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When I Grow Up: Intimacy Work and Collegiate Theatre

by

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ABSTRACT

The field of intimacy work within the wider theatre industry is rapidly growing, and universities should be prepared to meet the demands the industry is setting forth. Since 2016, intimacy direction has been making its way into the professional theatre world. As intimacy work becomes more mainstream, students will enter college with the ultimate goal of going into the field. Through this research, I have set out to create courses that could fit into the framework of a collegiate theatre program that would support students' desire to learn about the intimacy field, and to create a department environment built on consent and collaboration. To do this, I researched the current intimacy landscape through participating in intimacy workshops with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, Inc. and Theatrical Intimacy Education, as well as conducting textual research in the fields of trauma and feminist theory and applying those findings to the theatrical process.

Keywords: intimacy direction, intimacy work, theatre, collegiate theatre, feminist theory, trauma

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APA   American Psychological Association

BDSM   bondage/discipline dominance/submission sadism/masochism

DSM   Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

HBO   Home Box Office, Inc.

IC   intimacy coordinator (film)

ID   intimacy director (theatre)

IDC   Intimacy Directors and Coordinators

IDI   Intimacy Directors International

PTSD   Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

TIE   Theatrical Intimacy Education

USM   The University of Southern Mississippi

VCU   Virginia Commonwealth University

INTRODUCTION

Much of theatre is, by nature, intimate. That intimate nature is exciting, emotional, and impactful for the audience – and for the performers as well. That is how any form of intimacy should be: exciting and welcomed by all parties involved. However, the unfortunate reality is that physical intimacy can be and has been weaponized, even in what should be highly controlled environments, such as a rehearsal room or a stage. The term "intimacy direction" was coined in Tonia Sina's 2006 Master's Thesis at Virginia Commonwealth University, and in the wake of movements such as #MeToo, intimacy direction is quickly becoming a pillar of the theatre industry. After her graduation from VCU, Sina went on to found Intimacy Directors International (IDI), which dissolved in March of 2020. Sina now works with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC), one of two current organizations that focus on mainstreaming intimacy work.

Training that revolves around consent, boundaries, and personal agency is an important component of intimacy training. The theatre industry and the world at large would be a kinder and more aware space if everyone had this training, but even in an ideal world where everyone innately respects the boundaries of their peers, intimacy direction would still be necessary. In a scene that requires physical vulnerability, it is important that a neutral third party is in the room to guide through any awkwardness or intervene if there is the potential for harm to one or both of the parties involved. In the past, either the director has taken this role (sometimes to detrimental effects), or worse, the director has turned the actors loose to figure it out themselves with no supervision of any kind. In an instance where both actors are respectful and committed to making sure their partner is comfortable, this might not be a harmful, but could still lead to

awkwardness or shame. However, it is easy to imagine a scenario in which someone could suffer physical or emotional violence, even if it was not deliberate.

The use of intimacy directors' services is becoming more commonplace in the professional world. However, the academic space is in a state of limbo as I embark on this research journey, and that space is my area of concern. I am writing this thesis from the perspective of someone in this limbo. I am lucky to be in a department with not one, but two faculty members who have recently gotten involved with the two current major theatrical intimacy organizations: Caitlyn Herzlinger is working on her certification with IDC and Theresa Bush is researching agency in costuming under the principles of Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE).

I have been preoccupied with onstage intimacy since I was a senior in high school. I became fascinated with the historical contextualization of assault onstage while I was working on Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, a Restoration comedy about taking agency as a woman in the seventeenth century. In my freshman Honors class, I wrote a paper asking whether it was cathartic or unhealthy/triggering for assault to be presented onstage. I did not hear the term "intimacy director" used until my sophomore year, and after learning more about the concepts and principles, I knew that I wanted my research to focus on theatrical intimacy in the academic space because of my long-term goal of entering academia as a professor later in my career.

IDC and TIE offer workshop packages and faculty mentorship programs for universities, but I believe that in the not-too-distant future, students will enter college with the ultimate goal of becoming intimacy directors, and theatre departments across the country should be prepared to meet the academic needs of those students. Additionally, it

is important that performance-focused students are allowed to work with intimacy directors while in college to prepare them for new standards in the professional world. Furthermore, students with the goal of becoming directors should be exposed to the idea of introducing an intimacy director into a rehearsal process that requires it.

The goal of my research is to propose a curriculum that could be fully or partially integrated into a collegiate theatre program. This curriculum would aim to serve the dual function of training prospective intimacy directors and allowing theatre practitioners from all areas to come into become more familiar with intimacy direction as a concept. Students and faculty who use this curriculum would also learn some of the basic principles upon which intimacy direction is built to become more aware and respectful collaborators. Accessible education on intimacy direction is vital to the field of theatre – educated actors, directors, designers, and crew members ensure that work is produced safely and that everyone's humanity is recognized and valued.

I am not a pioneer of this field, nor am I seeking to give the final word on how these practices should be taught. I hope that my research can be modified and built upon as the field of intimacy direction moves forward, whether I continue to develop it myself or other theatre practitioners tailor it to their needs. For my specific areas of interest, I have researched trauma theory, feminist theory, and twentieth century developments in theatre and film, as well as current intimacy practices. These four focuses will be synthesized into the curriculum I intend to propose.

CHAPTER I: Intimacy Work and the Intimacy Industry of Today

Performers have been staging intimacy since theatre began. Intimacy is a part of life; therefore, it is a part of theatre. While the position of an official "intimacy director" is new, the depiction and staging of intimacy itself is not. Movements of any kind, social, artistic, or the intersection of the two, are products of their time. Lasting movements, as I hope the intimacy work movement will be, inevitably go through changes. This chapter will present the field of intimacy work as it is now, in the late stages of the 2021 Coronavirus pandemic, and where I think it can go as the world changes and the theatre industry responds.

As it stands today in the United States, two organizations facilitate training in the field of intimacy work: Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC) and Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE). Both of these organizations are less than five years old – the industry is young and ever-changing. Further, both organizations contribute to the creation of methods and pedagogy that facilitate the growth of the intimacy field, though each has their own methods. In the interest of full disclosure, I have participated in short-form workshops with both IDC and TIE, but I am pursuing certification with IDC. At time of writing, I have completed my Level 2 online course. I have found great value in my experiences learning both from and with these two organizations. In this chapter I will present information directly from each organization about their history and methodology. This requires an explanation of terminology. Both TIE and IDC refer to intimacy professionals in the film industry as "intimacy coordinators." However, TIE uses the term "intimacy choreographer" to refer to an intimacy professional for a theatrical production, while IDC uses "intimacy director." I will use intimacy

choreographer if I am talking specifically about TIE's organizational structure or methods, but for my own research purposes I will use "intimacy director." It is the term by which I was introduced to this work, and it also better serves abbreviation – using ID for intimacy director and IC for intimacy coordinator, rather than having two ICs.

The original intimacy work organization, Intimacy Directors International (IDI), was founded by Tonia Sina, Alicia Rodis, and Siobhan Richardson in 2016. Previously, Tonia Sina wrote the 2006 thesis "Intimate Encounters; Staging Intimacy and Sensuality" as part of her master's degree at Virginia Commonwealth University. This manuscript is widely acknowledged as a foundational text of intimacy work that established consent practices and intimate choreography.

Alicia Rodis played a large part in the mainstreaming of intimacy work in the television industry. In the post-#MeToo landscape, Home Box Office, Inc. (HBO) committed to using an intimacy coordinator (IC) on all of their sets, beginning with their 2017 show *The Deuce*. Rodis was brought on board to develop the role of an intimacy professional for film (now known as the intimacy coordinator), and she continues to work with HBO both as an IC and to vet all other ICs hired by HBO.

IDC was founded in 2019, with Rodis on staff as one of two Creative Directors, and as an intimacy director (ID) and intimacy coordinator, while Sina is affiliated with IDC as an ID. IDC's international affiliations at time of writing include Intimacy Coordinators Canada and Intimacy for Stage and Screen (formerly known as Intimacy Directors International UK). IDI officially closed its doors in March 2020, with its website (now unavailable on the web) re-directing visitors to the IDC website. In addition, Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE), a third organization, was founded in 2017

by Chelsea Pace and Laura Rikard. Pace published her book, *Staging Sex*, in March 2020, and Rikard is credited on the cover for contributions as well.

