

Guidance for the Direction of Intimate Scenes

This guidance is for directors directing plays that contain intimate scenes or scenes of intimacy between adult members of the People's Theatre. Such scenes involving members under the age of 18 years will be subject to separate guidance.

“Scenes of intimacy” and “Intimate scenes” are terms used in this guidance to cover scenes that range from appearing naked or semi naked to kissing and touching to simulated sex including simulated rape

As an amateur theatre company we strive for artistic excellence but the welfare of our members must come first. Directors need to decide together with actors how they can be true to the piece of drama they are working on and create work they are all comfortable with. Embracing a duty of care is vital in all aspects of directing but even more so when directing scenes of intimacy. This guidance addresses concerns around vulnerability. It also covers the consent required of all involved.

This guidance relies upon a collaborative approach. This means that each person involved in the process has the right to raise objections at any stage about anything they are not comfortable with. Actors need to be able to ask for support from an identified established member of the theatre who is independent of the production, referred to in this guidance as an intimacy coordinator. This is to ensure that true collaboration does take place. Actors could feel outnumbered and under pressure to agree to something that they are not comfortable with.

Directors have a responsibility to manage intimate scenes in a considered and respectful way as risks to actors can include:

- Intimidation to participate (bullying)
- Body shaming or ridicule
- Gender based derision and humiliation
- Reputational damage (especially involving social media)
- Objectification
- Obsessive behaviour in others
- Unwanted physical contact
- Molestation
- Physical assault
- Sexual assault

This document provides clear and practical guidance to our membership on directing intimate scenes so that directors and actors feel safe.

Director's Preparation with the Script

Directors need to review the intimate scenes that are contained in the script, especially in stage directions. Sometimes details that are written are required to tell the story. Often other actions can serve the story telling better. Directors shouldn't underestimate an audience. An audience can follow themes in a play without putting actors through traumatic acts to reveal character.

Directors should take the opportunity of talking through their ideas for these scenes with the intimacy coordinator for their advice and support at this stage.

Auditions

By their nature, auditions are based on a power imbalance. Actors can feel obliged to agree to uncomfortable requests in order to be cast. The theatre is rightly concerned about actor safety and issues of consent.

Directors need to state in the audition notice if the role requires any scenes of intimacy. This will enable actors to decide at this point if they want to be involved in the production.

Auditions should always take place at the People's Theatre

The director should confirm to all those members auditioning for characters involved in the intimate scenes, the nature of the intimacy and confirm the support that is available once the play is cast.

Never assume an actor will be comfortable taking part in intimate scenes even if they have done them before.

The intimate scenes must not be used for auditions.

Casting Cards

Once a cast has been agreed by the director, and casting cards are to be issued, an established member of the theatre should be identified as the intimacy coordinator for the play and their contact details should be included. This will reassure everyone of who to approach if they have any concerns and if discussions with the director have not resolved those concerns.

Rehearsal Period

Members of the production team and all cast members should be made aware of the nature of the intimate scenes and what to expect.

The rehearsal room needs to be a place of mutual respect and support. There should be no sexist or unacceptable comments or banter about these identified scenes or the actors taking part.

Members of the production team or other members of the cast should not be invited to observe these scenes until all involved are happy that they be there.

No one should be in the auditorium who doesn't need to be there during dress rehearsals, unless it is with the agreement of the director and the actors involved in the intimate scenes.

Directors should consider setting aside specific time to plan and rehearse these scenes.

No nudity or semi-nudity in the rehearsal should be required

Talk through possible blocking before anyone touches anyone. Invite the 'no' from actors, this identifies what actions and contact are acceptable. Get everyone's consent. Consider doing this with only the necessary production team being present so actors don't feel under pressure.

Listen to performer concerns. Never assume everyone is comfortable with what they are being asked to do. Just because a director thinks it's not an issue, doesn't mean it won't be for the actors. Don't make light or belittle what actors are trying to achieve.

Make it clear that if an actor is unhappy about the blocking, they can call a stop.

Don't give 'secret' direction about the practical mechanics of the scene to individuals.

Use proper biological terms for body parts and together agree terms on what physical actions will be called.

If there is simulated sexual violence in the scene, you must ensure that a safe word or signal is used so that at any time during rehearsal or performance the scene is controlled by the actors and can be stopped at any time

Performers shouldn't grab someone and 'demonstrate' what they're thinking.

Plan movement, such as touching and kissing in advance. When kissing there should be no 'tongues'.



Invite the intimacy coordinator to rehearsals. They are independent of the production and can help support actors.

Show Week

Just as the rehearsal room needs to be a place of mutual respect and support so does the backstage and dressing rooms during the run of the show. There should be no sexist or unacceptable comments or banter about these identified scenes or those actors taking part.

No one should be backstage who doesn't need to be there.

In some plays and for some scenes it may be necessary to have a "closed set"

Ensure quick-change areas are private and as discrete as possible.

Some actors may wish to run a difficult scene before a performance, offer them the opportunity to do so. Ensure that the stage managers are aware of this and clear the stage and back stage areas and set time aside in the pre show schedule to enable this.

Keep intimate scenes under review at each performance, so any issues can be resolved as quickly as possible. Stage managers need to build this into their risk assessment.

Publicity

Currently the Theatre uses rehearsal shots, for publicity. It also uses short films as publicity. During the final stages of a production various theatre members take production shots. Some of these are displayed in the foyer or can be purchased by the cast. These are often shared on social media either by the People's Theatre's own social media pages or individual cast social media pages. Nothing should be shared of a cast member without their permission. No shots or films of the intimate scenes should be taken. Individual's privacy must be protected.

Post Production

When giving feedback to Productions Committee care should be taken in commenting on actors and in discussing the intimate scenes.