

Creating Healthy Orchestral Work Environments

2026 National Conference

CAEN THOMASON-REDUS: Good morning, everybody. My name is Caen Thomason-Redus. I use he/him pronouns. I'm the Vice President of Inclusion and Learning at the League of American Orchestras. It's really great to see you all. Thank you for being here on day three. After the Tune-Up Party, thank you for making it back early in the morning. This has been a really great collaboration leading up to this. We've got Virginia Bratton and Jane Booth. They are a pair of musicians, teachers, scholars, researchers, so many great things. I was first introduced to them through the Coalition of Musicians for Ethical Change, which is obviously a musicians' organization that I've been really privileged to get to know over the last year or two. And the process of getting this together has been really fun and exciting, with diverse competing perspectives, which they're going to tell you about. It's been a great metaphor for how we could work in this field towards change, so it has been awesome. Right now, I think the priority for us in this room, I just want to say, is to be here with each other, for each other, to think about what this means for our organizations, for the people we know, and to leave here ready to make some stuff happen.

So thank you so much, and I want to thank both Virginia and Jane, and it is to them now. Please welcome them.

[APPLAUSE]

VIRGINIA BRATTON: Thanks so much, Caen. And thanks for the opportunity to be here. Good morning, and welcome to Creating Healthy Orchestral Work Environments. My name is Virginia, or Ginny Bratton. I am a Professor of Management in the College of Business at Montana State University. And you know what? I noticed that there were a couple of participants from the Bozeman Symphony Orchestra. Do any happen to be in here today? I probably should have reached out and told them I was going to be here. Anyway, I am a trombone player. My dad was a band director. And my mother, despite her saying, "Don't do what your dad did, and don't be in music," I did.

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But after getting my Masters in Arts Management, the highlight of which was interning with the American Symphony Orchestra League in the late '90s, the last year that the League was based in D.C. Despite that, I ended up shifting to business. But the idea was that I would always come back to where my heart is, which continues to be orchestras and music. So now I am finally getting the chance, now that my career has stabilized, and I have hit professor, to research where—and so I conduct research in this area. Yes, thank you. And so

you will see little flyers for a research study that my colleagues and I are completing. And you'll get to learn a little bit about the topic of that in a moment. I made 200 of them, so grab them, share them with your colleagues if you want.

And with Jane, my colleague here today, we have had a wonderful time preparing this presentation. Thanks again to Caen for the opportunity. We are, as Caen said, founding members of the Coalition of Musicians for Ethical Change. Jane.

JANE BOOTH: And we have other founding members with us, too. So it's great to see Jessica. Thanks for coming. Great to see you. We've been talking online for two years. We've never met, so this is—As you'll tell immediately, I come from London. I work at the Guildhall School, and I head up Guildhall's Professional Development Consultancy, which is a business, a commercial business. We offer coaching services. We offer accredited coaching training and organizational development work for the higher education sector, for the arts and for the corporate world. I got into that through my work at the Guildhall when I was Head of Early Music for over 10 years. We had some professional development, and this has just grown and grown. So this is what I now do. But before I had that role, I spent 33 years playing in orchestras.

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I was a historical performance clarinet player, which was quite a niche thing when I got going in the late 1980s. And for 33 years, I was very, very fortunate to play principal clarinet with orchestras based in London, orchestras based across Europe and also in Canada. And I had the most amazing time. Life really did exceed my expectations. But alongside all of those marvelous moments, there were moments when the environment and some of the behaviors of people in the environment left me reeling. And that really is what's led me to this place today. I'm really, really delighted to meet you all, to be here. And we've got plenty to share, so perhaps I should get on with it.

BRATTON: We have prepared an eclectic presentation with quite a few topics. As you can see, these are the topics that we will cover today. And I will remind you where we are on this roadmap as we go through it. But first, we will start with our working agreement.

BOOTH: So as anybody who was with Jessica Schmidt yesterday will know that as we work as coaches, we really like to be clear how we're going to work together. How are we going to be in a space where we are collaborating and dealing with tricky issues? So we offer a working agreement. And because we don't have time to co-create that today, I have prepared a list of suggested topics. Yes, there we go. So the first one is curiosity. We heard about this from Deborah. When we can bring curiosity into our minds and keep bringing it back in, we're in a space where we can learn. It allows us to park judgment over there.

Sometimes judgment's useful, but it's not useful when we're thinking about different perspectives and trying to take on board new information. So I invite you to try your best to hold curiosity front and center.

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I invite a spirit of respect. And this is for ourselves as well as for others. So we may be touching on some issues which create some discomfort. I mean, we can't do this work without embracing some discomfort. When that comes, if it comes, please just notice it and ask yourself what might be the learning for me when this is coming up? Consent for Ginny and I to manage the time because we've been told we have to finish on time.

Anonymity. So, yes, we're talking about tricky topics. We know there are big stories out there. We know people have been harmed, and we know some of the people who have been harmed. Within this space, we are interested in talking about behaviors, the impacts of those behaviors, and what we can do to move to a better place. We ask that we do not share specific names of instances today in this session. We're here to look to the future and also to keep everybody safe and free from any fear of any litigation.

And in our work, we always believe the victim. I hope that that's okay for anybody. If there's anybody who has a problem with any of those elements of our working agreement, please do let me know now, and we can talk about it. Wonderful. Thank you very much. Before we get into our content, I also want to contract with Ginny because we are coming from slightly different positions of expertise. We may not always agree on what the other one is saying, and we may want to challenge that. So we're going to agree that if we do disagree, we will do it respectfully.

BRATTON: And we will probably disagree, but we will be respectful. Yes.

BOOTH: And we're going to try to share our time fairly, and we're going to try to make space for some questions.

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BRATTON: We will try. So this is an app called Poll Everywhere. I invite you to get out your cell phones, should you have them. Has anyone done a poll like this before? Some of you are nodding, some of you aren't. There's a QR code there, and we've tried it from different parts of the room. It might be kind of hard. The other thing you could do is send a text message to 37607 with the content Virginia Brat. I don't know why they can't write it out, but Brat 042. And that's going to give you access to this poll. Because before we get started, we would love to hear from you as to what your expectations are from this session and what you hope

to leave this session with. We're going to do the best we can to tailor that we hope that perhaps you—But ideally, your expectations are, oh yeah, I think we can maybe give you a little bit of hope, yeah? That's going to work out. Thank you for responding so quickly. And we will see this populate on the screen.

