

The KISS Project
Keeping Intimacy Safe on Stage
for Young Performers



By Lojo Simon
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Forward

Theatre is no stranger to intimacy, yet it is only recently that practitioners have developed protocols for safe expression of intimacy on stage and in film/TV. Part of the reason for this change in practice is that the #metoo movement has fostered global conversations about once-taboo topics such as sexual abuse and consent in the workplace. At the same time, there is a growing public awareness, if not acceptance, of the fluidity of gender and sexuality. For perhaps the first time, adults, teens and children are openly exploring their gender/sexual identities in ways that may have significant repercussions on schools and theatres.

The confluence of these social trends led me to launch The KISS Project: Keeping Intimacy Safe on Stage for Young Performers. With funding from the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas Innovation Grant, The KISS Project embraced four primary research methods: An online survey, an intimacy workshop, conversations with theatre students and online research.

- **Theatre educator survey:** An online survey of 62 self-selected theatre educators, who answered 11 questions about their experience with young actors and stage intimacy. Respondents represent schools, colleges and theatres across the US and Canada. Survey results are printed in their entirety in the Appendix of this report.
- **Intimacy workshop:** A two-day, 16-hour immersive workshop conducted by Theatrical Intimacy Education instructors Chelsea Pace and Laura Rikard. The workshop included instruction in intimacy choreography pedagogy and methodology.
- **Student/teacher conversations:** Discussions with theatre students in 6th-12th grades in my community of Orange County, California, in which they shared their experiences with stage intimacy, as well as insights they have gleaned about personal boundaries and consent.
- **Research and reading:** To supplement my fieldwork, I also read multiple articles, documents and online resources to shape my understanding of the topic.

All of these experiences inform The KISS Project report. It is my hope that sharing what I've learned will be thought-provoking and instructional, perhaps leading to further study, research and conversation in this area of theatre education.

A few caveats before launching in. First, what I'm not: I'm not an actor, director, choreographer, intimacy choreographer, educator, attorney or expert in theatre or education. What I am is a playwright, dramaturg, journalist, observer and participant in theatre-making with adults and children. I wanted to clarify this up front to reinforce that this document is not intended to be a definitive or complete guide to stage intimacy with young performers. It is, rather, simply a summary of findings and best practices suggested by those findings.

Second, my research focused primarily on consent and intimacy among student actors ages 10-18. By limiting the project in this way, I am not suggesting that consent and personal boundaries are not applicable to performers younger than 10 and older than 18. Sadly, we often don't know the history and experiences young performers bring into a rehearsal room. Sadly, sexual assault on young people remains a devastating worldwide problem. Corporal punishment, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and body shaming persist in homes, churches, community centers and other spaces where adults fail to respect young people's boundaries. I do not have the expertise to address these specific traumas, but I acknowledge that they exist and encourage theatre educators to be cognizant of them.

Third, I acknowledge that my research was limited to North America. I interviewed students in southern California only, and while my interviews reflect a diversity of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, socioeconomic background and experience in theatre, The KISS Project findings may not apply in different geographic, religious and cultural circumstances.

I also want to pause to thank the people who participated in The KISS Project. I am deeply indebted to Laguna Playhouse Education Director Dylan Russell for her partnership in every aspect of this effort, and for our growing friendship. I also want to thank the theatre educators who helped develop, disseminate and complete The KISS Project Survey, with special mention of Johamy Morales, Jonathan Schmidt Chapman, Jane McPherson and Allison Dolan. Thanks must go to Chelsea Pace and Laura Rikard, co-founders of Theatrical Intimacy Education, for their excellent workshop leadership and guidance. Thanks also to theatre educators Bethanie Knieser and Erin Sawyer of Laguna Playhouse and Sharon King of Anaheim High School and to their students who shared their time, attention and thoughts. Dylan Russell, Laura Rikard, Melissa Firlit and Charlotte Ostrow reviewed a draft of this report – thank you all for sharing your time and expertise. Finally, I want to thank the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs Association of the Americas, which funded The KISS Project. I hope this report proves to be a valuable addition to the dramaturg's toolkit.

Lojo Simon
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Introduction

The history of abuse against women and girls is long and deep, but it wasn't until Twitter erupted with the hashtag #metoo in the wake of sexual abuse charges against producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017 that the world finally woke up to the need to put consent front and center in our public dialogue. In the years since, many powerful men have been brought down for their unethical and/or illegal sexual behavior. Consent has become the watchword for social relationships and business dealings, particularly when there is an imbalance of power between individuals in those relationships.

Throughout North America, businesses, government and educational institutions have instituted long-overdue policies and procedures designed to protect workers from sexual abuse. Nowhere has this effort been more evident than in entertainment, an industry in which tales of sexual misconduct are as old as Hollywood itself.

In January 2020, SAG-AFTRA published *Standards and Guidelines for the Use of Intimacy Coordinators*. Intimacy Choreographers, much like Fight Choreographers, are trained in creating safe spaces on stage and set. Neither a new nor proprietary process, Intimacy Choreography (also called Intimacy Direction and Intimacy Coordination) builds upon foundational principles and practices of movement and choreography to ensure that actors feel safe when called upon to simulate intimacy on stage. Theatre intimacy may include a variety of intimate physical and emotional moments including but not limited to kissing, hugging, sexual innuendo, nudity or partial nudity (including on-stage costume changes), revealing costumes, simulated sex, and heightened imaginative or sexual circumstances. (Source: *Chelsea Pace, U. Maryland-Baltimore County Theatrical Intimacy and Instructional Touch Policy*)

Did you know? The unfortunate reality of “the casting couch” first was acknowledged in a 1924 silent film that featured the stereotypical scenario of an actress auditioning for a role and giving in to the salacious demands of the casting director. (Source: *The Atlantic, Oct. 16, 2017*)

At the same time as Broadway and Hollywood have begun to adopt consent-based practices, 12 states have added consent to their health/sex ed curricula (California, DC, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia). Each of these states mentions the words “healthy relationships,” “sexual assault,” or “consent” in their sex education programs, according to the Center for American Progress. California, New Jersey and Oregon, in particular, “have served as model examples of teaching healthy relationships as part of sex education,” a Center report states. “All three states require educators to use materials that are medically accurate and include instruction related to healthy relationships or consent.” (Source: *Sex Education Standards Across the States, Center for American Progress*)

Conversation about consent is appearing in elementary school classrooms, as well. "In my class, we have a safety network where we talk about the people we trust and to speak up if someone ever makes you feel uncomfortable," says Citizens of the World Charter School teacher Liz Kleinrock. (Source: CNN, October 8, 2018)

Kleinrock teaches third grade, where consent means "saying yes to letting someone do something," whether that "something" is sharing or borrowing a book or hugging a friend. (Source: *How My Third Graders and I Address Consent*, Kleinrock, *Teaching Tolerance*, Sep 27, 2018). "We are not talking about sexual abuse," Kleinrock says, "We are talking about consent. I think sometimes people have a difficult time with the subject because of the connection between consent and sex. But my goal is to teach about appropriate behavior." (Source: CNN, October 8, 2018)

Kleinrock is not the only educator adopting consent-based practices as part of a larger effort to teach personal responsibility and behavior to children. "Our school is trying to teach children about respecting personal space as part of our positive behavior initiative," says assistant principal and mental health clinician Alicia Johnson. "As we have conversations about hugging practices with my school staff, there seems to be an underlying fear that if you aren't a hugger, you are cold or aloof. We need to shift our mindset to think otherwise. I feel strongly about the topic of consent and want my daughters to have healthy boundaries and ownership of their bodies as they age. We can teach consent at a young age, whether it be giving or asking for a hug. We all have emotional and physical needs, but we can be more intentional about how we express affection and discuss who is responsible for meeting some children's need for touch." (Source: *Can I Have a Hug: Tools for Teaching Consent to Elementary Students*, ASCD Express, 14:28, June 6, 2019)

Claire Broome, a drama teacher and Curricular Head of the Arts at John Fraser Secondary School, says, "The #metoo conversation is difficult for adults. It is even more difficult for young people. Students are watching as some actors, directors and producers they have admired in the world of Hollywood are accused of abuse of power. They are also learning of actors and other artists who have been mistreated and/or abused. We, as teachers, have a responsibility to change the thought processes and culture that allow #metoo situations to take place. Although not all of our students will ultimately pursue a career in the performing arts, we still have an obligation to teach consent. Our students have a responsibility to change how people are treated now and how they will be treated in our future. We must teach respect. We must teach our students to expect respect. We must also show our students respect and allow our students to be provided with the opportunity to be asked for consent." (Source: *#metoo in the Drama Classroom*, *Theatrefolk.com*)

The time clearly has come for theatre educators to be more aware than ever of the necessity to keep students safe on stage and perhaps to adopt new policies, practices and procedures that ensure a consent-based environment in our theatre spaces.



Consent-Based Theatre Education

Creating theatre is a process inherently fraught with discomfort. Drama frequently addresses emotionally challenging issues. Choreography and singing demand strength and stretch, literally and metaphorically. Many theatrical works require young actors to master challenging language, on-stage combat and simulated intimacy. Young actors also may feel uncomfortable with the simplest of theatrical demands, such as memorizing lines and appearing in front of an audience.

Despite all of these discomforts, theatre should not be a place of pain or violation on one's personal boundaries. On the contrary, theatre should be a safe place for artists to express honest emotions. In an educational setting, safety on stage is the responsibility of the theatre educator. How does one create safety on stage? It begins by instituting a consent-based creative environment that respects actors' bodies, minds and feelings.

What is Consent?

Consent is a term applied to a circumstance in which one person agrees to participate in a particular activity proposed by another person. The word "consent" becomes more specific when applied to particular circumstances, such as consent to medical treatment, to research, to the use of one's image, or, as is the case with #metoo, to sexual activity.

In the case of theatre education, consent is simply agreement by an actor to use their instrument (body, voice, mind, feelings) in a particular way on stage. As suggested by University of South Carolina Upstate Assistant Professor of Theatre and co-founder of Theatrical Intimacy Education Laura Rikard, in much the same way that a violinist is responsible for and takes care of her instrument, so, too, the actor must have complete control of, protect, and care for the instrument with which they make their art.

In order to assess how theatre educators are addressing consent in the classroom, as well as in rehearsal and production, I created an 11-question online survey as part of The KISS Project. Survey invitations were disseminated to theatre educators via email, social media and various professional associations and groups. In total, 62 people completed the survey in early 2020.

The survey asked respondents to identify theatre practices that they use in their classrooms and rehearsal rooms with 18-and-under actors. Of 59 people who responded to this survey question, a large majority reported that they talk about consent, boundaries and stage intimacy with students in some way.

- 91% talk with students about consent, personal boundaries and stage intimacy during rehearsal;

- 85% talk with actors about consent, personal boundaries and stage intimacy outside of rehearsal;
- 61% address consent, personal boundaries and stage intimacy at auditions; and
- 61% do table work around scenes that call for stage intimacy.

Although fewer in numbers, respondents also reported that they address consent, boundaries and stage intimacy in other ways, as well.

- 32% hold an Intimacy Call as part of rehearsal and production;
- 32% coordinate with a Stage Manager to address issues of consent, boundaries and stage intimacy; and
- 17% consult with an actor's family or guardian to discuss consent, personal boundaries and stage intimacy.

Respondents elaborated by adding:

- "There are questions on our audition form asking about kissing and playing homosexual characters* on stage to ensure that actors who are not comfortable with physical intimacy are not offered parts that would make them uncomfortable."
- "During auditions, students have an opportunity to express what they are willing or not willing to do to in regard to physical contact. I stress the importance of being honest about their comfort level and never going beyond what they are comfortable with."
- "At the beginning of each semester when going over systems and routines for our classroom/studio, we always talk about respecting boundaries and appropriate touch (e.g., knee to knee when sitting next to another actor - I teach in an elementary school setting, personal space when warming up and during independent practice time, etc.)"
*(*I have to note that theatre intimacy experts caution educators not to call out homosexual stage intimacy as the only kind of intimacy that warrants consent. Consent-based practices should be implemented across the board to protect and respect personal boundaries, regardless of gender and sexual preference of both characters and actors.)*

University of Maryland-Baltimore County Assistant Professor, author of the book *Staging Sex* and co-founder of Theatrical Intimacy Education Chelsea Pace confirms that addressing consent with actors is best done early and often, particularly because actors have long been conditioned that a good actor is one who is compliant, while a problem actor is one who says "no" and therefore is labeled "hard to work with."

