

GENERAL GUIDELINES TO INFORM THE MENTORING ELEMENT in the "Tour d'Europe des Chorégraphes" programme

Broad definition

To put it simply, mentoring is a partnership between a more experienced person (the mentor) and someone less experienced (the mentoree). The less experienced person seeks advice about their work or their career direction, and the more experienced person willingly responds by sharing their own experiences and by taking an interest in the other person's needs.

In case of Tour d'Europe : the mentor and the mentoree do not share the same background, so one important idea of the exchange is to open up the mind for other areas of society and interest : how do I communicate with people from different professional backgrounds?

Mentoring as intended in the "Tour d'Europe des Chorégraphes" programme

The project sees the choreographer not as an artist set apart from the job market and its economic, strategic and managerial realities, but as a well-rounded person concerned with his own development, that of his project and of his team.

Each choreographer is assigned a mentor from another country, working in a sector other than dance. This means that the relationship does not fall back on aesthetics.

The aim is to explore the concept of mentoring : sharing experiences and developing career paths through privileged relationships.

The process should stress the importance of personal development. A mentor is there to help the mentoree reflect on what they are doing. The aim is to be self-reflective, suggest a number of ways of looking at things, suggest different frames for looking at what they are doing, and to find positive ways of looking at difficulties.

Quick guide to the mentoring partnership agreement

- > Agree on the goals of the relationship
- > Note the ground rules for the relationship.
- > Spell out the 'what ifs' – for example, what to do if the time available for contact becomes an issue or if the partners are incompatible.
- > Determine criteria for success and the completion of the relationship.
- > Decide how to come to closure in case where the relationship terminates by mutual consent.

Suggested timeline

It is essential that the mentoree and mentor meet and establish a rapport before commencing the formal relationship. This would help the mentor work out what the mentoree wants and what he/she can give to the mentoree.

We suggest that the mentoree travel to meet face-to-face the mentor in his/her country. They would meet for a 2 days session, the first session being facilitated by the guest partner. Appropriate support will be provided by the partners to facilitate the travel.

This initial meeting will help set clear parameters and expectations from the beginning, creating a 'safe space' for communication between mentor and mentoree. Mentor and mentoree will decide together how they want to best build their relationship.

One-a-month check-in sessions, following each of the away-days, are recommended to develop the relationship. Mentoree and mentor are free to decide on the best format (i.e. skype calls, email exchange, etc.). They would also agree on a regular, mutually convenient contact schedule.

Mentor and mentoree should always maintain their partner in the loop about the development of the process.

Checklist for mentorees

- > Can I take constructive criticism ?
- > Do I have the ability and desire to learn new things about others peoples profession and daily practice?
- > What do I expect from this experience ? What do I want to learn from the mentor and about his interests and experience ?

- > Do I need a mentor primarily to (e.g.):
 - help me reflecting my career in general / opening up perspectives on the career path
 - support me through to the end of the project Tour d'Europe
 - opening up new perspectives and a broader understanding of working life and society in order to reflect upon dance in the context of society and politics etc

- > What agreement will I make with my mentor? Have I thought about:
 - how we can keep in contact
 - what we should try to do together when we meet in the mentor's city
 - what my mentor's responsibilities and time commitments are
 - what we should do if something goes wrong or if one of us is unhappy in the partnership?

Checklist for mentors

- > Invest time and effort in setting the climate for mutual exchange
- > Be sensitive to the interests and needs of your mentoree and spend time connecting with them.
- > Make sure that connection results in meaningful exchange and communication. Ask yourself what the mentoree is taking with him/her from the two days meeting on your city.
- > Think about how to approach to the choreographers questions and needs and how your own background and experience can be helpful to the mentoree, although you are working in different areas.
- > Try to be sensitive to the choreographers way of communicating about hs/her work

Source : « Making your mentorship work » Mary Ann Hunter