THEATER EMORY Guiding Principles for Rehearsals and Productions (Working document)

Updated October 2025

The document below is intended to be shared at *all* department rehearsals. It details the department's commitment to ensuring a safe rehearsal and production environment for students, staff, guests, and faculty, and the principles described below apply equally to all members of the department community. This is intended to be a living document, subject to annual review by the Leadership Committee at the end of each academic year. The guidelines also include excerpts from the University's policies and accompanying links to relevant portions of their websites.

Copies of the guidelines will be distributed and reviewed at first rehearsals for all departmental productions. They will be available on the department's website as a permanent resource for all students, staff, and faculty participating in department productions.

These guiding principles are divided into several sections. The first section offers a general statement of the department's values and outlines the university's policies regarding discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The second section focuses on physical safety in department spaces. The third section offers general guidelines for best practices in rehearsals and performances. Section four details policies and expectations concerning appropriate conduct in rehearsals and production related to issues of sexual harassment (please note that all faculty and staff are mandated reporters concerning any incidents that may arise). The fifth section describes best practices related to culture, difference, and representation.

I. General Conduct Guidelines for Students, Staff, and Faculty

I understand that I am a representative of Theater Emory and as such my actions reflect upon and impact the greater organization of the Theater Studies program as well as the general Emory community.

- We invite all the members of our community to show each other grace throughout the rehearsal and production process. Remember that you may not know the past experiences or concerns of your colleagues. Have the grace to apologize if you inadvertently hurt someone's feelings, and to share your intellectual commitment to learning from your mistakes. On the other hand, if someone's misinformed statement or inadvertent action causes you pain, we invite you to assume good intentions and show them grace in return as they learn from their error.

- We use the community agreements taught in the allyship workshop at the beginning of the rehearsal process to build a shared understanding and language in the rehearsal process. Those community agreements are as follows:

- Be Authentic
  - -We will use "I" statements.
  - -We will speak from our own experiences and avoid making generalizations and assumptions.
- Be Accountable
  - -We will acknowledge and accept the impact of our words and actions.
  - -When people speak truths about hurt/harm we believe them
- Be Gracious
  - -We will give grace to ourselves and each other to "speak in draft."
  - -We will leave space for growth and accountability.
- Be Generous
  - -We will listen to understand, not respond.
- Take Care of Yourself
  - -We will be specific about our needs as humans in this space.
  - -If anyone does anything harmful, damaging, or makes us feel unsafe, we have the authority to pause the moment.
- Value Process
  - -We will focus on HOW we make art.
  - -How we communicate individually can't outweigh the need to treat each other with respect.

- *Deliberately* hurtful or biased language and behavior will not be tolerated in accordance with the university's non-discrimination policy, detailed below.

Non-Discrimination Policy: The Emory Non-Discrimination Policy establishes uniform guidelines in order to promote a work and educational environment at Emory University that is free of discrimination and harassment, and to affirm the university's commitment to equal opportunity. For more information on the university's policies and expectations of all students, staff, and faculty, see: https://emory.ellucid.com/pman/documents/view/16834/?security=d3b7518a869d72e6d5b0c965c987b3c9053079b3

Sexual Harassment Policy: We seek to understand sexual harassment as it pertains to performance environments, provide procedures to prevent it, and outline recourse when it occurs. We recognize the potential for harassment in rehearsal, during performance, and outside the performance among participants, staff, board, and audience members. We acknowledge performance environments can court confusion about the difference between chemistry, artistic freedom, and harassment; we believe participants can be bold and live "in the moment" of performance material while maintaining choreography, fellow participants' safety, and agreed-upon boundaries. For more information on the university's policies and expectations of all students, staff, and faculty, see: https://emory.ellucid.com/pman/documents/view/16836/?security=4f94881ac0ddcbae11c4a4115a74ae7de40de24b.

Accessibility Policies and Resources: Emory provides all persons an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and services afforded to others. Emory University's accommodations information can be found at: https://accessibility.emory.edu/ The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS), part of the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance, assists qualified students, faculty, and staff with obtaining a variety of services and ensures that all matters of equal access, reasonable accommodation, and compliance are properly addressed. Emory holds a "Designated Name and Pronoun policy: https://registrar.emory.edu/records-transcripts/change-of-information/designated-student-name.html

Open Expression Policy: While the university respects an individual's right to self-expression, it expects that the rights and concerns of others who work and study at Emory are respected as well. As a community of scholars, Emory University is committed to an environment where open expression of ideas is valued, promoted, and encouraged. Recognizing the educational process of our institution requires diverse forms of open expression – including freedom of thought, inquiry, speech, activism, and assembly – the university affirms the rights of members of the community to assemble and demonstrate peaceably within the limits of this policy. Emory's Open Expression Policy can be found at: https://emory.ellucid.com/pman/documents/view/19648/?security=c6f36f9de43a2cd25fc99614d09384f649a313cf