"To actually get consent in the rehearsal room, there has to be space, real space, for an actor to say 'no,'" Pace asserts. "It's not enough to tell an actor they can say 'no.' If your whole training life has conditioned you to say yes, saying 'no' breaks the rules. Even asking for a moment to decide can feel like being difficult. Even when you ask them what they want, actors feel the pressure to be easy."

Interviews with students confirm that even young actors feel pressure to be compliant and to do whatever a teacher or director asks of them. “Last year in 8th grade, I had to hold the hand of one of the guys in the end (of the show), and I was never asked if I wanted to,” one student said. In speaking about a production of *Cinderella* at her school, another student explained, “Of course, actors can talk to the director, but no one wants to talk to them because you don’t want to be that one person who’s like, ‘I don’t want to do this kissing scene because I’m too nervous or shy.’ It’s like, suck up and do your part.”

Pace challenges the long-held theatrical norm that a good actor is a compliant actor. “We need to normalize ‘no,’” she says, “We do that by establishing an expectation, with words and with our actions, that everyone will have boundaries and those boundaries will be respected.”

What Do You Need Consent For?

The KISS Project survey asked theatre educators what kinds of physical practices they use in the classroom and/or rehearsal space.

- 97% of respondents teach scenes that require hand-holding or other kinds of touch;
- 92% of respondents choreograph movement that requires actors to touch in some way;
- 84% of respondents stage fights or other violence on stage; and
- 80% of respondents stage scenes that require stage intimacy (hugging/kissing) between actors with different genders.

Although the numbers were smaller, respondents also indicated that they had staged scenes or led classroom exercises using:

- Dance (69%);
- Mime (65%);
- Body-focused training such as Viewpoints (58%); and
- Stage intimacy (hugging/kissing) between actors of the same gender (44%).

Each of these theatrical practices, unless performed solo, suggest that actors’ bodies are moving together and apart on stage, perhaps touching in some way, as part of the physicality of the scene. Certainly, other student actors are witnessing the work, as well. In an age in which all of us have become sensitized to the need for consent, particularly in relationships such as teacher-student in which there is a power imbalance, should educators seek consent for everything?

To be honest, intimacy choreography is still in its infancy, and to date, there is no national or international standard or proven best practices for the application of consent-based theatre education with under-18 actors. However, in the interest of caution, theatre educators should consider using consent-based practices any time something happens in a theatre class, rehearsal or performance that may cross an actor’s personal boundaries, or in the parlance of

one school theatre program, any time someone's self-defined "personal bubble" may be invaded, stretched or popped.

Rikard says crossing one's personal boundaries could include, but is not limited to physical touch with romantic, sexual or violent intent, such as kissing (both heterosexual and homosexual on any part of the body), hugging, some types of dancing, holding hands, simulated sexual relations and sexual violence. It also could include full and partial nudity, such as appearing on stage in any costume that bares more than what a student (biologically male or female) might normally wear to school, such as a bathing suit, undershorts or negligee. Likewise, crossing one's personal boundaries also could apply to off-stage activities such as costume fittings, quick changes, applying mic packs, etc.

Parental Consent for Minors

Because theatre educators often work predominantly with minors, you likely are familiar with parental consent forms, yet only 17% of KISS Project survey respondents reported that they consult with an actor's family or guardian about consent, boundaries and stage intimacy. Is it advisable to get parents involved in decisions regarding stage intimacy? The short answer is yes.

According to the law, most minors do not have the capacity to consent on their own. What determines capacity to consent? The first factor, although far from perfect, is age. Let's take the case of capacity to consent to sexual activity. Laws vary from state-to-state in their definition of legal capacity to consent to sex. Thirty-two US states define the age of consent as 16, eight states use the age of 17, and 10 states set the age of consent at 18. (*Source: www.ageofconsent.net.*) Minors under that age are not considered legally capable to grant consent. In Canada, the age of consent to sexual activity is 16; however, the age of consent standard is higher under certain circumstances, such as when there is a relationship of trust, authority or dependency between an adult and a minor. (*Source: www.justice.gc.ca*)

But capacity isn't that simple. Many US states as well as Canada have "close-in-age exceptions" to their consent laws. A close-in-age exception means that a minor can legally consent to sexual activity with someone else of a similar age. In Canada, for example, a 14- or 15-year-old can consent to sexual activity as long as the partner is less than five years older and there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or any other exploitation of the young person. Similarly, a 12- or 13-year-old can consent to sexual activity with a partner as long as the partner is less than two years older and there is no relationship of trust, authority or dependency or any other exploitation of the young person. (*Source: www.justice.gc.ca*)

Age-related consent is not limited to sexual activity. A study conducted in the Netherlands found that children's competence to consent to clinical research can be accurately assessed by the modified MacArthur Competence Assessment Tool for Clinical Research. Generally, the study found that children of 11.2 years and older are competent in decision-making about their medical treatment, compared to children of 9.6 years and younger who are not. Age is

considered the key determining factor in children’s competence in this study. (Source: *BMC Medical Ethics*, 2015)

Of course, age is not the sole factor in determining competence to consent. Also relevant are:

- Developmental disability;
- Mental incapacitation, such as traumatic brain injury;
- Intoxication;
- Physical disability; and
- A power imbalance between the person asking for consent and the one granting it, which is, of course, particularly applicable in a school setting.

If you are at all concerned about legal and/or ethical issues related to your students’ capacity to consent to stage intimacy, it is advisable to reach out to parents/guardians. Just as you require Parental Consent for participation in production, so, too, you should consider seeking Parental Consent for scenes involving stage intimacy. Such consent can be sought in the normal course of action as part of your Parental Consent Waiver and Release of Liability Forms and/or your Audition Disclosure Forms.

When preparing these forms, include as much information and description as you can about staged intimacy that you anticipate in your classroom and productions. Describe choreography (as you anticipate it) that may involve physical touch, both for the actors participating in it, as well as for the actors witnessing it. Sharing this information up front helps actors and their parents/guardians make informed decisions about student participation. At the same time, talking with parents/guardians early gives theatre educators a heads up about potential problems that may arise later in the production process.

Below is an example of how Miami Children’s Theatre used its Parental Consent Form to spell out the director’s vision of stage intimacy and other potentially sensitive issues in *Heathers, the Musical*:

1. I understand that Miami Children’s Theatre is producing the stage musical “Heathers, the Musical”;
2. I understand that “Heathers, the Musical” is about a fictional high school in 1980’s America where the school population is subjected to extreme bullying by cliques of popular mean girls and jocks. I understand that the show goes to extremes portraying the cruelty of the popular crowd and the rebellion against it. I understand that the show portrays the murder of the popular kids by poisoning and shooting and makes these murders out to be suicides.
3. I understand that there is gunplay by the main characters, and one character attempts to destroy the school and all the students using bombs.
4. I understand that this show is a dark comedy and includes depictions of bullying, consumption of alcohol and drugs, violence, gun play, individual and mass murder, suicide, school violence, homosexuality and simulated sex acts.

5. I understand that the language in the production is frequently crude, suggestive and/or obscene.
6. I understand that there are highly suggestive and physical “sex scenes” between the characters of Veronica and JD.

Rikard advises keeping parents in the loop even after permission slips are signed. “I would advise making an active effort to let parents know that their voice is welcome in the conversation at any time,” she says, noting that in her experience as a director, communication is paramount to ongoing cooperation from students and their parents.

Resistance to Consent-Based Theatre Education

You might be reluctant to involve parents/guardians in the consent process. This feeling is understandable. Parents can become overly involved and insert their opinions where they are not wanted. Parents may have different points-of-view than their children, which can result in you being caught in between them. Sometimes parents have clout in the community and can use that clout to undermine your ability to make independent decisions about your programming. In a worst-case scenario, parents have been known to sue school districts and teachers with whom they disagree.

Directors and educators of young actors may resist implementing consent-based practices for other reasons as well:

- Fear that consent-based practices challenge adult authority and alter a necessary power imbalance between teachers and students;
- Concern that consent-based practices take too much time out of educational and rehearsal processes;
- Resentment that consent-based practices compete for students’ attention during rehearsal and detract from the group dynamic by focusing on individual preferences;
- Belief that consent-based practice is unnecessary because you have already created an environment in which students are comfortable speaking up;
- Discomfort or embarrassment addressing intimacy with students;
- Frustration with a legal system that influences so many aspects of our creative process, and
- Contempt for “helicopter parents” and other people in the community who try to assert their moral, political, religious and/or cultural perspectives into artistic decisions.

I asked Rikard about this resistance and she suggests that, despite potential challenges with parents, integrating consent-based practices into theatre education actually will result in a more creative rehearsal process that ultimately leads to improved performance. “It will free you up to get better work from your students,” she says. “Setting boundaries allows for boundless creativity. You set parameters to know how far you can play.”

In this sense, intimacy choreography and consent-based practices are simply tools that you can use to enhance the work you are already doing. You can and should tailor the suggestions in this report to serve your particular artistic processes. Your commitment to consent-based practices also ultimately will help intimacy choreographers to refine their best practices. “We know how this work benefits adults, but we don’t have enough feedback on how it benefits minors,” Rikard admits. “We need experts in teaching young performers in the room to give us that information.”



Intimacy Policy, Process and Practice

Based on the current social climate regarding consent, legal and ethical concerns related to the sanctity of personal boundaries, the desire among theatre educators to create safe spaces for students to learn and play, and results from The KISS Project survey, theatre educators may benefit from a more structured approach to staging intimacy with young actors. Here are some suggestions on how to do that. These suggestions are taken in large part from the Theatrical Intimacy Education workshop that I attended. They also are described in greater detail in Pace's 2020 book *Staging Sex*, available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Staging-Sex-Practices-Techniques-Theatrical/dp/1138596493>.

Create Policies for a Consent-Based Classroom

Making theatre in a consent-based environment won't happen overnight; however, you can take an important step toward this goal by creating policy to codify your commitment to keeping intimacy safe on stage.

Begin by creating a policy manual to document the "do's and don'ts" of making theatre in a consent-based environment. The following policy language written by Pace and implemented at University of Maryland-Baltimore County may be helpful:

The theatre program at _____ is dedicated to integrating consent-based practices into all classroom and production environments.

In all theatre-related activities, all participants are expected to abide by consent-based practices as defined and taught by theatre faculty.

All participants in theatre activities are expected to communicate their boundaries, ask before they touch, and maintain a professional working environment.

A professional working environment is one that results in a team of theatre-makers made up of competent, respectful, mature, and accountable people working towards a common goal. Professional employees don't swear, gossip, bully, lie, cheat, steal, lose their tempers or demean others by using sexualized language, telling off-color jokes, etc.

Failure to abide by these guidelines may result in one or more of the following consequences:

- Warning or timeout,
- Meeting with the teacher/director,

- Call or notification to my parents/guardians,
- Loss or change of a role or part,
- Suspension or removal from the Program.

(Source: UMBC Theatrical Consent and Intimacy Policy, <https://theatre.umbc.edu/files/2019/09/Theatrical-Intimacy-and-Instructional-Touch-UMBC-Theatre-1-3.pdf>)

Once your theatrical intimacy policy is in place and expectations for behavior and consequences are codified, share your policy and the reasons behind it with your institution, visiting artists, production team, stage management, students and parents. Describe how the consent policy will impact behavior in the classroom, auditions, rehearsal and production, and explain why the consent policy is necessary and important to ensuring everyone's safety and well-being. This manual also can be made available at auditions, as transparency is paramount to ensuring a safe environment for everyone.

Consent-Based Practices in the Classroom

When creating a consent-based environment, it is useful to recognize that students arrive with very different levels of understanding of consent and stage intimacy, based on their age, maturity level, gender, education, sexual experience, religion and history with trauma. For example, students I interviewed defined consent as: "permission to do something," "allowing something to happen," "to agree to do something, especially something intimate," and "verbally expressing that's it's ok to do something."

