Leadership styles i: Participatory leaders

Steve, how do you develop

a culture in your organisation

that's conducive to participation?

It isn't a question of me going, or Francis going,

"This must happen, do it!"

There'll be a discussion at a company meeting

about what we should be doing

and consensus will be arrived at

and then we'll try and action it.

There will be very few times,

there are very few times

where I've actually had to say to people,

"Look, I know you want to do it that way,

but we're not going to,

we're going to do it this way."

It just so rarely happens because

it's by talking about things

we tend to get through to a point

where most people can see

the logic of a given position

and it usually will be, "We'll do this,

and if that doesn't work,

we'll try that, and then try that,"

and so that accommodates

where people are coming from.

And I don't think my leadership style,

or Francis' leadership style,

is about saying, "This is the way

we're going to do things."

It's generally about trying to open things up,

so that you get as much discussion

and as much common...

you can get everybody's knowledge

and common sense,

based around something,

because often people will go,

"But if you do it like that,

you haven't thought about this",

and I will go, "Oh yeah".

I think it helps, in theatre,

as a director, what you are,

which is my background originally.

What you are is usually the fulcrum

of a lot of creative people.

You know, you've got the writer,

you've got your performers,

you've got the designers,

and the director's job isn't just to impose

a way of working on everybody.

It's to create conditions within which

everybody else can flourish

and then, you will get the best overall result.

And I think the same absolutely applies

in the way we run Black Country Touring.

It's about making sure that you've got a culture

that allows other people to use their brains best.

And people use their brains best

if they say things and they don't feel like

they're going to be shot down about that.

And even if they say, you know,

if you're brainstorming about something,

and somebody says something, they just say,

"I'm just going to say this now,

it's probably completely ridiculous",

and they say something, and actually,

nine-tenths of what they said doesn't make sense,

but one-tenth of it makes somebody else go,

"Ooh, what about this though?"

And that's where you get the real creative results,

because, by allowing people

to talk openly and not feel stigmatised

for saying ridiculous things,

actually, a tiny fraction of what

they're saying, even partly as a joke,

can trigger something in somebody else

that actually is the real idea,

and that's the real deal,

and when you can get working like that,

it really makes a difference I think.