

New Repetitions: Questions and Suggestions for a More Trauma-Informed Production Process

Karie Miller, MFA, PhD; Kelsey Miller, MA; and Elizabeth Wellman, PhD

About the Authors:

Karie Miller (she/they) is an interdisciplinary artist, scholar, and educator specializing in belonging, and the content, behavior, and containers that promote it, primarily through acts of care, play, and joy. Her pedagogy and creative practice, informed by feminist, anti-racist, trauma-informed, and somatic practice, aspires to convene equitable and creative learning experiences. She holds a BFA from Northern Kentucky University, an MFA from the University of Virginia, and PhD from the Ohio State University. Karie is proud to be in the first Educator Advocate cohort with Theatrical Intimacy Education and currently teaches as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Grinnell College, in Grinnell, IA.

Kelsey Miller (they/them) is a therapist and interdisciplinary artist specializing in therapy for queer and trans individuals, sex therapy, and therapy for people practicing polyamory. Their therapeutic approach--influenced by anti-racist, trauma informed, and transformative justice principles--utilizes somatic practices and attachment theory to help people deepen their connections to each other. They hold an BA from Southern Oregon University, and an MA from Lewis and Clark Graduate School. They currently practice as a Marriage and Family Therapy Associate at The Center for Couples and Sex Therapy in Portland, OR.

Elizabeth Wellman (she/her) is a performance historian and theatre director who specializes in inclusive pedagogies and facilitation. Wellman's current scholarship interrogates workers' rights and safety on the stage, particularly in a historical North American context. Her dissertation troubles narratives of cultural and artistic illegitimacy in mid-century burlesque performance, while her master's thesis focused on theatre made by and for survivors of sexual violence. She holds a BA in Theatre from Adams State University, and an MA and PhD in Theatre History, Literature, and Criticism from the Ohio State University. Wellman is currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre History at University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Trauma-informed care's basic premise is that people are shaped by what has happened to them and what they have had to do to survive it. There is no shortage of examples to this effect, especially in our post-#MeToo and post-#WeSeeYouWAT culture. It's easy to spot what isn't working but much harder to do something differently. *That* requires unlearning the decades of training and practice embedded in the performing arts. It requires us to deconstruct the perpetuated harm justified by the cultural value of survival, grit, and the starving artist myth, though many of us, as educators, were taught those same rules when we were students. Despite the widespread need for change, this type of deconstruction cannot take place on a grand scale—as we know, change happens incrementally. To create lasting change requires us to first dig in, on a personal level, and examine why we each have bought into or been complicit in the institutional harm of the performing arts.

I hold both a BFA and an MFA in acting and participated in the professional theatre and improv community of Chicago—I am the product of classic hegemonic training programs and industry which rely on normalized harm¹. Only recently have I been able to recognize the harm I took in as part of my education. Coincidentally, my sibling, Kelsey Miller also experienced the limitations of care in the performing arts yet is now a marriage and family therapist. The edge phenomena of our family are significant, with family calls and meals turning quickly into research conversations, including our older sister, a web developer, and a UX fanatic. It was by the grace of family that I learned about trauma-informed care and processed its absence in my own field as an actor, director, and spectator.

I left Chicago in 2014 and, in a Ph.D. program at the Ohio State University, I met then-doctoral candidate Elizabeth Wellman and her impressive heart and passion for the common good as realized through theatre. She shared similar concerns informed by her own previous performing arts trauma. Together, we developed a shared research question of how to establish and share best practices for trauma-informed theatrical production, specifically in educational settings, and, along the way, invited Kelsey Miller into the room to speak about the intricacies of mental health and performance.

We began with questioning the primacy of some hierarchical rehearsal models and what their alternative might be, imagined specifically for practical purposes. This initial study was informed by Watkins' "The Feminist Director in Rehearsal: An Education" in *Theatre Topics* (2005), Young's "Feminist Pedagogy at Play in the University Rehearsal Room" in *Theatre*

Topics (2012), and Kim A. Case’s “Toward an Intersectional Pedagogy Model” in *Intersectional Pedagogy* (2016), Mantell’s “Touch the Wound but Don’t Live There” in *American Theatre* (2021), the transformational work of adrienne maree brown, and continued study on intimacy choreography, largely through Theatrical Intimacy Education. To be clear, we do not claim ownership of trauma-informed theatre practice—rather, we hope to facilitate a gathering and sharing space informed by rigorous research and praxis. As we stated in our initial proposal:

“We seek to consider the practical disruption of rehearsal rituals which erase, dismiss, or disempower women, people of color, trans people, and other marginalized bodies and to imagine the implementation of new rituals and structures that may counter inherent, unearned repetition of patriarchy and white supremacy. These new repetitions have the potential to generate performances embodying true radical hospitality in which the spectators and performers visibly and *carefully* partner in the creation of the performance’s meaning.”

Our first working group convening at the 2020 virtual American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) conference gathered a small group of like-minded individuals with experience in dance, technical theatre, and various performance backgrounds.² We convened, knowing we wanted to build something but unsure of what that something was.

As we learned and re-learned while working together at the 2020 virtual ASTR convening and the 2021 San Diego ASTR conference, the work of proposing trauma-informed practices requires first talking through and witnessing the effects of the status quo. We foolishly assumed the work would just mean building a collaborative policy list of *dos* and *don’ts* because, again, that’s what we were familiar with coming from cultural and educational experiences shaped by white supremacy. But we quickly found that policy solves nothing without the interdependency of its stakeholders.

In our ASTR convenings, we found that what often drew people to this change-making conversation was a personal buy-in, having had their own adverse experiences in the past. In all of our ASTR-hosted meetings and virtual working sessions, folx tended to mention what was not working by telling a personal or witnessed story of harm. Personal testimony of the past is an important part of crafting the future. Imagining alternative training methods requires the healing that comes with witnessing and listening. Together we found that this work cannot be considered without first disrupting the shame that leads to future harm. We work with the assumption that toxic behavior is not endemic to the theatre—its harm is the result of previous harm. Cycles of

abuse, suicide, harassment, and harm have all flourished by being left unnamed for decades, so significant healing requires personal attention.

We took inspiration for our document's structure from Tema Okun's 1999 document on White Supremacy Culture. Rather than a prose-style article, we offer lists of questions and suggestions generated by us in collaboration with our working group members. What we have codified in our document is not work that we or anyone in our group invented. Karie Miller, Kelsey Miller, and Elizabeth Wellman are all white individuals of middle-class privilege and advanced degrees. As we continue to resist prior structures of teaching and criticism, we also want to offer something that allows for the complexity of the many factors affecting theatrical situations, and which puts the diagnosis in the hands of the community and not just one individual. So, we have broken our document into sections, each representing one stage in the life cycle of production. We first offer "evidence that things aren't working," followed by "questions to ask" and then "suggested alternatives" and "resources."

