



INTIMACY  
FOR STAGE & SCREEN

# ADVICE FOR PERFORMERS





## ABOUT US

*Intimacy for Stage and Screen* is an organisation dedicated to raising awareness of safer practice during the creation of intimate scenes.

*Intimacy For Stage & Screen* is not a Union or Agent or Casting Director and therefore we will not be providing guidelines on how to manage an audition environment. For audition specific notes created by unions and trade organisations there are links lower down in this document.



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THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS OUR ADVICE TO PERFORMERS  
ENGAGING IN SCENES OF AN INTIMATE NATURE.

## 01.

**Your body belongs to you and you alone.**

## 02.

**Be part of the conversation**

- with the creative team and fellow performers regarding the intimate scenes.

## 03.

**Everyone has a say**

- any performer present in an intimate moment (whether involved in the choreography or not) should have the opportunity to express their concerns or ask questions.

## 04.

**Personal vs Professional**

- you do not have to share intimate personal experiences. We recommend separating your personal body & experiences from your character's body and experiences.

## 05.

**Celebrate your boundaries**

- advocate for your physical boundaries and your "no contact areas". You can always offer an alternative movement that feels right for your personal body and connects to your character's needs.

## 06.

**Give yourself time**

- ask for time to think if you are unsure.



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## 07.

### **You have control**

- you can retract your consent at any point.

## 08.

### **Offer placeholders**

- use placeholders (see Appendix 1) when improvising/walking a scene if intimacy choreography hasn't been created yet. Intimate moments should not be improvised in the same way that simulated violent action requires specific choreography.

## 09.

### **Your right to professional support**

- if you are working on an intimate scene it is your right to ask for an Intimacy Director (for stage) or Intimacy Coordinator (for TV/film) to be present in the process and help create safe intimate choreography while advocating for your safety.

If a production cannot employ them then they should not include simulated sex or nudity since these are moments with higher risk (both emotionally & physically). A helpful comparison is staging a fight. A Fight Director should be hired to support the cast. Remember, there are always other ways to tell a story if the above is not financially possible.

## 10.

### **Check-In for consent**

- always ask for and seek consent from your scene partner before physical intimacy is explored. Don't assume consent - even if you have worked with that performer before or you are friends in your personal life. When it comes to negotiating boundaries and consent, treat them the same as any other performer.



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## 11.

### **Trust your body**

- if something feels wrong, is distressing, uncomfortable or impacts you physically and/or emotionally tell your Stage Manager/1st AD, Intimacy Director or Intimacy Coordinator. Triggers can appear hours later, days or weeks later. As a performer you may have been trained to challenge your performative limits however not in the expense of your safety and sustainability throughout the show. You are more important than the project!

## 12.

### **Ask for a break**

- take a break within the intimacy rehearsal if you need one.

## 13.

### **Third party present**

- ask for a third party to be present when rehearsing intimate choreography (this should not be the director, producer or another performer if possible).

## 14.

### **Safe space to do the work**

- you have the right to a Closed Rehearsal / Closed Tech / Closed Set to limit the amount of personnel around you. However if you'd like an open door etc. do let your SM or AD know.

## 15.

### **Safe space for everyone**

- if you are involved in scenes with nudity/semi-nudity you should use a robe or cover up every time a break occurs. Even if you are comfortable to stay without, don't forget that it is for the safety of the other performers, director, creatives, SM Team and crew around you as well.



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## 16.

### **Communicate any alterations you need**

- if you would like changes or if the intimate choreography changed in any way from the original agreement.

## 17.

### **Know your contract**

- if nudity, semi nudity or simulated sex are mentioned in the script/play, read through your contract to make sure that you have a Nudity & Simulated Sex Clause. Discuss this with your agent, Equity or the producer fully before signing so you are aware of your rights and how your image will be used.

If you retract your consent at any point, new notes surrounding that clause should be created and resigned in order for the contract not to be fully terminated. Please seek further advice from your agent and union.