Though IDI closed its doors, IDC and TIE continue to provide invaluable services to the theatre community in their own distinct ways. Of course, both groups focus primarily on the physical and mental safety of actors involved in scenes of intimacy. This begins with creating the "culture of consent," as I have heard it called in workshops with both IDC and TIE. This is a term that has become popular in spaces that raise awareness for sexual violence in communities, with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center using the term in a blog post as early as 2015. It has also been given importance at the collegiate level. The United States' Department of Health and Human Services Office of Women's Health dedicated a blog post to the topic in 2018. IDC and TIE strive to integrate consent culture into the theatrical process. The overarching goal of both organizations is to shift the culture of the theatre industry, in part by educating theatre practitioners in each organization's respective method. IDC and TIE seek to produce intimacy directors/choreographers, coordinators, and educators, particularly through workshops, which in the case of IDC can follow their "Pathway to Certification."

The Coronavirus pandemic has hit the theatre industry hard. Studying intimacy in a time where physical proximity and contact is a dangerous practice is very different to studying intimacy in "normal" times. In any field of movement specialization, including intimacy work, in-person interaction and opportunities are critical to learning the practical applications of the work. However, the rapid and necessary shift to virtual learning created new avenues to continue the development of the intimacy field. Both

IDC and TIE have offered a wide range of virtual workshops, and I was able to participate in several to further my research efforts.

TIE's method for teaching consent and choreographing intimacy follows their "Best Practices" method. Best Practices is currently offered as a one-time, six-hour digital workshop. This foundational course is the prerequisite for their other more specific workshops (excluding their Foundations in Race, Intimacy, and Consent Workshop). TIE does not offer an internal certification. Instead, TIE permits workshop participants to take what they learn into their own artistic and/or educational practices, with the stipulation that only TIE faculty are authorized to host TIE workshops. TIE's other workshop opportunities include a course centered on casting and creating consent-based policy for a theatre or department. Because the field is still new, workshop titles and topics change and develop frequently.

The "Best Practices" method strives to develop a consent-based and thorough process, with choreographing and documenting the process given high levels of importance. TIE stresses using "deloaded" or "desexualized" language when both choreographing and setting boundaries. An example Chelsea Pace gave in a workshop is setting a word to be used as a "self-care cue" (as opposed to a "safeword") if a participant wants to stop a scene. "Safeword" has connections to the BDSM community, so "self-care cue" is a way to remove the sexual nature while still being able to stop and take a pause.

IDC utilizes the "5 Pillars," or simply "The Pillars," which was developed by Sina, Rodis, and Richardson for IDI (IDC Resource Guide 5). The Pillars are: context, consent, communication, choreography, and closure (in that order). The Pillars are the

foundation of all workshops hosted by IDC, and each Pillar is explored in depth throughout IDC's "Pathway to Certification."

IDC's "Pathway to Certification" is four-level intensive process. In-person training is required, especially for the third and fourth levels, so currently Levels One and Two: Foundations of Intimacy are the only certification workshops with components available to complete online. Due to safety concerns as a result of the pandemic, the in-person components of both levels one and two are on hold, while levels three and four are unavailable at this time. However, IDC provides a detailed description of the full certification process with cost and curriculum breakdowns in their "Pathway to Certification" PDF, which is downloadable on their website.

Level One: Foundations of Intimacy consists of a four-week online course, meeting once a week for three hours, and one two-day, in-person workshop. Level Two: Foundations of Intimacy II is comprised of a six-week online course (the PDF lists Level Two as being an eight-week course), which currently meets once a week for two and a half hours (the PDF says two hours). Two three-day "Variable Topic" in-person workshops are required to complete Level II. These variable topics currently include, but are not limited to "Acting Intimacy," "Intimacy Direction/Coordination in Academia," and "Intimacy and Advocacy" (IDC 14).

To progress to Level Three, once that option is available again, a student must have: (1) completed both online and in-person components of the first two levels, (2) embarked on a period of "Self-Study," which can involve pursuing external training in disciplines such as Mental Health First Aid, Bystander Intervention and Harassment prevention, and examination of biases, and (3) applied for a Level Three workshop. The

move from Level Two to Level Three is a move from the broad-stroke application of

consent, boundaries, and choreography in a theatre or film process, to the specifics of

what it is like to be an intimacy professional. The student specifies their interest in either

becoming an intimacy director (theatre) or an intimacy coordinator (film) and embarks on

the Level Three course best suited to their interests. Level Four, also an application-only

course, takes the skills learned in all previous levels and allows the student to fully apply

them in a professional setting under the mentorship of a certified ID or IC.

IDC offers a myriad of workshops not in conjunction with the Pathway. Their 90

Minute Webinar series offers one-time workshops covering a variety of topics. I have

taken several of these workshops, including one called "Consent in Academia." Current

offerings include "Regency Intimacy," which covers intimacy in period styles and is

taught by Lizzy Talbot, intimacy coordinator for Netflix's popular new series *Bridgerton*

(Talbot is certified through IDC), and "Working with Underage Performers." Multi-week

courses that are not in conjunction with the Pathway are also available. Though I took

"Consent in Academia" as a 90 Minute Webinar, it has now been expanded into one of

these multi-week courses, along with a course on "Stage Managing Intimacy," and

"Consent for the K-12 Classroom."

Both IDC and TIE offer consultations, the option to hire an ID or IC for a single

production or for a residency, and policy development and implementation. Both

organizations have started offering academic, collegiate-level packages, such as IDC's

options for three-to-four-hour faculty or student workshops, full day workshops for

faculty, and two-day intensives for students.

TIE and IDC also share a focus on "trauma-informed" work. TIE currently offers a workshop dedicated to "Trauma-Informed Practices," and integrating trauma-informed work into the theatrical process is part of IDC's "Pathway to Certification." Theatre's relationship with trauma is an important part of intimacy work, and I will discuss this topic at length below. Both current intimacy organizations also see this as an important area in which to develop resources and pedagogy.

As it has "education" in its name, TIE has material centered around intimacy in the classroom and is currently offering a "Consent in the Acting Classroom" workshop. Participants and leaders in classes I have taken with both TIE and IDC work in the education system as professors and teachers. I have also seen firsthand the desire to put this work to use outside of the theatre or film realms. I have participated in workshops alongside doulas, sex therapists, and burlesque dancers and choreographers. These individuals may not be pursuing intimacy direction as a career, but they see the value in adding the consent-based practices central to the work of TIE and IDC to their own fields.

The doors have barely cracked open for intimacy in the collegiate theatre space, but interest in the work is steadily building. The use of an intimacy coordinator on high profile professional television shows enjoyed by high school and college-age people, such as HBO's *Euphoria,* has signaled to a coming generation of actors that the industry is changing. And while the pandemic has raged and the theatre community longs to return to live performance and a "real" rehearsal process (not over "Zoom"), there is also a desire for the "safety net" that an intimacy professional can offer. The guidelines,

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training, and reassurance can release the actor from the pressure and anxiety that physical

and public intimacy inevitably evokes.

CHAPTER II: Theatre as Media, Intimacy as Theatre

The twentieth century saw rapid development in the entertainment world. Print and visual media combined to stimulate the invention of animation, film, and television, and as the twenty-first century began, cell phones gave us the ability to take media everywhere and be constantly entertained. Changes in the "real world" trickle into theatre – both in how it is produced and what sort of material is produced. I believe that new and innovative forms of content and new ways to consume content affect the "old" methods of content consumption. Theatre's role in the media sphere has evolved and changed throughout the centuries, and I want to define theatre's position in our mediated world at the present time. Further, in this chapter I hope to explore the relationship between innovation and safety, and the audience's relationship to the performers in an intimate context. Better understanding theatre's role in the today's media sphere will facilitate more effective productions, and using the collaborative process well is integral to these improvements.

