

PARTNERSHIP IN OR OFF SHIP

*PERSPECTIVES OF THE ETHICS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND
PARTNERSHIP IN THE PERFORMING ART*



**A REPORT WRITTEN BY
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PUBLICATION DETAILS

PARTNERSHIP IN OR OFF SHIP? CREATING SPACE FOR DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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Summary

This publication provides a detailed review of a curated series of dialogue on the ethics of international cooperation and partnership in the performing art.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Alex D. Loo is an activist for women and LGBTQI+ writing in Peru. She is a co-founder of the Association of Independent and Diverse Feminists of Arequipa and the activist drum ensemble Bomba Cuir. She has a Master of Arts and applied linguistics from the University of Leicester, UK. "I started in the academic world, just going to university, following in the footsteps of my parents, who are professors, in a sort of a bubbled, privileged background, right? However, I lived in other countries, and then when I came back to Peru, I started to learn more about the society and feel the oppression in my body because I do not know if you know a lot about Peru. However, the context here is highly oppressive, highly conservative, and it has become more so in the last few years."

Charles Etubiebi is an actor, T.V., stage & screen, and the artistic director for Theater Emissary International, a Nigerian theatre company that uses theater as a tool for social change. "We, at inception, the idea of Theatre Emissary was to tackle specific issues that we found prominent in Nigeria at the time. Being members of the ITI community, we have also had the opportunity to take art from Nigeria to some performances in some ITI communities, like Sudan, the NEAP Festival in Brazil, and Armenia. Charles is based in New York, USA.

Samba Yonga, Co-founder of the Women's History Museum in Zambia. "We set up the museum to restore indigenous knowledge systems obscured by the colonial experience. We are essentially a digital archive that collects living histories, and they are focused on women. We have collaborated with museums in the global North and the West because they hold collections. In the sense of collaborating with them, we have had to approach and create structures of integration and collaboration that will allow us to reach our desired goals while also recognizing that we have different expectations. We come from various backgrounds, and our experiences and results differ significantly."

Agansa Kisaki is a Ugandan-based performing artist, playwright, director, producer, published author, and award-winning film actress. She has produced works such as *The Betrothal* by Joshua Bimali and *Red Hills* by Asiimwe Deborah Kawe, as well as the Kampala International Theatre Festival in 2019. In 2022, she completed an assistant director role for the *Merchants of Venice*, and her most recent theatre director work is for the production of *My Fair Lady Musical* in Kampala. Kisaki is the founder of the Yensi Theatre Conservatory, which equips performing artists with various training courses in Film and theatre. A fellow of Georgetown University Lab for Global Politics and Performance, she is producing a Broadway romantic comedy musical entitled *She Loves Me*, set to premiere at the Uganda National Theatre.

Gerald Odil is a curator, a visual artist, and a visual performance artist from Uganda Kampala, based in Germany. Gerald began the creative and art scene in 2014 as an events manager, then as a producer and a curator. "My practice was around public art and artists creating and supporting public art. Then, I started working in theatre and, eventually, in Film, cinematography, and acting. I moved to Germany because six of my friends and I were artists. We came together and created Atimas, which is a queer collective that takes back public space for queer performance."

Nora Tormann is a Berlin choreographer, dance dramaturg, and curator. With a background in political philosophy and contemporary dance, their practice navigates the intersection of artistic and theoretical research. "I mostly work as a freelancer in Berlin and other European cities. Moreover, in the last two years, I have worked in different cities across Mexico in those capacities. In my work, I move between different constellations- I engage in solo, team, and collective work."

C.J. Ochoco, co-coordinator, NEAP, and co-founder of Breaking Wave Theatre Company, a non-profit theater company based in Guahan.

CURATORS

Taiwo Afolabi is a theatre-maker, scholar, theatre manager and entrepreneur. His interest is in amplifying voices and experiences; and re-centering governance models, strategies and systems on the margin through the lens of decolonization, equity and anti-oppressive approaches. His experience in over a dozen countries across four continents in a variety of contexts focused on socially engaged and community-based creative practice for transformational change. Through storytelling and devised theatre, he works with communities on social issues pertinent to them and his research continues to advance broad-minded thinking within the art and culture sector.

He is the Canada Research Chair in Socially Engaged Theatre and serves as the Director of the Centre for Socially Engaged Theatre (C-SET) at the University of Regina. He is a Senior Research Associate at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa and the founding director of Theatre Emissary International (TEMi) in Nigeria and Canada.

Malin Nagel is the project manager at ITI Academy, Germany. She takes care of the ITI Academy for young cultural professionals, including the Academy Week during Theater der Welt. She studied Literature and Music Studies at the University of Kiel, and Dramaturgy at the School for Music and Theatre in Leipzig. She worked for many years as a dramaturg and production manager at municipal and state theatres as well as in the independent scene.

