

Skidmore Theater

Departmental Protocols for Rehearsing and Performing Scenes with Sexual Content and/or Nudity

Created in collaboration with Intimacy Directors International protocols

This document is designed to prevent sexual misconduct and harassment and to promote respect and empowerment for actors in the event that a show or scene contains sexual content or nudity. It promotes freedom of expression through processes that respect collaborators' personal boundaries. All collaborators should be able to work in full confidence that intimate and sexual content and stories of sexual touching, including depictions of sexual assault and nudity, will only be rehearsed and performed with the ongoing enthusiastic consent of all actors.

These protocols apply to all members of the community who may be working in rehearsal and performance - students, faculty, staff, and guest artists - and all members of the community are responsible for upholding these standards.

This is intended to be a living document and will be updated and revised in accordance with continuing best practices.

Definitions

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct is a broad term encompassing any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same

or different gender. Sexual misconduct may vary in its severity and consists of a range of behavior or attempted behavior. It can occur between strangers or acquaintances, including people involved in an intimate or sexual relationship.

Much sexual misconduct includes nonconsensual sexual contact, but this is not a necessary component. For example, threatening speech that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to constitute sexual harassment will constitute sexual misconduct. Making photographs, video, or other visual or auditory recordings of a sexual nature of another person without consent constitutes sexual misconduct, even if the activity documented was consensual. Similarly, sharing such recordings or other sexually harassing electronic communications without consent is a form of sexual misconduct. For further information and guidance, please refer to the Skidmore sexual and gender-based misconduct resources and information page at this link <https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm/>

Scenes with Sexual Content or Assault

Scenes with sexual content are those in which either the plain meaning of the text or the company's interpretation of the text reference sexuality, including attitudes, actions and sexual language.

Scenes depicting consensual sexual touching are those with representations or choreography of kissing, touching of buttocks, breasts, and thighs, at or close to erogenous zones, stroking, body-to-body contact or that deal with simulations of physical penetration, oral sex and touching oneself or others sexually. Productions with scenes containing consensual sexual touching may require an intimacy adviser.

Scenes depicting sexual assault are representations of acts of non-consensual sexual touching, kissing, penetration, or oral sex, when any of the above are perpetrated by force, coercion, incapacitation, or in the absence of clear verbal or non-verbal affirmative consent. Productions with

scenes depicting sexual assault may require a combat and intimacy adviser.

Nudity and Hyper-Exposed Work

The showing of buttocks, genitals and breasts are considered nudity or partial-nudity. Additionally the baring of any part of the body that a student would not normally show in public for religious or cultural reasons maybe considered as hyper-exposed work. All collaborators should be able to work in full confidence that any nudity or hyper-exposed work will only be rehearsed or performed with the ongoing enthusiastic consent of all actors.

Protocol for Productions

Pre-Production

Director(s) and Stage Manager(s) identify scenes with sexual content, depictions of sexual assault and/or any possible nudity.

For student led productions, approval by faculty of all scenes of sexual content and/or nudity must be applied for prior to audition notices and faculty adjustments must be accepted. *If scenes of sexual content or nudity develop mid-production they must obtain approval of the faculty advisor, in consultation with the Artistic Director prior to full rehearsal of them.*

During callback auditions, all actors must be made aware of which roles include nudity and/or partial nudity, consensual sexual touching and/or depictions of sexual assault. This information must be included on the callback form and given to the actors prior to the callback audition.

After casting is complete, the director, playwright (if present), choreographer/intimacy adviser (if any), stage manager, and dramaturg ensure that scenes with sexual content are noted and discussed.

At this time, the production team will develop a plan for handling these scenes during archival recording of the production, which includes film and photography. In general, scenes with nudity or partial nudity should not be recorded. Scenes with sexual content or sexual assault should be recorded with care, and only with the relevant actors' consent and prior approval of the Artistic Director. Scenes with nudity or partial nudity or sexual content should not be used for any marketing material without the enthusiastic consent of all relevant actors.

Rehearsal

The stage manager and/or director (and intimacy advisor if there is one) will be the facilitator for all protocols relating to scenes with nudity and/or sexual content. At the first rehearsal, the stage manager will call the company's attention to these protocols including IDI's pillars and the reporting protocol at the end of this document. All company members must be mindful that sexual content is to be treated with professionalism and respect by all collaborators: careless references to or jokes about these subjects, or about people's bodies, or the transmission of related photos or other materials, may constitute sexual harassment.