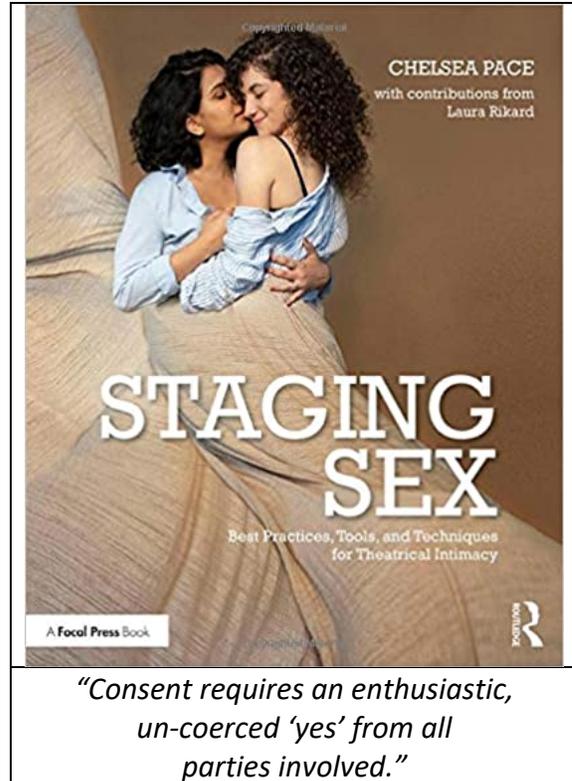
Answers to my query "What is stage intimacy?" varied even more, with students conjecturing that stage intimacy is: "action derived from a feeling of love," "physical contact," "physical attraction," "sharing a bond," and "physical expression of strong feelings." Many of the older students I interviewed had learned about consent and intimacy in health class, but younger students had not. One sixth grader even asked straight up, "What does consent mean?" For this reason, I would suggest starting your discussions about consent and stage intimacy by coming to a common understanding of what these terms mean in your particular educational setting.

Granting and Denying Consent

Once students gain an understanding of consent and when it is needed, help them define simple vocabulary to grant consent. With younger students, granting consent can be a simple, "Yes", "Sure" or "Of course." Older students may already have been taught, as one ninth-grader told me, "Yes means yes, no means no. 'Maybe' doesn't cut it. 'Eh' doesn't cut it. It has to be a verbal 'yes' before you can do anything." Or as Pace says, "Consent requires an enthusiastic, un-coerced 'yes' from all parties involved." (Source: *Staging Sex*)

Learning how to decline consent is as important if not more important than learning to grant consent. Words and phrases that Kleinrock uses with her third graders are: “No!”, “Stop it!”, “I don’t feel like it,” and “No, thank you.” (Source: *How My Third Graders and I Address Consent*, Kleinrock, *Teaching Tolerance*, Sep 27, 2018)

Students can practice granting or denying consent by role-playing. “We linger on the speaker’s delivery, body language and tone of voice,” Kleinrock says. “I have a student come up and act out a scene with me in front of the class: ‘Can I give you a hug?’ he asks. ‘Um, OK...’ I reply, looking and sounding as uncomfortable as I can muster. We repeat the scene, and this time, I respond by enthusiastically laughing, ‘No!’ My class giggles, and we discuss how the lack of consent is communicated differently in each scenario.” (Source: *How My Third Graders and I Address Consent*, Kleinrock, *Teaching Tolerance*, Sep 27, 2018)



What if one student wants to hug but another doesn’t? What if two students are in the middle of a hug and one changes their mind and wants to stop? “As a class, we agree that all of these examples fall under the person *not* giving consent, and we have to respect their boundaries,” Kleinrock says. “If we prioritize conversations around consent and boundaries at an early age, we lay the groundwork of developing our students’ moral compasses.” (Source: *How My Third Graders and I Address Consent*, Kleinrock, *Teaching Tolerance*, Sep 27, 2018)

When it comes to consent among young actors, a few respondents to The KISS Project survey pointed out situations in which their students granted consent during auditions/casting, and then later refused to participate in a staged kiss during rehearsal/performance. How should a theatre educator handle a situation when an actor initially consents to stage intimacy, then withdraws it as a production grows near?

It helps to remember that for all people, personal boundaries change as circumstances change. During the Covid-19 crisis, for example, being five feet from another person felt too close, when a few weeks before the pandemic, hugging was *de rigueur* among theatre colleagues. One respondent to The KISS Project survey recounted a story about having to replace a student actor who fell ill on opening night, and as a result, being faced with the prospect of kissing a student. (The scene was re-choreographed at the final hour.)

If you have a student who backs away from previously granted consent, it is your responsibility to honor the student's new boundary, even if it means re-choreographing a scene. Hopefully, though, creating a consent-based environment in the classroom as well as in rehearsal will nearly eliminate these kinds of last-minute adjustments.

Respectful Consent-Based Vocabulary

In addition to creating a vocabulary for granting and denying consent, a best practice for assuring actor safety in classrooms, rehearsal halls and performance spaces is to demand that everyone use respectful, desexualized language. Obviously, telling off-color jokes, swearing, bullying, sexual innuendo, and referring to body parts using slang terms all are unacceptable. That said, some students may not know correct anatomical terminology, so it becomes the theatre educators' responsibility to correct this oversight. The desexualized anatomy vocabulary list in the Appendix may be useful in this regard.

Theatre educators should always use positive, desexualized language in choreographing scenes and movement. Some of the terminology used by Pace and Rikard in their Theatrical Intimacy Education workshop includes the following:

- Opening/closing space between bodies
- Levels of touch (skin, muscle, bone or powder, paint, clay)
- Tempo/counts (use a specific number to set timing of movement)
- Shape (arc, angle, figure 8)
- Eye contact (seek or avoid)
- Destination (actual, intended)
- Breath/sound (deep, shallow, short, long, sharp, high, low)
- Gravity/weight
- Visible power shift

(See Staging Sex for more details on desexualized language.)

Consent-based vocabulary also should include a self-care cue for actors to use when they feel uncomfortable about a personal boundary, are having a strong reaction to an intimate situation, and/or simply need a moment to pause and process. The word that Pace and Rikard use is "button," as in "hit the pause button." As a cue to stop action, the word "button" is starting to become standard in intimacy choreography; however, any word that is not commonly used in the classroom or in scripted work is suitable. Students can be very creative choosing their own word, such as "eggplant," "aardvark" or "kangaroo." A self-care cue also can be accompanied by a physical gesture.

When an actor uses a self-care cue and/or gesture, everyone is expected to pause without judging the actor or demanding justification for the actor's decision to hit the pause button. Teachers or directors may respond by asking the actor, "What do you need?" as a way to offer ownership of the moment to the actor before all involved agree to move on.

Personal Boundary Exercise

I experienced first-hand how consent is taught in a theatre setting in the Theatrical Intimacy Education workshop. Instructors Pace and Rikard call this practice a Personal Boundary Exercise. Teaching personal boundary exercises gives students aural, verbal and kinesthetic experience with consent. Personal boundary exercises also allow students to define their own physical and emotional boundaries with a scene partner.

Theatrical Intimacy Education's Personal Boundary Exercise is as follows:

1. Choose a scene partner. Designate one as A and the other as B. A and B stand facing each other.
2. Partner A uses their hand on their own body to show Partner B all the places that Partner B has permission to touch. Partner A uses sliding, swiping or smoothing motions on both their front and back, from head to toe. Partner A clearly omits all areas that are off-limits to touch.
3. Partner A asks Partner B for permission to take their hands. With permission, Partner A uses Partner B's hands to re-trace the parts on Partner A's body that Partner B is allowed to touch. Should Partner B be uncomfortable with touching Partner A's body, Partner B may use the designated self-care cue to temporarily halt the process.
4. Partner B verbally mirrors back the places that Partner A has identified and granted permission to touch. Partner B uses anatomically accurate, desexualized language. For example, Partner B may say to Partner A: "I understand that you grant me permission to touch the top of your head, your hair, your neck and your shoulders, but you have a fence around your face and the front of your chest down to your abdomen." A fence refers to an area that is off-limits to touch.
5. Scene partners then switch roles and repeat the exercise.

Pace and Rikard assert that this exercise plays a valuable and regular role at the start of rehearsal, particularly when actors are unfamiliar with one another. See *Staging Sex* for more details on the Personal Boundary Exercise.

Director Melissa Firlit uses a variation of the physical boundary exercise with her students, who pair up and take turns asking one another, for example, "May I use my right hand to touch your forehead?" The respondent may consent or offer an alternative, such as, "No, but you may use your left elbow to touch my knee." "This makes both people further define their boundaries and keeps the relationship propelling forward," Firlit says.

You may find that regardless of specifics, some students (and/or teachers) may find physical touch exercises uncomfortable or too nuanced for younger actors. If that's the case, consider "fencing off" certain regions (such as the entire torso) from any kind of touch. You also may want to consider a "hands-free" option and opt for a drawing of the human body that you have students color in with areas of permission in green and fenced areas in red. The document

Desexualized Anatomical Vocabulary for Use with Young Actors included in the Appendix may be useful in this regard.

You are encouraged to develop your own methods for helping young actors define areas on their bodies to which they consent to touch, as well as areas that they deny consent to touch. Knowing an actor's "fences" helps you keep intimacy safe on stage while also allowing you to choreograph intimacy scenes in a timely and effective manner.

Consent-Based Practices in Production

The application of consent-based policies and practices in the classroom lays the foundation for a safe space in the rehearsal room, but the onus for keeping intimacy safe on stage for young actors remains on the theatre educator, who sets the tone for the overall production.

Choose Material Wisely

Start by choosing a play or musical that conforms with your standards, as well as those set by the institution and community in which you work. If the play you select calls for intimacy, consider how you might stage it with available student actors, especially if you are aware beforehand about their personal boundaries and comfort level with stage intimacy based on exercises you have done in the classroom. Try to anticipate your choreography for the intimacy scenes, your costume design, and what your aesthetic and artistic vision demands. The better you know your vision, plan your choreography and share that information with everyone involved in the production, the better you will be at creating a safe, consent-based environment that encourages everyone's best work.

Reinforce Consent Policy at Auditions

When preparing for auditions, review your policies for a consent-based classroom and use them to create a Student Behavior Contract that mirrors your classroom policy and uses consent-based language. Disseminate this contract along with your Parental Permission Forms to both students and parents. Make sure that everyone reads and signs the forms before confirming an audition time. If necessary, you may need to seek a language translator to ensure that both students and parents/guardians fully understand what you are asking. Consider both student contracts and permission forms when making casting decisions.

Reinforce Consent-Based Practices in Rehearsal

Begin your rehearsal process from a place of consent by incorporating a Personal Boundary Practice in your first rehearsal or shortly thereafter. It is also a good idea to use an early rehearsal to review your consent policy and behavior expectations in conformance with that policy with your entire cast and production crew.

When you do your script/table work, identify places in the text where you anticipate some form of stage intimacy, and share what those moments may look like. Let students know that you will be staging these scenes using consent-based practices, appropriate desexualized and respectful language, and that a previously agreed-upon self-care cue will be honored.

Schedule specific times in the rehearsal process for choreographing intimacy, and let your actors know those times as early as possible. Ensure that a third party such as a stage manager is present for the staging of intimacy scenes. Directors frequently opt for closed rehearsals when first staging intimacy choreography.

Productions with intimate scenes should have a no-cell phone policy in rehearsal and backstage for all members of the cast and crew.

Choreograph Intimacy Scenes

All theatrical intimacy, regardless of how simple or straight-forward, should be choreographed. Choreography should be notated in writing by actors as well as by stage management. Audio notation can be used; however, for actor privacy, no video of intimacy scenes should be recorded.

When staging intimacy, begin with the Personal Boundary Exercise to help actors get clear and comfortable with each other's personal boundaries. Remind them to use desexualized vocabulary, self-care cues, and other consent-based terminology that they have learned in the classroom. Remind them that they have the power to grant and deny consent at any time, even if that means changing their mind during the choreography process.

Once choreography is set, actors are expected to follow it. Intimacy choreography cannot be changed by an actor at any time. If an actor deviates from the choreography, Stage Management should remind them not to do so. An Intimacy Call prior to each performance is a good way to ensure that actors remember and intend to comply with choreographed intimacy; however, it is not necessary and up to you to decide when it should be used.