I consider theatre to be a part of the "media" sphere, though in a different lane from more "mainstream" media (referring here to television and film, not mainstream news outlets as a form of media). A Chinese theatre company, Ibsen International, called theatre "alternative media," due to its communicative power and live format (as it differs from mainstream media) ("Theatre as Alternative Media"). Theatre can be examined as a form of media and as a medium – and these should be understood as separate facets of theatre that can intertwine. Theatre as <u>media</u> refers to the social power of theatre, how it is received at the time it was produced and how it is examined from an historical perspective. Theatre as a <u>medium</u> refers to its methods of production: the processes and

developments that affected the way theatre was made (technological advances), stylistic shifts, and the creation and use of genre. I argue that theatre is both media and medium, not to dilute theatre's status as a live and ephemeral form of art, but to reinforce theatre's status as a culture-making and culture-defining force.

Philip Auslander's *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* uses Fredric Jameson's definition of "mediatization" to examine theatre's role in the media sphere (5). Jameson used "mediatization" in reference to "the process whereby the traditional fine arts…come to consciousness of themselves as various media within a mediatic system" (qtd. Auslander 5). Jameson laid out that definition in the early 1990's, and Auslander updated *Liveness*, originally written in 1999, in 2008. Auslander asserted the economic necessity of theatre's mediatization (5). In a mediatic system that began prioritizing newer forms of media, such as television and film, theatre had to change to continue to compete under capitalism. The "mediatic system" has since evolved to include the giant that is social media, and the "traditional fine arts" have become even further mediatized by this development. Auslander refers to the competition between live performance and mediatized forms in the cultural arena. The addition of social media to this equation has commodified theatre as a whole. Engaging a theatre's audience on social media has become almost as important as engaging a theatre's audience with the art produced onstage.

Because theatre is an ancient form of art that combines many disciplines, innovation touches the stage in a way that I find very unique. It is difficult for me to think of a technological or intellectual advancement that has not in some way affected the medium of theatre. For example, the impact of technology on language propelled the

development of speech to writing, to stylus and wax, to quill and parchment, to pen and paper, to the typewriter and then to computer. These changes affected how plays are written, and in fact that plays are even *written* at all. Further, feats of architecture changed the ways and settings in which theatre could be physically produced, while the invention of the lightbulb in the 1870s revolutionized the theatrical field of lighting at the beginning of the twentieth century. The emergence of the field of psychology played a large part in shaping and evolving the modern idea of acting through psychological perspective. Theatre is a reflection of its time and can then be re-molded to fit the time in which it is produced or re-produced. The field as a whole evolves to create new modes of creating; the classic literary material—Greek tragedies, Shakespeare, even American greats such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams—evolves with the field. Theatre, in other words, is shaped and re-shaped by the cultural context and material conditions of the time.

As the first decade of the new millennium came to a close, Bruce Barton wrote "Paradox as Process: Intermedial Anxieties and the Betrayals of Intimacy" for *Theatre Journal*. In this essay, he reflects on other performance theorists' reactions (and in many cases, anxieties), about what the use of "intermedia" in theatre was doing to live performance. Intermedia is used here to indicate the merging of newer media with traditional live performance – for example, a video projection on the stage as live performers act in front of it. Intermedia was not a *new* concept in theatre – Max Reinhardt used film projection in live theatre in the 1930's. However, the emergence of the "mediatized culture" re-shaped audiences' relationship to live performance. Barton cites Arnold Aronson's *Looking into the Abyss* to illustrate the general sense of

protectiveness over the pure live experience (567), but then introduces Meike Wagner's concept of theatre as a "hyper-medium," meant to involve multiple forms of "technical media" along with performance to create the whole product (577).

As a child of the twenty-first century, I currently align myself with the view of theatre as a hyper-medium. As an actor, I have been trained to focus on my part of the process, building my character and working with the rest of the ensemble to build the story, and I simply trust that the technical aspects will be brought in by the design team during tech. The unification of performance and technology creates the whole that is the production. Although actors are very much a part of *a* collaborative process, actors are rarely involved in the design process – clued in to varying degrees of vagueness or detail, yes, but never directly included. The same is true in the reverse: designers typically do not attend rehearsals until the end of the rehearsal process, when the design elements are finally brought in.

In the Venn diagram of theatre as the hyper-medium, actors (in the rehearsal process) and designers (in the design process) typically exist as their separate circles, with the director in the center, gradually pulling the two closer together until the Venn diagram has become a unified circle – the realized production (see Fig. 1).
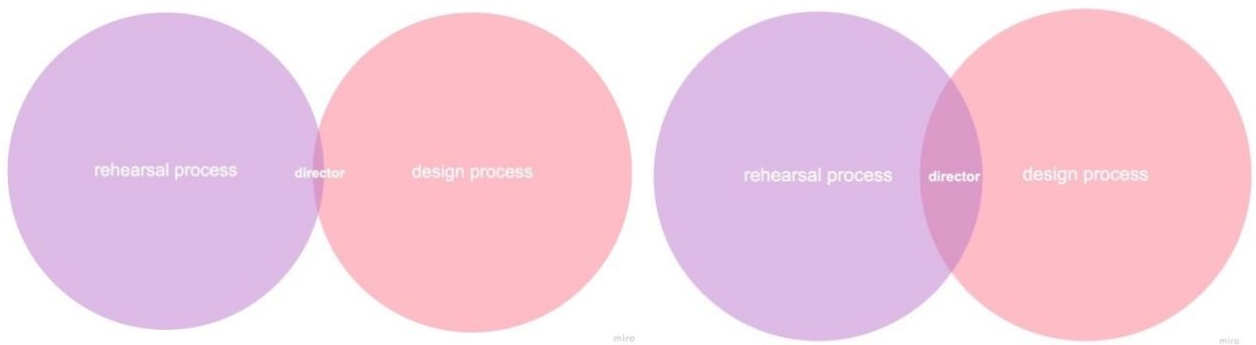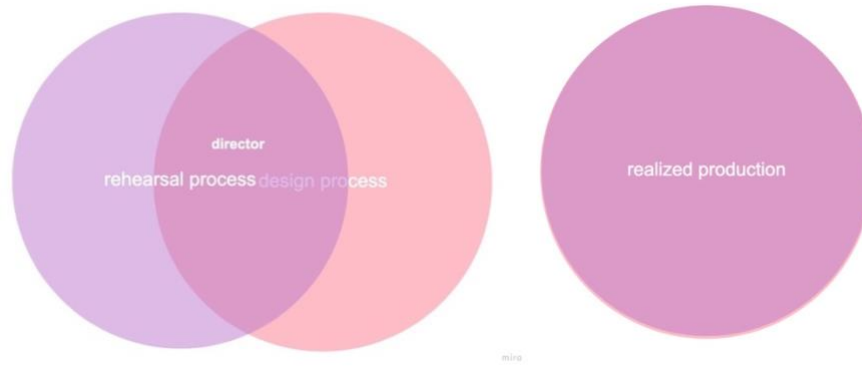
Fig. 1 – visual representation of the two "spheres" of theatre coming together

A beautiful thing about theatre is the individuality of each artists' process, though this makes defining a universal process difficult for academic purposes. This is true within the explicitly "creative" areas of theatre – performance, direction, and design. The artists working in each has most likely received some sort of formal training that they have taken and evolved into a personalized process that looks different from even someone who received the exact same training. On top of that, artists will remold their processes to suit the specific circumstances of any given collaboration. Though technicians are also theatre practitioners, their work can be more formulaic across productions (for example, there is a specific and proper way to hang and focus a lighting apparatus). An intimacy director fits into the creative category – training that gives way to a personal process, which then becomes flexible enough to work in tandem with the processes of other creatives. Understanding theatre as a hyper-medium provides a framework upon which to build collaboration. An intimacy director is a newer addition to the hyper-medium machine.

