

**CONSENT IN THE  
CLASSROOM:  
FACILITATING  
INTIMACY**

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This workshop is taking place on the traditional lands of the Southern Paiute people. White settlers seized the lands colonially known as Cedar City through the unratified and unfulfilled Treaty of Spanish Fork in 1865, in exchange for basic needs and rights, under the direction of Brigham Young.

We also recognize the stolen lives of the enslaved Africans brought to Utah by early white settlers, and acknowledge that their subjugation and forced labor helped to establish the cities that exist in this area today.

These acknowledgments are only one step in anti-racist theater work. We must continue to de-colonize our work through careful project selection, meaningful collaboration, ongoing conversation, and self education.

# AGENDA

- Introductions/Housekeeping
- Lecture
- Tools & Exercises
- FAQ
- Q&A



## ABOUT ME

- BS in Theatre Education from BYU-Idaho
- 20 years of theatre experience as an actor, director, choreographer, educator, sound designer
- Began training in new field of intimacy direction and consent-based work in 2019 (~100 hours)
- I come to this work from a place of passion for theatre, mental health advocacy, and social justice

## ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

- Take notes!
- Participate by either joining in the exercises or just observing
- You will **NOT** be asked to perform any nudity or intimacy today
- I'm going to give a **TON** of info, but I also give you access to my website and we'll have a Q&A

# WHAT IS FACILITATING INTIMACY AND CONSENT-BASED WORK?

A set of tools, practices, and philosophies that help us create powerful theatre that is:

- Safe (emotionally and physically)
- Repeatable
- Professional
- Respectful
- Legal

It also helps us prevent and interrupt the abuse that has plagued our industry for so long

# WHY DO WE EVEN NEED THIS???

- #MeToo woke us up to how our industry creates and perpetuates opportunities for abuse (esp. sexual and emotional abuse)
- The industry is shifting to utilizing intimacy directors and coordinators, and to consent-based work
- Positive change happens in educational systems
- You are preparing your students to navigate the industry more successfully

What we  
think this  
work is  
about

## CHOREOGRAPHY FOR SIMULATED SEX SCENES

What  
this  
work  
is  
mostly  
about

Consent  
Boundaries  
Power dynamics  
Communication  
Culture & Identity  
Understanding of Trauma  
Navigating kissing scenes  
Moments of touch onstage  
Expectations  
Reporting structures  
Self-care tools  
Rehearsal rules

*(A lot of  
anxiety  
about stage  
kissing or  
physical  
touch is  
anxiety  
about  
consent)*

# **CONSENT APPLIES TO ALL CONTEXTS**

**REHEARSALS, IMPROV SCENES, CLASS  
EXERCISES, & PERFORMANCES  
(REGARDLESS OF CONTENT OF THE  
SCENE)**



# WHAT IS CONSENT?

Agreeing to  
do/experience  
something

## **FRIES**

Freely given  
Reversible  
Informed  
Engaged  
Specific

# WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF CONSENT?

- Inexperience
- Power dynamics
- Trauma

# POWER DYNAMICS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

## DIRECT POWER

- Grades
- School acceptance
- Casting
- Career
- Social life

## INDIRECT POWER

- Patriarchy
- White supremacy
- Religious experience
- Mental health
- Ability vs disability

# GETTING IN THE WAY OF CONSENT: TRAUMA

## Comfort Zone

- Confident
- Something you've done before
- "Yes!"
- "I love that"
- Instincts to listen to self and scene partners
- Smiling, laughter, connection
- Feeling calm
- Breathing even
- Present and aware in your body
- No muscle tension
- Digestive system calm

## Growth Zone

- Curious
- Something you've never done before
- "I'm willing to try it"
- "How would that feel for me?"
- Instincts to make jokes
- Feeling a little nervous or anxious
- Breathing fairly even
- Present and aware in your body
- Minimal muscle tension
- Digestive system generally calm
- Maybe a little shaky

BOUNDARY

## Trauma Zone

- Scared
- Something you do not want to do
- "I have to do this"
- "What will people think if I don't do this?"
- Unable to think clearly
- Feeling very nervous or anxious
- Breathing uneven
- Disconnected from body
- Muscle tension
- Digestive system overly calm
- Shaky
- Flashbacks

Assume that everyone in the room has some kind of trauma

# **LET'S BUILD A TOOLBOX!**

**EXERCISES & PRACTICES**

# LANGUAGE

- Pronouns
- Talk about bodies in terms of muscles and bones
- “Yes/No” → “How do you feel about?”
- Provide multiple options

# AUDITION DISCLOSURES & CONTENT WARNINGS

- Allows students to make informed decisions (the “I” in “FRIES”)
- See [website](#)

# “BUTTON”



↓  
**"What do you need?"**

- "I need to find a different way to do this"
- "I have a boundary around my knees, can we touch my thighs instead?"
- "I need to take a break"
- "My skirt is twisted and I just need to fix it"
- "I'm not comfortable with that"
- "Can I speak privately with you for a minute?"
- "Can we all/each get some Listerine strips?"
- "That wasn't the choreography, can we review?"
- "Can you use a little less pressure with that grip?"



# BOUNDARY PRACTICE

- Helps communicate boundaries
- BEST: Long version
- BETTER THAN NOTHING: Short check-in version
- Resist the urge to justify or explain boundaries, or to ask about them
- Everyone's boundaries are perfect exactly where they are!
- LET'S PRACTICE

# CLOSURE

- Actors get in a circle, or face one another and take turns saying the following:
  - As the character of \_\_\_\_, I am feeling \_\_\_\_ and doing \_\_\_\_.
  - As myself, I am feeling \_\_\_\_, and doing \_\_\_\_.
  - After rehearsal/this show, I'm looking forward to \_\_\_\_.
  - \*hit thighs and say "hup!", then clap\*
- After everyone has shared, \*hup\* \*clap\* \*hup\* \*clap\* \*hup\* \*clap\*  
\*YAAAAAY!\*

# STAGE KISSES!

- Placeholder
- Closed-ish rehearsals when the actual kissing starts
- Do not have actors figure it out on their own

# CHOREOGRAPHING STAGE KISSES

1. Listerine strips + chapstick
2. Reminder of “Button”
3. Boundary Practice
4. Context
5. Body placement/hand placement
6. Counts
7. Noses touching
8. Lips touching
9. Closure

# SYSTEMS OF REPORTING & CLEAR CONSEQUENCES

Students should be able to speak with someone in power about their experience.

- Anonymous
- Without repercussions/retaliation
- Multiple avenues
- Easily accessed
  
- Clear consequences (written)
- FOLLOW THROUGH

# FAQS

How you do deal with boundary breakers?

- Set clear expectations and consequences, clear system of reporting
- “Hold. That’s not the blocking. Do we need to take a few minutes to review?”
- “It’s not your job as the actor to make those adjustments.”
- “This is the direction the industry is going, and it’s my job to help train you to be successful.”

What about visible signs of arousal?

- Only a problem if it’s a problem
- “Button”
- Dance parallel
- Take 5 / physical activity
- Compression garments

# FAQS

But I want it to be real! How do I make it real?

- The same way you make fight choreography real. By acting.
- Doing things “for real” is asking actors to engage in sex work. Which is a different industry.

Where can I learn more?

- Staging Sex by Chelsea Pace
- Theatrical Intimacy Education
- Intimacy Directors and Coordinators
- [Utahintimacydirector.com](http://Utahintimacydirector.com)

# Q & A

[www.utahintimacydirector.com/workshops](http://www.utahintimacydirector.com/workshops)