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May 10, 2014

The Promotion Committee, The University of Alabama

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in enthusiastic support of Seth Panitch's application for Promotion to Full Professor at the University of Alabama. I have known Seth for several years, and have worked with him, and/or observed his work as, a professor, a professional theatre artist, and an administrator.

Seth is an extremely intelligent, talented, and motivated educator and artist. He has much to recommend him, including his skill in teaching and directing a very wide range of theatrical genres and styles, his ability to communicate effectively to a diverse group of constituents (students, fellow professional artists, colleagues in academia and in the profession, etc.). His inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity have led him to become conversant with a variety of historical and cultural approaches to theatre.

As an actor in the professional theatre, Seth is highly skilled at both tragedy and comedy, and exhibits facility with a range of styles. His theatrical instincts are well-developed and he shows great inventiveness and imagination in every role I have seen him play. Audiences responded very well to his comic work as Don Armado in Shakespeare's LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST for my former company (the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, where I served as Producing Artistic Director for six years) in 2008 - a very large and difficult role to make effective today, given the nature of the comedic writing, which is less resonant now than it undoubtedly was in Shakespeare's time. As a fellow actor in MACBETH, playing a minor role, he brought a very different - and very appropriate - approach to a great tragedy, and also demonstrated that he clearly understood how to support the work of the leading actors. More recently, he displayed his considerable musical theatre skills when he played the leading role of El Gallo in the 2010 CSF production of THE FANTASTICKS, as well as turning in a very fine performance as the Provost in Shakespeare's MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Regarding Seth's skills as an educator, I have had the opportunity to work with many of his students in my capacity as a guest director for the department in the fall of 2009. I was extremely impressed with the work of these young artists, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. The play I directed (THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE) is filled with roles for mature character actors, and I was not expecting to find university students who would be able to fill roles successfully. To my delight, the students proved themselves extremely capable of convincingly portraying a range of character types, in a play which is stylistically very challenging, and which represents a genre of play with which many young actors are not at all familiar. I have taught and directed at many universities (including UC-Berkeley and UC-San Diego), and I have seldom seen such skill and artistic maturity among actors of this age - and that is a testament to Seth's ability both to recruit and to train young artists for the profession.

Shortly after working with Seth's students, he approached me about the possibility of creating a formal graduate-level internship at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, for a select number of his students. Given the quality I had witnessed in those students, I eagerly agreed, and we worked together to create an arrangement which commits us to using several MFA acting students every summer as interns in our company. This arrangement was of great benefit to the company, and (I believe) to the students. They

company. This arrangement was of great benefit to the company, and (I believe) to the students. They excelled onstage in CSF productions, working comfortably alongside our professional, Equity acting company.

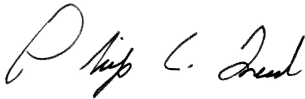
Additionally, I believe – based on my observations at other universities where I have taught or served as a Guest Artist – that Seth’s body of creative work far exceeds that of other educators, in both quantity and quality; he is far more active in the field than most.

Lastly, I would like to speak to Seth’s work as an innovative artist both within the academy and in the profession as a whole. His work shows great initiative and entrepreneurial resourcefulness. He has created many original works, and unlike most playwrights he has also found the means to see these works produced and presented in public venues (a much more daunting task in our field than for a visual artist, a dancer, or a musician). Seth’s work with Cuban artists, both in Cuba and in the United States, shows great artistic and administrative ability on his part; I have been involved with international cultural exchange for many years and I know from firsthand experience how difficult it can be to negotiate artistic, political, and cultural differences.

In my assessment, Seth Panitch shows tremendous promise for continuing success artistically and academically, and I highly recommend him for promotion to Full Professor. I have enjoyed my work with him, and I look forward to the opportunity to partner with him again in the future.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance in your consideration of Seth’s application for promotion.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip C. Sneed". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Philip C. Sneed
Executive Director, Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities
Former Producing Artistic Director, Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Past President, Shakespeare Theatre Association of America