## 18.

### **Advocate for yourself**

- the responsibility also lies with you to discuss your needs and requests with the director and SM team or AD team. Never assume they will guess what you need facilitated.

For example, for stage productions we recommend implementing the following:

- Ask for 24 hours notice before Intimacy Rehearsal Sessions.
- Nudity in rehearsals or tech: a “nudity plan” should be created in discussion with yourself, the director, SM and the intimacy director. This will outline your needs, when and how this should be carried out so everyone is informed, stage management team and the costume department can prepare accordingly etc.
- Ideally 48 hours notice before a rehearsal with nudity or semi-nudity so you can prepare anything you need (for example: hygiene related or booking an appointment for waxing etc).



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## 19.

### **De-Role / Close It Off**

- remember to engage in a full closure practice/de-rolling (see Appendix) practice once your rehearsal/scene/show ended that day. This helps reinforce the separation between your personal and professional body. If you feel that you cannot step out of the character and/or the character's experiences then seek professional support (see resources below).

## 20.

### **Know your resources**

- remember to engage in a full closure practice/de-rolling (see Appendix) practice once your rehearsal/scene/show ended that day. This helps reinforce the separation between your personal and professional body. If you feel that you cannot step out of the character and/or the character's experiences then seek professional support (see resources below).

### **Unions & Industry Organisations:**

Equity UK, BECTU, Casting Directors Guild, PACT, FAA.

### **Additional resources on auditions:**

Equity UK Casting Manifesto:

<https://www.equity.org.uk/media/1380/manifesto-for-casting.pdf>

Casting Directors Guild Guidelines:

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/sites/default/files/casting-auditionguidelinesforplays.pdf>

Times Up (USA specific but many things are transferable)

[https://timesupfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TUF-Safety\\_Packet-Auditions-V3-20191222\\_FINAL.pdf](https://timesupfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TUF-Safety_Packet-Auditions-V3-20191222_FINAL.pdf)

### **Support Services Resource Page:**

<https://www.intimacyforstageandscreen.com/resources.html>



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## APPENDIX 1: INTRO TO INTIMACY TERMINOLOGY

### Advocate

A person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.

A person who puts a case on someone else's behalf.

### Boundary

A physical parameter a Performer has put in place to guard themselves from physical and/or emotional and/or trauma.

### Check-In

An update between the Intimacy Director and Performer or between the Performers and / or between Stage Management and Performers (physical or verbal) to ensure intimacy protocols are maintained.

### Child Actor and Young Adult Actor

In England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Intimacy scenes where minors are present require safeguarding practices in place. The Intimacy Director will work closely with the Stage Management Team and the Chaperone to oversee the child's protection.

To understand more about what level of involvement can a Child Actor or Young Adult Actor have in the scenes, please seek advice from Equity UK.

### Closure / De- Rolling

A ritual / action / exercise that aids the Performer to de-role (come out of character) and acknowledge that the intimate situation performed on stage was not real.

### Consent

Section 74 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in the UK states that: "a person consents if he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice."

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>).

Consent on stage is given by the Performer performing the action. Consent can only be freely given if the Performer has full knowledge of the action required beforehand. Any form of coercion negates the Performer's consent.

For more general information on consent: <https://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk>

### Descriptive Language

The wording in the Nudity & Simulated Sex Clause found in a Performer's contract detailing the extent of nudity and type of simulated sex actions the Performer agrees to perform per scene.

### External Barriers

Props and/or padding placed between Performers to reduce or eliminate groin-to-groin contact, stimulation and/or help to anchor body parts in order to perform intimacy choreography techniques.

### Garment Barriers

Padding inserted into modesty garments to reduce or eliminate groin-to-groin contact and stimulation. These are made or bought by the costume department with guidance from the Intimacy Director.

### Intimacy

Is a very broad term and is affected by the context of the characters within the scene. Depending on states of emotions, level of familiarity or intensity of the relationship, it can include non-contact based intimacy such as: portrayal of sexual tension and chemistry where no touch occurs. It can also include: intimacy between parents and children, friends, strangers, and include physical intimacy where contact occurs (see Physical Intimacy definition).





