

2023 Fire Conclave Video Primer

Filming, Editing, Framing, Audio, and Lighting for your Audition Video

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Mayday Video Review - May 1st

Special Tool Request Deadline - June 1st

Audition Video Submission Deadline - June 21st

Documentarian Registration Media Mecca - July 20th @ 12 noon PST

Videos Must be more than 15 minutes and less than 20 Minutes

COURTESY OF
BURNING MAN
FIRE CONCLAVE COUNCIL

Have questions we didn't answer, ask.

Please direct all questions to fireconclave@burningman.org

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Other reference material

- [Tips for filming Fire Conclave Auditions](#) - From Stewart Eastep

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Fire Conclave Video Primer.

Inside this Primer you will find guidelines, tips and lots of technical information regarding shooting video for both your MayDay Review and your main Video Audition. We suggest bookmarking this document to use as a reference guide, and sharing this information with the person(s) shooting and editing your video along with your choreographer or anyone else who is gonna need to know how to plan the performance for the camera.

The MayDay Review video is a snapshot of where you are so far. This is so that we can make sure you are on the right track. We do not expect all the bells and whistles that we do in your main audition video, so keep it short and simple. It's a way of letting us know how you are doing so far, making sure you understand how the video needs to be presented, and allowing ample time for feedback, corrections and changes should they be necessary.

Your main Fire Conclave video submission is your audition, please consider it as such when you plan and produce your video. Put your best flamey foot forward, costume up, and dazzle us. Show us your best performance in preparation for a live show on Burn night, not a whizzy movie or a promo video. That being said, we understand that not everything will be perfect. Show us your best and then tell us what is changing in the submission form.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding your video submissions, don't hesitate to contact us at Fireconclave@burningman.org. We are here to help and support you along the way.

Good luck in your endeavors. We can't wait to see where your imagination takes you...

Regards,
The Fire Conclave Council
Crimson, Tabasco, Wrangler, Scorch and Natalie



The Quick Reference List

- **Length of Video** - We expect the Mayday video to be no more than 5 minutes in length and the main audition video to include your 15 - 20 minute performance (do not include chaos at the end).

Fire - It is very important that we see your dancers with fire in your final Fire Conclave video submission. We want to see the act as we see it will be on playa. While we enjoy seeing fire in the MayDay video, it is not a requirement. We do, however, require you to be holding the fire tools you intend on using (or something similar) so we can see your intention.
- **Duet** - Start your video with your Duet. The duet is mandatory, in both your MayDay and final Audition Submission video. If your video does not start with the duet, then you will immediately reduce your chances to make it into the Great Circle.
- **Lighting** - do not rely on the fire to light your performers. Use work lights, clip lights, headlights, bonfires, etc.. to front-light the performance/ performer, allowing those of us watching the video to see you clearly.
- **Shooting (FPS)** - shoot your video at a minimum of 24 frames per second (FPS) or higher. 30 or 60 FPS is preferred.
- **Shooting (Resolution)** - Shoot at a minimum of 720p resolution. 1080p resolution is better. 4k resolution is great but isn't necessary unless the person(s) editing your video wants it and has the hardware and software to handle it. Most computer monitors max out at 1080p anyways. If you use different settings for different shots you are posting together, use the lowest resolution to render the whole thing to help with consistency. Must be a minimum of 720p.
- **Shooting (Speed)** - Make sure your video is **at speed**, meaning do not speed it up or modify the timing of it in any way, at any time, for any reason.
- **Equipment** - If using an action camera (such as a GoPro) keep in mind you'll have to edit out the fish eye effect in post production. Gopro's editor has a setting which will do this for you.
- **Rendering** - When rendering, make a copy in H.264 (also called MP4) compression to make your files. Most video editing programs give you the option to render it for Youtube or Vimeo, eliminating your need to worry about the compression format.
- **Review** - be sure to review what you are submitting. Watch it before you're done, after you're done, and again after you have uploaded it. Make sure it is what you want, and that you feel it is the best you have to show.

