



PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

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## PLU THEATRE AND DANCE CONSENT-BASED PRACTICES

Pacific Lutheran University Theatre and Dance lauds vital conversations about consent and boundaries in the arts. Theatre and Dance artists have an obligation to honor boundaries and life experiences of those involved in our department's productions, classes and employment positions. This document lays forth our consent-based practices in these areas.

### **ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES**

Directors/choreographers, instructors, managers of employment, students and others should take care to establish physical, emotional and professional boundaries to ensure a safe and caring environment.

The expectation of this department is to honor and respect physical, emotional and professional boundaries while balancing the artistic and educational vision and needs of the production, class and/or employment position.

Boundaries differ between people, and boundaries for one person may change production to production and even day to day. Boundaries should be discussed freely in productions, classes and work assignments and should be maintained once identified.

A best practice to indicate a boundary has been crossed is the use of a self-care word. For all PLU Theatre and Dance activities (including student-directed productions and classes), that word is "**LUTES**". This self-care word may be spoken by anyone to hold/pause the rehearsal or action because they feel physically or emotionally unsafe and students are encouraged to use it.

**Physical boundaries** should be established whenever touch is necessary, especially intimate or forceful touch.

Performance classes and performances tend to make use of physical touch for scene work, choreography, and the like. Those with physical boundaries that would not be considered intimate or forceful should have a discussion with your instructor or director/choreographer as early as possible (even before course registration or auditions) so an accommodation can be considered.

For productions or classwork that include physical intimacy or violence, participants may wish to establish a placeholder. A placeholder is a physical gesture used to indicate an intimate or violent moment. For example, a production could establish a high-five placeholder to represent a kiss. The performers then have the right to high-five anytime the characters need to kiss until such a time that the kiss has been choreographed and the performers feel comfortable.

To clearly identify a performer's physical boundaries--especially in scenes requiring intimate physical touch--directors/choreographers should provide time for the following at the first staging rehearsal:

- 1) One performer (“A”) uses their hands to touch places on their body that they are comfortable with physical touch that day. They should touch themselves from head to toe, front to back. The touch should be done in wide, sweeping motions.
- 2) A then takes their partner’s (“B”) hands into their own and uses B’s hands in sweeping motions to touch the same places on A’s body.
- 3) Afterwards, B verbally identifies places A indicated not to touch (a “fence”), using anatomical words (“breasts” instead of “boobs”, etc.). For example, “I saw a fence on your breasts, on your lower stomach, on your pubic area, and on your buttocks.” A should make any corrections to B’s fence list.
- 4) The process then repeats, switching partners. Performers agree from that point on to honor each other’s physical boundaries.
- 5) Before each rehearsal, performers should ask their partners if there are any new fences that day or if there are any places that are no longer fences.

Physical boundaries may increase or decrease over time, as comfort and trust builds or as circumstances change. Performers should always initiate identifying new fences and places that are no longer fences to their scene partners and their director/choreographer or instructor.

Any and all physical intimacy (kissing, groping, simulated sex, etc.) and violence/combat must be fully choreographed. Following a discussion of the script’s purpose for these actions and a reminder of the self-care word, the director/choreographer, or intimacy/fight choreographer shall provide specific blocking. The stage manager or their assistant must be present to record the blocking. Under no circumstances should the director/choreographer ask the performers to choreograph the actions themselves. The director, stage manager and performers should then decide whether or not there will be physical intimacy/combat calls at the top of rehearsals and performances to ensure physical and emotional safety.

Any production or class work requiring nudity or that exposes a performer’s genitals or buttocks must be first approved by the Chair of Theatre and Dance. If approved, performers must be informed of the nudity on the audition form and again at callbacks. Nudity should be layered into the process at the comfort of the performer—there should not be a “nudity day”. Directors/choreographers and performers should discuss how nudity will be handled during technical and dress rehearsals to avoid the performer being nude longer than necessary.

Any production or class work that involves scenes portraying sexual violence and/or sexual assault must be first approved by the Chair of Theatre and Dance. If approved, there must be debriefing/de-roling built into every rehearsal, content warnings for the audience must be posted prominently, and support resources must be provided to the cast and crew.