This is helpful. We will have suggestions today, not necessarily guidelines. Jane, can you see what's on here?

BOOTH: Yes.

BRATTON: We will have some discussion about some strategies and some solutions. And I hope that we can provide a little bit of clarity. We also are available for contact after this session and to answer questions at the conclusion of this session as well. So I hope that we can do the best that we can to accommodate you and fulfill these expectations today. And perhaps we'll even give you a little surprise as well.

Okay, so now let's talk about unethical behavior. There's a growing awareness across multiple industries, not just this industry, of unethical behavior and the consequences that it has. That was interesting. And so, as Jane and I were talking about this, we realized that there's an opportunity to establish a little bit of clarity around some terms that have led to this discussion today on creating healthy orchestral work environments. So the terms that we landed on here are unethical behavior, well, these four terms.

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So let's just talk about what they are. So unethical behavior are acts that have harmful effects on others and are either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community. This is from a seminal article on business ethics literature. You might notice that I, for those of you who are philosophers in the room, that I just use the terms "moral" and "ethical" kind of interchangeably, and that's what we do in business ethics. I studied business ethics. That was my dissertation topic when I was doing my Ph.D. And one thing that I discovered, by the way, my plan was to come out here knowing clearly what was right and what was wrong. And that did not happen. I just learned how large gray was when it comes to ethics. But one thing that I thought was interesting is that "illegal" and "immoral" are not the same thing. Some of you might be like, "Yeah, obviously." In '55, when Rosa Parks decided to not go to the back of the bus, she was breaking the law. But no one today would say that was an immoral act, right?

So oftentimes the law is lagging behind what society agrees to be ethical. And as society changes, so does what we agree to be ethical. It changes, as well. So this is a moving target. A subset of ethical or unethical behavior is workplace harassment. The EEOC defines this as

"unwelcome conduct based on protected characteristics." And these protected characteristics have also evolved over the years. It includes race, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, sexual identity, and lately genetic information, which I think is going to keep on growing. And this creates hostile, intimidating, or abusive environments, and it can result in adverse employment decisions.

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Related to harassment, but not entirely overlapping with it, is workplace bullying. And the longer definition of that is "repeated unreasonable actions of individuals or a group directed towards employees or a group of employees." And this intimidates, degrades, humiliates, or undermines, and that can create actually cumulative impact on your health and your well-being. So this is more than an off-color joke. This is more than people being sensitive. This is a pattern of behavior that creates serious harm and long-lasting harm.

In a 2014 report from the Workplace Bullying Institute, they found that 50-something percent, and that might have been 70-something percent, of victims have sought medical care because of that prolonged exposure to bullying. And of that, 30-something percent or just under 30 percent reported considering suicide as a result of this behavior. So this is not just people not being able to take a joke.

On top of that, in the 2025 report from the Workplace Bullying Institute, they found that 50-something million employees had been reported being targets of bullying behavior; 20-something million reported witnessing it. So combined, we have 74.8 million U.S. workers in 2025 reporting being impacted directly by bullying behaviors. And you can see that is the equivalent to the population of those 10 states. Although two of those states are—well, three, Wyoming and Montana and Idaho—are small states. But still, California is a big one. So we also have a subset of workplace harassment, which is sexual harassment. "Unwelcome conduct based on your sex." And that can include your sexual orientation, transgender status, and pregnancy.

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And this can lead to, but not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. There are several consulting firms that do reports on this every year. HR Acuity is just one of them. They survey around 2,000 people. In 2025, they found a 14-point increase of sexual misconduct and workplace harassment, misconduct and general and workplace harassment over the past seven years. This does not necessarily mean that people are taking part in these behaviors at a larger rate. It may be a reflection of an increased awareness of this. In any event, the people in this room and people that work with employees—we are more aware of

it and we are more impacted by it, and it increases our workloads and it puts some pressure on us to do the right thing and to do it expeditiously. So that's just something to keep in mind.

So, how does this all relate together? Unethical behavior is the larger landscape within which workplace harassment does fall in there. Workplace bullying does not overlap completely with workplace harassment, but there is some intersection there. It is possible to harass and not bully. It is possible to bully, and not be harassing, right? But there is an overlap there. Sexual harassment is a subset of that, and, again, can intersect with workplace bullying. And if we are going to create healthy orchestral work environments, we are going to decrease these behaviors. Any comments about this yet, Jane?

BOOTH: No, I'm good.

BRATTON: Okay, good. All right, so let's now talk about the context in which we all work, the orchestra context. And a lot of this is going to be review, because many of us have taken music history, and we know that in the 1600s, it was when we first had our orchestras come into existence. And in the 1600s, okay—so we know that women domestically played music, right? Let's provide a little entertainment after dinner and stuff.

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Just as we sewed and we cooked—and so those were domestic things that were labeled "female." But professionally, these things were, and kind of continue to be male professions, right? So it wasn't until the late 1800s where we started to see women entering these spaces. And this is an example of the creation of an orchestra for women and led by a woman. I didn't know about that, but Jane told me. What else? It wasn't until 1930 that we had the first full-time female member of a professional orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra. She played the harp. And in 1939, with the start of World War II, we saw more women entering spaces that were traditionally held by men, right? I think of A League of their Own. We even had women playing baseball, right?

But you remember when the men came home from the war, the women's baseball league disbanded. So this didn't really take hold or lasting hold, and by the time we hit 1970, we had less than 6% women in American orchestras. So we all know that this is when we started having blind auditions and things like that. And there was generally a positive impact by that. I'll insert myself into the timeline. In 1991, I was a freshman at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and I was the only girl, in the back row. And that was in the concert band. I was the only girl for four years in the orchestra in the back row, as well. My colleague Jane was the only woman in the wind and brass section in 1992. And as we know that for many—were you the only woman for all the years that you were performing there?