What is Not Accepted

- DO NOT show highlights, we want to see the full performance straight through.
- DO NOT send footage of playa dances, last year's Decompressions, etc. This must be new and current work.
- DO NOT send us a video clip of a spin jam. We want to see the choreography and showmanship you are working on.
- DO NOT send us a group's promotional video.
- DO NOT shoot vignette-vignette-vignette and try to splice them together or cut out transitions between dance sets. Doing so makes us question your abilities to conduct a full performance all the way through. We need to see transitions between pieces to make sure they are safe and coordinated.
- DO NOT use multiple camera angles.
- DO NOT shoot your video with a low resolution camera. Some phone cameras can film fine, but check them first. A bunch of white bleeding lights is not a great video representation of your dance.
- DO NOT use special effects, filters or software transitions when making your video.
- DO NOT include large objects (tools, props or implements) that have not been approved by the FC Council. Write to us to discuss the possibility of using big tools and props in the Great Circle.
- DO NOT show us some of your dancers. If you have 50 people listed in your group and you are only showing a few to represent what you're working on, we'll wonder where everyone is and you will lose points with us.
- DO NOT add titles to explain the video. If the performance doesn't tell the story the words will not help.
- DO NOT include "Chaos" at the end of your audition.

THE MAYDAY REVIEW

The goal of the Mayday review is to show us you are on the right track and to give you enough time to make corrections if we see issues with the performance. It will also give you a chance to show us how you will video it and give us a chance to tell you any concerns we may have. Over the years we have found that a bad video can make a good performance look bad, so we will focus on both the choreography submitted and pay special attention to the video production or filming.

What is required:

- ★ At least 45 seconds of your Duet
 - We do not expect perfection but we want to make sure it is a duet, and that what we are looking for (eg..two people dancing interactively with fire) is clear to you.
 - You can submit more than 45 seconds, but less will give us a reason to be concerned
- ★ Two scenes from the rest of your performance
 - If you are “geographically diverse”, this would be a good time to show us how you will be editing the scenes together (read more below)
 - If you're unsure about the way things are coming together this is a good time to show us so we can give you a quick critique
- ★ A transition between scenes. The transition can be from either your Duet to Scene #1 or from Scene #1 to Scene #2
- ★ You must use tools, even if you don't have fire we want to see how the tools will be used.
- ★ No more than 6 minutes
 - This is not your audition, it is a review to both help us and help you. Keep it short to the point and we will respond quickly. Go on too long and you will be disappointed when we don't watch all of it.

TO BE VERY CLEAR - We expect the following

1. **Duet - 45 seconds min / 2 mins max**
2. **Transition or cut (YOU MUST SHOW AT LEAST ONE TRANSITION)**
3. **Scene #1 - 1 to 3 min**
4. **Transition or Cut (YOU MUST SHOW AT LEAST ONE TRANSITION)**
5. **Scene #2 - 1 to 3 min**
6. **DONE - At least 5 minutes**

What is NOT required:

★ Fire

- While we would prefer fire, we understand that the end of April is still a hard time of the year for planning outdoor performances. Unlit tools, light/glow tools, or flags are an acceptable substitute.

★ Perfection

- We understand that there is a lot of time after this video shoot to really perfect things, put your best foot forward and show us what you have at this point in the best way you possibly can.

★ We do not expect the Mayday Video to match the Audition submission.

- We hope for and expect growth, change and expansion of the performance.

What you should focus on:

★ Camera work

- Use the camera you are intending to use for your audition if possible.
- Figure out the buttons and settings, make sure you know how everything works.

★ Lighting

- Set up extra lighting (headlights, flood lights, etc...) so that the performers are not dark.

★ Practice

- Show us the work you are putting in

★ The upload

- Upload it the same way you are planning on uploading your Audition video (either to Vimeo, Youtube, or online storage) and make sure everything works

The good and the bad:

- ★ The goal of the Mayday Review is to let you throw something at us and see how we respond. With almost 2 months till the audition is due it should give you time to clean things up and give us a solid audition video of your group at its best.
- ★ We will provide you with a critique of the video work and the performance. This critique is meant to be helpful, but keep in mind we won't be holding back even though we know it is an unfinished work in progress.
- ★ If you show us something sloppy and it is still sloppy when you get to the audition we will see it, and it will be noted.
- ★ If we make recommendations and you ignore us it will also be noted.

PREPARING YOUR AUDITION VIDEO

Cameras

There are lots of cameras to choose from, some are way out of most people's price range but cheap cameras are not hard to find or borrow. No matter what type of camera you have, make sure that it can do certain things:

- ★ 30 frames per second (24 is also accepted but generally only used internationally or for movies)
- ★ 720 or higher resolution
- ★ The ability to be stabilized at eye level or higher (use a tripod, ladder, top of a car)
- ★ Low light capabilities
- ★ If possible **turn off auto focus**. Fire moving around can mess with the camera's sensors. Manual focus or “fixed focus” is your friend. Some cameras allow you to lock the focus which will do the same thing.