For costume fittings and quick changes, students have the right to: employ the self-care word, request another person be present, request removal of unnecessary personnel, request to be in an open or closed space, request assistance or extra privacy, and ask clarifying questions.

**Emotional boundaries** are often invisible; most people do not wish to disclose these unless they must. Shootings, extreme violence, sexual assault, sexual acts, sexual trauma, suicide/attempted suicide, and mental illness tend to be common emotional boundaries.

Because the variety of emotional boundaries is so great, directors/choreographers and instructors cannot anticipate all boundaries for all people. It is important, therefore, for participants to identify emotional boundaries with directors/choreographers and instructors so an accommodation can be considered. In many circumstances, a director and instructor may be able to provide an alternate assignment or role but in other cases they may not due to requirements pertaining to copyright or

artistic/educational expression. However, the director/choreographer or instructor shall consider all options in order to make an appropriate accommodation if possible.

Performers in roles that challenge their emotional boundaries should explore individual and/or group de-roling practices as a means of leaving their performance at the theatre. One example of de-roling might be shaking or peeling off the character before leaving the stage.

**Professional boundaries** include directors/choreographers, designers, student employment managers, instructors, and peers asking permission before making physical contact with performers, crew, workers, students or peers. Embedded in that request should be an explanation of the purpose of the touch and an option for the person to say no, such as “May I touch your shoulders and your upper back to demonstrate the proper posture for this character? Is that alright with you?”

Professional boundaries also include maintaining confidentiality and exemplifying professionalism in relationships.

### **SYLLABI STATEMENTS**

PLU Theatre and Dance courses that require or potentially require physical touch should include a statement of such in the course syllabus and refer students to this document.

### **APOLOGIES FOR BOUNDARY BREAKING**

PLU Theatre and Dance believes in the best intentions of all who work on their productions and in their classrooms. The department recognizes that breaking boundaries is often a mistake rather than a purposeful action intended to harm. However, breaking boundaries, intentional or not, requires an apology to the person/people impacted.

An apology should happen as soon as a grievance is made. It should be authentic, and contain the words “I’m sorry” or “I apologize” followed by what the break was. It should conclude with an assurance that the offense will not be repeated. As requested, the apology can include a third party present—preferably the director or stage manager.

Purposeful or intentional breaking of boundaries is a much more serious matter that shall result in the removal of the offender from the production and/or university disciplinary action.

### **ANNOUNCING CHALLENGING CONTENT**

Productions that contain shooting, extreme physical violence, sexual assault, sexual acts, suicide or attempted suicide, nudity, mental illness, and/or physical intimacy other than hugging or closed-mouth kissing must indicate so in the audition notice and make available a copy of the script for auditioners to read/review at least one week before auditions. Performers should be provided an opportunity to ask questions about these actions and have an option to withdraw from consideration for that character before the audition process is complete.

Challenging content added during the rehearsal process but that is not written in the script or revealed during the audition process shall be considered negotiable. In this circumstance, the director/choreographer must receive permission from all performers involved and any “no” must be honored. The performers will privately notify the stage manager of their acceptance or denial of the added challenging content, and the stage manager shall inform the director whether or not there is unanimous acceptance. The stage manager shall not provide the number or names of specific performers who voted one way or the other.

### **TECHNICAL REHEARSALS**

Stage Managers should ensure all crew is informed of challenging content during the crew watch or the first technical rehearsal.

Running crew should ask before touching performers and explain where and why they need to touch them. Crew should use anatomical words and avoid commenting on the performer's bodies or the nature of any revealing costumes.

In productions including nudity, no recording technology of any kind—including cell phones—are allowed backstage or front-of-house. Stage Management should coordinate check in/out of performer and crew cell phones.