BOOTH: People came in as subs, but nobody had a specific—Nobody was appointed. So I was principal clarinet in an orchestra which I'm not going to name, because I am going to tell you that recently I was checking on their current publicity photographs, and there is still only one woman in the wind and brass section. So that's out of 18 people in that orchestra, just the one female. And there's only one section principal across the whole of that orchestra, viola.

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So in 1993, we have 21% women in American orchestras. In 1997, the Vienna Philharmonic hired a lady full time. In 2014, we now have 37% women on average in American orchestras. And recently, in 2022, the New York Philharmonic was approximately 50% women, a little bit more than that. Now, that shows that we've had a slow trend toward demographic representation of women in these spaces. What we don't see from that—and for those of us who have been in those spaces, we know that just because we've got a couple of women in the orchestra doesn't mean that we have access to resources, to power. So it's demographic diversity, but not necessarily inclusion. Jane?

BOOTH: Yes, well, there was actually a big piece of research done in the late 20th century by Allmendinger and Hackman. And they examined 80 orchestras. Those were orchestras from the two Germanies, from the UK, and from the USA. And they were looking at a very, very broad range of issues within those orchestras. But looking at the topic of gender and culture, they determined that when an orchestra achieves about 10% female representation, actually up to that point, nothing changes within the environment. The culture doesn't change, the practices, the habits don't change. When the orchestra moves from about 11% up to, I think, about 40%, the culture actually becomes more tricky. There's more discord, there's more conflict, there are more problems. Women really find it difficult to find their place and to be heard fully in that space. And it's only when they get really close to that 50% mark when the environment starts to adapt and starts to see that different practices and different behaviors might be needed.

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And that was a really stark piece of information for me. But in addition to that, if that's what it takes for women to be fully accepted, what about all the other marginalized groups that we want to care about and we want to bring into our ensembles?

BRATTON: So what this brings up is the topic of culture. Because if we're going to create healthy workplace environments in the orchestra setting, we're likely talking about a cultural shift. And historically, in my field, we have discovered a concept called "contest culture," and it tends to arise in traditionally male organizations. But I want to be clear, males and females

and members of marginalized groups all participate in and contribute to contest culture. It is not just a male thing. It just tends to arise in male situations. So let's talk a little bit about what contest culture is.

BOOTH: Sorry, may I just say? We're not here to blame anybody who's here. We're thrilled that you have come to join the conversation. We're not here to criticize or to imply anything about anybody who's in the room or even in this industry. This is about research that's been done elsewhere.

BRATTON: Correct, and actually, this research has been primarily completed in finance, entrepreneurship, policing organizations, and military. So let's talk about what they've learned. In a contest culture, there is zero-sum game competition. So that means we have one winner. It's like Highlander. There can only be one. And they get all the prizes. There is no 70-30 split. There is no smaller prize for second or third place here. It's one winner who gets it all. And to be a winner, you exhibit stereotypically masculine traits. We'll talk a little bit more about what those traits are in the next couple of slides. And this tends to lead to some organizational dysfunction and some hyper-competition amongst employees, because competition ends up being more important than what we exist in this organization to achieve.

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We want to be the winner. We want to be the lone winner. And so we're going to do what we can to be that winner, even if it comes at the cost of what we're trying to produce or create as an organization. And as a result, people start stepping back. They're not sure they want to participate in this, or they're trying to participate in this. It comes at a cost to psychological safety, like Jessica Schmidt was talking about in her session yesterday. It comes at a cost to our ability to retain employees, research shows, and many of you probably have data for this, that it costs one-and-a-half to three times the amount of a person's annual salary to replace one person leaving. So let's consider all of their solutions, rather than doubling down on this type of contest culture.

Before we do that, let's talk a little bit about some of those norms. These are norms that are correlated with organizational dysfunction. And one is to show no weakness. We can't say that we're tired. We can't take a break. We can't take a break because we're feeling stressed out. We might feel physical pain from repetitive motions, whether we are in the office or in the orchestra, but we are not allowed to say that in a contest culture. So we don't show weakness. What we can show is strength and stamina. Those things are widely celebrated. As a trombone player, I certainly—

My academic friends are like, "Strength and stamina. Is that going to work in an orchestra setting?" I'm like, "Yeah." It's absolutely going to be celebrated in an orchestra setting. I am a trombone player, and I know that I have been accused of not being strong enough or complimented for being so strong with my sound before. And I remember kind of giggling when I heard people bragging about how many hours they practiced without a break. I'm like, "I don't think you really played for 12 hours straight, man." But that's what we do. We have these brags. We put work first at the expense of all else—at the expense of your health, at the expense of your personal life, at the expense of your children.

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BOOTH: So you've just reminded me. I was doing some workshops with an orchestra, and there was somebody that I knew, that one of the participants knew, and we just shared how so-and-so is going on—they'd recently retired. And this gentleman said to me, "She was a marvelous player in the orchestra. You know, she never let being a mother get in the way of her work."

BRATTON: I bet her kids really love her for it, too. Yeah, so.

BOOTH: I wonder what happened about his kids.

BRATTON: Right, yes. So we put work first. And lastly, the type of competition that we have is dog-eat-dog. You know, I was thinking about 15 years ago, when I was offered a position in the Bozeman Symphony Orchestra after auditioning, and I remember hearing when the conductor said, "I would like to offer you second trombone." I should have been really happy. Like, trombone is not my vocation anymore, and I really just practiced enough to be, you know, competent enough to get through the audition again. But I was so mad that I didn't win. I was like, "Why am I not principal?" And after a couple of seasons, I was like, "Oh, my God, I had no business trying to be a principal in this organization. I have a full-time job in academia. I can't do this." But I was mad. My goal in that moment was to be first. So we're always trying to be on top.

BOOTH: There's another story that I have. Sometimes in orchestras, we have a little bit of argy-bargy, we say in the UK. Do you say argy-bargy?

BRATTON: No, tell us about that. [UNINTEL]

BOOTH: Okay, well, that's another story. But we have a bit of argy-bargy between certain players and the conductor. This is where this comes in. You know, if the conductor asks for something, and the player shouts something back, "Well, do you mean fast or slow, or do you mean—?" That kind of sense of defensiveness or pushing back, you know, that you're not

going to get at me, so I'm going to get at you type of behavior. And that can be uncomfortable for everybody else in the room, can't it?

