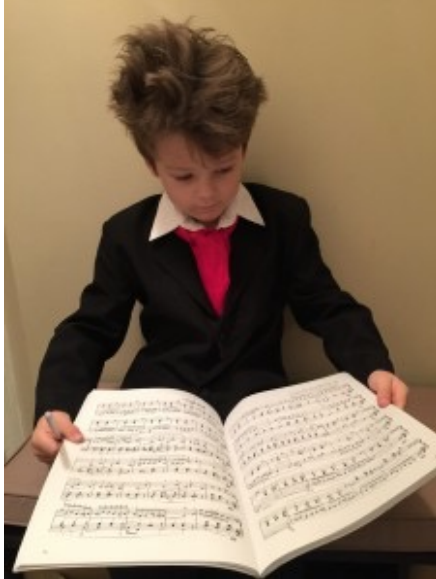


Finding Your Agility Symphony

By Tom O'Shea, CMC, Organizational Agility Practice Leader



The Ode to Joy ... is both a famous composition by Ludwig von Beethoven and also the feeling one gets from taking your daughter and six year old Beethoven-loving grandson to his first symphony concert (geared for kids). This passion comes to him quite naturally from his mother who is a cellist and professional music teacher from her at-home music studio. Over the past fifteen years we have been concentrating on understanding the dynamics of agility, I have often explored the parallels and principles that make music so beautiful with how they might be applied in our organizational settings. In a way, it is the joy and curse of my life.

I cannot even sit in a symphony performance without also processing on the these parallels. This past Saturday was no different.

In fact, this time it went even further because the performance entitled “Emily Saves the Orchestra” involved an underlying story very much applicable in the “real world”. In this musical play originated by [The Platypus Theater Company](#), the storyline involves dark forces of change threatening to make “music go away forever” unless Emily is able to help the orchestra “find the music” before the scary warbird crows the third time. This creates some teaching moments as Emily and the music spirit, Opus, explore various aspects of making music that the orchestra must discover like ... rhythm, melody, harmony, dynamics and many more elements.

This also reminded me of a discussion about “polyphony” that my daughter Meaghan had shared several years ago as we talked about the things involved with music theory and creating harmony. Polyphony is the capacity for multiple instruments to operate simultaneously and in their individual



melodies but come together in a harmonious and organized way. Strangely, I also thought about this framework on my flight this week to Phoenix for a speaking engagement and sessions with a good client. My flight from Charlotte on Monday was filled with passionate fans from universities of Alabama and Clemson – all decked out in proud team colors and voices. The NCAA Championship football game between these two schools took on, for me anyway, another illustration of polyphonics as both teams did a masterful job of bringing their best together in synchronized, complimentary and cooperative fashion.

This morning I will be working through my final iteration of this framework for the week while facilitating what we call TLC – a Team Leaders Call involving six mission critical agility action team leaders sharing efforts and insights around their own efforts at harmony, cadence, rhythm and also improvisation. You see, for years I also talked about the context of VUCA leading us to hone our skills as leaders and teams in a jazz context – lead AND follow. There is also a broader context akin to creating a fully integrated, high-functioning orchestra able to create advantage from superior capacity to sense and respond better and faster – yet in synchronized, polyphonic manner across all functions and teams to satisfy the real audience – our stakeholders and team.

There are disruptive forces of chance threatening each of our businesses today and putting our success or survival at risk. Will your music stop ... Or will you be able to lead your team to find the symphony you need to avoid discord or unhappy endings?

Love to hear some of your music too.



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