
Bristol School of Acting

Intimacy in Performance Policy and Procedure

Adopted September 2022

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Review Date: 2 years

Introduction

1. The intrinsic nature of teaching and training in drama necessitates addressing issues of physical intimacy as part of rehearsal and performance. In this context, the safety and wellbeing of all students is paramount. It is therefore vital that students feel assured that their bodily autonomy, physical safety, right of consent and mental wellbeing are protected in relation to all physical work. This document aims to help provide that assurance by setting out the BSA protocols for physical intimacy in performance and associated rehearsals. It forms part of the Respect at BSA framework and articulates with the other resources within that, as well as being augmented by the clear guidance provided by staff and open discussions with students.
2. Students must be given the opportunity to state their personal boundaries in advance of all physical and intimacy work.

Definitions

Intimacy

3. Intimacy is defined as any moment of stage action which portrays intimate physical contact or engagement. This may include, but is not restricted to:
 - kissing
 - family/friendship intimacy
 - intimate touching
 - imaginative intimate moments, e.g. portraying moments of attraction, romantic chemistry, tension between characters with physical touch
 - touch that is interpreted as abusive, physical, sexual and/or traumatic
 - use of revealing clothing
 - full or partial nudity
 - portrayal of sexually traumatic events and sexual violence, including non-consensual sexual violence
4. The Sexual Offences Act for England and Wales 2003 states that a person consents to something if that person *'agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice'*. This definition must be adhered to in all physical work at BSA.

5. In live performance, no-one but the performer can consent to an action proposed. The director can propose a performer to be intimate with another performer but both performers must consent to the director's proposition.

Note that consent previously given by a performer can be retracted at any point.

Nudity

6. Full or partial nudity is not permitted in any student performance at first or second year level. For final year actors, as with all aspects of intimacy in performance as listed in 3 above, student consent must be obtained for any full or partial nudity, and any work involving this must be done with minimum personnel present.

Intimacy Management

7. Movement, including intimacy direction, will be guided by BSA Head of Movement in conjunction with the Director. (Intimacy direction will be undertaken by a trained BSA Intimacy Coordinator, Fight direction will be provided by BSA's appointed fight director).
8. The Intimacy Coordinator will advocate on behalf of the performers as required to ensure safe practices are maintained at all times.
9. The Intimacy Coordinator will discuss the intimate scenes with relevant actors in advance of choreographing to discuss the scene, determine consent and to ensure actors are not feeling pressured to give consent but are doing so willingly.
10. Good practice in the management of intimacy scenes can include:
 - Ensuring the safety of performers while supporting the realisation of the director's creative vision and storytelling.
 - Director and stage management team co-ordinating on scheduling of intimacy sessions during rehearsal time, length of time needed etc.
 - Not permitting mobile phones anywhere in the auditorium including backstage during technical rehearsals of intimate scenes
 - Assigning an 'Intimacy Captain' for the run – see below for further details of this role, which will be taken by a member of the stage management team (preferably the stage manager).
 - Regular discussion with the Intimacy Captain with regard to the wellbeing of the performers and if any further support is needed during the run.
 - Ensuring actors are clear on the context of intimate scenes
 - Language of notes, guidance and direction for intimacy scenes should be kept as neutral as possible (eg not overtly sexual) while conveying the necessary direction
 - No company member, including staff and external creative team, should use any innuendo or suggestive language regarding intimate scenes and acts of intimacy, and must all conduct themselves professionally
 - Use the characters' (*not* the performers') names to refer to actions, language etc in discussion of scenes
 - Use of a key word for performers to temporarily halt proceedings should they feel the need to do so
 - Use of a 'placeholder' movement during rehearsal such as palm-to-palm in place of, for example, kissing, if the Intimacy Coordinator or Intimacy Captain is not present or

performers wish to defer the moment of intimacy

- Notating choreography of intimate scenes, in writing and/or for reference throughout the rehearsals and run.
- Directors and other creatives should not step into rehearsals of intimacy or have any physical contact with performers during the scene. All rehearsals of intimacy to be run by the Intimacy Coordinator or Intimacy Captain.
- Full choreographing of all intimacy regardless of how simple or fleeting it is
- Performers must never improvise or deviate from choreographed intimacy
- Change of choreography if the consent of the performers changes during the run, or due to any injury or sickness
- Careful documentation of intimacy rehearsals – this can simply be a useful aid to the process as well as for reference in any conflict resolution

Intimacy Captain role

11. This role will normally be undertaken by the stage manager with their consent. If they are unwilling to do so, another member of the stage management team may be asked to undertake the role. Responsibilities of this role include:

- manage intimacy calls before a show
- be present in intimacy sessions as a third party
- take notes and maintain the consented choreography throughout the run of the show
- keep a log to write any changes in choreography so they can notify the actors of deviation from the consented choreography
- maintain recorded copy of the agreed choreography, in order to contact the Intimacy Coordinator for any required alterations.

Intimacy Captain support

12. In common with every student, the Intimacy Captain will be informed who to contact if they or someone else in the company has concerns, anxiety, feelings of stress or any mental health issues.

Wardrobe and fitting

13. The following protocols must be observed:

- Wardrobe staff and actors are encouraged to communicate clearly with each other throughout fittings to ensure that actors are fully informed about necessary touch and can express any concerns/questions
- Wardrobe fitting procedures must respect the actors' comfort and personal boundaries
- Actors should always wear appropriate undergarments to fittings
- Space constraints may dictate that fittings are sometimes held with other personnel present; actors should state in advance if they have specific concerns about privacy or if they prefer more or fewer people in the room

Information

14. The following protocols must also be observed:

- Minimum 24 hours notice should be given to the actors for rehearsals of intimate scenes.

- Props, costume, Intimacy Kit etc. should be available in the sessions where necessary.
- There should be a sign outside the door to the performance space stating that an intimacy session is in process and a screen to be placed over any windows or other openings that might prevent complete privacy for the actors.
- The following reduced team will be present in the intimacy session: stage manager, director, Intimacy Coordinator and actors
- Actors cannot practice a scene involving intimacy unless the Intimacy Coordinator or Intimacy Captain is present
- A contingency plan must be in place in case choreography cannot be performed
- In marketing the show, before using promotional images containing intimacy, the written consent of the performers involved must be obtained.
- There must be written assurance from the School that no photographs (regardless of whether they portray moments of intimacy) taken from either rehearsal or performances may be distributed online or otherwise without the actors' prior written consent.
- Any hygiene expectations must be clearly explained.

Technical rehearsal, dress rehearsal and show

15. The following protocols must be observed:

- There must be intimacy calls before each performance, allowing for time to discuss any issues and raise concerns.
- Alterations of intimate choreography must be made in consultation with the Intimacy Coordinator and the director only, never just the director and strictly with the consent of the actors.
- There should be reduced personnel present when teaching/rehearsing intimacy: actors or personnel who are not required for such scenes should exit the rehearsal room/auditorium.
- Clear reminders of the photographs policy (see above) must be given.
- Intimacy kit (when required) should be at hand in both wings
- Clear signage posted outside the auditorium and in any programme materials to make audiences aware there is intimate content in the show.