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BRATTON: And so maybe in some respects, being open to feedback is showing weakness. And that's another thing that is present in contest cultures.

BOOTH: Oof, genius.

BRATTON: I know. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm screwing it up. I'm drinking decaf right now because I'll talk really fast.

BOOTH: We were asked not to use that first word of this.

BRATTON: We were, and I'm screwing it up. The official term is "masculinity contest culture." I removed "masculinity" because I know that sometimes that can close people off. And also I'm not as purist as academic. It's contest culture. That's what it is. And you don't have to be male to participate in the contest culture. As I just shared with my example, I am deeply a part of contest culture in many of the organizations that I participate in.

BOOTH: It's also an industry in which competition is instigated from almost the start of our journeys, isn't it? We start to learn an instrument, and immediately we are either in competition with ourselves, submitting for exams, or we're going into competitions. So it's just there all of the time. How to get away from this?

BRATTON: Rural Montana. I competed every step of the way through music. I was always going to be good enough to be number one. And then I stopped. You know, so I'd be good enough, and then we shifted. So now I pose a question to you. Might orchestras exhibit contest culture traits? Is it obvious? Do we need to answer this? Can I just see a show with hands? How many of you say yes? Okay. Do any of you say nah—maybe? Okay, it looks like most of us just say yes. If you want to, we can participate in this poll, but I suspect I know what is going to happen here. So we need to move on. Let's move on. So, Jane.

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BOOTH: So if we are going to bring about some change, we need to find a way to encourage more people to change their behaviors, to look inward and say, "Am I serving the music? Am I serving my colleagues? Am I serving myself in all of my behaviors?" People have fallen into habits over many years. There are cultures that have been going in orchestras for such a long time. We really need to find ways to encourage people to look again and ask themselves, "Can I do differently? Can I do better for the environment for my colleagues?"

And what this is going to need is we are going to need more people to speak. Whenever I've done workshops with whole orchestras, I have about three people max that ever speak up. We ask questions. We break people up into groups. We're talking about stuff which is relative to their work. Only three people, maybe four, ever speak up. We need more people to have a voice, to feel that their voice is welcome. It's only at the end of the sessions when people come back and say, "I couldn't speak. I don't agree with anything they said. I want to tell you what I think, but I couldn't say it to the room." We really need to find ways to change that.

And then when we're in the field, when we are in our orchestras, we need to find ways to challenge small acts of discrimination, small moments when the language is not helpful, not kind, and small moments when people who might develop into more serious transgressions are just testing out the environment. Will anybody pull me up if I say or do this? Is anybody going to bother, or am I affable enough that I can just get away with it? Because if we allow people to just get away with it and make excuses, their behavior will amplify, will accelerate, and at some point, it will become very serious. And we have to question our traditions, the way that we have done things in the past.

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There's a lot of conviviality and jovial behavior, and all of that is still welcome. And we need to make sure that all of that behavior is in service of everybody in the ensemble.

BRATTON: Yes, standard practice is not an excuse to justify unethical acts. So, we're talking about changing a culture, and this is much easier said than done. And part of the reason is because all of us in this room—and its standard human behavior—we are resistant to change. I like to think that I'm pretty open to change, but all of a sudden something changes, and I have to take a different route to work, and I'm so mad about it. And again, I like to see myself as kind of going with the flow, and compared to my husband, I am.

BOOTH: Me too.

BRATTON: But still, I like that predictability. There are a lot of really good reasons why. So, when we resist cultural change, it's not to say that we are drawn to and married to committing unethical acts. It's just what we know. So we might resist some of these cultural changes, and that comes from several sources, some of the organization. And we might resist change because our systems are so deeply intertwined that it's difficult to make one change when it comes to recruitment, without a cascade of additional changes having to be made. So, my background in business is organizational behavior and HR. And I mean, HR alone requires a lot of changes to be made. If we change recruitment, we have to change pay, we have to change assessment, we have to change promotion. And so it becomes much

more complex. And similarly, it might lead to a narrow focus of change, which is going to change just one thing, and we ignore all the other things that must be changed with it.

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We have group inertia. So we have norms, and that's that gravitational force. All right, we've got to change, we see that people are starting to exhibit it. And a month later, everything's back to the way it was before, because we like that predictability. We like sticking with what we know. We also, when we make changes, it might threaten expertise. So this is what I know. This is what I do. I feel confident doing this, and now you're asking me to do something else? You know, I took a pottery class in February for the first time, and the first couple of weeks, I hated it because I'm used to knowing what I'm doing. And by the end of it, I was like, "Oh, this is kind of fun. I think I like pottery." But dealing with that discomfort of something new was very humbling for me, and we all experienced that when our expertise is threatened. We also might experience some threatened power. So, I've been in charge. Now you're asking me to share my decision-making authority with others. I don't know how I feel about that. And we might, again, resist a little bit. And, of course, change can impact how we allocate resources. Maybe we're even bringing on more temp employees into our organizations, and then, how does that impact me? Am I still going to be secure?

So these are organizational sources of resistance to change. There are also individual sources of resistance to change. We like our predictability. We like our habit. And you know what? We can kind of go into autopilot for a lot of this, right? Now, suddenly, we're having to exert a little bit more cognitive energy to navigate things that have been very routine for many years in our lives. So that is something that we naturally resist. We may feel insecure. So, "Oh, I'm reporting to this person instead of that person? But I have rapport with that person, and I don't know how I'm going to work with this person." So that is also another reason to resist. Maybe we're not sure about our stability of our employment or how secure our promotion that we thought we had in the bag is going to be.

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And that shapes our economic plans. I was going to go on a vacation. I was going to buy a bigger house. I was finally going to replace my junker car. We might also have just general fear of the unknown. One thing that's more common than you think is a lack of awareness. In the College of Business, my College of Business, we're changing our structure. And even though we are scholars in this area, we are not implementing change, like I'm asking you to implement change right now. And we haven't had ample opportunity to even discuss what this change is. Why are we doing it? And, "Oh, yeah I thought there was an email." Yeah, there was an email—one email four years ago. But we're going to need more than one email. I will say, and many of you in this room probably can share this experience. When you send

an email, and no one reads it, and you're like, "God, why didn't they read it?" And then, poor Caen has sent me so many emails, and I don't know that I've read all of them, Caen. No, I didn't. I didn't read them all, and I didn't read them all the way through because we want people to read our emails, but we don't.

