feature, interdependencies between the leaders, do exist as long as the shared leadership model is used. It is vital for the organization to realize that conflict can never be fully avoided, but by recruiting members who understand and are able to manage conflict, the boards could address many of the problems arising from conflicts between the leaders (Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

Cray et al. (2007) also consider the role of leaders in arts organizations as greatly challenging because of shared leadership. They, too, acknowledge that the way that people behave in the inevitable need to balance between artistic quality, integrity, and organizational viability is a likely source for conflict in the organization. The producer's role is to ensure the longevity of the organization's operations, while the

artistic director is primarily focusing on short-term artistic recognition. (Cray et al. 2007).

Many of the studies on shared leadership acknowledge communication as a crucial component of a functional and conflict avoiding management team (Reynolds et al. 2017; Järvinen et al. 2015). An open dialogue is not only critical for building trust between the leaders themselves, but also between the leaders and the rest of the organization, making communication a necessary tool for bridging boundaries between the top management and the remainder of the organization. If the leaders work well together, but do not communicate to the rest of the organization, a sense of otherness can establish between them and the rest of the organization. (Järvinen et al. 2017).

#### 2.1.4 Benefits of the Shared Leadership Model

So far, only the challenges related with the shared leadership model have been discussed. The role between the two leaders has been described by Miles and Watkins (2007) as “managers who 'sleep in the same bed but dream different dreams” (Reynolds et al. 2017, 91). This metaphor has a negative connotation implying that the leaders, albeit working seemingly together as one leadership unit, have different motives for being leaders in the same organization. Although some research on the subject support this notion, other researchers have found contradicting evidence, which will be presented in this chapter.

While the challenges related with the shared leadership model should not go unnoticed, a more optimistic metaphor that highlights the benefits of the model is provided by Byrnes (2009, 24), who states that “the separation should be viewed in much the same way as the human brain functions: the two hemispheres are linked and communicate with each other while each side continues to do what it does best.”

It is obvious, that there are remarkable benefits related to the shared leadership model because it is so widely adopted in the arts field. Thus, it is somewhat odd, that many of the previous studies from the arts management discipline focus much on the conflicts and challenges instead of the widely accepted advantages associated with the model, and that the conflict between the leaders is considered inevitable in most previous studies of shared leadership (Reynolds et al 2017).

In comparison to the traditional single leader model, organizations engaged in the shared leadership model can respond to the complex demands of a modern arts organization more efficiently (Byrnes 2009, 24). The cultural organizations face an increasingly challenging environment, which they have to operate in, and by having two (or more) leaders at the top of the organization with different backgrounds and focus areas, the organization is able to take advantage of the wider range of competencies possessed by the leaders (Järvinen et al. 2015), whereas a traditional one leader model is limited to the competencies of one leader only.

In the festival context, shared leadership works very well in this sense. The artistic director is a professional artist, who retains profound knowledge about artistic matters. Such knowledge can only be achieved with years of education in music and by practicing the profession of a musician. The producer, on the other hand, is an expert of the managerial topics, making the two a single expert unit in both artistic and managerial matters.

At best, then, the shared leadership model works to a great benefit of the organization. While Reid and Karambayya (2009) state that the personalities, personal views and goals of the leaders are conflict causing factors, Järvinen et al. (2015) found them to be beneficial to the organization when the leaders work together, taking advantage of each others' personalities, views and goals. Also, because the shared leadership model divides the sometimes excessive work load of leaders more evenly, and because the diversity of different tasks can be divided between the leaders according to who has the best knowledge of the matters at hand, sharing the leadership brings relief to the fatigue and even possible burn

outs experienced by leaders. (Järvinen et al. 2015).

Reynolds et al. (2017) stress the importance of collaboration between the leaders. In fact, they determined that *collaborative leadership* is a special case of shared leadership (which they refer to as dual leadership), characterized by the interdependency between the leaders. Because the leaders are dependent on each other and cannot make artistic decisions at the expense of managerial decisions or vice versa, the collaborative nature of the leadership process is a determining factor for organizational success. Taking the other leader's initiative into account builds trust between the leaders and makes them respect each other's decisions, which, in turn, help the leaders solve the potential conflicts efficiently when they share each others' values and communicate openly. (Reynolds et al. 2017).

As has been described above, in the previous studies done on shared leadership, there is evidence that both supports the benefits of shared leadership (Reynolds et al. 2017; Järvinen et al. 2015) as well as evidence that the complex nature of shared leadership in a turbulent arts industry causes inevitable conflicts between the leaders (Reid & Karambayya 2009), which reflect to the whole organization (Järvinen et al. 2015). Thus, whether the shared leadership model is the best model for arts organizations or not, cannot be unanimously stated. There are significant benefits from using the model, but in order to actualize those benefits, the leaders must collaborate, and avoid conflict by building trust, share each others' values, communicate, and respect each others' views (Reynolds et al. 2017).

## **2.2 Strategic Decision Making in the Non-Profit Sector**

I have defined the vital key players in the decision making process of the festival organizations and described how the model of shared leadership works in a festival organization. How the strategic decisions in the non-profit arts organizations are made and what roles the leaders assume in the strategic decision making process deserves further investigation.

### 2.2.1 Strategic Decisions in a Non-Profit Arts Organization

Strategic decision making has been widely studied for decades by different researchers. Nevertheless, only a relatively small amount of those studies has concentrated on strategic decision making in non-profit organizations, despite the fact that their role and importance in the society is growing. Within the arts field, such studies are even more scarce. (Cray & Inglis 2011). This may be a result of a lack of recognition of strategies as valuable assets also in a non-profit organization, partly because the literature often only examines the issue from the for-profit organizations' standpoint.

Furthermore, the success of a non-profit organization should be evaluated based on how effectively and efficiently it meets the needs of constituencies; not primarily based on financial considerations, because these are not relevant for a non-profit organization (Kaplan 2001). If the success of strategic decision making in a non-profit organization is measured in terms of revenue it generates, the results can be misleading to those working in the arts industry and thus viewed as irrelevant, because the purpose of the organization's existence and its relevance to the society is different from the for-profit companies.

Gray & Inglis (2011) also suggest, that the reason for why many non-profit arts organizations do not base their decision making on strategy is that they simply do not have a proper strategy to follow. It is not rare to find arts organizations managed on an *ad hoc* basis, either due to the lack of organizational resources, insufficient knowledge on strategic management, or because strategies are not considered important in a non-profit organization.

However, a non-profit arts organization will benefit from adapting the strategic decision making processes in the organization. The arts industry is described as dynamic and turbulent (Cray et al. 2007), and the leadership model of many arts organizations is known to generate conflict as described in the previous chapter. Therefore, the leaders have to make sound decisions that support the



organization's success not only in the short future, but also in the long run. The funding challenges, competition for audiences not only with other festivals, but with all alternative ways to spend free time, and changes in governmental arts support systems are increasingly affecting the decisions that arts organizations have to make. (Cray & Inglis, 2011). Thus, it is crucial that the organization pays more and more attention on the long term effects of their decisions and bases the decisions on the organizational strategy, which all of the directors and board members should comply with.

While the non-profit cultural organizations differ from the for-profit organizations in terms of what kinds of strategies they adopt, the basic processes of strategy formulation has much in common. Thus, the concepts and learnings of strategic decision making from the for-profit sector can be applied to the arts and non-profit sector, as long as the context is clear. Cray et al. (2007) point out that the increased involvement with a broader group of stakeholders of nonprofit arts organizations will increase also the organizations' accountability from the stakeholders' viewpoint, and therefore greater transparency of governance procedures is a necessity: "Overall, there has been a strong push to adopt procedures closer to those of profit-making firms" (Cray et al. 2007). For these reasons, adaptation of the already tested methods for strategic decision making from the business world would seem feasible in the non-profit arts and festival context as well.

### 2.2.2 Top Management Strategic Decision Making

Schwenk (1995) discusses the characteristics of those who formulate strategy in an article based on past research on the topic. The upper echelons, which he refers to, are basically the top management teams of private companies, but the findings are applicable to arts organizations as well.

One of the key findings of these studies has been, that heterogeneity within the top management team may be positively related to performance, and that there are significant positive relationships between heterogeneity of functional backgrounds

and innovation (Schwenk 1995). This implies that those teams or combinations of people who formulate strategies in organizations should come from diverse backgrounds to nourish innovation, which is a necessity in an arts organization.

However, the findings of Cray & Ingles (2011) indicate, that in the arts management context the amount of people who make strategic decisions is restricted, thereby representing few interests in the decision making arena. If a proper representation of diverse backgrounds is a prerequisite for well functioning decision making and innovation, as Schwenk (1995) suggests, then there is a paradox between these findings. However, this should not necessarily be considered a call for larger amount of decision makers in arts organizations. It is advantageous for an arts organization to recognize, that if the decisions made are not in line with the best interests of the organization and stakeholders or the decisions made are narrow-minded, it may be necessary to broaden the pool of people who are involved in making strategic decisions.

