

# UVU Theatrical Intimacy Policy

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## Definition

The Department of Theatrical Arts at Utah Valley University considers stage action in which the given circumstances of the scene or production require physical or imaginative touch, simulated sexuality or simulated sexual violence between actors as a moment of theatrical intimacy ("TI"). These moments may include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Kissing
- Embracing
- Intimate touch
- Stylized non-contact movement that tells an intimate story
- Nudity (an actor is expected to perform in a lesser state of dress than they would typically use for rehearsal)

In the interest of making its rehearsal and performance processes demonstrative of best pedagogical and professional practices, the Department of Theatrical Arts requests that all participants adhere to the following guidelines:

## Rehearsal Protocols

1. In collaboration with your director and scene partner, verbally establish the purpose and scope of TI in the scene:
  - What are the character objectives and obstacles associated with moments of TI ?
  - How is the storytelling enhanced by moments of TI?
  - Is TI necessary to tell the story intended by the author, production team, and actors?
2. Establish and document actors' consent to physically explore the specific material discussed above, including acknowledging any potential actor boundaries;
3. Desexualize rehearsal language by encouraging the use of anatomical language when referring to body parts, differentiating character intentions from actors' choreographic actions, and referring to scenes by act and scene number rather than terms such as "the sex scene."
4. Establish a self-care cue for rehearsal. This is a word or phrase that *anyone* can say to "hold" a rehearsal while a moment of heightened concern is addressed (TIE recommends the word "button");
5. Utilize a boundary-establishment protocol at the beginning of each rehearsal and establish permission for touch;
  - **Actor boundaries are to be respected during the rehearsal process and in performance;**
6. Utilize a placeholder (such as a high-five) 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;
7. **All intimacy is to be choreographed and documented.** Have a plan B and rehearse this option in the event that an actor's boundaries change;

8. **Never rehearse TI in private;**
  - A stage manager or other agreed-upon third party must always be present for TI rehearsals;
9. **Actors should also document the rehearsal process;**
  - Keep a written record of TI rehearsals: What was rehearsed? How did it go? Did any concerns arise? Is there a need for follow-up?
  - Review choreography notes for all moments of TI;
  - TI rehearsals should not be video-recorded. An audio recording of the choreography notes with timings may be used for review;
10. If concerns of harassment or abuse ever arise, document your experience carefully and follow the [Concern Resolution Path](#) posted on the department website.

## Additional Production Protocols

### Auditions

- Provide information on any potentially loaded content in the production (including intimacy, violence, etc.) at the time of auditions and encourage actors to document any potential boundaries;
- Intimate physical contact and/or nudity should never be required during an audition call.

### Staging

- Secure a qualified Intimacy Choreographer/Director/Designer for all productions that include TI;
- Encourage the entire production team to become familiar with these guidelines;
- Team members should offer comments or opinions on the staging/execution of TI to the director or choreographer only, never to the actors involved;
- 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.

### 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;
- When possible, personnel should adjust procedures to respect touch boundaries and rely on communication and collaboration for working within boundaries;
- All parties have a responsibility to clearly communicate any concerns or questions;
- Performers should always wear appropriate undergarments to their fittings;
- 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 or if they prefer more or fewer people in the room.

## Instructional Touch

Occasionally it can be useful for an instructor to use physical touch as a teaching tool, especially in physical skills-based courses such as voice or movement (e.g. placing a hand on the back of a student's

neck to help the student identify excess muscular tension that may be impeding their vocal function). In these cases, the following guidelines apply:

- The instructor should be specific about the nature of the touch and its purpose.
- The instructor should establish whether there is consent for instructional touch.
- The instructor should be prepared to offer alternative instruction should the student decline instructional touch.
- The student will not be penalized, shamed, or denied instruction as a result of requesting alternative instruction.