

Rehearsing new embodied organizational identity claims : organizational identity embodiment

Abstract :

Organizational identity has been mostly studied through discourse analyses, but more and more research unraveled the importance of embodied cognition in the understanding of the organizational identity for individuals. Due to the difficulty to study, capture and translate this tacit knowledge, few articles to date help us understand the role of embodied practices in processes of organizational identity change. Furthermore, existing studies of embodied organizational identity tend to focus on the *individual* level, to the extent that individuals come to perceive the identities of their organizations through their bodies, but don't address how this individual cognition influences organizational identity. To investigate these questions surrounding embodiment in the process of organizational identity work, we chose to study artistic organizations to take advantage of the expertise artists have in understanding their bodies. In the two cases we investigate, a new artistic director assumed leadership with a mandate to fundamentally change the organization, in distinctly different ways. Our findings draw attention to how tacit, embodied and material understandings of certain practices can influence organizational identity embodiment for employees through change in backstage ambiance, and for the public through the onstage performances.

Keywords : organizational identity change, embodiment, artistic organizations, collective embodied practices, collective embodiment.

Introduction

New leaders are often employed by organizations to implement organizational identity change (Van Knippenberg, 2016), although they frequently face many obstacles in doing so (Brown and Starkey, 2000). The vast majority of studies of organizational identity and its change has focused on text and discourse (Chreim, 2005; Ybema, 2010), including the manner in which old labels are imbued with new meanings (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). The study of changes in backstage rehearsal practices in the performing arts is useful to generate new insight into the role of material and embodied practices in OIC, complementing the predominant emphasis on discursive perspectives in the literature (Gioia et al, 2013). Performances using long-embedded practices are at the core of both the internal artistic and the public perception of the organization and its identity (Payne, 2018; Baldyga, 2017). Artistic performers and creators are trained to understand their bodies in relation to artistic practice. Through this training, they learn to talk about this embodied experience. We mobilize this expertise to better understand those embodied practices in OIC.

In this paper, we analyze the organizational identity change processes of two performing arts organizations, a classical chamber orchestra ‘Sinfonia’ and a leading theatre company ‘Theatrix’. Both organizations had been led for over a decade by Artistic Directors (ADs) who had instituted distinctive embodied and material practices, thus anchoring the identity of each organization with their audiences (Gioia et al, 2000). In each case, executive leadership was changed in a somewhat disruptive manner. A new AD was hired to lead change and solve past issues in the organization. Organizational identity change occurred. This necessitated sometimes difficult revisions to the embodied and material practices of organizational members, particularly the performing artists and the technicians who partnered with the artists to produce the performances.

We identified several new and modified practices that are embodied and material, and that contribute to new organizational identities.

1. Literature review

1.1 Organizational identity work

Organizational identity, the self-referential answer by organizational members to the question “who are we” (Albert et al., 2000) and “what we do” (Nag et al., 2007) as an organization, has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest (Gioia et al., 2013). Organizational identity has been conceptualized as institutional claims, generally articulated by organizational leaders (Whetten, 2006), which provide legitimacy and sensegiving to foster a collective sense of self (Czarniawska, 1997; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Alternatively, organizational identity is viewed as a set of socially constructed shared beliefs and understandings within an organization, that are the evolving result of shared sensemaking by organizational members (Corley et al., 2006; Fiol, 1991; Gioia et al., 2000). More recent interpretations of organizational identity embrace both these top-down and bottom-up perspectives (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley 2008).

Although early perspectives on organizational identity focused on attributes that remain stable over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985), more recent studies have focused on how and under what circumstances it can change and evolve over time (Gioia et al., 2013; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Fachin & Langley, 2023). Processual approaches to organizational identity view it more as continuous rather than enduring (Gioia et al, 2000), and focus in particular on organizational identity ‘work’, or “discursive, cognitive, and behavioral processes that help individuals and collectives create, sustain, share, and/or change organizational identity” (Kreiner and Murphy, 2016; p.279). Such approaches implicitly embed organizational identity’s temporal dimensions, as organizations move from “who are we” to “who are we becoming” in the future (Schultz, 2016: 101)

While some scholars have examined the way in which organizational identities can be sustained over time through periods of environmental change (Kouame et al., 2022), others have focused more explicitly on how organizational identities adapt and change. Such changes can result from broader strategic change initiatives, such as Gioia and Thomas's (1996) study of how leading higher education institutions tried to become more 'business like', or as start-up organizations establishing new organizational identities for themselves over time (Oliver and Vough, 2020). Gioia and colleagues (2010) found that organizational identity change involves renegotiating identity claims and performing liminal actions such as "trying out behaviours" and "establishing new ways of working" (p.27). Although some organizational identity change proceeds slowly and incrementally (Albert & Whetten, 1985), in other contexts it can occur more quickly, such as in the context of mergers (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

The arrival of a new leader with a very different conceptualization of 'who' an organization needs to be can provoke attempts to alter an organization's identity (Van Knippenberg, 2016), as they present a visionary future image to guide the change imperative and the revision of the organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2000). Organizational leaders may engage in active sensegiving to promote organizational identity adaptation in the context of mergers (Corley & Gioia, 2004), or in managing hybrid organizational identities over time (Cornelissen et al., 2021). Founders of start-ups may incorporate, prioritize or reaffirm identity claims in response to identity opportunities and threats in their environments (Oliver & Vough, 2020). Organizational leaders can thus have a significant impact on organizational identity and its evolution over time (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011; Scott & Lane, 2000).

Organizational identity remains relatively challenging to identify and study. Most studies have involved analysis of texts and narratives (Chreim, 2005; Ybema, 2010), or attributes and

labels that convey symbolic expressions of how members view the identity of their organizations (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Fiol, 2002; Gioia et al., 2000; Gioia et al., 2013). Labels themselves can change or be reinterpreted over time with new meanings (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), and discursive constructions have been the focus of much study of organizational identity work (Kreiner et al, 2015). However, much of this work relies on underlying assumptions that organizational identity work is a relatively rational phenomenon that can be enacted and discussed consciously by practitioners. By focusing on overt claims and assertions put forth by organizations, we may inadvertently be attending to “projected images the organization hopes others will accept as legitimate” (Gioia et al., 2013, p.170).

