

The Substantial Role of the Performing Arts and the Adaptive Possibilities for
Creative Female Leaders during the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic



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Capstone Project

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way performing arts leaders understand and function in our world. Current literature is rapidly growing at a rhythmic pace to address the scientifically grounded state and national modifications required in managing the COVID-19 pandemic within the performing arts sector. At this critical time in our society, female leaders must embrace performing arts production possibilities through innovation, adaptive techniques, storytelling, and inclusion. Changes are happening in a context where female leaders, who are experiencing substantial new burdens during this pandemic are underrepresented in arts leadership. The purpose of this capstone is to understand how the performing arts is changing in the time of COVID-19 and the experiences of the female leaders in facilitating this change.

This project explores these changes through interviews and qualitative research methods to describe and explore the following:

- Theatrical and Artistic Appreciation, Cognitive Processes, and Background
- Current Outlook in the Arts during COVID-19
- Community, Technology and Potential Cognitive Shifts in the Arts
- Adaptability, Preservation, and Re-arrangement of the Arts during COVID-19
- Leadership Identity as a Female in the Performing Arts

This qualitative study on professional identities and community, analyzed through an adaptive leadership lens, unearthed discoveries that framed potential pipeline explorations for the partner organization, Generation W, to better understand and equip their future work around innovative theatrical programming. This project also offers insights into the comprehensive performing arts space, the crucial need for the arts, and the exploratory shifts that might preserve needed artistic space while making room for diversity and inclusion.

This work focuses on three research questions to understand the current state of the performing arts during the COVID-19 pandemic and what might be possible with leadership adaptations.

The three research questions are:

1. What do theatrical leaders see as the role of the performing arts during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How are female theatrical leaders exhibiting the elements of adaptive leadership by responding at this time?
3. What are the adaptations that female leadership is making at the moment?

This project unearthed the strengths and barriers that sixteen successful female leaders in the arts experience in their important work. These significant findings include: (1) society's expectations for the performing arts experience, (2) interpersonal communication is a core component for leadership throughout the pandemic, (3) interpersonal communication within the performing arts is a modality for healing, learning, and hope, (4) the arts are a crucial tool for community through acts of service (5) sustainability is linked to artistic resilience (6) technology is enabling artistic resilience but eliminating leadership positions, (7) equity within the performing arts is a balancing act, (8) COVID-19 pandemic measures are providing opportunities for a hierarchical shift within the performing arts, (9) staying active with personal and professional priorities is essential, (10) financial and long term success is a major factor within the performing arts, (11) female leadership insights on value placement within the performing arts industry, (12) female leaders are undervalued by being underestimated, (13) female leaders are undervalued due to a lack of acceptance and appreciation for certain female types within this industry, (14) female leaders are undervalued when it comes to visibility in

production positions, and (15) female leaders are undervalued when observing and interpreting our deep rooted strength.

All interviews took place in May 2020 when the United States was under national lock down and a stay-at-home order. This study contributes to research and practice around the arts, and its substantial role in a time of crisis. It provides insights into female adaptive leadership from Broadway to the local Jacksonville community, where my organization Generation W is located. Furthermore, it allows for development and point to the need for equitable and shared initiatives centered around leadership, community, and organization.

In order to successfully continue the important work needed to further the performing arts during this pandemic and to promote equal and diverse voices in the arts, these female performing arts leaders empowered and equipped themselves with interpretive and adaptive techniques in their leadership paths. These recommendations answer the research questions: (1) the role that the performing arts is currently playing for our society in the depths of stay-at-home orders and a global pandemic, and (2) explore the connection that female leaders are utilizing to step forward in their career paths and within their theatrical organizations or community.

The three recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: The female leaders of Generation W need to continue the call for performing arts accessibility and meet societal expectations.

Female leaders in the arts must continue to use dynamic tactics, like social media connections within the performing arts community to shift this narrative of female independence and success. The need for these messages in the theatre are magnified even more with pandemic culture, as people are more isolated and cannot have as much connection in person. Virtual arts and experiences are a strong substitute and can serve as a major source for normalcy and

sensemaking. American Conservatory Theater based out of San Francisco called out the lack of mentorship programs for females within the performing arts industry (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016).

One critical dynamic suggestion would be a paired peer mentoring program virtually housed by Generation W within Jacksonville.

This interdisciplinary mentoring program could focus on three benchmarks for success including (1) mentee's academic success within their artistic programs at their high school, (2) cultivate a sense of community support within Jacksonville, (3) develop practical skills within the business of the performing arts. The strategies of this mentoring cohort are: (1) ease the transition between courses at their current high school, (2) provide information, support, and encouragement throughout design, performing, or directing projects, (3) foster congeniality and friendship between performing arts students at different schools, (4) encourage networking and leadership throughout the Jacksonville area regarding academic and community run performing arts productions.

The mentoring cohort 2021-2022 needs to create and share meaningful content on social media platforms in the hopes of building a collective movement of future female leaders perhaps with a hashtag similar to #genwfutureleader or #futurefemaleleaderscohort. Having a strong connection with a marketing campaign is one of the many different ways we could have our collective voice heard on social media. There is real work that can be highlighted and propelled forward with our collective Generation W voices as we capitalize on growth and diversity and continue to build collective movement.

Recommendation 2: The female leaders in the performing arts should continue the narrative that we as Americans are all in this together. Humanity is collectively in this world and space together, so keep continuing the female narrative.

We must continue to be creative while sticking to the performing arts' values and mission of learning and equity, while valuing individual craftsmanship and collective organizational work. No one has all the answers. Performing arts leaders need to use their platform for good and to remind the country that we have been through worse and can rise above. The call is for learning, hope, and healing across types of theatrical productions and to continue propelling inclusive actions within our organizations.

Along with the cohort mentioned above, we can begin to thread together collective movements locally in Jacksonville beginning with the performing arts and organizing alongside and other strong non-profits. Another thought is to partner with a collective movement, such as Theatre in our Schools, #theatreinourschools, or the collective wellness movement that the company Bandier, #bandier, started.

Recommendation 3: Female leaders should use their platform as a voice for minorities and marginalized communities by allowing performing arts productions to be equitable through a focus on a shared initiative of healing, progression toward all-inclusive practices and developing consistent links to humanity.

Female leaders need to continue their dynamic and innovative wave of change. This interpretive movement allows the world to see and make sense of the work through a female leader's lens and a collective movement with a focus on intersectionality. The observable findings centering on Acts of Service, Sustainability, Value, and Equity point to the need for equitable and shared initiatives centered around the intersection of healing one's self, one's community, and one's organization. These incredible voices, writers, directors, designers, and producers can start crafting these alternate narratives. Diversifying the arts is not just about having the same shows with a diverse cast but having a diversity of stories onstage. We can

encourage theatre companies to look for diverse female authors, new playwrights, and swerve from the mainstream in their choices for productions.

This capstone study also provides awareness into best practices and pathways on how to adapt the theatrical arts during times of crisis. It will additionally add to professional awareness and continue the call for diverse female leaders within the performing arts.

Keywords

Adaptive Leadership, Sensemaking, Inclusion, Innovation, Theatrical Appreciation, Artistic Appreciation, Cognitive Processes, Performing Arts, Performer, Leader, Female, Director, Community, Technology, Leadership Identity, Theatrical Production, COVID-19 Pandemic.

Introduction

The most effective directors, performers, and writers understand that art is a reflection of life - an “extension or a projection” of how we live, think, and feel (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2015). Art benefits society, revealing to us what we treasure and admire, and what we fear most deeply. The performing arts have a long history of helping the world make sense of uncertain times, especially during times of global disarray.

The presence of a captive audience is an essential partnership in a live theatrical performance. As an audience, we participate vicariously through heart and mind. In order for this cohesive partnership to thrive, the audience engages in “a willing suspension of belief” (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2015). For decades Broadway and the local Northeast Florida theatrical community have kept marquee lights on and doors open in order to share in this communal experience. Broadway provides a visual for the rest of the theatrical world, especially within artistic communities, and in Northeast Florida - this is no exception.

Truly, this shared experience, which makes theatre and Broadway so exceptionally thrilling, is the very reason all Broadway productions were cancelled on Thursday, March 12, 2020. It appears that shows would not go on as all New York productions were suspended initially for 32 days and have not open to date. Broadway’s lights shine like a beacon and the community itself is a cultural icon to all national theatres, especially local theatres. Theatres closing and the cancellation of social gatherings are extremely rare in New York and in Florida.

The purpose of this capstone is to understand how the performing arts is changing in the time of COVID-19 and the experiences of the female leaders in facilitating this change. Generation W is a non-profit located in Jacksonville, Florida whose mission is to educate, inspire, and facilitate powerful female leadership. One of their strategies is to promote female

leadership in the performing arts in order to elevate the voices of women and promote the change they want to see in the world. The underrepresentation of women in the performing arts is exemplified by Tony Award winner Rachel Chavkin who was the only female director on Broadway in 2019, the year she won.

Chavkin called out this limitation in her acceptance speech stating: “I wish I wasn’t the only woman directing a musical on Broadway...there’s so many women and artists of color ready to go. It’s a failure of imagination by a field whose job it is to imagine how the world could be” (Tony Award Footage, June 9, 2019). This failure can be linked to a fear of scarcity of opportunities within the national performing arts industry, specifically, on Broadway.

Similarly, the number of females in performing arts leadership are lower than expected within the Northeast section of Florida, Jacksonville, where Generation W is located. The Director of Operations and Programming at Generation W requested an extensive theatrical segment for their signature large-scale event. According to Orender, “community leaders and experts from around the country will gather for an insightful day that will challenge our thinking, inspire our spirits, and connect our worlds” (Generation W, 2020). The signature event was slated to take place on April 3, 2020 with approximately 1,400 guests. However, due to complications related to COVID-19, the event took place virtually. My problem of practice centers around Generation W’s request for a study on how other female leaders within performing arts production are adapting content and managing careers while coping with the effects of COVID-19, while still being fearless leaders in this industry.

*A note about gender equity: an important piece of this project is our definition of female (that includes female +). For the purposes of this study, we include all genders that are not cis-male.

Context

The purpose of this capstone is to recognize how the performing arts is changing in the time of COVID-19 and the experiences of the female leaders in enabling this change. Through interviews with female leaders in both Broadway and Jacksonville, the capstone sheds light on how the performing arts have responded to COVID-19, the challenges faced by female leaders, and the ways they are exhibiting leadership in this time of upheaval in the performing arts.