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### **Intimacy Call**

Any show which has moments of Physical Intimacy (especially simulated sex) should run an Intimacy Call prior to the show. It is a designated time for the Performers to check-in with each other and with the Stage Manager as well as walk through any inconsistent moments or raise concerns.

### **Intimacy Call & Show Report**

A report filled out by a member of the Stage Management Team outlining details from the Intimacy Call and intimacy choreography performed during the show. This form will be given to them by the Intimacy Director.

### **Intimacy Captain**

Depending on the decision of the Intimacy Director and the style of intimacy in the show, an Intimacy Captain can be assigned. However, in general, we do not recommend this practice due to the power dynamics it creates between performers in the company.

Intimacy material can be extremely sensitive and encompasses emotional safety. This should not be in the hands of another performer which may create power play within the company. We advise that the Stage Manager should be the only person to run the Intimacy Calls when the Intimacy Director is not present.

### **Intimacy Choreography**

The choreographed moves of intimacy which the performers perform.

### **Intimacy Choreography Notation Document**

A document in which the Intimacy Director writes the Intimacy Choreography agreed and any safeties, notes and requests made by the Performer.

### **Intimacy Coordinator**

An intimacy-movement specialist trained to oversee and facilitate scenes involving nudity, simulated sex and/or overseeing consent on a film / TV set.

### **Intimacy Director**

An intimacy-movement specialist trained to oversee consent and to facilitate safe intimacy choreography for the stage. Their role involves advocacy, liaison, choreography and safety.

### **Intimacy Rehearsal Log**

A log filled out both by a member of the Stage Management Team and the Intimacy Director outlining notes from the Intimacy Session. This form will be given to them by the Intimacy Director.

### **Intimacy Risk Assessment**

A report which outlines a systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in the shooting of an intimacy scene.

We recommend that Intimacy Coordinators submit such documentation prior to the day of shooting.

### **Intimate Scenes**

This term is complex because a Performer can see any scene as intimate for their character. However, when regarding scenes that may need an Intimacy Director, we recommend considering “Intimate Scenes” as scenes which may involve situations which are mentioned in the “Physical Intimacy” term as priority.

### **Modesty Garments**

With the expansion of intimacy direction and coordination practice, this now includes any garment which may cover the intergluteal cleft, nipples, breasts and genitalia. These are usually made or bought by the costume department in consultation with the Intimacy Director and the Performer.



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### **Nudity, Semi Nudity and Disrobe**

SOLT & Equity's Agreement for Theatre Artist states:

"Nudity", "semi-nudity" and "disrobe" shall mean "to be in a state of undress which if in public could be regarded as indecent".

PACT Equity TV Agreement 2019-2020 states:

"Nudity" or "Nude" shall mean the display of any part of the body which would be revealed if the Artist were not wearing a bathing suit (Speedo and bikini, for male and female actors, respectively).

### **Nudity & Simulated Sex Clause**

A clause in the Performer's contract which is negotiated between the Performer (or their representative) and the Producer. This defines the terms of nudity and/or simulated sex agreed by both parties.

### **Permission**

Can be given by a third party but those asked to do something need to be able to give their consent freely. For example, a Director can give permission for an action to happen but only the Performer can give their consent.

### **Physical Intimacy**

We define physical intimacy as any moment which portrays physical contact and highlights the intimate nature of the characters. This may include (but is not restricted to): kissing, "making out", physical contact leading into various states of undress, contact with chest or genitals, simulated sex, simulation of sexual violence, simulation of sexual manipulation.

### **Placeholder**

An agreed gesture used by the Performers in rehearsals or auditions which substitutes the intimacy action. This is extremely helpful for early rehearsals when Performers explore the scene in its entirety for it allows them to avoid improvising intimacy. Anytime they feel a need for an intimate action they can use the agreed placeholder to signal that further choreography is needed in that moment of the scene. Once intimacy sessions start with the Intimacy Director, placeholders are then removed and intimacy choreography can be facilitated fully. Placeholders should not be intimacy actions like a kiss or hug. Best practice is to agree on a more neutral gesture.