In the arts context, then, it could be argued that the strategic decisions should not always be done by the artistic director or producers alone. In order to achieve a higher degree of innovation and perform better, strategic decisions should be made within larger groups of people who are more likely to come from diverse backgrounds. What this means in the festival field, in practice, is that the board of directors should consist of people who appreciate the importance of strategy, possess different kinds of backgrounds, and understand the culture which non-profit arts organizations operate in.

Top management teams are also bound to create paradoxes, i. e. “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” into their strategy. An organization may have to balance between many alternative strategies, which creates these strategic paradoxes. Reasons for the existence of the paradoxes can come from within the organization or from the outside, such as tensions from competitive situations or stakeholders. A successful organization's strategic decision making is therefore dependent on the leaders' ability to address the paradoxes and guide the organization in the right direction. (Smith 2014).

Another finding regarding the upper echelons suggests that “firms with [top management teams] that were younger, had higher team tenure, and had higher educational levels were more likely to change corporate strategy” (Schwenk 1995). The implication of this finding in the context of festivals is that when the festival organizations change their key decision makers, they should also be willing to accept the fact that the new decision makers may want to change the festival's strategy either deliberately or unintentionally. On the other hand, changing the key decision makers can also be a necessary choice if a strategy shift is desired but the current key decision makers are unable to accomplish the change.

### 2.2.3 The Role of Emotion in Decision Making

It can be symptomatic for many of the arts organizations to find themselves in a conflict sparked by the shared leadership model and the turbulent atmosphere they operate in. The emotions and feelings of people making decisions cannot be neglected, especially since arts and artists in general are very sensitive to emotion, and artistic direction as well as producing sometimes demand a large amount of passion.

Loewenstein and Lerner (2003) addressed the issues of emotion in decision making and the influence that immediate emotions have on decision making. Immediate emotions are those that are experienced during the time when decisions are made, and they were found to have an effect on the decision makers' perspectives of the possible outcomes, because they can override the rational decision making processes, leading into situations where decision making is based more on emotion than rationalities. (Loewenstein & Lerner 2003).

Therefore, it can be argued that if the decision makers constantly act based on their current feelings rather than rationally based on what is best for the organization, emotions will distort the judgements that people make. Since the artists are generally more sensitive and spontaneous, and producers tend to be more ordered and rational (Reid & Karambayya 2009), there is a chance that

emotions will significantly affect decision making in arts organizations.

To a degree, emotion is always present in decision making, even when decisions are made on a rational level. Negative feelings related to the decision making, such as guilt and defensiveness, are found to prolong the final decisions and increase the reluctance to make the decisions. In most extreme cases, emotions can affect a wide array of choices and even the decision making process as a whole within the organization. Negative emotions are bound to prolong decision making and affect future decision making negatively. (Maitlis & Ozelick 2004).

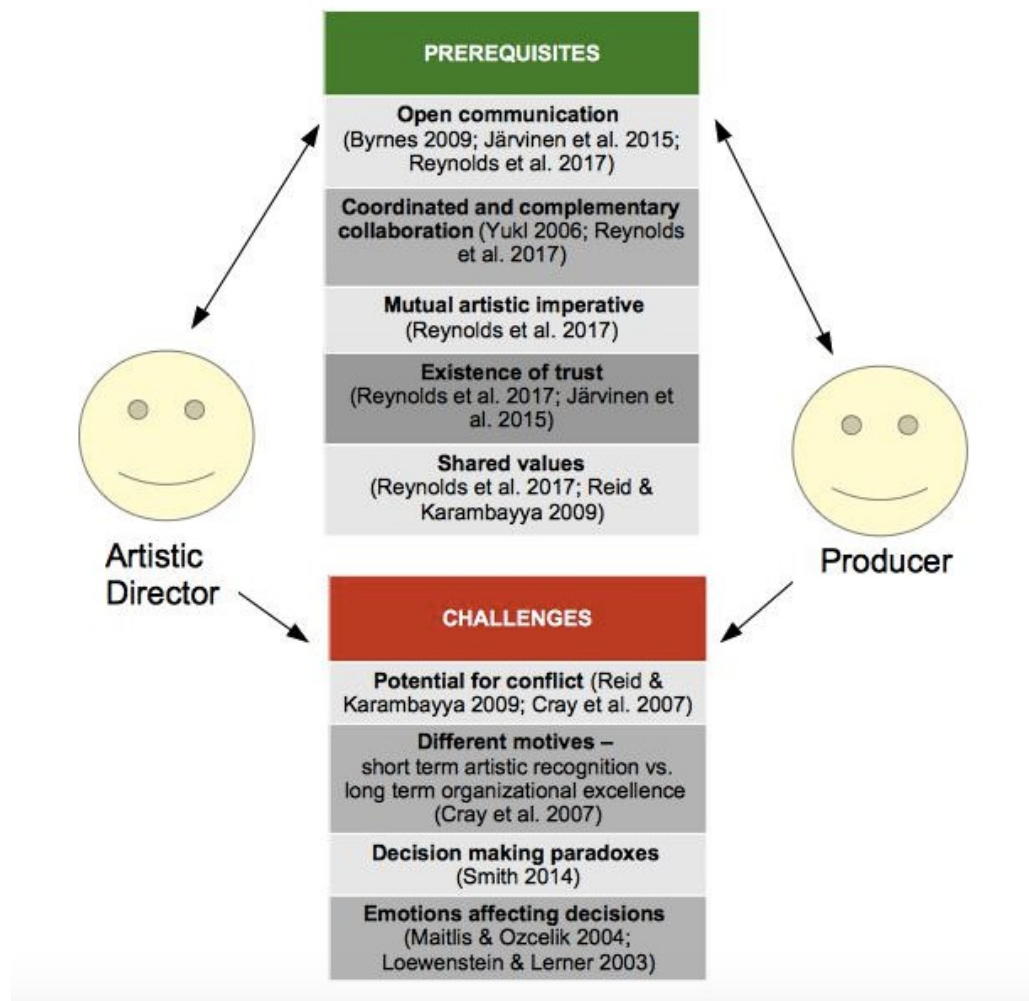
It should be noted, that the role of emotion is not necessarily cognitive in the decision making process. Even affect that is not related to the decisions being made can influence the judgements that people make. Negative emotions from the past decisions are found to have effect on current decision making. (Loewenstein & Lerner 2003). If the leaders of a festival organization should, for some reason, bear a grudge from some past decisions, it can have an impact on current decision making. If one of the leaders has negative affects towards the other leader, the emotion will definitely affect the decision making and be a source for conflict.

The role of emotion in decision making at a festival organization cannot therefore go unnoticed. In the arts, emotion plays such a significant role overall, that it is prone to have an effect also on decision making also.

### **2.3 Shared Strategic Decision Making at Festivals**

According to Cray et al. (2007), leadership and strategic decision making are the two crucial managerial objectives of an arts organization in a changing environment. Based on the findings on shared leadership model and decision making of the non-profit arts organizations, this sub-chapter summarizes the main factors affecting the strategic decision making in the context of festivals, which are managed with the shared leadership model.

In order for the organization to learn to make decisions as a shared process between the leaders, certain elements that affect the decision making process need to be recognized. My illustration below summarizes the main prerequisites and challenge causing factors that affect the decision making in festival organizations that operate with the shared leadership model.



*Figure 1.* Prerequisites and Challenges affecting Shared Leadership Decision Making.

The most important prerequisites enabling effective decision making between the leaders are open communication between the artistic director and producer, coordinated and complementary collaboration between these two parties, and a mutual agreement on the artistic vision, which is the at the core of the festival. The leaders need to share a mutual respect for each other, as well as have a sense of

trust in order to be able to collaborate effectively and act as shared leaders of the festival.

It can be argued, that the biggest challenge causing factor is the nature of the shared leadership, which is prone to cause conflicts among the leaders. The other challenge causing factors are the differing motives between the artistic director's motivation to gain short-term recognition, and the producer's incentive to achieve long-term organizational excellence. Closely related are the strategic paradoxes, which can be almost inevitable in a shared leadership model in a festival setting. Last, but not least, the emotional factors which affect decision making, can cause sporadic challenges.

The summary above does not include the role of the board as a decision making body, because this study only focuses on the shared leadership and decision making between the artistic director and producer. However, it should be noted, that the role of the board is significant, because the board makes the recruitment decisions and hires the leaders. Cray & Inglis (2011) found, that out of the the key players making the strategic decisions in arts organizations, most of the strategic decisions are actually made by the board of directors, followed by the administrative director (producer) and the artistic director.