1.2 Material organizational identity practices

Beyond text, organizational identity forms in the ‘doing’ (Weick, 1995), and its development can also involve the enactment of practices (Nag et al, 2007; Oliver & Vough, 2020). Gioia et al. (2013) propose that practices can initiate identity-related conversations and questioning, while Watkiss and Glynn (2016) propose that practices act as performative repertoires from which organizational identity is constructed. Organizational members can become highly attached to certain practices, which have been found, for example, to influence organizational identity regulation in mergers (Langley et al 2012).

Practices are shared and recognizable ways of doing things; activities, doings, and sayings that draw on widely held understandings of appropriate actions in given contexts (Schatzki, 2002; Smets et al., 2015). Practice-based studies have shown that tacit knowledge can be enacted in, and enabled by, concrete action situations (Berti et al, 2021; Fisher & Robbins, 2015; Nicolini, 2012). In many ways, organizations are enacted by the carrying out of practices (Schatzki, 2006). Practices can be viewed as manifestations of more fundamental organizational assumptions and beliefs, providing stability and guidance in the face of ongoing processes of organizational identity negotiation and adjustment. Gioia et al. (2013)

propose that practices can initiate identity-related conversations and questioning, while Watkiss and Glynn (2016) propose that practices act as performative repertoires from which organizational identity is constructed. Organizational identity influences and is influenced by a variety of work practices (Oliver & Vough, 2020). For example, different practices in merging health organizations were found to regulate organizational identity change in a context of rapid change (Langley et al, 2012). Scholars have also found that practices can create resistance in the face of attempts at identity change in established firms with strong identities (Nag et al., 2007; Kjaergaard et al., 2011; Tripsas, 2009). Organizational members can engage in experimental practices to activate new organizational identity work by playing with new identities and ultimately developing shared identity aspirations together (Bojovic et al., 2020).

Many organizational identity-related practices have distinctively material aspects. Organizational identity can be manifested through practices related to choices of apparel in hospitals (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997), or to the use of tools or the physical location of the head office (Harquail & King, 2010). Indeed, organizational identity attributes may become more resonant when materialized in a specific object (Kouamé et al., 2022). Tripsas (2009) also found that material practices related to innovation can trigger identity work. However, relatively little empirical study has focused on the impact of changing material practices for the purpose of changing organizational identity.

1.3 Embodied organizational identity work

There is a growing understanding that practices include not just enacted ostensive aspects that can be easily observed and described, but also elements that are more inherent and embodied (Wright, 2019). Studies of phenomenological embodiment explore how lived experience shapes meaning and action (Willems, 2018; Zundel, 2012), as actors learn through practices by drawing on corporeal and pre-discursive experiences (Yakhlef, 2010). Embodiment is

intimately linked to the body—how it moves, what it senses and feels. Such tacit understandings may sit alongside or precede cognition and prove difficult to articulate verbally or through texts.

The embodied nature of certain practices can make them particularly important to organizational identity (Alvesson et al, 2008), as individuals come to understand the identities of their organizations through embodied cognition (Harquail and King, 2010). Actors' bodies influence these processes, and meaning is firmly rooted in and emergent from bodily experiences (Johnson, 1987). Actors learn through practices by drawing on corporeal and pre-discursive experience (Yakhlef, 2010). However, little is known about the specific processes by which embodied practices enacted by members of an organization can influence organizational identity.

Despite recognition that embodied practices play a role in organizational identity work, empirical research in this area remains rare. Furthermore, existing studies of embodied organizational identity tend to focus on the *individual* level, to the extent that individuals come to perceive the identities of their organizations through their bodies. The intersubjectivity created by embodied patterns of interaction can become a shared reference point in organizations (Harquail and King, 2010), rendering efforts at change problematic. In engaging in collective embodied practices, organizational members can also gain valuable understandings and enact the identities of their organizations, as their bodily practices engage and interact with those of other organizational members.

1.4 Embodied and material practices in performing arts organizations

One context in which embodied and material practices are particularly salient is in the case of collective artistic performance organizations. Performing arts organizations are a useful context in which to investigate embodiment in organizational identity change, because the end 'product' of such organizations, such as live concert or theatre performances, are

experiential (Lampel et al, 2000). Performances using long-embedded embodied/material practices are at the core of both the internal artistic and the public perception of the organization and its identity (Payne, 2018; Baldyga, 2017).

The ‘onstage’ performances, and ‘backstage’ practices leading up to these performances present rare opportunities in which to study collective embodied organizational identity practices. Embodied and material practices are at the center of most performing art organizations. Artists and technicians create and produce the performances with their bodies as well as specifically conceived scenic and costume materials or musical instruments in the presence of an audience. The quality and perception of the performance are shaped by practices that have been learned and refined over time, often from an early age (Payne, 2018; Pettinger, 2015; Tinius, 2018).

Because they can be deeply ingrained at both the individual and organizational levels (Payne, 2018; Tinius, 2018; Ingold, 2000), these practices may challenge a new leader’s efforts to reshape an organizational identity when a new leader is mandated to do so. Changes to the established embodied and material practices during organizational identity change can unpredictably impact the performing artists, technicians, and audiences during the activities of realizing the art: rehearsals, production processes, and performances. Ultimately the organization is affected (Payne, 2018).

We lack understanding of the role played by such performance practices in the processes of organizational identity change and how they might provide useful insights for other organizations. Consequently, our research question is: how do embodied and material practices play a role in processes of organizational identity change ?

To investigate this question, we studied two artistic organizations, a classical chamber orchestra ‘Sinfonia’ and a leading theatre company ‘Theatrix’. In each case, a new artistic director assumed leadership with a mandate to fundamentally change the organization, in

distinctly different ways. The changes pertained to both backstage and onstage material and embodied practices, and our findings draw attention to how tacit, embodied and material understandings can influence organizational identity work and change.

2. Methodology

To investigate this research question, we adopted a two-case study design (Eisenhardt, 2021), developing a detailed chronology of events over six years following the appointment of new artistic leadership in a chamber orchestra and a theatre company. Evolving and embodied practices anchored our perceptions of organizational identity change through the process of those event chronologies in each organization. The processes in our case studies contrasted, thus enabling a useful triangulation of theorizing and avoiding misinterpretation.