Repertoire:

Olusola John, visiting researcher at the Centre for Socially Engaged Theatre (C-SET)

Moderators:

Malin Nagel moderated this conversation with the following people during the discussions.

Jeff Fagundes, the President of International Theatre Institute, Brazil.

Lloyd Nyikadzino, Executive director for the Zimbabwe Theatre Academy Trust and the Mitambo International Theatre Festival.

Executive Summary

International cooperation in the performing arts is crucial for promoting cultural exchange, fostering understanding, and building relationships between nations. Long-term cooperation and cultural exchanges can build solid relationships and foster international partnerships. Creating authentic spaces for artists requires authenticity, vulnerability, and a willingness to learn from others. Care and self-awareness are essential in the performing arts industry to manage conflicts, prioritize rest, and promote trust. Navigating language and cultural barriers, communicating needs clearly, and understanding different communication styles are crucial in international collaborations. Addressing conflicts in international partnerships requires open and honest discussions about cultural context, remuneration, decision-making, and mobility. Fostering cultural exchange, providing information, and having targeted conversations about the context of partnerships are essential for successful international collaborations. Demonstrating empathy and confronting injustices with possible solutions can help resolve conflicts within theatre companies or performing arts groups. This report presents ideas and thoughts from a three-part series on international partnerships. It involved three entities: the German International Theatre Institute, the Network of Emerging Art Professionals of the ITI, and the Centre for Socially Engaged Theatre at the University of Regina in Canada.

- International cooperation in the performing arts is crucial for promoting cultural exchange, fostering understanding, and building relationships between nations.
- This exemplifies how long-term cooperation and cultural exchanges can contribute to building strong relationships and fostering international partnerships.
- Through cultural exchanges and artistic collaborations, countries can leverage the unique power of the arts to bridge cultural divides, celebrate diversity, and strengthen international partnerships in the realm of performing arts. This underscores the significant role of the audience in this field, making them feel valued and integral.
- The series reported here outlines the significance of creating space for dialogue on international partnerships. It draws on diverse artists' experiences to address this topic, ensuring the reader is well-informed.

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the global crises that continue to impact the arts, international and transcultural cooperation in the performing arts is indispensable. In an environment of increasing polarization, in which forms of discrimination and exclusion take place daily, daring to take the step of starting an artistic relationship, crossing borders, and working together gives cause for hope. Artists often provide new, participatory ideas for common grounds and society through alternative approaches – but these experimental spaces are usually rare and shrinking. Even more, it is brave to take this step and establish a space for free artistic expression, encounters, and debates.

Further, for emerging artists and arts professionals, the need to partner and collaborate is central to the growth of the crafts. Partnerships have to be done equitably and ethically to empower and amplify change. Thus, what are the conditions necessary for equitable and ethical partnership?

The Network of Emerging Arts Professionals (ITI Worldwide), the ITI Academy (ITI Germany), and the Centre for Socially Engaged Theatre (C-SET) led by Malin Nagel and Taiwo Afolabi curated the dialogue series on the **ethics of international cooperation and partnership in the performing arts**.

Guiding Questions

What does it mean to establish and hold a safer and braver space?

How do you stay with a caring practice?

How do you navigate conflicts and misunderstandings?

How are artists dealing with risks and limitations in freedom of expression?

In what way do artists develop methods that contribute to transnational democracy?

What are the conditions of co-creating an equitable international cultural exchange?

Goal

The dialogue aims to raise issues and create opportunities for emerging artists to share their experiences, co-learn, and exchange knowledge on working around the questions raised in their practice.

Background of International Cooperation in Performing Arts

International cooperation in the performing arts is crucial for promoting cultural exchange, fostering understanding, and building relationships between nations. Studies have shown that dialogue and collaboration in performing arts can enhance cultural diversity, preserve intangible heritage, and strengthen intercultural relations. Doulamis et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of transforming intangible folkloric performing arts into tangible digital objects to promote cultural diversity, raise awareness of traditional arts, and facilitate intercultural dialogue (Doulamis et al., 2017). Countries can share their cultural heritage with global audiences by digitizing performance arts, especially folklore dances, fostering cooperation and understanding. Skoryk (2024) discusses the benefits of international exchanges in art education, highlighting how studying and working in different cultural environments provide valuable opportunities for funders and artists (Skoryk, 2024). Such exchanges enhance artistic skills and promote cross-cultural understanding and cooperation in the arts field. In the context of cultural exchanges, Yang & Zhao (2023) explore the history and future of China-Pakistan cultural exchange, emphasizing how conflicts have been effectively resolved through mutual visits, leading to deeper understanding and trust between the two nations (Yang & Zhao, 2023). This exemplifies how long-term cooperation and cultural exchanges can contribute to building strong relationships and fostering international partnerships.