Jacksonville is the largest city in the continental United States with over 875 square miles (*Visit Jacksonville*, 2021). The Jacksonville metropolitan area has fourteen major theatrical venues including The Times Union Center for the Performing Arts, The Florida Theatre Performing Arts Center, The Ritz Theatre and Museum, Theatre Jacksonville, St. Augustine Amphitheatre, Alhambra Theatre, The Fine Arts Center at the University of North Florida, The Thrasher Horne Center, The Prime Osborne Convention Center, The Florida State College at Jacksonville's Wilson Center for the Arts, Veteran's Memorial Arena, Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, and Daily's Place. The 2019 Jacksonville city budget presented by Mayor Lenny Curry provided \$1 million for improvements to the Ritz Theatre and Museum and the Prime Osborne Convention Center. Similar to New York, the metropolis of Jacksonville and its leaders place artistic value on keeping historical performing arts venues current, updated, and artistic resilience thriving. The leadership of Jacksonville's performing arts industry is male dominated. In fact, all the top leadership positions, except for The Ritz Theatre and Museum, The Wilson Center for the Arts, and Theatre Jacksonville, are held by men.

Like all local performing arts industries, Jacksonville is heavily influenced by Broadway. Broadway is an incredible artistic outlet, but also a huge business. There are 41 Broadway theatres in operation in New York. The Broadway League is the national trade association for the

Broadway industry and includes over 700 members. According to Playbill (2021) there are four main categorical tracks within the performing arts: Administrative, Design, Technical, and Performance (Appendix 1). During the 2018-2019 season, the Broadway industry contributed \$14.7 billion to the economy of New York City and supported 96,900 jobs (Broadway League, 2020).

Literature Review

The performing arts are changing in the time of COVID-19 and so are the experiences of the female leaders in facilitating this change. Rapid changes are taking place within the performing arts world regarding pandemic protocol and safety measures. These changes are happening in a context where female leaders, who are experiencing substantial new burdens during this pandemic are underrepresented in arts leadership.

Both Broadway and Jacksonville have union affiliations; however, as Florida is a right-to-work state, not all jobs must be filled by union personnel. Both locations employ actors and production stage managers from the union, Actors Equity Association (AEA), the union for professional theatrical performers. AEA's diversity study showed employment numbers from 2013-2015 from the League of Resident Theatres union contracts for stage actors and stage managers (both female leadership categories) demonstrating heavily male employment (Lehrer, 2017).

Retrieved from <https://www.actorsequity.org/news/PR/DiversityStudy/>

**NEW WEEKLY CONTRACTS AVAILABLE
(2013 - 2015)**

PERCENTAGE OF **MAN VS. **WOMAN****

NATIONAL PRINCIPAL EMPLOYMENT IN PLAYS (30,452)



NATIONAL PRINCIPAL EMPLOYMENT IN MUSICALS (14,834)



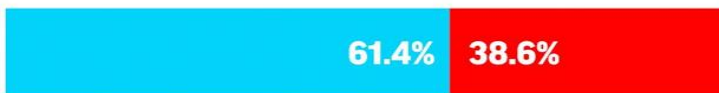
NATIONAL STAGE MANAGER EMPLOYMENT (11,632)



NATIONAL CHORUS EMPLOYMENT (6,685)



NATIONAL LORT PRINCIPAL IN A PLAY EMPLOYMENT (8,296)



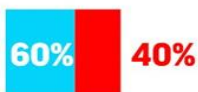
NATIONAL LORT STAGE MANAGER EMPLOYMENT (2,749)



NATIONAL LORT PRINCIPAL IN A MUSICAL EMPLOYMENT (2,196)



NATIONAL LORT CHORUS IN A MUSICAL EMPLOYMENT (1,318)



**NUMBERS IN PARENTHESIS:
NUMBER OF CONTRACTS**

As of 2017, in spite of the fact that females comprise half of Actor's Equity Associations' membership, they were hired less frequently, and on lower paying contracts than men in every category of on-stage employment. Females were employed on these union contractual agreements with "lower minimums, negotiated lower over-scales and earned lower average contractual salaries than men" (Lehrer, p.4). The only area where females were hired more often was in stage management, though still at lower pay levels than men.

As demonstrated by an investigation into Broadway statistics for 2017 (Lehrer, 2018), the inequity in numbers are also bad for females on stage, but even worse for females in leadership positions. A survey of director members of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society showed that the majority of female stage directors who were or had been artistic director of a theatre arrived at that position as the theatre's founder (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016). The current female leaders got to the position by founding a new organization, not being hired or promoted into an existing one.

There is a glass ceiling for females within the performing arts. They can achieve the next-in-line position, but not step into the leading roles of director nearly as frequently as males. Career progression within certain elements of the arts can come from an apprenticeship model (i.e., director, designer); however, it appears that female mentors within the performing arts are in short supply, and with the few leadership opportunities available, there is little turnover (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016).

The remarkable director Whitney White states, "there's a feeling that there aren't enough resources, enough space, or enough playwrights, and so you see institutions and producers unwilling to take a chance on something—which can often mean a woman or a person of color" (Clement, 2018). In the midst of a pandemic where we are constantly adapting in our

professional and personal lives, how can we adapt enough to change this feeling that stop producers from taking chances on female leaders? Producers need to adapt the boundaries with confidence and create equitable leadership opportunities within the performing arts pipeline. Female Artistic and Executive Directors among the League of Resident Theatre system is roughly twenty-five percent (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016). Rarely are females making it to the top spot of director. “The image of a (white) male director is still ingrained in our collective thinking” (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016). This phenomenon is particularly puzzling in an industry that strives for representation and in which roughly three-quarters of all ticket buyers are female. Female leaders have to continue this call for change and craft a new vision.

Female theatrical leaders are beginning to unfold new pathways within the performing arts, strengthen their outlook and resilience, broaden technology endeavors, and re-establish theatrical productions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Modern professional leaders continue to forge the road ahead, making space for those less represented. America Ferrara, who plays the award-winning titular character in *Ugly Betty*, narrated a recent TED Talk discussing theories of female leadership, identity, and positioning in certain environments.

Ferrera’s speech is incredibly moving, revealing limitations that women and women of color in the film and casting industries often face: the lack of agility and freedom to step forward in a leadership role within the filming, casting, and directing industry. There are specific challenges when dealing with large organizations like the casting industries within the performing arts. When you are the performer you are up against not only other performers that are your type but the vision that the production team has of the role and casting option. The communication paths by which performers, directors, and leaders get opportunity or acknowledgement in the theatre are ever changing, yet, not opportunistic, especially for females

and females of color. Ferrera's frank talk opens the lid on stereotypes, narrative, and dialogue. She describes her struggles at the start of her career and then describes her thoughts after a failed audition:

“Come at me, obstacle. I'm an American. My name is America. I trained my whole life for this, I'll just follow the playbook, I'll work harder. And so I did, I worked my hardest to overcome all the things that people said were wrong with me. I stayed out of the sun so that my skin wouldn't get too brown, I straightened my curls into submission. I constantly tried to lose weight, I bought fancier and more expensive clothes. All so that when people looked at me, they wouldn't see a too fat, too brown, too poor Latina. They would see what I was capable of. And maybe they would give me a chance” (Ted Talk, 2019).

In her thirteen-minute speech, Ferrara's final statement resounds “for our systems to reflect what the world actually looks like - they don't have to create a new reality. They just have to stop resisting the one we already live in” (Ted Talk, 2019). The realization that the current system allows for a lack of female leaders and female leaders of color to have proper mentorship and recognition.

Another obstacle is a misguided sense of the industry niche. This is the idea that stories that women and women of color tell are only of interest to women or people of color. This could not be farther from the truth and is another core problem. Collins-Hughes states,

“the capacity to take women seriously is at the heart of all of this: the idea that we're not an aberration but half the population, and just as human as the other half. It is ridiculous to me that the need for equal footing even has to be a discussion” (*The New York Times*, 2018).

Women do not have equal footing in the performing arts industry. Stories created and performed by females and females of color are of interest to the entire population. Gender and ethnic diversity within organizations strengthens organizational vision and overall performance of firms (Carter, D'Souza, Simpkins, Simpson, 2010). Females underrepresentation in performing arts leadership positions “validates entrenched systems and beliefs that prompt and

support men's bids for leadership" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). This cycle in turn just keeps the status quo. This allows the assumptions that stories men tend to tell are universal, but females' stories are not. This could not be further from the truth and this contextual misinformation is what keeps allowing the system to function with minimal change to leadership structure and social context.

The Substantial Need for the Performing Arts in a Time of Crisis

Context counts in adaptive leadership and within the arts. In addition to one's own values, priorities, and sensitivities, a performing arts leader, embodies their organization's or production's values, priorities, and sensitivities by relaying the message on stage. All performing arts have many characteristics in common including collaboration, movement through time, the need for creators and interpreters, and the requirement of audiences. Common elements specifically needed in theatrical productions are performers, a script, a director, designers, theatrical performance space, and an audience (Appendix 1). The role of the performing arts and its ability to connect performer and audience member can adapt substantially to suit the needs of society in a time of crisis.

During 9/11, as the world went dark in two hours, so did Broadway (Jones, 2019). Remarkably on September 13, 2001, two days following the fall of the twin towers in downtown Manhattan, all twenty-three shows on Broadway reopened in Times Square, just one hundred blocks north. Just as the pace of our country and New York stopped then in 2001, the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered Broadway's doors on March 13, 2020. By all historical standards to that point, Broadway's reopening on September 13, 2001 was a crowning achievement. The Broadway theatrical community made that night "about the living – many of whom were finding their job impossible to perform" (Jones, p.3). Five shows closed in the month of September

2001, but many producers did not lose hope knowing that the arts are where society looks for joy, peace, sadness, and most importantly the human connection through storytelling (Jones, 2019).

“Metamorphosis,” a piece by female director Mary Zimmerman, was slated to open off-Broadway in September 2001. Following the attacks, Zimmerman adapted her vision of staging and involved the culmination of bodies and how they can assume new shapes. This effect and the messages of life and love being eternal, hope being the driving force of mortality, and the need to keep looking ahead, provided grounds for audiences to heal, breathe, and connect. Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* wrote after his visit to this theatrical production, “those who have known the loss of people they loved will surely feel the echoes of their own pain...and find the solace in sorrow that opens the emotional floodgates” (Jones, p.2).

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we see and experience the performing arts, and “one thing seems certain: we will never look at ourselves as a culture the same way again” (O’Grady, 2020). With mandatory social distancing gatherings of more than ten people being discouraged by the Center for Disease Control, it creates an opportunity for adaptive leadership potential. Leaders can prioritize, adapt, and achieve artistic goals in spite of, and during, the current pandemic situation, including the lack of audience.