Research sites

The two cases in our study are performing arts organizations situated in Canada. In the year previous to the study period, the board of directors for each organization chose to change the artistic director (AD) leadership. The new AD was mandated by the board to renew the organization and hence, lead organizational identity change. As a result, the cases serve as paradigmatic examples of the role of embodied practices in organizational identity change (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Sinfonia is a string chamber orchestra with a strong organizational identity built around the energetic performance style of its founder and AD. This founder was a performing musician who recruited the orchestra's musicians to perform using a distinctive musical performance practice that informed the performance identity of the group. To great acclaim, they performed standing in a semi-circle around the AD, while the AD performed and conducted facing the audience. However, the founder fell ill; the orchestra's quality and the audience interest declined. A new AD was recruited by the organization's Board of directors to "save

and renew” the orchestra. The musicians then performed while seated and the AD conducted in a traditional manner, standing while facing the orchestra. However, the new AD wanted the orchestra’s performances to reflect the distinct intentions of each composer, as opposed to one particular approach, as the previous AD encouraged.

Theatrix is about 50 years old. Their programming offered theatre ‘classics’ and some traditionally conceived contemporary theatre, performed on a big stage with extensive scenery. Under the preceding AD, the company became known for its formality and realistic style of performances. The performers were well-known to the audience and the production technicians had developed a standard and regulated manner of developing and presenting each performance. In 2011, difficult conflicts arose between the artistic director and the executive director (ED). Declining attendance accompanied this challenged executive co-leadership (Reid & Fjellvaer, 2023). To solve both issues, the Board of Directors decided that internal and external renewal was necessary for the organization. They hired a younger artist as the new AD who was renowned for their innovative dramatic interests. This new AD changed the performance and technical process by introducing practices from different theatrical forms, and other performing disciplines. These practices opened *Theatrix* to a more collegial and warmly relational creative process and operating structure.

Data Collection

Interviews, notes from observations behind the scenes and of performances, and video representation of performances provide the data for our analysis. The data inventory in Table 1 provides the details of this data as well as how they provided insights through the process of our research.

Table 1 : Data inventory

Data type	Musica	Theatrix	Use in the analysis
First wave: June-July 2014 and 2014 season			
Interviews	Artistic Director Executive Director Communications Operations Board member Musician --	AD ED Communications Production Board president	Reflections on the arrival of the new AD and the prior dynamics to their arrival. Perspectives are varied including board and artists.
Observations (of organizational performances and audiences)	September through December 2014 – six concerts (Six pages of notes).	First production of the season: Sept 2014. One performance (one page of notes)	Observe the varied responses from the public across the different concerts and productions. A different form of theatre – structured but not narrative. Different repertoire for the orchestra from the past.
Observations (of organization)	Casual conversations over lunch and between interviews (Eight pages of notes)	Casual conversations over lunch and between interviews (Five pages of notes)	Nuanced interpretations of interview data, relationships among participants, and questions of daily concern.
Secondary data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website screen captures (three) Four cases about the orchestra in Case Centre HEC Montréal Concert programs (six) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspaper articles (x3) from 2012 regarding arrival of AD Website screen captures (three) Performance program (one) 	Insight into outside perspectives of how the organizational identity is changing and internal strategies of presentation to the public. Organization's history and the previous leadership profile and identity.
Second wave: January-February 2015			
Interviews	AD ED Communications Operations Board member	AD ED Communications Production Board president	Reflections on the development of inter-relations in the organization and impact of changes being made on art and organization.

Data type	Musica	Theatrix	Use in the analysis
	Musician		
Observations (of organizational performances and audiences)	January through May 2015 – six concerts (Six pages of notes)	Third production of the season: January 2015. (One page of notes)	New works with additional members of the orchestra. Stimulating programs. Challenging dramaturgy and vision of theatrical direction. Reactions from public – assemble in small groups to make sense.
Observations (of organization)	As interviews are undertaken – observe office dynamics. While attending concerts, overhear comments amongst audience members and observe the response from the public. (Ten pages of notes.)	As interviews are undertaken – observe office dynamics. Some short observations of backstage organizational set-up. (Five pages of notes)	Organizational dynamics such as interpersonal relationships within the office and audience enthusiasm and criticism of the performances. Enriched understanding of organizational dynamics internally and externally.
Secondary data	Concert programs (Six).	Performance program (One).	Descriptions of materialized manifestation of changed organizational performance format.
Third wave: July-August 2015 and 2016 season			
Interviews	AD ED Communications Operations Board member Musician	AD ED (interim ED) (X2) Communications Production Board president	Reflections on artistic and organizational changes that are becoming established. Reflections on implications for public and for organization.
Observations (of organizational performances and audiences)	2015-2016 season Six concerts (Six pages of notes)	One performance. (One page of notes)	Observe growth of orchestra under the increasingly established direction. Programming vision is very attractive and while audience remains small there is enthusiasm for the program.

Data type	Musica	Theatrix	Use in the analysis
Observations (of organization)	As interviews are undertaken – observe office dynamics. While attending concerts, overhear comments amongst audience members and observe the response from the public (Five pages of notes).	As interviews are undertaken – observe office dynamics. While attending concerts, overhear comments amongst audience members and observe the response from the public (Five pages of notes).	Further enriched view of how relationships are evolving and how practices are being accepted both internally and with the audience.
Secondary data	Concert programs (six)	Performance program (one)	
Additional performance media	Six CD recordings of the orchestra prior to new AD. Observe repertoire and particular style of sound. Two videos of orchestra in previous performance configuration. Concert programs (six).	Six videos of the development of a new production.	Observe artistic practices before current AD or the observe the impact of the new program. Sought additional sources of information to inform identity practices outside interview period.
Fourth wave: September-October 2018 and 2018-19 season			
Interviews	ED Musician Board member	AD (X2) (telephone) ED Communications Production	Perspectives provided near the end of the tenure of each AD. Practices are no longer new, becoming accepted/ appreciated. Retirement is announced. Anticipation of further change with a new AD.
Observations (of organizational performances and audiences)	Ten concerts (extending into 2019 season) (Ten pages of notes).	NA.	Observation of varied audience and artists interaction during performances.
Observations (of organization)	None	Casual conversations and over lunch enable observation of relationships and some issues in the office (Five pages of notes).	Observation of well-honed relationships.
Secondary data	Concert programs (ten).	NA	

Interviews in each organization included the new AD, their equally positioned co-leader who is the executive director, an artist in the ensemble or company, one key Board member, as well as marketing and production directors. The choice of these organizational actors provided full-circle perspectives regarding the art and the market view on the process of change in these settings. Thirty-two open-ended interviews in three waves occurred during an 18-month period in 2014 and 2015, with a fourth wave of 9 additional interviews in 2018. These interviews revealed how and why artistic and organizational practices changed over time, both prior to and subsequent to the new AD.