Moreover, Wang (2024) underscores the role of performing arts in international cultural exchange, offering new perspectives on global arts education and identity formation (Wang, 2024). By recognizing the significance of performing arts in the era of globalization, countries can leverage international partnerships to promote cultural dialogue and cooperation on a global scale. In conclusion, international collaboration in the performing arts is essential for promoting cultural diplomacy, enhancing mutual understanding, and fostering cooperation between nations. By embracing dialogue, cultural exchanges, and artistic collaborations, countries can leverage the power of the arts to bridge cultural divides, celebrate diversity, and strengthen international partnerships in the realm of performing arts.

Performing Partnership: Importance of Ethics in International Partnerships

Creating space for dialogue on international partnership is crucial to fostering collaboration and understanding among nations. In international relations, dialogue is fundamental for addressing conflicts, promoting cooperation, and advancing common goals. The conversation focused on the significance of creating space for dialogue on international partnerships, drawing on artists' experiences and practices. One essential reference that sheds light on the importance of dialogue in international collaboration is the work of Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991) on principled negotiation. In their seminal book "Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In," the authors emphasize the value of open communication, mutual respect, and problem-solving in reaching mutually beneficial agreements. By creating a space for dialogue based on these principles, countries can overcome differences, build trust, and work towards shared objectives. Another relevant reference is the Track II diplomacy concept discussed by Berridge (2002) in "Diplomacy: Theory and Practice." Track II diplomacy involves unofficial, non-governmental efforts to facilitate dialogue and build relationships between conflicting parties.

Countries engaging in Track II dialogues can explore creative solutions, build trust networks, and lay the groundwork for official negotiations. The work of Keohane and Nye (2000) on complex interdependence is relevant in the context of creative economy partnerships. According to their theory, states are interconnected through a web of economic, art, social, and political ties, necessitating dialogue and cooperation to address transnational issues effectively. Performing arts organizations can enhance their mutual interdependence and promote sustainable development by creating spaces for dialogue on matters of the creative sector.

Creating space for dialogue on international partnerships is essential for building trust, resolving conflicts, and advancing common interests among organizations. Through principled negotiation, Track II diplomacy, U.N. initiatives, and economic interdependence, organizations in the creative sector can harness the power of dialogue to strengthen their partnerships and create a more peaceful and prosperous world.

The importance of ethics in performing arts organizations' international partnerships cannot be overstated. Ethical considerations in international alliances of the performing arts organizations relationships are crucial for several reasons:

Trust Building

Ethical behavior fosters trust between partners. Trust is essential for the smooth functioning of any partnership, particularly in international contexts where cultural and regulatory differences can create misunderstandings.

Reputation Management

Maintaining high ethical standards helps protect and enhance the organizations' reputations. A strong reputation can lead to better funding opportunities, attract talent, and foster positive stakeholder relationships.

Legal Compliance

Different countries have varying legal requirements and standards. Adhering to ethical practices ensures compliance with international

laws and regulations, reducing the risk of legal penalties and sanctions.

Sustainable Relationships

Ethical partnerships are more likely to be sustainable in the long term. Ethical behavior promotes fairness, transparency, and respect, which are critical for the longevity and success of any partnership relationship.

Cultural Sensitivity

Ethics in international partnerships often involve respecting cultural differences and practices. Understanding and respecting these differences can lead to more effective communication and collaboration.

Risk Management

Unethical behavior can lead to significant risks, including financial loss, legal issues, and damage to brand reputation. Ethical practices help mitigate these risks and ensure a stable business environment.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Adopting ethical practices reinforces an artist's or organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility. This commitment can improve public perception and contribute to broader societal goals, such as environmental sustainability and social equity.

Partners and Artists' Morale

If a performing arts group operates ethically, artists are likelier to feel proud of and committed to it. High morale can increase productivity, reduce turnover, and attract top talent.

Examples of Ethical Considerations in International Partnerships:

- **Fair Labor Practices:** Ensuring labor practices meet international standards and respect artists' rights.
- **Transparency:** Being open about business practices, financial performance, and operational challenges.
- **Respect for Local Laws and Customs:** Adhering to local regulations and being sensitive to cultural norms and values.

- **Anti-Corruption Measures:** Implementing policies to prevent bribery and corruption in all financial dealings.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** Committing to environmentally sustainable practices to minimize ecological impact.

Ethics in international partnerships are vital for building trust, ensuring legal compliance, managing risks, and fostering sustainable and respectful partner relationships. Performing arts organizations can achieve long-term success by prioritizing ethical behavior and contributing positively to the global creative sector landscape.

Creating Safe and Brave Spaces

Creating safe and brave spaces is a concept that acknowledges the importance of providing environments that are both secure and empowering. The idea of safer spaces recognizes that complete elimination of risk is not feasible while also encompassing brave spaces as complementary rather than alternative (Anderson & Riley, 2020). This approach emphasizes the need to go beyond traditional safe spaces and embrace environments that encourage courageous conversations and actions (Ford et al., 2023). The term "brave space" is chosen to signify that many spaces are never entirely safe for individuals experiencing oppression (Myers et al., 2019).

