

# K-State Theatrical Consent, Staged Sexual Intimacy and Instructional Touch Policy

The Theatre Department adopts the following Best Practices in alignment with evolving industry best practices and standards for theatre training. These policies are meant to foster communication so everyone is able to give fully informed consent in productions and classrooms, and feel confident that all boundaries will be respected without retribution. These protocols are designed to protect personal autonomy while allowing for open communication resulting in more confident and freer performers.

## Staged Sexual Intimacy Definition

K-State Theatre considers staged sexual intimacy (SSI) to be any stage action in which either the plain meaning of the text or the company's interpretation of the text references sexuality, including attitudes, actions, and sexual language, whether graphic or suggestive, as well as states of dress and undress, including but not limited to nudity and partial nudity. These moments may include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Kissing
- Embracing
- Intimate touch including on the chest, the pelvis, the upper thighs and any other erogenous zones
- Sexual innuendo
- Simulated intercourse, intercourse or oral sex
- Stylized non-contact movement that tells a sexually intimate story
- Violent touch that is interpreted as an abusive physical, sexual and/or mental act
- Imaginative violent moments without touch (moments where violent mentally abusive behavior is portrayed but physical touch may not occur)
- Full or partial nudity (an actor is expected to perform in a lesser state of dress than they would typically use for rehearsal, including on-stage costume changes)

In the interest of making its rehearsal and performance processes demonstrative of best pedagogical and professional practices, K-State Theatre requests that all participants adhere to the following guidelines:

## Auditions

- Intimate physical or violent contact and/or nudity should never be required during an audition. Introduce placeholders (such as a high-five or wrist-tap) if necessary.
- Directors will provide information on any potentially loaded content in the production (including intimacy, violence, etc.) to the department by the end of Spring semester. It will then be given to actors at the time of auditions. At call-backs actors will fill out the specific consent and intimacy questionnaire.

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## Rehearsal Protocols

1. Practice a consent-based process
  - Encourage the entire production team to become familiar with these guidelines and sign the bottom of them indicating that they agree to follow them.
  - Consider securing a qualified Intimacy Choreographer/Director/Designer for all productions that include SSI. Actors and/or stage management may request to bring in an Intimacy professional or qualified third party when consent and comfort levels deem it necessary.
  - Utilize a placeholder 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.
  - Limit attendance in early rehearsals to director, actors, stage management and the intimacy choreographer(s) when sexually intimate moments are being staged or rehearsed. The rehearsal should be announced at least one day in advance and the daily call sheet should indicate a closed set.
  - Productions with Intimacy should have a no-cell phone policy in rehearsal and backstage for all members of the production during staging of SSI and all times any type of nudity is involved.
  - Directors and choreographers should never physically step in to stage intimate moments or have any physical contact with the actors during the staging or rehearsal process of intimacy.
  - Reestablish and document actors' consent to physically explore the specific material discussed above with every SSI scene partner, and if touch is involved, Stage Combat partners. This should include acknowledging any potential actor boundaries before intimate staging begins, and allow for check-ins throughout the rehearsal and performance period. The SM will take notes on blocking, the Intimacy Choreographer (or an assistant) will take notes and may do an audio recording of complex choreography. In addition, actors should write out their choreography and sign the K-State Actor Consent Form After Staging; a copy should be made by the SM and the original returned to the actor.
  - If nudity is being staged, actors must have consented to staging this before casting. Allow actors to determine the degree of exposure/nudity they are comfortable with throughout the rehearsal process up until dress rehearsals. (See Nudity Policy.)
  - Establish a self-care cue for rehearsal. This is a word or phrase that *anyone* can say to pause a rehearsal while a moment of heightened concern is addressed (such as "Time-Out" or "Button").

Based on best practices outlined by Theatrical Intimacy Education  
Proposed April, 2020; to be signed by all faculty, staff and applicable guest artists.

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## 2. Desexualize the process

- Encourage the use of anatomical language when referring to actor body parts.
- Differentiate character intentions from actors' choreographic actions.
- Refer to scenes by act and scene number or other neutral title rather than terms such as "the sex scene."
- The Intimacy Choreographer and/or the Director should offer De-Roling (differentiating oneself from the character).

## 3. Choreography

- Before the scene is rehearsed, the Director of the production will discuss with the Intimacy Choreographer and/or another faculty member the storytelling needs and vision of the SSI in the scene including:
  - What are the character objectives and obstacles associated with moments of SSI?
  - How is the storytelling enhanced by moments of SSI?
  - What particular SSI is necessary to tell the story?
  - Either the Director, the Choreographer or both will discuss these things with the actors involved before staging begins. The Choreographer will work with the actors to tell the desired story with SSI while staying within the boundaries of the actors.
- All staged sexual intimacy, regardless of how simple or straight-forward it might be, must be choreographed.
- Choreography must be notated by performers and stage management as noted in part 1 of this document.
- Notation should be written but can also be in the form of an audio recording. Video recordings of intimacy should not be created for actor privacy.
- Have a plan B staged and rehearsed in the event that an actor's boundaries change due to immediate circumstances.
- If a performer's boundaries change that necessitates the altering of the choreography outside of Plan A and Plan B, they should notify the SM who will notify the Choreographer and Director as soon as possible so modifications can be made. Otherwise, performers must not deviate from choreography once set.
- No SSI should be rehearsed without a third party, such as a stage manager, present.
- Actors should also document the rehearsal process every time it is rehearsed, including any adjustments made.

