

Guidelines for Theatrical Intimacy

Definition

The Department of Theatrical Arts at Utah Valley University considers stage action in which the given circumstances of the scene or production require physical or imaginative touch or simulated sexuality or sexual violence between actors as a moment of "theatrical intimacy" (TI). These moments may include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Kissing
- Embracing
- Intimate touch
- Imaginative intimate moments (moments where the actors are asked to portray moments of romantic chemistry between characters even when physical touch is not needed)
- Touch that is interpreted as an abusive physical, sexual and/or mental act
- Imaginative violent moments without touch
- Nudity: exposure of any performer's breast, buttocks, or pelvic/genital area
- Partial nudity wherein the actor is in a lesser state of dress than they would typically be in rehearsal.

In the interest of making its rehearsal and performance processes demonstrative of best pedagogical and professional practices for all concerned, the Department of Theatrical Arts requests that all participants adhere to the following guidelines:

Rehearsal Guidelines

1. In collaboration with your director and scene partner, verbally establish the purpose and scope of TI in the scene:
 - What are the character objectives and obstacles associated with any potential intimate moments?
 - How is the storytelling enhanced by moments of TI?
 - Is TI necessary to tell the story intended by the author, production team, and actors?
2. Establish and document actors' consent to physically explore the specific material discussed above, including acknowledging any potential actor boundaries;
3. Desexualize rehearsal language by encouraging the use of anatomical language when referring to body parts and referring to scenes by act and scene number rather than terms such as "the sex scene."
4. Establish a self-care cue for rehearsal. This is a word or phrase that *anyone* can say to "hold" a rehearsal while a moment of physical or mental stress is addressed (TIE recommends the word "button");
5. Utilize a boundary-establishment protocol at the beginning of each rehearsal and establish consent before initiating physical touch;
 - **Should an actor state that an area of the body is off-limits to touch, that boundary is to be respected during the rehearsal process and in performance;**
6. Utilize a placeholder (such as a high-five) in place of kissing or intimate physical contact until an intimacy choreographer can be present, when scene partners are rehearsing without a third party present, and as needed at any other time prior to dress rehearsals;

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7. Have a plan B and rehearse this option in the event that an actor's boundaries change;
8. **Never rehearse TI in private;**
 - A stage manager or other agreed-upon third party must always be present for TI rehearsals;
9. **Document the rehearsal process;**
 - Keep a written record of TI rehearsals: What was rehearsed? How did it go? Did any concerns arise? Is there a need for follow-up?
 - Take detailed choreography notes for all moments of TI;
 - TI rehearsals should not be video-recorded;
10. If concerns of harassment or abuse ever arise, document your experience carefully and follow the Concern Resolution Path posted on the department website.

Additional Production Guidelines

Auditions

- Provide information on all potential intimate or sexually violent moments in the production at the time of auditions and encourage actors to document any personal boundaries;
- Intimate physical contact should never be required during an audition call.

Staging

- Consider securing an Intimacy Choreographer/Director/Designer for all productions that include TI;
- Encourage the entire production team to become familiar with these guidelines;
- Team members should offer comments or opinions on the staging of TI to the director only;
- Incorporate an intimacy call as needed before performances so actors can rehearse moments and address any concerns with stage management before the house is opened.

Costume Fittings

- Costumers and performers are encouraged to communicate verbally with each other throughout fittings to ensure that performers are well informed about necessary touch and can express any concerns in advance;
- When possible, costumers should adjust fitting procedures to respect the performer's comfort and rely on the performer's assistance in working with personal boundaries;
- Performers have a responsibility to clearly communicate any concerns or questions;
- Performers should always wear appropriate undergarments to their fittings;
- Due to space constraints, fittings are sometimes held with other costume shop personnel present; performers should notify the costumer in advance of their appointment if they have specific concerns about privacy or if they prefer more or fewer people in the room.