

# SISTERS FREEHOLD

## Freehold Theatre Standards

**Note:** Much of what follows is adapted, with the permission of the creators, from the **Chicago Theatre Standards (CTS)**. The contents of this document are revisited at regular intervals. As of today (**August 12, 2021**), we feel that the following policies are appropriate to our current organizational size and scale. We intend to keep growing.

### Statement of Purpose, What is this Document?

The **Freehold Theatre Standards (FTS)** is a voluntary tool for self-governance that seeks to nurture communication, safety, respect, and accountability of participants at all levels of theatrical production. Its mission is to create:

- **Harassment-free spaces**, whether it be sexual, or based in race, gender, religion, ethnic origin, color, or ability;
- **Nurturing environments** that allow us to challenge ourselves, our audiences, and our communities; that support risk of mind and body; and that establish the freedom to create theatre that represents the full range of human experience;
- **Unified understanding** of practices for the Sisters Freehold (SF) theatre environments; and
- **Comaraderie** through a clear resolution path for conflicts or any situation that someone may find to be untenable within the SF environment.

This document's doctrines are: **communication, safety, respect, and accountability.**

### Who is Responsible for Enforcing the FTS?

Everyone; Every working vessel a part of any SF production is responsible for creating a nurturing environment free of harassment with support and unified understanding. At certain times, the individuals listed on the Concern Resolution Path (CRP) may have direct responsibilities related to executing the CRP.

### The Role of the Stage Manager Regarding the FTS

- Read and be familiar with the FTS.
- Know and follow the theatre's published CRP.

- Ensure that consent is discussed before scenes of sexual content and nudity and document applicable specifics.
- Document all choreography, including sexual content. The Stage Manager is to be present for all rehearsals when choreography is rehearsed.
- Allow for the selection of the Non-Equity Deputy (NED) during the first week of rehearsal and include the NED in the safety walk on the first day of tech.
- Work and communicate with the NED, particularly regarding any raised concern.

## **Non-Equity Deputy (NED)**

Each cast will be instructed to elect a Non-Equity Deputy (NED) on the first day of rehearsal. If a getting acquainted period is necessary, the NED may be chosen by the end of the first week.

## **Role and Responsibilities of the Non-Equity Deputy (NED)**

- Familiarize yourself and others with the FTS, CRP, and any related policies and procedures provided by the producer.
- Provide contact information and availability for consultation outside of rehearsal/performance space/hours.
- Serve as a liaison between the cast, crew, stage manager, and producer for issues brought to attention by participants.
- Protect anonymity whenever possible.
- Report concerns, both their own and those reported by fellow participants, using the CRP, and communicate the resolution of such concerns to fellow participants as appropriate.
- Respond to concerns as quickly as possible (within 24 hours whenever possible).
- Shadow the SM on the safety walk-through (see the Basic Health and Safety standard).
- Commit with integrity and empathy to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of participants and discourage efforts (intentional or otherwise) to use the FTS to divide or create an atmosphere of “heroes and villains.”
- Engage the CRP if the SM is unable, unwilling, or is the individual of concern.

# The Standards

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## Auditions

- We will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations to facilitate access, such as allowing interpreters when necessary, holding auditions in accessible facilities, and providing audition materials in advance to artists with disabilities.
- Required materials (scripts and sides) should be provided at the audition.
- Any physical contact required for an audition should be disclosed and choreographed.

## Basic Health and Safety

We will strive to promote basic health and safety practices by providing the following:

- A suitably stocked first-aid kit
- An insurance policy that covers on-site injuries
- A plan for costume maintenance and laundry

## Choreography: Violence, Movement, and Physical Theatre

### Facilities

The following should be provided in all rehearsal and performance spaces in which high-risk physical theatre takes place:

- First-aid kit, including cold packs
- Space for warm-ups
- Proof of liability insurance

### Equipment, Weapons, and Specialized Costumes

All specialized equipment and costumes should be suitable for the required choreography.

### Preproduction and Auditions

- A designer or choreographer should be engaged for any production that includes weapons, hand-to-hand combat, sexual violence, specialized movement techniques, or any similar high-risk activity.

- At the time of audition, prospective participants should be asked to provide accurate descriptions of their physical abilities and limitations/injuries as they relate to the possible choreography.

## **Rehearsal**

- A schedule for rehearsing all choreography should be established and followed.
- Adequate time should be allocated for stretching and warming up before all choreography rehearsals.
- Before work starts the actors, director, choreographer, and stage manager should agree to the requirements of the planned activity (kiss, slap, dance, etc.). Participants are then responsible for staying within those agreed-upon boundaries.
- Time should be set aside at the beginning of rehearsal to run through choreography. These calls are particularly important before running the show. Calls should be conducted in a distraction-free, appropriately lit space.
- Actors should communicate any injury, discomfort, or fatigue experienced before, during, and after rehearsals.
- A 10-minute break should be provided after every 80 minutes of physical work.
- Regular rehearsal reports should be sent to the designer/choreographer and should include notes to the designer/choreographer if any adjustments need to be made to the choreography, or if any problems develop.

## **Performance**

- Choreography calls should occur before every show, and should take place in a focused environment free of interruptions or distractions.
- Performance reports should include the designers/choreographers, noting any issues that arise and any actor injuries (whether related to the choreography or not).
- Performers should have a communication plan with the stage manager to report (on the day it occurs) any inappropriate or potentially unsafe changes in the performance of choreography and/or use of equipment or weapons.
- The stage manager should check in before and after performances with each actor involved in the choreography, confirming that the choreography is maintained and consent/boundaries have not been overlooked.

