

May 15, 2014

Promotion Committee of the University of Alabama:

I am writing this letter in full support of **Professor Seth Panitch's** application for Full Professor. Seth and I have been colleagues since his arrival in Tuscaloosa almost a decade ago. Many times it takes a new professor some time to adjust to a new situation in terms of student's expectations, faculty expectations and living in a new environment. This was hardly the case with Mr. Panitch. He "Hit the ground running" as they say, and he hasn't stopped since.

It is easy to speak of Professor Panitch's superior achievements and profound dedication to the art of teaching. He is truly one who "practices what he preaches", while going beyond the normal scope of what is expected of a theatre professor.

His reputation in the classroom is top-rate. He is demanding of his students, who may initially wince at the high level of professionalism expected of them, but quickly come to appreciate his skill and total dedication to their training. Students of all levels consistently clamor to be in his classes. This is also true of the productions that he directs for the Department of Theatre and Dance. These assignments are expected of a professor in his position.

What is not expected is the abundant workload that he takes on beyond his normal assignments. On two separate occasions he has written and produced his work Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway. Not only does this bring recognition to The University of Alabama, but it also affords our students to act and design in such venues that are rarely available to any college students.

Professor Panitch has also been instrumental in establishing long-term relationships through his work at prestigious regional theatre festivals. He not only served as a director for The Texas Shakespeare Festival (TSF), but also as their fight choreographer. For two years he performed at the highly regarded Colorado Shakespeare Festival (CSF), and this summer he returns there to direct a production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Through this rich relationship, he was able to bring Philip Sneed, of CSF to direct a show on our own campus. This also led to the development of an internship with CSF for our actors. As is the case for both TSF and CSF, actors from The University of Alabama are getting cast due entirely to Seth's efforts.

Seth has also been very invested in the UA Cuba Initiative. Not only has he gone to Cuba on numerous occasions to direct productions there for the Ministry of Culture, but also he has taken our own actors and designers with him. It goes without saying what a valuable experience this is for our students. Mr. Panitch was also responsible for bringing Cuban actors to Alabama for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, allowing for all of us to interact with the Cuban artists.

He repeated this experience on a grand scale last summer with his successful production of *Alceste Ascending*, which he produced Off Broadway in New York City before mounting it in Havana, Cuba.

It should be noted that while Professor Panitch is extraordinary in the classroom as well as globally successful, he somehow manages to find time to again, practice what he preaches on stage. He has been a featured actor in several UA productions, including most recently, a hysterical turn in Shaw's *Misalliance*.

You may be able to tell that is difficult to distinguish Professor Panitch's teaching accomplishments from his artistic achievements. He very successfully, walks the fine line of combining both. I believe this is through his true love and dedication to what he does and what he believes an effective professor should be. It is virtually impossible to clearly and completely express the many ways that **Professor Seth**

Panitch so deserves promotion to full professor in this brief letter of support. I would be happy to address any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Donna Meester
Associate Professor
BA/MFA Program Director, Costume Design & Production
The University of Alabama
dmeester@as.ua.edu