As it currently stands, intimacy directors are brought into a process by one of two broad avenues. An ID can be brought on to choreograph without being present for the design process or the majority of the rehearsal process. As the industry progresses,

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however, some facilities have a resident intimacy director, which allows the ID to see more of the design and rehearsal processes. Both are valid forms of intimacy direction, and to come into a rehearsal process without prior first-hand knowledge of the process and be able to efficiently assess the needs of the scene is an incredibly useful skill. However, in an academic theatre setting, the intimacy director-in-residence model is more likely to be in effect. Ideally this happens with a trained faculty member and perhaps with students having an interest in intimacy work who shadow the ID as they choreograph. This model allows the ID to see the design process come together and have more knowledge of the actors, their boundaries, and their needs. This model is especially useful in working with young theatre practitioners and continues the artistic tradition of "hands on training" with a mentor.

One part of the collaborative development that might be overlooked is the intimacy director having access to the pre-rehearsal design process. As safety is a major focus of this work, conversations with the actors about consent and their personal boundaries is of paramount importance throughout. With that said, the creative product of intimacy work is the *choreography*, and further, how well that choreography is integrated into the unified theatre performance of a hyper-medium. Scenes of intimacy will most certainly be accompanied by lighting and sets and perhaps sound, but with the rise of intermedia in theatre, other design factors could come into play as well. The choreography should flow with every other design element, and the ID is expected to choreograph without those design elements present – much as actors rehearse and directors block without design elements present. Sharing knowledge from the design

process is a useful tool to foster collaboration between the director and the ID, while allowing the director to feel more included in the choreography process.

Another key part of theatre that is not added to the process until the last minute is, of course, the audience. The audience's relationship to the performers in an intimate context is an extremely important factor of the choreography process that the ID has to mitigate. Murray Pomerance touches on the difference between intimacy onscreen and intimacy onstage in *Moment of Action: Riddles of Cinematic Performance*, in a chapter aptly titled "Acting Intimate." Pomerance describes touch onscreen and the audience's tendency to feel like an outsider while watching (135). Film language and camera angles can mitigate this because of the medium, but with theatre, the audience is always in that awkward, third-person space. The sense that the audience should not be seeing an intimate moment can be useful, but sometimes, taking the audience out of that space is necessary. The use of set pieces or props, lighting, costumes, and the choreography that an ID crafts are factors that those operating within the modes of theatre can use to change the dynamics between the audience and the performers. Again, the ability of the ID to collaborate with the design team can greatly assist the ID in helping the director bring their unified creative vision to life.

The use of media in theatre and the theatre industry's shift to a more mediatized state is a defining development of theatre in the last few decades. Social media facilitated the mainstreaming of intimacy work, through the #MeToo movement that gained traction across social media platforms in 2017. Examining theatre as a hyper-medium aids in positioning the intimacy director as a collaborator, while maintaining that safety is a legitimate part of any artistic process.

CHAPTER III: Trauma: The Personal vs. the Performative

"The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like." – Aristotle, *Poetics*

Trauma in its various forms is a part of life, and therefore has been a part of theatre since "Western" theatre's emergence in ancient Greece. In fact, the English word "trauma" comes from the Greek "*trōma*", meaning "to wound," referring specifically to physical wounds ("Trauma"). The term was used solely as a medical term until psychology began to develop in the late nineteenth century, and then it was not until almost a century later that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was formally recognized in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd Edition*. For the intimacy director, maneuvering around an actor's personal traumatic history while the performer is simultaneously enacting the trauma of fictional characters is perhaps the most difficult aspect of intimacy direction. Even a scene where the character is not experiencing trauma (as in a moment of consensual contact) could cause harm to an actor who has had a past traumatic experience. I will examine trauma and theatre from a so-called "Western" point of view, using sources and examples from the Western theatre tradition. In this chapter I hope to explore the roots of trauma in theatre and how the relationship between lived trauma and fictional trauma has developed. I believe that a working understanding of trauma both as a physical/psychological concept and trauma as the undercurrent that drives all theatre is foundational to the study of intimacy work.

My thought process on this facet of my research was launched when I read Sarah Misemer's introduction to the 2013 issue of *South Central Review*. In this introduction,

she explored historical events that caused large-scale, societal trauma in Latin America and the artistic and theatrical movements, such as Augosto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, that emerged due to these collective traumas. Latin American countries experienced political turmoil in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of their fights for independence from Spanish, French, and Portuguese colonization, and this "traumatic heritage," as Misemer called it (1) still influences the art produced there. Misemer links theatre and trauma to Aristotle's concepts of *pathos* and *catharsis*, as outlined in *Poetics* (2). In his text and description of "The Scene of Suffering," as he named it, Aristotle lists examples ("death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like") (9) that involve physical trauma, or *trōma* to the Greeks. The desired response, however, is not physical, but emotional. The audience is meant to share the trauma that the performers act out, and in some way, to feel the trauma themselves, at least enough to experience catharsis, the "purgation of emotion" (4) that was integral to Aristotle's notion of tragedy.

The Greeks clearly understood the concept of emotional pain and knew that physical pain and emotional pain could overlap. However, this emotional connection to physical action applies as well to emotions and physical feelings other than pain. In all of its many actions, theatre is meant to make the audience feel *something*. Physical comedy and slapstick are meant to make an audience laugh, fist-fighting or a sword fight makes an audience member tense, a passionate kiss when two characters come together can make onlookers feel happy for the couple, or even share in their triumph. Physical displays of any kind, including those simulated in theatre, beget human emotion. Even the psychological study of trauma acknowledges that disorders such as Post-Traumatic

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Stress Disorder (PTSD) are a psychological response to an event in a person's life and has nothing to do with genetic predisposition (DSM-V 271). I do not think it is a stretch to say that every human being experiences circumstances that fundamentally change the way they operate or see the world. Sometimes this shift occurs because of a traumatic experience. This is another fact of life that theatre-makers intuitively understood before science began to apply its ever-evolving tools to the study of human psychology – the various events and traumas that characters in a Greek tragedy experience fundamentally change them, and this fundamental perception of lived experience continues to influence contemporary theatre.

Art's relationship with trauma could be described as cyclical – it is why we see plays by the early Greeks, Shakespearean drama, or the plays of Early Realism as they come in and out of fashion. The phrase "history repeats itself" comes to mind, but it is a little misleading. The situations and details deviate, but the feelings they produce are the same. War, fear of change, the agony of monotony, lost love – these things resonate because they are always present in society. That is why empathetic response is so powerful. And somehow, the translation of the trauma from the character experiencing it to the audience sharing it does not generally traumatize the audience – instead it can have the power to heal, or at least make them feel understood or that they understand. That is the strange healing power of art – the ability to hold the space for catharsis. Note that this space for catharsis can be *held* but is not always necessarily *kept* – there are plenty of plays that do not use catharsis at all, or outright reject emotional healing in favor of harshness or cruelty. Art can be misused to harm, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Catharsis is simply another tool that can be used in art; it is one that I feel

is an important but not necessary outcome of a particular performance. In a world that throws human suffering and trauma at the viewers as quickly as it can (the news being a prime example), being invited to sit with trauma and encouraged to experience it vicariously makes theatre as a medium stand out.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manuel of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* entry for the diagnostic criteria for PTSD specifically notes that exposure to a traumatic event via "electronic media, television, movies, or pictures" does not qualify someone for diagnosis (271). Theatre is not listed as one of these exceptions, though I would argue that it falls under the sort of "simulated trauma" category the DSM seems to be describing. But I do not think that seeing a murder onstage would usually cause psychological trauma because, though disbelief has been suspended, the brain has been trained to protect the audience member from believing that they are witnessing a real murder. It is interesting that authorities like the American Psychological Association have legitimized the effects that new media has on causing trauma, but an art form like live theatre, which has been around for millennia, has remained relatively unconsidered.