At this stage in the research, the document has reached the "beta-testing" stage, which asks that the document be stress-tested in real practical conditions. Of course, this work cannot simply be outlined and disseminated in a static document. It requires an ongoing working document and the ongoing collaboration of the people involved. So, the 'final product' will build on the results of this beta-testing and offer a publicly accessible working document of ongoing adjustment. We encourage you to reach out with any suggestions.

Definitions

Safety: It is our understanding that depending on the identities one holds; safety is a privilege. When we are referring to safety in this document, we are referring to participants' ability to stay present and engaged. When someone feels respected, their comfort can be stretched, and ultimately, they feel safe *enough* to play and work together.

Accountability: Generally, accountability is taking responsibility for actions both in regard to impact and intention. This might look like someone being able to answer feedback or conflict with openness, curiosity, and flexibility, versus with defensiveness or rigidity. For example, when we say, "lack of accountability," this means when things go wrong and participants are struggling, the leadership or those responsible either do not take responsibility, are not

responsive, do not treat the feedback with an appropriate level of seriousness or urgency that communicates care for participants, and/or deflect from responsibility using blame or scapegoating.

Scarcity: The belief that we do not have enough of something, so we must either hoard or sacrifice something else to maintain our supply. Scarcity here refers to the feeling that resources, time, ability, etc., are scarce and therefore require us to sacrifice crucial abstract resources (care, community, belonging, safety, authenticity) for more concrete “scarce” resources such as money or time. For example: Not casting an actor with a disability with the excuse that it may take more time than the company has to work with them.

Company and Community Culture

The way we approach the community culture inside the theater reflects the way we approach culture outside the theater and vice versa. The main differences are the methods of accountability available in these different spaces.

Challenges to safety:

- Unclear accountability measures
- Unclear expectations
- Strict operational hierarchy and power hoarding
- Adherence to “industry standards” regardless of their success or consequences
- Lack of shared values/priorities across the team
- Limitations of academic and institutional power structures
- Prioritizing the perspective of those in power over those not in power
- Lack of shared familiarity with experiential knowledge of individuals
- Ignorance of experiential knowledge of students/marginalized identities
- Limited visions of success (money, fame, expert status)
- Prioritization of “professionalization” / “the real world”
- Larger departments, companies, or units increase the difficulty in changing culture/creating inclusivity
- The emphasis on “cancel culture”; not allowing for learning how to do things differently or how to make space for growth (for faculty and students)

Evidence that something is not working:

- Presence of casually degrading or dismissive language
- Body language: avoiding eye contact, closed off with arms crossed or chest collapsed, fidgeting, pacing, ambivalent nodding
- Defensive/belittling responses, derision, and dismissal to complaints/conflict: “This is how we do it here”; “In my day...”; “In the real world...”; or for the sake of “legitimacy” or “paying of dues”
- Requiring more emotional/physical labor than is accounted for (these labors are often invisible or under-visible)
- Compassion fatigue: finding it difficult to care or emotionally respond to others’ pain
- Valorizing exhaustion, martyrdom, hazing; a belief that stress equals success
- Lack of transparency around compensation
- Shared ideas that “The Work” is more important than anything else
- Appeasement- the embodied experience of feeling the need to placate others to keep the peace, stay in their good graces, and/or avoid potential conflict

Questions to ask of ourselves, our colleagues, and our collaborations:

- Who is “in control”?
- Who has power? Who does not?
- What are our values?
- How do we make decisions?

- How do we hold one another accountable? What are the consequences?
- What expertise is already present?
- How do the powerful talk about those with less power when they are not in the room?
- How do the projected hours measure against the actually spent hours?
- How do we compensate labor?
- How transparent is this contract?
- What do we reward?
- What do we punish?
- What are the safeguards?
- What are the essential functions of each role?
- How do we respond to change in culture or practice?
- Is there an established order for who to go to address concerns? What is it, and how accessible is that knowledge?
- How do we define “safety” and “danger” in our shared culture?
- How do we address, incorporate, or ignore the ongoing lived experience of our participants *outside* the creative space?
- How do we invite our colleagues to come with us in the process rather than alienating or distancing them?
- Why does X system *have* to function this way? *Could* it function differently?
- When working with specific communities, what is the contract/agreement made with the neighborhood? How transparent is that contract with the neighborhood?
- Are we making “for” or “with”? How is the community involved in the making? What is the invitation?
- Is compensation commensurate with market standards? Are there clear lines between employment and volunteerism?
- Who/what are the resources in our community or in the community in which we have been invited to engage?
- How does the production or project relate to the neighborhood? How does this performance experience benefit those who participate?
- What is the target audience to whom we are marketing this project? In what ways is this audience inside or outside the community in which we are working?
- How do the resources of our company, institution, or department reflect or respond to the resources of the neighborhood? In particular, how do we consider equity and need?
- What are the potential barriers to entry? Transportation, ticket cost, childcare, safety, time, accessibility?
- What is the parking/public transit situation? How does that impact those involved?
- How is our institution, company, or department participating in community events?
- How do we respectfully bring in the community?
- What is our long-term commitment to the community?
- How is our institution, company, or department using its resources beyond performing arts production?

Suggested practices:

- Adhere to timeline and time commitments

- Establish shared expectations within a community around essential functions and reasonable accommodations, perhaps a contract/agreement within the company
- Allow space and time to find the balance between project goals and human capacity/needs
- Post community culture documents in physical space (and perhaps link to them using QR codes)
- Host a series of community conversations about shared goals and values that includes all faculty and students or company members who participate:
- Guiding question: How can our values lead our practices?
- Develop shared language/vocabulary
- Establish a concern response path comprised of who to speak to for what concerns within the organization and how concerns are handled
- Regularly incorporate check-in's
- Patience and grace--if the intentions are there for this colleague, make space for slowly, gently onboarding them/letting them see how it works
- Develop a coalition; this work cannot be accomplished by one person working alone

Further reading:³

- brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. United States: AK Press, 2021.

brown's text imagines alternative systems of organization and community building, drawing on the work of climate activism and Afro-futurism, as well as their work in the not-for-profit world. Utilizing the language and imagery of the natural world and its systems, brown invites readers to consider the possibility of parallels in human systems. In language, both poetic and practical, *Emergent Strategy* offers a foundational text in decolonizing systems to better serve communities.

- Harvie, Jen, and Andy Lavendar. *Making Contemporary Theatre: International Rehearsal Processes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Harvie and Lavendar's edited collection offers a survey of contemporary rehearsal practices in a global context, particularly within devised work. A review of this text offers specific examples of rehearsal culture and may point to commonalities both in success and challenge facing artists in collaborative environments, inviting both application and troubling of those practices.

- Loar, Josh. "Overworked Staff and Performing Arts: Let's Not Pretend We're Okay." TheatreArtLife, July 2, 2019. <https://www.theatreartlife.com/technical/Performing-arts-overworked-staff/>.