# Harassment

## Harassment in a broader sense includes, but is not limited to:

- Inappropriate or insulting remarks, gestures, jokes, or innuendoes or taunting about a person's gender, gender identity, sexual identity, racial or ethnic background, color, place of birth, citizenship, ancestry, creed, or ability;
- Persistent unwanted questions or comments about a participant's private life outside the boundaries of consent established in rehearsal;
- Persistent unwanted verbal or non-sexual physical contact intended to intimidate or threaten.

## Sexual Harassment in a theatrical workplace includes but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunts about a person's body, attire, gender, or sexual orientation outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Negative stereotyping of race, gender, gender identity, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, ability, or other status protected by law outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact such as touching, kissing, massaging, patting, hugging, or pinching outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Unwelcome inquiries or comments about a person's sex life or sexual preference outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Leering, whistling, or other suggestive or insulting sounds outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Inappropriate comments about clothing, physical characteristics, or activities outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Requests or demands for sexual favors, especially those that include, or imply, promises of rewards for complying (e.g., job advancement opportunities) and/or threats of punishment for refusal (e.g., denial of job advancement or opportunities) outside the boundaries of consent or production content;
- Attempting to engage in sexual behaviors offstage that are choreographed for the stage;
- Inviting an actor to rehearse sexual content outside of scheduled rehearsals;
- Repeated invitation/suggestion to take relationships of a sexual nature beyond the stage;
- Improvising sexual content without expressed consent.

# Concern Resolution Path (CRP)

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## GOAL

The goal of the CRP is to provide a documented, clear communication pathway to address issues in a production, program, or within the organization. The CRP seeks to inform all participants what to do and who to address with serious issues, and to dispel fear of reprisal for reporting on issues of safety, harassment, or other serious concerns. Sisters Freehold is committed to resolving concerns early, before participants or the production are put at risk and before the concern escalates.

The CRP is a tool to help create communication pathways to prevent and resolve issues, not create divisions. To that end, nothing in the Freehold Theatre Standards or accompanying CRP encourages firing or marginalizing participants for mistakes, a momentary loss of temper, an argument (artistic or personal), a single unintentional injury, etc. The CRP is designed, rather, to provide pathways to respond to events, behaviors, and conditions that create reasonably understood *unsafe* conditions, not *uncomfortable* situations.

## *What is a concern resolution path?*

The CRP provides the names and contact information for members of the organization or production who have agreed to be responsive to reported issues and work to resolve them. It consists of:

- A written, clear, and transparently shared list of procedures for addressing a concern;
- A written, clear, and transparently shared list of persons with whom the concern should be addressed;
- A commitment to give reported concerns priority and a reasonable timeline for resolution.

## AVAILABILITY

The CRP will be provided in printed and digital format, distributed to all participants of a production or program, and verbally explained at the first rehearsal or project meeting. During production, the stage manager will keep a copy of the CRP readily available at all times.

## STRUCTURE

- Level 1: We recognize that many concerns can be resolved through conversation with the parties involved. Whenever possible, participants should be encouraged to discuss challenges and concerns with one another. Sharing and hearing

concerns with openness and respect can prevent situations from escalating further.

- Level 2: The following participants are granted a certain level of authority and trust in determining whether a concern can be resolved at this level or if it needs to be sent on to the next level.
  - Stage Manager
  - Production Director
  - Non-Equity Deputy
- Level 3: These participants should be considered the final level of the path, capable of resolving issues that have not been resolved prior to reaching this stage. They are strongly advised to consult with each other and review legal or other implications before any decision is made.
  - Co-artistic Directors
  - Board Member/Company Attorney

## COMMUNICATION

- Participants are strongly encouraged to report their concerns in writing for recordkeeping purposes.
- All members of a particular level are encouraged to keep written records of concern-related communications.
- All individuals listed on the CRP should understand their role in resolving concerns, the process for recording concerns, and the process for reporting those concerns to others on the Path.

## RECORDKEEPING

- Sisters Freehold maintains personnel files, which include concerns reported via the CRP. These files are confidential and accessible only to company staff and board officers.

## LEGAL REMEDIES

- In the event of civil or criminal misconduct or liability, the Freehold Theatre Standards are not a replacement for legal advice or action, nor do they stand instead of local, state, or federal law.

## **Oops and Ouch: One way to handle negative comments or actions in real time**

We'd like to recommend a system of "Ouch" and "Oops." For instance:

*Speaker A is trying too hard to be funny and makes a thoughtless remark. Speaker B says "Ouch!" This cues Speaker A to realize that the funny remark was potentially hurtful. Speaker A says "Oops" to indicate recognition and regret. Then there's a Pause.*

It's up to the Ouch-caller whether this moment requires some conversation. So maybe there's a conversation – or maybe the Ouch caller says "Cool, let's move on." But the decision to move on must come from the Ouch- caller.

Please note that anyone in the room can call "Ouch." It does not have to come from the person who is the focus of the potentially hurtful remark.

If you've felt an ouch and didn't say anything, please do bring it to whoever you're comfortable with on the leadership team. We want to know and we will figure out how to address it.

Any questions or discussion?