More backstage knowledge was acquired through viewing ten videos of the theatre's creative, rehearsal and production processes and two videos of the chamber orchestra's rehearsals led by each AD. These videos enriched visually explicit understanding of the embodied processes articulated in the interviews. Attendance at public performances included twenty-two different concerts and four different theatre productions. Attendance generated an independent embodied experience, subjectively confirming the public impact of changing practices reported in the interviews. Documentation about the AD choice of artists and repertoire in the printed program for each performance offered insights into the change in practices.

The originating author of the research was the researcher in charge of leading the interviews. This person had formal training in professional musical performance, followed by many years of organizational management experience in the arts. They also draw on much comparative experience as an audience member at theatre, dance, cirque, and musical performances. As a general insider to the creative industries context, but not an insider in either of the organizations (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007), this author's knowledge of the setting and practice of the artistic craft enriched the data analysis. As well, this familiarity with the professional practices in the field instilled participants with a trust during the

interviews, providing deep description and reflection, as a result. Observation notes of practices were framed through experienced eyes.

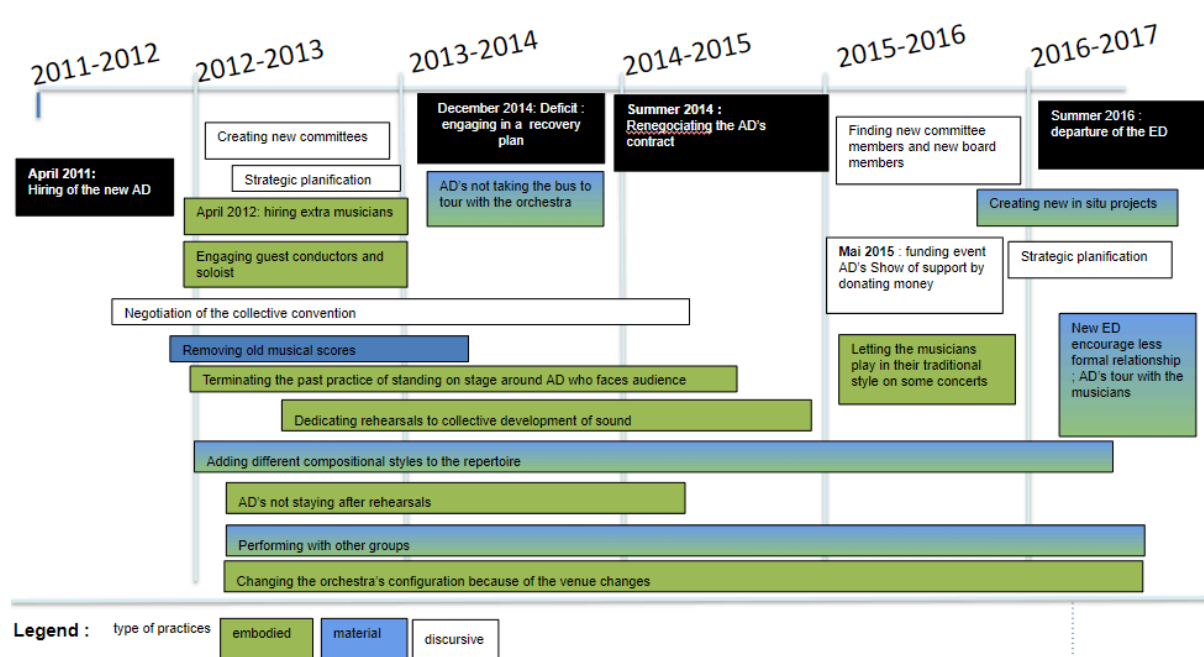
Data analysis

Our analysis involved a combination of longitudinal case study (Yin, 2003) and grounded theory building (Locke, 2001).

Longitudinal reconstruction of events

Our initial analysis used the initial waves of interviews and observations with Sinfonia, where we developed a detailed chronology of events and identified practices of change within that timeline. We shared our narrative and chronology with the key participant at Sinfonia who validated our analysis while suggesting areas for further investigation.

Figure 1 : Timeline of events and practices of change in Sinfonia



With this positive experience, we subsequently repeated that same analysis and consultation with Theatrix. This second consultative experience confirmed the narrative for the theatre company, as well.