Though psychology does not recognize media (or "simulated trauma" as I called it) as diagnostic criteria, media has been commonly recognized to possess the ability to re-traumatize or "trigger." Trigger warnings (also called content warnings) in both mass-produced visual media, such as film and television, and individually produced visual media, such as YouTube videos, have been normalized and become common practice in recent years. I would call the Motion Picture Association's film rating system the primitive version of trigger warnings, specifically geared toward the protection of children from sex, violence, and nudity. In a catharsis-based artistic practice, trauma and

traumatic events are not shown in art to traumatize or re-traumatize any audience members – the trauma is meant to be shared in a cathartic manner and/or to teach the audience about a historical event or social issue. Trigger warnings can prevent the re-traumatization of a person who has experienced a trauma and knows their triggers. Eva Schaper explored catharsis in her article "Aristotle's Catharsis and Aesthetic Pleasure," stressing the transformative nature that tragedy has on audience's emotions because of the intentionally imitative (mimetic) nature of tragedy (139). I mentioned the "strange healing power of art" earlier. Using the lens with which Schaper looks at Aristotle's theory, I have concluded that experiencing emotions as a response to art (rather than life) is what delineates catharsis from trauma. Catharsis is achieved when a traumatic event is witnessed in a "safe zone," such as a theatre. Re-traumatization occurs when a traumatic event is witnessed in an "unsafe zone," or if a person cannot perceive any zone as "safe" because of previous trauma causing a distorted sense of reality.

I stated in this chapter's introduction that trauma is the undercurrent that drives all Western theatre. Misemer discusses the large scale, societal trauma that Latin Americans experienced collectively because of colonization and revolution. I have labeled this phenomenon *sociotrauma*. Trauma experienced by the individual I call *idiotrauma*. Idiotrauma can be a symptom of a sociotrauma. For example, a Vietnam veteran with PTSD has acquired their idiotrauma because of war (one of the most prominent causes of sociotrauma). An example of a symptom of war-related sociotrauma would be scarcity mindset, or an anxiety-inducing feeling that there is a finite amount of "x" resource (food, water, housing, etc.).

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In some contexts, sociotrauma and idiotrauma intertwine. Going back to the example of PTSD and the Vietnam War, a generation of soldiers came home with lasting trauma. The noted *National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study* projected that 30.9% of men and 26.9% of women who fought in the Vietnam War had "lifetime PTSD" (2). Even without an official diagnosis of a trauma disorder, soldiers who served were exposed to events that the DSM links to the development of trauma disorders, such as "actual or threatened death" or "serious injury" (DSM-V 271). Just because a trauma disorder was not developed and diagnosed does not mean a person has never experienced trauma. So it could be said that though each individual soldier was suffering from idiotrauma (whether in the form of a diagnosed disorder or not), sociotraumas manifested as well because of the number of people affected. 2,700,000 American soldiers fought in Vietnam (according to va.gov). This number, however, only accounts for the soldiers who fought in the Vietnam War. It does not account for the family and loved ones who went through the psychological turmoil of having a loved one at war. Additionally, the trauma war inflicts does not end once a soldier comes home. Dealing with the sometimes-lasting effects of the trauma their veteran suffered, as well as possibly violent manifestations that traumatized the veteran's family, are some of the lifelong implications of combat-related trauma.

The example of Vietnam veterans is significant because it legitimized trauma theory as a subset of psychology. Feminists were quick to begin the fight to legitimize the trauma of the female existence, an experience not given attention in the original DSM-III entry for trauma/PTSD (Wilkin and Hillock 186). The overlap between socio- and idiotrauma is seen again in the wake of movements like #TimesUp, #MeToo, and even

the emergence of intimacy direction as a field. The buildup over years and years of

women who were mistreated in the entertainment industry (which is just a microcosm for

how women have been treated by society as a whole) became manifested in these social

movements. The scale of personal traumas may range from something small like being

catcalled every day on the way home from work, to an assault which may warrant a

PTSD diagnosis. The results of these personal traumas built until a cultural response

emerged, using the platform social media provided to connect with others with similar

experiences. The sociotrauma manifested itself in many ways, such as telling daughters

not to walk alone at night or the spike in purchases of key-chain pepper spray. Women

who have not personally experienced the trauma of being assaulted might move through

the world in fear that one day it will happen. People typically think of trauma as a major

event in someone's life, and this limited view is true. But to get to the root of the human

experience, we have to look at the socially accepted, everyday experiences in which

trauma may accrue. Being catcalled would not meet the diagnostic criteria for a trauma

disorder diagnosis. However, being catcalled on a regular basis since pre-pubescence

does *something* to a person. It might cause them to look at strangers differently or look at

themselves differently.

In her book *Micro-trauma: A Psychoanalytic Understanding of Cumulative

Psychic Injury*, Dr. Margaret Crastnopol defines the titular occurrence as small moments

that might be forgotten by the victim but leave wounds on the psyche that "can distort a

person's character, undermine his or her sense of self-worth, and compromise his or her

relatedness to others" (1). Crastnopol is interested in micro-trauma as it occurs among

people with interpersonal relationships, while I am interested in looking at it both within

that context and removed from it. Catcalling, for example, almost always occurs between strangers. But the effects it has on women are in line with Dr. Crastnopol's description of the symptoms of micro-trauma. In regard to the entertainment industry and intimacy in particular, the industry *needs* intimacy direction and coordination to prevent sexual trauma from occurring, but also to identify micro-traumas between the actors or between actor and director. For example, an offhand comment from the director about a double chin or fat roll (referring to *anyone* involved in an intimate scene – body shaming is prevalent across all forms of gender expression) could leave a significant psychological wound.

Theatre practitioners are in the business of humanity, and humanity is often in trauma. The toll that comes from just living in this world can be traumatic. I began this chapter talking about the way the Greeks rooted their theatre in traumatic events, and the way that through line of all Western theatre resonates today. To gain the understanding of trauma that I think is necessary for intimacy work, the separation between trauma in life and trauma in art has to be identified. The right of any given actor or practitioner to set boundaries without the need for explanation or justification is a foundational principle of safe intimacy practices.

Bringing personal trauma into acting is a dangerous game and can lead to that trauma being exploited or exacerbated. However, trauma in art cannot be avoided, and everyone in the room – directors, actors, stage management – should be equipped to tackle the task of bringing the trauma on the page to the stage in a truthful and safe way. As I learned in my Level II course with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, intimacy professionals advocate for "trauma-informed practice." This work seeks to understand the

diverse traumatic backgrounds that artists can unknowingly bring into their work and

provide resources to prevent re-traumatization, but recognizes that the intimacy

professional is not a stand-in for trauma specialists or therapists. The psychological

concepts and frameworks I've introduced in this chapter are, as is much of my research,

meant to encourage further exploration by those looking to bring intimacy work into their

teaching, or even to bring trauma theory on as a way to look at acting or directing.

CHAPTER IV: Agency and Performance Theory

"One does one's body, and indeed, one does one's body differently from one's
contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well." – Judith
Butler, *"Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and
Feminist Theory"*

Feminism as a cultural movement is in large part the reason that intimacy work is
now being taken seriously as a discipline of study and application in professional theatre
and film. Entertainment industry-specific movements of the past decade, such as the
previously-cited #TimesUp and #MeToo, can be credited with giving the intimacy field a
huge push. However, looking further into the past and digging into feminist history and
theory is important in order to understand how foundational ideas of feminism support
the theory and practices that have built intimacy work.

The study of agency by twentieth century feminist theorists connects to intimacy
practices such as boundary setting; the tactical use of desire in queer and feminist
performance in the 1980's and '90's also provides rich context for the twenty-first
century's relationship with the concept of agency. Additionally, theatre's own history of
suppressing agency in actresses is certainly worth examining with a modern-day lens. For
the purposes of my writing, I will systematically refer to each "wave" of feminism, using
the word loosely, as I prefer to look at feminist history in smaller ripples rather than
waves. My thinking is influenced by Leandra Zarrow's chapter of *No Permanent Waves:
Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, and I believe her method will serve my purposes

better than treating a relatively small, but important, chunk of history in broad strokes. Intimacy direction is for people of all gender identities, as feminism is, but both movements were started by women, mostly for women. In this chapter, I want to look at the way the past influences the present and suggest current acting and intimacy techniques that are influenced by feminist theories of agency.