Be careful with action cameras such as a GoPro. They may not have very good low light capabilities for the footage you're trying to take. A good way around that is adding lots of ambient light such as streetlights and car headlights, or shooting at dusk before it's too dark.

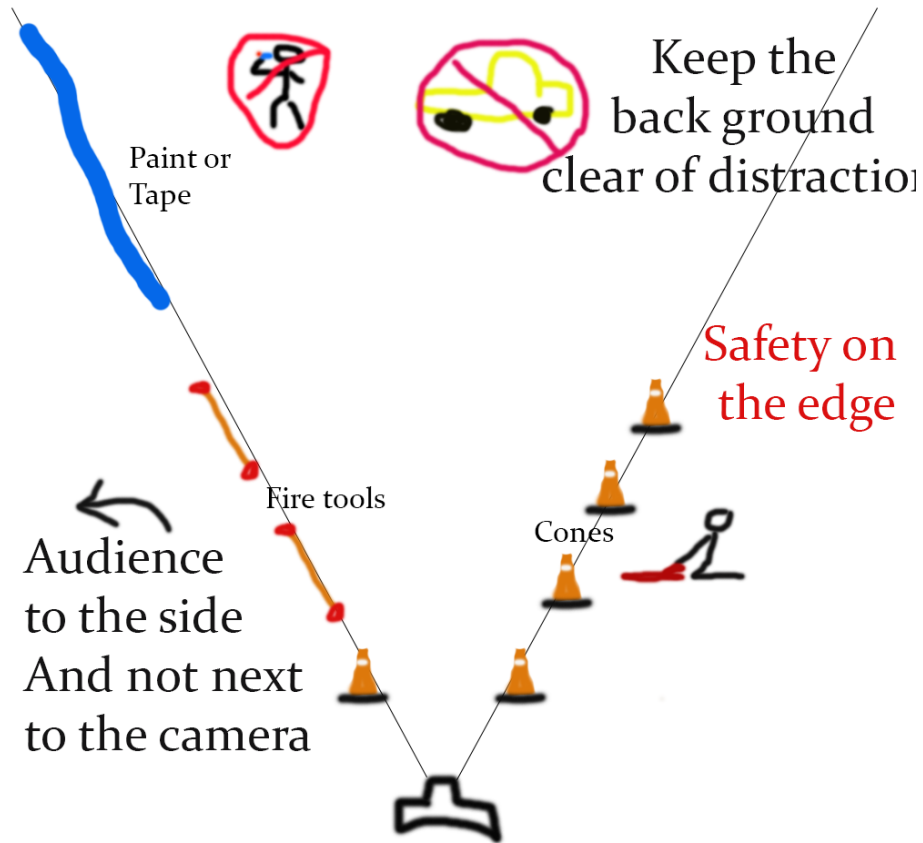
Framing Shots

Make sure that the camera angle sees the whole dancer(s) and the full extension of their tool. If this is during an event, performance etc, make sure the camera is capturing dancers from toes to the top of their tools.

1. Think about the presentation of your performance.

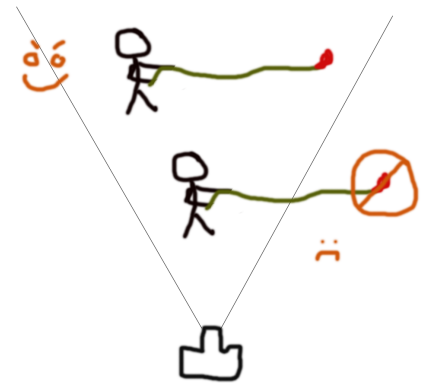
You have about a 68' (large group) or 34' (small group) wide performance space on the playa. This almost certainly will not be the most effective presentation for your videos. Consider squeezing into a 30-40' frame just for your video shoot, otherwise your footage will look very far away. If we can't see the Performance, we can't accept it.

- ★ Keep the Camera at standing eye level or slightly higher. Use a tripod, ladder (6 feet or so), top of a car, or some other stabilizer. Set the camera and then...
- ★ Mark the space the camera is recording on the ground so your group is aware of the boundaries. Use cones, tape, paint, extra fire tools, safeties, or flowers. We don't care if it's in the shot as long as it keeps you in the frame and it isn't more interesting than your performance.

