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TALC Editing Session 7/13/20: GROUP ONE NOTES

Discussion notes appear at the end of this Doc

Instructions:

Please read the following materials. They were compiled from 3 different documents as examples for our potential wording for a Declaration of Purpose in our MN Theater Standards (MNTS). There is a fair amount of repetition between them as the Chicago Theater Standards were templates for the other two documents. As you read through them, you can make comments on the side about your thoughts, good and bad, or suggestions for additional content you would like to see in the MNTS. To leave a comment, double click on text you wish to address and a comment bubble will appear. Click on the bubble and leave your comment.

You will have a group facilitator and note taker to guide you through the process on Monday, to help bring clarity and focus to what we are hoping to gain from this conversation. Thank you for taking the time to read and prepare for this conversation about the MNTS.

Graciously,
The TALC Admin Circle and Editors

CHICAGO STANDARDS | DECLARATION:

****Click [here](#) to view full document.**

Arts environments require risk, courage, vulnerability, and investment of our physical, emotional and intellectual selves. Chicago theatre has a history of authenticity and risk on our stages. We are proud of that legacy, and seek to nurture spaces with strong safety--nets – spaces that support great risk without compromising a visceral, authentic and intimate experience for artists and audiences.

When creative environments are unsafe, both the artist and the art can become compromised. Spaces that prize “raw,” “realistic,” “violent,” and otherwise high--risk material can veer into unsafe territory if there are no procedures for prevention, communication, and, when necessary, response. Too often, artists have been afraid to respond to abusive or unsafe practices, particularly where there is a power differential between the people involved. Artists have been afraid that speaking out will ruin a show or harm their reputations, and artists subjected to extreme abuse sometimes leave the craft, cutting their careers short. We believe that even in the absence of high--risk material, having pathways for response to unsafe conditions and harassment help to maintain the integrity of the work, it’s participants, and the organization.

This document seeks not to define artistry, prescribe how it is created, or stand as a legal document. It seeks rather to create awareness and systems that respect and protect the human in the art – to foster safe places to do dangerous things. It is the result of input from a wide and experienced group of theatre producers and artists. It is meant to be flexible and to accommodate as many types and styles of theatre, organizations of diverse structures, budgets, and environments as possible.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) of Illinois state law defines “workers” by wages and hours worked. Participants in small theatres often don’t meet the definition of “worker,” and therefore are not covered by the protections from harassment (including sexual, racial, and other abuses) provided in EEOC law. Actors who work under an AEA contract enjoy limited protections and opportunities for registering complaints, but only if the artist is a member of the union, and only if the issue is covered in the AEA rulebook. Moreover, certain kinds of conduct can be harmful even they are not technically unlawful. With this framework in mind, members of the Chicago theatre community joined forces to create a tool for self--governance. We seek to foster awareness of what artists should expect, and what companies can strive to provide in their spaces.

This document is the result of dozens of Chicago theatre participants meeting in round--table discussions for a year to produce a first draft, followed by over a year of pilot testing in 20 participating theatres. The result is the following **Chicago Theatre Standards**. This document outlines simple and largely cost-free practices and tools to prevent and respond to the everyday challenges in arts environments.

The overriding tenets of this document are: **communication, safety, respect, and accountability**.

The **Chicago Theatre Standards (CTS)** is voluntary, cost-free, and not subject to enforcement by any outside body. In adopting this document, organizations state their intentions through procedures designed to help them live by those intentions.

Participants who work with organizations that adopt the CTS endorse these intentions by reading the document and following its procedures and protocols. All involved are encouraged to call attention to situations when these intentions are not being met by using the reporting channels herein. This is a free document, and it is available online at notinourhouse.org.

CLEVELAND STANDARDS | “DECLARATION”:

***The Cleveland Standards did not have a ‘declaration’ but instead listed an ‘executive summary’ and ‘purpose’ - so language below is lifted from different segments of the Cleveland Standards that relates to a declaration. They do have a mission statement, included here. To view the language in context within the entire standards or view it in its entirety, you can find it [here](#).*

“Executive Summary”

The CLEAn House Standards are created in the belief that theatres need to be safe places to do dangerous things.

The CLEAn House Standards are a voluntary tool for self-governance of northeast Ohio theatres that nurture communication, safety, respect, and accountability at all levels of production, regardless of theatre size, age, budget, or artistic mission.

We believe that theaters should be:

- Spaces free of harassment, including (but not limited to) harassment based on sex, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, religion, class, ethnicity, color, nationality, political belief, or ability;
- Nurturing environments that allow us to challenge ourselves, our audiences, and our communities; that support creative risks of mind and body; and that establish the freedom to create theatre that represents the full range of human experience.