Loar's personal reflection is a call-to-action for theatre-makers at all levels to interrogate the ways in which our industry sanctions, and even endorses, exhaustion within our work culture. Stemming from his many years in professional and academic theatre and entertainment, Loar invites us to challenge some of the norms and expectations our field has historically supported.

- McAuley, Gay. *Not magic but work: an ethnographic account of a rehearsal process*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015.

McAuley's exhaustive case study of a specific rehearsal process at Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney, Australia includes, among other things, a strong argument for understanding and articulating the social working components of community within a particular production. Readers may find it helpful to consider the ways in which the individual circumstances and needs within a *specific rehearsal process* may not be able to be generalized or reconstituted as a guiding principle for application outside that rehearsal room. In other words, this reading may complicate the argument for making guidelines transferable, leading us to interrogate the limitations of this kind of broad application.

- Okun, Tema. "(divorcing) White Supremacy Culture: Coming Home to Who We Really Are." <https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/>.

Okun builds on their landmark article, "White Supremacy Culture", which describes some of the observable ways that culture "shows up in our organizations." Readers may find it a useful introductory tool to consider how white supremacy culture has informed or impacted their behaviors and experiences. Okun's website offers a "remix" of the article, placing it into a broader context which seeks to educate and offer increased historical and social context. The site includes webinars, links to other writers and thinkers, and additional resources for exploration. It is an accessible and wide-ranging resource for us to consider, particularly in the context of our rehearsal practices.

- Sedgman, Kirsty. *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Sedgman's study troubles the notion of "unruly behavior" in contemporary theatre audience, reframing such discourse for broader discussion about ableism, accessibility, and

disability justice, among other things. Sedgman asks us to consider not only *what* is reasonable etiquette for the theatre, but also *who* decides?

- Thompson, James. *Applied Theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond*. Bern: Peter Lang Ltd, International Academic Publishers, 2012.

Thompson's project examines applied theatre collaborations internationally, analyzing not just the *what* in specific case studies, but the assessment of that *what*. Helpful in thinking not just about applied and community engaged work, but also in modeling potential assessments for success in practice, Thompson's book invites us to interrogate the methodologies and measures of efficacy we embrace in our own processes.

Auditions

Challenges to safety:

- "Auditions" is a loaded term that has both positive/negative connotations
- Unclear approach to cultural competency in casting
- Requiring actors to accept whatever role they are offered due to curriculum or community expectations
- Limited relationship between department/company and wider campus or community population
- Physical access to the audition space due to its location and/or layout
- Unclear casting expectations and timeline
- Prioritizing "bold" choices without equal prioritization of boundaries
- Required disclosure on the audition form, i.e., having to answer questions that will elicit information that participants aren't comfortable sharing but have to share in order to be part of the project
- Required participation in exchange for access or credit hours
- Requiring certain credentials prior to casting or employment, resulting in institutional gatekeeping

Evidence that something's not working:

- Only reaching out to marginalized communities for specific projects
- Lack of diverse representation in the audition pool
- Lack of diverse representation in the casting room, including directors, producers, stage management
- Resistance to change or new artists
- Demonstrations of ableist infantilization/embarrassment/dehumanization of people who need accommodations or other marginalized communities
- Those with needs are asked to educate those in power/decision-making roles/unpaid labor (gendered/racialized/embodied labor)
- Performative/theoretical language without corresponding action
- Presence of scarcity culture

- Us vs. Them mentalities- “in-group” of seasoned theatre community members and “out-group” of new members

Questions to ask:

- How are we pursuing and building relationships with individuals or communities beyond those currently in or associated with the company or department?
- How do we welcome people? What language is used for engagement and recruitment?
- How do we care for auditionees? What do they need to feel confident and successful?
- How do we respond to accommodation (having the conversation of accommodation *before* it’s needed in real-time)?
- What might they be feeling as newcomers to our space and/or as actors auditioning?
- How do we communicate our expectations, or “what we’re looking for”?
- How do we handle follow-up, casting, and communication with those who are not cast?
- What happens when we need to cast a character with a disability that a student or actor wouldn’t have?
- Barrier of the audition itself: if you want a student or actor who is not in the department or company, how do they know how to audition/when/where/etc.? How welcoming is that department or company to new students or actors under the guise of professionalism?
- Audition posting language: what language are we using regarding race, gender, ability, size?
- Disability language -- how do we talk about individuals/communities? Why is the word “disability” problematic?
- What do accommodations actually look like (ramps, elevators, etc.)? What are you explicitly committing to?
- “Theaters are old buildings.” What matters more to you: inclusion or the building? What resources might be needed and available to update building access?
- Who is responsible for making accommodations/accessibility?
- How is language static/dynamic when we’re describing bodies on stage?
- Why do we prioritize certain credentials, and who is left out of the process when we prioritize a certain credential?

Suggested practices:

- Restage the layout of the audition room (attempt to change the hierarchical feel of the room with us vs. them set up: circle of chairs, director and auditionee sit one-on-one, small creative groups oriented around collaborative tasks or brainstorming).
- Look at the audition as a workshop rather than a performance; this may include starting each group with games or viewpoints to focus the auditionees and give them grounding in and ownership of the space
- Lay groundwork with different communities long before audition calls go out
- “Not accommodation, innovation” (Ann Cooper Albright. *Choreographing Difference*.)
- Possible language: “We welcome all abilities”
- Have workshops in the student union: “This is how to audition”
- Intro to Acting/theatre classes: clarify what is being taught and intentionally get those students to audition, faculty going into those classes and talking about what auditions look

like: registration, expectations in the audition room of both the actor and the casting personnel, etc.

- Inviting community groups to program their events in our space, making room for them in our season planning and production calendar, rather than only asking community members, particularly from marginalized groups, to participate in our projects and attend our shows. Honor the ongoing work happening in communities and amplify community-led projects before and in conjunction with new programming.
- Audition posting language regarding race, gender, ability, size

Further Reading:

- Albright, Ann Cooper. *Choreographing Difference: The body and identity in Contemporary Dance*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997

Albright examines the relationship between body and culture in contemporary choreography, offering an analysis of how cultural representation is communicated through the body. This analysis gives crucial insight to identity and cultural considerations communicated through bodies in performance.

- Alexandrowicz, Conrad. *Acting Queer: Gender Dissidence and the Subversion of Realism*. New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Alexandrowicz casts a queer theory lens on theatre pedagogy. He cites the experiences of gender diverse actors navigating heteronormative theatre teaching practices. This book sparks a discussion of how to move forward while considering the past experiences and future needs of these actors.

- Bruder, Melissa and Lee Michae Cohnl. *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*. London: Vintage, 1986

The authors aim to fill the gap left behind by many acting classes for other actors in the field. Written by young actors working under playwright David Mamet, actor W. H. Macy, and director Gregory Mosher at the time of writing, this book is informed by real-world experiences.