There are moments when trajectories within the performing arts shift. Most recently, technology has led the trajectory change. The addition of lighting in the late nineteenth century, which historically was the last of the visual elements to be fully developed, is now one of the most complex of all elements (Wilson & Goldfarb, 210). Lighting design is intended to provide illumination onstage, to establish time and place, to help set the mood and style of a production, to focus the action, and to establish a rhythm of visual movement.

This addition alongside computer automation has been an interesting shift and growth within artistic resilience. This additional technology is used frequently to propel action (acting) while connecting stories for the audience. For example, in the Broadway production of *Network* (2018) led by Tony Winner Bryan Cranston, the staging featured a live onstage television studio and an onstage restaurant titled *Foodwork*, where audience members can enjoy a three-course meal while watching the play.

With so much changing rapidly, the issue of how art and theater respond and adapt to COVID-19 is significant. The performing arts are intertwined into pop culture, and the culture has power to maintain or blast norms regarding adaptive techniques, sensemaking, networking, community, narratives, and leadership. The pace of pedagogical theories has failed to keep pace with human practices (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). During the months of April and May 2020 (the peak point of this pandemic), Netflix usage went up twenty seven percent (Interview, Florida, 13). Society through social media is turning to artistic outlets for hope and resiliency including films, operas, television, poetry, music, improvisational exercises, classical theatre, and musical theatre.

Theoretical Framework

The performing arts is the only craft that has been both replicating resiliently and dying for over hundreds of years (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2015). While individually we will all have our own visuals and metaphors to make meaning of this time, adaptive leadership and artistic resilience is vital for our society. Adaptive leadership is defined as a strategy within organizations to preserve items that matter, discard things that are no longer needed, and create arrangements that give freedom to flourish in new ways and in more challenging environments (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). For the purposes of this study, artistic resilience is defined as the ability to anticipate, respond, and adapt to change and disruption in order to thrive. Theatrical leaders and industry professional are reforming their artistic resilience by exploring platforms to aid in the creative process, and new technology.

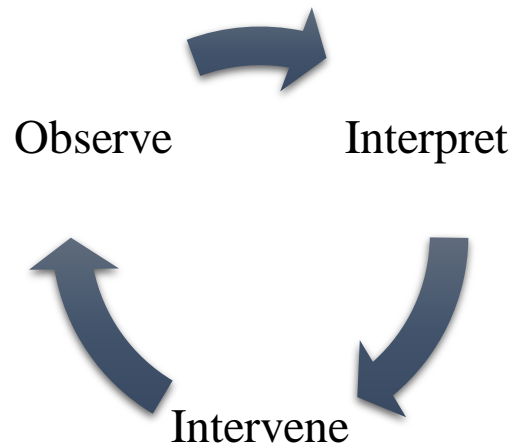
An additional theoretical concept is sensemaking, which “draws attention to the role of local context in shaping integrity of implementation” (Cannata, Neel, Rubin, 2021). Sensemaking is connected with one’s environment and the fact that performers do not have a live audience or exchange in real time challenges the status quo and may shape identities of future productions. The context is not just the lack of in-person captive audience, but the influencers and creative teams. The artistic directors, the directors, the designers, the musicians, and the leading performers on Broadway serve as a force for context within the performing arts. Local organizations take cues from the Broadway community and national unions. Industry groups look to issue guidance and might make recommendations on what should happen.

In order to successfully continue the important work needed to further theatre and the arts during this pandemic and to promote equal and diverse voices in the arts, female performing arts leaders must be equipped with the important pillars of adaptive leadership. The research around

adaptive leadership stems from multi-tiered possibilities. Adaptive leadership’s process involves three key activities: observing events and patterns around you, interpreting what you are observing, and designing adaptive interventions based on the observations and interpretations to tackle the adaptive challenges identified.

Image work cited, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (p. 32)

The Adaptive Leadership Process



Two people observing the same event or being in the same situation see different things depending on their previous life experiences and perspective. The goal of observation within adaptive leadership is to make the observer as objective as possible, by being both a part of the action, but stepping back onto a “balcony” to view the action from an observable place (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). As interpreters we sense make. We make sense of the same situation in different ways based on our own experiences and context. The concept of actively interpreting within the adaptive process might be understood as “listening for the song beneath the words” (p.38), so to make your interpretations of data as accurate as possible by considering the widest array of sensory information: seeing the loyalty, strength, and values of the individual and organization.

Sensemaking is a process of interpretation. After sensemaking and interpretations have been made the next move is the intervention. Well-designed interventions provide context and connect interpretations to the core or purpose of the work, so the perspective is seen as relevant to the collective effort. The best practices indicated in adaptive leadership were developed to provide targeted methods for mobilization during tough challenges, and currently, in this the COVID-19 pandemic (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). “Not daydreaming, wishful-thinking possibility, but rather a roll up your sleeves, optimistic, realistic, courage-generating, and make-significant-progress kind of possibility” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Therefore, adaptive leadership in the arts means that artistic leaders observe what is going on around them such as the pandemic and its effects on all elements of society including but not limited to economic, education, social-emotional, mental and physical health etc. The performing arts is primarily an interpretative act and experience. So, this interpretation by the current female leaders is a critical and key step. The sixteen leaders interviewed interpreted certain moments similarly based on location, but also made sense of other leadership elements with different regards. These leaders in the performing arts are actively sensemaking “the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals’ ongoing activity and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalize what people are doing” (Weick, 1995; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). They are putting into place adaptive techniques producing safe, efficient, and effective performing arts by revising content while still connecting with the national and local arts communities. For example, Lincoln Center for the Arts recently announced the rearranging of their theatrical spaces to allow for virtual and potentially in- person productions to occur by the opening of outdoor stages this summer. Typically, most past productions occurred in their traditional three indoor stage spaces (*Time*

Out, 2021). According to Heifetz, Grashow & Linksy (2009) the five practical pillars of adaptive leadership are as follows:

1. *Mobilize people to tackle tough challenges and thrive*

Adaptive leadership is about “will plus skill” (p.37) There are several tough challenges that the performing arts community is facing at this time. Through the pillars of adaptive leadership, we can provide recommendations on how to willingly meet these challenges as skillfully as possible during a pandemic. As leaders, we have the will and skill to make sense of certain situations: in this current context artistically thriving in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic translates as artistic resilience.

2. *Build on the past while being conservative and progressive*

We must ensure we are anchoring values, competencies, and musts of the performing arts as a genre and within society’s expectations. As performing arts leaders, we must engage and distinguish what is essential to preserve about the performing arts, while also asking ourselves what is expendable. Initially, my thought on what is *essential* is the storytelling and the learning opportunities. What might be *expendable* is the stigma of pride and competition that can permeate this industry.

3. *Experiment*

As a leader, my mindset is resource-driven seeking to lead by my heart, mind, and spirit into experimentation and improvisation. Adaptive leadership describes this experimentation as “engaging above and below the neck” (p.37). The courage that is required to lead, requires all of you, your mind and body learning new competencies and training your body in new techniques.

As creatives, we have to ask, how can we create during a pandemic? What does experimental theatre look like during the COVID-19 pandemic? Indeed, we are starting to see the beginnings of socially distant innovative virtual theatre and art.

4. Rely on distributed or collective intelligence

Adaptive leadership insists that leaders be more diverse in our approaches. In the performing arts world, we need to make note of what productions are dependent on and attempt to diversify the theatrical culture by adding additional narratives and encouraging more female leadership.

5. Significantly displace, re-regulate, or re-arrange

As we diversify and continue to lead, what can we lose in the performing arts in order to have it survive the COVID-19 pandemic? What is an individual loss that could occur? What is systemic? We must first understand what female performing arts leaders need, based on their personal encounters with COVID-19 and experiences within current production work, and then personalize which approach of adaptive leadership they follow, which can close the gaps and lead to a strong, supported future for their career path, strengthen theatrical productions, and grow within organizations.

Research Questions

Building upon the literature, this project focuses on three research questions to understand the current state of the performing arts during the COVID-19 pandemic and what might be possible with leadership adaptations. Each question explores different discoveries that are important to address while working on leading within the performing arts during this global crisis.

The three research questions are:

- 1. What do theatrical leaders see as the role of the performing arts during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?**
- 2. How are female theatrical leaders exhibiting the elements of adaptive leadership by responding at this time?**
- 3. What are the adaptations that female leadership is making at the moment?**

The first research question seeks to understand the role that the performing arts is currently playing for our society in the depths of stay-at-home orders and a global pandemic. The second and third research questions explore the connection that female leaders may be utilizing to step forward in their career paths and within their theatrical organizations or community.

An overview of the research provides key perspectives regarding the connection to the conceptual framework of this study which is grounded and outlined in *Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing your Organization* by Heifetz R., Grashow, A. & Linsky, M (2009). The research shows that this process (observe, interpret, and intervene) aligned with the pillars of adaptive leadership connects to a purpose. That connection is motivating and powerful.

Project Design

To better understand the adaptations in the arts that current professionals and leaders are making, I looked at the five elements of adaptive leadership alongside the research questions. Because there was no precedent for performing arts leaders to follow on managing COVID-19, and as this research occurred in real time when national, state, and union policies were still being created, the focus was on interviewing current, working female leaders. The interview goals were to explore and analyze in hopes to identify the adaptive work of these female leaders.

Method and Approach

For the purposes of this project, female leaders in this field are defined as current females who are commanding their career in the performing arts field. This field is incredibly proactive and constantly shifting in “normal” times, let alone during a global pandemic. These female industry leaders are tied with a production company, organization, or agency and working actively on their craft. They have had to make leadership calls either within their personal career path - for example, as a principal on Broadway or leading a poetry workshop with a prestigious museum.

Securing a leading role on Broadway gives a performer a signal, along with a professional identity, positioning them as an industry leader. Another example of an active leadership role is one of a technical director, who is literally organizing all elements of the theatrical production at a large or mid-sized venue. All of these interview candidates brought personal career leadership experience and were aligned with an organization or agency in which they were actively making choices around the new pandemic protocol.

This research contains sixteen interviews total: eight interviews with current Broadway or New York-based performing arts professional leaders, along with eight interviews with

Northeast Florida performing arts professionals and leaders. This focus was to provide local and national perspectives. The female leaders were ethnically diverse, including African - American, Asian - American, Middle - Eastern American, Latin American, and Caucasian females whose ages ranged between twenty-one to fifty-five.

In order to get a range of viewpoints, strengths, and answers to our research questions, I scheduled one-on-one Zoom interviews with professionals in all fields of the performing arts industry. The interviews included the following professions: actor, singer, model, poet, writer, dancer, dance captain, choreographer, director, musician, musical director, conductor, arranger, costumer, dresser, designer, stage manager, technical director, marketing, publicist, and producer.