So we need to anticipate that that is a natural reaction, and we need to find multiple ways to get you that information and remind you that it's going to feel like you're beating a dead horse. But you're not. You're just making sure that people get that information in the ways that they need. And then, of course, social factors. Because a lot of us show up to our workplaces for that relation and the relatedness. And we question, "Wait, how is that going to change because of this new policy or this new culture that we're trying to implement here?" So this leads us to types of change. We have two types of change. There's a reactive change, where we have what is and what should be, but we're not doing what should be. And so we have a performance gap here. And so that's what the change is. We're going to have to bridge that performance gap. There's also proactive change, where we have what is and what could be. And here we have an opportunity gap. So how do we achieve that?

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In both types of change, we need to raise dissatisfaction. That is key to implementing this change. And dissatisfaction specifically is emotional energy about that performance or opportunity gap. Because when you try to make a change, you're going to have a lot of people going, "Everything's fine. There's nothing wrong here. We don't have to do it." So it's up to you to say, "Nah." Go ahead, Jane.

BOOTH: That's what the three or four people in the room always say to me.

BRATTON: Nothing's wrong here.

BOOTH: "We don't know why you've been called in for these workshops. We don't know why we're here. We'd rather be playing in the orchestra. There's nothing to see here. We're all just fine."

BRATTON: And that dissatisfaction is silent. And so we have to bring that to people's attentions. So how do we raise that dissatisfaction? We communicate the need for change and what we lose by not changing. And however we need to do that in our particular context, that's what we do. So how do we communicate that need for change? We project an effective model. And that effective model, that effective future image of what we could be, is desirable, so it satisfies our stakeholders and it motivates and mobilizes our employees. It is feasible, so we have opportunity for short-term wins. And it's a realistic stretch. It's not so

out of reach that you're like, "Why are you even asking us to do this? It's never going to happen."

And finally, it's relevant. I'm not going to present something that worked really well in the corporate finance industry and expect everyone in my orchestra organization to embrace it. It's got to be tailored to the relevant context, and so be sensitive to the context in which we operate. How quickly or slowly should we move? This depends on the nature of the change. Go ahead, Jane.

BOOTH: Yes, so thank you very much, because all of that context is really, really important for people who are thinking and planning about what's going to happen in organizations. I'd just like to look for a moment at what's going to happen to the individual, what's going to happen to the people on the ground?

[00:38:00]

So let's just move to the human level. And one of the things I notice in my coaching is that people experience on a personal level two kinds of change. One of those is change that is imposed upon them and how they have to manage that and deal with it. The other one is change that they want to make for themselves. And guess what? Even when we want to make change for ourselves, it's still really hard. Who has ever wanted to change something about their lifestyle, something about their role, something about their career? This doesn't happen overnight. It's not a one-stop shop. It's something that needs planning. It's something that we move towards. We might fall off, and we might have to reevaluate and check again and get back on that plan. And we might do that several times around, so that Prochaska—There's a really interesting wheel about this around change. But we have to expect that it's not going to be a straight line. It's not a one-stop shop, even with the best of intentions. Does it say that?

BRATTON: It sure does.

BOOTH: Okay, right.

BRATTON: So along with that, there are two different—When we talk about nature of change, we can have directive change. And directive change is something we can use in an urgent or crisis situation, the type of situation that might arise when we are reacting to bridge a performance gap. Let's use the metaphor of the house being on fire. We're not going to negotiate and say, "All right, are you guys all on board? We're going to exit this way and see if we can call the authorities to put out the fire." There's a lot of dissatisfaction with the smoke and the heat. We're not going to resist much to the suggestions, to the directions we're receiving in this situation. And we all support that. Yeah, we want to live, right? And the

person in charge of leading us to a safe environment has the relevant information, and that change is pretty doggone clear. So let's translate that to maybe a situation you might encounter.

[00:40:02]

It might be, "We're going to be X-number of dollars in deficit. Our organization might not survive." We're going to lose a critical sponsor for one of the largest concerts that we have of the year. That is going to be an opportunity for you—you could be a little more directive in that situation. But not all situations are crisis, right? So this is where we approach with more persuasive approach. Not a crisis, and because it's not a crisis, we're going to need to really build commitment to that change and build commitment to participate in and support that change. The change is a little less clear. It's not, "Run for your life, run to safety." We have to figure out a little bit more about that. There's going to be more nuance to this. The change is definitely more complex, and we need support from our key constituents. Jane?

BOOTH: And so this is where coaching skills can help. And that's learning some coaching skills. It's deploying coaching skills, or it's becoming a coach. There are some wonderful coaches in the room already today. Coaching draws upon a number of research areas—psychology primarily, but in particular, positive psychology. We draw upon the behavioral sciences, and that includes aspects of neuroscience. So one of the things that we're doing is we're learning how it is that our brains work. What influence do they have on us, and how can we use that as we seek to bring about change in our organizations? And the primary job of our brain, we think it's about being clever and all of that stuff, but the primary job of our brain is to keep us alive. So the brain is wired to minimize danger, keep us away from harm, and it's wired to maximize reward. And it does this by prioritizing the limbic system. That means that our emotional responses of processes, our behaviors, our motivation memory, these are all privileged over our executive functioning.

[00:42:07]

So when somebody says, "I don't know what happened, I just, I just, I wasn't thinking." What they mean was I went into that fight-flight-freeze form, mode, and their executive function, the front pride of the brain that does all of the thinking, it was switched off because the brain has made that decision that we have to move to safety. And what's really important about this is that the brain does not know the difference between physical threat and social threat. So when somebody says something which feels aggressive, which is unpleasant to hear, whether it's negative feedback, criticism, or insults, the brain's responses—and this has been shown in MRI scans—the brain's responses are just about the same as if somebody came at you with a punch.