The Particular Challenge of Kissing with Young Actors

Of all the stage intimacy challenges faced by theatre educators working with young actors, perhaps the most challenging is the on-stage kiss. Ninety-three percent of surveyed respondents reported that they have adjusted choreography to accommodate an actor's discomfort with stage kissing. Respondents also noted the following specific experiences with stage kissing:

- "A young man had not had his first kiss and also had a crush on the girl playing opposite him."
- "Two students were not comfortable with kissing on the lips on stage, and after a conversation with them, I suggested if we made an adjustment to kissing on the

cheek. They were still not super comfortable at first but they both felt relieved to have that adjustment.”

- “We adjusted stage kissing in *Almost, Maine* so students would not have to lock lips. Mainly, the 10th grade boy was uncomfortable kissing a senior girl. We worked it out in rehearsals so that everyone was fine by performance time.”
- “I’ve had actors say they were not comfortable with a kiss while on stage, so I blocked a staged kiss where there is no kissing.”
- “Recently a young woman came to me and expressed discomfort about a stage kiss. I re-choreographed the dance to end in a dip and cut the kiss.”
- “My actors had never kissed anyone and did not want their first kiss to be on stage, so we blocked it in a way that she could cover them with a shawl and did a quick blackout. It was still a little awkward, but my actor’s comfort had to come first.”
- “An actor told me at the beginning of the rehearsal process that she wasn’t comfortable being kissed as called for in the script. After talking to her, we changed the moment to they were about to kiss but get interrupted.”
- “Actors who have never kissed someone before needing to learn how to kiss.”
- “I had a pair of actors who needed to kiss during a show but were best friends and were reluctant to do it. We ended up choreographing the kiss so that the lack of mouth contact was not visible to the audience. We basically masked it like a stage combat scene.”

Indeed, kissing seems to demarcate a particularly self-conscious boundary for young actors, some of whom have little or no experience in kissing a romantic partner. What best practices can help you choreograph a stage kiss with young actors?

First, use a placeholder in rehearsal until the kissing scene is fully choreographed. A placeholder may be a high five or a palm-to-palm touch. By using a placeholder, you can continue rehearsal and then stage the kiss at a different time.

When you are ready to choreograph the kiss, reinforce your consent policies and reassure your actors that they have the power to grant and deny consent at any time during the staging process.

One survey respondent wrote, “I usually send the actors to a private place to have them do a first kiss to overcome that awkwardness.” Pace and Rikard discourage this practice, and instead advise that adults (teachers/directors/choreographers) choreograph stage kisses in a closed rehearsal room with only essential people (director and stage management) present to notate the choreography. Student actors may run lines and practice other parts of the scene outside rehearsal, but kissing and other intimate moments should only be done on stage when there is at least one witness present. To protect actor privacy, no cell phones should be present, except for audio recording.

Use desexualized language, such as “Close the space between your torsos,” or “Close the space using a three count between your lips and his cheek using a whisper-like touch.”

When choreographing a lip-to-lip kiss, consider having the actors place their hands over their lips with the palms out, so that the kiss is actually palm-to-palm until final dress rehearsal. Using palm-to-palm kissing is more hygienic. Similarly, stage kisses with young actors should always be closed mouth kisses.

Be Mindful of Instructional Touch

Pace and Rikard advise against using instructional touch when choreographing intimacy. “Never touch. Never demonstrate,” Rikard says. “This is one of our key mottos.”

However, educators often find that the best way to teach students is to show them.

Instructional touch is an acceptable practice when:

- Adjusting an actor’s alignment/positioning,
- Putting hands on an actor’s body to bring awareness to physicality,
- Partnering for demonstrations,
- Correcting actor placement in space, and
- Adjusting Personal Protective Equipment.

If you want to touch a student for instructional purposes outside of an intimacy scene, Pace and Rikard suggest the following best practices:

Ask before you touch. Use open-ended questions that do not set up an expectation of consent or reinforce the unequal power relationship between teacher and student. For example, ask students questions that begin with: “How would you feel about ...?” and “Would you be open to...?” that encourage an open-ended response, rather than asking, “Is this okay?” to which a student who does not feel comfortable would have to respond in the negative. Describe a) what you will use to touch, b) where you will touch and c) for what purpose you will touch. Be as specific and anatomical in your language as possible. For example: “I would like to use my hands (a), to touch your stomach (b), to help guide your breath from the diaphragm (c).”

Prepare alternative instructional methods should a student deny you permission to touch their body. Alternatives to instructional touch include visualization, having the student use their own hands on their own body, using props, and demonstration on yourself accompanied by careful observation and notetaking by the student.

Create Separation Between Character and Actor

One of the biggest concerns expressed by both students and educators as part of The KISS Project is the confusion that sometimes arises between an students’ words and actions while in character versus their words and actions as actors. For example, educators report:

- “Honestly, the biggest factor seems to be if they are dating someone and the stage kiss is viewed as cheating by the non-theatre student.”
- “I can't even convince my romantic leads to hold hands at times. In some cases, it's people who have not dated before and feel awkward; in others, it's people in relationships with someone else and terrified to make their S.O. jealous.”

Students echoed these concerns. For example, one student noted, “When you’re getting into your character, you’re putting yourself into their shoes, and I do feel like it’s sometimes hard to separate yourself from them... We always apologize to each other when we’re (saying mean things), like ‘Sorry, it’s just a scene. I don’t really mean it.’”

To help students distinguish between their portrayal of a character and their identity as an actor, Pace and Rikard use a process called de-roling, in which students are encouraged to say the following lines out loud to their scene partners:

“As character _____, I said _____ and did _____, which reflected my feelings of _____.”

“As an actor, I said _____ and did _____, which reflects my feelings of _____.”

For example, “As the character of Aaron Burr in *Hamilton*, I said critical things and I shot Hamilton, which reflected my feelings of jealousy. As an actor, I said the lines and sung the lyrics written by Lin-Manuel Miranda and pretended to shoot the character of Hamilton as called for in the script, which reflects my commitment as an actor to the role I was playing.” See *Staging Sex* for more details on de-roling.

Another way to create a separation with one’s character is to participate in a closing ritual at the conclusion of each rehearsal and performance, or even at the end of a particularly challenging scene. The ritual can be small, silent or verbal (a high five, a handshake, an expression of thanks) as long as scene partners recognize it as a demarcation point between their on-stage work and real life.

Address Policy Violations

Despite your best efforts, there will be times when you have to address violations of your consent policy that you witness first-hand or are told about by another person involved in the classroom or production.

I asked respondents to The KISS Project Survey if they had a system in place to handle violations of personal boundaries in rehearsal and/or production. More than half do not. Of those who do, several admitted that their “system” relies on “informal checks and balances,” and puts the onus on students to ask for help and or intervention. As one educator wrote, “I would hope

that actors would feel that they could come to me, my assistant director, or stage manager with any issues, but we haven't been explicit about telling them to."

Not to point fingers, but Pace points out that, "The path to ethical, efficient, and effective theatrical intimacy is littered with good intentions. Many of the approaches people take have been created out of a genuine desire to be careful and considerate – sometimes, unfortunately, to the point of making a lot of things a lot more complicated, and maybe even worse." (Source: *Staging Sex*)

To avoid vague and possibly ineffective methods to address violations of your consent policy, it may be useful to adopt policies and procedures for your classroom, rehearsal and production that are in line with your school's overall disciplinary policies. How does your local school system handle academic discipline, athletic discipline and/or other violations of school policy? Likewise, how would a student report a violation of academic or athletic ethics, and can you institute a similar reporting system to create a safe path for students to come to you or to another appropriate person of authority if they have concerns regarding theatrical intimacy?

"At this age, some students think, 'Well adults just don't understand,'" says Lauren Schneider, a health educator for Somerville Public Schools. "I remind my students, though, that for teachers and parents, it's our job to keep them safe and that if they have an interaction they're uncomfortable with, with either a peer or an adult, they should tell an adult who they trust." (Source: *Consent at Every Age*, Tatter, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2018)

If you determine that a violation of your consent policy has occurred, take action according to that policy to issue a warning, call or notify parents/guardians, and/or remove the student from the class or production in order to ensure that, above all, you are keeping intimacy safe on stage for all of your students.



References and Resources

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Groups, Associations and Guidelines

Consent and Respect in Theatre (CART): <https://www.theatreconsent.com/>

Intimacy Directors International: <https://www.teamidi.org/>

Planned Parenthood Sexual Consent information:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/relationships/sexual-consent>

SAG-AFTRA Standards and Protocols for the Use of Intimacy Coordinators:

<https://www.sagaftra.org/files/Intimacy%20Coord%20S%26P%20w%20Bios%20012920.pdf>

Theatrical Intimacy Education (Pace and Rikard's workshop):

<https://www.theatricalintimacyed.com/>

The Guide to Stage Intimacy: <https://www.guidetostageintimacy.com/>



Appendices

KISS Project Survey Results

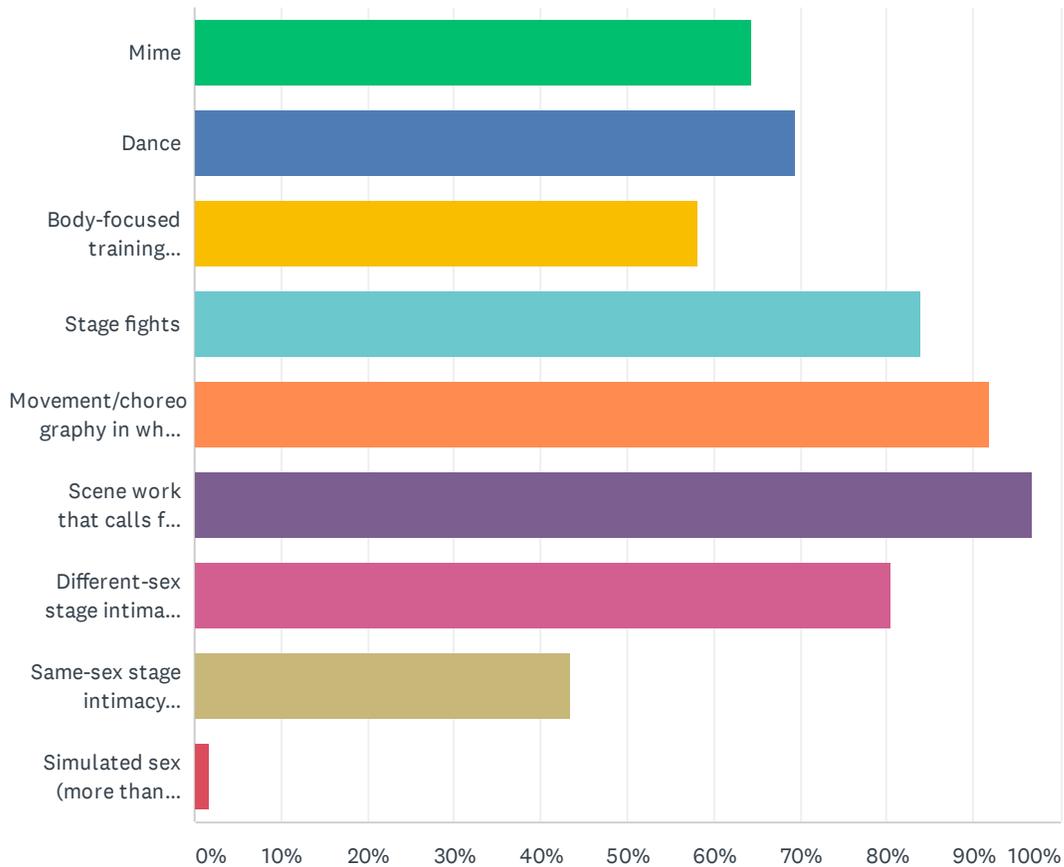
Desexualized Anatomy Vocabulary for Use with Young Actors

Intimacy Best Practices for the Costume Shop (UMBC Policy)

Sample Consent Forms

Q1 As a theatre educator, do you do any of the following activities with 18-and-under actors? (check all that apply)