Because of their important roles as strategic decision makers in the organization, the conflict dynamics between the leaders and the effect that these dynamics have on the decision making and organizational performance should be thoroughly considered when leaders are recruited (Reid & Karambayya 2009). Cray & Ingles (2011) discovered, that the most common type of strategic decisions in arts organizations concern human relations, which further indicates, that the dynamics between the top leaders have an impact on strategic decisions that are made within the organization.

Cray & Inglis (2011) also recognize the challenges related to arts organizations' strategic decision making under shared leadership. They state, that the

overlapping artistic and operational decisions that are made in an arts organizations require the leaders to define guidelines for recognizing the topics that will be considered as strategic within the organization. Furthermore, an arts organization has many different interest groups, such as musicians, sponsors, and government, whose diverse interests can cause challenges to the strategic decision making. (Cray & Inglis 2011).

### **3 RESEARCH METHOD**

In this chapter, I will first describe the methodology used in the research. After that, data collection and analysis are explained in detail, and the last chapter focuses on critique and limitations concerning this study.

#### **3.1 Methodological Approach of the Study**

This is a qualitative research study. I chose to conduct a qualitative study, because the most suitable research method for studying the subject is to conduct interviews with artistic directors to find out, how they see the role of a producer and consider shared leadership in a festival organization. If one is to conduct an interview study with a limited amount of cases and open-ended questions, it is typically the best option to do qualitative research (Silverman 2013, 201).

Furthermore, I chose to collect the data by doing interviews, because it is a recommended method “to find out how a particular group of people perceive things” (Silverman 2013, 201). There are also different kinds of interview techniques, which are suitable to different subjects and research processes. I chose a method known as a semi-structured (also referred to as a semi-standardized) interview. By definition, “in a semi-structured interview, the questions for all interviewees are the same, but no ready answers are offered to the interviewees, so the interviewees can reply with their own choice of words.” (Eskola and Suoranta, 1998, 87). Conducting semi-structured interviews was the most suitable interview method for this study.

According to Hopf (in Flick, von Kardoff and Steinke, 2004, p. 203):

qualitative interviews are particularly closely related to the approaches of interpretative sociology. Because of the possibility of enquiring openly about situational meanings or motives for action, or collecting everyday theories and self-interpretations in a differentiated and open way, and also because



of the possibility of discursive understanding through interpretations, open or semi-standardized interviews provide important opportunities for an empirical application of action- theory ideas in sociology and psychology.

The qualitative research study using a semi-standardized interview method allowed me and the interviewees to discuss the phenomenon quite freely, unlike a survey or a structured interview would have allowed. The study subject involves both sociologic and psychologic aspects when the co-operation between musicians and producers is discussed, so the choice of methodological approach was fit to the subject. Furthermore, such a relatively open and free method is “under suitable circumstances the most flexible and revealing way to interact with people” (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 53).

I conducted the interviews in Finnish, because it is the mother tongue of all the interviewees and myself. The same question pattern was used in all four interviews, but due to the semi-standardized nature of the interviews, the discussions did not follow the question pattern strictly at all times, and occasionally the interviewee had answered a question already before it was asked. However, all of the interview topics were covered with all four interviewees.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The data for this research was collected in four in-depth, semi-structured interviews, three of which were conducted in June, 2016, and one in July, 2016.

The first one of the interviews with Jukka-Pekka Saraste was conducted via Skype, while the other three were conducted face to face with the interviewees. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder, and then transcribed word to word for the purpose of thematic content analysis.

All of the interviewees are professional classical musicians. I chose to interview

these individuals, because their career profiles fulfill the criteria which I set out as a prerequisite for the interviewees: they have performed at Finnish classical music festivals frequently over many years, as well as have experience in artistic directing from at least one festival. I also wanted to study, what kind of a role do the age and experience of the musicians play in their opinions towards and expectations from producers. In addition to these, all four are internationally experienced which gave me a good chance to ask, how the producing at Finnish classical music festivals is different from similar productions abroad.

### 3.2.1 The Interviewees

This sub-chapter provides a short description of the interviewees in order to provide the reader a better insight into their careers and expertise. The chosen interviewees represent artistic directors during different stages of their careers. Hence it can be examined, if there is a difference between how the younger and older artists see the role of a producer. Here they are presented from oldest to youngest.

#### *3.2.1.1 Jukka-Pekka Saraste*

The interview with Jukka-Pekka Saraste was conducted on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in the afternoon via Skype, due to his busy working schedule abroad.

Jukka-Pekka Saraste is one of the most well-known orchestra conductors in Finland. He was born in 1956, and trained as a violinist before becoming an orchestra conductor. He has worked with many different famous orchestras around the world, and he is currently the chief conductor of the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Cologne, Germany.

He is the founder of the Finnish Chamber Orchestra, and the artistic director of the orchestra's annual Tammisaari Festival. ([www.jukkapekkasaraste.com/about](http://www.jukkapekkasaraste.com/about)). He

has also co-founded the Avanti Chamber Orchestra and had a role in establishing the Avanti Summer Sounds festival in 1986 ([www.avantimusic.fi/suvisoitto](http://www.avantimusic.fi/suvisoitto)).

### ***3.2.1.2 Topi Lehtipuu***

Topi Lehtipuu was interviewed in the afternoon of 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016 in his Helsinki Festival office.

Born in 1971, Topi Lehtipuu is an internationally renowned opera tenor, who is also known for his involvement as an artistic director of different music festivals in Finland. He was appointed as the Director of the Helsinki Festival in October, 2015. Before this position, he was an artistic director of the Turku Music Festival from 2010 to 2015, and prior to that, an artistic director of Joroinen Music Days chamber music festival. ([www.topilehtipuu.com](http://www.topilehtipuu.com)). It should be noted, that in his current role as the Director of Helsinki Festival, he is both the artistic director and managing director of the organization. At his previous festivals in Turku and Joroinen, he has been the artistic director sharing the top leadership role.

### ***3.2.1.3 Dalia Stasevska***

The interview with Dalia Stasevska took place in a small coffee house in downtown Helsinki on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in the afternoon.

Dalia Stasevska was born in 1984. She has studied violin and viola at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, and orchestra conducting under Jorma Panula's guidance in Royal Swedish Academy of Music and under Leif Segerstam's guidance at Sibelius Academy. Nowadays she is an internationally renowned orchestra conductor, and also a visiting conductor at the Finnish National Opera. Between the years 2011-2015 she was the artistic director of the Helsinki "Kamarikesä" chamber music festival. ([www.oopperabaletti.fi](http://www.oopperabaletti.fi)).

#### **3.2.1.4 Linda Suolahti**

The interview with Linda Suolahti was done on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, 2016 at the café of Helsinki Music Center.

Linda Suolahti (born 1990) is a violinist currently employed by the Lapland Chamber Orchestra. She has studied at Sibelius Academy with Jaakko Ilves and Minna Pensola as her principal teachers. She has also held a scholarship in the Royal College of Music in London during the fall of 2014 and 2015. She has co-created a chamber music festival called Kokonainen in Hämeenlinna, Finland, and is currently the artistic director who also manages much of the productional responsibilities of that festival. ([www.kokonainenfestival.fi/linda](http://www.kokonainenfestival.fi/linda)).

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis as the analysis method. Thematic content analysis is a method used to encode qualitative data. The data is coded under different themes and patterns found in the data that best describe that particular phenomenon. (Boyatzis 1998, vi-vii).

After all of the interviews were completed, I listened to them several times and then transcribed them verbatim. After the interviews were transcribed, I selected the focus themes from the interviews based on the original research questions described in chapter 1.3, and thematized the answers according to Hirsjärvi and Hurme's suggested method, by which “in the analysis phase, one will study such features from the data that are common to multiple interviewees” (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2001, 173).

Hirsjärvi, Remes, and Sajavaara (1997, 200-202) discuss some general limitations affecting studies conducted by interviewing people. These are applicable to this study as well, and I have tried to take those limitations into account when analyzing the data.

The interviewees are bound to give answers that are “socially acceptable” because they want to present themselves in a good light. The negative aspects may not be covered in depth in the interview, if the interviewee does not feel comfortable discussing them. People are bound to interpret their own actions more positively than other people's actions, and give such answers that they feel the interviewee wants to hear. Therefore, the interview data is situation and context related, and this fact has to be taken into consideration when the data is analyzed. (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997, 201-202).

### **3.4 Critical Reflections on the Research Process**

The reason for choosing a semi-standardized interview was to be able to follow a ready pattern of questions, which could be answered quite freely by the interviewees. I believed that this is the most suitable method for researching this topic, because when people talk about such matters that are close to their profession and thus they have much to say about the topic, the flow of discussion cannot be very strictly controlled by the interviewer.

