



# THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

*Theatre and Dance*

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September 2, 2009

William Teague, Chair  
Department of Theatre and Dance  
Box 870239  
University of Alabama  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0239

Dear Professor Teague:

I'm writing in support of Seth Panitch's application for tenure and promotion at the University of Alabama. I've had the pleasure of getting to know Seth Panitch during the past several years, when he served as a KCACTF respondent for productions here at Southern Miss. In spring 2009 I traveled to Tuscaloosa to see *King Henry V*, which he directed. When I was asked to serve as an external evaluator for your tenure and promotion process, I was glad to accept the invitation.

In reviewing Seth Panitch's dossier material it is clear he is a teacher and theatre artist who is busy in all areas necessary to achieve tenure and promotion. When compared with candidates in similar tracks at other universities, I rate the broad range of Seth Panitch's accomplishments extremely high. He appears to be meeting the challenges in all important areas with enthusiasm and determination, and to be going well beyond expectations for teaching, creative research and service.

When you speak with Seth Panitch the passion he feels for teaching and making theatre could not be more evident. Seth is committed to the highest professional standards of excellence. He is interested in motivating students to strong technique, and to a process of investigation and discovery. He wants theatre work to be joyful and profound. He is an excellent role model, who, I'm sure, is a strong leader of the performance program in the Department of Theatre and Dance.

While I have not attended any of Seth's classes, I have no doubt that his work with students is personal, direct, and inspiring. Based on the extraordinary clarity with which he articulated ideas and concepts during his KCACTF responses at Southern Miss, our students and faculty were immediately engaged in an important dialogue about their work. Based on his dynamic passion for theatre, and his personal accessibility, we felt an immediate kinship with Seth Panitch. I knew I was meeting an important teacher, theatre artist and colleague.



Seth Panitch is a working professional actor, director and writer, whose opportunities seem to be growing commensurate with his talent and experience. He has acted and directed at a number of significant professional resident theatres in different parts of the country, and his work will likely appear in even larger venues during the next years. While it's exciting to have a faculty member who is actively engaged in the profession, the value this brings to a university program is enormous. Seth is able to bring his professional experiences to the classroom, and to spread the word about his home program in the field. He thereby provides a context of direct relevancy for students, while serving as a recruitment liaison.

One of the aspects of Seth's professional outreach that seems most unique is his work with Cuban theatre artists. Any international theatre activity is an opportunity for collaboration between cultures. It appears that Seth Panitch has brought students, faculty, and staff at the University of Alabama an unusual and invaluable chance to broaden their experiences, and deepen their understanding of theatre content and form.

Seth Panitch's creative work for the university program reveals his understanding of the need for passion and excitement in making theatre. *King Henry V* is a very challenging play to direct, even on a professional level. Seth's work on this production, for which he served as director as well as fight choreographer, was accomplished in many ways. He infused the production with a striking pace and determination. His unusual use of the space was imaginative and dynamic. It forced the audience close to the action; we felt part of an historic journey that relentlessly moved forward.

For *King Henry V* Seth coordinated excellent designs that helped support the overall vision for the production. He guided a relatively inexperienced company (as is any university company in regard to performing Shakespeare) toward creating strongly defined characters with high stakes. In short, Seth made a theatre event that was important in its effort, and significant in its achievements. Frankly, I'm not sure how Seth found the time, in a short rehearsal process, to both direct the production and create the exciting stage combat. This feat is surely an example of how far Seth is willing to push his own efforts for the sake of the department's work.

Like all creative artists teaching at universities, Seth Panitch's creative work for the program and in the profession should be valued as the equivalent of research and publication in more traditional academic departments. Seth Panitch shows tremendous accomplishment in three areas of creative research: acting, directing and writing. The breath of his endeavor is beyond the normal expectations for tenure and promotion approval when compared with artists in similar positions at other universities.



It's easy to objectively summarize Seth Panitch's strengths as a member of the Department of Theatre and Dance faculty. He is deeply committed to teaching, and creating the most productive and positive learning environment. He appears to tirelessly work to improve his craft, and to provide leadership for his area. He is active in his profession in all areas both at the university and in the field, and will surely continue his impressive record of creative research in the future. He has a strong record of service to the department and the university.

Seth Panitch has worked with members of different departments for various projects, thereby bringing the collaborative nature of theatre beyond the bounds of the Department of Theatre and Dance. His professional work has brought his home program to the attention of professionals in different areas of the country, and on an international front.

Seth Panitch brings an undeniable passion and a great enthusiasm for collaboration to every theatre project he undertakes. Seth Panitch is the kind of theatre artist and teacher most sought after by theatre departments across the nation; his work is unique and important.

The University of Alabama is fortunate to have Seth Panitch on its faculty. I highly recommend Seth Panitch for tenure and promotion, and would be happy to discuss my evaluation of his work at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Louis Rackoff', written over a horizontal line.

Louis Rackoff

Chair, Theatre and Dance

University of Southern Mississippi

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