In the first week of rehearsal and prior to rehearsal of those scenes, the director (in consultation with the intimacy advisor if one is present on the project) and/or the faculty advisor in the case of a student director, will have discussions with the actors who are involved with scenes with sexual content and/or nudity to discuss actors boundaries and requests relating to those scenes and discuss the approach to creating them.

If the director is a first time director at Skidmore or a student director, a faculty member must be present at the first staging. This faculty member will be decided upon at the discretion of the Artistic Director.

Directing/Choreographing Scenes with Sexual Content or Assault

When a scene with sexual content is rehearsed, there will be a conversation between the director and actors, in consultation with the playwright (if present), choreographer (if any), stage manager, fight director or intimacy coach (if any). Discussion of scenes with sexual content should address the following parameters: context, consent, communication and choreography. What will be determined is as follows:

- What is the story (context) of these moments and how does it relate to the narrative of the whole production?
- What kind of physical contact is necessary or possible in these scenes to tell that story?
- What body parts are acceptable to be touched and what are individual actor's boundaries around touch and the stories they tell with their bodies?

If a degree of improvisation is involved in these scenes, boundaries should be clear before any improvisation begins.

Before a depiction of sexual assault is first staged it must be evaluated in accordance with professional standards for staged combat. If a combat adviser is assigned to the production, the participation of a combat adviser is required at the first staging. If a combat adviser is not assigned, the staging must adhere to a plan developed with and approved by Faculty in consultation with the Artistic Director.

Closed Rooms

A closed rehearsal room is one in which any actor or creative team member outside of the scene(s) in question, with the exception of the director, choreographer, fight director/intimacy coach, participating actors, stage manager and Faculty member (if required), will not be admitted into the rehearsal room during the rehearsal of the scene in question. The doors to a rehearsal room during a closed rehearsal are closed but not locked at any time and appropriate notice and appropriate signage should be posted indicating that the rehearsal room is off limits to those not directly participating in the scene. Closing such a rehearsal is standard—exceptions should be rare and agreed to by all actors, stage manager, fight director/intimacy director, director and faculty member.

While the fight director or intimacy coach's ongoing participation is expected, after initial staging, the director, stage manager, fight captain, and actors may collaborate on minor adjustments, and the company may continue to rehearse the material for purposes of review.

Costuming for Nudity or Partial Nudity

Designs for costumes that include partial nudity or hyper exposure must be discussed with the actor wearing the costume, prior to the creation of the costume, and actor must enthusiastically consent to the level of nudity or exposure.

Responsibilities of the Actor

In a scene of sexual or intimate contact or nudity, actors are responsible for acknowledging their own personal boundaries and communicating that information to their scene partner(s) as clearly as possible prior to the start of any rehearsing. The first step is a conversation with the actor's scene partner(s) and then sharing those boundaries with director, intimacy and/or fight director and stage manager. Actors must respect boundaries stated by their scene partner(s) and engage in ongoing discussions of this if necessary. Actors do not need to justify or explain their physical boundaries. This communication may be difficult for some actors who are reticent about stating their physical boundaries. If this is so, seek help from your director or a faculty member.

Do not let yourself be coerced or rushed in this process. You may approach any faculty member, the director, or stage manager, at any time about the sexual content or activity in any scene.

All actors are expected to work within the parameters of the rehearsal protocols set forth in this document.

A reminder that the energy exchanged between actors in a scene is in service to the story of the play. Sexual attraction between two characters is not the same as - and should not be confused with - sexual attraction between the individual actors who portray those characters. If actor's scene partner(s) give(s) actor permission to touch them in an intimate way in rehearsal, it does not mean that permission extends outside the context of the scene. Actor should not make assumptions about actor's scene partner(s) based on their work with the actor in rehearsal.

In scenes involving consensual sexual touching, it is each actor's personal responsibility to seek ongoing affirmative consent from a scene partner: the actor must ascertain verbally what is acceptable to their scene partner, before any and all sexual or simulated sexual touching, including

kissing. The interpretation of the scene may be ambiguous with respect to any character's intent, but the actor must have unambiguous clarity with respect to their fellow actor's ongoing affirmative consent.

Third party assurances ("the director/teacher/another actor said it was okay") are not acceptable as consent. Ongoing affirmative consent can only be given by the actor or actors being touched.

Before initiating an improvisation that involves consensual touching, scene partners must clarify what physical boundaries are in play and the context of the scene and give their affirmative consent to the touching incorporated into the improvisation. At any point, the actor may say, "Hold" to temporarily suspend the improvisation, and the sexuality, sexual touching, or protocols should be discussed. It is far better to stop an improvisation than to breach the trust of another actor.