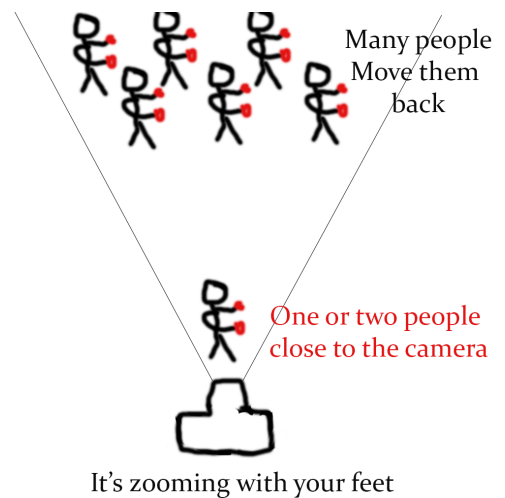


★ Think about the widest moment of your choreography, line those folks up in their places.

- Have everybody swing their tools up/out as far as they're gonna go... like a staff, up as high as it can reach. You might have to reel in a rope dart for better framing of the dancing for the purpose of the shoot.
- Step back and forth until everybody's feet, and the upper tips of their tools, are in frame.
- Then... take a step or two back to accommodate the space fire will require.



- ★ Make the performance work with the space you have.
 - The duet may move closer to the camera while the poi routine with 20 performers should move away from the camera.
 - We understand that the video is a “representation” of what you will be doing on playa, and moving the action forward and back so we can see the performance in the video will help. (BUT **DO NOT ZOOM IN AND OUT**)
 - Don’t get stuck trying to make the performance exactly like the playa and then have a camera so far away that all we see on our computers are blurs of light.
 - Use more depth when you have more performers on. If you are planning on having a scene using 50’ on playa, stagger it a little in the video and use only 40’ (or less).



- ★ Watch the video or a scene on a small screen (phone, tablet, back of the camera) before you leave the shoot. If you can see what is happening while your hands/ arms are at rest, great. If you have to zoom in to see it... reshoot.

You may not reach the boundaries of your designated performance area with your video framing; as long as performers aren’t getting cut out of frame that’s fine.

Why can’t we zoom? (You ask)

Our biggest issue with zooming has been:

- Missing entrances, exits, or transitions; we believe this info is important to what we need.
- Losing the edges of tools in a performance. You should consider the poi (or whatever) a part of the person and if it goes out of frame it's like chopping off a part of the body.
- Quickly zooming in and out distracts us. It may be needed to show an entrance, but it causes us to lose our focus and screws with what we want to see.
- We love your faces, but if we can’t see what the rest of your body is doing, then it means nothing to us.



2. Plan the frame, eliminate distractions, add light.

We want to see what you're doing.

- ★ Be aware of odd backlighting, if you have backlighting due to the nature of the space, add front light or overhead light for the win! Headlights or work-lights are fantastic, as are overhead lights.
- ★ While having a beautiful sunset in the background is great, it will put you in the shadows. It is actually better to have the performers facing the sunset.
- ★ Too much light is possible, we want to see the fire. If you're shooting outdoors, and it's still light on set well into the evening, adjust the brightness of your camera settings within reason to accommodate for the brightness of the Day Star.
- ★ Do you have distracting junk behind or around the framed performance area? Move it so we don't see it.
- ★ People lingering? Tell them to move.
- ★ Give the camera a security detail if possible. People who will prevent or stop:
 - People walking in front of the camera
 - People talking or "hanging out" next to the camera.
- ★ **We do not consider Fire Safety a distraction** and we like to see how you put your tools out, especially if they are big and awkward. Consider this a part of the performance. If you see it and it looks weird to you, it will probably look weird to us as well.

3. Shooting, frame rate video size, quality, color profile and white balance

Cameras vary, whether you have a cool HD video camera, a video enabled DSLR or a point and shoot with video capabilities, poke around in your camera's menus to double check your settings.

- ★ Frame rate – 24 or 30 frames per second (FPS). In Europe 25 is the standard, but once you upload it to the internet, it will format to the rate required by the website (YouTube or Vimeo)
- ★ Video size - bigger is better 720p or 1080p are wonderful
- ★ Quality - fine, so fine
- ★ Color profile, set to faithful or neutral
- ★ White balance, if your camera has a white balance setting, try finding one that makes a picture where white looks like white, not green or blue or orange

DO NOT shoot your video with a Barbi-cam (This is a Barbi-cam in action <https://youtu.be/9VS3C183G8g?list=PL7ECB90D96DF59DE5>) or some other camera that lacks acceptable quality. Say no to big pixels.