By utilizing both national industry leaders and local community-centered leadership this work aimed to secure a sample that provides outcomes and insight into themes of adaptive leadership within the performing arts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to time and COVID-19 parameters of shelter in place, the interviews took place in May 2020 via Zoom due to the inability to meet in person. I arranged, set up the meeting timing, and asked all questions to each of the sixteen interviewees. No one was given questions ahead of time in order to get extemporaneous responses in real time. During each interview, twenty-seven questions (Appendix 2) were asked in the same order each time which provided significant insights into the categories:

- Theatrical and Artistic Appreciation, Cognitive Processes, and Background
- Current Outlook in the Arts during COVID-19
- Community, Technology and Potential Cognitive Shifts in the Arts
- Adaptability, Preservation, and Re-arrangement of the Arts during COVID-19
- Leadership Identity as a Female in the Performing Arts

The insight of these interviews was important in answering all of the research questions, as well as highlighting the human concerns that are a part of the performing arts career path and leadership process.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

I coded the data in two stages. I first coded the data by doing a broad, a priori, initial round of coding. I read through all sixteen interviews with a lens of understanding and an emphasis on descriptive open categorization with reflection on how the interviewees answered each of the twenty-seven questions. As an educated and expert performing arts professional, I also explored vocal dynamics, linguistics, and passion surrounding the answers that each interviewee had given. The data shown in the figure is from the initial phase of the categorical coding. I coded based on job location (New York or Florida). The a priori findings that were revealed from this first round of coding fit into seven categories: (1) Community, (2) Sensemaking, (3) Core of the Performing Arts, (4) Current Narrative, (5) Leadership, (6) Adaptive Techniques, (7) Challenges of being a Female in the Performing Arts. Reviewing these transcripts and sinking in further to specific words, stories, perspectives, observations, and stimulated my drive to subdivide these chunks of text to see potential relational interpretations and adaptive leadership connections.

Interview	Community	Core	Sensemaking	Current Narrative	Leadership	Adaptive Techniques	Challenges / Female
NY 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NY 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	
NY 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NY 4		X	X	X	X	X	X
NY 5	X	X		X	X	X	
NY 6	X	X	X	X	X	X	
NY 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NY 8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FL 9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FL 10	X	X	X	X	X	X	
FL 11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FL 12	X	X	X	X	X	X	
FL 13	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FL 14	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FL 15	X	X	X	X	X		X
FL 16	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

I then took these seven categorical themes and reviewed the transcripts in a second round of coding. In this round of coding, I saw emergent findings including: (1) society has expectations for the performing arts experience, (2) interpersonal communication is a core component for leadership throughout the pandemic, (3) interpersonal communication within the performing arts is a modality for healing, learning, and hope, (4) the arts are a crucial tool for community through acts of service (5) sustainability is linked to artistic resilience (6) technology is enabling artistic resilience but eliminating leadership positions, (7) equity within the performing arts is a balancing act, (8) COVID-19 pandemic measures are providing opportunities for a hierarchy shift within the performing arts, (9) staying active with personal and professional priorities is essential, (10) financial and long term success is a major factor within the performing arts, (11) female leadership insights on value placement within the performing arts industry, (12) female leaders are undervalued by being underestimated, (13) female leaders are undervalued due to a lack of acceptance and appreciation for certain female types within this industry, (14) female leaders are undervalued when it comes to visibility in production positions, and (15) female leaders are undervalued when observing and interpreting our deep rooted strength.

Findings

1. Society Has Expectations for the Performing Arts Experience.

There are societal expectations for the performing arts and storytelling to continue through technological experiences and innovative modalities. These female leaders unlocked observations and forged new interpretations of societal expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We want the togetherness – a return to the theatre. We want to make moves towards this cohesive community. We are not just sitting by. Make a donation when you can. Help victims when you can. There is a call to action for storytelling.” (Interview, Florida 5).

“I am taken out of myself and experiencing something with someone. At the core of theatre is humanity. The human experience. There is always a lesson to be learned” (Interview, New York 1).

Although there may be some disconnect because the audience and performers are not in the same physical space, the interviewees showed an awareness that society still has expectations for storytelling, artistic forward motion, and creativity.

“The sense of community online can be done in creative ways. I think there are different opinions around new innovative projects, so I am keeping an open mind” (Interview, New York, 4).

“The audiences are looking to Broadway performers and stars on social media – so in that regard *there is still an audience* even if there isn’t a show. Everyone is getting together – for example Jessica Vosk is doing a Sondheim piece virtually (Interview, Florida, 12).

The audience is a critical part of the shared experience of performing arts, and, presently, there is still an audience, even if it is virtual. Being a part of a live audience is a way to connect with others. Everyone is experiencing the same story or music in real time.

“We should discard the societal view that arts are not necessary. If you look at the world right now it is what is keeping everything together. It is the only thing that is literally getting through to people is the arts right now. The heightened level of

Netflix and TV content and podcast and released videos. It is what we do. Historically people say they support the arts, but we really need to support the arts in force” (Interview, New York, 8).

This connection through experience is significant. It is more than just the anticipation of getting back to live performances, it is the sense of connection that we need.

“I feel like I have been lacking the beautiful connection between people that happens in theatre. Nothing that happens comes every time and every audience brings something different. There is constant dialogue. I miss being able to be guided by what I can explore and the connection between the performers onstage. Because if you are not actively involved you are just reading lines to each other. The involvement is the active connection” (Interview, New York 7).

“What are we really able to take in? On a micro-level? On a macro-level? Are we more connected than before? Who do we want to talk to? What are the things we need to work on? The arts will play a crucial role in the next steps in our country for sure, granted, music, TV, storytelling, and art are needed as a society” (Interview, New York, 8).

There are two threads of this finding – the first being societal expectations for the performing arts experience and the second being the anticipation for the arts to get back to live performances eventually.

“The arts are uplifting. We need to keep producing. We need to keep the positivity and look forward to the times when we can have live productions. I have been to three drive in productions and see that people really want to be together. I think we have to stay on my toes and stay as prepared and flexible as possible” (Interview, Florida, 16).

Additionally, there are societal expectations for joy, hope, resiliency, storytelling, and healing to be transmitted and passed on through the performing arts to endure the COVID-19 pandemic.

Being a part of a community that has camaraderie and share unique experiences. Watching live theatre is so very special. The storytelling – seeing it live and off and on Broadway is spectacular (Interview, New York 4).

There are also societal expectations that theatre and the performing arts will come back to full capacity this year (2021). However, the interpretations of half of the interview candidates were not sure this would be a possibility:

“Arts organizations are not going to be back for a really long time. For example, the Broadway show, *Frozen*. It just got their closing notice, and it was like an ice bucket to their face. What New York might see is that it *is* Broadway first.” (Interview, New York, 3).

Society looks to the arts as a beacon and for the United States, the shining star is Broadway. The product is art; the customers are the audience and critics. Society and smaller venues, like those mentioned in Jacksonville, Florida are looking forward to the future and the enduring capabilities of art.

“It can feel very gloom and doom. Some fear. Some thoughts that the show will go on once we are allowed to go on. The media can make you feel like you should panic and that is challenging as a performer. Theatre, it will come back. It needs to be in the time and with the circumstances that are manageable” (Interview, New York 1).

“What we learned from 9/11 that theatre is necessary. We cannot let danger and dangerous things stop art. Art is essential. Theatre can be an escape. It is healing. The laughter is uplifting. You sit in a theatre for a 2-hour block of time and that’s what matters at the moment. How critical it was in 9/11 when they deemed theatrical employees essential. Be that story. We were doing *42nd Street* and the character of Peggy Sawyer really resonated. When my heart was broken at 9/11, I went to the Ford Theatre. It helped. It healed. It mattered” (Interview, New York, 2).

Our society has expectations for artistic leaders to delve into the core of the performing arts and to continue to create artistic works locally and nationally, in force.

2. Female Leaders observed Interpersonal Communication as a Core Component for Leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Female leaders’ observation of interpersonal communication and recognition of the deep connection between the audience and performers was significantly important throughout the

interview findings. This finding connects all three research questions and answers how the performing arts leaders observe, interpret, and innovate throughout the pandemic.

“Broadway Jukebox artists play games, for example Ben Platt did a zoom call with family and friends of *Dear Evan Hanson*. I think that they (performers) want to make sure the connection is still there and that its real. They also stress that it is important to stay home and to stop the spread and to stay immersed and interacting with fan community online. Keeping up responses” (Interview, Florida 5).

These female leaders are sensemaking and interpreting these connections to lead elements of the performing arts business. While the interpersonal element is a challenge within the limits only small gatherings occurring, leaders are adapting. While going back to shows with audiences of 1,200 is not happening now or for the foreseeable future, leaders are using this time to engage with the tough questions this presents.

“It is probably one of the hardest spots that theatre has been in since 9/11. That is the last reference I have for theatre not being the whole center of New York and the world at the time. Seeing things through a theatrical lens is incredible and it is a way to come together” (Interview, NY 2).

Female leaders adapt into virtual spaces by stepping forward virtually to help activate, teach, and create productions on innovative platforms.

“We are blessed that theatre has such a wide community span and so many community players that we can continue to educate, help and endear folks to theatre. There are so many places to donate. Being the voices that we are not going to stop and keep. This is not forever. The community will return” (Interview, FL 5).

One Broadway singer and university professor observed:

“With music especially it is the 1/1 aspect. It is not an exact science and it is not like science it is very much like an interpersonal relationship. So much is involved in acting and teaching and vocal arts. You counsel them. You instruct. You teach” (Interview, New York 6).

As a researcher, I witnessed firsthand the interpersonal connection that intertwines so many professional leaders and the need within the performing arts industry.

3. Female Leaders observed Interpersonal Connections as a Modality for Healing, Learning, and Hope.

The interviews interpreted the interpersonal connections matched with sensemaking and saw an opportunity for learning, healing, and hope to occur. The Broadway cast and company of Sara Bareilles' *Waitress* collaborated together on a virtual song in May 2020, supporting one of the cast members, Nick Cordero, who became ill with COVID-19. Virtual and interpersonal connections were mentioned regarding Broadway celebrities and their ability to connect and educate:

“Staying immersed and being active creates connection and learning. For example, *Mrs. Doubtfire* – the cast and crew did a behind the scenes. Disney has done sing a-longs – the entire cast of *Aladdin*. Idina Menzel did a sequence called Because we are still here. I think being aware in and of itself is not isolating. Being aware and interacting is a big one. While still being sensitive and educated. With Twitter and Instagram there are different mediums and culture and tone throughout. What and how people expect to learn - while not being disrespectful. It matters. Now the stars are focusing on their fans and there are choosing people that they interact with well in that matter. On those platforms. Respectful terms. It can be a lesson as to why we don't use a certain word or term. The performers or artists are choosing how to address someone if they aren't being appropriate. I think they are learning how to respond professionally without harm. For example, it shouldn't get into a he/she situation when you say it online – it is there. In black and white. Everyone sees it. That has never really happened before” (Interview, FL 6).