However, when reflecting upon it critically, the main limitation regarding this study is that I have been able to analyze the co-operation and collaboration between producers and artistic directors only from the artistic director's point of view. Had I chosen to do a pair interview involving both a producer and the artistic director of the same festival, the answers could have been more comprehensive regarding the different aspects of co-operation and the festival as a whole. On the other hand, that might have also posed some limitations to the validity of the data, because the parties might not have felt comfortable to talk freely about the other side in their presence.

The interviews were conducted according to the artists schedules and one was also conducted via Skype. While this was not a major issue, I am tempted to believe that while the circumstances in which the interviews were done may not necessarily have affected the answers per se, they may have had an effect on the

overall feeling during the interview. For example, one interview was done a few hours before the interviewee had a concert, and the upcoming concert was probably already in the artist's mind at least on some level. Another one was conducted in a coffee shop, where there is always some background noise and people coming and going, which may draw some attention away from the interview itself. I could have standardized the circumstances by having done all of the interviews in the same atmosphere, but in that case, I could not have had all of the interviewees participate in the study due to their busy schedules.

A third, and perhaps the most irrelevant critique has to do with myself as an interviewer. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001) state that “everyday life does probably not teach us all necessary skills needed in an interview. They are learned by attending interviewer education and by doing interviews.” (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 68). I have not done any similar interviews in the past, and therefore consider myself an inexperienced interviewer. Furthermore, I tend to be a little reserved in social situations, unless I know the other side well.

Interview conversations are generally recognized as potential sources of bias, error, misunderstanding or misdirection, and proper and clear questioning is desired from the interviewer to get all the desired information (Holstein & Gubrium in Silverman 1997, 113). Due to a degree of nervousness, I made few unclear expressions that I had to further explain to some of the interviewees. However, all of the questions were answered and I was able to obtain all of the data that I was looking for.

Finally, having worked in the classical music field myself as a producer and general manager of classical music festivals, I am not entirely unbiased regarding some of the issues described in the next chapter. Due to my background, I had some hypotheses on what the answers will be like, even though I did not bring these hypotheses to anyone's attention before or during the interviews. However, all of the interviewees did know that I have a background in the field. I have also worked with some of them previously, although not as a producer at those festivals where they are or have been artistic directors. While I am tempted to think that my

producing background did not affect their answers, it cannot be completely ruled out, either.

## **4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

This chapter presents the analysis and its results based on the four interviews. The producer's role from the artistic director's perspective is described in the first sub-chapter. The second sub-chapter discusses the qualities and traits of a producer, and the third sub-chapter deals with the issues of collaboration between the artistic director and the producer.

### **4.1 Producer's Role from the Artistic Director's Perspective**

The interviews began by defining the role of the producer in a festival context. In order to simplify the concepts, the term “producer” included all of the people in the festival setting, who are involved in the production process, except for the artistic directors. This was also made clear to the interviewees.

#### **4.1.1 The Enabler**

A producer is primarily an enabler, who makes the artistic ideas possible. The absolutely best answer from a producer after presenting an artistic idea is: “This sounds interesting, I will find out within which limits this is possible.” (Topi Lehtipuu)

This quote is a great general description of the producer's role in the planning phase of the production. In the planning phase, the artistic director has a vision of the festival program, and the goal is to make that vision a reality within the operational limitations of that festival. This is the phase of the festival, where most of the strategic decisions are made. Such decisions concern, for example, the hiring of musicians and other personnel, the image of the festival, funding, the concert programs, and concert locations (Cray & Inglis 2011).



This is the phase in which the producer's role as a gatekeeper for artistic ideas is vital. This role was described as “really significant” and “even more important than the artistic director's role” (Dalia Stasevska) and “perhaps the most important in that phase” (Linda Suolahti). The producer's budgeting capabilities and the ability to set limits to artistic directors were seen as essential. “A producer must be the person who can say that 'we have here this and this type of a material, spatial or financial limitation.’” (Topi Lehtipuu).

In the very beginning of the festival planning process, the producer has a key role in defining the boundaries within which the execution of the festival is possible. These boundaries are mainly dictated by the festival organization's financial limitations and its other material or spatial limitations, as well as its role within the local community. The producer's role in this phase was seen as the most demanding within the organization, as there is a multitude of different tasks that need to be addressed to create the foundation, grounds, and functionality of the festival. Especially, if the festival's ability to compensate for the artist's services with a proper salary is limited, the operational functionality of the festival is crucial to the artists' satisfaction (Linda Suolahti).

As suggested also by many arts management scholars, the importance of producer's role is fundamental in the financial planning and budgeting process to guarantee the organization's sustainability (Cray et al 2007; Reid & Karambayya 2009). Well prepared financial plans are the starting point for building a successful festival. The producer has the best knowledge of the financial boundaries and should also have the ability to evaluate artistic proposals from the financial point of view.

All of the interviewees acknowledged the importance of the producer as the financial coordinator of the festival. As the producer is typically the person in charge of the overall financial planning and budgeting in the organization, the responsibility of financial planning falls usually on the producer, who has to be able to negotiate the program of the festival accordingly with the artistic director. This, according to Reid & Karambayya (2009) is also one of the potential source

for conflicts.

At a festival, it is the producer who mainly analyzes that festival's ability to succeed in that location and tries to come up with the funding plus income. And then when one considers the budget with regards to what kind of artists can be afforded or signed, it is the producer who takes care of that, and assumes responsibility for that the festival works. (Jukka-Pekka Saraste)

Particularly at the smaller, rural festivals, a producer often has the best knowledge of the local audience and their taste of music, as well as familiarity of the venues. Such information is vital for the overall success, since the artistic directors may not be as familiar with the local communities and their taste of music, as are the producers, especially if the artistic directors are directing the festival for the first time. This is also linked to the economic survival of the festival, because the program has to cater for the local taste of music in order to ensure sufficient ticket sales leading to financial success.

When the budget and other boundaries and limitations for the festival have been set, the roles between the producer and the artistic director begin to shape up. While the artistic director's focus is on building the program and finding the right players to perform it, the producer should focus on building awareness of the festival. In practice, mainly on marketing and communication. However, it was recognized that already in the planning phases of festivals, the producer usually begins to take care of a multitude of different kinds of necessary tasks, many of which are very specific and related to the producer's professional know how. The artistic director may not even know about the existence of some of such tasks.

The division of tasks between the producer and the artistic director is dependent on the size of the festival as well as the practices assumed in the festival's past. Smaller festivals tend to have more of the "hands on" kind of attitude, where everyone participates in many different tasks, while the bigger and established festivals can divide their resources in a more organized manner (Topi Lehtipuu).

Regardless of how the festival organization's tasks are divided, it is vital that the producer and artistic director work together and have a mutual understanding of how the artistic quality as well as financial success are being achieved. This finding is supported by many of the previous studies (Yukl 2006, 449; Reid & Karambayya 2009; Järvinen et al. 2015; Reynolds et al. 2017).

#### 4.1.2 The One Who Knows All

While budgeting and the ability to recognize financial limitations were seen as the most important qualifications that a producer should possess in the beginning of the planning phase of the festival, the importance of having other business skills grew once the initial planning phase was over, and the festival was nearing. One of the interviewees described the producer's role as a manager of “100 different things” (Dalia Stasevska), and another as the “multi-tasker, who knows how to do everything” and stressed the importance of producer's ability to manage the overall process and the risks involved (Topi Lehtipuu).

The overall know-how of producers was a topic of discussion in all of the interviews, and the productional tasks described were vast. The size and financial situation of the festival have a definitive role in the expectations that the artists have for the productions, but the importance of knowledge of accomplishing a wide variety of different tasks is common to all festivals. Within a smaller festival, the requirement of expertise from numerous different lines of business falls on fewer people, which further emphasizes the fact that producers need to be proficient in managing a multitude of different kinds of tasks. Cray et al. (2007) noted, that traditionally managers of non-profit arts organizations have been viewed as less capable than their counterparts in for-profit companies. However, based on the interviews of this study, producers are highly capable of managing the multitude of tasks of a festival producer.

The marketing skills of producers per se were stressed by some, but not all of the interviewees (Topi Lehtipuu, Linda Suolahti). On the other hand, organizational

success in the marketing, media and communication fields was seen as an important factor for the festival, but it was not necessarily perceived as the producer's task only. After all, artistic directors of festivals often act as the figureheads of festivals in media, in marketing materials, and in other means of external communication, so the explanation for this may be that marketing communication is seen as the responsibility of not only the producer, but also the artistic director or the whole organization.

The ability to manage a multitude of different things also requires the producer to be very systematic, be able to anticipate the unexpected, and plan well ahead in terms of scheduling and budgeting. The overall flow of things when the festival is nearing and the general control of everything that is going on are essential to accomplish everything on time before the festival begins. This is linked to the functionality of the festival both externally to the audience and internally to the musicians, as well as other personnel working at the festival, such as volunteers, catering, and technical crew. The continuous and uninterrupted communication between the producer and artistic director is critical for the functionality of the whole organization (Järvinen et al. 2015).