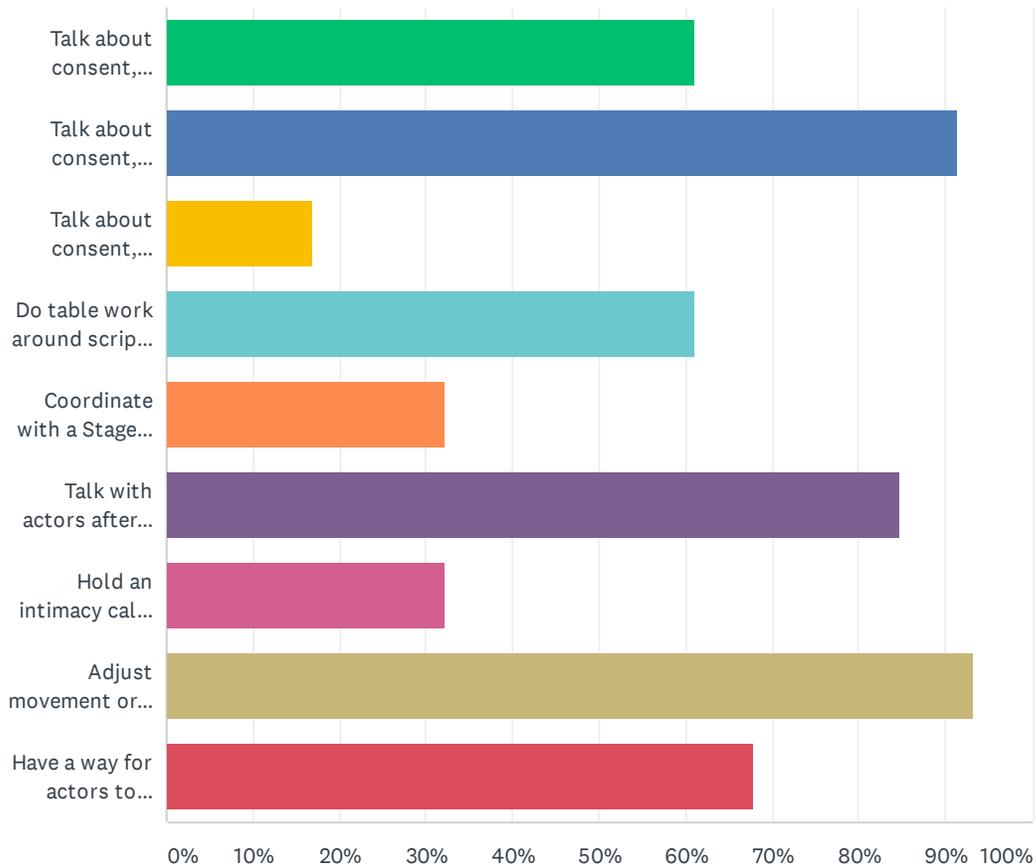
Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mime	64.52%	40
Dance	69.35%	43
Body-focused training (Viewpoints, Suzuki, Williamson, etc.)	58.06%	36
Stage fights	83.87%	52
Movement/choreography in which actors touch in any way	91.94%	57
Scene work that calls for holding hands or any kind of non-sexual touching	96.77%	60
Different-sex stage intimacy (kissing, hugging)	80.65%	50
Same-sex stage intimacy (kissing, hugging)	43.55%	27
Simulated sex (more than kissing or hugging)	1.61%	1
Total Respondents: 62		

Q2 Do you use any of the following practices in your theatre education for 18-and-under actors? (check all that apply)

Answered: 59 Skipped: 3



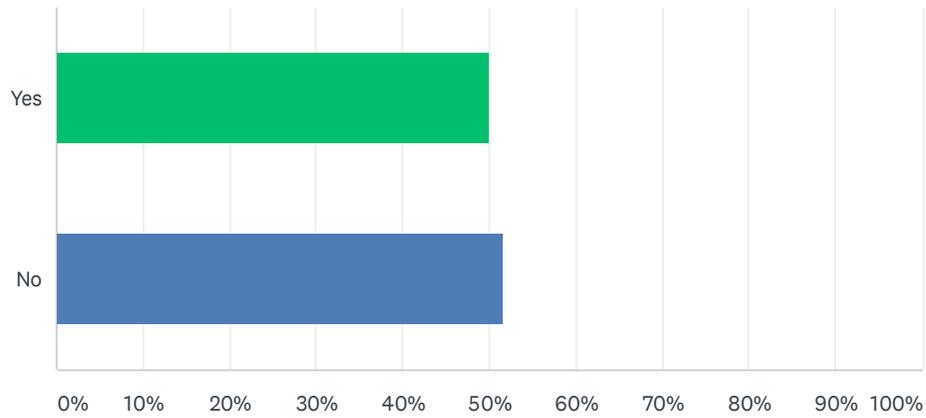
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Talk about consent, boundaries and stage intimacy in auditions	61.02%	36
Talk about consent, boundaries and stage intimacy during rehearsal	91.53%	54
Talk about consent, boundaries and stage intimacy with actors' family or guardian	16.95%	10
Do table work around scripted scenes that call for stage intimacy	61.02%	36
Coordinate with a Stage Manager to address issues of consent, boundaries and stage intimacy	32.20%	19
Talk with actors after rehearsal/performance about their comfort level with stage intimacy	84.75%	50
Hold an intimacy call as part of rehearsal or production	32.20%	19
Adjust movement or choreography to accommodate an actor's comfort level with stage intimacy	93.22%	55
Have a way for actors to address issues of consent, boundaries and stage intimacy in a confidential setting	67.80%	40
Total Respondents: 59		

The KISS Project: Keep Intimacy Safe on Stage

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	We spend a great deal of time on character development and objectives to underpin the intimacy in the early rehearsals.	1/11/2020 8:23 AM
2	There are questions on our audition form asking about kissing and playing homosexual characters on stage to ensure that actors who are not comfortable with physical intimacy are not offered parts that would make them uncomfortable.	1/9/2020 7:37 AM
3	During auditions, students have an opportunity to express what they are willing or not willing to do to in regards to physical contact. I stress the importance of being honest about their comfort level and never going beyond what they are comfortable with.	1/9/2020 6:56 AM

Q3 Have you ever faced a challenge dealing with 18-and-under actors with regard to stage intimacy?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	50.00%	31
No	51.61%	32
Total Respondents: 62		

The KISS Project: Keep Intimacy Safe on Stage

#	PLEASE DESCRIBE.	DATE
1	With my students we do not delve into stage intimacy - we deal a lot with physical acting (e.g.: mime, gesture work, tableau, etc.) but we do not deal with scenes or situations that deal with stage intimacy.	1/31/2020 5:11 PM
2	Principal complaining a high school play was inappropriate for elementary students in the audience. "Two Gents" musical.	1/30/2020 10:18 PM
3	Self-consciousness and discomfort on the part of the Teen Actors	1/20/2020 9:16 AM
4	Students parents were not comfortable with student playing a married person	1/18/2020 4:54 PM
5	Only back stage or online communication issues that came to light after the fact.	1/17/2020 12:52 PM
6	A Young man had not had his first kiss and also had a crush on the girl playing opposite him. The script called for a stage kiss between the two young characters and the young actor had a difficult time with the lead up to the projected rehearsals.	1/16/2020 11:31 AM
7	Two fifth grade students who understandably had a hesitancy to hug in their production of Twelfth Night. A hug was asked to be included by my boss who runs the program.	1/14/2020 12:11 PM
8	Well, I did not really "face it." I did worry about it. This was quite a few years ago. Today I believe I would address the concern. This was a case of a very gifted, beautiful girl dancer just under age 18 who was a student but cast in a company role with a young adult male partner. It was obvious that they became very taken with each other during the long rehearsal period of breath-taking music and choreography. As I don't believe there's a way to avoid this risk, I would not OK this casting of a minor in the future. Even though I had no evidence of improper behavior, I feel the risk is really too high, even if the parents would give their approval.	1/14/2020 10:36 AM
9	Two students were not comfortable with kissing on the lips on stage and after a conversation with them I suggested if we made an adjustment to kissing on the cheek. They were still not super comfortable at first but they both felt relieved to have that adjustment.	1/14/2020 8:30 AM
10	Some high school students have not experienced a romantic kiss, as opposed to a kiss with a family or a friend, before that stage kiss. They don't want to admit that. I handle kisses and hugs in the same way I handle stage combat, by dividing it into separate movements, working in slow motion. In the case of a kiss, I have them move progressively from ending an inch from the other person, to the cheek, to the corner of the mouth, to actually kissing during tech week. Closed mouth.	1/11/2020 8:23 AM
11	Honestly the biggest factor seems to be if they are dating someone and the stage kiss is viewed as cheating by the non theatre student.	1/10/2020 9:17 AM
12	I was directing a high school production of "The Sound of Music" when the actor playing Captain Von Trapp became sick a week before the show with a long term illness. There were no understudies available, so I took on the role, which meant I had to kiss Maria (a high school student) in a certain part of the show. After talking it over with the actors (the part was double-casted), we decided the best thing to do was for me to kiss her hand instead. The audience seemed to accept without any problem. In another play, two students were supposed to kiss and they were both uncomfortable with the idea of kissing each other on the lips. I talked to them about doing a "stage kiss", which involves the male student taking the female student in his arms and turning her away from the audience as he leaned in to "kiss" her; he then kissed her on the cheek, and that seemed to work for both of them.	1/9/2020 5:26 PM
13	Some actors, for religious reasons, will not kiss another actor on stage.	1/9/2020 11:29 AM
14	Before putting some of the practices I now use into effect, i had a students who was clearly uncomfortable with the kissing in the scene we were doing. My main approach at that time was to try to normalize/neutralize the issue -- treat it like combat choreography, but she never really seemed comfortable with it. If I were directing the production today, I would treat it differently. Reading about approaches to intimacy directing has been really helpful.	1/9/2020 9:13 AM
15	We adjusted stage kissing in Almost, Maine so students would not have to lock lips. Mainly, the 10th grade boy was uncomfortable kissing a senior girl. We worked it out in rehearsals so that everyone was fine by performance time.	1/9/2020 9:10 AM
16	There were a few times when the actors experienced their first kisses on stage. They were okay with doing it, but there was still awkwardness. I usually send the actors to a private place	1/9/2020 8:35 AM

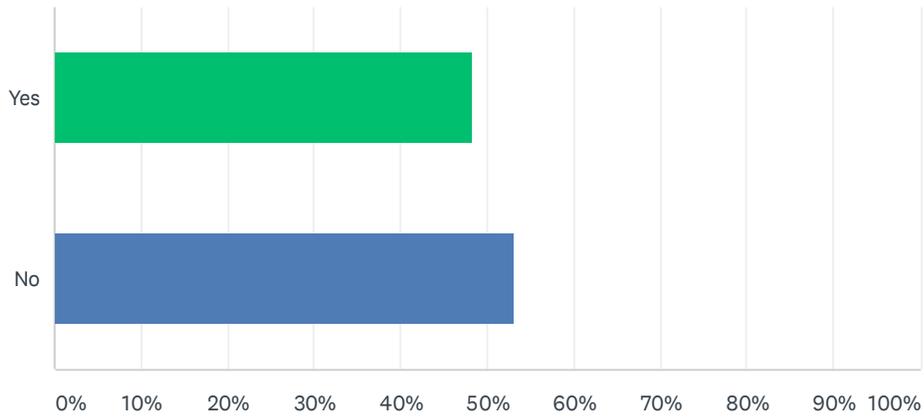
The KISS Project: Keep Intimacy Safe on Stage

to have them do a first kiss to overcome that awkwardness. But I never force the issue and the kiss happens only when both students are ready. If a student really doesn't want to have an on-stage kiss, we work on staging that makes them feel more comfortable but still honors the text. When kisses do happen - with consent from both actors - the kiss is rehearsed without the rest of the cast present. This takes pressure off of the actors and allows them to be more in touch with their characters.