Questions about reporting issues of concern:

We recognize that rehearsal and production processes and academic departments have their own internal hierarchies that may make it intimidating for people to report issues of concern. We encourage students involved in a rehearsal/production process to begin by relaying their concern to their stage manager. The stage manager will then speak to the department's Production Manager who will also share the issue with Theater Emory Leadership. The Theater Emory Student Representatives are also an available and trusted resource. Should the potential issue be related to a faculty member involved in the process, concerned students should speak directly to the Department Chair. It is important to remember that if for *any* reason a student feels concerned/unsafe in bringing an issue to faculty within the department, the student may contact the Title IX Office (sexual): 404-727-4079 or the office of Equity & Inclusion (non-sexual): 404-727-9867 directly.

I.A Rehearsal Conduct

- I understand that I am making a commitment to this production for its duration. In the event that I can no longer honor my commitment (medical leave, academic probation, expulsion/suspension, etc.) I will inform the Managing Director or Production Manager as soon as possible.
- I understand that all rehearsal conflicts must be turned in 2 weeks prior to the start of rehearsals and that no additional conflicts will be accepted after that time. Conflicts are subject to approval, and non-academic conflicts are not guaranteed to be accepted.
- I will attend all scheduled rehearsals/meetings, as outlined in the performer agreement that was signed at the time of confirmed participation, and conduct myself in a professional and timely

manner. I understand that rehearsal starts at my scheduled call time, and I am expected to be present ready to begin at that time. If I am going to be late for a rehearsal, I will notify my stage manager immediately, providing an ETA for my arrival to rehearsal.

- I understand that excessive lateness and/or unexcused absences could lead to my removal from the production, and if I am receiving credit hours, could affect my grade.
- Calls outside of rehearsal, such as costume fittings, photo shoots, etc., should be treated with the same timeliness and respect as rehearsals.
- For the duration of the process, I will treat the project as a high priority. I will plan accordingly to arrive on time and ready to be collaborative with my fellow artists.
- While in rehearsal, tech, or performance, I will not consume drugs or alcohol in any rehearsal, tech, or performance space owned by Emory University. This includes the MGM Theater, the Schwartz Theater Lab, and any classroom or space where a rehearsal or performance is held.
- Cell phones and other devices should be off/on silent during rehearsals/performances and only used on breaks.
- I will treat props and costumes with care, only interacting with those pieces that are assigned to me.

II. Use of Department Space and Equipment

- I will treat all Department of Theater Studies/Theater Emory spaces and equipment with care and respect. I will exercise extreme caution while using these spaces/equipment and will report any damaged equipment immediately.
- I will abide by any safety regulations or standards for all of the Department of Theater Studies/Theater Emory spaces or equipment.
- I understand that dressing rooms are all shared spaces and will treat them with respect, keeping a clean and neat environment for myself and those sharing the space.

III. Specific Considerations: Sexual Content and Theatrical Intimacy

Sexual Content and theatrical intimacy require careful consideration, and as a result are considered as part of the season selection process. Artists in scenes of intimacy take great personal risk, and our goal is to allow actors to take that risk in an environment that is as safe, supportive, and comfortable as possible. Theater Emory is committed to utilizing best practices when engaging with sexual content and theatrical Intimacy.

Theatrical Intimacy is the simulation of intimate physical acts for theatrical purposes.

Examples of Theatrical Intimacy include:

- Kissing
- Embraces

- Revealing Clothing
- Nudity or partial nudity (including on-stage costume changes)
- Simulated intercourse
- Theatrical Intimacy may also include heightened imaginative sexual or intimate circumstances for a character.
- Stylized movement that tells an intimate story.

Theatrical Intimacy Best Practices

Theatrical Intimacy requires the following:

- Practicing a consent-based process
    - An Intimacy Director will be present on all productions requiring Theatrical Intimacy.
    - Building consent between participants is a required first step in any process of choreographing sexual content.
    - Use "The Button"-- the equivalent of pressing pause on a moment.
    - Establish Boundaries: specify the range of contact that is agreed to by performers (e.g., anything but bikini area is within the range, or kissing is always closed mouth, etc.).
    - Use the Boundary Practice exercise. (Gates & Fences, Red/Yellow/Green, etc.; all of which will be taught in a workshop before staging begins)
    - A third party such as Stage Management must **always be present** for the staging and rehearsing of intimacy.
    - Productions with Intimacy should have a no-cell phone policy in rehearsal and backstage for all members of the production.
    - Directors and choreographers should never step into stage intimate moments or have any physical contact with the actors during the staging or rehearsal process of intimacy.