#### 4.1.3 The Fire fighter

When the festival is very close to start or has already begun, Topi Lehtipuu compared the producer's role with that of a firefighter in this phase. A producer has to be aware of almost everything that is going on at the festival. Even if all of the planning and execution in the earlier stages would be performed flawlessly, there is still a chance that small “fires” light up here and there.

The firefighter metaphor is a good illustration of the challenges that a producer faces when a festival is ongoing. There are many different stakeholders, such as musicians, audiences, media, sponsors, and volunteers involved in creating the festival's success, and the producers have to be able to balance their time and efforts between all of these people. The likelihood that something unexpected

happens is elevated, and in case it happens, the situation requires quick problem-solving and good communication skills from the producer.

While external communication to the audience, media, and other external stakeholders is important to the festival's image, some of the interviewees mentioned situations, in which poor internal communication has affected the musicians' comfortability at the festival. Sometimes poor internal communication from the producer's side has left the musicians feeling uncomfortable because they have not known what is expected from them, or they have not felt welcome to perform at the festival, simply due to lack of communication between the musicians and festival leaders (Linda Suolahti). Järvinen et al. (2015) found very similar evidence from the theater field: under the shared leadership model, theater employees do not always know, which leader to approach with questions, and this was seen as a challenge also by the leaders themselves (Järvinen et al. 2015).

Sharing information with the artists and being available to respond to their needs were seen as important parts of the internal work that a producer performs during the festival. This has significant repercussions to the artist satisfaction, which is also an important measurement of a successful festival (Jukka-Pekka Saraste) and may have long term effects (Linda Suolahti).

One of the interviewees discussed the producer's role also from a very practical point of view, when asked what a musician needs a producer at a festival. Based on this perspective, the producer also needs to act as a kind of a care taker of the musician's practical issues, such as making sure that they do not lose their sheet music (Linda Suolahti).

#### 4.1.4 The Family Person

Especially in the smaller festivals, the musicians may expect a degree of family-like

or relaxed atmosphere from their colleagues and from the organization (Jukka-Pekka Saraste). Dalia Stasevska described this dimension of the producer's role as follows:

[...] the creation of team spirit and a family. That is in principle and in the end what I have noticed also when performing at festivals, that it is easier to rely on the producer than the artistic [director]. So it is very important that there is some kind of paternal or maternal [figure]... I am going to say that it is very important. There has to be a person, who is easy to rely on and who understands problems and can quickly solve anything. (Dalia Stasevska)

The ability to create a cozy atmosphere around the festival for the artists was also mentioned by other interviewees. Especially the smaller festivals are often struggling to compensate the artists with generous salaries, so the overall mood of the festival can be a balancing factor for the smaller pay check. Linda Suolahti pointed out, that the young musicians can occasionally face situations, in which they are not paid at all for playing at festivals. If, in addition to the lack of salary, they have to “sleep in a barn” and are not even served food and other such necessities, it is guaranteed that at least she would not go back to that particular festival next year (Linda Suolahti).

Jukka-Pekka Saraste mentioned the dedicated network of volunteers and their ability to meet the needs of artists quickly as a pleasant and cohesive detail at many Finnish festivals. He also pointed out that rural festivals often arrange little nice surprises, like sauna evenings or picnics to the artists, thereby affecting positively to the overall ambience at the festival. (Jukka-Pekka Saraste).

The expectations are different, if the festival is larger and takes place in an urban setting. Topi Lehtipuu, who has been an artistic director of both a small rural festival in Joroinen as well as two large urban festivals in Turku and Helsinki, mentioned that the anticipated degree of functionality of the organization

increases when it is arranged in a city with a larger budget, and therefore the whole organization has to be prepared also on a different level. “Our audience count [at Helsinki Festival] is completely different, there is no village festival sense to it and it is an urban event, at which we have to take into account an extensive amount of things” (Topi Lehtipuu).

Hence, in order to meet the expectations of both artists and audiences, a producer should be able to adapt his or her role to the prevailing circumstances of the festival. In general, the artists are usually happy with a relaxed, cozy and homelike atmosphere at smaller rural festivals. They therefore tolerate a less meticulous manner of producing at those festivals, while when performing at the larger urban festivals, they expect a more professional approach to the productions.

#### 4.1.5 Producer as an Artist

One of the key issues regarding the producer's role from the artistic director's point of view dealt with how much involvement is hoped for and expected from the producers when artistic decisions are at hand. The artistic decisions are among the most significant strategic decisions of the organization (Cray & Ingles 2011). They have a defining role in the outcome of the festival, but are also a potential source for conflict (Reid & Karambayya 2009). However, conflicts related to artistic decisions can be diminished, if the producer shares the artistic directors passion for the artistic content (Reynolds et al. 2017). Therefore, it could be argued, that the artistic content has a significant role for not only the overall success of the festival, but also to the relationship between the artistic director and the producer.

All of the interviewees stated, that a good producer should have the ability to take a stand on artistic matters, and even challenge the artistic director's proposals every now and then. This is especially necessary if the artistic director's idea is unfit to the festival's overall concept and the festival does not have resources to actualize the idea. It was pointed out, that since the producer assumes a risk of overall success of the festival, it should also be the producer's responsibility to eliminate

ideas that are not going to interest the audience at that particular festival (Jukka-Pekka Saraste). Of course, this also means that the producer is required to both know the audience profile and their music taste, as well as have enough general knowledge about the music itself to know what kind of repertoire attracts the audience.

At best, the producer has qualifications to act as an opponent. In some way, if you think that an artistic director coming from the outside tries to push an agenda that the producer feels is unfit to the situation, then, in my opinion, you have to have guts to accomplish compromises and be able to negotiate about the contents in that case, or the style. (Jukka-Pekka Saraste).

While all of the interviewees unanimously agreed that it is a good quality for a competent producer to act as a “sparring partner” to the artistic director in a cooperative manner, they also pointed out that not all of the producers are capable of acting in such a role. The necessity of a classical music education or background will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.2.1, but it is, of course, obvious that in order to be able to bounce ideas back and forth and negotiate them with the artistic director, a producer has to be familiar with the context.

[The producer's ability to address artistic decisions] depends so much. If a producer has no competence and wants to influence, it does not go well, but if there is competence and the chemistry [between the producer and artistic director] works, then it is  $2+2=1$ , so that is an ideal situation. (Topi Lehtipuu).

The chemistry between the artistic director and producer most certainly affects the producer's role in artistic decision making. A common understanding of the constraints and opportunities within the festival is a requirement of fruitful cooperation. “I have noticed that the better the people around you are, the better the festival becomes. I do not believe in a one director model at all. I have operated in



such a way that the producer is an advisor and the alpha and omega of everything” (Dalia Stasevska).

## **4.2 Characteristics of a Producer**

The second main theme of the study was to find out, what kind of a background should a classical music festival producer come from, what kind of characteristics do the artistic directors value from a good producer, what are the unfavorable qualities, and what are the main differences between productions in Finland compared to abroad based on the interviewees' experiences.

### **4.2.1 Producer's Background**

As acknowledged in chapter 4.1.5, the artistic directors value the producer's ability to take a stand and challenge the artistic ideas. The prerequisite for being able to provide opinions is that the producer has some general knowledge of artistic planning and understanding of the context of classical music.

The answers and opinions were twofold when I asked the interviewees whether a producer has to have a background in classical music. On one hand, a strong musical background was called for from those producers, who are involved in the artistic planning process (Jukka-Pekka Saraste). On the other hand, some interviewees did not consider the musical training of a festival producer as an absolute necessity, albeit they, too, mentioned that it is very beneficial to have such background. This would imply that a producer without music background should simply not participate in the artistic planning process due to lack of knowledge and experience on the subject. However, as one of the key attributes of successful and collaborative shared leadership is shared vision between the leaders (Reynolds et al. 2017), it can be very challenging to find such vision if the producer is inexperienced in classical music.

Reynolds et al. (2017) suggest, that producers are passionate about the arts that they produce, and hence commit strongly to the co-operation between them and the artistic director. However, in the organizations that they studied, 61 % of the arts managers had an artistic background and training. While they also questioned the validity of this finding and suggested that it would need more research, my interview data implies, that producers share the passion and provide opinions for the music they produce.

When discussing backgrounds in music, one has to bare in mind, that also an amateur musician could very well be experienced enough to have an opinion regarding artistic decisions. In Finland, many people study music when they are young and the music schools provide a comprehensive education in music, which provides an suitable background to be able to address some artistic issues as well. Therefore, none of the interviewees expected producers to be professionally educated musicians in order for them to be able to take part in the artistic decision making.