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- What was rehearsed? How did it go?
- Notify the SM if any concerns arose or there is a need for follow-up.
- Actors should review choreography notes for all moments of SSI regularly.
- After it is set and approved, Directors must discuss any changes to choreography with the choreographer.
- 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.
- Placeholders (such as a high-five) should be used until choreography is set.

## Wardrobe/Crew

- Production personnel and performers are encouraged to communicate verbally with each other throughout costume fittings, quick change rehearsals, mic fittings, etc. to ensure that all parties are well informed about necessary touch and can express any concerns in advance. All crew should be trained in consent and instructional touch. Actors should meet the dresser working with them before dress rehearsal and discuss any boundary concerns with the costume designer or staff costumer that may arise.
- When possible, personnel should adjust procedures to respect touch boundaries and rely on communication and collaboration for working within boundaries.
- Performers should always wear appropriate undergarments to their fittings (opaque, neutral-tone, full-coverage).
- Due to space constraints, costume fittings and quick changes are sometimes held with other personnel present; performers should notify the appropriate personnel in advance if they have specific concerns about privacy. Screens or other dividers should be provided whenever possible to avoid changing in a public space.
- Students, Intimacy Choreographers, Costume Designers, or Dressers may request students be provided with and wear appropriate modesty/intimacy garments.<sup>1</sup>
- Students and Shop Personnel have the following tools in a fitting:
  - Saying “Time-Out” or “Button”
  - Request two-minute break
  - Request a reduction in the number of people in the room
  - Request that the door be open or closed
  - Request to be fitted in an open or closed area of the shop

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<sup>1</sup> “Modesty garments” are costume pieces that conceal and often protect “bathing suit” areas. The term is slowly being replaced by the term “intimacy garments.”

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- Request help or additional privacy for dressing or undressing
- Request that the appropriate faculty or staff member makes the adjustments, rather than a student designer or draper
- Ask questions for clarification

The measuring process for costume fittings requires accuracy. This process involves physical contact with the measuring tape and minimal touch from the measurer. Students and Shop Personnel have the same tools available during measurements as above.

## Content Disclosure Considerations

To allow audience members to have full consent for what they will experience, program content disclosures or warnings may be prudent. Directors will provide a general content disclosure for marketing materials, web pages, the ticketing site and the program, such as "This production contains adult material, profanity, sexual situations, and homophobic and ableist content. If you'd like more information, please click here or speak with a member of the box office staff." This will allow for consent without spoiling surprises for those who enjoy them.

Full example:

CONTENT DISCLOSURE: *The Birthday Party* contains content that some viewers may find distressing, including depictions of sexual violence and physical/verbal abuse. For full content disclosures, please go to [www.KSTATETHEATRE/TheBirthdayPartyDisclosure](http://www.KSTATETHEATRE/TheBirthdayPartyDisclosure).

FULL CONTENT DISCLOSURE: (posted online with a printed copy for the box office)

This show contains depictions of the following:

Sexual assault (fully clothed, interrupted)

Physical violence (punching, kicking)

Psychological and verbal abuse

Misogyny

Intimate touch above the waist

Substance use (alcohol, cigarettes)

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## Instructional Touch Definition

Occasionally it can be useful for an instructor to use instructional physical touch as a teaching tool, especially in physical skills-based courses such as voice or movement. Instructional Touch best practices are also be encouraged between students. Examples of Instructional Touch include:

- Adjusting alignment/positioning
- Bringing awareness to physical use
- Partnering for demonstrations
- Correcting actor placement in space
- Adjusting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Costume Fittings

In these cases, the following guidelines apply:

- Ask before touching
  - The instructor should be specific about the nature of the touch and its purpose (where and for what purpose?).
- The instructor should establish whether there is consent for instructional touch at this moment. Try open questions to be clear on consent:
  - “Does that work for you?”
  - “How would you feel about \_\_\_\_\_?”
  - “Would you be open to trying \_\_\_\_\_?”
- The instructor should be prepared to offer alternative instruction should the student decline instructional touch.
  - Visualization
  - Demonstrating on themselves
  - Using their own hands
  - Using props
  - Careful observation and note taking
- The student will not be penalized, shamed, or denied instruction as a result of requesting alternative instruction.

Please note: Instructional Touch is different from touch made in situations where the touch is made in an attempt to prevent or minimize injury in an emergency. In those situations, all participants should act immediately to reduce harm or risk in accordance with their safety training. Check-in afterward regarding touch if necessary.

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## Communication Best Practices

In production, if students have a concern regarding theatrical intimacy or instructional touch, they should speak with their instructor or another faculty or staff member associated with the production (i.e.: Director, Choreographer, Voice Director, Assistant Production Manager/Stage Management Coordinator, Production Manager, or Department Chair).

In non-production coursework, they should address concerns to the instructor or to the Department Chair.

If concerns of harassment or abuse ever arise, document your experience carefully and follow the [Communication Pathway](#) posted on the department website and callboard, and given to the entire production team at the first rehearsal.

## Instructional Touch and Staged Sexual Intimacy Policy: Syllabus Language

K-State Theatre is dedicated to integrating consent-based practices into all classroom and production environments. In all theatre related activities, participants are expected to abide by the Instructional Touch and Staged Sexual Intimacy Best Practices. All participants in K-State Theatre activities are expected to communicate their boundaries, ask before they touch, and maintain a professional working environment. The full policy detailing the Best Practices and our anti-harassment policy is available on the department website: WEBSITE

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name) have read and agree to follow the K-State Consent & Sexual Intimacy Guidelines. I understand the guidelines and who to contact on the Concern Resolution Pathway if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (signature) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)