**SKIDMORE THEATER DEPARTMENT**

**Guidelines for writing an intimacy/violence disclosure statement:**

Skidmore Theater Department aims for a consent-based practice where students are empowered to make decisions about the types of roles and content that they engage in. One of the first areas of communication regarding the production and play script can be found in the director’s disclosure statement.

All directors are asked to write a brief statement that discloses any violent or sexual content that will be part of the performance. Think of this as your first type of communication to your potential collaborators (designers, actors) about how you will treat the rehearsal process, respect individual boundaries and provide a safe environment for everyone to do their best work.

A sample statement is provided below for reference.

**(Please ensure that you have read and understand the protocols for staging violence/stage combat and the protocols for staging intimacy. Both documents are available on the Skidmore website: https://theater.skidmore.edu/department-policies-and-protocols/)**

This disclosure statement serves two main purposes:

1. to communicate to the actor any content in the script that may conflict with the actor’s boundaries
2. to open the conversation about the process of staging specific moments of intimacy or violence

As this statement is specifically to let the actor know what is in the script before auditioning and being cast, remember that ***they likely will not have read the play*** (this could be due to time constraints or plain negligence). Even in the professional world, a professional actor may not be able to read the full script before auditioning.  Although the plays are made available and it is their responsibility, this does not mean that all auditioning actors will. The goal of the statement is communication and transparency and hopefully to avoid a situation where an actor didn’t read the script and then comes to the first rehearsal only to find out that there is moment that they are not willing to enact due to the content.

**Length**

A disclosure statement should be brief; from a paragraph to one or two pages, at most. Actors will only need to know what actions they are doing and then can refer to the script to get more context. They will want to know important things like if there is partial nudity, a slap, a kiss, profanity, racial slurs, etc. They don’t necessarily need to know character motivations at this point (that’s for artistic discussions later). If your production has very little intimacy or violence, a paragraph may be all that is needed. If the production has a lot of moments of intimacy or violence, then you may want to be as specific and descriptive as possible.

This content should be at the top of your statement as it per our department policy:

*PLEASE NOTE: As per Skidmore Theater audition guidelines, you will not be asked to perform intimacy or violence at callbacks or auditions.*

This can be followed by this statement:

**Please read the script in full before auditions.**

As stated before, many actors may not actually read the script. It is important to have that statement as it is their responsibility and the best way to ensure they are not surprised by the content.

**Brief Overview**

Keeping in mind an actor may not read the script before callbacks, think about the most important information actors need to know, and then provide details later on. If an actor was in a hurry and only able to glance at the first paragraph of your statement, what boundaries would they have to immediately consider (ie content and/or specific physical actions)?

For this reason, we recommend the first paragraph being a description of the play as well as the overall content. For example, if one of the main themes of the play is suicidal ideation or an eating disorder, the actor may not have to read any further.

You may also need to add other design elements or special things to consider – will there be fog or other atmosphere, usage of stage blood, loud noises, crawling on the floor, eating of food? Will an actor need to perform in bare feet? What costume elements might be good to know (like having to take a shirt off or wear a bathing suit). Will the actor have to wear a wig or dye hair?

**Violence and Intimacy**

Following the overview, then you can dive into more specifics of what intimate or violent moments the characters may be engaging in. Please remember that intimacy and violence is not only limited to physical contact, but may also include intimate or sexual language, violent language, imagery, threats, derogatory or racist comments, words, slurs, profanity or other traumatic situations. Intimacy can also sometimes be aligned with violence (in the case of sexual assault) so use your best judgement on where to include that statement. Be as specific as possible. If characters kiss, is it consensual? What do the stage directions say? Feel free to quote from the play itself - or include that in the listing by page number (ie “*George plants a juicy kiss on Martha who recoils back from him and slaps him hard*”).

When in doubt about whether you should include it, look on our questionnaire – if we ask about it regarding boundaries, its best to include it.

You may also want to read through the script and mark any content or moments that would entail violence or intimacy, including language. In the sample you can see this statement:

“This play contains the following specific moments of violence/intimacy:”

Then list the specific moment and corresponding page number (e.g.: “P. 39 - Mark punches Joe in the stomach” or “P. 10 - Jack and Jill passionately embrace”). With this information, the actor can immediately refer directly to that page and see if it is something they can perform or perhaps have more questions about.

**Thoughts/guidelines:**

***How specific should you be?***

The more specific, the better, although you may be unsure, so can also provide that information, as well. Telling actors that “Romeo and Tybalt will fight” is unclear. Will they fight with swords, knives? Will they be in a fist fight? Even if there is a fight director or the moment isn’t choreographed yet, the more clarity for the actor, the better.

***What would we consider moments of violence or intimacy?***

Looking at the protocols for staging intimacy or violence, we have some clear definitions, but if you are in doubt, look at the intimacy/violence audition form for the questions that we ask actors at the general auditions.

