



“BALLET MEETS BUSINESS”, A SEMINAR ORGANISED JOINTLY WITH IMD, THE PRESTIGIOUS BUSINESS SCHOOL

An extraordinary learning event - Ballet Meets Business - took place on Wednesday January 31 at IMD. This workshop was hosted jointly by IMD and the Prix de Lausanne, an internationally renowned competition for young dancers of all nationalities, on the occasion of its 35th Anniversary. (the semi-final of which takes place this Saturday, February 3, and the final on February 4th .) This unique event, on the leading edge of trans-disciplinary experience, put into perspective two themes that were treated by IMD professors and personalities of the ballet world : performance on demand and collaborative leadership. The speakers from the dance world were : David Nixon, Artistic Director Northern Ballet Theatre; Sue Hoyle, Deputy Director of the Clore Leadership Program ; Siobhan Davies, Artistic Director Siobhan Davies Dance Company; and Frank Andersen, Artistic Director Danish Royal Ballet. Present from IMD : George Kohlrieser, Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior; Maury Peiperl, Professor of Leadership and Strategic Change; and IMD President, Dr. Peter Lorange.

Among the many personalities at this event was Philippe Braunschweig, the Honorary Chairman and Founder of The Prix de Lausanne. Peter Lorange introduced the two guest speakers and the IMD Faculty members, linking the artistic side and business side of the learning event.

David Nixon, the first guest speaker, started dance lessons in his home town of Chatham, Ontario, before being accepted at the National Ballet School of Canada where his training began. Today he is the Artistic Director of the Northern Ballet Theatre and second time winner of the “Dance Europe Director of the Year” award. David spoke about *Performance on Demand*. “Dance and IMD are two similar worlds. Management is like dance”, he said. “Today’s world is spontaneous with remote controls, ready-made dinners; we expect everything to work instantly. We too, as human beings, have to perform “on demand.” This is made possible when we are confident, have freedom of inhibition, are self-motivated. Confidence enables people to achieve. Demand the best of yourself. As leaders we must allow an environment where people can make mistakes, express themselves freely, wear their hearts on their sleeves. And, as directors we also have to supply on demand.” Talking about audience expectations, David said that the challenge is to create a bond with the audience by taking them on a journey. “The audience has a comfort zone, but likes to be surprised.” He concluded by expressing his passion for his business and how privileged he is to be part of it.



If we have passion, should we perform “on demand?”

George Kohlrieser, IMD Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behaviour, and author of *Hostage at the Table* told his audience that we all should bridge the gaps between performance and business. “Talent comes from resilience and business people should learn this from the artists. Change your mindset – be positive. We should all be able to reach our highest level of potential,” he said. “We are all hostage to our negative states. Expand your neurons and stop doing things in a box. Do new things! Let’s change the myth people don’t like change.”

Maury Peiperl, IMD Professor of Leadership & Strategic Change, talked about *Collaborative Leadership*. He referred to the London Symphony Orchestra and its autonomous approach to leading without a leader. “They learn from one another”, he said. “However, collaboration is over-rated if you don’t have the right thing to do. There must be a creative vision. Good management is to avoid boredom. We need to stretch our skills and use creativity.”

The second guest speaker was Siobhan Davies, founder of Siobhan Davies Dance Company. Among many awards, Siobhan has received a CBE in the New Year’s Honours 2002 and in January last year, she opened the Siobhan Davies Studios for which she was awarded a RIBA prize. Siobhan takes us on a journey backstage and talks about leadership as a sharing process. “Our common human journey is learning from each other. My main collaborators are dancers in a constant learning position. Don’t push a new idea away, test it, do not dismiss it. Their minds and bodies are the same thing. They learn to dance so body and mind become one. Building up physical intelligence builds up mental intelligence.” Siobhan used the metaphor of cellular structures – every part of our bodies are made up of tiny cells and when we compose a new dance I tell my dancers to find the first cell and multiply it as in the makeup of our bodies. Each cell has a quality of its own. “We cannot divide brain and body.”

The meeting left us with the thought that management is very much like a dance. They are both about human beings; they integrate people in a common enterprise. They are about communication: choreographers and dancers with audiences, managers and employees with their customers.

The meeting was followed by cocktails and then dinner on IMD’s campus.

Prix de Lausanne 2007 – 35th edition – January 31st 2007/ end