As a singer I work with X (Broadway charity) we are able to go virtually into a children's hospital to do singalongs with the kids. We aren't able and don't sing together. We can't harmonize like we could if it were in person, so essentially, we can't sing together, so sometimes it still feels sketchy when thinking about the technology. If it is not live then there might be a faster way to create content for the kids and the hospitals. (Interview, NY 1).

The transparency created with the accessibility to well-known performers, designers, and these connections allow for multi-tiered possibilities, leading to an adaptive tool actively used by these performing arts leaders -- acts of service.

4. The Performing Arts serves as a Crucial Tool for Community through Acts of Service.

These leaders interpreted the performing arts as a service, industry of care, and a crucial tool for community to elevate and teach.

“I believe arts can be used to give a voice to kids or refugee or unaccompanied and vulnerable populations. Teaching in the arts can be used as a form of communication and personal storytelling” (Interview, NY 3).

“When I look at *Waitress*, it is the first piece that I have done where it is, essentially telling a contemporary story of abuse. It is a story that needs telling” (Interview, NY 2).

Additionally, through the elements of teaching and healing, leaders can elevate voices and connect them. Elevating voices and stories allow some people to heal (those experiencing performing the story) and others to learn (those experiencing the story in their life).

“Everyone has a voice, and this should be a chance and a change to be heard. Be seen. I got into this business because I love it. Performers just don’t happen in a bubble. I love storytelling and it is vital. We are focused so much on the audience because there is a human need to hear storytelling. To tell stories and to be heard. We are such givers. The other side is to be and give knowledge and see. The exchange is so important” (Interview, New York 1).

Giving voice, elevating, and strengthening the diversity of performing arts narratives was mentioned in seventy-five percent of the interviews.

“The theatrical arts is one of the best ways to heal and learn. Theatre is a healing wonder” (Interview, Florida, 12).

This highlighted a focus that female leaders are centering around during the time of COVID-19. As leaders, we do this by:

“not being so internalized but being aware of other people’s struggles. By seeing the needs that people express on social media. All plays are stories. The stories that come out of this are going to be amazing, real” (Interview, Florida, 14).

These female leaders understand the performing arts’ value and are stepping forward with service as a goal when crafting and creating art during the COVID-19 pandemic. The word *actor*

literally means “to serve,” and throughout this pandemic the arts have served to heal through learning and storytelling.

“It is so personal. It is a job where you inhabit and experience their life in the front row yourself. It is part of the joy and squeezing the juice out of everything. I loved Beauty and the Beast. It is a clear morality tale being a part of a musical. I loved playing a strong confident and positive woman who struggled through adversity. Belle was strong confident and stood her ground without succumbing to some sort of base idea and giving up her morals” (Interview, New York 5).

Adaptiveness and the community as a whole. Creativity should remain at the center, along with the interest. We can change plans we can create and adapt new guidelines to follow. People still love watching live shows. It is for real. There is still a market for what we do, we just need new ways of getting things done (Interview, Florida, 16).

The arts serve hope, joy, and kindness, while also aiding in learning.

5. Sustainability is Linked to Artistic Resilience. The Fact that Leaders are Proactively Investing in the Artistic Intellectual Relationships between Colleagues, Organizations, and National Thought is Allowing the Arts to be Sustainable.

When reflecting on this time and the significant depth of their love for the performing arts, these theatrical leaders observed and interpreted the concept of sustainability and its link to the love of the performing arts.

“There must be a way to be more creative for spectators using something that is multi-framed, even while distanced, than the boxes we see on Zoom. Theatre is a visual art. The theatre is full of sensory experiences I am hoping we are finding ways to integrate what we can” (Interview, New York, 1).

“Well, everything we do has to have purpose and has to have meaning. The lack of funding and money etc. is a real concern. Right now, some people are writing stories. Stories are so vital. Stories come out of this poignant place of consumption” (Interview, New York, 6).

“For the foreseeable future it seems like virtual is the only way to create reliable theatre. Perhaps with and in time there could be more tests done so we can see how to step forward. Perhaps we can live stream more and actually watch a live performance happen” (Interview, New York 4).

There are parts of the craft and the business that are sustainable, such as keeping current with technology, being familiar, in the community, and taking calls from agencies or other organizations. Being “pro-active with networking” and procedural improvements that align with artistic values create sustainability (Interview, New York, 1).

“Sondheim’s 90th birthday special. While there are some significant challenges in Zoom with regards to performance avenues, it is what we are using right now. It is significant that the world and news and talk shows are being shown in the same format. That sort of internal resentment is not happening. People seem to be finding community even looking at old reruns for constant input and community. There must be a way to be more creative for spectators using something that is multi-framed, even while distanced, than the boxes we see on Zoom. Theatre is a visual art. The theatre is full of sensory experiences I am hoping we are finding ways to integrate what we can, and I don’t think animation is the way to go there. The challenge might be latency. All the speeds getting throttled, and all the tech stuff. It does seem like zoom’s priorities now are more business-oriented, but we will see” (Interview, New York, 8)

“I hope that the message is holding fast. Don’t give up. If there was ever a moment to not go into theatre unless you love it – it is now. This time is actually a test of how much you love it. The height of adversity is grinding to a halt. This business is hard. Theatre is hard. Right now, the jobs aren’t there. The other jobs outside of performer aren’t there either. The hope is that the message to keep on trying and fighting and to be resolute is there. The message to take care of yourself and your health. Realize your resources. Look at projected dates and make allowances and accommodations. Check the touring or regional guidelines. Keep up the craft. Check out certain cities, for example Chicago – you can now zoom in and audition. Realize there are tools and time is a tool.” (Interview, New York, 5).

Sustainability is linked to artistic resilience. The fact that we are talking about and proactively investing in artistic intellectual relationships between colleagues, organizations, and national thought is allowing the arts to be sustainable. “Art isn’t a science” (Interview, New York, 1). This shared access to connecting and sharing experiences virtually is crafting new and constant dialogue that maintains sustainability with the community.

“The sense of community online can be done in creative ways. There is this entirely new space, and you can live stream. We can create content on our own and show it. It is a way to stay connected to the community and to the art” (Interview, New York, 4).

We are creating sustainable arts during a pandemic by showing up virtually with our art, having the work have meaning, and then creating the connection between performer and audience.

“I think we have to frame things in conversation. People watch. Audience members are a part of the human experience. There are cues and permission to laugh and cry when you are a part of an audience. If someone does that expression it gives someone else permission to have an experience also. That is part of the problem with the adaptation of theatrical productions being virtual and experiences being solely online – it makes the experience still so one sided” (Interview, New York, 1).

This act of purposeful creating and making meaning creates sustainable performing arts work in this time of crisis and pandemic.

6. Technology is Enabling Artistic Resilience but Eliminating Leadership Positions.

Female performing arts leaders keep the arts alive during this time of crisis by observing, interpreting, and sensemaking. They are applying in a practical manner the utilization of technology to elevate, extend the narrative and heal. However, with this cognitive addition of technology in almost every area of artistic production, there must be a robust check of positions in all performing arts areas. As performing arts leaders, we look to see what and how the team is doing. Are all positions thriving during this pandemic or have some been removed and displaced?

Advertising spaces could be major drivers for the arts in this environment. Marketing seems to drive the global economy (Interview, New York, 1).

Seventy percent of the interviewees mentioned observing a potential removal of certain positions as a possibility for artistic resilience and survival (Appendix 1). The interviewees described their acute awareness that positions might be removed from the creative process, especially critical roles like director and designers.

“I think there are different opinions around new innovative projects, so keeping an open mind. The way I feel and the way my agencies feel; we see a decent amount of brands still shooting now. You have to look at opportunities and submissions in a new way. You aren’t really getting paid as much and they expect you to be the actor, director, producer etc. (Interview, New York, 4).

For example, a filmed scene would typically have a director, a camera operator, a sound technician, a lighting designer, a hair/makeup/wardrobe stylist, a script supervisor, and a performer. One interview mentioned this layout, and described how she, as a performer, is now single-handedly responsible for multiple positions. What used to require six people, is now condensed into one. Essentially, five of the six positions normally provided by a production company for a film shoot were cut.

Typically, pre-pandemic, the modern theatrical narratives and leadership were driven by the director’s vision and supported by designers and technicians. Is the vision and hope for new narratives still present if technology is substituted into the production and eliminates a director, or if the actor is responsible for all technology – like camera work or final product? Is there the same need for designers in the arts as before? I believe so. Technology should not be eliminating leadership roles; it should be illuminating them. What is worse, females typically held several of these positions, so we are seeing a cut to even more jobs for females in the arts.

7. Equity within the Performing Arts is a Balancing Act.

Technology fosters more equity, removes positions, and puts more burdens on certain people, specifically females and females of color. This challenge can be particularly burdensome for performing females, for whom, costuming, hair, and makeup needs can be more intensive and require more skills than males.

Several leaders observed the theme of equity within the performing arts' current state as allowing for an inclusive experience. These interpretations were outlined in over half of the interviews.

“The level of people that all get to share in this show watching experience is at an all-time high. Broadway is so expensive and costs a *lot* of money. With the fact that shows are available online and with localization anyone can access and enjoy the theatre right now” (Interview, Florida, 13).

“We should preserve the desire, passion, and to help people escape” (Interview, New York, 5).

Theatre provides escapism, community, and learning opportunities. While Broadway and large live theatrical experiences are closed, certain productions live virtually and are released with shared accessibility and equity across the United States. This is significant as the performing arts are “immersive, and you can think about it for days. It is not fleeting. It is an experience” (Interview, Florida 13).

“There are lots of things are out there. You have to take a lot with a grain of salt. You have to do your own research. So, you don't just follow. There is lots of material. I would hope things go back and be well rounded in this approach. To interpret the world that we live in. My hope it a lot of folks will see grey areas and become more aware” (Interview, New York, 5).

“There is so much on the phone and people going to Facebook. The events we share together are so cool because of the shared experience. There are so many people able to access this and even though some are small there is a willingness to keep the shows happening virtually on screen and it is so sweet that we get to enjoy it together” (Interview, Florida, 13).

These female leaders understand the significance of these theatrical experiences and the vitality of the connections occurring during a pandemic.