Establishing brave spaces in educational settings is essential for fostering an understanding of social justice and promoting inclusive learning environments (Brazill & Ruff, 2022). It involves utilizing transformational leadership to create spaces where challenging discussions can occur, contributing to personal and collective growth (Cook-Sather et al., 2020). These spaces are built on humility and trust, enabling dialogue and partnership between students and staff (Chilvers et al., 2019). The significance of creating safer and braver spaces extends beyond education to various contexts, including performing arts, the creative sector, and community development. For instance, initiatives like the Creating Brave Spaces (CBS) workshop have been developed to address microaggressions and promote a more caring and consultative approach to crisis

management among healthcare workers (Smith, 2023).

In urban planning, safer spaces are linked to strategies that aim to enhance security and livability by involving community members in identifying and improving problematic areas (Whitzman, 2007). Additionally, urban green spaces play a vital role in promoting sustainable environments, improving biodiversity, and enhancing the well-being of urban residents (Mwanzu, 2023; Okech & Nyadera, 2021).

Creating safer and braver spaces fosters inclusivity, promotes dialogue, and empowers artists and the creative sector to engage in challenging conversations and actions. By embracing these concepts, performing arts organizations and communities can work towards building environments that prioritize safety, equity, and courage, ultimately leading to positive social change and collective well-being.

Establishing A Safe(r) and Brave Space in Performing Arts

In this first section, the discussants articulated what these terms mean to them and shared practical experiences on ways they have created and continue to create safe and brave spaces in their partnership and practice.

Malin Nagel moderated this conversation with the following people during the discussions.

Gerald Odil is a curator, a visual artist, and a visual performance artist from Uganda Kampala, based in Germany.

Charles Etubiebi is an actor, T.V., stage & screen, and the artistic director for Theatre Emissary International. Charles is based in New York, USA. Nora Tormann is a Berlin choreographer, dance dramaturge, and curator. Nora is based in Berlin.

Safety is crucial for meaningful partnerships, allowing expression, collaboration, and mutual understanding. While the concept of a safe space may vary among individuals, over time, it originated in the 1930s to denote a physical environment free from harassment and threats, where like-minded individuals could gather. Safe spaces enable people to unite and shape their experiences in a secure environment.

Perception

A safe space means the correct perception that guarantees equal human treatment.

The concept of a safe space is rooted in how a group is perceived. A misperception can lead to judgmental behavior, which is not conducive to building a solid relationship. How a group is perceived significantly impacts how its members are treated. Narratives and stories about the group often shape these perceptions.

Charles—At Theatre Emissary International, we faced the harsh reality that the global perception of Africans was misleading, and this affected artists. The inhumane treatment we endured prompted us to reconsider the stories we tell about ourselves. We consciously embarked on an enlightenment campaign to inform and include the world in our mission to change the narrative of African aesthetics.

Authenticity

A brave space means an authentic space.

Authenticity enhances vulnerability. In creating a safe and brave space, authenticity is required for genuine interactions and mistakes to happen. Also, for art to be authentic, there must be some vulnerability. A strong connection exists between creative efforts and a safe space- where artists can converse without physical and emotional harm and judgment. Brave space is the design of open and honest dialogue from various perspectives. In a brave space, the conflict that will arise from engagement should be encouraged because it enhances learning from each other while building a mutual understanding.

Community

The safe and brave space is a shared values, purpose, and communal culture community. It is important to consider space as a community because of the diverse participants in creating a community that should include care.

Understanding the power of community and the reason for coming together is vital to creating a safe space. The idea of space is about providing opportunity and equitable access. That is how to ensure vulnerability in such a partnership. It is about creating a culture of safe space. Creating a physically safe space is not just an idea; in

practical terms, it is a cultural and economic shift created around multiple interests and demography. The community is a resource, considering the partners involved and their varied contributions. It is essential because everyone's contribution makes the space brave and safe. Embedded in the community is communal care, a shared responsibility that connects all and gives a larger sense of purpose.

Nora - "With my collectives as well as working with other collaborators, we've developed different practices of creating safe and brave spaces. These practices have shown especially relevant when facing challenging situations but also generally shape the culture of how we work together. Accordingly, these practices are relevant in contexts like workshops, dance practices, and activism alike. In my dramaturgical practice, I try to create contexts of care - towards the artistic proposal at hand, the team involved, the context where it is shown, the audience that will receive it, the environment where it takes place, etc. However, that might not always feel safe - but then: what do we need to face that risk?"

Tools for establishing safe spaces

Vulnerability

It is vital to have vulnerability in a safe and brave space with different aims and missions of each contributing partner to ensure equity and not just a safe space for a selected few. The need to incorporate every party's perspective on safety and social justice will enrich the community regarding how safe and brave it becomes. In this space, people are empowered to contribute meaningfully and can be vulnerable. Each partner should feel respected and involved in the process of collaboration and partnership. In a safe space, people are responsible for how they show up.