To this end, the CLEAn House Standards offer best practices learned from the Chicago Theatre Standards, with a goal of making artists of all theatrical disciplines aware of their rights and responsibilities. These include a series of commitments to be made by participating theatres ranging from how auditions are announced and run, to rehearsal

procedures for violent and intimate choreography, to anti-harassment procedures, and more - including recommendations for lines of communication and addressing problems as they arise.

We believe that there is enormous strength in banding together as one theatrical community, made up of many different artistic visions, and publicly committing to the well-being of the artists who currently call northeast Ohio home, as well as all those in the future who will wish to join us.

I. Purpose

Arts environments require risk, courage, vulnerability, and investment of our physical, emotional and intellectual selves.

When creative environments are unsafe, both the artist and the art can become compromised. Spaces that prize “raw,” “violent,” and otherwise high-risk material can result in unsafe conditions if there are no procedures for prevention, communication, and when necessary, corrective action. We believe that even in the absence of high-risk material, having pathways for response to unsafe conditions and harassment help to maintain the integrity of the work, its participants, and the organization.

This document seeks to create awareness and systems that respect and protect the human in the art – to foster safe places to do dangerous things. It is the result of input from a large and experienced group of theatre producers and artists. It is meant to be flexible and to accommodate as many types and styles of theatre, organizations of diverse structures, budgets, and environments as possible.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination laws, but only some employees and some companies meet their definition of “workplace.” Participants in small theatres are often not covered by these laws. Actors who work under an Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) contract enjoy limited protections and opportunities for registering complaints, but only if the participant is a member of the union, and only if the issue is covered in the AEA rulebook. Moreover, certain kinds of conduct can be harmful even though they are not technically unlawful. We seek to foster awareness of what artists should expect, and what companies can strive to provide in their spaces.

The overriding tenets of this document are: respect, safety, communication, and accountability.

The CLEAn House Standards are voluntary, cost-free, and not subject to enforcement by any outside body, including TASC. Some theaters may already have stronger protections for artists than those outlined in the Standards, and this document should not replace those policies. This document is designed to give individual artists agency and information. In adopting this document, organizations state their intentions through procedures designed to help them live by those intentions. Participants who work with organizations that adopt the CHS endorse these intentions by reading the document and following its procedures and protocols. All involved are encouraged to call attention to situations when these intentions are not being met by using the reporting channels herein. This is a free document available online at www.tascclle.org.

CLEAn House Mission Statement:

The CLEAn House Standards are a voluntary tool for self-governance that nurture communication, safety, respect, and accountability at all levels of theatrical production. Its mission is to create:

- **Spaces free of harassment**, including (but not limited to) harassment based on sex, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, religion, class, ethnicity, color, nationality, political belief, or ability;
- **Nurturing environments** that allow us to challenge ourselves, our audiences, and our communities; that support creative risks of mind and body; and that establish the freedom to create theatre that represents the full range of human experience;
- **A common understanding** of practices for theatre environments, including written, reproducible standards available at no cost; and by
- **Peer support** through collaboration and community outreach using Theatre Artists for Social Change as a resource.

NY INDEPENDENT THEATER HARASSMENT TOOLKIT | “DECLARATION”:

***Note: this toolkit did not have a ‘declaration’ per se, so language below is lifted from different segments of the toolkit that relates to a declaration or mission of the document. To view the language in context within the toolkit or view it in its entirety, you can find it [here](#).*

We believe that all artists are entitled to a safe place to practice their craft free of harassment, abuse or retribution for reporting abuses. Furthermore, we believe all artists have a duty to abstain from harassment, be it sexual in nature or based in racial or gender bias. As individuals working in a collaborative art form, we are obligated to take seriously any charges of harassment while also taking steps to address the offending behavior.

Goals

There are many established resources available for theater practitioners to use as a basis for physical safety standards. The Actors' Equity Showcase Code is often used as the benchmark for establishing safety protocols, and we encourage every practitioner to be familiar with and adhere to the guidelines put forth in the code regardless of each participant's union status. In the AEA Showcase, as well as in the other documents found below (Quick Guides), you will find helpful standards for safety such as: break times and maximum rehearsal hours, how to approach stage combat, availability of potable water, etc.

This tool kit is meant to address Harassment. It will provide resources for all practitioners to build greater transparency, accountability and agency in establishing open, creative environments where all artists can flourish without fear of harassment or retribution. Not all documents or statements found in this Tool Kit will fit every project or company, nor is it meant to be prescriptive as to how others must work. In it, you may find ideas for moving your own project or company forward, or use examples laid out below to build your own set of policies and practices.

In addition to using this tool kit, we encourage all practitioners to get as much training as their time and budget allow. In the Quick Guides, you will find links to other organizations that offer a wealth of resources, guidelines, training programs and services that can help you create your own policies or assist you when in crisis.

It is our hope that the tools provided will be a useful platform for every artist to establish their own habits of communication and consent, working towards a harassment free environment. Only when all parties feel safe to fully participate in the creative process can a robust, vibrant theater exist.