Beware of shooting with a cell phone or tablet, while some have great daylight video capabilities, shooting fire performance is very difficult for most and you need to present the best version of you, you can. **If it is your only choice**, then make sure it is stabilized and you have enough extra lighting to make sure the **fire doesn't bleed out**, while not having so much lighting that we don't see the fire.

Sound / Audio / Music

When recording your dance and the music at the same time, please be aware of the sound around the microphone. Listening to people talking distracts from the performance. Be aware of wind noise as well, and be prepared with a mic muff if needed.

You may dub over all the audio with the sound track you used during the taking of the video as opposed to leaving the mic audio. This can cover up the counting and other odd sounds during the filming.

Wind, passing cars, chatty folks joking nearby, audience noise, and barking dogs are all really distracting to the viewers. We know it's a picky thing, but this video is your audition; respect yourselves by considering the sonic distractions present in your video.

- ★ If you are going to use original audio, prepare your camera's microphone with a mic muff, this is a super easy DIY trick for dampening wind noise, made from a swatch of fun fur, it's so easy it's silly, check it out! [Here](#) or [here](#). If you need to look further to suit your camera, search on DIY mic-muff, or wind muff (it's also called a dead cat, that's not a search term we would suggest).
- ★ If you have drummers, situate them next to your camera so they are prominent in the sound. This will give us a good idea of your music plan if you have one.
- ★ If the sonic level of your video is really high or low, adjust it in your editing.
- ★ If you choose to add a music track to your video, we will ask what relevance it has to your performance. Be prepared to tell us in your written submission what purpose it serves. It could be the music you chose to rehearse to and isn't necessary to your final performance, or it may be a much nicer sonic scape than the sound the camera captured. Great, just let us know.

Compositing and Editing

Keep video compositing to a minimum (more detail below)

- Do not zoom in/out
- Make sure the camera is in *focus*, we really do want to see what you all are creating.
- Single point perspective, single point of view, no multiple camera angles
- Give yourself plenty of time to review what you are submitting.
- Plan to do several rehearsal shootings.

Asking you to be a Shin and a filmmaker is a tall order, so enlist support of people who have experience shooting, compositing and editing video, and will take your direction. This is *your* audition, not *their* demo reel. To composite video is to make your audition from various parts or elements:

- ★ You do not *have to* make your audition video in one continuous shot.
- ★ You DO have to make the video feel like it flows as one shot. Every scene has a beginning and an end. Every shoot should start with the end of the previous scene and end with the beginning of the next scene. DO this and we will see the transitions.
- ★ While you can cut **between** scenes please **DO NOT do ANY cuts during a scene**. Do not cut out drops or mistakes, they happen and a cut is worse in our opinion than a drop.
- ★ You may make multiple takes with the same camera framing.
- ★ Select the best takes of those shots and edit each scene together being sure to blend the transitions together as seamlessly as possible.
- ★ Composite and edit them together so the final video sequence presents as a continuous performance.
- ★ We want to see transitions from one segment to the next, end and begin each take with the same positioning.

DO NOT shoot vignette-vignette-vignette and try to splice them together and cut out transitions between dance sets as doing so makes us question your abilities to conduct a full performance all the way through.

DO NOT use multiple camera angles.

DO NOT use special effects, filters or software “transitions” such as a “wipe” or a “roll” when making your video.

DO NOT add titles to explain the video. If the performance doesn’t tell the story the words will not help.

Rendering and exporting your film

- ★ Rendering can take hours, so don't wait till the last minute.
- ★ Make one copy exported at the very best quality your software will allow for, use this as a master edition, duplicate it and save it.
- ★ Make one copy exported at H.264 (MP4), this will be the video you submit online. (H.264 will look great when uploaded to the internet and won't take forever to load). Also known as MPEG-4 Part 14 or MPEG-4 AVC.
- ★ How big is your file size? If it's less than 100KB something went terribly wrong. We don't need to see the video on our phones, so try exporting the file again with different settings.
- ★ Most (not all) video editors have a setting for uploading to Youtube or Vimeo. Once you choose this option make sure that the level your rendering is as high a resolution as it allows, or at least at the resolution you want it to be set at.
- ★ Always save copies of footage, something disastrous may happen with your compositors computers, their physical body or their commitments. Consider burning all of your units of footage to DVD, or using Dropbox or some other online file storage site as backup to work from in the event something goes sideways and you need to find another editor.