Charles - When it comes to vulnerability in a creative process and a space where more people with different perspectives come together, one of the things that pushes vulnerability first is that you have to be willing to model it. This can be achieved by asking questions and giving a background of your person, context, and where you are coming from.

In international cooperation and partnerships, modeling vulnerability shows that others

could learn from you about other people's cultures and relate better. The idea of rightness leads to discord, but to avoid that, we need vulnerability. We need to listen to each other to understand our differences.

How Values play out in International Partnerships

Values play a significant role in international partnerships in creating a safe and brave space. International partnership values include vulnerability, care, accountability, and responsibility. These values are modeled as a guiding principle for social engagement. Furthermore, respect for people's expertise and experiences is crucial to social engagements. Artists should be permitted to express their valuable skills and knowledge without interruptions. This will show respect for the expertise built over the years. Transparency is another value that should be considered. It is the willingness and practice of demonstrating openness and plainness in implementing projects and monitoring processes. This concerns how communications are carried out, financial dealings, time, and access to all issues around trust involved in international collaborations and partnerships. Transparency as a value guarantees understanding and good working relationships. The need to create safe and brave spaces is urgent and essential. The premise for which international agreements are drafted could mean bravery and safety or the absence of it. Sometimes, institutions claim to provide conditions for a safe space but fail to acknowledge the power dynamics not implemented in that setup. Again, more complicated situations where the politics of institutions cannot provide space for these discussions will limit the partners' expression. They need to be considered as we discuss brave and safe spaces.

Gerald— It was about having space for people to collaborate and have conflicts about what these values mean to them. That meant there was no singular role, but we were all accountable, there were collaborators, and each party had equal say and stakes in the project. We hosted a quarterly series of art exhibitions, performances, visual exhibitions, and other collaborations. Safe and brave spaces consider the limitations imposed on artists in war zones like Gaza, where

no artist is secure.

Practices of Care in Artistic Practices

Care practices in artistic endeavors involve a deep connection between human-oriented actions and relationship-centered approaches (Kol et al., 2022). This philosophy is demonstrated by incorporating relational caring principles into arts-based practices, creating an environment conducive to the well-being of all participants (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2021). Viewing care as a form of creative and artistic expression presents challenges that necessitate a combination of practical and intellectual skills, particularly in demanding contexts (Kitson, 2016). Additionally, ethics of care in artistic research underscores the importance of critical reflexivity, prompting researchers to recognize power dynamics and the value of maintaining engaged and context-aware relationships with participants (Boothby, 2023). Artistic practices enhance personal satisfaction and self-expression and contribute to the establishment of caring environments that go beyond the individual, promoting spiritual and consciousness-based healing (Wright & Wadsworth, 2014; Lewis, 2003). Moreover, the systemic exploitation of artists within current funding structures emphasizes the necessity of safeguards to ensure the well-being of artists and the communities they interact with (Belfiore, 2021).

The transformative influence of creativity, empathy, and human connection in promoting well-being and healing in diverse settings makes care important in performing arts. By embracing the ethics of care, practitioners can elevate the quality of care provided and create meaningful experiences for caregivers and recipients.

The focus is the practice of care among artists, with the discussants:

Jeff Fagundes, the president of ITI Brazil, anchored this section.

Agansa Kisaki is a Ugandan-based performing artist, playwright, director, producer, published author, and award-winning film actress.

Alex D. Loo is an activist for women and LGBTQI+ writing in Peru.

Implementing Care in Artistic Practices

The practice of care toward artists begins with creating a conducive environment. It is further enhanced by mutual sharing, which fosters a sense of connection and value within the artistic community. This sharing creates a system that works for everyone. Also, care practice includes attending fellow artists' shows to affirm the artists and their work and show that their work matters. The artist must learn to appreciate the beauty of their work beyond the functions they perform. It would help if they received constructive feedback on their work.

Discussants emphasized the need to consider artists who need help because of disability. Care for those in need could be addressed through artistic, creative works. This process educates the audience and empowers them to take responsibility for these societal issues. Talking about these issues is another practice of care.

Aganza - Theatre embodies the mental state of humans. It brings the essence of togetherness into the action thus facilitating a team spirit. Ugandans say performing arts are on our skin. Performance can be emotion driven. We feel our emotions and those of the people next to us. We think about the feelings of the characters we are playing. We take on everything society is feeling. In care, artists strengthen the collective identity and solidarity within their groups and with other groups, such as theatre groups or other activists. They promote trust by strengthening those social bonds because they know the people around them will provide the support needed in a crisis or a moment. Artists appreciate that care is necessary and a privilege.