- Greene, Meg. "Gender Responsive Casting." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, June 29, 2016. <https://howlround.com/gender-responsive-casting>.

Greene interrogates traditional audition practices, with a comparative analysis of the progress in inclusivity of race and ethnicity to the lack of awareness of diversity in gender presentation and expression of those auditioning. Using recent feedback and observations of

working with gender diverse actors Greene asks what needs to happen to shift how casting directors search for actors to include these identities and reduce potential harm.

- Heumann, Judith with Kristen Joiner. 2020. *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*. Beacon Press.

In this memoir by a highly influential disability rights activist, Heumann shares invaluable perspectives is invaluable in expanding the reader's view of the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

- Jadhvani, Lavina and Victor Vazquez. "Identity-Conscious Casting: Moving Beyond Color-Blind and Color-Conscious Casting." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, February 2, 2021. <https://howlround.com/identity-conscious-casting>.

In this conversation between Jadhvani, a director from Chicago, and Vazquez, the casting director from X Casting NYC about casting in theatre, they discuss evolving casting from "color-conscious" or "color-blind" acting towards including more identities and experiences.

- Johnston, Kirsty. "Reclaiming the Ordinary Extraordinary Body: Or, The Importance of the Glass Menagerie for Literary Disability Studies." *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama*, by Kirsty Johnston, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, pp. 129–52.

Johnston details the landscape of disability theatre and its main challenges. Analyzing modern productions of disability theatre, Johnston highlights how disability on the stage has shifted. Later other disability studies scholars and disability theatre practitioners offer analysis and generative discussion of disability theatre and its potential to offer new perspectives and challenge creativity.

- Jutting, Jaclynn. "Teaching the Young Director to Cast Inclusively: Best Practices." *Theatre Topics* 30, no. 3 (2020): 187-193.

Jutting offers a firsthand narrative of efforts to address casting with her directing students, identifying some strategies for challenging young directors to cast consciously in terms of race, gender, disability, age, and size. Her honest reflection and assessment on the efficacy of such measures makes this a particularly compelling conversation starter for departments, teachers, and directors.

- Mac, Taylor. "A Culture of Trust." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, September 22, 2011. <https://howlround.com/culture-trust>.

Playwright Mac compares experiences of working with actors vs. dancers and highlights experiences that could inform future development of performance-making. Mac proposes developing new standards that prioritize trust, community-building, flattening hierarchy, and considering the performer more holistically. More specifically Mac proposes new perspectives on auditioning that have offered more successful results for judy than traditional practices.

- Oberoi, Kirsten. "No. Auditions. Ever. ...and Here's Why." Southshore Children's Chorus, November 9, 2022. <https://www.sscchorus.org/blog-post/noauditionsever>.

Choral director explores the auditioning process for new singers compared to her choir's process of admitting anyone in without audition. She explores the possibilities allowed by not being beholden to traditional auditions, questioning the hidden bias and elitism of such auditions, and advocates for a shift in thinking about the quality of the performance over the community that creating a successful performance requires.

- Pace, Chelsea, Laura Rikard, and Shealyn Jae. *Staging Sex: Best Practices, Tools, and Techniques for Theatrical Intimacy*. New York; London: Routledge, 2020.

This practical guide for staging intimacy, nudity, and sexual violence allows for communicating boundaries and considering the safety of performers.

- Sawyer, Aaron, and Terri Lynn Hudson. "Access Auditions for Performers Who Are D/Deaf and Disabled." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, August 15, 2017. <https://howlround.com/access-auditions-performers-who-are-ddeaf-and-disabled>.

Sawyer and Hudson outline their process for developing and updating "Access Auditions" at Red Theatre Chicago, a more inclusive audition process for people with disabilities.

- Woodzick, K. "A Nonbinary Actor Prepares (for Battle)." *Theatre Topics* 30, no. 2 (2020): 109–15. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2020.0017>.

Woodzick offers practical advice for non-binary actors, particularly in vocal training and performance. Not only does Woodzick outline a training methodology from Roy Hart which incorporates tools that were particularly useful in assisting Woodzick in the development of their

voice, but also gives recommendations for best practices from the audition process through production. This helpful resource for non-binary performers in self-advocacy can also serve as a strong introductory primer for cisgender practitioners in creating and sustaining inclusive professional theatre spaces.

Rehearsals

Challenges to safety:

- In-grouping: where some folks in the room know one another and others are new and therefore “outside” the group
- Unclear timeline throughout the rehearsal
- Rigid hierarchies
- Value attributed to a “right” way without critical analysis
- Inability to acknowledge difference
- Exclusionary language in relation to disability/language barriers/comfort level [NOTE: how are we defining “exclusionary”?]
- Exclusionary practices in relation to disability/language barriers/comfort level
- Not making room for boundary practice/fight call per show/actor needs
- Priorities for each process are determined by the individual vision/director and are not always clear to those outside the artistic team
- Unclear if rehearsal is open/closed to crew or potential audience/anyone outside cast

Evidence that something is not working:

- Participants unwilling to speak up or articulate boundaries
- A culture of gossip or passive-aggression
- Valuing stress as success
- Exercises/activities unable to include all participants
- Space becomes static - the process halts
- Disagreements between participants are unfruitful
- Energy drops in the room and/or the cast
- Unclear access to resources, i.e., “where is the first aid kit?”
- Confusion around deadlines or schedule
- Fear of conflict, viewing all conflict as negative
- Discomfort due to “surprise” audience

Questions to ask:

- How energetic (or not) does the room feel?
- Who gets to know what information? Why?
- How do we protect everyone’s time? How do we preserve individual agency over time?
- Who participates most often? Why? Who is not? Why?
- Does everyone appear to be actively involved? Can more people become involved?
- How are we checking in with one another?
- How do we define daily progress?

- What are the values behind scheduling? Is tradition relied on for tradition's sake (e.g., night rehearsals)?
- Who is invited to watch the rehearsal, and why? Is everyone aware of rehearsal audience in a timeframe that allows actor wellness?

Suggested practices:

- Flexibility - allow exercises/activities to wander and bring back
- Allow exercises/activities to be led by participants
- Accommodations viewed as innovations - use this language
- Encourage disagreements to become discussions
- Allow participants to question and change scene/dialogue/choreography
- Communicate early and often standards and expectations for rehearsals
- Encourage inclusive practices from the beginnings (keeping an eye on potential exclusions; encourage participants to advocate for selves', peers, for leadership; check biases that produce us vs. them/hierarchy mentality)

Further Reading:

- Harvie, Jen, and Andy Lavendar. *Making Contemporary Theatre: International Rehearsal Processes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Harvie and Lavendar's edited collection offers a survey of some contemporary rehearsal practices in a global context, particularly within devised work. A review of this text offers specific examples of rehearsal culture and may point to commonalities both in success and challenge facing artists in collaborative environments, inviting both application and troubling of those practices.

