

Report

Is Mentorship a Thing?

Julia Locascio, 15 February 2015

Our conversation surrounded ideas of 'mentorship' in all of its best and worst forms.

WHAT IS IT? (and ideas about what it could be)

- More experienced directors going to see younger directors' shows and giving feedback (creative)
- Mentors prioritizing LISTENING above all. Resource/possible model: Nancy Klein's book, Time to Think, about what makes a useful 'thinking environment.'
- Could there be a contract/agreement/written expectations set out before the relationship begins? Or does that fall into the pressure of a "labeling" situation that cuts out the humanity/possibility for a real symbiotic creative relationship?
- Mentor 'bestowing wisdom' to mentee vs. the mentee offering something to the room that the mentor can't.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

- Just get into the room somehow. Work as an admin, weasel your way into the rehearsal room, make yourself indispensable.
- Persistent, focused, tactful emails (it works sometimes!)
- Connections through teachers and friends / showing up, being a visible part of the community.

VS. ASSISTING

- What are the incentives for a mentor to work with a mentee?

- Mentees needing to offer symbiotic skill sets—less of a power imbalance.
- Sometimes the best mentor/mentee relationships are never defined that way. The defining of the relationship creates a power imbalance and cuts off collaboration/conversation.

DIVERSITY

- Training institutions can cut independent emerging directors off from opportunities, tuition as a price of admission to the profession.

VS. TRAINING

- The problem of certain institutions (Birkbeck, RADA) 'holding the keys' to certain assisting and mentor relationships. Equally, the Birkbeck/RADA directors being limited to placements at regional houses. Can we expand the conversation? Work together?

PEER to PEER vs. OUTSIDE INDUSTRY MENTORSHIPS

- Can both sides offer something to the other? How is this different than a role model (worshipful) relationship?
- Mentors from outside the industry could provide perspective and help the profession as a whole (i.e. Why would you do that for free?!). Also: developing self-promotion and arts advocacy skills

WHAT DO WE NEED FROM SDUK?

- Balance the diversity/keys to the profession issue. Is SDUK interested in 'positive discrimination'?
- More bursaries? Possible caveat: how do you avoid playing into the culture of 'paying your dues' by ticking off bursaries?
- A pay it forward system? Perhaps mentees will be expected to mentor as they move

on in their career. Multi-generational mentorships as an exciting possibility.

-Can SDUK work with organisations/theatres/buildings rather than frame them as adversaries? How do we resolve a real or perceived conflict of interest for artistic directors?

-Should there be a SDUK 'black list'? Organizations that seek to engage with emerging directors (directors that will work for free) in ways that are exploitative. VS. the real need for in-kind support and the value of unpaid experience. Can we help organisations find the funds?

-Mentorships and guidance in BOTH the Art & Creativity half AND the Business & Brand half

Tags:

training, Training, mentors, Diversity, mentoring, Mentorship, diversity, mentorship, Mentoring, Mentors