Alex- We work hard to understand that care is required and a privilege. When your basic needs are not covered, you can not expect somebody to stop work, pick up, and care for everyone else. Moreover, to understand that activism and artivism, everything we do is unpaid. So, you really cannot expect people to always prioritize this. Unfortunately, some people must step out and dedicate their time to work or family. We cannot impose tasks on people when they are indisposed.

Dealing with the frustrating feeling of care

It can be very frustrating when the culture is all about care, especially when society's culture is all about care. The values of care should be integrated into the group culture. That will help to manage burnout. Artists should be encouraged to be authentic and respectful in expressing their feelings. These should not sabotage the creative process. Artists should be mindful of dealing with problems outside of rehearsal time. That will help creativity thrive.

Balance care practice with KPIs and deliverables

It is essential to recognize that artistic work can be physically and mentally tasking. Artists should acknowledge that fear is a normal part of the process, not a sign of weakness. Validating these experiences creates a supportive environment where all feelings are accepted. This approach helps transform fear and emotion into action, such as using fear and rage as powerful tools for protest.

Caring for the Care Giver

Some artists are trying hard to save themselves. Everything seems important, and failing to meet up is often perceived as a failure in life.

The rule should be, "Not all work is important, but all work is meaningful." Artists must learn to relieve themselves from the pressure.

Understand that your work may not be the most important, but it will mean something to someone because art reflects society. It is a reflection of truth. Learn to rest; you are flawed, not a machine.

The artist must prioritize rest in the creative process because rest is vital for the creative mind to work efficiently. Rest is a form of self-care that helps the body to rejuvenate for better and fresher output. It is crucial to ease up and take care for creativity's sake and where it is necessary to push through. Frustration often arises from failing to meet performance standards. Frequent check-ins with yourself and the team could be helpful.

Studies and personal experiences support the vital role of relaxation in creativity. Balance a safe space with a personal atmosphere of care. To

address this, begin by asking your collaborators what they need to do for work professionally, as well as accountability and care. Let them offer suggestions.

The Practice of Care in International Cooperation

The practice of care in international cooperation would begin with communicating expectations in an understanding language and appreciating the collaborating partners' culture. Clarity in planning is essential. Details of the projects should be mutually discussed and agreed upon to accommodate differences in language, culture, and preferences.

Alex - If you are working with people from other countries, remember that there are very different communication styles, temperaments, and ways to show feelings. Also, be aware of the imposter syndrome some people from non-Western countries still feel when invited to Western Centers of Culture. Understand your country's place in the world's cultural production and all others from the margins. Be gracious enough to ask questions that make them comfortable. Notably, funded artists need to be self-aware that they are not inferior. They should change their mindset and accept that they contribute considerably to the culture.

Aganza, your unique perspectives on international cooperation in performing arts are invaluable. Beyond the workshops and conferences, your insights into the projects' backgrounds, structure, phases, and regional considerations are crucial when drafting guidelines and factoring into funding applications. Your contribution is essential to the project's success.

As artists, it is imperative to recognize that your bodies are being exploited by yourself and society in a way that leaves you exhausted. This happens sometimes without compensation. Therefore, there is a need to sustain the struggle and juggle by employing different aspects of care, like resting and minimizing complaints but voicing your frustrations, even if they are seen as weaknesses. Working under such exhaustion and undue pressure is a form of injustice, and you

must learn to recognize and resist just as you fight against other more explicit, apparent forms of injustice. The practice of care in the performing arts industry strongly emphasizes constant communication. While it may be tiring at times, it is necessary. Always create safe spaces to voice your concerns and ask questions.

Another crucial aspect of care is having a contingency plan in place for instances of aggression, harassment, or violence. This is particularly important in diverse contexts such as on the street, in unfamiliar places, or online.

Additionally, always be cautious when assigning roles and be clear about responsibilities.

Remember, creating an atmosphere that breeds joy and pleasure is essential. By eating healthy meals and having fun, you practice self-care and contribute to a positive and uplifting environment. Manage conflicts well, learn from your mistakes, and avoid unhealthy competition. By doing so, you will feel more motivated and inspired in your work.

Practices of Working through Conflict in International Partnership

In international cooperation, working through conflict involves various practices to resolve disputes and promote collaboration. Mediation is a widely recognized strategy in conflict resolution (Melin, 2017). Regional cooperation with organizations like the European and African Union is significant in conflict resolution and security enhancement. They contribute to stability through conflict management (Kalay, 2023). Successful examples of mediation have shown great potential in resolving complex international disputes and fostering cooperation between states (Zhomartkyzy, 2023).

Cooperation resolution strategies are recommended to handle conflicts effectively and harness their positive outcomes while mitigating negative impacts (Laslo et al., 2019). Research indicates that when conflicts are perceived as complex, cooperation is often preferred as a conflict-resolution strategy (Güss et al., 2018). In multicultural groups, an open attitude and diverse behavioral repertoire increase the likelihood of adopting cooperative conflict

resolution strategies (Boroş et al., 2010). Effective conflict management by organizational leaders is crucial for creating a collaborative team environment (Ningtyas, 2024).

