

## UWW DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE/DANCE POLICY

### PROCESS FOR REHEARSING AND PERFORMING INTIMATE CONTACT IN THE THEATRE PROGRAM

*This policy is to be included in the syllabus and introduced at the first meeting of all acting classes and any other courses to which the policy applies.*

*These are protocols to be put in practice in all Theatre Program-led classes, auditions, rehearsals, or productions, both inside and outside of class, with or without a director. It also applies to student-led projects taking place on University property as well, whether supervised or not.*

At UWW Department of Theatre/Dance, we train actors to be bold and to live moment-to-moment in the given circumstances of the material, while being equally vigilant in ensuring their partner's safety and boundaries. We encourage actors to take risks in scene work, but an atmosphere of absolute trust is necessary in order to truly take those risks. Communication is essential to ensure that all participants feel a sense of voluntary agreement in every action.

Clear boundaries must be established and agreed upon among the artists involved, both in rehearsals and performance, particularly in scenes depicting violence, sex acts, intimate contact, abuse, or gestures of intimacy.

Students do not give up rights by participating in this class or production. Nothing here in shall restrict the academic freedom of faculty or students.

#### PROTOCOL:

1. **Verbally identify points of intimacy (or potential points of intimacy) in the script.**
2. **State any personal boundaries you might have regarding physical touch or action.**  
**Scene partners and the director must agree to the boundaries of the scene** (e.g., kiss, slap, etc.), whether explicit or implicit in the text **before the work starts.**  
A "Let's just improv and see where it goes," approach is never appropriate.  
**The actors are responsible for staying within those agreed upon boundaries.**

There are two general kinds of boundaries that can be set:

- a. A realm of contact that is acceptable to rehearse.
- b. Specifically choreographed contact. [Stage violence is always choreographed but may also include non-"contact."]

3. **Rehearse the scene with boundaries in place.** The goal is to take care of your fellow collaborators. Scene partners should have a verbal check-in before any rehearsal in which intimate contact is being rehearsed, to determine if/how that contact will be rehearsed in that rehearsal. This is because the boundaries may change over the rehearsal process. The boundaries may narrow, or they may broaden. However, **any change to the boundaries must be discussed and agreed upon before the rehearsal.**

4. **Listen to your partners and performers.** Give space for people to express any potential discomfort, as this is often more challenging than everyone simply saying, “Sure, that was all fine.”
5. **After rehearsal, check in with one another.** Did anything arise that was uncomfortable? Were the set boundaries successful?
6. If you’re uncomfortable with the material or the process, or these criteria are not being met:
  - a. In class/ rehearsal outside of class/scene rehearsal: **rehearsal/exercise should STOP. Boundaries must be re-established before moving forward.**
  - b. In performance: The actors should **report any variations from the agreed-upon boundaries or actions to stage management.**
7. **Maintain the integrity of the agreed-upon structure of intimate contact once a show is in production.** All agreements are to be kept. Discuss and determine if incorporating an Intimacy Call along-side Fight Call before every show would be useful.
8. Some scenes are very affecting and can be hard to shake. Please create a personal wind down routine after rehearsal or performance to help release and neutralize energy that can arise in the work. Craft it as you would a good warm-up with vocal and physical exercises useful to you to return to neutral.

\*\* An individual may also, at any time, discuss an incident with a faculty advisor, their academic advisor, or another trusted faculty/staff member if they wish. The actor should be aware that the faculty/staff member may have reporting obligations and may not be able to guarantee confidentiality. An individual may also always make a report directly to Paige Smith as the University's Title IX Coordinator ([reedp@uww.edu](mailto:reedp@uww.edu), 262-472-1910, *Hyer Hall 425*) or may also choose to discuss incidents with a **confidential** source through UHCS (University Health and Counseling Services, [uhcs@uww.edu](mailto:uhcs@uww.edu), 262-472-1300, Ambrose Health Center). For questions, do not email, please call and select menu option 1.

*\*\* This document was created in consultation with UWW’s Title IX Office, with reference to the Intimate Touch Policy at The Theatre School at DePaul University and the following sources:*  
<https://www.guidetostageintimacy.com/the-guide-1>  
<https://www.guidetostageintimacy.com/>  
<https://www.intimacydirectorsinternational.com/>