Geographic Diversity

If your group members are scattered around the country or even the world, composite their video clips together in the same sequence as the performance.

If your group is flung far afield, you don't have to join together in the same physical place to shoot your video. Good planning, leadership and compositing can generate excellent results. Please explain in the written portion of your audition submission that you are compositing a geographically diverse group together into one film, so we know to account for this special circumstance.

It may be helpful to:

- ★ Impose shooting guidelines upon your diverse groups, attempting to achieve the same camera framing, frame rates and lighting. Consider shooting a sample and posting it on youtube or Vimeo so they see what you are looking for.
- ★ Consider making a short master example as a shooting guide for each of the camera operators to follow.
- ★ Use a file sharing platform, share copies of unedited raw footage with your video editor who will then...
 - Assemble the footage, per the notes on compositing and editing above, in sequence as it's intended to be performed on the play.
- ★ Don't try to combine multiple performers located in multiple locations in a single scene. Have each area work on a scene or two as a pod and submit a video which you as the shin will direct into a greater performance.
- ★ Try to use the end of the previous scene in the beginning of each following scene. It will show you are planning transitions and give us a better sense of the flow of your piece.
- ★ Do not split screen as all this does is distract from the performance, use stand ins when necessary and if you absolutely feel the need to do something check with us first and send us a sample of what you would like to do.

DO NOT send us each group's promotional video.

DO NOT send us one film per pod - DO composite or edit them together.

SUBMITTING YOUR VIDEO

Preparing to Upload

Using YouTube to share your video with the FC Council may cause you to break your video into two or more segments (depending on your account). Plan ahead for this break or consider using Vimeo.com which allows for longer videos. Without consideration to frame rate and compression, downloading your videos can take a while; we're not all sitting on fat pipes to the internet, so please be considerate of file size. Vimeo has a great guide to compression and frame rate on their Compression Guidelines page at <https://vimeo.com/help/compression/> with tutorials for many movie-making programs. Regardless of which service you use, compression and frame rate are important to the quality of your video.

We may not be "experts" in video, but we will do our best to answer any questions you have and coach you through any processes. Tabasco has some experience editing but is merely a hobbyist. Any questions you have should be addressed to fireconclave@burningman.org.

Uploading Video

Please upload your video to one of these online sites:

<http://www.youtube.com>

<http://vimeo.com>

OR, use a file sharing site such as Onedrive, Dropbox or Google Drive.

For those that have not uploaded video before we suggest that you have a reliable internet connection and give yourself plenty of time to upload your video (it may take an hour or more).

- ★ Video compression resulting from the upload may throw you for a loop and you may have to export your film again at a different setting and re-upload.
- ★ Test the link and make sure it works, then make sure someone who is not in your inner circle can access the video.
- ★ All in all, don't wait until the last minute to send your video, you may encounter surprises.
- ★ Make sure the video can be downloaded. We find it very helpful to review and discuss videos when we can download them.

Completing the Audition Form

Complete the audition form located here: <http://tinyurl.com/Audition-Form-FC-2023>. Include the following information along with the links to the video:

- ★ Group Name
- ★ Shin
- ★ Shin Email Address
- ★ Brief description of your theme/performance- KEEP IT SHORT (150 characters or less). The words are the equivalent of a summary of your dance and must match the video as best you can. We do not need a record of every move, every tool, or all the blocking. We read the synopsis first and then watch the video. Keep it short and succinct.
- ★ Video Link (up to 2) - The FC Council lives in four different cities so all video submissions must be uploaded to the internet. Please submit to the FC Council at least 15 minutes of your dance and no more than a total of 20 minutes.
- ★ Total number in Group
- ★ Number of Performers
- ★ Number of Safety/Fire Watch
- ★ Number of drummers and/or musicians
- ★ Name of Documentarian - Please give us the name and email they use for their burner profile which is required for registration. **This is not necessarily the same person who filmed your audition.** This is the person who will digitize (film or photo) you on playa. If you don't know yet, that is fine, but get on that Registration closes 7/20
- ★ Total Video Length
- ★ What your plan for music on playa is (if any)
- ★ Upload links
 - Include password if needed
- ★ Can we share your video
- ★ Do you need ambient Musicians.
- ★ Social Handles
- ★ Additional Notes