The cooperative conflict resolution strategy emphasizes empathy and rejects aggressive or violent behavior, promoting a more harmonious approach to resolving conflicts (Valverde et al., 2022). Attention to regional approaches, civil society peacebuilding, and training in cooperation and problem-solving are essential components in conflict resolution efforts (Leeuwen, 2008; Davidson & Versluys, 1999). Understanding the impact of institutional structures on conflict resolution strategies in international joint ventures is also crucial (Kwarteng et al., 2018).

Therefore, working through conflict in international cooperation involves mediation, regional cooperation, promoting cooperation resolution strategies, fostering empathy, leveraging regional approaches and civil society peacebuilding, and effective conflict management by leaders. These practices aim to enhance collaboration, resolve disputes, and contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious global order. *In this last section, the discussion centered on the practices of working through conflict and shared practical experiences on how they have managed trying times in collaboration and partnerships in their practice.*

This conversation was moderated by Lloyd Nyikadzino, Executive Director of Zimbabwe Theatre Academy, with the following people as part of the discussants.

Samba Yonga, Co-founder of the Women's History Museum in Zambia.

C.J. Ochoco, co-coordinator, NEAP, and co-founder of Breaking Wave Theatre Company, a non-profit theater company based in Guahan.

Patterns of Conflict

Conflict is the clash of opposing ideas and a situation where individual choices can make a difference. Resolving conflict is the decision of the parties involved and how they choose to fix it. One way to work through conflicts is to create

structures of integration and collaboration that will allow the partners to reach their desired goals. Although recognized, they have different expectations, backgrounds, experiences, and results that might bring about conflict.

Cultural conflict

Cultural context is always an extensive discussion when collaborating internationally or even internally. Differences in mores, nuances, and language could generate conflicts in international cooperation. Understanding is necessary because it creates a space for accountability, cultural context, needs, requirements, and expectations. Ochoco—In Guahan, we have Indigenous people and people of color. Although the U.S. colonized the island, the cultures are conflicting. Despite the conflicts, our diverse cultures are sources of richness.

Samba—A project was set up to bring together different actors and cultural practitioners from the global north and South, but mainly Europe and Africa, to find better solutions for creating understanding through social, political, and economic partnerships and building close collaborations and exchanges. However, the implementation process had limitations. That was partly due to cultural differences and expectations.

Technical Conflict

Technical conflict affects project implementation issues like funding, infrastructure, and skill set constraints.

Technical conflict can arise in a partnership or theatre company that revolves around leadership, management practices, and team building. These issues are generated based on the interactions between collaboration and partnership. This was experienced in the Breaking Wave theatre because the indigenous management practices conflicted with USA policies, although they are American, too.

Communication Conflict

There will be many conversations like this one held during the Deconfining project. The best approach is to find a way to understand each

other better. In the last maybe 30 years, many projects have been implemented. However, in the end, they were not beneficial for the communities of the Global South because they were implemented in a way that did not apply to the cultural context. The funding was insufficient, and the policies created contradicted the source communities or the cultural context in which they exist. Nevertheless, that all happened because there was never a prior conversation about what would work. Sometimes, there is a need to properly discuss the details before making assumptions about what a community needs or infrastructural implementation requires.

Funding/Compensation Conflict

The idea of having a recommended remuneration list for different countries and actors in different geopolitical locations breeds conflict. In the Global South, particularly in Africa, remuneration could be much lower even if the work and skill set being executed were precisely the same. Such difficult conversations must occur, especially if all partners have the same skill set. They should receive the same level of consideration in terms of remuneration. In some instances, theatres and regions are unjustly denied funding, leading to significant challenges. For example, territories like Guahan are often overlooked for financial support despite all other States being considered. This disparity can create conflict for the affected theatre companies, highlighting the real and immediate impact of funding denial on their operations and sustainability.

Identifying the Issues

It is vital to identify issues such as ethics, partnerships, engagement, remuneration, decision-making, mobility, delivering results, or positioning that can cause conflict. Many of the partnership projects implemented in Europe required European artists and practitioners to travel to Africa for cultural exchange. However, some artists have mobility problems, visa challenges, and sometimes denial. This is hardly the same experience with Europeans visiting Africa for cultural exchange.

Finding Solutions

The impacts of these conflicts affect the bodies, minds, and contexts of the people experiencing them. Each project should aim to give recommendations to various bodies that can bring about change.

Dialogue through the conflict

Dialogue is a vital part of the solution-finding process. There must be ongoing conversations with the founders or partner's leadership to resolve issues. What funding would be necessary for a project? When the funding is available, how will it be allocated based on needs? And other possible questions. Expectations should be outlined, the process needs to be envisioned, and the decision-making criteria be explicitly stated. Both parties should know the process, their rights, and demands. This will allow a transparent and productive negotiation process.