- James, Ann, and Rocio Mendez. "Balancing Power through Intimacy in the Rehearsal Space." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, August 26, 2022. <https://howlround.com/balancing-power-through-intimacy-rehearsal-space>.

James interviews Mendez about her experience of adding consent-based practices to her fight choreography. The piece reflects on the changing landscape around intimacy direction for the stage and offers specific examples from production that highlight the learning and growth process.

- Pace, Chelsea, Laura Rikard, and Shealyn Jae. *Staging Sex: Best Practices, Tools, and Techniques for Theatrical Intimacy*. New York; London: Routledge, 2020.

This practical guide for staging intimacy, nudity, and sexual violence allows for communicating boundaries and considering the safety of performers.

- Redfield, Claire K. “The 4 RS.” HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, January 21, 2021. <https://howlround.com/4-rs>.

Grounded in her training in trauma-responsive rehearsal practices, Redfield offers an introductory look at some guiding principles for incorporating trauma-responsiveness in creative spaces. Utilizing David Treleaven’s description of the “4 Rs” used in the US National Center for Trauma-Informed Care, Redfield expands each with a list of questions for practitioners in theatre to consider under each heading: *realizing*, *recognizing*, *responding*, and *resisting*.

- Simonsen, Barbara. *The Art of Rehearsal: Conversations with Contemporary Theatre Makers*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017.

Simonsen interviews eighteen professional theatre directors from the UK, US, and Europe about their own practices in rehearsal. The compilation of their advice and experiences offers both philosophical and pragmatic insight into common elements of successful theatre companies.

- Venet, Alex Shevrin. *Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Education*. New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021.

Venet’s primary goals as an educator are both preventionist and interventionist. Venet argues for a set of transformative practices which might engage students who have experienced trauma and harm which, in turn, leads to greater inequity in classroom experiences. This text approaches the topic from a pedagogical framework, offering key takeaways and practical examples of application.

Tech

Challenges to safety:

- Altered or unpredictable schedule
- More people and equipment are involved/in the room
- Longer hours with fewer breaks
- Assumed knowledge, mobility, ability, and communication styles
- Physical changes in the environment (blackouts, bright lights, costumes, etc.)
- Everyone’s running on empty, including time limitations (spend the least amount of time not making money)
- New expectations, likely uncommunicated
- Predetermined expectations of “hell week” and impending stress and anguish
- Lack of onboarding for crew
- In-grouping of performers, exclusion of anyone else

- Lack of personal and professional communication

Evidence that something's not working:

- Treatment of designers and technicians as “hired help”
- Lack of students signing up for crew positions - lack of recruitment, lack of retention
- The tech crew and cast become territorial
- Not showing up on time
- Annoyance at perceived involvement - not feeling seen
- Members getting snippy or becoming argumentative
- Tech crew injuries
- Awkwardness in communication between crew and cast
- Designers have reputations of negative behavior with little consequence (continue to get hired, aren't given feedback, etc.) that is ignored because their work is good
- Tech and design leadership and crew don't have time to read the plays they're working on or adequately communicate with their fellow crew members
- The tech crew is relying on only one form of communication that doesn't consider the needs of crew members for alternate forms of communication (using headsets only)

Questions to ask:

- How are we bringing the constituencies of a production together?
- How are we practicing equity in labor?
- How are we balancing work and rest?
- How are we encouraging, preparing, and retaining technicians?
- How do we establish and nurture relationships between tech, cast, and director?
- How do we honor each person's work?
- What are the indicators of stress, and how are we responding?
- How are we inviting the tech crew into the space and warming up with them?
- How is tech leadership being invited into the company?
- How is leadership modeling accountability, collaboration, respect, boundaries, etc.?
- What are we not seeing when designers or others in leadership roles interact with our members? What are we willing to ignore that is damaging to the relationships between the crew and cast?
- How much do we want tech crew and leaders involved, and what resources (time, space, acknowledgment, etc.) are we providing to ensure they are able to be involved?
- How are we checking in with each individual crew member to understand what they need to perform their job well?

Suggested practices:

- Implement check-ins at the start of each day's work.
- Inviting crew and cast to play theatre games/warm-ups together
- Celebrating the accomplishments of tech with cast
- Asking cast members to help with tech for experience
- Nurturing a culture of feedback, flexibility, and open action to accommodate crew needs

- Paying attention to indicators of stress (ex: crew members going quiet or shutting down; increased aggression and irritability; increased sense of urgency or fatigue; lack of concentration and focus; increased conflict; ambivalence)
- Recognize when the entire group needs a break and/or to reset work expectations
- Leadership in design and technology (designers and production managers) prioritizing crew wellness (including their own)- checking on stress levels, physical, safety, and how each member is taking care of their bodies and each other
- Involving tech leadership and crew in the process early and often
- Introducing crew members when they arrive multiple times, encouraging everyone to be on a first-name basis
- Including crew in breaks during rehearsals
- Building a culture of transparency, compassionate confrontation, and support in advocating for boundaries and feedback (no matter how awkward)
- Create safety plans with the crew and cast in case someone gets injured, is triggered, or an inappropriate interaction occurs, and communicate the plan early and often.

Further Reading:

- Breemen, Alice. "Performance Philosophy: Audience Participation and Responsibility." *Performance Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (2017): 299. <https://doi.org/10.21476/pp.2017.2267>.

A critical treatise on the changing role of the audience in contemporary theatre, Breemen's article offers a case study that examines the spectator's relationship to the performance itself.

- Kershaw, Baz. 2001. "Oh for Unruly Audiences." *Modern Drama* 133-154.

In Kershaw's now landmark essay, he argues for a connection between increased performative applause in the contemporary theatre and decreased agency of the audience who offers such applause. For our purposes, Kershaw's essay asks important questions about what it means to disempower/empower an audience through our expectations of their behavior and response.

- Parker, Priya. *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*. New York City, NY: Riverhead Books, 2020.

Parker's recent self-help guide, designed to be applicable in personal and professional settings, makes a case for facilitation of all "gatherings," from work meetings to family dinners. The book is designed to be accessible to facilitators with diverse agendas and needs. Parker's work emphasizes choice, individuality, and transparent communication, values we have personally found meaningful in conversation with theatre practitioners.

- Ranciere, Jacques. 2011. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso.

Ranciere's influential examination of spectatorship argues for a move away from the binary thinking of spectators as passive and actors as doers/changemakers. In troubling the notion that theatre audiences exist as monolithic communities that move as one populist body, Ranciere reframes spectators as individuals in equality. In our conversations, we have considered Ranciere's interrogation of the "purposes" of theatre to speak to/educate/change its audience members and questioned our own possibly assumed agendas about the work that we make and those for whom we claim to make it.

- Sedgman, Kirsty. 2018. *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behavior Policing, and the Live Performance Experience*. Palgrave.