There are also people, who love music and they can be, for example, theater academics or something else. Of course, for sure one has to have a strong knowledge of arts, but what it concretely is, does not maybe play a role, but, of course, the main thing is that one loves the thing one sells. And has pretty much the knowledge of the field. But in my opinion one can learn everything as well. (Dalia Stasevska)

All in all, having a classical music background and contextual understanding of the arts and especially music field were determined as very advantageous properties, but not as absolute requirements from a successful classical music festival producer.

#### 4.2.2 Qualities of a Successful Producer

One of the key objectives of this study was to research, what kind of qualities and personal traits are considered favorable from a festival producer. Such as in every other industry and line of business, also festival producing accents some qualities and values over others. It is important to know what those qualities and values are in order to build flourishing relationships between artistic directors and musicians, because shared values is one of the prerequisites for successful shared leadership (Reynolds et al. 2017; Reid & Karambayya 2009).

Almost all of the qualities that the interviewees described dealt with the cooperation between the producers and musicians. Based on the answers, a competent producer should have a good sense of humor, be a positive, friendly, cooperative and flexible person who gets along with different kinds of people. In other words, an easy-going person, who is not confrontational or get irritated when things do not go as planned. This reflects back to the results described in chapter 4.1.3, where the role of producer during the festival was linked to a firefighter. “To make a festival is to hassle and tune” (Topi Lehtipuu) and in order to be able to fight the “fires”, one has to maintain a calm and positive approach to disorder.

When Reynolds et al. (2017) studied the individual attributes of leaders in the arts field, they found it to be common that it is the producer who is responsible for adapting his or her behavior and working style to complement and suit to the artistic director's behavior. The artistic content is in the heart of the arts organization, and therefore the practices of producers have to be adapted to suit to those, who make the arts possible, i. e. the artistic director. (Reynolds et al. 2017). The qualities described here support the notion, that producers should be adaptive to the artistic director's goals and visions.

When the interviewees described the non-personal traits, the ability to assess situations in a swift manner, and good problem-solving skills were mentioned several times. A systematic approach to challenges was also mentioned, as well as

motivation and “thirst” for good results. In a hectic festival environment with varying numerous tasks, these capabilities are certainly necessary. In addition, if the producer has a supervisory role, the ability to foresee and manage the others was seen as essential.

#### 4.2.3 Qualities of an Unsuccessful Producer

As a counterpart to the positive qualities, also several negative qualities that are not favorable from a producer were mentioned. An overall statement regarding producing was that if the producer has poor skills and is not collaborative, the festival as a whole suffers from such behavior, because the musicians are not satisfied nor feel comfortable, and some of the necessary managerial tasks are not completed due to the producer's lack of skills and the ability to co-operate with the artistic director and other members of the festival organization.

The most frequently mentioned negative quality affecting the productions was the lack of communication skills. This affects not only the interaction between the producer and musicians but also the overall success of the festival, namely marketing, fundraising, and the ability to talk to bureaucrats (Topi Lehtipuu). The lack of communication skills has also led to situations, in which it has been uncertain for musicians, who is the producer responsible for a certain element at the festival and who the musicians should address with problems. Naturally, this affects the overall atmosphere at the festival and leads to confusion amongst the musicians. Communication problems are recognized as a clear challenge of shared leadership also in other studies (Järvinen et al. 2015).

Another point regarding this issue was that producers should not try to achieve too many things on their own. Creating a festival is considered team effort, in which the artistic directors, producers, and other personnel and stakeholders work together to accomplish the best results. Thus, distancing oneself from this team by working on their own will lead to negative outcomes, complicate decision making and increase the communication challenges.

A third factor affecting the negative visions of producers was the lack of enthusiasm for their job. The interviewees described situations in which a producer has been dispassionate and uninterested in the overall outcome, which was visible as unprofessional behavior towards the musicians. Also cases, in which the producer has behaved unfairly and spoken ill about other musicians were mentioned. Negative past experiences have been found to have an emotional effect on current decision making (Maitlis & Ozcelick 2004; Loewenstein & Lerner 2003), and possible destructive conflicts between the leaders have been found to disseminate and bring negative effects into the whole organization (Reid & Karambayya 2009). All in all, there can be many underlying reasons for such behavior and lack of enthusiasm from the producer's side, and they need not be results of past negative experiences or conflicts. Whatever the reasons are, the failures to behave in a collaborative manner were seen as factors which diminish the general atmosphere and hence affect the overall success of the festival. This finding is widely supported by the theory of shared leadership.

#### 4.2.4 Main Differences between Finnish and Foreign Producing

Because all of the interviewees were internationally experienced, one of my goals was to find out, what kind of differences exist between productions in Finland and abroad. Of course, a comprehensive study about this subject would require a thesis on its own, but in this context I was interested in a few general distinctive factors.

Overall, the level of festival productions in Finland is satisfactory, and there is no reason to be worried about the quality of festivals as a whole. However, there are also differences between individual festivals both in Finland and abroad, which makes it difficult to assess the level of production overall. Topi Lehtipuu mentioned, that the factors which contribute a good producer are universally the same, so the country in which they operate does not really matter. Good and bad examples are found all over the world. However, two of the four interviewees mentioned that they had at some point of their careers been particularly confused when taking part in an Italian production.

It was seen as an asset that producers are generally adaptive to changing circumstances in Finland, and they do understand what is required from the organization to build a successful festival. The active volunteers who work at almost every festival in Finland were seen as a remarkable asset to Finnish festivals: “The strength of Finnish festivals is in particular, that someone can organize the volunteer work in a way that it... It becomes like a pleasant experience to everyone” (Jukka-Pekka Saraste). Such networks of volunteers are also vital for many festivals' financial contingency, because they cannot afford to employ large numbers of employees to manage all of the practical arrangements at concert venues, etc.

On the other hand, Dalia Stasevska pointed out, that “[abroad] producers are more active overall in cultural scene so that they are really visible and sovereign, and they are like agents showing up all the time everywhere, so that it is like a way of living” (Dalia Stasevska). In that sense, it can be argued that Finnish producers concentrate more on their own festivals, while abroad networking and building contacts is valued more. However, Stasevska added that a change towards building networks and co-operating between festivals is also becoming more and more active in Finland, especially amongst the younger generation of producers.

### **4.3 Collaboration Between Artists and Producers**

The third research subject was to study the collaboration and mutual understanding between artistic directors and producers in the festival field. Since the coordinated and complementary collaboration is one of the main prerequisites of successful shared leadership decision making (see chapter 2.3), it is essential that both parties share a consensus about the common goals of the festival and about the means how to achieve them. This is why I wanted to research how well the shared leadership model works in practice at festivals.

#### 4.3.1 Mutual Understanding Between Artistic Directors and Producers

A mutual understanding on the between the artistic director and producer has to exist as a prerequisite for the shared leadership model to work in practice. The ability to understand organizational priorities and the ability to shift focus on those instead of focusing solely on the artistic or managerial aspects is demanded from both leaders (Reid & Karambayya 2009).

One definitely always has to measure [the ideas] for budget reasons, and discuss and let go, and make such decisions that work regarding the budget. And such situations are faced all the time, so the production side should not be afraid of claiming responsibility for the profitability, of maintaining the budget, and also of the ability to make artistic... I am not going to say compromises, but some things that are inevitable to be made fit for the situation. (Jukka-Pekka Saraste).

This quote provides a good description of the process of achieving a common understanding between the artistic decisions and financial considerations. In a well-functioning relationship between the artistic director and producer, the ideas can be fine fine tuned by making compromises without drifting into conflicts. It is very much a view that is based on a mutual understanding, yet in a way that both parties are still eventually responsible for their own divisions and tasks within the festival organization. This view is very much in line with the overall benefits of using the shared leadership model.

Also other kinds of views emerged from the interviews. Although generally the mutual understanding between musicians and producers is on a satisfactory level and collaboration exists, there were still some negative examples given to this question. Once again, poor communication skills and the lack of availability from the producer's side were mentioned. "I also have bad experiences from producers, who have not been available at all, so you might catch a glimpse of them at a concert, but they are unreachable, and all that." (Dalia Stasevska). "[The producer]

has to be [...] available and just like that one does not disappear somewhere all of a sudden.” (Linda Suolahti).

Another good view on shared leadership and collaboration was that it is indeed a “learning experience for both sides” (Topi Lehtipuu). Successful shared leadership requires the leaders to learn to trust each other, share a vision, determine common goals for the organization, and develop ways to communicate effectively with each other during their time together; a process, which can take years until it works efficiently (Järvinen et al. 2015).

The answers to the collaboration questions were not entirely unanimous. Linda Suolahti, who is both a musician and has done also production-related work especially at Kokonainen Festival, was of the opinion that musicians do not understand how difficult producing can be.

