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**Volume 2 Issue 1: Questioning Past Practice**

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**Journal of  
Consent-Based  
Performance**

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**Front Cover:**

*The Wizards*, written by Ricardo Gamboa.  
Produced (2022) at APO Cultural Center: Chicago, IL.  
Actors: Luis A. Mora and Eliseo Real.  
Intimacy Choreography by Greg Geffrard and Sheryl  
Williams.  
Photo: Eleanor Kahn.

**Themed Issue: Consent and Cultural Competence**  
**Deadline March 10, 2023**

Those in performance arts are not the first to consider consent as a major influence on their field's practices. As artists and scholars, we should therefore consider the history of consent-focused discourse in other fields, and the failure of such discussions to fuel equity in practice. From medicine to education, the ongoing conversation of consent-based practices continues to shape-shift, allowing space for identity-based nuance in consideration of consent. Despite well-established legal requirements for informed consent, human racial and cultural biases still frequently affect the communication of consent in medicinal and educational fields (Feyi 2022; Vyas et al. 2021), demonstrating the difficulty of swiftly translating consent-focused theorizing to a shift in the field's culture and practice. In the process of this translation, implicit, conscious, and subliminal preconceptions of one another's identities impact clear and effective communication regarding, as well as the respecting of, boundaries.

The *Journal of Consent-Based Performance* calls upon scholars and artists to consider the ways biases and cultural competencies affect the communication of consent within performance practice. We invite artists, educators, and scholars engaged with consent-based performance—in theory or in practice—to interrogate the role and importance of cultural competence in consent-based performance. We invite authors to analyze the roles of consent and cultural competency in existing theatrical texts, performance works, and approaches to crafting performance. We invite interdisciplinary theorizing that can inform intimacy professionals in developing more equitable, ethical, anti-oppressive, and effective consent-based performance philosophies and approaches. Furthermore, we invite reporting on the broad range of practices emerging throughout the world that focus on consent and performance, broadly conceived. We invite contributions that consider:

- The impact of power, identity, and positionality in both offering and receiving consent during artistic processes as cast, creatives, crew, administrators, and audience
- The ways in which cultural competence can, does, or should inform the tools, practices, and effectiveness of, consent-based performance practices
- Theories and philosophies that should guide performance practitioners seeking to establish consent in more equitable and inclusive ways
- Intersectionality in consent-based performance; what complicates our capacity to ask for, give, and clearly communicate, consent?
- Approaches to communicating consent within performance practices and genres outside of the United States and outside of Eurocentric conceptions of “theatre”
- The ways in which consent is, or is not, represented (historically or now) in written theatrical texts—in scripts; in stage directions; in dramaturgy; in reviews

Olukanni, Feyi. 2022. “Henrietta Lacks Black History Women's History.” Black Students of California United. February 22, 2022. <https://www.blackstudentscu.us/the-unknown-life-of-henrietta-lacks>.

Vyas, Darshali A, Leo G Eisenstein, and David S Jones. 2020. “Hidden in Plain Sight — Reconsidering the Use of Race Correction in Clinical Algorithms.” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 9.

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Demystifying the Moment: Choreographer's Notes on the Cover Image



*They stare at each other. SERAFIN is near tears.  
NETO stands up and walks to him.*

*NETO*

*(placing his hand on his shoulder)*

*I feel you man*

*SERAFIN'S face falls into a smile.  
They stare at each other.*

*SERAFIN*

*Don't die out there, motherfucker.*

*They stare at each other. It is a moment of  
suspension. Slowly, they begin leaning into  
each other. They close their eyes and kiss.  
They keep kissing. They don't stop kissing.*

*Suddenly, we hear voices coming: JAVI and  
LALO. NETO and SERAFIN pull away from each*

*other. They stare at each other with a mix of awe, confusion, recognition, and shock. NETO takes a few steps back.*

Serafin (played by Eliseo Real) has recently learned that his friend, bandmate and baseball teammate Neto (played by Luis A. Mora) has enlisted to the army. What begins as benign and pedestrian physical moments of consolation—a playful punch on the shoulder, a shoulder bump, a messing of the hair—transforms into an exploration of an unfamiliar but deeply desired connection shared by the characters. This suspended moment of adolescent vulnerability is interrupted by the intrusion of their fellow teammates. Unknown to all four of the young men in the room, this would be their last night together. We never get to see what this relationship could have become.