Sedgman's study troubles the notion of "unruly behavior" in contemporary theatre audience, reframing such discourse for broader discussion about ableism, accessibility, and disability justice, among other things. Sedgman asks us to consider not only *what* is reasonable etiquette for the theatre, but also *who* decides?

- Simon, Nina. 2016. *The Art of Relevance*. Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0.

Museum director Nina Simon offers practical lessons from her work in community engagement and new audience cultivation. We have made particular note of her description of relevance as "an exercise in empathy." Further, some of Simon's questions for herself and her team are especially useful frames: Whose [Institution's] Room Is This? Where are the "Invisible Doors" potentially creating access barriers?

Conversations and Reflections from Artists

- Haac, Lux, Dominique Fawn Hill, and Deb Sivigny. "Three Costume Designers Meet for Tea on the Edge of a Cliff." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, February 24, 2021. <https://howlround.com/three-costume-designers-meet-tea-edge-cliff>.

In this roundtable conversation, Haac, Hill, and Sivigny reflect on some of the challenges they face as costume designers, particularly loneliness, imposter syndrome, and a sense of responsibility to be thoughtful always about the needs of others in how they appear, how they are represented, and how they feel. Throughout the piece, the three designers consider the nature of empathy in design and its impact on their growth as leaders and artists.

- Costa, Maddy. "It's Time for Audiences to Be Less Uptight." *The Guardian*. March 4, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/mar/04/relaxed-performances-theatre-time-audiences-less-uptight>.

Cultural critic Maddy Costa considers the possibilities of "relaxed" performances in which audiences may be permitted to move, make noise, even eat. Costa asks readers to assess whether strict behavioral expectations, and even rules, cause additional barriers to access, particularly for those with disabilities. The short article provides additional examples of disruption of theatre hierarchies as a means of creating more inclusive experiences.

- Kapil, Aditi, and Jack Reuler. "Radical Hospitality: The Artistic Case." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, November 27, 2013. <https://howlround.com/radical-hospitality>.

In this artistic conversation about Mixed Blood Theater Company in Minneapolis, Kapil and Reuler discuss how the principle of radical hospitality fuels not only audience development but the continued development of new work.

- Loar, Josh. "Overworked Staff and Performing Arts: Let's Not Pretend We're Okay." TheatreArtLife. TheatreArtLife, July 2, 2019. <https://www.theatreartlife.com/technical/performing-arts-overworked-staff/>.

Loar's personal reflection is a call-to-action for theatre-makers at all levels to interrogate the ways in which our industry sanctions, and even endorses, exhaustion within our work culture. Stemming from his many years in professional and academic theatre and entertainment, Loar invites us to challenge some of the norms and expectations our field has historically supported.

- Maag, Michael, and Annie Wiegand. "Illuminating the Careers of Disabled Lighting Designers." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, February 23, 2021. <https://howlround.com/illuminating-careers-disabled-lighting-designers>.

Maag and Wiegand argue for the value of universal design in better supporting theatre artists with disabilities. They also describe some of the specific challenges they have faced working in the professional theatre, including physical access to spaces, inadequate communication technology, and excessively long workdays.

- Martin, Peppa. 2019. *Audience Activation and the New Art Spectator*. <https://www.justanotherinsight.co/audience-activation>.

In this blog-length essay, Martin argues for a new and more empowered way of consuming and responding to art as an audience member.

- Pierce, Jerald Raymond. “Yes, Lighting Design Has a Diversity Problem.” American Theatre. Theatre Communications Group, June 21, 2021. <https://www.americantheatre.org/2018/06/19/yes-lighting-design-has-a-diversity-problem>

Pierce describes the continued lack of diversity within lighting design, particularly for women and people of color. By highlighting some of the experiences of designers from underrepresented communities, the article makes a case for the long-term harm this trend causes in the industry. The article’s emphasis on poor hiring practices, lack of mentorship opportunities for emerging designers, and missed opportunities further illustrates the difficulty of creating inclusive rehearsal and production spaces without representation within sub-disciplines and at every level of the profession.

- Rolon, Rosalba, Juliana Haubrich, and Trevor Boffone. “Designing Women.” HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, June 7, 2015. <https://howlround.com/designing-women>.

In thi series of reflections from women designing for the stage, diverse sets of experience echo concerns about the ways in which production budgets, limited resources and opportunities, and underrepresentation, highlighting common challenges from the field.

- Webb, Duncan M. *Running Theaters: Best Practices for Leaders and Managers*. New York: Allworth Press, 2020.

In this updated edition, Webb tackles some of the biggest topics facing the day-to-day and long-term planning needs of managing theatre companies and spaces, including everything from financial wellness, venue management, leadership models, to fundraising and working with a board of directors. As we consider the values behind our focus on non-hierarchical and trauma-informed theatre production, contextualizing the practical operations of the working theater becomes essential to move theory into practice.

- Whatley, Amber, Calvin Anderson, and Sherrice Mojgani. “Not a Pipeline Problem, a Problem with the Pipeline.” HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, September 1, 2021. <https://howlround.com/not-pipeline-problem-problem-pipeline>.

A group of designers holding MFAs share their responses to the systemic and individual failures of university programs to offer equitable, inclusive opportunities for students to advance. The article offers some suggestions for institutional change and disruption, but fundamentally question the necessity of the institution as a gatekeeper for new designers.

- Turner-King, Rachel. “Creating Welcoming Spaces in the City: Exploring the Theory and Practice of ‘Hospitality’ in Two Regional Theatres.” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 23, no. 3 (May 21, 2018): 421–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2018.1477583>.

In this case study, Turner-King engages principles of hospitality, both ‘conditional’ and ‘unconditional,’ in consideration of how audience experience is impacted by layout, design, and place. Central to our questions around inclusivity, this article asks us to consider some of the things which may be more or less hospitable to participants.

- White, Gareth. *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

In this text, White offers an in-depth examination of participatory theatre. While the author does not attempt to persuade us to draw a singular conclusion about efficacy or lack thereof, the book does engage us in a series of questions about the parameters within which audience participation is well-received, or otherwise. Particularly interesting to our group’s focus, White posits that power, control, and, indeed, consent are major factors in participatory theatre practice.