17	I've had actors say they were not comfortable with a kiss while on stage, so I block a staged kiss where there is no kissing.	1/9/2020 8:12 AM
18	Recently a young woman came to me and expressed discomfort about a stage kiss. I re-choreographed the dance to end in a dip and cut the kiss.	1/9/2020 7:53 AM
19	My actors had never kissed anyone and did not want their first kiss to be onstage, so we blocked it in a way that she could cover them with a shawl and did a quick blackout. It was still a little awkward, but my actor's comfort had to come first.	1/9/2020 7:29 AM
20	It is always a challenge to balance the actors' comfort levels, the power of peer pressure ("everyone else is ok with kissing, so I should be too") and the storytelling requirements of the piece. I have gotten better at gauging these things as time goes on and better at establishing procedures. My limited experience with intimacy training as well as my interest in the importance of consent and establishing boundaries in all aspects of theatre has informed the way I work with young actors.	1/9/2020 7:20 AM
21	I have had some students really struggle with hugging, kissing, and touching other actors. We try to adapt the movement to support the comfort of the actors involved.	1/9/2020 6:56 AM
22	It wasn't really a problem, but an actor told me at the beginning of the rehearsal process that she wasn't comfortable being kissed as called for in the script. After talking to her, we changed the moment to they were about to kiss but get interrupted.	1/9/2020 6:39 AM
23	Actors who have never kissed someone before needing to learn how to kiss.	1/9/2020 6:18 AM
24	I make it very aware if there is going to be intimacy in a role before auditions. I then also work with the actors during rehearsal to make sure everyone is continuing to be comfortable.	1/9/2020 5:56 AM
25	Initial consent, after consent sought in the audition process and early rehearsals. Withdrawn consent as the production drew near.	1/9/2020 5:38 AM
26	An actor who agreed he was comfortable with a kiss during auditions/casting, and then was not and refused to participate during rehearsals/performance. 2nd: actors first kiss having to be a stage kiss.	1/9/2020 5:24 AM
27	I had a pair of actors who needed to kiss during a show, but were best friends and were reluctant to do it. We ended up choreographing the kiss so that the lack of mouth contact was not visible to the audience. We basically masked it like a stage combat scene.	1/9/2020 4:59 AM
28	HS actors who didn't want their "first kiss" to be with a scene partner. Parents who don't approve of "anything that goes against my faith" (Daughter, a senior, played "Glory" in scene 1 of Almost, Maine) - but signed off on the audition form that asked about kissing on stage... not sure what parent meant, but during tech week - a question was raised about the on-stage kiss. (On the night that her father attended, they didn't kiss... but on the other nights, they did.) The actor who played "West" is her boyfriend in real-life, and the kiss was innocently done, and discussed at every stage of rehearsal. Performing that scene at the state conference this past weekend, they REALLY kissed - and embraced - perhaps because it was their last time doing the scene ever, but also because her parents were not in attendance?	1/9/2020 4:57 AM
29	Female student in a male role was to "goose" a female student in a female role for humor. Male role refused to do it.	1/9/2020 12:21 AM
30	Girl in final week of rehearsal refused to do the spanking scene in kiss me Kate	1/7/2020 6:54 PM
31	First musical I directed was 13 where two boys had to kiss and one was uncomfortable despite our discussing at auditions. We worked through it, staged it as a cheek kiss instead.	1/7/2020 6:36 PM

Q4 Do you have a system in place for addressing 18-and-under actors' concerns about violation of personal boundaries in rehearsal or production?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	48.39%	30
No	53.23%	33
Total Respondents: 62		

The KISS Project: Keep Intimacy Safe on Stage

#	PLEASE DESCRIBE.	DATE
1	At the beginning of each semester when going over systems and routines for our classroom/studio, we always talk about respecting boundaries, and appropriate touch (e.g.: knee to knee when sitting next to another actor - I teach in an elementary school setting, personal space when warming up and during independent practice time, etc.)	1/31/2020 5:11 PM
2	Discussing everything we need to do beforehand. No touching without consent.	1/30/2020 10:18 PM
3	Private conference with me	1/18/2020 4:54 PM
4	We always ask first. We make the option to answer in confidence. I believe there are always alternatives to on stage intimacy for young people.	1/16/2020 12:36 PM
5	There are informal checks and balances in place with production leaders but not for the whole production company	1/16/2020 10:54 AM
6	1- Communicate with SM: If done in person, a written response is required for clear understanding. I have a document entitled PB & J (Personal Boundaries and Jurisdiction) which I co-authored with our HR department to safely outline questions that the concerned party can freely answer and return. 2- SM, Director and HR meet to discuss document and ascertain if additional follow-up is needed. 3- Actionable items that directly address the issue are outlined and shared with the concerned party. 4- Once mutually agreed upon, action items are implemented. ***If the situation involves another minor, additional meetings are held separately with SM, Director and HR and the minor to discuss the situation. That person signs the PB & J to indicate understanding of the concerns brought forth and acknowledging changes in rehearsal or production behavior that must be made. We consider this warning 1. Warning 2, should it escalate to this level, includes a meeting with the minor and their legal guardians, HR, and Director of the production.	1/14/2020 10:13 AM
7	1. Documentation of the incident. 2. Have a conversation with the violator and their legal guardians regarding the incident. 3. Have a conversation with the victim and their legal guardians and ask what's best for them moving forward and follow up with all parties including the theatre to discuss correct legal measures. 4. If the incident warrant having the police involve, contacting the police and reporting what happened.	1/14/2020 10:09 AM
8	I set ground rules at the top of class or rehearsals that become our agreement of collaboration. I encourage students throughout the rehearsal and classroom process to have discussion and dialogue as we work through scenes together. I feel that it is important to create a environment where we can all discuss and ask questions which in return help students speak up when something feel uncomfortable or unsafe.	1/14/2020 8:30 AM
9	My "system" begins by discussing personal boundaries in all theatre classes, so students know where I stand. In rehearsal, I talk about the place where I would like a hug, need a kiss, etc., and discuss it with the actors. If a student seems uncomfortable, I discuss the issue with them privately and we find a compromise. Again, I never start with full contact in the early rehearsal.	1/11/2020 8:23 AM
10	We meet with the actors and discuss. We try to create an open atmosphere where people feel comfortable expressing their concerns. We try to communicate the importance of consent. This can happen before rehearsals and/or during rehearsals.	1/9/2020 11:29 AM
11	Students can indicate on their audition forms if they don't want to be considered for a role the requires intimate contact. We have closed rehearsals for intimate scenes. When we work on scenes involving intimate or aggressive contact, I ask for consent from the individual actors beforehand.	1/9/2020 10:39 AM
12	I wouldn't say it is a system. I would hope that actors would feel that they could come to me, my assistant director, or stage manager with any issues, but we haven't been explicit about telling them to.	1/9/2020 9:13 AM
13	I wouldn't call it a system. I have a discussion with students about respect in classes and rehearsals.	1/9/2020 9:10 AM
14	Quite simply, if a student's boundaries are violated, the student perpetrator is written up and discussions happen with administrators and counseling staff.	1/9/2020 8:35 AM
15	Students tell me or another trusted adult and then I follow school protocols.	1/9/2020 8:12 AM
16	Each student meets with me at the beginning of the rehearsal process to go over given	1/9/2020 7:53 AM

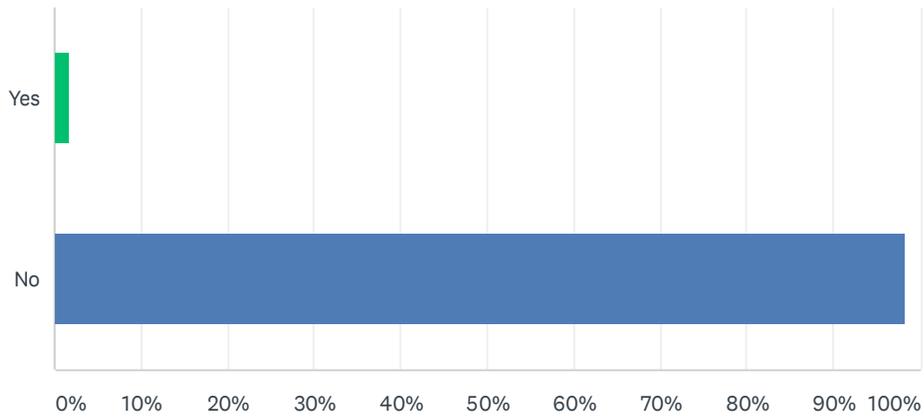
The KISS Project: Keep Intimacy Safe on Stage

circumstances, at this point we also talk about the requirements of the role and whether any aspect is of concern. Often the student will talk about being concerned that the person they are romantically involved with on stage will think they are romantically interested off stage and much less about a stage kiss. I also go over what a stage kiss is with the entire company.

17	Students are encouraged to come speak to me privately for any concerns. I have a very open and non-judgmental department which has fostered a sense of comfort and safety and allow for open conversations.	1/9/2020 7:37 AM
18	They know they can come to me or message me privately about any concerns.	1/9/2020 7:29 AM
19	Not a system yet, but I do think actors know they can come to me if they have concerns and can trust me to respect their boundaries and look out for them in rehearsal.	1/9/2020 7:20 AM
20	Immediate discussion with the director.	1/9/2020 7:02 AM
21	I try to maintain strong relationships with the students, so they know to come talk to me if something isn't right, or feels off. Sometimes another actor will come to me if a newer student is uncomfortable. I keep an open door and respond promptly if there are any issues.	1/9/2020 6:56 AM
22	Not a system, but I do ask.	1/9/2020 6:39 AM
23	Students can notify the stage manager, one of the backstage adult workers or myself. If a student feel uncomfortable we discuss why and what can be done to make them feel comfortable. If it warrants it, we will also have parents and or/administration involved. I always err on the side of caution.	1/9/2020 5:56 AM
24	Nothing formal, just open communication.	1/9/2020 5:38 AM
25	Nothing in writing - but we do have open conversations with our students every step along the way. And we are a very conservative community, so we can only get approval to do shows that are deemed appropriate by administration (which reduces the number of instances, and the type of instances required by a script)	1/9/2020 4:57 AM
26	We usually find a way to work around the situation that keeps everyone comfortable yet true to the moment.	1/9/2020 4:09 AM
27	I encourage actors to advocate for themselves by talking to a director, stage manager, or trusted adult.	1/9/2020 3:40 AM
28	We are just very careful and chose shows that do not require intimacy as a plot device.	1/7/2020 6:54 PM

Q5 Have you ever used a dedicated intimacy director for 18-and-under theatre education programming?

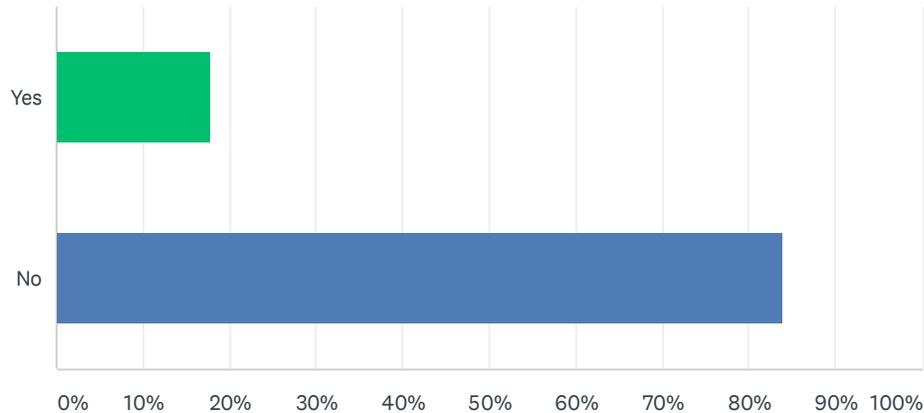
Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	1.61%	1
No	98.39%	61
Total Respondents: 62		

Q6 Have you had any education or training in stage intimacy?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 0

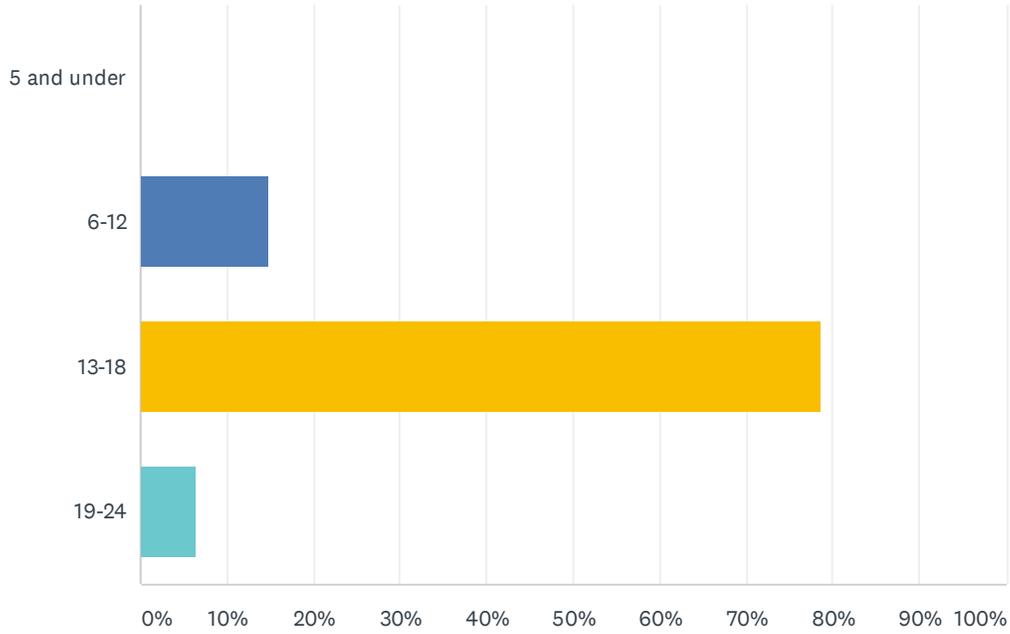


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	17.74% 11
No	83.87% 52
Total Respondents: 62	

