

# PILLARS OF SAFE INTIMACY REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

## *Context - Communication- Consent - Choreography*

### FIRST, A NOTE ON THE ROLE OF INTIMACY DIRECTOR:

The Intimacy Director is more than a choreographer; they are an advocate for the ensemble and for each actor. The Intimacy Director takes responsibility for the emotional safety of the actors and anyone else in the rehearsal hall while they are present. No matter what happens during intimacy choreography, the Intimacy Director is responsible for the energy in the room and must control all outbursts and inappropriate comments. They are the last line of defense between choreography and a harassment lawsuit. For this reason, we recommend seeking out a certified Intimacy Director with Intimacy Directors International. Should this be out of reach for any reason, please refer to the four Pillars listed below, along with the guidelines listed in “Best Practices.”



## CONTEXT

- Explain the story of the intimacy within the scene and within the story as a whole.
- Describe the aesthetic of the intimacy (ex. Shocking, risqué, inclusive, non-threatening, etc.)
- Agree on the goal and objectives of the movement of the story among actors, director, and stage management.
- Collaborate with the actors about the perspective for character’s inner life.
- If possible, include the design team on the table work (costuming, set, props, choreographer, and producers if needed).
- Take into account the playwright’s vision.

## COMMUNICATION

- Provide the actors a safe space to ask questions, and a free-flowing environment of collaboration, open communication between the actors, stage management, and the director.
- When giving direction, refrain from generalization and/or subjectification. Take care that notes are specific and actionable.
- Periodically ask if any information (consent, boundaries) has changed throughout the process. This includes checking-in with actors in the scene, remaining cast, stage management, and anyone involved on or backstage with the choreography.
- An individual’s sexual orientation or past personal trauma is private until and only if the individual wishes to share. If information is given in rehearsal, it remains confidential.

- Language in rehearsal hall:
  - No inappropriate jokes while working.
  - Be sensitive to triggering terms, like “rape scene” or “orgy,” using instead something neutral like “scene 4”. Every group is different, but best practice is to start at this baseline.
- Rehearsals containing Intimacy may remain light, but should remain professional (especially during vulnerable moments)
- Ensure that everyone in the company is aware of the process for reporting harassment.
  - This can include backstage behavior just as much as behavior in rehearsal.
- In the absence of an Intimacy Director, who is your *de facto* mediator, seek resolution if a mistake is made, for instance inappropriate behavior or comments. Immediately accept responsibility for your actions or language. Apologize and forgive without blaming or deflecting. Everyone is human and can make mistakes.
- Actors must know at least 24 hours in advance if nudity is required for rehearsal, and the actor must sign a contract stating there will be nudity in the show before they start rehearsals.
- When accepting a role that includes intimacy, communication between actors and directors must be open and transparent so that expectations and boundaries are understood before rehearsals begin. After the original contract has been signed by all parties, changes to that agreement, for example the actor retracts consent or director implements drastic changes in the design, may affect the entire production. Clear communication at all stages of the process will lead to a smoother production as a whole. While anyone may retract consent at any time (see below), it is important to note that there may be far-reaching consequences for that retraction, depending on the legitimacy of the retraction, the timing of that retraction and the resulting effects on the production.

## CONSENT

- Permission Vs. Consent:
  - Permission can be given by anyone, and does not imply consent.
  - Consent must be given and received by the individuals involved in the action.
- Consent is never assumed when dealing with physical contact.
- Openly discuss physical and emotional boundaries for actors, ensemble and audience. This is crucial throughout the process in order to prevent instances in which actors suddenly retract consent.
- Actors must ask for consent from partners before beginning any move that contains intimacy.
- Anyone has the right to retract their consent at any time.
- Accepting a role doesn’t automatically imply consent for specific actions.



## CHOREOGRAPHY

- Always have a third party (an “outside eye”) present when setting choreography.
- Always have a third party (an “outside eye”) present when rehearsing choreography.
  - Actors should never be asked or allowed to rehearse intimacy choreography alone.
- Set aside enough time in rehearsal for tablework/discussion of choreography.
- Acknowledge the need for collaboration, and don’t be afraid to know when you’re in over your head. Find a professional Intimacy Choreographer with Intimacy Directors International if possible to advise or to help choreograph the scene.
- Each actor is unique and has individual challenges. The Intimacy Director uses the bodies and energies of the actors to choreograph instead of entering with blocking at the beginning of the rehearsal. For this reason, choreography from Intimacy Directors International is tailored for each different show experience, offering a unique breath and movement pattern each time.
- The choreographer may need to demonstrate the blocking by stepping in the scene. This should never be done in the nude. There is no reason a choreographer must get naked when choreographing nudity. This is unnecessary and can be highly dangerous and unprofessional.
- Give actors an “intimacy call” before each performance to rehearse scenes with heightened emotional content before each performance. This can also be referred to as “movement call.”
- No moves may be added or removed without express permission of the Intimacy Director. The choreography will stay the same every night (within reason). If a movement changes, stage management will question the moment after the show to find the reason and the scene will be added to movement call before the next show.

*For more information, visit our website, [www.IntimacyDirectorsInternational.com](http://www.IntimacyDirectorsInternational.com). For specific inquiries or to connect with one of our recognized directors, email [info@intimacydirectorsinternational.com](mailto:info@intimacydirectorsinternational.com)*