Audience

Challenges to safety:

- Discomfort with the unknown
 - *All spectators approach our projects with some degree of not-knowing, and some feelings about that not-knowing. That productive anxiety is an important part of the live performance experience. Artistic decisions will determine to what degree that anxiety is necessary, but logistically, we have the power to address unproductive anxiety. We can’t eliminate all anxiety, but we can help spectators figure out how to use it.*
- Lack of familiarity with space and other spectators/company. Stranger danger.
- Lack of transparency around how certain (challenging) aspects came to be
- Lack of content warnings
- Stress from anticipating material mentioned in content warnings
- Accessibility needs (not an exhaustive list)

- Seating: spacing, size of the seat, lack of physical support, legroom, location, seating for wheelchairs or individuals with mobility issues
- Space: Navigating space, clear directions to restrooms, seating areas, temperature, ambient noise, etc.
- Egress: ramps, clearly marked exits/aisles, bathroom access
- Communication: Subtitles, sign language interpreters, hearing loops, touch tours

Evidence that something's not working:

- Lack of "returning customers"
- Overt disdain between artists and the audience
- Defensive spectators
- Front-of-house staff unable to respond to emergent needs
- Direct or indirect complaints about lack of content warnings, accessibility, physical discomfort, difficulty navigating the space, interactions with cast and crew

Questions to ask:

- How do we communicate transparently with our spectators?
- What do we communicate to our spectators?
- What are our safety protocols, responsibilities, and processes?
- Why are we doing this production/project? What is our intention for the spectator?
- How do we account for the gap between expectations and delivery?
- How do we cultivate collaborative conversations with the audience? Is a talkback useful for this show? A workshop? A delayed gathering? Zoom?
- What might be triggering to our audience? How do we respond with care to triggered or activated spectators?
- How do we prepare/care for our audience before they even purchase their ticket? How can we front-load dramaturgy?
- How are we creating and sustaining new spectators?
- What is our relationship to our spectators' communities? How are we maintaining those relationships?
- How do we welcome spectators?
- How do we remove the audience's entitlement to comfort while also making it a safe space for them to be uncomfortable?
- How do you offer specific accommodations and be transparent that you don't (or can't) offer others?
- What kinds of complaints are we getting, and is there something we *can* do about some of them?
- How do we communicate to the audience what protective structures are already in place for the actors?
- How do we practice transparency?
- How do we communicate about the process to the spectators?
- Who is your space designed to serve?
- How are you expecting spectators to respond? Applause? Silence? Quick exits?

Suggested practices:

- Identify seating options for the full range of possible bodies present in your spectators. Consider especially the size and ability of those bodies and their potential barriers to comfort in your seating plan
- Include content warnings on all promotional materials
- Include available accommodations on all promotional materials
- Include potential barriers to access
- *You can include what you intend to do to help spectators mitigate these barriers, or it's also fine to say, for example, "this production requires spectators to stand for prolonged amounts of time."*
- Create contingency response plans for emergent situations (i.e., Injury, conflict, triggered spectator, inappropriate interaction between spectators)
- Identify quiet spaces to retreat from the performance space
- Identify potential resources and reimbursements available for emergent situations.
- Certify front-of-house staff in mental health first aid or include contingency response plans as part of job training.
- Communicate the presence of safety plans and protocols to spectators.
- Communicate contingency response plans to performers and technicians.
- Practice acceptance of spectator response to the project, regardless of what it is.

Further Reading:

- Costa, Maddy. "It's Time for Audiences to Be Less Uptight." *The Guardian*. March 4, 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/mar/04/relaxed-performances-theatre-time-audiences-less-uptight>.

Cultural critic Maddy Costa considers the possibilities of "relaxed" performances in which audiences may be permitted to move, make noise, even eat. Costa asks readers to assess whether strict behavioral expectations, and even rules, cause additional barriers to access, particularly for those with disabilities. The short article provides additional examples of disruption of theatre hierarchies as a means of creating more inclusive experiences.

- Kapil, Aditi, and Jack Reuler. "Radical Hospitality: The Artistic Case." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, November 27, 2013. <https://howlround.com/radical-hospitality>.

In this artistic conversation about Mixed Blood Theater Company in Minneapolis, Kapil and Reuler discuss how the principle of radical hospitality fuels not only audience development but the continued development of new work.

- Kershaw, Baz. "Oh, For Unruly Audiences: Or, Patters of Participation in." *Modern Drama* 44, no. 2 (May 2001): 133–54.

In Kershaw's now landmark essay, he argues for a connection between increased performative applause in the contemporary theatre and decreased agency of the audience who offers such applause. For our purposes, Kershaw's essay asks important questions about what it means to disempower/empower an audience through our expectations of their behavior and response.

- Martin, Peppa. 2019. *Audience Activation and the New Art Spectator*. <https://www.justanotherinsight.co/audience-activation>.

In this short essay, Martin argues for a new and more empowered way of consuming and responding to art as an audience member.

- Rancière Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso, 2009.

Rancière's influential examination of spectatorship argues for a move away from the binary thinking of spectators as passive and actors as doers/changemakers. In troubling the notion that theatre audiences exist as monolithic communities that move as one populist body, Rancière reframes spectators as individuals in equality. In our conversations, we have considered Rancière's interrogation of the "purposes" of theatre to speak to/educate/change its audience members and questioned our own possibly assumed agendas about the work that we make and those for whom we claim to make it.

- Sedgman, Kirsty. *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Sedgman's study troubles the notion of "unruly behavior" in contemporary theatre audience, reframing such discourse for broader discussion about ableism, accessibility, and disability justice, among other things. Sedgman asks us to consider not only *what* is reasonable etiquette for the theatre, but also *who* decides?

- Turner-King, Rachel. 2018. "Turner-King, Rachel. "Creating welcoming spaces in the city: exploring the theory and practice of 'hospitality' in two regional theatres." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 421-437.

In this case study, Turner-King engages principles of hospitality, both 'conditional' and 'unconditional,' in consideration of how audience experience is impacted by layout, design, and

place. Central to our questions around inclusivity, this article asks us to consider some of the things which may be more or less hospitable to participants.

- White, Gareth. *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

In this text, White offers an in-depth examination of participatory theatre. While the author does not attempt to persuade us to draw a singular conclusion about efficacy or lack thereof, the book does engage us in a series of questions about the parameters within which audience participation is well-received, or otherwise. Particularly interesting to our group's focus, White posits that power, control, and, indeed, consent are major factors in participatory theatre practice.

- Parker, Priya. *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*. New York City, NY: Riverhead Books, 2020.

Parker's recent self-help guide, designed to be applicable in personal and professional settings, makes a case for facilitation of all "gatherings," from work meetings to family dinners. The book is designed to be accessible to facilitators with diverse agendas and needs. Parker's work emphasizes choice, individuality, and transparent communication, values we have personally found meaningful in conversation with theatre practitioners.

- Simon, Nina. *The Art of Relevance*. Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2016.

Museum director Nina Simon offers practical lessons from her work in community engagement and new audience cultivation. We have made particular note of her description of relevance as "an exercise in empathy." Further, some of Simon's questions for herself and her team are especially useful frames: Whose [Institution's] Room Is This? Where are the "Invisible Doors" potentially creating access barriers?

Performance

Challenges to safety:

- Accessibility- set, sound/lights/tech
- Boundaries/Intimacy Coordination/Freedom or lack
- For touring productions, allocations for rest/performance demands
- Mental/physical/vocal health of performers
- Directorial choices vs. actor as person
- Audience and actor relationship

- Budget value over actor or tech discomfort

Evidence that something is not working:

- Discomfort with direction/boundaries/restricted freedom of performance
- Physical injury or difficulty in execution
- Mental burnout/underperformance
- Audience distractions (loud, cell phone, etc.)