Responsibilities of Teachers

It is the responsibility of the teacher to alert students when they are assigned scene work that may involve consensual sexual or simulated sexual touching, including kissing, or scenes with stories of non-consensual sex. Students may request an alternate scene (one without sexual touching), and should be made aware of this option. Such notice may be given in writing, via e-mail, or during an in-person meeting.

There should be no nudity or non-consensual sex scenes assigned in any intro classes.

Teachers will honor a student's right to call a hold during a scene. Teachers who have questions with respect to implementation of these protocols should contact the Artistic Director or Head of the department.

There shall be no sexual relations between faculty and students or staff and students. Teachers shall respect the physical boundaries of students.

Teachers shall never demonstrate sexual or simulated sexual acts with a student, including kissing.

Protocols for Actors Rehearsing a Scene for a Class

When rehearsing outside of class i.e., with no faculty, director, or stage manager present, it is especially important to acknowledge and respect boundaries in rehearsing scenes with sexual content or consensual sexual touching, including kissing.

Prior to staging physical action of a sexual nature, the actors should discuss the sexual content of the scene and communicate their boundaries within the context of that rehearsal; this creates the container for that particular rehearsal. The first time the physical action related to sexual content in the scene is rehearsed, a third party should be present in the room to observe and help the actors follow the rehearsal protocols, as needed. Choreography of any and all sexual and/or simulated sexual touching should be set. At any point during the rehearsal process, an actor can request the presence of a third party to observe and assist, as needed.

At any point, the actor may say, "Hold" to temporarily suspend the rehearsal, and the sexuality, sexual touching, or protocols should be discussed. If an agreement on rehearsing such moments cannot be reached, then the actors may rehearse other moments, or may agree to suspend the rehearsal. They should then, either individually or together, take their concerns to the class's faculty member.

Best Practices

Spontaneous changes to staging involving sexual touching are unacceptable both in rehearsal and performance, unless they fall within previously agreed boundaries.

The need for consent trumps spontaneity in every circumstance.

If at any time in rehearsal an actor feels that affirmative consent has not been given, that a harassing act has taken place, or that a mistake in protocol has occurred, the actor may say, "Hold"—this requires any other actor, the director and/or stage manager, or faculty member if it is in a class, to temporarily suspend the action in rehearsal. At that time the actors, director, stage manager and/or faculty member can discuss how the rehearsal may proceed consensually and in a productive manner.

In any situation, it may be necessary for the class or company to take a break, while the faculty member or stage manager and/or director talks with the actors about the scene.

In rehearsals, if an actor accidentally touches a body part that was not stated as being acceptable, the actor touching or the receiver of the accidental touch will verbally let the scene partner know that this has occurred, actors will discuss and then seek permission to continue with the work within agreed parameters. During a performance, if an actor accidentally touches a body part that was not stated as being acceptable, following the scene or the completion of the performance, the actor touching or the receiver of the accidental touch will verbally acknowledge actor's inappropriate touch, discuss clarity of boundaries and choreography and will agree in future performances to maintain the work within agreed parameters.

In rare circumstances, actors in class may be assigned or choose to work on a scene that gives rise to a depiction of sexual assault. Actors should only choose such work in consultation with teachers; teachers should

only make such assignments in consultation with the actors; and all parties should be confident that these protocols will be used by the actors to ensure consent as they rehearse the scene for the purposes of the class.

Protocol for Reporting

If a boundary is crossed in rehearsal or in a class the first step is for the actor to address it directly with the scene partner(s). In the event any actor feels uncomfortable or unsafe speaking directly to scene partner(s) or speaking up in rehearsal or class, the actor may speak to the stage manager, director or faculty member connected with the production. If an actor feels uncomfortable or unsafe speaking to those directly connected to the production, or if any scene partner, stage manager, director, or teacher is unreceptive to an actor's concerns about sexual content, they can speak to any other faculty member (including the head of department/ artistic director, the Dean of Students, anyone in the Title IX office or the on campus counseling center).

These conversations can happen at any time privately, either in person or via email. The goal of such communication should be address any transgression and to move the conversation back into the rehearsal hall, so that the actor is fully empowered to give affirmative consent to, or withhold affirmative consent from, the scene partner(s). There shall be no repercussions or punitive action taken against the reporting student for bringing their concerns to any of these parties.