#	PLEASE SHARE TECHNIQUES YOU FIND MOST EFFECTIVE.	DATE
1	the smallest amount. I attended a workshop at the Boil in LA as part of an SAFD workshop weekend.	1/31/2020 2:05 PM
2	Asking each actor who is to be involved with the stage intimacy what their level of comfort is - and basing the stage directions off of that. I have not staged stage kisses with under-18 actors, only hugs with consent.	1/14/2020 12:11 PM
3	Most of my training on intimacy comes from working in shows with intimacy directors and from the social and communications classes I took in college.	1/14/2020 10:09 AM
4	I have created systems for myself based on the experiences I had through my education and career in order to make sure that my students don't have a negative experience as I did. I also take into consideration working with students of color or other cultural backgrounds that might have different levels of sensitivity when it comes to intimacy. Asking for permission and keeping an open dialogue is important.	1/14/2020 8:30 AM
5	I attended one workshop at a state Thespian Festival years ago.	1/11/2020 8:23 AM
6	Making it clear from the beginning and throughout that everything is a choice, and that there are a wide range of choices that we can make. Asking the actors to make suggestions as to what movements and contact they think would work. Going step by step, slowly, continually checking in -- is this ok? how do you feel about this?	1/9/2020 9:13 AM
7	but I am a former actor and I never ask my students to go beyond their comfort levels.	1/9/2020 8:35 AM
8	I did have an intimacy coordinator teach a hand-to-hand combat workshop and she did an exercise about consent that I sometimes do with my voice and speech students. I plan on using this in rehearsal more often now.	1/9/2020 7:20 AM
9	I would love to attend a workshop based on intimacy training.	1/9/2020 5:38 AM
10	Lots of clear communication, modeling how to express concerns.	1/2/2020 2:40 PM

Q7 What age group do you primarily work with?

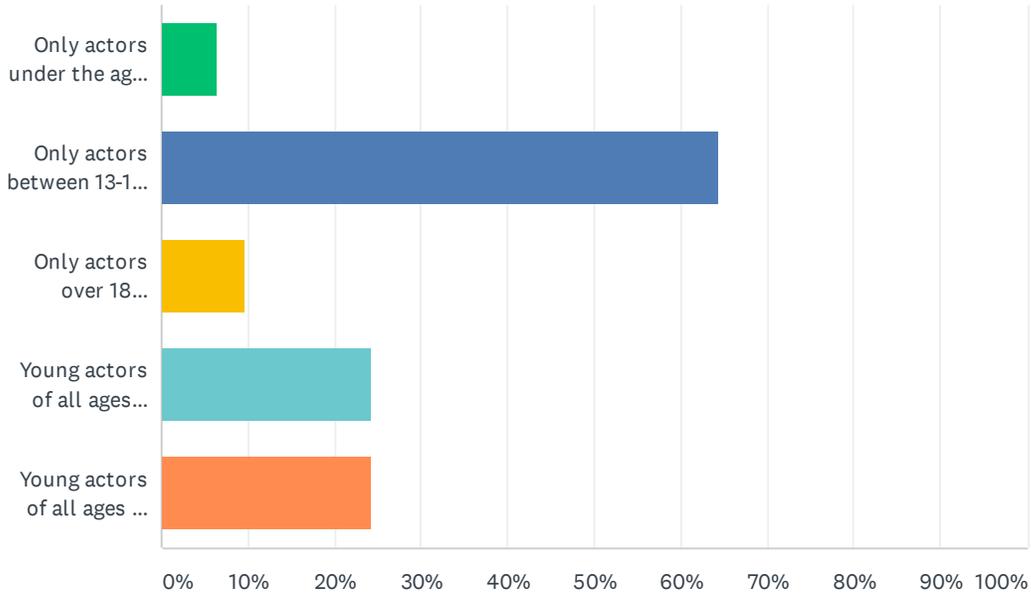
Answered: 61 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
5 and under	0.00%	0
6-12	14.75%	9
13-18	78.69%	48
19-24	6.56%	4
TOTAL		61

Q8 Do your productions cast:

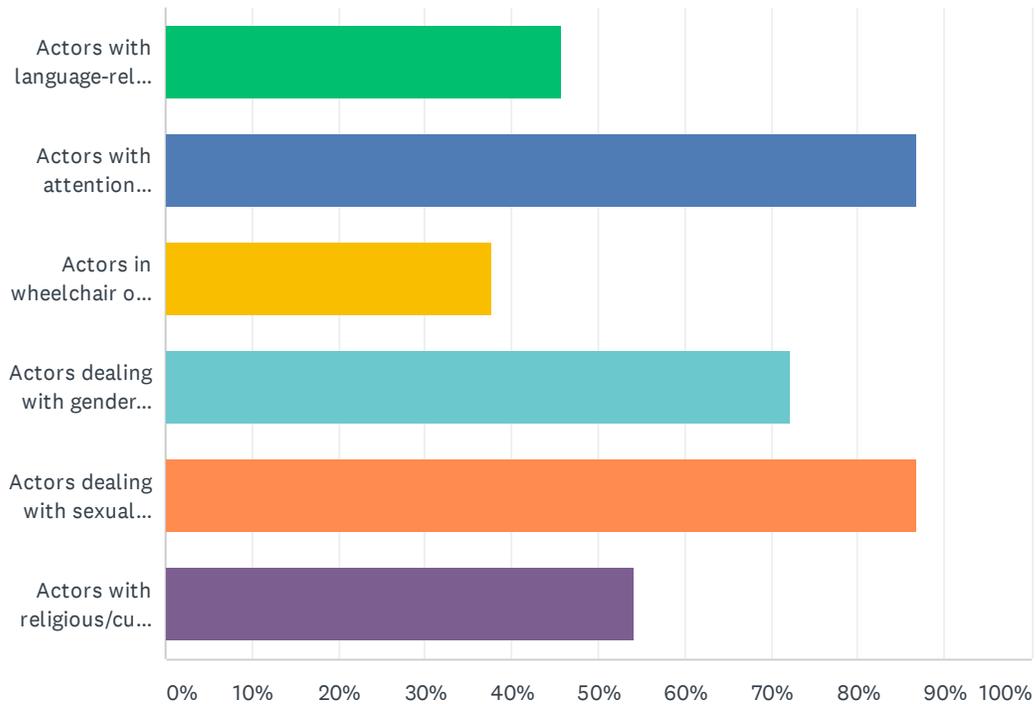
Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Only actors under the age of 12 (elementary school)	6.45%	4
Only actors between 13-18 (middle and high school)	64.52%	40
Only actors over 18 (college students)	9.68%	6
Young actors of all ages under 18, but no adults	24.19%	15
Young actors of all ages and adults	24.19%	15
Total Respondents: 62		

Q9 Do any of your young actors have special needs or circumstances described below? (check all that apply)

Answered: 61 Skipped: 1

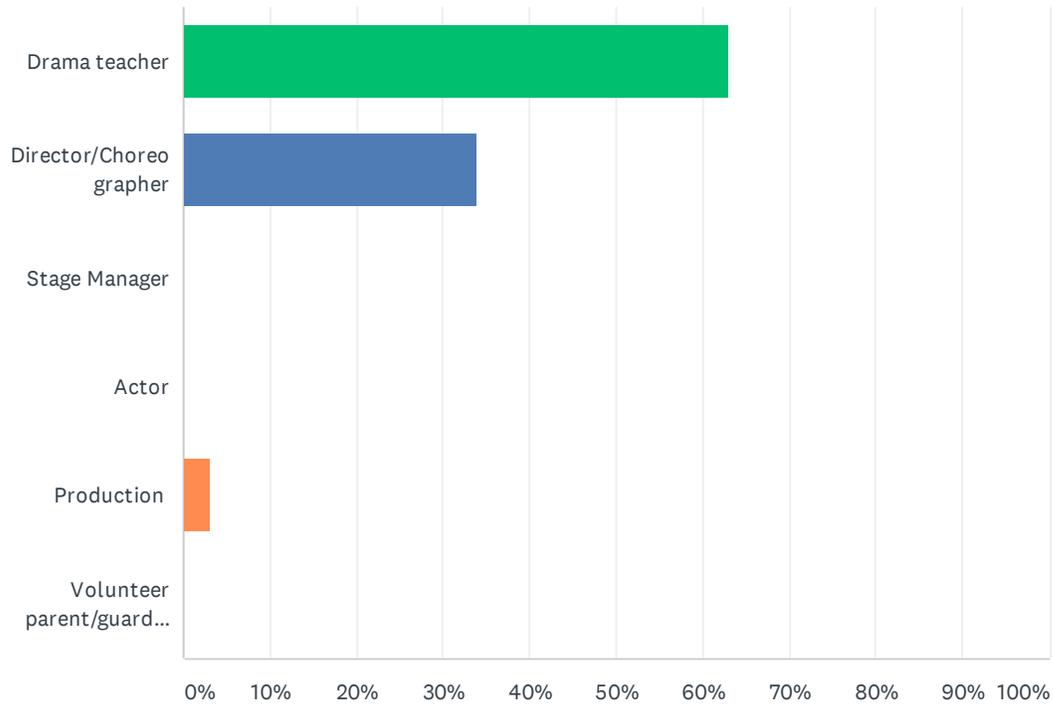


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Actors with language-related communication challenges	45.90%	28
Actors with attention deficits or behavior challenges	86.89%	53
Actors in wheelchair or with other physical challenges	37.70%	23
Actors dealing with gender transition	72.13%	44
Actors dealing with sexual identity issues	86.89%	53
Actors with religious/cultural preference preventing them from touching a person of the opposite sex	54.10%	33
Total Respondents: 61		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	I have worked with multiple girls who have been sexually abused as children or date-raped as teens. These young women initially react to onstage intimacy by not wanting to touch as all or by being overtly sexual.	1/11/2020 8:23 AM
2	I have, in the past, worked with many actors in evangelical religious sects.	1/9/2020 5:38 AM

Q10 What is your primary role in working with young actors?

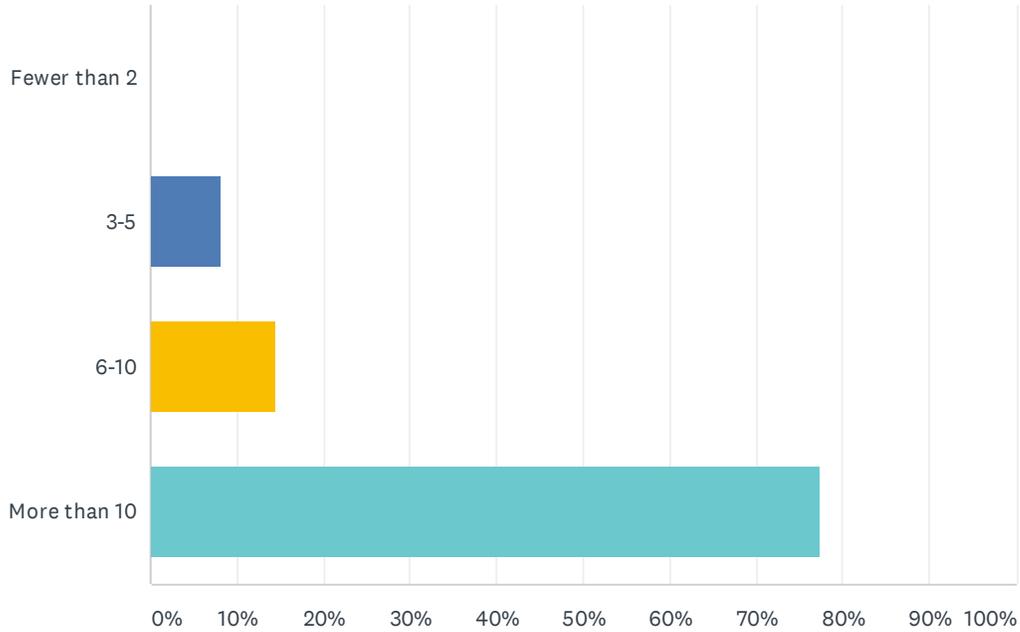
Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Drama teacher	62.90%	39
Director/Choreographer	33.87%	21
Stage Manager	0.00%	0
Actor	0.00%	0
Production	3.23%	2
Volunteer parent/guardian/community member	0.00%	0
TOTAL		62

Q11 How many years have you worked with young actors?