Sociologists understand agency as a person's ability to control their individual actions, and as practiced in intimacy work relates to a person's (actor's) own *body*. Hypothetically, the actor has full power to decide what happens to their body while working. Merriam-Webster defines agency as "the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power" ("Agency"). I like this definition, as it alludes to the exact reason that personal agency is so important in theatre. Historically, power dynamics were (and still sometimes are) often out of control in the performance world, and some directors and actors had far too much power over other more vulnerable theatre practitioners. The line between collaboration and violation of agency was blurred for too long, even if it is true that collaboration is a vital part of the artistic process for theatre. That is why conversations about agency and boundaries are so important, so true collaboration can happen. True collaboration is "*we* get to work *together*," while the false collaboration that has run rampant in the theatre world is "you *get* to work *with* (*for*) me."

Both theatre and film have a history of celebrating "auteurs" –often white, male director/writers who exercise total control over the productions on which they work; sometimes this control extends to the people they work with. Though I use the term "auteur" (which usually refers to a director), unethical use of power can be enacted by producers, "star" actors, and other benefactors of uncontrolled power dynamics. It should

be noted that because of the nature of capitalism, money is the great arbiter of power, especially in a field like theatre. A director who has access to the financial resources to produce their own work might begin to feel as if they have total ownership of a production, and thus license to control every aspect of it. Likewise, a big-name actor who is aware that their name on the marquee is what will bring people to the theatre might mistreat other actors or crew because of the ego trip. It can be difficult to critique the work of these artists, as some great (and hugely important) earlier works of the screen and stage were produced with practices that, when later viewed through a feminist lens, seem unethical. There has been retrospective scholarship on some of these artists, such as Samuel Beckett, some of which blindly venerate his genius, with others taking a more critical approach while still acknowledging his artistry. Some feminist theatre scholars who have examined Beckett's approach have tried to balance the importance of Beckett's oeuvre with the damage that his approach caused. Hannah Simpson and Gay Gibson Cima have both looked at Beckett's professional relationship with actress and frequent "collaborator" Billie Whitelaw. Both scholars cite Whitelaw's own accounts of the physical (and mental) toll that working with Beckett took – Cima listing the example of Whitelaw's paralyzed jaw from her performance in Beckett's *Not I* (220). However, Whitelaw never said it was too much or that she did not want to do it anymore. She worked with Beckett until his death in 1989, and after he died she continued to speak about his genius and her career working with him. In *Performing Women*, Cima asks if it is right, as feminists, to celebrate a woman's decision to forfeit agency (221). By contrast, Simpson argues that because she willingly surrendered her physical agency, Whitelaw became a true collaborator and gained creative agency (412).

That is a circular discussion that can continue until the end of time. Is art that requires artists to harm themselves really art? If everyone is a consenting adult is there really a problem? Part of bringing intimacy and agency training into theatre is risk mitigation – if an activity is physically or mentally dangerous, are all parameters to make it as safe as possible in place, and is everyone participating aware of and consenting to what will happen? Power dynamics are an integral part of the discussion around creating a more equitable culture in theatre. In the specific case of Beckett and his actors, Simpson and Cima both mention the sort of suspension of power dynamics that occurred. The saying that has been held over actors' heads goes: "if you won't do it, there are a hundred other people that will" – essentially, the sentiment that all actors are replaceable, and the practice of blacklisting has plagued the shockingly small world of theatre for decades. This is part of the culture that intimacy and agency work seeks to destroy. But this specific wielding of the director/actor power dynamic in the case of Beckett is not applicable, because Beckett needed these actors as much, if not perhaps more, than they needed him. Because of Beckett's extremely specific demands, there are not "a hundred other people" that could have done what actors like Whitelaw could do. Beckett's desire was that his actors did as little acting possible (preferably none) – no inflection onto the text that Beckett did not write into it, no movement that Beckett had not directed himself. Seasoned Beckettian actors, who had been working with "Sam" for years, were not so easily replaceable. Despite her uniqueness to Beckett, Whitelaw simultaneously was appearing in films throughout the 1980's, at the height of her professional relationship with him.

However, this instance is the exception, not the rule. Other actresses who worked with Beckett were not so lucky to be his muse, or collaborator. The concept of the muse has become subject to deconstruction in works like Ashley Lawson's *The Muse and the Maker: Gender, Collaboration, and Appropriation in the Life and Work of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*. Lawson uses the Fitzgeralds' relationship to embody the artist/muse relationship, saying that the muse occupies "a secondary status, no matter how substantial her contribution to a work may be" (6). She further states that the muse is seen as a "non-artist," even in relation to works that she, the muse, had an active role in producing (6).

But was Whitelaw a collaborator or a muse? In her deconstruction of the muse, Lawson says that the ideal artist/muse relationship is one where the art is always seen as solely the artist's; any acknowledgement of the muse's contributions would threaten the artist's autonomy (5), Lawson insists, failing to consider the muse's autonomy in any way, of course. This definition holds water when the authoritarian qualities of the auteur role are considered, but theatre as an art form relies on collaboration. Just because one person *wants* to take full credit for a piece of theatre does not mean others will agree. The court of public opinion is notoriously fickle, and no artist has any way of knowing how a work will be perceived by either the immediate audience or the future audience. The complex interpersonal and professional relationships throughout theatre's history have often been characterized by artistic brilliance compromised by bad behavior. The example of Beckett and Whitelaw is a brief introduction to how difficult it can be to locate agency amidst complicated power dynamics.

It may not be necessary to have an intimacy professional in every rehearsal at all times, particularly if no physical intimacy is occurring. However, it is critical that theatre

practitioners (especially those benefitting from present power dynamics) grasp the

importance of accountability and personal agency Directors and actors alike should be

comfortable with setting boundaries and having frank discussions about them, perhaps

before agreeing to work together. Having personal agency means recognizing that only

you have power over yourself, but also you have power over *only* yourself.

Acknowledging the agency of others is just as important as acknowledging the agency of

yourself, especially if a power dynamic is at play and you are the one benefitting from the

power.

Agency training factors into all areas of theatre: stage management, tech

positions, directing, and performance. Since my specific skills and knowledge lie in the

performance field, I feel best equipped to discuss intimacy work in actor training. Once

an actor has learned principles of consent, agency, and boundaries, they can begin to

study themselves and the constructs that have been placed upon them, and strip those

"behavioral marks" back to build a character. Much of intimacy work involves

"unlearning" and self-study of biases. I believe it is logical to fold these practices into

existing methods of actor training. I drew directly from Judith Butler's texts and sources

which interpreted them, most notably Carrie Noland's essay "The Gestural

Performative."

Actor training can seem like somewhat of a conundrum – as a student myself, I

have been told that actors are a blank slate for the character to emerge from, but also that

the specific personality each individual actor can bring to a role is important. I do not

necessarily believe that either is right or wrong. Some actors are total chameleons, and

some just bring *that* essence of themselves to every role they play (and it works!). I can

only speak from my personal experience studying acting and from the curriculum descriptions of other programs that I have reviewed, but actor training on the collegiate level is typically divided into three categories: "acting" as a whole (Stanislavski, Meisner, Bogart's Viewpoints, Uta Hagen's 9 Questions, Michael Shurtleff's Guideposts, Practical Aesthetics); voice (Lessac, dialect work); and movement (Laban, Lugering, specialized techniques like Suzuki and commedia dell'arte). Actors usually do not marry themselves to one method, instead pulling what they find most useful from their "toolbox," as I have been taught to call it. In teaching, each method must somehow fit with the others to create a congruent curriculum. Intimacy work is a form of movement specialization. Thus, the actor training system proposed here would most likely fall into the "movement" portion of a curriculum. However, like with general agency training, I hope that the general principles can be incorporated as little or as much as needed into any acting method.