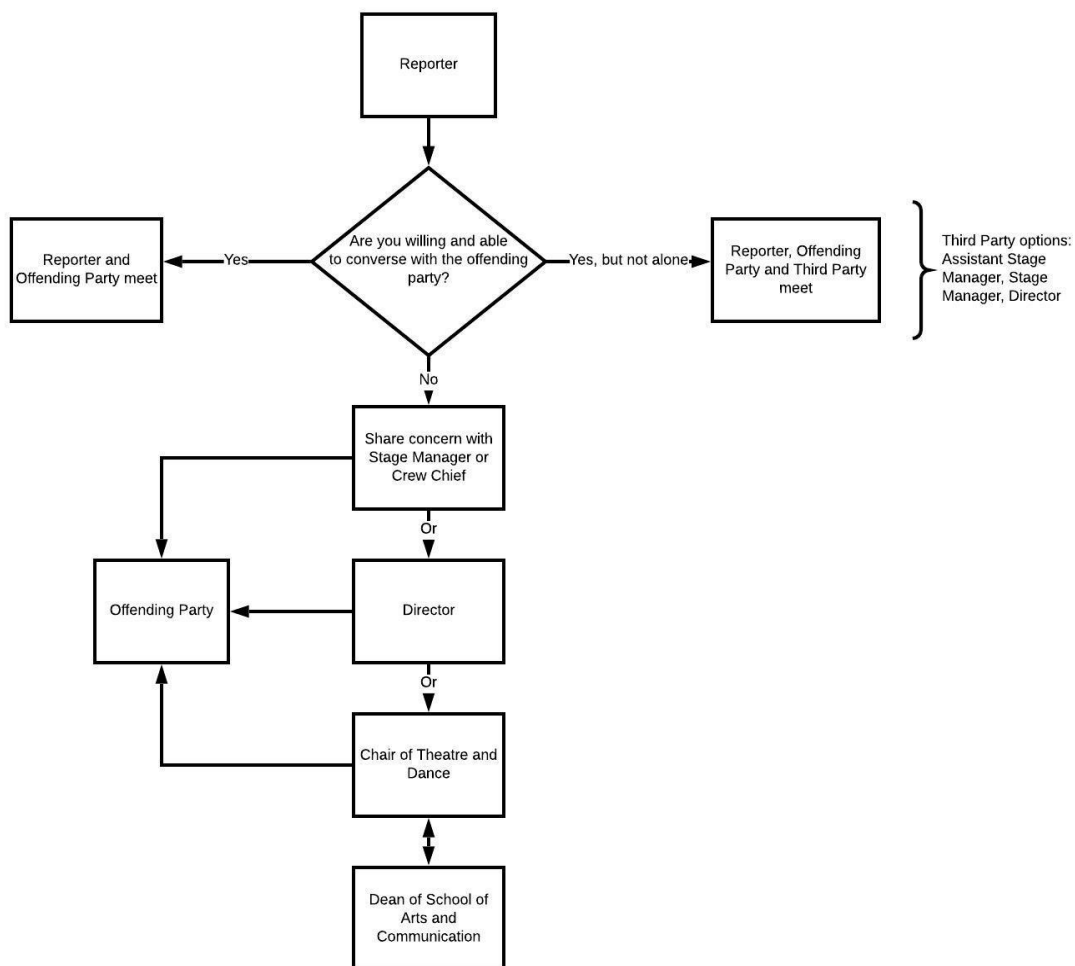
When stopping to make fixes during tech, performers should feel free to use a placeholder unless the moment being fixed includes the intimate or violent action. Nudity, if required in the production, should not be part of tech until the production can be run without frequent stops for lighting or sound fixes; usually, this means the first or second dress.

As blocking is adjusted to accommodate lighting, etc. during tech, the stage manager must re-record any changes to physical intimacy or violence in their blocking book.

Directors/Choreographers should discuss necessary content warnings with the Chair of Theatre and Dance if such warnings are not already included in the playbill.

**RESOLUTION PATH FOR PRODUCTIONS**

Students and faculty have the right to access and understand a production's resolution path in cases of grievances or expressions of concern. For PLU Theatre and Dance, this path is:



Serious grievances falling under Title IX and PLU's Student Code of Conduct supersede the Resolution Path and shall follow those reporting procedures.