

Loud and Clear x The Old Vag Club: Consent in Theatre (plaintext version)

Before Auditions

You should make applicants, both cast and crew, aware of any challenging content that may be required for particular parts **before they apply** - this includes any potentially triggering content, and especially content of a sexual nature.

Intimacy should not be required in auditions themselves. One-on-one auditions are also not recommended, and auditions should not take place in a student's private space.

For Directors

Ask consent for every instance of intimacy, and for every rehearsal. **You should not assume people's comfort levels and boundaries** - only they can tell you this. Always ask what people are comfortable with and work around their boundaries.

Have check-in points, making sure people are comfortable throughout. Also have breaks if rehearsals are long or particularly draining.

“Every rehearsal should be an ‘intimacy workshop’” - not about careful blocking, but building trust and comfort between actors through:

- Open & honest communication
- Trust exercises
- Ensuring actors involved set clear and specific physical boundaries

Portraying Intimacy

There are creative ways to portray intimacy within any actors' comfort levels - forcing an actor to do something they don't want to, or making it seem like they are causing problems for not wanting to do certain things, is **not okay**.

Directors should think about how necessary intimacy is to a scene.

Creative alternatives to intimacy scenes include:

Stage-kisses

Kiss scenes in shadow

Lighting

Using puppets

Using projection/animation

Workshopping Intimacy

“Actors should not jump straight into intimacy scenes, but rather work towards them.”

Scaling up intimacy can help. For instance, start with talking through the choreography (“this is when we’ll do X, then Y”).

Example of scaling up a kiss:

1. Placing two fingers on the lips of the other person
2. Kissing with two fingers still in place
3. Removing the fingers (lip contact)

Remember: intimacy can be more accurately portrayed when actors have reached a level of trust with each other which can only be achieved over time with conscientious effort.

Intimacy Coordinators

Sometimes it may be necessary to have a designated and more specially trained intimacy coordinator (sometimes known as intimacy choreographers, or intimacy directors). You can advertise for these on Camdram, as you would for any other role. You could also contact the Old Vag Club (email oldvagclub@gmail.com) if you want more advice or recommendations.

Welfare Rep

This is good practice for all shows.

At the start of the rehearsal process, a clear welfare system should be put in place. There should be a designated welfare contact within the production team, who can be approached in confidence with any concerns. This person should not be the director or producer.

The Five Cs

Context: All parties must be aware of how the scene of intimacy meets the needs of the story and must also understand the story within the intimacy itself, creating a sense of safety and eliminating the unexpected.

Consent: Clear and specific consent must be given from all parties.

Communication: There should be frequent discussion and check-ins, and opportunity for dissent. There should also be avenues to report any discomfort or harassment that may occur.

Choreography: Each scene of intimacy must be choreographed and that choreography adhered to for the entire production.

Closure: Before and after rehearsing/performing intimacy, actors should 'tap in/out'. This symbolic gesture (often a high five) draws a line between intimate scenes and the non-intimate everyday, and maintains professionalism.

Consent

A reminder about what consent actually is never hurts!

Consent is

- Freely given
- Reversible
- Informed
- Enthusiastic
- Specific

For Actors

Remember that your boundaries are important and should be respected.

It is the responsibility of the Director to make sure you are comfortable at all times. If you do not feel this is so, you could talk to the designated welfare officer for the show. You could also talk to the CUADC actors' reps, or to ADC staff members.

If things do go wrong, you can use the ADC harassment form to report any instances of sexual harassment or misconduct. It can be filled in anonymously if you wish, and can be found at this link:

<https://www.adctheatre.com/about-us/report-harassment-or-discrimination/>

Links

This short post is in no way exhaustive. If you are directing a show which includes scenes of intimacy, this is a big responsibility and you need to know what you're doing!

[Guidelines for Rehearsing Material with Sexual Content by Yale Undergraduate Production](#)

[Guidelines for Theatrical Intimacy by the Department of Theatrical Arts at Utah Valley University](#)

[Intimacy On Set Guidelines by Ita O'Brien](#)

[The Five Cs](#)

Support

If you have been affected by any of the issues in this post, please see the following links:

[The University's Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor](#)

[Cambridge Student Guide](#)

[Loud and Clear Guide](#)