For instance, does your production have any content or moments related to:

* Kissing
* Hugging, holding hands, or other display of affection that may include physical touch
* A slap, punch or kick to another character
* Weapons (or props used as a weapon)
* A threat of violence
* Physical contact such as contact improv (including lifts)
* Actors having to dress/undress or wear revealing clothing
* Characters who use harmful or derogatory language
* Profanity
* Self-harm or suicide ideation (or discussion of self-harm or suicide)
* Sexual assault
* Eating disorders
* Racial trauma
* Alcohol or tobacco use
* Substance abuse

As each production is different and actor boundaries are different, there may be other content that you will need to inform the actors about.

If in doubt, look at the questions on the audition disclosure form and if you find that content listed there, you should inform actors on your statement.

**NEIGHBORHOOD 3: REQUISITION OF DOOM by Jennifer Haley**

Directed by Dennis Schebetta

**CONTENT AND DISCLOSURE FOR INTIMACY AND VIOLENCE**

*PLEASE NOTE: As per Skidmore Theater audition guidelines, you will not be asked to perform intimacy or violence at callbacks or auditions.*

**Additional information about design and production elements may be added by the Stage Manager or Director before auditions.  Please make a note to re-review this document before auditions.”**

*Neighborhood 3:Requisition of Doom* is a psychological thriller where parents find their teen-agers addicted to an online horror video game. In this game, players kill zombies in a neighborhood that is mapped out using GPS of their actual neighborhood. “The line blurs between fiction and reality and both parents and players realize that fear has a life of its own.”

This is a tale of suspense and examination of fear – both real and imagined. Think *Twilight Zone* meets *Resident Evil*. There are many illusions to horrible imagery or violent acts such as you would find in an R-rated horror movie or video game. Although the script does not call for actual zombies on stage, there is violence and threats of violence as well as references to killing video game zombies and mutilation. (There is a potential that we may add content, including actors as zombies – as there is a lot of room for interpretation in the stage directions). Content also includes intense or vulgar language, sexual innuendos, and references to game addiction and substance addiction (specifically alcohol, but also references to drug use).

In this production, we will be using intense music and sound effects to create terror in the audience. Some of this music or sound FX may be creepy and some of it may be loud.

**Intimacy**

Actors in this play may engage in physical touch (within the boundaries of our own health and safety protocols) such as those of family or friends. This physical touch could involve close contact, hugging, or holding hands. There are a few references to sexual innuendos and dangers of possible pedophiles online (see below).

**Violence**

We will be using a fight director and will work within actor boundaries. There are many references to violence, murder, death and blood.

In Scene 7, there is a threat of violence with a golf club between Chelsea and Steve. Steve also grabs her, probably by the arm.

In Scene 9 (the last house) there is a violent event where Blake uses a bloody claw hammer on his mother, Joy, and beats her to death.

We do intend to use stage blood, particularly for the bloody hammer in Scene 8 and Scene 9 and for the brutal bludgeoning in Scene 9 (play calls for “stupidly spurting blood, like in a video game”).

**Please read the script in full before auditions.**

The play, *Neighborhood 3:Requisition of Doom*, contains the following moments of intimacy and/or violence as indicated in the dialogue or stage directions in the script (*please note that most of the play doesn’t contain stage directions so violent or intimate moments will be interpreted by the director and actors in rehearsal*):

* P. 16 – Hint of sexual innuendo when characters talk about a “joystick”.
* P. 19 – Mikaela mentions how brother mutilates zombies of breasts in game (“slice my titties off”).
* P. 25 – Steve talks about concern that pedophile might be playing game with daughter.
* P. 26 – Steve talks about how daughter butchers zombies.
* P. 30 – Leslie mentions husband addiction and intervention.
* P. 39 – Kaitlyn mentions and suggests something horrible done to a cat.
* P. 46 – Ryan mentions someone who killed his son with a claw hammer.
* P. 54 – Madison says, “how about some gut raping with my garden spade” to game.
* P. 56 – Madison mentions father’s drinking and rehab.
* P. 58 – Madison mentions death by Barbecue Fork.
* P. 68 – Barbara references a pedophile.
* P. 69 – Tobias mentions death of his triplets and being buried in back yard.
* P. 70 – Barbara accuses Tobias of killing his daughters.
* P. 75 – Steve and Chelsea talk about illicit photos she took on her cell phone to use as currency.
* P. 79 – Chelsea details how Cody killed his mom with a Barbecue Fork.
* P. 80 – Steve is holding on to Chelsea – possibly hand grabbing arm.
* P. 81 – Chelsea holds up a golf club threateningly toward Steve.
* P. 86 – Zombiekllr14 holds a bloody hammer.
* P. 92 – Barbara sees someone (something) dead in a tree.
* P. 93 – Mention of post-it notes covered in blood.
* P. 96 – Joy talks about CSI episode with a “dwarf/little person” who murders someone, talks about gory details of “vertebrae snapping”.
* P. 98 – Blake calls someone a “pussy” and a “fucking douche”.
* P. 98 – Blake talks about how he bashed someone’s head in.
* P. 99 – Joy mentions how Barbara is dead with “half her head gone”.
* P. 101 – Joy rushes towards Blake with claw hammer. They struggle. He gets hammer from her hands and beats her to death.