Limited Knowledge of Rights

Some institutions in the Global South often need to learn their rights. They need to know what they can demand and understand the negotiation process. The process comes with challenges, but they are easily overcome with adequate preparation. The more articulate they are, the better they can benefit from the outcome.

Ochoco- We want the actors, stage managers, designers, and everyone to feel empowered to participate in the art-making process. Sometimes, in projects, we may have folks who have trained more in the Western schooling of theater who will have issues with what we do in trying to decolonize theater and the performing arts. Those are some of the conflicts we face, and we must sit down and discuss why we are doing these things. Sometimes, the ego comes into play. However, I encourage folks to be more collaborative and work together because we root back to the fact that theater is storytelling. I know many of our ancestors are rooted in storytelling.

Resolving Conflicts through Cultural Practices

Pre-funding Dialogue—You can propose departing from the traditional pre-funding template by embracing a more practical approach

to conflict resolution. Instead, advocate for a comprehensive understanding of the cultural context, creative landscape, ecosystem, opportunities, challenges, and revenue potentials. To be implemented in Africa, Guahan, or elsewhere, this approach will allow for crucial issues to be addressed before the partnership, thereby defining the partnership guidelines clearly and ensuring a successful collaboration. Provision of Information—The receiving partners play a pivotal role in the partnership by providing expertise, knowledge, information, and data. This information is invaluable for potential partners in making informed decisions about collaborations and partnerships. Cultural Exchange—Fostering cultural exchange is a necessity and an opportunity. It enables the exchange of knowledge and best practices, inspiring and motivating all involved. This exchange can significantly elevate the management practices of the grant receivers, leading to a more successful partnership. More specific and targeted conversations should be had about the context of organizations, countries, or continents of partnership. These discussions should focus on what works for them and how they can strengthen their infrastructure, particularly in areas such as [specific areas of focus]. Many times, that nuance, context, and understanding are lost. It is time for a change. The organizations or countries' experts should be there to provide that understanding and insight into what would work, why this is trending this way, how institutions work, what needs to be done to process and work within institutions, and what would be required to change, to make things better, to improve, to build.

Conclusion

The partnership in and off the ship? The conversation opened up the issues confronting performing artists and organizations that have influenced their practices. While these conversations may be challenging, especially when there are many assumptions before and during projects, it is vital to incorporate ethical care into international cooperation. This is to

ensure that the goals of such projects are achieved with minimum hitches. This document is not exhaustive, but it was prepared to give insight into the issues that need to be addressed in partnership and collaborations among performing arts organizations.

SUMMARY

Creating Safe and Brave Spaces For Artists

Authenticity and vulnerability are essential to create a safe and brave space for artists. This requires a space where artists can converse without fear of physical and emotional harm and judgment. Creating a safe space is not just an idea but a cultural and economic shift that requires consideration of multiple interests and demographics. A safe space provides opportunity and equitable access, which ensures vulnerability in partnerships. International partnership values include vulnerability, care, accountability, and responsibility. The key theme of this text is the importance of creating safe and brave spaces for artists, which requires authenticity, vulnerability, and a willingness to learn from others. This can be achieved through mutual sharing, constructive feedback, and respect for people's expertise and experiences.

The Importance of Care And Self-Awareness In The Performing Arts

We can articulate and educate audiences about societal issues through film and theatre, empowering them to take responsibility. In the performing arts, we take on the emotions of the characters we play and those around us, making it essential to prioritize care and self-awareness. We should be cautious about the people we surround ourselves with and recognize that activism and artivism are often unpaid, making it challenging to prioritize care. We can manage burnout by expressing our needs and problems from the outset, creating a supportive environment where all feelings are accepted. Artistic work can be physically and mentally taxing, and fear is a normal part of the process. By validating these

experiences, we can transform fear and emotion into action. Rest is vital for the creative mind to work efficiently, and frequent check-ins with ourselves and the team can help us relax and focus.

Navigating language and cultural barriers is crucial in international collaborations, as is communicating our needs clearly and being aware of different communication styles and temperaments. The practice of care in the performing arts industry emphasizes constant communication, creating safe spaces to voice concerns, and having a contingency plan for instances of aggression, harassment, or violence. We can manage conflicts well by fostering a positive and uplifting environment, learning from our mistakes, and avoiding unhealthy competition.

Collaboration And Cultural Understanding In International Partnerships

When collaborating internationally or internally, creating a space allows for accountability, understanding of cultural context, and a voice for all parties involved (Ochoco). To navigate these conflicts, open and honest discussions about cultural context, remuneration, decision-making, and mobility are essential (Samba). Ultimately, it is essential to be self-aware of the injustices people perpetuate against others, organizations, or countries and to confront these issues with possible solutions (Ochoco). Demonstrating empathy and remembering indigenous practices of caring for the community can also help resolve conflicts within theatre companies or performing arts groups (Ochoco).

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