So it is a big thing for the brain to receive that kind of attack. So we're going to do an exercise. We are. We're going to do an exercise. We're going to use David Rock's SCARF model. He devised this in 2008. He's a neuroscientist. And this is a model around social interaction. So the brain responds to social threats and rewards in the same way that it does physical ones. And when the brain is perceiving a threat, then it's less able to collaborate, less able to problem-solve, less able to make decisions, and it is really compromised. It's also important to know that the threat response is much more powerful than the reward response. And as well as the "away" and the "toward"—which way is it? Away is that way. I've got to get my arms right. David revealed five social domains, five particular areas in our lives where we're impacted by negative and positive influences. And this is really useful in the workplace.

[00:44:12]

So we're going to do a little experiment, a little exercise together. It's a silent exercise, and in order to do this exercise, I would like you to think about an experience or an event in your lives that has some meaning. I'm going to say don't bring up something that was traumatic, because I don't want to open that box for you right now. So this could be something that was great, something that was marvelous, or it could be something that's coming up that you need to deal with, or something that was a little bit challenging. Can we go back to the last one?

BRATTON: Oh, the last one? Oh, yeah, because we haven't gone through the model yet.

BOOTH: No, it's good. We've got a map, and we can look at different parts of the map. So the five social domains. The first one is status. How do I feel? How important am I in relation to others in this environment? Do I feel that where I sit in relation to others in the environment is where I expect to be? When my status is threatened, somebody might embarrass me, they might humiliate me, they might leave me feeling, you know, really as if—Well, I don't know what happened there, but I no longer know where I stand, literally where I stand. When my status is rewarded, then people are valuing the work that I do, and they are recognizing what I do really well.

The second one is certainty. I've been given a job to do. Am I clear on what that job is about? Do I have the resources I need to do that job well? Is it really, really clear what the destination is and maybe what some of the stages are? If not, then there might be shifting sands, or people might be changing their minds, or they're being vague. And then I'll feel threatened because I really don't know if I can do this well because I just don't know what's required.

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Sense of autonomy. Have I got someone hanging over me saying, "I know how to do this? I can do it really, really well. The only way to do it is my way. So it's my way, or it's the highway." Have I got someone doing that where I'm going to be feeling threatened, or have I got someone saying, "This is where we're trying to get to. These are the resources we've got. Come back and tell me if you need anything, but I know you've got this. I know that you have the skills to do it, and I want you to do it in the way that you can deliver that work as best as possible. I want you to bring your strengths to the situation."

And then relatedness. Are you in a situation where the computer says, "No, you can't have that, just go away and deal with it." Or are you in a situation where you feel you're on a fantastic team, where everybody has their place, where the different gifts and different strengths are celebrated, and where the sum of the whole is so much greater than the individual parts?

And the final one. Does this feel like a fair exchange between people? Do I feel that there's fairness here in the work that we are doing, for me and for others? Because when fairness is a really important social domain, we're also concerned about others. If fairness isn't present, what are the feelings that come with that? If fairness is present, what do I benefit from in that? So there we go.

BRATTON: Yes, Jane, when I think about this, and I think about giving that opportunity to play in the Bozeman Symphony Orchestra, and that story I just shared—I realized that for me, when I was offered second trombone, my status was threatened there. But we managed to get over it, because relatedness was an opportunity that drew me forward.

BOOTH: There you go. So bring to mind an event, an experience that you'd like to work on. This is a silent exercise, so wherever you are, if you'd like to take a seat, and you haven't got one, please do take a seat. We're going to think about this experience that you have in relation to each of the domains in turn. So, just get comfortable. I want you to really step in, lean into this situation.

[00:48:05]

You might want to close your eyes. It suits me, but it might not suit you. But if you want to, that's fine. Get really into that situation. The people, you might even smell where it happens, or you might smell the place, or you might envisage the room where that work takes place. The people involved, all of that. Okay. So, when you think about that event or experience, how is your status impacted by that event, that experience? Do you feel that your status is enhanced? Do you feel good? Do you feel you're in the right place there for yourself? Or do you feel isolated or embarrassed or uncomfortable? What does that do? I'll just go quiet for a moment so you can think about that.

Okay, I did say think about it, didn't I? I should have said what do you feel? What do you feel about that? Where do you feel that in your body? Are there some sensations somewhere in your body? And what's the information that that gives you? Because it's information. Emotions are information. Okay, let's shake that one off. Let's shake off status. Let it go. And we're going to move to the next one, certainty.

So, when you think about this same event or experience, how does certainty show up in this experience? Is it an experience where you know what's required, the instructions are clear, you haven't got a few screws missing from a flat pack piece of furniture? You've got everything that you need, and the instructions work for you, and you know where you're going. Is it like that? Or are you feeling, "I just don't know what I'm being asked to do."

[00:50:02]

And whichever one of those, what kind of feelings does that bring up for you? What kinds of sensations come to you? Where are they in the body? And what is the information?

Okay, thank you. This is very short. If I was doing this in a proper workshop setting, which this isn't, then we'd be spending rather more time, we'd be doing it in quite a different way. But we're just trying to get a tiny flavor of how these kinds of things can work.

BRATTON: So we're shaking it up again.

BOOTH: Oh, we're shaking it off, yes, thank you. Yes, shake that one off. Let that one go. Let certainty go. Let's have a think about autonomy. So autonomy. In this experience, have you got full control over how you do this thing, over what your role is and how you're doing it? Have you got full control, or is somebody hanging over you and saying, "You have to use this fingering," or "You have to put the bow this way up," or "You have to use this particular clarinet reed," or something like that?

Okay. Let's shake off autonomy, and we're going to move to relatedness. So was this a computer says, "No" situation? Or was this a common, let's do this all together and make the output greater than the sum of its parts? How was relatedness showing up for you in this event?

[00:52:03]

BRATTON: Can I say more about that? You give a great example of a job opportunity.

BOOTH: So one of the stories that sometimes comes up is that a person has auditioned for a new orchestra, and they've done all of the trials and all the rest of it, and they've been appointed to this new orchestra. And this new orchestra is several states away, and they're

going to have to move house. They're going to have to move their whole family. They've got a great opportunity. It's a well-paid job. It's a great orchestra. Status is high. Autonomy is quite high because it's an up position. There's responsibility there. They've played there, and they know how it works. But relatedness, well, I'm just going to have to leave my parents behind, and I've got my cousins here, and I've got various other people who are in this town, and I won't see them so much. And that's actually pulling me in two directions. That's making this decision actually not so obvious.