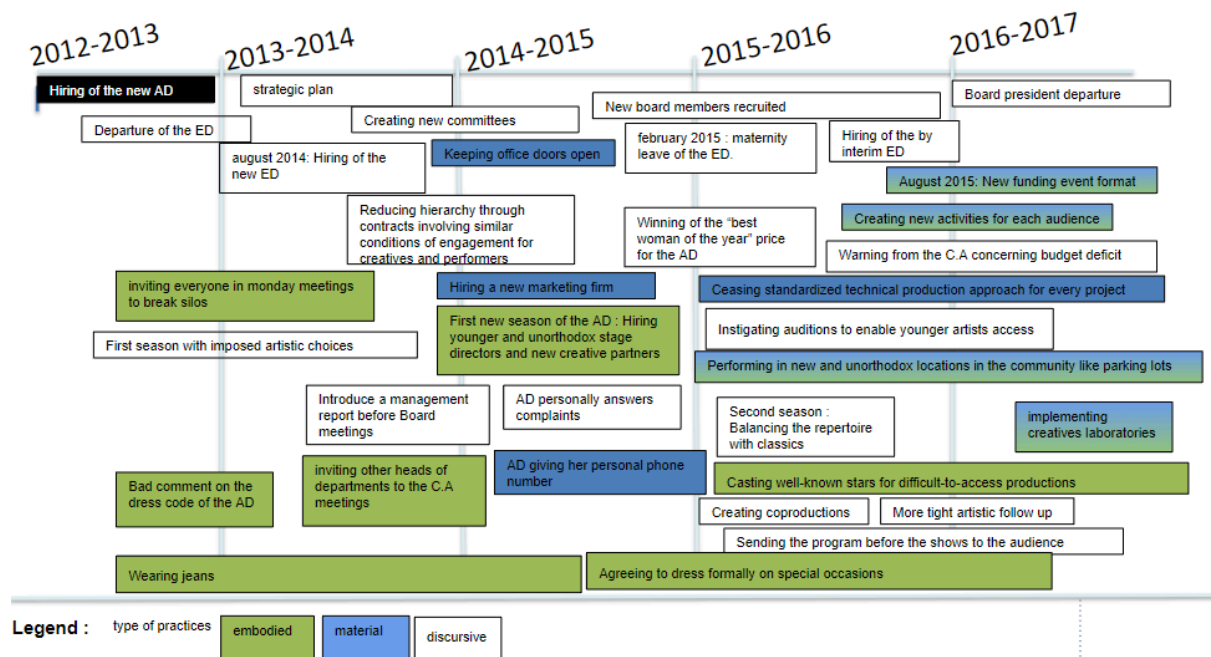


Figure 2 : Timeline of event and practices of change in Theatrix

At that moment of our investigation, our focus was neither on embodied practices nor organizational identity change, but on practices of organizational change in general. But as we created these timelines, we noticed that embodiment was salient and that it might have an organizational identity aspect to it.

Open coding of identity-related processes.

The longitudinal acquisition of data enabled a dynamic understanding of the practices that produced organizational change. Using NVivo, data were analyzed by another author who had training in theatre and with experience in cultural management and board governance in the performing arts. Initially, the extensive NVivo analysis, other than leadership change, involved no specific theoretical orientation. Hence, the coding followed grounded theory principles (Gioia et al, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, the early interviews and this preliminary data analysis led the partners doing the analysis to intuitively understand that these organizations were engaging in identity change. This led to a refocus of the research

question away from leadership to organizational identity change. A third author joined the team, with expertise in identity theory and its literature.

We revised our analysis focusing on organizational identity change. In both cases, the first phase of analysis and organization of the data served to develop open coding, leading to first-order concepts (Gioia et al, 2013). This process enabled insight about three aspects of identity in the organization: the base identity, aspirational identity of the AD, and the practices that are constitutive of these organizational identity. See tables 2 and 3 to view the two organizational identities and the practices that enabled the change in identity in the organization.

Table 2: Synfonia		
Historical Identity Claim	Aspirational Identity Claim	Organizational identity change practices
Romantic repertoire and unity of style - significant energy.	Varied repertoire and performance according to style of each composer.	Work on the articulation of a musical phrase based on the composer's personal preference. Work on performing in a variety of styles. Choose the number of musicians as a function of the repertoire. Do not remain the same size of orchestra. If a piece requires a woodwind instrument, add an extra player.
Family, instinctual, emotional	Professionals in service to the music.	Work on coherent intonation. Adapt to the concert hall for optimal acoustic experience. Hire a guest conductor to ensure adaptability. Fire old musicians who don't deliver and hire new musicians. Designate time for socializing and time for work. Follow the conductor rather than following colleagues. Conductor travels apart from the musicians. Conductor is only present for rehearsals. Conductor avoids discussing personal life. Disciplined approach. Order new scores to erase the memory of previous bowing indications and to reflect composer's needs. Hire extra string players to mask disparities in quality

Table 3 : Theatrix		
Historical Identity Claim	Aspirational identity Claim	Organizational identity change practices
Choice of productions from the classical theatre repertoire	New choice of texts and disciplinary influences	Cross disciplinary productions. Emotional basis to texts. Lyrically inspired programming (brochure)

Classical dramaturgy	Contemporary dramaturgy	Adapt to a more flexible production process to suit the new approach to contemporary theatre that emerged
Realistic staging	Innovative conceptual staging	Invite new stage directors for changing practices onstage. Immediate feedback from AD to stage directors.
Traditional hierarchy Aura of elitism	Democratize. Connect with audience and ecosystem More friendly (trans-organizational communicative) work environment	Collaboration and transparency. Improve financial reporting tools. Create an artistic committee reporting to the Board. Invite executive leadership to Board meetings. Improve interdepartmental communication. Initiate weekly Monday staff meetings. More co-productions that require openness to other practices. Develop AD's public profile to express changes. Wear casual clothing suggesting changes in OI. Open door policy Cultural mediation. Respond to audience complaints personally. Involve more people in decisions. AD more involved in communications department

It was these first order concepts that confirmed the important role played by embodied and material practices. This clarity enabled us to narrow our focus on specific aspects of the data by systematically interrogating “what the body of the artist was doing”, “how different senses are involved” and “what the artist was feeling”. The organization’s original identity under the previous AD became clear, as well as the new AD’s ‘aspirational’ identity. We classified specific embodied practices that were enabling the original organizational identity and those that were put in place by the new AD to achieve their vision. By analyzing what impact they had on the bodies of the organizational members and how their senses were involved in those changes, we managed to better understand the meaning of those embodied practices for them and how those practices embodied the identity of the organization. We will now present you with these results.

3. Results

In this section, we explain the insights gained from our investigation of the organizational identity change process in each of the two cases. The link between certain embodied practices and organizational identity was made salient by the changes initiated by the new leader. In tables 4 and 5 you will find the initial embodied practices and the senses involved within these practices. You will then see how those embodied practices were changed by the new

AD, the impact of these changes on the senses of organizational members and their interpretation of it.