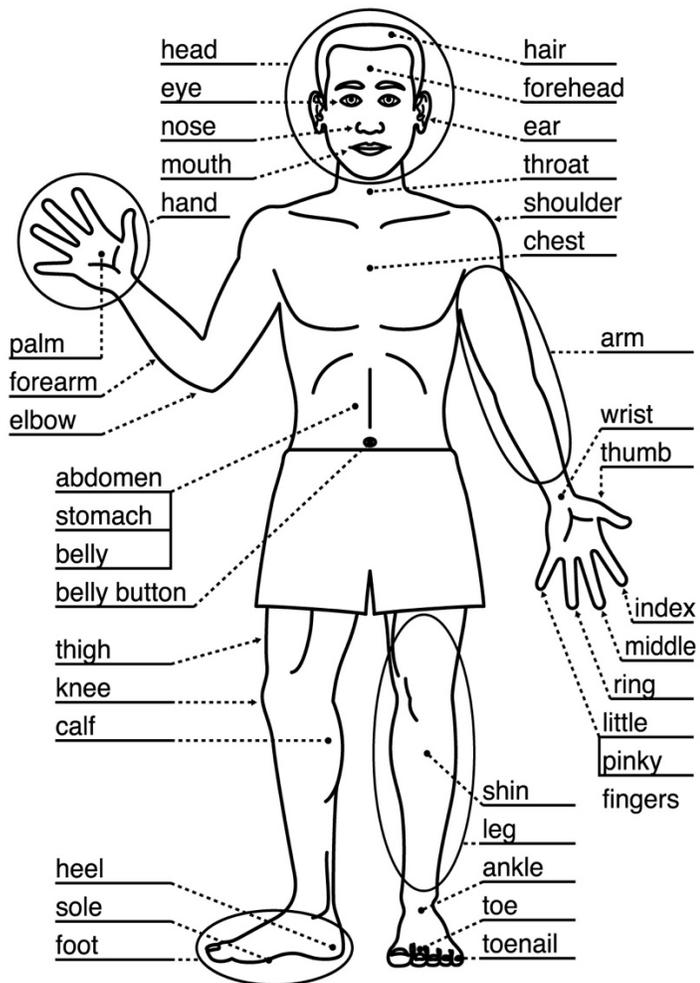
Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Fewer than 2	0.00% 0
3-5	8.06% 5
6-10	14.52% 9
More than 10	77.42% 48
TOTAL	62

Desexualized Anatomical Vocabulary for Use with Young Actors

Scalp
 Head (front, back)
 Forehead
 Ears
 Eyes
 Nose
 Mouth
 Cheeks
 Jaw
 Chin
 Neck (front, back)
 Collarbone or clavicle
 Sternum
 Thorax
 Ribcage
 Chest
 Shoulders
 Upper arms
 Elbows
 Lower arms
 Wrists
 Hands
 Palms
 Fingers
 Abdomen
 Groin
 Buttock
 Upper back
 Lower back
 Waist
 Hips
 Upper thigh (interior, exterior)
 Knee
 Lower leg
 Ankle
 Foot



(Illustration sourced from abcteach.com)

Intimacy Best Practices for the Costume Shop

When an actor is cast in a department production, they should come to their scheduled fitting prepared to participate in the fitting process at that time.

Fittings involve:

- Removal of street clothes down to undergarments (Actors are responsible for wearing opaque, neutral-tone, full-coverage undergarments to all fittings)
- The fitting of garments close to the body
- Physical touch to adjust fit to designer specification
- Interaction, including physical touch, by various personnel including the draper, designer, and assistant designer

Students and Shop Personnel have the following tools in a fitting:

- Saying “Button”
- Request two-minute break
- Request a reduction in the number of people in the room
- Request that the door be open or closed
- Request to be fitted in an open or closed area of the shop
- Request help or additional privacy for dressing or undressing
- Request that the appropriate faculty or staff member makes the adjustments, rather than a student designer or draper.
- Ask questions for clarification

The measuring process for costume fittings requires accuracy. This process involves physical contact with the measuring tape and minimal touch from the measurer. Students and Shop Personnel have the same tools available during measurements as above.

(Source: University of Maryland-Baltimore County Theatre Dept.)

MIAMI CHILDREN'S THEATRE PARENTAL CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM FOR "HEATHERS, THE MUSICAL"

*A participant under the age of 18 must have parental consent to participate in Miami Children's Theatre production of "Heathers, the Musical". This form must be completed, signed and returned to a member of Miami Children's Theatre **at the time of the audition.***

Name of Child: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

Name of Parent(s) /Guardian(s): _____

Address: _____

Home Tel.: _____ **Cellular:** _____

E-mail: _____

I/we am/are the Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) of the minor child named above and I/we have the legal authority to execute this Parental Consent and Release Form on behalf of the child.

CONSENT and RELEASE (Please read carefully and initial next to each point)

- _____ 1. I understand that Miami Children's Theatre is producing the stage musical "Heathers, the Musical";
- _____ 2. I understand that "Heathers, the Musical" is about a fictional high school in 1980's America where the school population is subjected to extreme bullying by cliques of popular mean girls and jocks. I understand that the show goes to extremes portraying the cruelty of the popular crowd and the rebellion against it. I understand that the show portrays the murder of the popular kids by poisoning and shooting and makes these murders out to be suicides.
- _____ 3. I understand that there is gunplay by the main characters and one character attempts to destroy the school and all the students using bombs.
- _____ 4. I understand that this show is a dark comedy and includes depictions of bullying, consumption of alcohol and drugs, violence, gun play, individual and mass murder, suicide, school violence, homosexuality and simulated sex acts.
- _____ 5. I understand that the language in the production is frequently crude, suggestive and/or obscene.
- _____ 6. I understand that there are highly suggestive and physical "sex scenes" between the characters of Veronica and JD.

Having been fully appraised of the foregoing, I hereby release, discharge and/or otherwise indemnify Miami Children's Theatre and all if its officers, directors, employees, agents, volunteers, sponsors, associated personnel and affiliated organizations, including the owners of the facilities in which "Heathers, the Musical" will take place, against any claim by or on behalf of my child as a result of my child's participation in "Heathers, the Musical".

Having carefully read all information contained on this form and having been fully appraised of the foregoing, I hereby consent to my child _____ appearing and taking part in the Miami Children's Theatre production of "Heathers, the Musical".

Exceptions:

I DO NOT give permission for my child to be cast in the following role(s):

(Please list the character names)

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Cast/Crew Student Contract

Thoroughly Modern Millie

1. Attendance:
 - a. Be on time and prepared for all scheduled rehearsals, work calls, and performances.
 - b. Attendance to all performances is MANDATORY.
 - c. Attend strike.
 - d. Attend calls for headshots, poster drops, and other production related activities in a timely fashion.
 - e. Parents must notify the stage manager by email if their student has a conflict with a rehearsal. This includes sicknesses.
 - f. Repeated unexcused absences from rehearsals may result in recasting or dismissal from the cast.
 - g. Forego all social activities that interfere with rehearsals or work calls.

2. Rehearsals:
 - a. Check the callboard daily to see the rehearsal schedule posted for that day (this is important concerning last minute schedule changes) and sign in.
 - b. Be prepared and ready to start at the scheduled time rehearsal starts.
 - c. Do not touch anything that is not yours. Please respect others and their property.
 - d. Come prepared with what you need (i.e. script, score, writing utensil, dance clothes/shoes, etc.).
 - e. Be quiet! Unless you have a line or a question, you should not be talking during rehearsal. This only wastes time and disrupts rehearsal.
 - f. The stage manager is the only person permitted to prompt an actor for lines. Actors shouldn't prompt other actors, it's unprofessional. If you need to be prompted, call "line" in character. Do not apologize or say anything in addition to "line," it's unnecessary.
 - g. Be memorized and off book by JANUARY 31ST. NO EXCEPTIONS.
 - h. Please have good personal hygiene. Rehearsals can be hot, intense, and happen in close proximity. Please brush your teeth, bathe, and wear deodorant for the benefit of everyone.
 - i. Silence all cell phones and other electronics during rehearsal. You can do homework or other quiet activity if you are not in a specific scene and the director says it's okay.

3. Food and Drink
 - a. No food or drink (other than water) is allowed in the main theatre (this includes the house, lobby, backstage area, downstairs, and upstairs). You may go to the music hallway to eat and drink.
 - b. You are encouraged to have capped bottle water during rehearsal.

- c. No food is allowed during rehearsal. You will be given multiple breaks for snacks and bathroom every rehearsal.
- d. Please clean up after yourselves.

4. Behavior and Conduct

- a. Please practice tolerance, patience, kindness, and respect for others at all times.
- b. Treat all cast, crew, pit, and directorial staff with respect and consideration.
- c. Keep the theatre clean! Clean up after yourself after rehearsal, clean up your work area, and don't leave things behind.
- d. No smoking is allowed in the theatre or rehearsal areas.
- e. Under no circumstance may you be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during any rehearsal or performance. Doing so will result in your removal from the production.
- f. Do not alter lines, lights, properties, settings, costumes, or any phase of the production without consultation with and permission from the crew head, the director, and/or stage manager.
- g. Never engage in caustic criticism of another artist's work.
- h. Inspire the public to respect you and your craft through graciousness in accepting both praise and constructive criticism.
- i. Direct your efforts in such a manner that when you leave the theatre, it will stand as a greater institution for you having been there.

5. Costumes and Props

- a. You are not the costume designer. Do not give any feedback on costumes outside of fit or comfort issues. Acceptable: "My shoes are too tight." Unacceptable: "My character wouldn't wear these."
- b. No eating or drinking (aside from water) in costume at any time!
- c. Treat your costumer with the professional respect that she/he deserves.
- d. DO NOT touch props or costumes not assigned to you.
- e. Treat your costumes and props with respect as they can be very expensive and are the only ones you have.
- f. Be sure to hang up all costume pieces and return all props immediately after use. If your costume/prop goes missing it is then your responsibility to find and/or replace it.

6. Injuries

- a. Safety is our first priority. If you encounter an unsafe situation, notify the stage manager immediately and steps will be taken to fix the issue before continuing.
- b. If an injury occurs you must let the stage manager know IMMEDIATELY!
- c. Make sure you know the safety rules and protocol of your crew and you follow them at all times.

7. Performances

- a. Arrive on time at your call time. Call the stage manager if you will be late or have an emergency.
- b. Listen and respond to your stage manager at all times and respect the calls for half hour, five minutes, and places.
- c. All cast and crew must be quiet during performances (from half hour call to curtain call – including intermission). This includes backstage, basement, upstairs, dressing rooms, etc.
- d. Play your part in every performance to the best of your ability, regardless of how small your role or large your personal problems.
- e. Clean up after every performance (i.e. hang up your costume, clean up work area, etc.)
- f. Remember that our aim is to create illusion; therefore, you will not destroy that illusion by appearing in costume and /or make-up off stage or outside the theatre.

Cast and Crew Student Contract:

1. I signify that I have read and understand all of the policies and expectations presented in this contract.
2. I understand that the my fellow cast and crew members will abide by the policies and expectations presented in this contract and as an actor/crew member I reserve the right to hold them to such.
3. I understand my expectations as an actor/crew member and understand that any failure to meet those expectations may result in my dismissal from the production.
4. I understand that in order to participate in this production I am required to hand in a signed copy of this form to the stage manager, director, or assistant director by Friday, January 17th.

Student Signature

Date

Printed Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Printed Name: _____