Questions to ask:

- Does the actor feel safe before, during, and after each performance?
- What does the venue change about actor or tech experience/accessibility?
- Is the audience receptive to connection with actors during the show? Is it accessible/safe?
- Is the time schedule and frequency of performance appropriate? Re: students
- Is both mental and physical (PT for dancers, etc.) care encouraged post performance? (Note: we see this on Broadway, but how could we supplement this in academic realm? Yoga, etc)

Suggested practices:

- After boundaries are set, make sure they are followed in performance. Ensure that each member of the company feels safe in the environment
- Assess accessibility of theatre space (touring or not) for disability/quality of life for actors. If academic, consider personal climate (dressing rooms, etc.) before and after each performance. In time of COVID, sanitization, masks, COVID Officer enforcement w/audience
- If actor/crew/SM has concern after or before a performance, welcome their voices. Increase flexibility in lieu of safety/accessibility
- Offer space and time for debrief after performances or performance run
- Follow community warm-up/cool down practices from rehearsals through to dress and performances

Further Reading:

- Editors, American Theatre. “Dramatists Guild Announces First Inclusion Rider.” *American Theatre*. Theatre Communications Group, September 28, 2021. https://www.americantheatre.org/2021/09/28/dramatists-guild-announces-first-inclusion-rider/?fbclid=IwAR0Q_2IKfqZA7ViwmT2ffkx1nFOyWGo2pojJfXmYLLlwou1XcCkSZ_T20Ko.

This short article highlights the newly developed inclusion rider, created by a group of prominent professional playwrights. The rider itself offers actionable, measurable opportunities for fostering diversity in regional production houses.

- Farmer, Jim. “Immersive Theatre That Left Scars: Behind the Collapse of Serenbe Playhouse.” *American Theatre*. Theatre Communications Group, August 9, 2021.

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2021/08/09/immersive-theatre-that-left-scars-behind-the-collapse-of-serenbe-playhouse/>.

This is excellent investigative reporting on the severe and unsafe working conditions at Serenbe Playhouse which led to physical and mental health issues. Farmer's article highlights the reasons for practitioners to make consent and trauma-informed practice highly legible in our working environments.

- Gambino, Joe. "How Will Theatre Deal with 'Invisible' Disabilities?" Playbill. Playbill Inc., January 29, 2017. <https://www.playbill.com/article/how-will-theatre-deal-with-invisible-disabilities>.

Playbill's coverage of BroadwayCon's Theatre Accessibility panel in 2017 demonstrates the way in which the industry has begun to respond to less "obvious" or visible accessibility needs.

- Hayes, Kahleel. "Colorado Theater Community Takes on Safety, Race ... - Westword." Westword. Denver Westword, LLC, August 13, 2020. <https://www.westword.com/arts/colorado-theater-community-takes-on-safety-race-accessibility-and-gender-11769278>.

Hayes covers the 2020 development of the *Colorado Theatre Standards*, a document inspired by the Chicago Theatre Standards and the Not in Our House movement. Hayes quotes one of the three primary developers of the document, Amanda Rose Villarreal: "Young theater artists are somehow taught...that the key to success in theater is being easy to work with....and we learn early on to stop standing up for ourselves." As new codified theatre standards are adopted internationally, it becomes clear not only that such standards are wanted, but that sharing living documents as the Not in Our House movement contributes to a larger cultural discourse. Encouraged by these practitioners, we hope to share in that larger discourse.

- Marotta, Allie. "The Ableist Effects of Creating 'Post-Pandemic Theatre' during a Pandemic." HowlRound Theatre Commons. Emerson College, December 8, 2020. <https://howlround.com/ableist-effects-creating-post-pandemic-theatre-during-pandemic>

Marotta argues for the continued inclusion of disabled artists and audiences in the dialogue around theatre "after Covid." As Marotta points out, chronically ill people and others in distinctly vulnerable populations remain impacted by Covid-19 in increased numbers. Moreover, the theatre produced in the last two years, particularly during the height of lockdown, has demonstrated the possibilities for increasing access for both creators and audiences with disabilities.

Content

It is difficult to outline general guiding questions about content as production/performance content depends entirely on institutional values and mission. The following may be a template for use on an institution-by-institution basis, and/or a way to discuss how you are aligning with your values.

Challenges to safety

-
-
-
-
-

Evidence that something's not working

-
-
-
-
-

Questions to ask

-
-
-
-
-

Suggested practices

-
-
-
-
-

Further reading

-
-
-
-

¹ These programs were standard in their time, but I cannot speak for the way they have developed since I graduated.

² For more information on the 2020 Working Group and those whose thoughts contributed to this discussion, see: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.astr.org/resource/resmgr/2020_conference/program/20confprog.pdf and for more on the 2021 Working Group, please refer to the PDF of that conference's program, found at https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.astr.org/resource/resmgr/2021_conference/ASTR_2021_Program.pdf

³ In curation of the “further reading” sections, we encountered several challenges in organizing the list itself. What categories, we asked each other, would be most useful to a practitioner who might read this document? Does it help to divide, for instance, readings by length or level of accessibility? Perhaps it would be better to divide resources into “academic” and “general audience.” But would this categorization indicate audience or publication, or rather, content itself? We considered separating the theoretical from the practical but found this did not account for the ways in which the majority of texts on this list work to both theorize *and* practice (something we believe most, if not all, theatre-makers are working to do). Further, it might be possible to divide readings between sub-disciplinary categories (ie. tech, design, performance, history, criticism) but this, too, we acknowledge is the kind of silo-ing of practice we are seeking to undo as part of the challenge to traditional hierarchies within our field. The suggested readings included come from a multiplicity of group participants involved in the building of this beta-document, which is reflected in the seeming “messiness” of this list’s curation. This, too, we see as indicative of the complexity of overlapping and, yet distinct knowledge(s). We cannot claim to see this list as unified because it is not. Rather, it further demonstrates how the interdisciplinary nature of this conversation offers a complexity both illuminating and frustrating. With the intention of assisting readers in locating the resources most applicable to them, we have chosen to group suggested further reading into the following categories by point of origin: Conversations Within the Field and Conversations Outside the Field, with the caveat that both categories offer interdisciplinary applications.

References

- Case, Kim A. "Toward an Intersectional Pedagogy Model." Essay. In *Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice*, edited by Kim A. Case, 1–24. New York City, NY: Routledge, 2016.
- Watkins, Beth. "The Feminist Director in Rehearsal: An Education." *Theatre Topics* 15, no. 2 (2005): 185–200. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2005.0028>.
- Young, Christine. "Feminist Pedagogy at Play in the University Rehearsal Room." *Theatre Topics* 22, no. 2 (2012): 137–48. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2012.0027>.