It's not having the connections to people that make your life full. And I'm just aware of time, so I'm going to jump to fairness, and I know that for many people, fairness is really important. So let's shake off relatedness and fairness. Does this event express fairness for you and for others around you, the people you care about? Or is there something here that feels unfair? We'll just spend a short amount of time here, and then we'll move on. Okay, thank you.

[00:54:09]

So one of the things about this model is we're all in a slightly different place. You know, we have different values, don't we? We've heard about values throughout the week. We have different values. For some people, status is just not a thing. They're not bothered about that, but fairness is really important. For some people, having autonomy is really important, and so they leave an organization because, "I don't have autonomy here. I'm going to set up on my own, and I'll be much better off." We're all different.

BRATTON: I'm skipping the poll because of time.

BOOTH: We're skipping the poll because of time, but I think it's really interesting to notice for yourself which of these domains came up as more important than others in the moment that you were thinking about. And as leaders, what's really critical here is to know that when your organization, when you're asking people to go through periods of change, they will also be experiencing the threats and the rewards with all of these domains. So if somebody's reacting badly to something, and they're really resistant, then knowing which of these domains might be impacted can help you to support them through the change.

BRATTON: I know for me, I feel autonomy and fairness are deeply impacted as I navigate change, and Jane had shared that many of us experience different levels of intensity, and one to two domains may have more intensity. And I feel them in different parts of my body. I think about the threat, not the reward. All right, let's move forward.

BOOTH: There we go. Yes, so I've said this. As leaders with your teams and with your orchestras, thinking about what the other person might be experiencing, as we announce

and work through change, is going to be really important. So that brings us to making the case for coaching skills. So coaching, as we train people at Guildhall Ignite, coaching is about change, and we hold the belief that people are creative and resourceful.

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When people are healthy, they are creative and they are resourceful. In coaching, the relationship is a relationship of equals, and nobody is seeking to exert positional power over the other. When we learn coaching skills, it helps the other person, it helps the person we're working with to increase resourcefulness, and this is the opposite of giving somebody a piece of advice. If we give somebody a piece of advice, we're basically saying, "I know better than you do." And so in coaching, we're saying, "You're the expert in yourself, you know what you can do well, what ideas have you got about solving this?" And I might challenge and test those, but we'll find out what's going to work for you. It is collaborative, and it also takes on board the whole person, not just the person sat behind the music stand or the person sat at the computer.

And Jenny Rogers, who is our wonderful consultant, 40 books she has written on coaching. Can you imagine it—40 books? She says coaching works because it's based on psychologically proven principles. That's our need for autonomy, for relatedness, and for a sense of competence about going about our work. And a really important thing for me, this is a model of interaction, this is a model of engagement, which is about power with others. This is not power over others. And this is the significant thing that feels important in our work. It doesn't mean to say that people don't have other levels of responsibility. It doesn't mean to say that people don't get paid more because they held that responsibility. But it means that when we're talking to another person, whatever the hierarchy, we're not seeking to control them or have power over them. We are seeking to learn more about what their own minds and bodies can bring to the situation. And when we do this, we build trust. We build rapport. We listen carefully and without judging too soon.

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It helps other people to think. It helps us and them to challenge some of the things that they've assumed for such a very long time. Within coaching, we often offer and receive constructive feedback. There's accountability there. And there's a sharing of responsibility. So when you're in a situation where the leader is holding all of the decision-making and feeling like they're holding all of the balls in the air, coaching can shift this. It distributes the responsibility where the work is actually going to be done.

And as we've experienced, perhaps in that SCARF exercise, one of the things that we also know is that emotions drive our behavior more than our cognitive thinking. When we

remember things about people, good encounters, not-so-good encounters, we often, years later, will remember that encounter, not for what was said, but we'll remember how we felt. And however that feeling was at the time, it will stay in our bodies and we'll remember it in our physical being just as much as we remember it in our minds.

So we're offering today a model, a framework. Somebody asked at the beginning for a framework. Hurrah! Here it is. A framework for cultural change. This is a sort of a suggestion of how we think about bringing about change in our organizations. The first chunk of work, and I'm not suggesting that this comes as a one, two, three. I think these things all need to happen simultaneously or at different phases. But we need to update and revise our policies and our processes. These need to be co-created. People need to have a voice. They need to contribute to what we are signing up to. So get them involved, talk to people, find out what people's needs are, so that everybody's contribution can be honored, and so that the organizational values are representative of what the organization really stands for and is really about.

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These policies need to have clear expectations, and within that there always needs to be a safe channel for voice. A safe channel is one that people feel they can use and will use. There need to be safe channels for voice for people to speak up. These processes and the roles, the people who are operating processes, need to be transparent. They need to be clear for people. They need to be practiced. They need to be available. People need to be fluent with them so that it's not a big thing when something is raised. We're expecting to hear from people when something isn't okay. And alongside this, we need compassion and support and maybe peer support as well—compassion and support for people who have been harmed, and we need compassion and support for people who have harmed others, because we all make mistakes, and some of the mistakes that are made can be put right. We can sometimes change our behavior and do better again, and we need to create a space in which people can change their behaviors and change their minds. And if we have these things, we're beginning to move towards a safe working environment.

I encountered recently Dr. Sarah Brooks who's done a lot of work on voice and how we can achieve more people speaking up. How do we get people to speak up in organizations? How do we hear what people have to say? And she offers three coaching questions. If somebody is unsure, "I don't know if this is something I should speak up about. I don't know who to talk to. I don't know what's going to happen." Three questions. What do you want to say? Who needs to hear? What do you want to happen? Those three questions might just unlock something for somebody who's feeling a bit stuck. So if we've got the policies in place, we

need training. We need training for everybody, frankly, but we certainly need training for people who have leadership roles, and the people who are going to hold these processes.

