



Draft Pole Theatre Ethical Guidelines

With a presence in over 20 countries around the world, Pole Theatre is the largest pole competition in the world. The first Pole Theatre was held in Sydney in October 2013. Since then, Pole Theatre has exploded internationally, and the pole community has evolved and grown.

We are committed to our founding vision of allowing artists the creative freedom to bring their artistic vision to life on stage, with as few restrictions on their creativity as possible. Pole Theatre performances are often controversial and challenge the audience with different perspectives. We believe in the value of providing a platform to allow for artistic expression, creative freedom, and performances that push boundaries.

At the same time, it is of the utmost importance that Pole Theatre has guidelines to ensure it is a safe, fair and ethical competition.

Pole Theatre and Censorship

Pole Theatre as an organisation does not support the censorship of performances, except in limited circumstances. Outside of these limited circumstances, whether a performance is in good taste or has artistic validity is a matter for individual audience members to decide. As organisers, we remain committed to allowing performers to tell their story in the manner in which they choose, subject to the following limitations and considerations.

Banned Subject Matter

Pole Theatre will not tolerate performances that are:

- Racist (including but not limited to black face)
- Homophobic
- Likely to incite hatred towards or vilify a minority.

Any performances that are deemed by the organisers to fall within the above categories will be required to submit a new performance concept. If on the night, a performance is deemed to fall within one of the above categories by the judges, the performer will be disqualified. If after a Pole Theatre has been held, it is discovered that a performance constitutes a grave breach of these guidelines, a performer may have their titles revoked.

Whether a performance constitutes a grave breach of these guidelines will be a matter for the Pole Theatre World team to decide, having regard to any correspondence received from the public and the relevant performer.

Decisions made by the Pole Theatre World team will be final.

Note: performances that deal with the topics of racism, homophobia or vilification are not banned, but will be considered sensitive content (see below).

Sensitive Content

Pole Theatre performances often deal with subject matter that can provoke strong emotional responses from the audience. We believe that audience members at Pole Theatres should feel safe and supported, and be given the opportunity to prepare themselves for performances that may be upsetting or triggering.

As a performer, you are required to provide your National Organiser with a detailed description of your performance when you enter Pole Theatre. If your performance concept changes, you must update your National Organiser so that a decision can be made as to whether your concept is appropriate and whether a warning is required.

Failure to provide an adequate description of your performance may result in disqualification.

If you believe that your performance deals with subject matter that has the potential to cause a strong emotional reaction in your audience, you must advise your National Organiser that a warning will be necessary on the night.

Examples of subject matter that may be considered sensitive and may require a warning include:

- Mental health
- Sexual assault
- Disability
- Abuse or torture
- Self harming behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Suicide
- Hate speech or strong abusive language
- Violence, including domestic violence
- Murder or physical assault
- Depiction or discussion of discriminatory attitudes or actions, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, prejudice
- Drug, alcohol or substance abuse

We do not ban performances that relate to the above subject matter. However, we require performers to advise us if their performance relates to the above subject matter.

Pole Theatre Content Warning

The following content warning will be read out by the MC at the start of each Pole Theatre:

“Pole Theatre contains performances that can provoke strong emotions and reactions from the audience. There may be performances that contain content with offensive language,

scenes that are graphic or sexual in nature, violent themes, religious references, sexual violence themes, nudity, and other themes that may offend.

The performances and themes presented onstage do not represent the views of the Pole Theatre organisers. We do not censor the performers, except in limited circumstances.

As your MC, I will give you a description of each performance prior to the performer taking the stage so that you are aware of the content of the performance and can prepare yourself accordingly.

At Pole Theatre, we want performers to have the artistic freedom to tell their stories, and we also want audience members to feel safe and supported. If you feel you need to step outside to avoid seeing a performance that may be distressing for you, please understand that we understand and support your decision to do so.

Thank you, and we hope you enjoy the show”

Cultural appropriation

Wikipedia defines cultural appropriation as:

“Cultural appropriation, often framed as cultural misappropriation, is a concept in sociology dealing with the adoption of the elements of a minority culture by members of the dominant culture. It is distinguished from equal cultural exchange due to the presence of a colonial element and imbalance of power.”

Pole Theatre acknowledges that cultural appropriation has the potential to offend or to upset, even where no offence is intended. It is difficult for judges and organisers to determine the cultural and/or ethnic makeup of each individual performer, and we acknowledge that the question in itself might be inappropriate or offensive to the performer. Similarly, it is difficult for the judges to recognise whether a performer is part of a dominant or minority culture, or whether a performance would be considered inappropriate or offensive by a member of another culture.

Cultural appropriation is not in itself banned by Pole Theatre, however it is important for performers to understand that offence may be caused, and this may impact on the results of the competition, and it may affect the way the performance is received by the public.

If you are concerned that your performance might not be appropriate, please seek guidance from your National Organiser, but be aware that your National Organiser may not be able to give you a definitive answer as to whether your performance constitutes cultural misappropriation.

The onus is on the competitor to research their own theme and to be satisfied that they are presenting their performance in an appropriate manner.

Some examples of cultural appropriation to avoid include:

- Native American headdresses
- Traditional or indigenous costumes
- Dressing up as a different race

Questions or comments

Pole Theatre and its organisers take these issues very seriously. Any reports of this behavior should be reported immediately to poletheatresydney@gmail.com