My guess is that at least they [the musicians] don't often understand that the producers are very alone, and that they really are just a one person who has to take care of an enormous amount of tasks. And you do not really understand how many chores have to be taken care of, until you do producing yourself. (Linda Suolahti).

Topi Lehtipuu provided a different point of view:

It depends where you are, what is the context to which... If you are in Joroinen or in Vienna Musikverein, the answer is different. In a professional organization, the musicians understand well and do appreciate good producers. (Topi Lehtipuu).

Since festival producing is filled with small details, deadlines, and multitasking, it is quite understandable that a musician, who is a professional at performing, does not necessarily realize how many small details have to be taken care of until the festival is up and running. While in larger and more professional organizations the



level of mutual understanding is higher (Topi Lehtipuu), most of the festivals in Finland are smaller organizations with limited productional resources. This also provides one explanation to why the producers are not always visible to the musicians during the festival; a small festival organization cannot simply afford to hire enough producers to manage all the office work and concert preparations, and be present at rehearsals at the same time.

Therefore, it is also advisable for festivals to make careful considerations regarding the amount of artists versus producers at a particular festival because 1) more artists mean higher salary expenses, which decreases the amount of salary available to hire producers, and 2) the more artists there are performing at a particular festival, the higher the workload of the producers will be during the festival. If the ratio of artists versus producers is very high, it will most likely cause problems, because the producers are too busy to cope with all of the necessary duties and tasks.

#### 4.3.2 Artistic Expectations at Different Points of The Career

One of the secondary research questions of this study concerns how the artist's age and experience have affected the way that the artist sees the producer's role and the qualities of a successful producer. Therefore, I had selected interviewees from different age groups.

All of the interviewees agreed, that the more experienced they have become, the more they have learned and grown to understand the producers's work better. The importance of the producer's qualities described in chapters 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 has grown, as the artistic directors have learned what kind of skills and qualities are favorable and how the producer's personal traits and values affect producing and therefore the shared leadership. Especially the more experienced of the interviewees mentioned, that they have become more aware of what they can expect from the producer within reasonable limits, how much and to what extent should they be involved in productional tasks, and how the dynamics between the

artistic directors and producers function smoothly.

The most experienced artistic directors (Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Topi Lehtipuu) also pointed out, that producers are nowadays more educated and professional in every way compared to the early days of their careers, a notion supported also by Reynolds et al. (2017). Thus the level of producing also at smaller festivals is nowadays higher than what it used to be.

Jukka-Pekka Saraste mentioned, that from an artistic perspective the very experienced musicians who have been performing for decades, can be somewhat reluctant to commit to the “artistically safe” productions, which do not provide the artists' with artistically ambitious repertoire:

One could say, as trivial example, that as a conductor you just do not bother to play Sibelius' second symphony at every festival, but you want to expand [the repertoire]. And on the other hand, the producer might have a vision, that it is just that second symphony that the audience wants. And that... These things are such, that when you have a long career, you begin to want to have a little something else than exactly what is expected. So that a compromise, or the idea of a safe production, it just sometimes gets on your nerves because they play it safe too much. (Jukka-Pekka Saraste).

This quote and point of view links back to the producer's artistic capabilities and background described in chapters 4.1.5 and 4.2.1. A successful co-operation requires also understanding for this issue, and most likely a rewarding collaboration between the artistic director and producer leads to a well structured festival program, which contains both some crowd pleasing pieces as well as some less frequently played music in order to both guarantee financial success and achieve the artistic ambition. If the producer is only focused on having concerts which are guaranteed to bring money to the organization and the artistic director is reluctant to perform such repertoire, conflicts are inevitable.

### 4.3.3 Conditions for Professionalism

The aim of festivals is to be as professional as possible, not only externally, but also internally. In practice, it means that the artists who play at the festival are satisfied with all of the arrangements from the festival's side. People have to be able to trust the producers and the producers have to treat the musicians with respect and provide an equal treatment for everyone. Once again, the producer's social and communication skills are at the epicenter of success. A strong cultural background, although not a necessity, helps to achieve a higher degree of professionalism, because it increases collaboration as well as allows the producer and artists to communicate in the same professional jargon.

When asked if festival production in Finland is professional enough from the artistic director's point of view, the answers were twofold: in general the interviewees agreed that it is, but there are significant differences in the degree of professionalism between individual festivals. One of the key reasons is the lack of resources, specifically money, which is namely affecting marketing and general visibility of some festivals.

It was also mentioned, that individual musicians might have somewhat different expectations from some festivals than others, so that it is difficult to define a satisfactory degree of professionalism. Dalia Stasevska, for example, mentioned that she as a musician is very adaptive to different kinds of situations and does not always expect a high degree of professionalism particularly from the smaller festivals, but there are always some issues which could be better addressed to achieve a more satisfactory end result.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has aimed to find answers to the following main research question:

How does the artistic director collaborate with and share the leadership role with a festival producer in a classical music festival?

And the secondary research questions, which are:

What kind of qualities and actions do artistic directors of festivals expect from producers?

To what extent do producers understand artists' visions and vice versa, and do the possible contradicting visions lead to conflicts?

What kind of a role does the artists' age and experience play in the above?

The results gained from this study support the conclusion, that overall the classical music festival management from the artistic director's point of view in Finland is satisfactory and the artistic directors are happy to collaborate with producers, who are mostly professional and co-operative. Producers and artistic directors work together as shared leaders towards common goals to achieve the best possible outcome from their festivals. There are exceptions to this, but more than being caused by controversies and conflicts between people, as some studies suggest (Reid & Karambayya 2009; Cray et al. 2007), they dysfunction is mostly caused by financial or other resource limitations that affect the festival organizations as a whole.

Based on the results, many of the challenges could be avoided if the organization had more employees to share the work load, which is often excessive for the few people to manage especially during the festival. Festivals usually hire the maximum amount of employees possible with the limited amount of money they have available. Unless there will be a drastic change in the way that arts is funded or a remarkable increase from the government or grant donating organizations to

the funding of arts, this limitation is not going to disappear. Moreover, the average classical music festival audiences are growing older, and younger audiences are difficult to reach, which will likely increase the financial problems for festivals in the future.

The personal qualities of producers were expected related to the collaborative nature of shared leadership. The producer has to be able to manage the operational side of the festival with a professional manner, and the bigger the festival is, the more professional approach is expected. The qualities that were valued are flexibility in the hectic festival environment, adaptive attitude to changing circumstances, problem-solving skills and an overall positive attitude. These are qualities that make the collaboration easy from the artistic director's point of view.

## **5.1 Shared Leadership in Practice**

The concept of shared leadership was defined and described in chapter 2.1. This concept affects most of the classical music festivals' decision making processes in Finland, as usually the producer and artistic director manage and lead the festival together. Therefore, a collaborative relationship and mutual understanding between the artistic director and producer is a key asset for the festival organization's success.

In practice, the more the producers understand the reasoning behind the artistic directors' decisions, the better the artistic outcome will likely be, because the productional actions support the artistic decisions and vice versa. The more the artistic directors take into account the producer's suggestions and knowledge of local audience taste, understand the multitude of productional challenges, and realize especially the constraints that limit the productions, the better the financial outcome of the festival is going to be.

For these reasons, a festival cannot survive in the long run if there is not a common understanding between the artistic director and producer. Hence, to make the

shared leadership model work in practice, an active and open communication about all of the decisions which will significantly affect the outcome of the festival is required, as suggested by Järvinen et al. (2015). Based on the results of this study, the understanding between artistic directors and producers could be enhanced by communicating more efficiently. The age and experience has significant consequences to the understanding that artistic directors have for producing. The more experienced the artistic director is, the more he or she knows about producing understands operational challenges of festivals.

Much of the theory and criticism of shared leadership focuses on the conflicts and clashes involved in the model. Cray et al. (2007) suggest, that the artistic director's strong influence and emphasis on artistic vision has a potential to conflict forcefully with the managerial functions of the organization. Reid & Karambayya (2009) have also addressed this issue as a conflict causing topic in an arts organization.

However, while the interviewees admitted having experienced some disagreements with producers, none of them indicated that they would have encountered actual conflicts. There can be several reasons for this. First of all, like Hirsjärvi et al. (1997, 202) suggest, when discussing problems, an interviewee may intentionally or unintentionally belittle the depth of the problems. In this context, the word conflict could have had a very strong, negative connotation. Secondly, it is possible that none of the interviewees have actually been involved in an unproductive conflict with a producer; a finding that has support from the findings of Reynolds et al. (2017) in their study with a larger sample size. Thirdly, also related to the findings of Reynolds et al. (2017), there is a chance that the theory and previous studies on shared leadership focus too much on the conflicts over the benefits of shared leadership model, which gives the reader a false idea that conflict automatically exists when leadership is shared.