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We need people to have self-awareness. Am I conscious how I show up in the workplace? Am I conscious about the way I come across to others? Am I thinking about how I'm impacting them? We need those people, and I'm talking about people within the orchestra, as well as in the administration teams in all of the work, the wonderful work that you do. We need people who have clear leadership roles and responsibilities. And they need to have a developer practice of having regular leader-member dialogue. They need to know their people, not just the ones they're particularly friendly with, but anybody who's in their section. They ought to know them. They ought to understand where those people are coming from. And we need to grow communication and conflict management skills. If we nip things in the bud early on, we will avoid all of the massive costs of the HR processes, the recruitment, and all of the investigations and legal cases that come later. We can nip these things in the bud if we have all of this training. And we need to learn from our mistakes, and we need to be clear when we've made a mistake.

The culture of any organization is shaped by the worst behavior the leader is willing to tolerate. How often do we let something go because, well, that's just the way they are. "Oh, don't take it personally. That's just what they do. That's just what they say. It's just how they are." That isn't okay. People don't have to be just like that. It's a habit, and people can change their habits, and we're going to create the environment in which they can do that. So then we're getting into a place where we have inclusive leadership, and we need inclusive leadership on and off the stage. And that means listening more carefully, listening more deeply, modeling the policies and the expectations, rewarding when those behaviors show up, honoring the organizational values—don't leave them in the drawer—and holding responsibility for our own actions and behaviors.

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And so if we have all of these things in place, and the wheel keeps going because, as Virginia said, the targets move, life changes, we are in a world of change, and so we need to keep updating and keep practicing. I think the one thing that's really fantastic about all of this is musicians know how to practice. So that's all we want them to do. We want them to learn a new skill, practice it, practice it with each other, support each other, and we can make progress. And as we do that, and as we bring ourselves and lean into this work, we really need to—What's next? You were so ahead of that. You were so good there. Perfect.

BRATTON: I screwed it up.

BOOTH: No, you didn't.

So as we lead change in our organizations, we really have to be mindful of our own state. And this, I love this quote: Our success in this endeavor is going to be largely influenced by the manner, the tone, the behavior that we bring to that endeavor and that we bring to our colleagues.

So this is my big plug. This is the work that I've been doing since 2019. We have a team of about 50 coaches back in London. Actually, they're not all in London. Maybe one of them is in the room. We have a group of 50 or so coaches with slightly different expertise in the Ignite business at the moment. And I started working in particular with a lady called Trudy Wright. She used to be a Board Director for HarrisonParrott Agency, and she was Head of Tours and Projects. So it's possible that some of you might know her. She retrained as a coach in 2012, and we have a practice together in organizational development. In 2020, we rolled out our first cohort of Leaders On and Off Stage.

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Leaders On and Off Stage sits at the heart of our work delivering professional development to orchestras. The heart of this is a three-day program of workshops, highly interactive, highly practical for section leaders of orchestras. And it's such a beautiful thing when we work with a group from the same orchestra, something like 12 to 15 people. When we work with a group from the same orchestra, people are learning the skills together. They're learning the language together. They tell us after the first day, "I've just had a beautiful conversation with my colleague. We didn't know anything about each other. We've only ever just gone to the pub and done this, that and the other." But all of a sudden, we have a different kind of relationship with each other." People tell me that they have forged unexpected friendships. People tell me that they go to each other and say, "I've got a problem, and can you help me? Can I practice this difficult conversation I need to have?"

These groups are coming together by the end of three days. They've decided themselves that they want to form their own little committee. And they've got ideas. They've got a whole long list of things that they want to discuss and propose to management—improvements for the organization, improvements for their members, ideas for how they want to renew their own organization. So this agency really rises.

So far we've worked with, I think, over 900 musicians, about 20 or so orchestras in, I think, 10 different countries. So it's very exciting work. It's work that comes with a huge passion because both Trudy and I have spent our 30-odd years with orchestras, and we know that so much is wonderful, and we believe it could be so much better for the future. So this is one

person that came to work with us, Zoe, a beautiful violinist, if you ever get the chance to work with her. And this is what she said at the end of the program.

[01:08:04]

"You empower, they empower, everything feeds itself." I love that.

BRATTON: Yes, let's go. Or let's not. There we go.

BOOTH: So, call to action.

BRATTON: Call to action and wrap up. We did not practice me sitting down. I'm sorry that I did that, but I was like, "Oh!" My limbic system was telling me I might fall off the platform, so I walked over here and sat down.

So thank you so much for being here today and for your time and the opportunity to speak to you. So let's have a little bit of a wrap-up here. And the wrap-up is the culture of the past has not served all. And we can do better. We can achieve more. And the modern orchestra, the modern organization is varied and diverse. And it should reflect the varied and diverse membership of the institution, as well as the varied and diverse audience of our institutions. Everyone plays an important role in changing a culture. We all shape and influence that culture together. And how we behave matters as much as what we produce. As Deborah said in the opening keynote, "The values we live by play in a critical role." It's not just musical excellence. It's how we treat one another as human beings in achieving that excellence together.

So we'll never know the extent of a person's gifts until they feel safe to show themselves fully in the workplace. And together we can build a revolution. So a couple of resources. This is the website for the Coalition of Musicians for Ethical Change. We have colleagues in Canada at Safe Music Inc., who are doing a beautiful job. They are up and they're running, and they have just a really wonderful website. We have stumbled across an organization.

[01:10:06]

Has anyone heard of Backline Care? They provide therapy and counseling to people in this industry who are experiencing distress. And also, Jane's organization, Guildhall Ignite.

BOOTH: There are some leaflets on the table if you're interested.

BRATTON: Leaflets for Guildhall Ignite as well as CMEC. Again, I'll make a plug for my study. If any of you are interested in learning more about contest culture and are interested in

participating in our research, we would really welcome your feedback. And please take some and share them with your colleagues. And before we close, go ahead, Jane.

BOOTH: Yes, please. Before you leave the room, just make one commitment to yourself, one thing that you might do, that you will do—sorry, one thing that you will do differently in order to support your colleagues to do their very best work always.

BRATTON: And with that, thank you so much. Thank you for your time.

[APPLAUSE]

BRATTON: Thank you, Jane.

[01:11:10]