

Recommended Practice Guidelines for Staging Theatrical Intimacy and Nudity in Production Department of Theatre and Dance, the University of Texas at Austin

The Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas at Austin strives to employ professional and pedagogically sound processes when creating theatre productions. The department recognizes there are scripts in which theatrical intimacy or a character's nudity are critical elements of storytelling, and in a devised production, it may become evident that one or more of these elements are necessary.

The Department of Theatre and Dance considers stage action in which the given circumstances of the production require physical, stylized or implied contact between actors as a moment of "intimate contact" or theatrical intimacy. Nudity is defined as the exposure of any person's chest/breast, buttocks, and/or pelvic/genital area to the audience, cast members, or any production team members. We ask directors to give mindful consideration of other possible means of storytelling before choosing to incorporate nudity in production - students should never be asked to appear fully nude on stage.

In the interest of using best pedagogical and professional practices regarding theatrical intimacy, we ask the following guidelines be incorporated throughout the production process:

Pre-production and Auditions:

- Secure an intimacy specialist for the production should the scale of intimate moments in the production deem it necessary; a decision made in collaboration with the artistic team and departmental administration.
- Include information about possible nudity, theatrical intimacy, or sexual violence that may be incorporated in production in all casting notices.
- Ensure all auditioning actors are made aware of any potential nudity, theatrical intimacy, and/or sexual violence that may be incorporated into a production.
- No nudity, kissing, theatrical intimacy, or sexual violence be required in an audition or call back.
- Scripts (or sides) that contain simulated or stylized theatrical intimacy, simulated or stylized sexual violence, and/or nudity be made available for actors to review before final callbacks or casting.
- Written disclosure forms will be provided to actors at auditions for all productions that include theatrical intimacy, allowing actors to indicate their willingness to *explore the possibility* of performing/witnessing nudity, theatrical intimacy, and/or sexual violence.
- Copies of audition disclosure forms should be provided to the Intimacy Director, or to the Director of Academic Production if no intimacy professional is assigned to the production. All forms will be destroyed after the close of production.

During Rehearsals:

- Everyone involved in the production should be informed about how, when, and where to report an intimacy concern should one arise. Contact information for reporting intimacy concerns will be posted on the callboard and provided to actors by the first rehearsal either in hard copy or electronic form. Undergraduate and graduate students should **not** be included in the reporting structure.
- The intimacy director should be cc-d or included in all conversations/emails related to on-stage changes, undergarments, modesty garments, nudity, theatrical intimacy or violence/combat that intersects with intimacy.
- All emails related to performer's body, hair and/or personal boundaries should be treated with confidentiality and only be sent to a limited number of recipients. Recipients may include, but are not limited to, the director, intimacy director, stage manager, designer, Costume Production Director, the design advisor, and costume studio staff or others deemed necessary for each process. "Note taken" can be sent to the entire email list when responding to production report notes that require a greater degree of confidentiality, followed by a response to a more limited group.
- Modesty garments and/or barriers will be provided by the Costume Studio under revealing clothing or masking (such as a towel or sheet) as necessary or if requested by performers or the intimacy director.
- Production teams should be encouraged to use non-sexual and anatomical language when referring to body parts and intimacy staging and refer to scenes by act and scene number rather than terms such as "the sex scene" or "the kissing scene."
- A boundary establishment or sharing process should be used for actors during rehearsals, performances, microphone pack fittings, costume fittings, and wig fittings as well as during any other activities that require physical contact.
- An exit word or self-care cue should be employed for rehearsals and fittings. An exit word is a word that anyone can use to "hold" a rehearsal while a moment of physical or mental stress is addressed. We suggest using the departmental self-care cue "**tapping out.**"
- The director or intimacy specialist should never 'step into the place of an actor' to stage intimate moments or have any physical contact with the actors during the staging or rehearsal of theatrical intimacy.
- Actors will be permitted to use a placeholder (for example, a high five or cheek to cheek contact) in place of kissing up until the kiss has been appropriately staged.
- All scenes with simulated or stylized theatrical intimacy, simulated or stylized sexual violence, and/or nudity will be staged and rehearsed with the intimacy director and at least one of the following people in the room at all times: the director, the stage manager, the assistant stage manager, and/or the assistant director. All theatrical intimacy, regardless of how simple or straightforward, must be choreographed.

- The stage manager or assistant stage manager will record and detail all intimacy choreography; notation should be written but can also be noted in audio recording. Intimacy choreography should not be video recorded for notation purposes.
- Intimacy rehearsals should be closed, and limited to essential personnel when simulated or stylized theatrical intimacy, simulated or stylized sexual violence, and/or nudity are being initially staged.
- The use of cell phones will be prohibited during closed intimacy rehearsal and during the rehearsal and performance of nudity.
- Team members should refrain from making sexual jokes or innuendo, as well as offer comments or opinions on intimacy staging, even ones they may perceive as positive, to the director only.
- Productions involving theatrical intimacy should offer closure or de-role-ing methods/processes.
- All productions should be prepared to shift to a plan B for nudity and/or theatrical intimacy. Consent is always revokable and should an actor during the rehearsal process or a performance run revoke their consent, this wish will be respected, and the stage manager will implement plan B staging and/or contact the intimacy director.

Nudity

- Students should never be asked to perform fully nude.
- For any level of nudity with student or professional performers, the director and actor will mutually agree on a timeline when nudity will be fully incorporated into the rehearsal process. The actor will work at their comfort level in removing clothing while working toward that agreed-upon timeline. The actor should make the stage manager and scene partner(s) aware at what level they wish to work during each rehearsal.
- The stage manager will communicate the proposed nudity timeline to the Director of Academic Production.
- Robes will be provided for actors performing in any degree of nudity, and actors will put them on whenever not rehearsing or performing scene(s) requiring nudity.
- Once a production moves into dress rehearsals, the expectation will be for actors to perform the scene(s) as it/they will be staged in performance.
- Time will be provided for a transition rehearsal for scenes with nudity when moving from the rehearsal room to the stage; transition rehearsals should also be closed or limited to essential personnel.
- For cue-to-cue rehearsals, flesh-toned clothing will be provided by the Costume Studio if required to set lighting levels. No nudity will be required during cue-to-cue rehearsals.
- No photos shall be taken of nude actors. Video recordings taken either for designer runs or archival purposes shall not include images of nude performers (for recordings, the camera lens can be blocked or diverted, or scenes can be filmed using plan B staging).

During Performances:

- Allow time during the pre-show set up to incorporate an intimacy call before each performance if necessary. Intimacy calls are often not needed; however they are held when complex choreography or violence are involved, or at the discretion of the actor, director, intimacy director, and/or stage manager. Intimacy calls are always held if requested by the actor(s).
- If an intimacy call is deemed necessary, it will be conducted without nudity.
- If an intimacy director has been employed for production, directors may not make changes to the intimacy choreography without consultation with the intimacy director.
- Performers must not deviate from intimacy choreography. If a performer's boundary change requires altered choreography, they should notify the intimacy director or the stage manager who will notify the intimacy director as soon as possible to make modifications.
- A member of the stage management staff will be designated to ensure intimacy choreography and/or nudity remains as choreographed and agreed upon by the actor(s) throughout the production run. Any deviation from the established choreography will be addressed with the actors involved as soon as possible and reported to the intimacy director.

Thank you for the respect you show to our department and actors by adhering to these guidelines.

*This document was created based on work originally created by Theatrical Intimacy Education.