8. The COVID-19 Pandemic Measures are Providing Opportunities for a Hierarchy Shift within the Performing Arts.

The pandemic is creating an opportunity for innovation and hierarchical shifts. There is a significant spacial shift within the staging and overall performing arts work that we (Broadway, regional, local theatres, etc.) were previously producing at a too rapid pace. A hierarchal shift has the potential to occur because the arts are being interpreted by society as essential:

“We are seeing how essential we are. Arts matter so much. People need this escape. When people see productions that mimic this time – it is going to be powerful. There are virtual shows that are happening” (Interview, Florida, 14).

One Broadway female leading performer and activist stated:

“Now there is no hierarchy now. The hierarchy has broken. It has brought me closer to the theatre community in some ways. I am walking in other people’s shoes. Understanding the musician’s window into it for example. Theatre has changed, with the fact that there is no hierarchy, so with each creative project we can be reliable and that is reliable.” (Interview, New York, 7).

These innovative techniques being worked into technological spaces now during pandemic allow for more equity, hope, and potential shifts to change the pipelines and previous hierarchy allowing more female leadership in the performing arts scene on Broadway and in Florida. This absence in hierarchy is causing a resurgence of resilience within the female leaders in the performing arts. One Broadway performer interpreted this resilience as an opportunity to share multiple viewpoints:

“We could limit the fear. We could stop just having certain sides of politics shown in the performing arts. There is a limited scope that is reflected. There can be tunnel vision and a single focus. Some things are project - dependent but theatre should be about telling stories and having a lasting impact” (Interview, New York, 5).

Another Florida producer, writer, and director observed:

We need to discard the stigma that practicality is more important than passion. The stigma that at 23 someone needs a fulltime job. We need to destigmatize the arts. If you want to give it everything – go for it. Shoot, if you are so satisfied with what you know and what you are experiencing then there is so much you can do. There is such a financial banner and stigma that comes with people and some people don’t understand (Interview, Florida, 12).

Sixty percent of the interviewees observed a potential shift in previous production and artistic team hierarchies throughout the pandemic. Some interpreted this being a shift relating to union or non-union work; some observed a vision change. One interview from a New York-based Broadway performer mentioned a cognitive shift in sensemaking by stating she now looking at the world through “a lens that humanity is good” (Interview, New York, 3).

“What I love about (X musical) it is a story of resilience where her (leading role) ambition is the key to the piece. She is always finding hope for her next steps. She took charge of her life and flipped it on its side. Where being a woman has nothing to do with it. Her hopes and dreams hit on deep themes that are universal and one can see the possibilities are endless” (Interview, New York, 7).

A Broadway leading performer and university vocal professor states:

“There is no live theatre. At least not at the moment. You can’t keep extending into forever. It somehow feels like the beginning. There are many people keeping the love and joy alive. It is truly just gut joy. There is still an energy that things are happening. Streaming is happening – it is just not live which is depressing. I don’t want that to be the future. Theatre needs that live interaction. It is a fear I have. I am trying to teach elementary kids with online learning and math and such. But with music – it is like play this song on the smart device. There is no connection. No sense of being a part of things. Man – it is already a struggle to keep the arts alive. It seems like people are relying on live stream. People need it. They are taking every opportunity. And maybe only part of the money that previously. As usual real art has to take a hit financially.” (Interview, New York, 6)

This surge of resilience and hierarchical shift is allowing leaders to create opportunities and lead their own destiny in a new way.

“You can be in charge of your own destiny in a new way. People are taking the change at differing levels. There are now online acting courses available. There are physical things you can do to continue your craft and work. You do have to remember to reach out though” (Interview, New York 4).

This finding significant implications for leaders within current adaptive expressive art. Certain leaders are beginning to sense-make and shift focus from the whole scale of humanity to the finite detail of the craft. In a pandemic, leaders can still innovate, experiment, and build their craft by focusing in on their personal practice.

9. Staying Active with Personal and Professional Priorities is Essential.

The topic of priorities is a fascinating conversation to be had, especially during a pandemic, and it was exceptionally poignant with these sixteen interviewees. All interview candidates mentioned priorities of mental and physical health, and the priorities of self, sensemaking, and self-preservation were mentioned in all interviews.

“We are a support system for each other as well as vehicles for each other’s creativity. The common purpose. People are feeling connected” (Interview, New York, 7).

Staying alive and active in the craft provides the support system needed to continue the work. While art speaks to society and to an audience, some interviewees spoke of the need for creating art during a pandemic as a necessity for themselves (not just for an audience). Art benefits society and also the individual or creative team.

“I am working on visual art and video. A lot of movies. I am finding natural collaborators. For example, I am seeing that there is art that connects for example, *The Princess and the Frog*. This was the first princess that looked like me. I realize I had the same feeling of connection. It was and is a visceral experience. I am realizing I need to sit on my emotions for a while” (Interview, Florida, 14).

These female artists are adapting through the need to process the pandemic and uncertainty of the times that we are experiencing. They are adapting while also trying to create content to perform for or show to an audience.

“I took this as a time to create art. And creating is a priority for me. Mental health is a big thing, and it is something that I have to focus on” (Interview, Florida, 14).

“Actors are carnivores of silence. We love to serve something whether it is something obvious or tiny. For example, the #metoo movement – I think if we don’t tell these stories then movements like me too are going to become more prevalent. We need to start the discussion that needs to happen. We can watch some excellent performances then break out and have a feeling of connection. We can gain forward momentum. We can see pivotal points in the story and the character and see her move forward and to also feel support” (Interview, New York, 7).

Two-thirds of the interviews interpreted the need to create art and continue within the craft for their own personal practice and well-being. Certain interviewees observed taking time to process during this pandemic by interpreting current theatrical culture as “Necessary. Cathartic. Timeless” (Interview Florida, 14). Being isolated during this pandemic has heightened personal skills like connection to society and self through listening.

One Florida based performer, writer, director, and poet states:

“I feel like I am constantly eavesdropping even when on grocery runs. Like I am paying attention to the conversations” (Interview, Florida, 14).

Another Broadway based performer and university professor cites:

“So many people are full of anger and frustration. When we do go out or connect with someone be kind and have some kind of community in person. There has to be a human connection, Music can still be there. It can still happen. I know there is a way. Safe. What is safe. Not invading or inviting anyone else. Our core is at home and it can feel and touch your heart and take a minute to center.” (Interview, New York, 6).

This awareness of dialogue and talking/listening has significant implications for the growth in the types of art we will see in the future. We might be seeing more conversational work. We hope to see more performing arts works that center around real dialogue, conversations, and experiences, while still appealing to subscribers and audiences. This tension highlights the creative leader’s challenge between making art to make art for catharsis and making virtual art that is appealing to national audiences. I anticipate this tension will continue throughout the remainder of the pandemic and into next year.

10. Financial and Long-Term Success is a Major Factor within the Performing Arts.

Safety, financial need and the significant lack of funding in the performing arts have been major plot points during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The artists need support right now. They – we – are not looking for a handout. Artists are smart. We have to manage our schedules and accounts. There is not an unlimited pool of work, so we have to make sure the work is important. It has to be more than an unemployment check at this point. I appreciate the freedom to still audition for jobs that pay. One wants to be building a following and understand the marketing aspects too. The arts need to be viable as income” (Interview, New York, 1).

Financial and artistic success is vital for resilience to occur. One observation that proves key to self-preservation is staying embedded in the arts and doing that by staying in the craft and having the funds to provide for yourself and your organization.

“We have to figure out what is available. We have to find some time and wiggle around the boundaries of art. We have to realize there are options. We need some consistency before we come together” (Interview, Florida, 15).

“I am thirsty and believe that theatre will provide for us what is meant for us. Theatre has gone through other plagues and survived. It can be stripped down. My place in theatre will come forth” (Interview, New York, 7).

Focusing in on the preservation aspect, the current narrative is driven by word-of-mouth success and long-term success goals and resilience. We can make the arts reliable and sustainable by allowing artists to have self-preservation alongside our global community and technology.

“Without the live aspect it is something different. I think it is smart to continue to keep the interest alive and to try to keep people interested” (Interview, New York, 6).

“The only reliable part of theatre is connecting with each other and we have to adapt because I want to keep myself doing the things I love” (Interview, New York, 7).

“How do we do it with less people and not have it affect safety or costs. We must do it for the good of the cause. For the good of the whole” (Interview, New York, 10).

Each interview understood each person’s value within the structure of a performing arts production and understood the costs of what we do to create a live production experience.

11. Female Leaders' Insights on Value Placement within the Performing Arts Industry.

While all interviews answered the first and third research questions the second question regarding the interpretive and sensemaking qualities a leader must possess resonated strongly within this finding. The words “value”, “respect”, and “smart” surfaced seventy-five percent of the analytical discussions about being a current female leader in the arts. While most interviews emphasized the importance of being viewed and valued as a female leader in the arts. Moreover, several interviews went into detail interpreting specific instances within their career path where they have been undervalued, as well as the challenges to even step forward as a leader in this industry. Other female leaders cited the strength and toughness one must garnish to survive and thrive in this industry. All interviews spoke well of other female leaders within the arts and females as a whole.

12. Female Leaders are Undervalued by being Underestimated.

How are female leaders supposed to exhibit and lead while utilizing adaptive leadership techniques if challenges continue and stop traction before it gets started? How do we forge access and ability to step forward into the performing arts leadership pipeline when current leaders are underestimated? One of the interviewees shared this insight into the quality of being undervalued and underestimated:

“I get underestimated quite a bit *until* I actually perform. After the fact people come up to me and show respect, appreciation, etc. Theatre is still a male dominated industry. We still have barriers that exist. We, as females, have to do a whole lot more to prove ourselves and to be able to advance through this industry. If you want to be a woman in this business, we have to jump through things. We have to look a certain way. Act a certain way. Be skinnier. And once we do get recognition, then we have to think. For me, I am aware of the ethnic factor. They want me to play young-ish but not too young. Be smart but not too smart” (Interview, Florida, 14).

Reflecting on our youth poet laureate, Amanda Dawson, and the depth of her performance at the Presidential inauguration, we see that poetry provides a visible platform for current leaders. Dawson's brilliance, shown on screen in January 2021, highlighted that age should not be a factor with regards to leadership within the performing arts industry. In 1977, Andrea McArdle who originated the title role of Annie in the Broadway musical was only eleven years old; she that carried the show from pre-production theatre venues all the way to Broadway (MTI shows, 2021).

The interviews observed the importance of personal identity and value in tandem with the organization's connection or performing arts production.

"I don't think women are valued in the performing arts. For example, Adrian Campbell Holt – she is a director I know from Boston. Listening to her and how she has had to navigate the corporate culture. Listening to how she has been treated, it should be and could be so much better. The work we as women have to do to get in the door. It is really like an entirely different business if you are a female in the arts. The weird thing is I saw the emotional damage. Everything is physical. Beauty lasts in this business until you are 26. You have to be better, smarter than the males in this business – but don't be TOO smart. I think the #metoo movement might be reflected and looked at too through this lens. We need to find women who support it. It would be phenomenal to have women's theatre. Women's narratives" (Interview, New York, 3).