Table 4 : Initial and changing embodied organizational identity (OI) practices in Sinfonia and their meaning					
Initial OI	Initial embodied practices	Embodied senses involved	Changing embodied practices	Embodied senses involved	Aspirational OI
Family, instinctual, emotional organization playing standing up a romantic repertoire within a unique style - significant energy.	Conductor in the center performing facing the audience	-Collective sight : Seeing each other permitting adaptation to the collective embodiment in response to music -Selective hearing : adapting to the sound of proximate colleague -Physical solidarity : use of a shared embodied vocabulary because of the homogeneous knowledge of instrument handling and music-making	Musicians led by conductor in front facing musicians	-Selective sight : Musicians needing to watch conductor for central interpretation of the composer. -Collective hearing : Listening to the whole ensemble to ensure a collectively produced style and pitch -Physical distance : between conductor and musicians	An elite virtuoso ensemble in service to the music, playing a varied repertoire and performance according to style of each composer.
	Musicians standing while performing	-Physical Liberty : Whole body engaging in the music -Physical proximity : Feeling the moving bodies of the other and responding to the movement and performance style of close neighbours	Musicians seated in rehearsal and performance	-Physical restriction : Limiting whole body movement and individual expression to refocus on the sound -Physical distance : Following the conductor instead of their neighbours	
	Continue to play the same musical works with a certain style	-Muscular touch: The body is developing an expertise; knows “naturally” the next note, the next placement of the bow without too much thinking.	Add new works to repertoire and replacing with fresh scores reflecting	-Agile/flexible touch : Adapting performance style and reflexes	

		Developing a specific style with tense engaged muscle and limited breathing	composer's original style		
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Table 5 : embodied OI practices in Theatrix and their meaning					
Initial organizational identity	Initial embodied practices	Embodied senses involved	Changing embodied practices	Embodied senses involved	Aspirational organizational identity
An elite theater with realistic staging and classical dramaturgy and repertoire	Production work separated, on different floors, only communicate with those immediately upstream or downstream	-Physical distance: between departments, and formalized connection with selected people up and down the production chain	Involve everyone (artists, technicians...) at all stages of the production	-Physical proximity : Increasing interdependence and web of connections by making people meet and be physically together	A democratic and accessible theater reinventing classics through multidisciplinary and new formats.
	Formal dress required	-Keeping in sight : marking distance between artists and public by showing off	DA wears casual clothes and shares her personal phone number	Sight for sore eyes : showing the DA is approachable, like everyone	
	Plays selected from classical theatre repertoire with realistic staging	-Keeping the 4th wall : between artists and public by building a physical distinct world on scene -Temporal distancing : choosing pieces from the past	Selecting plays that require greater emotional expression, and improvisation new embodied performance skills by integrating other artistic disciplines	-Feeling touched : by showing vulnerability, prioritizing substance over form -Modern physicality: going out of comfort zones and developing new performance skills	
	Perform in the same venue	-Spotlight on the play -Muscular touch: body is developing an expertise, knowing every possibilities of the space. -Dedicated listening from audience	Meet the public in unconventional spaces (benefit event in the corridors of the theatre + performing in outdoor spaces...)	-Sharing the spotlight: Creating new bonds by interacting closely with the public and meeting them more often where they are -Physical agility: Adapting to different settings -Dealing with noise	

Within this analysis, we discover two principal impacts.

First, we discovered that, through their senses, individuals could instinctively see/feel what the aspirational organizational identity wanted by the new AD was made of by identifying what is out of sight/ out of touch or who are silenced (listened to/to whom we give a voice). While some senses were toned down by the AD within particular practices, creating a loss of bearings, others were taking over generating new orientations.

Second, these embodied practices were useful to attune differently to one another and better understand each other's place in the group and the type of interactions possible. We observed that this backstage dynamic impacted on how the artists were performing hence communicating the new organizational identity to the public that were also perceiving the new organizational identity through their senses; engaging emotionally with the organization.

We believe that these two movements between how the organizational members were sensing these changes and how they attune to one another backstage to perform the new organizational identity onstage, contributes to better understand the co-construction of organizational identity and the role of embodiment in that change process. Let's explore these two movements next.

Embodied practices and senses for orientation

During an organizational identity change, organizational members can often have the feeling of a meaning void (Gioia et al., 2010). We observed in our two cases that their senses were useful to instinctively understand the new priorities of their organization by identifying what is out of sight/ out of touch or who is silenced (listened to/to whom we give a voice).

Indeed, in Sinfonia, the new AD arrived with the mission of saving an orchestra where the quality was being lost. He wanted to level up the game. While the other AD was a musician, he was leading the group by playing in the center of the musicians standing around him. This way of leading wasn't precise. The musicians were left pretty much on their instinct to feel the music, interpret individually the conductor bodily gestual and revolve around their close neighbours' sound to fill the void.

Parce que l'ancien DA, la façon dont il nous faisait jouer, c'est à peu près pas possible de jouer ça avec un autre chef, c'était trop... on utilise toujours le mot organique en faisant des blagues, mais il y allait beaucoup avec le geste, c'était pas un chef qui avait une technique de direction très sophistiquée parce qu'il avait jamais étudié. Mais on comprenait ce qu'il voulait, puis il nous dirigeait comme il jouait, et c'était très personnel... Quand on est dans un tout petit ensemble, par exemple on est trois altos dans ma section, donc si l'autre alto ralentit ou il y a un petit problème, on a été formés à se suivre les uns, les autres pour pas que ça paraisse s'il arrive un petit quelque chose dans une section, woups, on appuie l'autre et l'autre nous appuie puis, woups, on se remet (a musician)

The new AD was trained in the fine arts of conducting methods and he was particularly renowned for the acuity of his earrings. He had a different understanding of how a conductor relates to the group. He was trained to lead the overall sound from the front of the orchestra. He had a philosophy of fidelity to individual composers' style and sound. His approach insisted on a change in order to gain greater flexibility amongst the musicians in response to the respect of each work performed.

I know there was a time when Sinfonia had a way of playing that came a lot from a mixture of the DA's heritage and his way of playing. There's a sort of imitation game going on. I'm not a string player myself, so I'm more in favor of eclecticism, not that everyone should play just any old way, but that when you play a Baroque work, you should have a very different approach to it than when you play a Romantic work. So, rather than imposing an identity on the style, it's rather the style that dictates the identity" (the new Sinfonia's DA)

He changed the configuration to achieve his envisioned sound; asking the musicians to play while sitting down while he was conducting from the front of the orchestra, maintaining a solid leadership in the service of the music.

This change in configuration impacted the three senses. Within the standing configuration, the musicians could see their conductor, but they could also see the rest of the ensemble... and the audience! “If I'd been sitting down, I'd have played behind the violinist, but here I was playing on top of her, so I was able to, I felt like I was going to give what I was playing to the audience” (A musician). No one was **out of sight** (from one another and from the public); they had a collective sight which they interpreted as a communal sense of being in this together. The family identity claim was strong. By asking the musician to play sitting down one behind the other, the AD selectively oriented their sight to mainly him.