In choreographing this sequence, Sheryl Williams and I placed the emphasis on all the little moments before, upon the subtle build, and upon the way that pedestrian touches can transform—can communicate something deeper—simply by adding the ingredients of seeking eye contact and breathing together. Focusing on these details created a dynamic opposition between the rush of unanticipated emotions exuding from each new contact. Balancing this rush with the suspension moment, highlighting an emotional experience that seems, to the characters, to exist outside of the limitations of linear time, was a delicate balance that grew throughout the rehearsal process. Trust in the choreography and not leaning toward the pending disruption allowed the moment to appear to be found anew each night. In the words of Sam in the play:

*SAM*

*They was kissin'. Gay kissin'. It was hot.*

Greg Geffrard, Intimacy Choreographer  
*The Wizards* by Ricardo Gamboa  
APO Cultural Center, 2022

### Questions Worth Asking: Editor's Comments

As intimacy specializations and similar roles in performance processes continue to grow and evolve—including the explosion in a variety of certifications and training programs that focus on mental health, safety, and cultural competence, etc—it is important to continue asking questions.

Psychologically, questions are thought of as “stimuli that elicit cognitive and expressive responses, social relationships, and interactional discourse” (Dillon 1982). Questions activate our thinking, fueling the creatively and academically crafted responses which carry our thoughts and feelings in response to the stimuli. Furthermore, questions are a relational process; the posing of a question implies an audience which will—hopefully, at least—consider and respond to that which was posed. In the context of performance studies, Augusto Boal posits that questioning can be an act of resistance conducted through theatrical engagement. Boal writes that “contrary to the bourgeois code of manners, the people’s code allows and encourages the spectator to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate” (1993, 142). From both a cognitive and a creative perspective, the act of questioning puts us into active conversation with one another, establishing a relationship between questioner and pondering audience. Similarly, asking questions focused on past practice puts us into conversation with the origins and futures of our field. These questions are posited as purposeful stimuli to encourage each of us engaged in consent-based practices to refute the idea that we should comfortably settle into patterns. These questions are an invitation to consider the social, cognitive, and behavioral circumstances in which past practices evolved, and to fervently pursue practices that ethically serve the social, emotional, cognitive, and creative circumstances of each new project and space that we enter.

This issue opens with three Notes From the Field. Laura Rikard and Amanda Rose Villarreal question the concepts of ‘safe spaces’ and ‘brave spaces’ in theatrical work; they explore the origins of these concepts and the ways in which these conceptual terms have failed artists in practice. Rikard and Villarreal posit that the fields of theatre and consent-based performance learn from risk management fields to pursue, instead, ‘spaces of acceptable risk.’

Karie Miller, Kelsey Miller, and Elizabeth Wellman then present a guided questioning for readers in “New Repetitions: Questions and Suggestions for a More Trauma-Informed Production Process.” The authors analyze various facets of the production process in isolation, providing meaningful questions to guide artists’ personal reflection and organizational planning, as well as providing resources to further inform artists in the pursuit of more ethical practices.

Sheridan Schreyer then questions the concept of “playing” with a scene, with movement, or with text. The concept of playing, or experimenting freely, has long permeated classrooms and production processes. Schreyer questions the true meaning—and the psychological implications—of ‘play,’ as well as engaging with neuroscientist Stephen Porges’s Polyvagal Theory to interrogate the circumstances which must be met in order for actors to find play and experimentation within what Rikard and Villarreal call the realm of acceptable risk.

Nicolas Shannon Savard’s “Do we Get More Points if we Take Bigger Risks? Modeling Boundary-Setting in the Undergraduate Acting Classroom” engages practice-based research methodologies to question the ways in which acting classroom cultures have historically been established. In communication with Rikard and Villarreal’s proposal of creating spaces of

acceptable risk, Savard proposes specific risk assessment tools to use with students who may feel pressured to draw from traumatic experiences within their acting classrooms when doing so is unsustainable for them. Savard's practice-based approach provides rich illustrations of the ways in which inherited teaching practices lead students to presume that they may receive more approval or higher grades from a professor if they engage in riskier behavior. Savard highlights students' learned focus on earning and losing points, and the way that this educational socialization combines with power dynamics, lived identity, and unclear expectations to propel students into making decisions without considering their own safety. Savard's research led to the development of a new model for facilitating dialogue around risk and boundaries, specifically within contexts of devising and autobiographical work.

Villarreal's "Curatorial Directing and Actor Agency: Consent-Based Practices for Digital Performance," then, concludes this issue by raising questions regarding traditional directing models in translation to digital platforms. Using performance-as-research methodology and considering their experience directing digital performance and participating in digital immersive theatre workshops, Villarreal analyzes the way that a camera's framing can strip actors of agency and proposes a new approach to "Curatorial Directing" intended to return agency to actors creating digital theatre. Furthermore, Villarreal offers reflections to their approaches to intimacy choreography within virtual performance, questioning the insistence that digital theatre must replicate traditional theatre conventions.

Amanda Rose Villarreal, PhD  
Editor, *The Journal of Consent-Based Performance*

Boal, Augusto. 1993. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Translated by Charles A. McBride. Tcg ed. edition. Theatre Communications Group.

Dillon, J. T. 1982. "The Multidisciplinary Study of Questioning." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 74: 147–65. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.74.2.147>.