13. Female Leaders are Undervalued due to a Lack of Acceptance and Appreciation for a Certain Female Types within this Industry.

Females are undervalued due to a lack of acceptance for certain female types within the performing arts industry. As mentioned in the literature, America Ferrara interprets the lack of vision for different types of female types within the performing arts industry, specifically television and film. One interviewee expanded on this observation in great detail citing the lack of realization of the beauty of being female.

“So, within the TV world it seems like things are slowly opening up for women in leadership spaces. For the film and theatre space – this is at slower paces. It really doesn’t seem fully realized. The expectations for females in these spaces are that they need to be bone rail thin or morbidly obese to work. For the first time it seems that heavier women are being seen, but women seem always regaled to the extreme. There is almost no acceptance on the in between. So, either you are an object of desire or you are comedy. The in between is almost non-existent. What is beautiful? What is beautiful is what is being put out in Italian sculpture. Women had meat on their bones but were beautiful. Perhaps if we can have casting directors who saw women more desirable and more castable and that the softness that makes them female is a desirable characteristic. The female that makes them female is desirable and wanted and needed and appreciated” (Interview, New York, 1).

Another interview specifically mentioned the film and modeling space’s lack of value or acceptance around their identity as females in the performing arts. This is significantly disappointing because as a society while in quarantine during the pandemic, even more of our community have been watching television and films. Stacy Wolf, Professor of Theatre at Princeton University states “Girls are trying to balance social pressures and emotional desires, to find a place for themselves” in the theatrical world (p.228).

“At times I felt that I have not been taken as seriously. Or people don’t think I am experienced enough. I do think there is something around being female in the arts and what we do. For example, the #metoo movement. This is especially relevant in the arts. Especially with modeling and acting in TV. Somehow it seems that TV is a more accepting space than theatre, film, and modeling. In film and modeling you can get a nasty string of misogyny and racism and sexism” (Interview, New York, 4).

“It is freeing to perform a role that has nothing to do with romance. That this is indeed *her* story. She is changing the story for herself. The narrative that is out there is offensive. There are two shows I could have a role in – one is *Aladdin* which has a stereotypical female narrative, and it is not the stereotype I want to play or *The Band’s Visit* – again, not a positive female role” (Interview, New York, 7).

14. Female Leaders are Undervalued when it comes to Visibility in Production Positions.

One seasoned Broadway interviewee interpreted her value around visibility issues and being a female leader in the performing arts. This specific interviewee had been a dance captain

for three major Broadway shows. Dance captain is a highly respected position. The dance captain assists the choreographer and after a Broadway show opens, maintains the original choreography, so it doesn't get sloppy. She also teaches any replacements for leading, supporting, or ensemble roles. She states:

“I hope that I am seen. It has been welcoming in my experience, but it could be project position-dependent for example being dance captain for X Broadway musical” (Interview, New York, 5).

By all production standards, she was a critical leader; the fact that she even questioned if she was seen and visible as a leader speaks to the environments of different Broadway productions with regards to challenges and elevations levels. A Broadway female leading performer comments on the narrative surrounding the lack of visibility currently on Broadway:

“I hope they expand the narrative of Middle Eastern women in the arts. We are women who have our hopes and dreams. I hope that we move away from stereotypes in all performing arts and go towards real storytelling (Interview, New York, 7).

Another Florida-based technical director and designer observed the lack of visibility and opportunities within leadership as:

“They skip past me. This is the nature of the beast. I have become accustomed to it, but now I have built up some private clients and am the manager for some solid events that things are growing” (Interview, Florida, 16).

The finding, and its implications highlight some of the biggest challenges that current female leaders in the industry are not seen and valued even when they are in a position or place of power. This challenge faces current female leaders in both the Jacksonville (local area) and Broadway pipelines. This finding aligns with the American Conservatory Theater's finding centered around a lack of trust for female leaders in the industry (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016). It has nothing to do with the merit and leadership skills, but rather, there is a lack of trust. With the

only advantage to a female being hired into a role is if they were a part of that organization to begin with (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016). I believe we can do better.

15. Female Leaders are Undervalued when Observing and Interpreting our Deep-Rooted Strength.

Leading females in the performing arts industry are undervalued when observing the deep-rooted strength that exists across personal and professional identities. By valuing female leaders, their choices, and their strength, we can structure a societal narrative. One of my interviews specifically cited this and stated:

Women are the toughest people on earth. Women will rise. Remember the strength of historical women. Look at Nick Cordero's wife. We have to pull through" (Interview, New York, 2).

"I see how lucky I am to have been born when I was. It seems that shows are beginning to bring on women in certain position and hear women's voices in theatre. We need the female narrative in some theatrical storytelling. There needs to be more- light on our stories. Or narratives and viewpoints. *Wicked* brings some of that, as does *All about Eve*" (Interview, Florida, 12).

The strength that females within this industry have is incredible and pushes to facets outside of their career. I worked with actor Nick Cordero on a film project a few years ago. In Spring 2020, I watched via Instagram as his wife, Amanda Kloots lost him to COVID-19 in July. Her journey was from the viewpoint of a wife and mother. This deep-rooted personal strength carries over when interpreting how to manage a crisis, like a pandemic, and innovate within organizations. Our toughness is what makes us great.

“We are finding strength through virtual concerts not for fundraising just for the connection. It is an act of service to the community around us. It is the perfect time to do this and the landscape of being online. Great performers such as Kristin Chenoweth, Audra McDonald, and Lady Gaga. This is shifting the mindset of theatre. We must extend compassion to each other. We as a community didn’t have an action plan. We hope that they will show up for us. The union is trying to serve us well and we serve them. These are all difficult decisions. Some shows that have to close....We are going to ensure the theatre will eventually come back. Some form of theatre for every person” (Interview, New York, 7).

“The other two singing instructors are male. I bring the comfort or the comforting mother aspect to vocal instruction and coaching. I enjoy that. I bring that to the table. I am Mom X (last name) and its okay (Interview, New York, 6).

Not surprisingly, some of these interpretations around value struck a part of me, as a performing arts professional, that I have had to keep hidden or tucked away in order to lead within this industry. *Wicked*, the Broadway musical has a lyric “this weird quirk I’ve tried to suppress or hide is a talent that could help me meet the Wizard.” There is a part of personal leadership identity linked to one’s sense of worth and value. This constant sensemaking to find acceptance within this pipeline has certainly sparked my desire to find recommendation pathways for adapting to the challenges of why females and females of color are kept out of leadership.

Recommendations

To successfully continue the important work needed to further the performing arts during this pandemic and to promote equal and diverse voices in the arts, these female performing arts leaders empowered and equipped themselves with interpretive, innovative, and adaptive techniques in their leadership paths. These recommendations answer the research questions: (1) the role that the performing arts is currently playing for our society in the depths of stay-at-home orders and a global pandemic, and (2) explore the connection that female leaders are utilizing to step forward in their career paths and within their theatrical organizations or community.

Following an in-depth review of the adaptive leadership literature that connected themes and solidified my analysis, I have the following recommendations. Recommendation one is specifically for the leadership at Generation W, and the last two recommendations are for both Generation W and our national industry leaders.

Recommendation 1: The female leaders of Generation W need to continue the call for performing arts accessibility and meet societal expectations.

According to the core fundamentals of adaptive leadership, well-designed recommendations provide context and connection for leaders. Leaders can then sense-make and craft interpretations that fit the work's core and purpose, so the perspective is relevant to the organization's collective effort or production's goals. These female leaders need to continue to reinvent accessibility and the core of the performing arts. This platform is needed now more than ever. As people stay locked at home due to a pandemic, there is a chance to make names for female leaders regarding accessibility to crucial material, community connections, and artistic resilience. The collective challenges voiced by these sixteen female leaders highlighted the

tenacity we must continue to have as leaders, even when experiencing pandemic fatigue (after one year of adaptiveness, with no ending date in sight).

Female leaders in the arts must continue to use dynamic tactics, like social media connections within the performing arts community to shift this narrative of female independence and success. The need for these messages in the theatre are magnified even more with pandemic culture, as people are more isolated and cannot have as much connection in person. Virtual arts and experiences are a strong substitute and can serve as a major source for normalcy and sensemaking.

American Conservatory Theater based out of San Francisco called out the lack of mentorship programs for females within the performing arts industry (Ekurt & Cedar, 2016). Boaler's analysis of females within an educational structure found the key connections to females' success in educational trajectory are grounded in connection and relational understanding alongside mentors or teachers (Boaler, 2002). One critical dynamic suggestion would be a paired peer mentoring program virtually housed by Generation W within Jacksonville.

According to the National Academy of Sciences: "Mentoring occurs when a senior person or mentor provides information, advice, and emotional support to a junior person or student over time" (Lev, Kolassa, & Bakken, 2010). Peer mentoring describes a relationship where a more experienced student helps a less experienced student improve overall academic performance and provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee (Colvin & Ashman 2010). Unlike other mentoring styles, peer mentoring matches mentors and mentees roughly equal in age and power for the task and psychosocial support (Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002; Terrion & Leonard, 2007).

This interdisciplinary network could focus on three benchmarks for success including (1) mentee's academic success within their artistic programs at their high school, (2) cultivate a sense of community support within Jacksonville, (3) develop practical skills within the business of the performing arts. The strategies of this mentoring cohort are: (1) ease the transition between courses at their current high school, (2) provide information, support, and encouragement throughout designing, performing, or directing projects, (3) foster congeniality and friendship between performing arts students at different schools, (4) encourage networking and leadership throughout the Jacksonville area regarding academic and community-run performing arts productions. The mentoring cohort could follow the academic school years in Duval, Nassau, and St. John's Counties (greater Jacksonville area), and have a review with myself, the leaders of Generation W, and other performing arts leaders within the Jacksonville community.

This mentoring cohort 2021-2022 can propel forward in vision after an analytical review in Summer 2022 and expand connections between high school female leaders within all sectors: business, performing arts leaders, scientists, engineers, marketing, medical executives, etc. This expansion would allow networking opportunity outlets for high schoolers and involve leaders at Jacksonville's three major universities (University of North Florida, Jacksonville University, Florida State College).

The mentoring cohort 2021-2022 needs to create and share meaningful content on social media platforms in the hopes of building a collective movement of future female leaders perhaps with a hashtag similar to #genwfutureleader or #futurefemaleleaderscohort. As leaders, we can capitalize on connections through innovative technology platforms thereby connecting our social media hashtags to other strong structured campaigns, such as the #racismisavirus, #womenalsoknow, #femaledirector, #minorityownedbusiness, and #thecleanestline.