One of the broad aims of this system is to free the actor of their own "gendered gestures" to build a character around gestures that best fit the specific engendered reality in which they exist. Simone de Beauvoir described gender as an historical situation, something influenced by various outside factors, such as period, location, status, etc (qtd. Butler 520). In the performance of period pieces, and the study of period styles, specific carriages of the body are taught to achieve a more "believable" theatrical performance, because gender performance varies from historical moment to moment. Judith Butler references clothing as a "gendered mark" in her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," and in theatrical performance, clothes can be an important part of characterization. Clothes dictate how much or little the body wearing them can move, and

once again, when exploring characters from a different era, much of the way they moved was informed by the dress of the time.

Carrie Noland uses Butler and de Beauvoir to support her points in "The Gestural Performative," though she focuses more directly on the kinesthetic and somatic experiences that constitute gender. Noland takes Butler's discursive model of gender construction and adds Iris Marion Young's study of gestural routines, specifically young girls throwing a ball (173). Both could be added to characterization and script analysis. Searching a script for clues about a character through other character's dialogues or stage directions (if the playwright uses stage directions heavily) brings Butler into script analysis. If part of one's outward expression of gender (and to some extent, oneself) is created by others, then part of a character is created by the other characters in the world of the play. This is especially true when considering the relationship between a character and the audience. If a character does not come onstage until Act II, but has been discussed in Act I, then the audience has likely already formed an idea of what that character must be like. The performance of that character might either conform to or subvert those ideas.

Young's study of the gestural routine, and Noland's interpretation of it can be connected to performance. I believe it can be used to both strip back the actor's own "gendered limitations," as I would call them, and discover (for the purposes of inhabiting) a character's gendered limitations. Young's study was partially a reaction to results of a study by Edwin Straus that concluded that women were physiologically different (i.e. "weaker") from men. This was refuted by Young, as she found that it was not physiology, but cultural conditioning, that caused girls to perform gestural routines

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"worse" than boys. Noland took from this that women are taught to experience space differently from men, frequently underestimating the amount of space and range of motion available to them (173). A performer must unlock the full range of motion available to them to better adjust that range of motion to any character they play. As intimacy work is a form of movement specialization, integrating movement exercises related to gender expression could provide new teaching (and learning) opportunities.

Noland repeatedly discusses the concept of dissonance through retraining the body (174), and when applied to performance, dissonance is an extremely useful tool in characterization. Finding dissonance within a character can help an actor create a rich inner life and show the audience a new layer of depth. Noland refers to dissonance as a subversion of cultural expectations (175), a more external phenomenon, but I think that internal dissonance can be explored as well. Retraining the body has the potential to not only shift how one is perceived by others, but how one perceives oneself – whether this is in the context of an actor's personal journey or a character's arc in a show.

Noland takes Butler's concept of "marks" of gender and splits it into three categories that she believes have differing varieties of hold on individuals: practices (gestural behaviors, behavioral marks), anatomy (physical marks such as primary and secondary sex organs), and statements (175). Examples of these "marks" can be seen in any given theatrical text. Classical female figures throughout the Western canon that subvert their gendered expectation communicate this subversion through dissonance and marks. In Lady Macbeth's famous Act I Scene V monologue she references behavioral marks of gender, asking the spirits to "unsex" her and fill her with "direst cruelty," cruelty being a behavioral mark of manhood. She goes on to refer to her "woman's

breasts," using an anatomical mark to again signal her engendered status to the audience and signal her desire to throw this status off. Noland believes that movement and physical presentation are chief agents in gender prescription, but performance is traditionally built on the text of a play. It is true that work like devised theatre, physical comedy, or some forms of Eastern theatre can be more reliant on the visual/movement-based aspects, but historically in "Western" theatre, the text has been and remains supreme. Intimacy work frequently stresses the importance of context in choreographing a scene, but the act of building a character relies heavily on context as well. The text is often the richest, and the first, source of context, and in some way informs the work of all artists involved.

The circumstances of a production are not created solely by the text, however. As I said, each artists' unique interpretation of the given context informs their direction, performance, or design, but the particular audience for which a show is performed adds another layer of necessary contextualization. The time and place in which a piece is performed for an audience is just as relevant as the time period during which it was written. Gestural and visible marks must indicate to the audience the circumstances of the play, whether that be character intentions, relationships, or time period. Once the audience is introduced into the process (the rehearsal process becoming the realized performance), the actor must develop their character's relationship with the audience. Even if the fourth wall is not broken, there is a sometimes-intangible relationship that the actor has with the audience in the shared experience of the performance. Though the highly valuable connection with the audience is one thing that is missing from that the virtual theatre that COVID has necessitated, a return to the live and in-person performance structure will bring that core element of theatre back.

Diving deeper into the applications of these theories in performance and in intimacy work is truly where I want this research to go. The pandemic gave me the opportunity to dive into the texts and work out these concepts on paper, but theatre is a practical art form. Text and theory can only go so far in this field, and I look forward to the day that I can take these concepts I have been fleshing out from the page to the stage.

CONCLUSION

In the following appendices, I will outline the courses that I have designed using USM Theatre Department's current program of study as the framework in which these courses would fit. These will detail full-scale courses, but it is my belief and hope that many of the principles and theories that I have synthesized can be folded into existing courses in ways I am interested in exploring further.

Throughout this thesis I have explored a wide range of topics. As the theatre industry and the world at large become more mediatized, looking critically at how and why we consume media is not only important from a consumer standpoint, but from the perspective of a theatre practitioner. Because most popular media is so immediately accessible, in our era consuming theatre is a larger commitment than opening Twitter or turning on the latest Netflix show. I believe that the study of the live theatre experience and how theatre practice adapts to reflect current media trends will remain important in academic theatre. I believe that utilizing trauma-informed practices will continue to become more fully integrated into how theatre is made, and as those practices influence the professional mainstream, universities should be prepared to follow suit. This is especially true considering what a transitory period of life college can be. Finally, using feminist theory as a mechanism to assist in the building of stories and characters presents opportunities for artistic growth and more nuanced storytelling.

Theatre is such a unified method of storytelling – the effectiveness of the story being told relies on every independent element coming together in a coherent manner. To discuss intimacy work without discussing the other aspects and disciplines within theatre would be quite pointless. Training intimacy directors at the collegiate level necessitates

that other practitioners be trained to work collaboratively with intimacy work in mind. I have proposed three full-scale courses – one that focuses specifically on the goal of preparing practitioners to work with intimacy professionals and intimacy principles. The other two are involved with directing intimacy and are meant for students with a specific interest in pursuing intimacy work.

I believe that intimacy principles and the feminist theory-based approach I proposed can also be integrated into acting classes. However, for the specific purposes of this project, I chose to propose only full courses, but not to modify existing courses. I hope that in pursuing this research in the years to come I can better develop the performance aspects of my work. As I stated in my introduction, I do not intend for this project to end here or be the final word on these important and ever-developing topics. I hope that these ideas will be of use or of influence to other theatre artists seeking to expand their practice.

APPENDIX A: INTRO TO CONSENT AND ADVOCACY

Course offered through: College of Arts and Sciences

Through: School of Performing and Visual Arts

From Department of: Theatre and Dance

GEC:

Will this course be a GEC?: No

Degree Plan:

Will this course be required/listed on a degree plan?: Yes (Major Area of Study Requirements)

Materials:

Does this course require textbook/materials?: No

Course Equivalency:

Is this course equivalent to any other course?: No

Online Method of Instruction:

Will this course be offered in an online format?: No

Course Information:

Course Title: Intro to Consent and Advocacy

Course Prefix: THE

Course Number: 103L

Credit Hours: 1

Course Description: This course would allow theatre majors to be introduced to methods of self-advocacy in all areas of theatre, ranging from rehearsal, the classroom, the various shops, production meetings, and fittings. Additionally, students would learn about personal agency and respecting the agency of their fellow students. Meant to be taken during a student's first semester at USM, this course would ensure that all students in the department are prepared to be respectful collaborators in whichever area of theatre they decide to pursue. This course is meant to be taken as a lab in conjunction with Intro to Theatre (THE103), allowing students new to the department to get to know one another as people and as artists, foster healthy collaboration across disciplines, and give young artists the space to discover and state their boundaries. Through a variety of group exercises and opportunities for self-reflection, this course will offer a unique introduction to the department. Though it is taken with THE103, the material covered in 103L does not correspond to that covered in 103. This would allow transfer students who have already filled the 103 requirement at their previous academic establishment to enroll in 103L without missing anything from 103.