## **5.2 Managerial Implications**

It is necessary to define both artistic and productional goals and expectations right

in the beginning of the planning process of the festival. A predefined, carefully thought out budget based on audience target is a necessity at any festival, as it is a clear-cut tool to which all of the decision making should be based on. However, it seems that it is easily simply the producers' burden to take care of the financial planning and oversee the budget.

Albeit not absolutely necessary, it might be very beneficial for the artistic directors to actively participate in the budgeting process at least during the planning phase of the festival, because understanding how the budget is constructed helps to plan programs that work within the limits of the budget and still maintain a high artistic level. Similarly, producers should be involved in the artistic decision making process, and give their professional opinions to the artistic directors regarding the specific success factors that affect just that particular festival, such as local audience's taste of music, venue characteristics, and financial restrictions.

Most of the challenges that festivals in Finland face from the artistic director's point of view could be avoided by implementing the idea of shared leadership more actively into the festival organization. It is not advisable to divide roles between the producer and artistic director in such a way that each party is only responsible for their own set of tasks, because the artistic and productional tasks are linked to each other. Festival planning and execution should be a team effort consisting of open communication, active discussion, and occasional compromises between artistic integrity and the need to make crowd pleasing concert programs to survive financially in the long run. This is what many studies of shared leadership in the arts field also suggest (Reynolds et al. 2017; Järvinen et al. 2015; Reid & Karambayya 2009). In case a festival organization fails to implement the concept of shared leadership in such a way that all of the leaders understand the concept, the end result will be a constant chaos, which can seriously jeopardize the organization's prerequisites for successful operation.

One key consideration regarding the shared leadership model in the festival field, however, is whether or not organizations should engage in that model at all. At least theoretically, if not properly understood and implemented, the shared

leadership model can be a source of multiple conflicts arising from differing interests of leaders (Reid & Karambayya 2009). Perhaps that is why some festival organizations are using alternative leadership models. For example, the Avanti Summer Sounds festival has chosen to appoint its artistic directors to plan the program for only one festival at a time. Hiring the artistic director for a very limited time resembles a purchased artistic planning service, and the festival is not obliged to hire multiple leaders permanently. The Helsinki Festival has combined the roles of general manager and artistic director, i. e. the two top leaders. Of course, the prerequisite for this model to work is that the organization is able to find a leader who possesses knowledge and capability to act effectively in both roles, which makes the recruitment process difficult and means, that the board has to put effort in finding the right person for the position.

Overall, the festival organizations' boards of directors should acknowledge that there are potential challenges involved in the shared leadership model with which most festivals in Finland are managed. The boards of festivals should occasionally consider, whether or not the shared leadership model is the most feasible management model for their festival. If so, the recruitment decisions made by the board should reflect this recognition, as a mismatch between the two leaders is a significant source for conflict (Reid & Karambayya, 2009) and thus can lead to a dysfunctional organization.



## **6 DISCUSSION**

This thesis has aimed to contribute to the field of arts management by researching the shared leadership between classical music festival leaders. It has been conducted by studying how the artistic directors of classical music festivals in Finland see the role of festival producers, what kind of skills and personal traits they value from producers, how the experience of the artistic director affects those values, and what actions could be taken to enhance collaboration between artistic directors and producers. The results have been analyzed based on a theoretical framework, which is founded mostly on previous studies conducted on shared leadership in the field of arts management and creative industries, as well as literature and studies on strategic decision making.

The thesis is important for two reasons: first of all, it provides a better understanding of the aspects that shape the shared leadership model in the Finnish classical music festival field and contribute to building more collaborative relationships between artistic directors and producers. Secondly, it asserts general factors and concepts that affect the whole festival organization and contribute to its overall success.

Even though the content deals with festival production in Finland, some parts of it are generally applicable to festivals in other countries, as long as they operate as a non-profit organization and utilize the shared leadership model of employing an artistic director and producer who collaborate together. Due to the special nature of classical music festival production, the results are not applicable as such to other kinds of arts festivals, and not to those festivals that operate on a for-profit base.

### **6.1 Suggestions for Further Research**

Research-wise this thesis has provided a platform on which to build further research regarding festival management in Finland. I have only interviewed

artistic directors of festivals for this study, but in order to broaden the understanding of collaboration between artistic directors and producers, studying the producers' views and opinions on the same topics would definitely benefit the research of the festival field as a whole.

Overall, the concept of shared leadership in creative organizations deserves to be studied in more detail (Reid & Karambayya 2009). The festival organizations provide a good platform for conducting research on shared leadership, because in a small festival organization, the effects of decisions made are clearly and instantly visible. A nonprofit festival is also dependent on a multitude of stakeholders, and their differing interests cannot be bypassed with issues regarding leadership and decision making.

Based on the previous studies, it would seem necessary to study the nature of conflicts related to the shared leadership model in more detail, and define the role of conflict in an arts organization. Is conflict a necessary evil tearing the leaders apart if not properly resolved, as Reid and Karambayya (2009) imply, or is it an opportunity that makes the leaders challenge each other in a creative and collaborative manner, as Reynolds et al. (2017) suggest? My findings support the latter view, but to study the phenomenon in more detail, conflicts between artistic directors and producers would deserve a study of their own. For these reasons, conflicts caused by shared leadership in the Finnish festival field would definitely be an interesting topic for future research.

Also, because the boards of directors at festivals often make significant strategic decisions, such as hire the producers and artistic directors to the festivals, the board members' competencies and their involvement in festival decision making should be studied in detail. Conducting such research would contribute very important information about the strategic decision making in the non-profit music festival field.

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# APPENDIX

## Thesis Interview Question Pattern

### Tuottajan rooli muusikon näkökulmasta

- Millaisena näet tuottajan roolin konsertin tai festivaalin suunnittelun alkaessa?
- Entä myöhemmin suunnitteluvaiheessa?
- Millainen on tuottajan rooli festivaalin aikana tai konserttipäivänä ja konsertin aikana?
- Mitkä ovat mielestäsi merkittävimmät eroavaisuudet tuottajan roolissa yksittäisten konserttien ja kokonaisten festivaalien tuottamisen välillä?

### Tuottajan ominaisuudet

- Mitkä ovat hyvän tuottajan ominaisuuksia?
- Mitä luonteenpiirteitä hyvällä tuottajalla ei tulisi olla?
- Tuleeko mieleesi esimerkkejä, joissa tuottajan ominaisuudet ovat merkittävästi vaikuttaneet konsertin tai festivaalin onnistumiseen tai epäonnistumiseen?
- Minkälaisia taitoja ja ominaisuuksia hyvällä tuottajalla tulisi tulevaisuudessa olla?
- Ovatko yllä kuvailemasi asiat yleistettävissä kaikkiin konsertti/festivaalitalanteisiin, vai onko yksittäisillä tapahtumilla merkittäviä eroja keskenään tuottajan ominaisuuksien ja roolin osalta muusikon näkökulmasta?
- Onko tuottajan roolissa ja tehtävissä merkittäviä eroja Suomen ja ulkomaiden välillä? Jos, niin mitä?
- Pitääkö tuottajalla mielestäsi olla jonkinlainen taiteellinen tausta tai koulutus? Jos, niin miksi ja minkälaista? Tuleeko taustan olla jonkin asteinen klassisen musiikin koulutus?
- Tuleeko tuottajan ottaa kantaa ja vaikuttaa myös taiteellisiin päätöksiin?

### Muusikon ja tuottajan välinen yhteisymmärrys

- Ymmärtävätkö tuottajat mielestäsi riittävästi muusikoita ja konsertteihin liittyviä taiteellisia ratkaisuja? Voitko antaa esimerkin tilanteesta, jossa tuottaja ei esimerkiksi ole huomionnut muusikon näkemyksiä riittävästi?

- Kuinka hyvin muusikot ymmärtävät mielestäsi tuottajien työnkuvan? Kuka sen mielestäsi määrittelee?
- Miten tuottajat voisivat parantaa toimintaansa yleisellä tasolla konserttien ja festivaalien tuottamisen osalta?
- Onko kohdallesi sattunut tilanteita, joissa olet ajautunut konfliktiin tuottajan kanssa. Jos, niin mitkä asiat ovat aikaansaaneet konfliktin?

### **Iän ja kokemuksen vaikutus siihen, miten tuottaja nähdään**

- Miten odotuksesi tuottajien työtä kohtaan ovat muuttuneet urasi aikana?
- Millaisia merkittäviä muutoksia tuottajien ja muusikoiden välisessä yhteistyössä on tapahtunut urasi aikana?
- Onko konserttien ja festivaalien tuotanto Suomessa mielestäsi riittävän ammattimaista? Jos ei, niin mitkä olisivat tärkeimpiä kehityskohtia?

Tuleeko mieleesi vielä jotain, mitä haluaisit lisätä?