What is Harassment?

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Discriminatory, offensive or unwelcome behavior all falls under the scope of harassment, including behavior that is repeated after a request has been made for the behavior to stop. Typically, harassment is splintered into the categories of sexual harassment, gender harassment, racial harassment or harassment based on a trait such as age, ability or status.

We recognize the intersectionality of our culture and that often an individual may become the target of harassment based on a combination of the above traits or others. Furthermore, we understand the common root of all harassment as a failure to behave in a way that respects the humanity of our co-workers, whether this be a momentary lapse brought on by the stress of production, the result of deeply ingrained biases or from malice. By creating strategies to actively build and exercise respect for all collaborators, we are able to create better art and safer workplaces.

NOTES from Group #1

General Responses: *It is important to convey that there are no wrong answers to these questions, everything brought forward is valid. The questions are:*

Lenses:

- Producer/director (2)
- Stage manager (3)
- Costume designer, writer
 - Dresser - experience in difficult situations
- senior age group (2)
- Actor, director
- Props designer,
- freelance worker (multiple)
- Carpenter, union technician
- movement and vocal coach, dance, teacher,
- Deafness
- Trauma informed
- Fundraising, grant writing, student at CTC, education director, organizer
- Intimacy director

Nurture safe environments, can say “stop” if we have standards, fondness for horizontal organizing

1) What do you see in these documents?

- Need for a broader definition of the word harassment (3rd)
 - “to foster safe places to do dangerous things” - we don’t always do **dangerous** things (2nd)
 - Creates opening to dismiss if you aren’t in a dangerous situation
 - Could we change to “nurture”
 - Prizes spaces that do raw material - hope that we would be broader than that
 - Dangerous feels judgemental
 - Harassment is also a third party observing harassment
 - Cleveland document has clearer definition of harassment
- None of the three documents use the language “Best Practice”
- First sentence - arts environment require risk
 - Include use of bodies in a way that is artistic, carries politics with it
- Historical context - do we need it?
 - This is what got us here
- Centering impact vs intention

2) As you read them, how did they make you feel? Emotionally, physically, intellectually or any other way. (*Many of these bleed into Question 3*)

- Rules are written after someone gets hurt - this speaks to the vulnerability of the performer
 - Could we expand the document to champion the cause of the practitioner (2nd)
 - Crews, front of house, students, parents of students
 - Some people don’t see themselves in this document because the language feels exclusive. If their role isn’t included, it’s not protected.
 - Try to frame toward the positive rather than the negative
 - Come at this with a positive approach
 - Overall tone of Chicago was cautionary - Cleveland feels more inspirational/aspirational
- Appreciation of the mission statement in Cleveland (2nd)
 - Like to have definitions
 - Made reader feel **safe** - this is essence (2nd)
 - Comes further along in the Chicago statement

3) What is your take away? How might we use these insights as we do this work together?

- Lack of discussion around power dynamics (2nd)

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- Definitions - need to define when you hold positions of power
- Find ways to level the playing field in hierarchical situations
- Help people identify where they hold power/privilege
- Meant to be fluid documents - keep this in mind as we write
 - Cleveland is a continuation of Chicago
 - Need to be open to change

4) What do you think the next steps should be regarding the development of a declaration of purpose for TALC?

- Safe and recognizable for our MN theater community
- Include the many ways theater spaces and teams are utilized
 - Rehearsal, public, outreach, union and student labor, performances
 - Different situations may require different approaches
 - Nomad theaters
 - Safety for moving into other spaces
- Every practitioner should feel the document applies to them
 - Ambiguous positions in the theater (props designer, photographer)
 - How does this apply to me?
 - These documents are actor and rehearsal focused
 - Coordinate with IATSE
 - There is no dancer union
 - Volunteer labor
 - Clear understanding of power dynamics may help this
 - This is a challenge society wide
 - Board members- let's get them involved in discussions and utilize them as a resource!
- Document should foster safety so the reader feels supported instead of heightening the reader's consciousness of risk
 - Also, who is the reader?
- Question: how do we hold each other accountable for these standards?
 - Could there be a governance board overseeing this process/these standards?
 - Those who adopt the standard could accept responsibility for each other
 - Is it realistic for us to have the power to call out another theater for breaking this agreement?
 - "I want to know my people have my back."
 - Everyone who signs on agrees to empower each other
 - Community is a circle
 - What channels are we creating for reporting?
 - How do we make the document accessible to all- from those involved in the rehearsal room, to volunteers, to the photographer that comes in once every production?

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- Sharing resources to build community
 - Similar to NY Toolkit's Quick Guides
 - Examples from AEA, IATSE, and other unions and advocacy groups
 - Reporting tree
- There was a lot of discussion about definitions and specificity of language. Do we need a separate "Definitions" section?