Prerequisites: N/A

Corequisites: THE 103

Can this course be repeated for credit?: No

Is consent required for students to take this course?: No

Recommended section size: 15-20

Course objectives: Students will be encouraged to get comfortable stating their boundaries confidently and respecting the boundaries of others; students will be prepared to move into higher level courses in the department with a keen sense of self-awareness and a working understanding of the nature of collaboration.

Intended student audience: Students who are new to the department, whether that be freshmen or transfer students.

Titles and publication dates of suggested and/or required texts: N/A

Assignments and Course Evaluation:

Methods of testing/evaluation and grade determination: Grades will be based on 100 possible points divided like so:

  -Participation (50 points)

  -Weekly Journal (25 points)

  -Final Project (25 points)

Assignment Descriptions:

  -Participation: As this is a discussion and group activity-based class, participation is the most important aspect. Class activities will include discussions and exercises. Exercises will cover personal boundary setting and practice requesting consent, rather than expecting it. Throughout the semester, each aspect of the theatrical process will be represented (possibly with guest speakers to discuss their areas of expertise). Students

will be expected to be open to learning about all areas, whether or not it is their own area of focus.

       -Weekly Journal: In between each class meeting, students should take the time to reflect on the exercises done in class and write those thoughts down in a journal. The journal will be checked at the time of midterms and at the end of the class but will never be taken and read in detail by the instructor. It will simply be checked for completion so the student feels empowered to write their unfiltered thoughts and feelings, and will be able to keep the journal to look back on.

       -Final Project: For their final project, the students will work together to create a class manifesto that outlines the values and principles they want to continue building upon as they continue in their education, and on into their careers. This should show a comprehensive understanding of how each theatrical discipline comes together to create a unified production and the students' ideas about how collaboration is achieved.

How will students interact with other students?: Students will engage in robust conversation with one another in one-on-one and class-wide discussions. Students will also be expected to engage with one another in the group exercises and interact with their fellow students in a respectful and open manner.

APPENDIX B: DIRECTING INTIMACY

Course offered through: College of Arts and Sciences

Through: School of Performing and Visual Arts

From Department of: Theatre and Dance

GEC:

Will this course be a GEC?: No

Degree Plan:

Will this course be required/listed on a degree plan?: Yes (Advanced Theatre

Electives – Directing, History, & Theory)

Materials:

Does this course require textbook/materials?: Yes

Course Equivalency:

Is this course equivalent to any other course?: No

Online Method of Instruction:

Will this course be offered in an online format?: No

Course Information:

Course Title: Directing Intimacy

Course Prefix: THE

Course Number: 422

Credit Hours: 3

Course Description: This course would allow students with an interest in the intimacy world to become familiar with the theory and the process of directing an intimate scene. Because of the sensitive nature of the material, students would not take the THE 320 approach and direct their fellow students, as holding rehearsals outside of class time without a neutral third party (or the instructor) present would pose a risk to all involved. Rather, students would intellectually engage with texts on intimacy direction, and apply the theories to required texts (plays) in class discussion and chosen texts (plays) for assignments. The semester would begin with mostly lectures and class exercises to build trust and reiterate the consent-based practices learned in THE 103L, but as reading material is assigned a more discussion-based approach would be adopted. Lectures would cover intimacy practices covered in assigned books and provided texts on intimacy work, trauma-informed practices, and feminist theory on gender to spark discussions about these topics in relation to assigned plays, as well as other forms of media students can relate to.

Prerequisites: THE 103L, THE 320

Corequisites: N/A

Can this course be repeated for credit?: No

Is consent required for students to take this course?: Yes

Recommended section size: 10-15

Course objectives: Students will gain an understanding of both the intellectual and creative sides of intimacy direction; students will gain a deeper understanding of the collaborative nature of theatre as a hyper-medium; students will learn how to effectively research plays.

Intended student audience: Students who have an interest in and/or hope to pursue intimacy direction as a career path (or career branch – many theatre artists work in multiple areas)

Titles and publication dates of suggested and/or required texts:

Ball, David. *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2017. *req. for THE320*

Behn, Aphra. *The Rover or, The Banish'd Cavaliers*. Biblioness, 2017 (orig. 1677).

Pace, Chelsea, and Laura Rikard. *Staging Sex: Best Practices, Tools, and Techniques for Theatrical Intimacy*. Routledge, 2019.

Strindberg, August, and Amy Ng. *Miss Julie*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020 (orig. 1888).

Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2004 (orig. 1947).

Assignments and Course Evaluation:

Methods of testing/evaluation and grade determination: Grades will be based on a 150-point scale, divided like so:

-Participation (50 points)

-"Mining for Context" (2 @ 25 points)

-Final Scene Study (50 points)

Assignment Descriptions:

-Participation: Students should come to class prepared to engage with their classmates through sharing thoughts that demonstrate understanding of and personal reflection on the reading material assigned. Students will also participate in boundary and consent-based exercises (building off of the practices from THE 103L), applied specifically to the plays covered in class.

-"Mining for Context": These assignments will allow students to choose a play with a scene of intimacy, one classical and one contemporary, and "mine" the play for helpful context that would assist the student in directing the scene of intimacy – character relationships, time period, culture in which the play is set/cultural background of the characters, etc. This is of paramount importance, as context is one of the most useful tools in the choreography process and should be fully understood before moving into choreography.

-Final Scene Study: Each student will choose between *Miss Julie* or *Streetcar*. The instructor will give a description of the director's vision, the design elements, and each actor/their hypothetical boundaries for each show. The students will map out the process of what choreographing a scene of intimacy factoring in all of these elements might look like, from the beginning of the rehearsal process (or before, during the design process) to the start of the show's run (when the stage manager takes over).

How will students interact with other students?: Class discussion, one-on-one

discussion, group exercises

APPENDIX C: PRACTICUM IN ASSISTANT INTIMACY DIRECTING

Course offered through: College of Arts and Sciences

Through: School of Performing and Visual Arts

From Department of: Theatre and Dance

GEC:

Will this course be a GEC?: No

Degree Plan:

Will this course be required/listed on a degree plan?: Yes (Theatre Practicum

Requirements)

Materials:

Does this course require textbook/materials?: No

Course Equivalency:

Is this course equivalent to any other course?: No

Online Method of Instruction:

Will this course be offered in an online format?: No

Course Information:

Course Title: Practicum in Assistant Intimacy Directing

Course Prefix: THE

Course Number: 490L

Credit Hours: 1-3

Course Description: Student will shadow and assist the intimacy director of a mainstage production. This will entail attending production meetings and rehearsals that the ID is present for. The student will watch the ID choreograph, assist in gathering context, and engage in discussion with the ID, director, and actors. The student will also help communicate to the stage manager the need for meetings with any other members of the production team (costume designer, lighting designer, etc.), and the student will attend said meetings with the ID. This course will give the student the chance to see the logistical side of intimacy direction and the choreography process in action in the context of a fully realized production. If course is repeated, the ID might allow the student to take over some of the creative process and choreograph under the supervision and mentorship of the ID.

Prerequisites: THE 320, THE 422

Corequisites: N/A

Can this course be repeated for credit?: Yes

Is consent required for students to take this course?: Yes

Recommended section size: N/A

Course objectives: Student will gain hands-on knowledge of the choreography process; student will develop communication skills across areas of theatre.

Intended student audience: A student with a clear passion for intimacy work who has the required background and is seeking mentorship.

Titles and publication dates of suggested and/or required texts: N/A

Assignments and Course Evaluation:

Methods of testing/evaluation and grade determination: This course is graded fully on participation.

How will students interact with other students?: Student will interact with other students and faculty members working on the production in a professional manner.

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