

# LEADERSHIP COMPASS

Leadership Development Programs at The Banff Centre

WINTER 2006-2007

## TEAMWORK

COLLABORATION • PARTNERSHIP • ENSEMBLE



The Banff Centre  
inspiring creativity

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CHRISTOPHER VON BAEYER

We all recognize the importance of teamwork but sometimes forget that a critical enabler is open, honest, and effective two-way communications.

# WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE STAGE?

Dramatically improving a leader's performance

BY PAM CHALLONER

Stepping into the spotlight, they immediately command the full attention on their audience. Every movement of their hands, face, and body, the inflections and emotions in their voice, and each word spoken, clearly communicates their message. They draw the audience in, connecting to them. They deliver something authentic, based on their true life experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and insights.

Is this a scene taken from the latest, hot television drama? Or, is it an example of the kind of leadership taking place in boardrooms, at weekly staff meetings, and around water coolers?

Christopher von Baeyer has proven it can be both. Creative facilitator for The Art of the Executive Leader program at The Banff Centre, von Baeyer specializes in the integration of theatre and human development. An actor, educator, and consultant, he has designed and delivered theater-based programming for actors and non-actors in voice, acting, leadership, and professional communication.

Von Baeyer is founder, artistic director, and conductor of the Toronto Playback Theatre. The company is dedicated to listening to people's stories and transforming them spontaneously into theatre. He has taught at Emerson College and Boston College in Massachusetts, the Kellogg Graduate School of Management in Illinois, the Columbia University Senior Executive Program in New York, the Ariel Group, Inc. and Corporate Scenes, Inc., also in Massachusetts.

The theatre-based programming which von Baeyer incorporates into The Art of the Executive Leader program explores the idea that theatre training and the skills of actors can be utilized by executives in order to become more effective leaders. The methodology includes developing 'emotional intelligence', or an ability to understand, recognize, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others.

Theatre professionals communicate values and feelings as

well as information; they are capable of building trust and inspiring action. A strong actor will reflect on experiences in their own life and on their unique identity as a person and a professional, and connect authentically with their audience. Akin to those on stage, a skilled leader appeals to the hearts and minds of their various audiences, not by pretending to be someone else, but by using expressive skills to communicate what they believe.

Understanding the fears many of us feel around public expression, von Baeyer creates a casual, engaging, participatory feel to The Art of the Executive Leader program. The environment is challenging, yet safe, as the group increases their appreciation of body, mind, and movement awareness, and develops their individual skills.

Using ideas from Playback Theatre, the program encourages personal exploration and story telling. Participants are challenged to consider the fundamental unity of human experience, to explore what makes them who they are, and to consider how their experiences fit into their capabilities as a leader. According to von Baeyer, participants are encouraged to work with what they already have, and learn to draw on different parts of their characters to suit specific situations, whether meeting with the CEO, or having coffee with a colleague.

The sessions encourage an atmosphere of play and engagement, and bring out facets of participant's characters that since their childhood may have been 'trained out' by the expectations of society. For von Baeyer, the most fulfilling part of the program is watching people get in touch with aspects of themselves that they didn't see as acceptable, or weren't comfortable with.

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Pam Challoner is a writer/editor for Marketing and Communications at The Banff Centre