In the early days, we played in a semi-circle. We could all see one another, whereas now some of us are behind others. So if I am playing in front, even if the person behind me moves (the bow) differently, I don't see him. So, I'm incapable of reacting in the same way. Therefore, this influences our identity in a big way (Musician)

In the citation, the musician also expressed how sitting down limited their body expression and the feeling of intimacy with one another. They could not feel the movement of their teammates, rendering them **out of touch**.

Also, the musicians were used to playing in a singular style, with limited breath and tense engaged muscles. This baroque touch was interpreted as dramatic by the musicians (and audience). The new AD asked them to adapt their instrument handling and bowing depending on the musical style; revealing that the organization was now prioritizing flexibility to a more muscular energetic unique touch that was leaving no places for nuances.

The “**sound**” that once was intimate, passionate and unique became more (technically) homogenized, sophisticated and of great virtuosity. As an audience member for the new orchestra and a trained musician, the researcher who attended the shows was able to observe that the music was incredibly exciting, engaging, and more refined.

Indeed, within a bigger orchestra seated in front of the conductor, the old way of relating (listening) to one another was not workable anymore.

“Dans un orchestre symphonique, on suit le chef, celui d’à côté est à côté... c’est complètement un autre travail, une autre écoute entre nous...” (Musicienne)

In the end, the organizational identity evolved from a formerly familial and personally passionate ensemble, embodied by playing standing up in circle configuration where musicians could see each other and feel each other, to a more professional and virtuosic organization where the conductor was positioned in front of its musicians playing sitting down one behind the other orienting their sight to mainly the conductor and forcing them to focus on the overall quality of sound.

For Theatrix, when the new AD arrived, the normal way of functioning was linear and specialized as each department passed the baton on in a predetermined order, leaving little room for encounters among the people involved. The organizational members had a selective sight of the organization. The tone of the art was very classical and articulate. Importing a more ‘collective creation’ approach, the AD wanted the creative team and the performers to be physically present from the beginning of the show’s development until the end instead of being present only during specific rehearsal phases of the production cycle. For example, people from the marketing department were invited to observe the creative process and build their promotional material consequently. She was opening up a pathway for a wider organizational landscape and creating proximity and intimacy amongst organizational members. Other organizational members were **now in reach and in sight**.

“citation warm”

But her vision of generating further connections was not limited to the in-house dynamic. Theatrix has a particular role in its larger ecosystem. Situated in a regional city, Theatrix’ mission is to engage artists from the region which was giving them a smaller artistic pool to choose from. The artistic mission also focuses on keeping culture alive in their city. The new AD defined the frontiers of Theatrix much more broadly than its physical space, feeling she

had the responsibility for an ecosystem. She wanted this ecosystem to be interdependent. She multiplied initiatives to develop culture and civic citizenship. A diversity of activities were created to answer a variety of audience needs. One program facilitated physical logistics for seniors in the audience and another promoted bringing the whole family to participate in theatre by initiating children's workshops while the parents attended the play.

Further, the AD created outdoor activities to find the public wherever they were:

Among other things, we realized that the public for our theatre was a bit elitist and closed. So, we decided that we would go out into the street. So, these days, we are performing as « poetic commandos ». We are out in the city, and we perform. Sometimes, we don't even say that it is us. But we attempt to create events outside the theatre. For example, for meeting with the public, I am the one who organizes them. In that way, we have an open house that is different enough so that the person who arrives at the event that we offer doesn't just have a learning experience, but the experience is something that plays with the rules a bit. (AD)

By extending its public encounters into new and unconventional spaces, Teatrix sent a message about wanting to have a closer relationship with its audience and broke with its formally distant identity of the past. The public became visible (in sight) and active (heard and in touch) in the creation process and results. Teatrix started to share the spotlight with them, often breaking down the 4th wall, accepting that the artists would not be the only voices heard.

Those new projects also changed how the artists performed. For example, playing outside meant they didn't have any infrastructure defined, off-stage or on-stage spaces or theatrical lighting. They needed to be heard above ambient sound, to overcome distractions and be ready to improvise. She also opened Teatrix doors to new artists from disciplines outside theater (circus, music...), showing that other **voices could be heard**. These disciplines involve a different muscular mobilization that is unconventional for traditional classical actors, so the actors need to reinvent their own body movement and develop new skills for their stage practice. This changed their embodied practices significantly. All these artistic choices redefined what "classics" could look like, interfering with the old organizational

identity. She promoted this message of welcoming and proximity through the casual clothing she wished to wear, in order to avoid the exclusive and elite image that the theater had previously fostered.

3.2 Backstage embodied dynamic influencing the organizational identity

As the organizational members were finding their new bearings by using their senses to understand the new orientation of their organization, we realized that focusing our analyzes on the senses linked to embodied practices gave us access to a better understanding of how members attuned to one another backstage and not from articulate verbal messages as organizational identity is often analyzed in the literature. This backstage embodied dynamic had an impact on the performance that was delivered, and hence the audience perception of the organizational identity.

In the context of Sinfonia, the aim of the music director was to elevate the virtuosity and flexibility of the orchestra which had been in decline. To do that, he needed to unknit the tightly woven fabric of the ensemble; making room for other artists like himself but also for the composer or new musicians. Adding new musicians into the ensemble, inviting guest conductors or playing new repertoire was destabilizing for the team used to always playing together, but it made them learn new and stimulating techniques. As the musicians were feeling they were losing this more collective sight and proximate touch, the new AD taught them to listen to the overall sound, and to follow (trust) his conducting indications.

The great thing about this group is that they're always ready to challenge themselves and they're always... open. And so I've done things with them in rehearsal that you never do with professional orchestras because people would be insulted, but with them, it's possible. They were even asking for it. For example, tuning notes, making them play chords and then tuning the third, tuning the fifth, tuning the unisons together, for hours on end. (AD)

They needed to listen more carefully to each other and perform in a more sophisticated manner. Visual sense and physical proximity had to be replaced by an aural orientation to understand the ensemble and the music.