### **Power Dynamic**

Can be defined as the degree of control over material, human, financial and intellectual resources exercised by an individual or group.

Degrees of power can be sustained/constant or dynamic/distributed depending on role hierarchy, class, gender, race, age, background etc.

One example of power dynamics in live performance: the Director or Choreographer in charge of the overall vision has various types of power which can influence the behaviour and consent levels of the Performers, Stage Management Team, Creatives etc.

### **Sexual Assault**

Sexual or indecent assault is any physical, psychological and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act, inflicted on someone without their consent.

For more information:

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/looking-for-information/what-is-sexual-violence/other-kinds-of-sexual-violence/what-is-sexual-assault/>



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### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that makes one feel distressed, intimidated or humiliated, as an example. It can take lots of different forms. It can include or be called sexualised bullying and can happen to people of any gender or sexual orientation and can be carried out by anyone of any gender identity.

For more information:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/sexual-harassment>

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/looking-for-information/what-is-sexual-violence/other-kinds-of-sexual-violence/what-is-sexual-harassment/>

### Simulated Sex

SOLT & Equity's Agreement for Theatre Artist states:

"Acts of a sexual nature" and "sex acts" shall mean "any act which if performed in public would be regarded as an indecent act".

### Withdrawal of Consent

A Performer owns the right to their body and therefore they can at any time withdraw their agreement to giving or receiving an action in a physical capacity at any time.



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## APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Equity's Safe Space Statement:

<https://www.equity.org.uk/getting-involved/campaigns/safe-spaces/>

Equity's Manifesto for Casting

<https://www.equity.org.uk/media/1380/manifesto-for-casting.pdf>

Equity UK's Casting LGBT+ Guidelines

[https://www.equity.org.uk/media/3465/equity\\_lgbt-casting-guide.pdf](https://www.equity.org.uk/media/3465/equity_lgbt-casting-guide.pdf)

Equity UK's Agenda For Change 2017: supported Intimacy Direction as part of their agenda.

<https://www.equity.org.uk/media/1263/agenda-for-change.pdf>

### Websites of Intimacy Direction specific training providers:

The following are training providers that we know train intimacy directors similarly to what is outlined in section 5.0.

UK: *Intimacy for Stage & Screen* ([www.intimacyforstageandscreen.com](http://www.intimacyforstageandscreen.com))

USA: *Intimacy Directors & Coordinators* ([www.idcprofessionals.com](http://www.idcprofessionals.com))

USA: *Theatrical Intimacy Education* (<https://www.theatricalintimacyed.com>)

### Books:

Ewan, V. (2014) *Actor Movement* - pages 247-259.

Pace, C. (2020) *Staging Sex*, Focal Press Book, Routledge.

### Thesis:

Sina, T. (2006) *Intimate Encounters; Staging Intimacy and Sensuality*, Dissertation, Virginia Commonwealth University

### Articles:

Noble, Adam. (2011) *Sex & Violence; practical approaches for dealing with extreme stage physicality*, Fight Master Magazine.

Rodis, A. (2017) *Killing Desdemona; creating safe spaces for dangerous work*, Fight Master Magazine.

Sina, T.(2014) *Safe Sex: a look at the Intimacy Choreographer*, Fight Master Magazine.



**Selected Interviews:**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/15/theater/need-to-fake-an-orgasm-theres-an-intimacy-choreographer-for-that.html>

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/advice/elizabeth-talbot-professor-of-movement-own-your-body-theres-a-myth-it-belongs-to-others>

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/yarit-dor-i-dont-like-to-be-boxed-in--i-dont-want-to-be-just-a-fight-director>

<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/broadway-intimacy-director-claire-warden-interview-68526/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/sep/15/slave-play-broadway-jeremy-o-harris>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/sex/confessions-intimacy-director-do-direct-sex-scenes-age-metoo/>



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