- Desexualizing the Process
    - Use non-sexual language for staging the intimacy or discussing it with the actors.
    - If you need to talk about the character's actions, use character names.
    - Refrain from making sexual jokes, innuendo, or comments.
    - Offer De-Role-ing (differentiating oneself from the character).

- Choreography
    - All theatrical intimacy, regardless of how simple or straight-forward it might be, must be choreographed.
    - Choreography must be notated by performers and stage management.
        - Notation should be written but can also be in the form of an audio recording. Video recordings of intimacy are not allowed out of respect for the actor's privacy.
    - Performers must not deviate from choreography.

- If a performer's boundaries change that alters the choreography, they should notify stage management, the director, and the intimacy choreographer as soon as possible so modifications can be made.
- In Production, Directors must discuss any changes to choreography with the choreographer and may not make changes themselves.
- Placeholders should be used until choreography is set.
- Placeholders may be used as needed after choreography is set except during performances and dress rehearsals.

Pre-production and Auditions:

- Theatrical Intimacy will not be required or requested at any audition.
- If a full script is made available to prospective participants, language similar to the following should be included: "Please read the script closely and confirm that you are comfortable working with this material. Feel welcome to bring questions about content to the audition process. Your level of comfort with the content of this script will not impact your casting consideration for future productions." Similarly, if the choreographer has a specific theme/action they plan to explore in the production, that information must be made available to prospective participants with language similar to the following: "Please review the project description carefully and confirm that you are comfortable working with this material. Feel welcome to bring questions about content to the audition process. Your level of comfort with the content of this script will not impact your casting consideration for future productions."
- Performers who will be asked to perform theatrical intimacy as part of the production will be informed at the time of audition.
- Performers who will be asked to perform theatrical intimacy will have access to the script before or during callbacks.
- Participants in devised work with be informed in advance of the process if theatrical intimacy will be a part of the process.

Rehearsal:

- The theatrical intimacy protocols outline above should be followed during the rehearsal process.
- Initial theatrical intimacy scene rehearsals should be closed, such that only participants involved in the scene are present. The rehearsals should be opened after agreement by the stage manager, director, and performers involved.
- Performers should have the option to decline SC/N elements that were not disclosed at auditions/callbacks or added after the audition/callback disclosure.

Performance and Documentation:

- The agreed-upon structure of intimate contact must be maintained once a show is in production.
- Performers must inform the stage manager and their scene partner(s) if they are sick (sore throat, cold sore, etc.), and alternate choreography should be defined for sick days.

IV. Specific Considerations: Culture, Difference, and Representation

Performance engages the full spectrum of humanity. Telling the stories of complex human experience often includes representations of violence, racism, homophobia, abuse, and other challenging content. We seek an ethical atmosphere when engaging in this content, working with diverse groups of participants, and particularly when producing culturally sensitive work.

We make the following commitments to all participants who work with us:

- When invited to audition, prospective participants have the right to make inquiries about how their cultural personhood will be used within the production, particularly when the work will be devised (when there is no script at the time of audition). Cultural personhood can include any element of one's social being. Inquiries will receive a thoughtful response and will remain confidential.
- Sometimes a potential participant discovers while auditioning that they are uncomfortable with production elements as they relate to their personhood. Potential participants have the right to decline participation offers without fear of reprisal such as losing future opportunities. It is not the participant's responsibility to explain why they chose to decline an offer.
- Whenever possible, a socially diverse group should be considered both in casting and in assembling production and design teams. The needs of a production may require professionals with appropriate expertise. Theater Emory will take active steps in recruiting and casting appropriate people.
- During the rehearsal process, participants should voice concern if they feel uncomfortable with the use of their cultural personhood, which may include:

    1. Costume pieces understood as stereotypical or based in caricature which were not disclosed at audition/casting, and could not have been expected by a reading of the script or otherwise available materials;

    2. Staging (culturally based violence or abuse, for example), which was not disclosed at the time of audition/casting;

    3. Accents or dialects not disclosed at the time of auditions/casting;

    4. Make-up that can reasonably be described as "black face," "brown face," "yellow face," "red face," or similar portrayal, which was not disclosed at the time of audition/casting.

- When staging scenes of cultural violence, or other culturally charged narratives and language, we will follow the same practice of consent building outlined in the Sexual Content and Theatrical Intimacy standard. Disclosure of this type of performance will be made at the audition, and the emotional risk associated will be recognized throughout the process.

Failure to adhere to these standards will result in immediate termination from this production and may also result in a prohibition from participating in future productions. Violations of university policies (described above) may result in a report being filed with the university.