Having a strong connection with a marketing campaign is one of the many ways we could have our collective voice heard on social media. Real work can be highlighted and propelled forward with our collective Generation W voices as we capitalize on growth and diversity and continue to build the collective movement.

Recommendation 2: The female leaders in the performing arts should continue the narrative that we as Americans are all in this together. Humanity is collectively in this world and space together, so keep continuing the female narrative.

We must continue to be creative while sticking to the performing arts' values and mission of learning and equity, while valuing individual craftsmanship and collective organizational work. No one has all the answers. Performing arts leaders need to use their platform for good and remind the country that we have been through worse and rise above. There is such strength in the ability to have adaptive spontaneity in leadership, keeping things that matter and discarding what doesn't matter at that time. The call for learning, hope, and healing across types of theatrical productions and to continue propelling inclusive actions within our organizations.

Along with the cohort mentioned above, we can begin to thread together collective movements locally in Jacksonville beginning with the performing arts and organizing alongside and other strong non-profits (i.e., The Museum of Science and History or the Museum of Contemporary Art) to foster interdisciplinary gatherings and conversations that would include for all majors such as leadership, science, technology, education, art, and math. Another thought is to partner with a collective movement, such as Theatre in our Schools, #theatreinourschools, or the collective wellness movement that the company Bandier, #bandier, started. Bandier could co-sponsor a mental and physical health initiative in Jacksonville, specifically with our cohort and provide avenues for conversations and activities around leadership and the need for

community, support, priorities, and overall wellness. By connecting with a larger collective movement on social media platforms there is potential for national growth, networking, and opportunities for current and future female leaders to learn how to prioritize and align with personal and professional health.

Recommendation 3: Female leaders should use their platform as a voice for minorities and marginalized communities by allowing performing arts productions to be equitable through a focus on a shared initiative of healing, progression toward all-inclusive practices and developing consistent links to humanity.

Female leaders need to continue their dynamic and innovative wave of change. This interpretive movement allows the world to see and make sense of the work through a female leader's lens and a collective movement with a focus on intersectionality. Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw of Columbia University has been interpreting the concept of intersectionality for thirty years and defines it as: the observable and analytical intersection of power imbalance (Coaston, 2019). Intersectionality is intended to address individuals, movements, and collective efforts to address one form of oppression and take others into account. This collective movement progression within the performing arts can be observed and interpreted within the frame of intersectionality (Ted Women, 2016). The observable findings centering on Acts of Service, Sustainability, Value, and Equity point to the need for equitable and shared initiatives centered around the intersection of healing one's self, one's community, and one's organization.

Communication experts state that when "facts do not fit in the available frames people have difficulty incorporating" new solutions into their view for thinking about a problem. In this case, we have a virtual platform to solve and elevate the intersection of being female, being a person of color, and having a disability. These incredible voices, writers, directors, designers,

and producers can start crafting these alternate narratives. If given this virtual platform we could create a digital panel to manage content, we might begin to hear in poetry, storytelling, and music the intersecting narratives, sounds, and stories of underrepresented communities.

Theatrical companies and organizations can actively begin to be inclusive in their hiring practices for leadership and when casting a show. These new hires could include female directors of color and diverse special needs artists. These stories and viewpoints are of interest to society. They need to be shared. They have impact and need to be experienced.

Society is visual, so increasingly adding diverse performers or musicians of color, different ages, abilities we have an opportunity to represent the diversity of all constituents in the United States. This inclusivity might support and link audience connection to humanity and will aid the learning elements within the performing arts. We can use the virtual platforms on social media, connect with theatrical companies to begin consulting on the season choices, and encourage them to look for female and diverse authors.

Diversifying the arts is not just about having the same shows with a diverse cast but having a diversity of stories onstage. We can encourage theatre companies to look for diverse female authors, new playwrights, and swerve from the mainstream in their choices for productions. “Vital Voices: 100 Women Using their Power to Empower” is an example of a written piece that highlights a diverse array of women. The writing paints portraits of women through their words on what drives them to do what they do. Perhaps staging portions of this work and hearing these vital voices would be an innovative, and practical start to this collective virtual movement.

Strengths and Limitations

The choice of qualitative research for this project allows for specific voices to be heard and elevated. These recommendations are promising in that one of the key strengths is embedded into the mission of the organization, Generation W, to promote and empower future female leaders (Generation W, 2020). Another encouraging feature within this project is the tie into adaptive leadership observations and experimental opportunities. Innovations in collaborative technology are happening now, so the recommendations center around ideas that can continue conversations in fields outside of the performing arts.

One point worth noting is that Broadway is still closed. The bookmarks of this study began prior to the Broadway closure on March 13, 2020, and now, in March 2021, Broadway theatres remain closed in New York. This is the closure of an industry contains almost 100,000 jobs total for New York City as of March 2021.

These recommendations contain some limitations. One limitation is the sample size. The sample of participants may be biased in that these sixteen interviewees might have been highly motivated to share in their experiences and leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, so that might be a contributing factor that I was not able to capture. In addition, all of the turmoil happening throughout this last year hit females and mothers especially hard. Unemployment and childcare added pressure that females are feeling at this time. This heightened emotional pressure alongside time limitations might have hindered certain people's availability to speak with me on this project.

Conclusion

This capstone helped identify key findings that contribute to a societal understanding of the need for the arts and its benefit, especially during a global pandemic. Alternatively, the incredible need for more female leaders within the narrative of the performing arts structure and need for systemic change is still essential. This project sheds light on the importance of observing, interpreting, and finding the opportunities for change on the regional and national levels. There is an opportunity for current leadership to craft a virtual platform that serves as a voice to produce equitable performing arts experiences including shared initiatives of healing, progression towards inclusive practices and developing links to humanity, all of which are currently needed. By focusing leadership on creative adaptive spontaneity, artistic resilience, and equity, Generation W can step forward with large scale events once the pandemic has subsided, and in the meantime allow leaders to lead forward, mentor, and build momentum in virtual spaces.

Katrin Jakobsdottir, Prime Minister of Iceland states “women’s economic independence is the key to ending women’s inequality. Policies matter and can lead the way by adapting policies that ensure women’s participation in the economy and society at large” (Women Political Leaders, 2020). One opportunity that exists is the call to research challenges of female leadership in other areas outside of the arts with a broader focus on societal issues of power, positioning, and inclusion. Continuing to research, analyze, and adapt these important and influential female leaders at Generation W has the potential to create innovative, effective, and powerful future leadership programming and models for generations.

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Appendix 1

This information on job opportunities for a Broadway musical was pulled from the *Amazing Grace* Playbill from the Nederlander Theatre (July 2015). It is a typical musical layout of positions on a Broadway show.

Administrative

- Company Manager
- General Press Representative
- Publicist
- Box Office
- Ticket Sales
- Marketing
- Social Media
- Website Manager
- Advertising
- Community Engagement
- Videographer
- Banking
- Insurance
- Legal Counsel
- Accountant
- Controller
- Payroll
- Travel

- Housing
- Production Photography
- Merchandise
- Opening Night Coordination
- Physical Therapy
- Medical Director

Production

- Executive Producer
- Producer
- Production Stage Manager
- Stage Manager
 - o Assistant Stage Manager
- Author
- Composer
- Director
 - o Assistant Director
- Choreographer
- Music Director/Arranger
- Dialect Coach
- Production Manager
- General Management
- Flying Supervisor
- Production Assistants

- Interns
- Translators
- West African Musical Consultant

Designer

- Lighting Designer
 - Moving Light Programmer
- Scenic Designer
 - Production Carpenter
 - Head Carpenter
 - Deck Automation
 - Production Electrician
 - Head Electrician
- Sound Designer
 - Production Sound Supervisors
 - Head Sound
 - Assistant Sound
- Costume Designer
 - Assistant Costume Designer
 - Wardrobe Supervisor
 - Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor
 - Dressers
- Hair and Makeup Designer
 - Hair and Makeup Supervisor
 - Assistant Hair Supervisor
 - Hair Stylists
- Special Effects Designer
- Fight and Military Movement
- Production Properties

- Head Props
- Assistant Props

Orchestra

- Conductor
 - Associate Conductor
- Keyboard
- Percussion
- French Horn
- Trumpet
- Trombone
- Flutes
- Bostrom
- Violin/Concertmaster
- Violin/Viola
- Cello
- Bass
- Music Coordinator
 - Associate Music Coordinator
- Music Preparation
- Keyboard Programmers

Performer

- Cast
 - Principal
 - Chorus
 - Dance Captain
 - Assistant Dance Captain

- Understudy
- Swing
- Fight Captain

Casting Agency

Staff

- House Manager
- Treasurer
- Assistant Treasurer
- House Carpenter
- Flyman
- House Electrician
- House Properties
- Head Usher

Appendix 2

The following questions were used for the interviews:

Exploration of Theatrical and Artistic Appreciation, Cognitive Processes, and Background

1. What do you enjoy most about theatre?
2. What is at the core of theatre?
3. What is your most current role or position in theatre?
4. What is your favorite theatrical production that you have been a part of and why?
5. What is your relationship with the audience?

Exploration of Current Outlook in the Arts during COVID-19

6. What messages are theatrical productions receiving at this very moment?
7. From where do these messages come from?
8. What three key words would you use to describe current theatrical culture at this moment?
9. What do you think should be prioritized in the theatrical arts right now?
10. What do you see as the role of the theatrical arts as the country is experiencing COVID-19?
11. What is informing your decision making in next steps for your career?
12. What do you think is informing other decision makers in your theatrical arts organization?

Exploration of Community, Technology and Potential Cognitive Shifts in the Arts

13. Typically, performers share the theatre space with each other and the audience, but given this timing how do we create a sense of community online?

14. What are key factors in creating this community culture during COVID-19?
15. Do you feel community connections during this time of COVID-19?
16. In what ways are you centering priorities right now?
17. How frequently would you say your priorities shift?
18. How do we create reliable theatre at this moment in time?

Exploration of Adaptability, Preservation, and Re-arrangement of the Arts during COVID-19

19. How are you adapting expectations for art during this time?
20. Who are you working with as you adapt your artistic endeavors right now?
21. What, if any, types of artistic experimental endeavors are you engaging in right now?
22. What should we preserve about the performing arts?
23. What could we discard in order to create opportunity to flourish?
24. What other environments are available besides large gatherings?
25. Who do you look to for guidance outside of your current organization?

Exploration of Leadership Identity as a Female in the Performing Arts

26. How do you think being a female affects how you are seen in the performing arts?
27. What barriers or challenges do you see as adaptations occur in the arts?