Also, in order to emphasize the break with former practices, the new AD requested an « urtext » version of the score be used, which is the version claiming to be the closest to the composer's original intentions. The materiality of the new scores highlighted the importance that the music director placed on responding as closely as possible to the composer's intentions. Furthermore, when new scores, and hence, new physical movements like bowing were imposed, the interpretation is influenced and impacts the audience in a new way. These practices resulted in more versatility and a different sound where musicians were not following their feelings but instead following a more aurally specific composer's intention:

“Sinfonia always sounded the same. There was a kind of sound that was like a singular stylistic paste overall, whether it was Tchaikovsky or Handel. It was a particular sound. ... The group was renowned for having a big sound. ... It was a sound that was not transparent, but rather opaque. The light couldn't pass through it. ... There was a continuous tension. It was as if there were constantly tensed muscles in the sound. (ED)”.

The musicians needed to find new ways to connect. Instead of connecting through physical proximity, they needed to connect through sound. Through sound, they could meet with the immaterial composer. Through sound they were able to hear the whole ensemble (and above!) instead of harmonizing with only close neighbors. The sound was evolving through these changes, capturing the public's attention. When the music director instructed the musicians to perform seated, it was, of course, visible to the loyal public who were engaged with a standing configuration. This was a rare practice evoking performance practice from the Renaissance. The audience's reaction to the new sight and sound encouraged the musicians.

“citation to be added”

A virtuous circle can thus evolve with each performance, impacting the audience perception of the organization's identity.

In the case of Theatrix, change occurred from a more classical theatre to a collective-creation approach. In the tradition of collective creation, every artist could share and participate in the creation. Artists are more than just interpreters, producing embodiment of their character and proposing a different understanding of a relationship with their colleagues than in a classical context. The work of performing the character goes hand in hand with sensitivity, where the actor needs to abandon themselves to the emotions experienced by the character in order to make them as credible as possible. This requires access to a vulnerable part of themselves. The director and the rest of the team play a crucial role to develop and understand the character. They propose their own ideas and interpretation or react to the actor's suggestions. This is a risky zone, where the artist commits themselves and must be open to criticism. The work of abandonment and vulnerability required for self-expression can only take place in a context of trust backstage.

By involving everyone at every phase of the creation, the AD wanted everyone to own the creation and feel responsible for it.

“citation to be added”

She also wanted everyone to know their colleagues more deeply and be more familiar with one another by meeting each other frequently and having different projects together. She also wanted to embody a leadership where the leader wasn't perceived out of reach by sharing her personal phone number and by showing authenticity through her casual closing. She is one of them. By creating proximity within the team, warmth was created.

She tried multiplying interconnections amongst organizational members but also within the regional community of the theater. Indeed, she extrapolated her vision of collective-creation

for the production of shows to the relation between Teatrix and its ecosystem. She opened Theatrix doors to new performers, from other disciplines, inviting non-theatre directors and performers, who brought new performance practices on stage through dance, song and circus techniques.

This play was a co-production with a circus company. So, we had about 15 artists on stage of which four were acrobats. The stage director, in fact, was a very novel creator. He is very young and so his ideas are new, and he works a lot with circus performers. It is a lovely mix of two disciplines: theatre and cirque. That ensured that the production was quite new and modern. (ED)

The public saw new faces on stage and were destabilized (and/or stimulated) by the novelty of the artistic disciplines that were introduced.

There are people who do not have the same tolerance that others do and for whom the idea of theatre is only one thing and as soon as we sing on stage or the moment that we take a political position on stage, it isn't theatre. So right there, my vision is quite different. (AD)

But she took care of the destabilized public by answering personally to every complaint, giving them her personal phone number, acknowledging their voice. She also multiplied moments of connections/contacts with them. She organized outdoor performances to meet with them differently. She also enhanced and extended their theatrical experiences with her program facilitating physical logistics for seniors or children's workshops while the parents attended the play.

4. Discussion (in construction)

Our findings have a number of implications for organizational identity change and organizational identity work. In the organizations we studied, identity claims and understandings were not confined to cognitivist textual or verbal declarations. Moving to a new organizational identity thus required more than rationalist explanations or the projection and touting of a captivating future image (Gioia and Thomas 1996). Rather, new leaders in organizations that rely on forms of bodily performance should consider how they might generate buy-in on a physical and embodied level. This may involve stimulating new

embodied practices to change the relationship between organizational members and their organization, and between each other. Physical placement of organizational members with respect to each other changes the nature of the interactions among them, which can ultimately lead to a different organizational identity. Our study thus moves beyond cognitive and text-based perspectives on organizational identity and organizational identity change to explicitly evaluate these embodied and material aspects.

We also shed light on the nature of such embodied practices. While the notion of organizational identity as a shared performance has been suggested previously (Clegg et al, 2007; Oliver et al, 2010), our findings suggest that practices engaged in by these organizations led their identities to be produced and reproduced through a recursive set of changes to backstage and onstage practices. Alterations to both backstage and onstage practices underlying this identity impacted the intended nature of organizational identity change in various ways. Our study thus extends practice-based approaches that focus on the ‘doing’ of organizational identity (Oliver and Vough, 2010) to engage with embodied organizational identity (Harquail and King, 2010) at a deeper level. In particular, the forms of embodied organizational identity work we identified included both embodied and material aspects.

Finally, our study also represents an early attempt to move from individual to collective levels of analysis related to embodied organizational identity work. We did this by zooming in on individual embodied practices then zooming out to analyze the collective performance resulting from changes to the practices on the individual level. The emergent new organizational identity evolved and changed as the collective practices changed, and the collective practices built on individual-level performance practices. We encourage further research into the process by which individual embodied practices become collective, and on how the collective, in turn, impacts the individual.

Conclusion

In this article, we portrayed the role of embodied practices in the organizational identity change process. We have explained that these embodied practices impacted on backstage embodied dynamics felt by the employees, artists and technicians which had a direct impact on the performances onstage, encouraging the public to bodily feel this change in the

organizational identity. While the rare literature on embodiment generally focused on the individual, we managed to level up and brought on the table the embodiment of the organizational identity felt by employees and the public. Indeed, embodiment is hard to study because this kind of tacit knowledge is hard to grasp and translate in words. The artistic expertise of our participants was a great help to describe what they were experiencing, and we believe that studying more artistic contexts and methodologies could be helpful in understanding the deeper embodied practices in organizations.

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