



Department of Music, Theatre and Dance

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To Whom It May Concern:

It is a great pleasure for me to write this letter in response to Janet Haley's appearance in the play *Homecoming* produced by the Flint Youth Theatre.

Homecoming is set in a small town during the Great Depression, and the simple story dramatizes the hopes and fears of a family awaiting the return of the father who is inexplicably absent. Cast in the role of the mother, Ms. Haley turned in a luminous performance. At every moment the tension between her deep anxiety about the fate of her husband and her overriding desire to remain a tower of strength for her nine children was arrestingly palpable.

Ms. Haley supported her clear internal work with ironclad professional technique. Her use of a "down home" dialect was consistent and convincing. The easy command of ramrod straight posture, enhanced by the adoption of a pulled-back, no-nonsense hairstyle, lent an immediate air of stoicism to her characterization. In many of the scenes the mother lingered in the darkened house upstage while the children ventured into the outdoors. Ms. Haley continued to fill these soft focus moments with rich internal life, lovingly polishing the back of a chair with the attention of one for whom material objects are hard won and precious, or anxiously fixing her hair in the reflection in the glass of the cupboard in hopeful anticipation of her husband's return. Ms. Haley provided the heart and soul to this production, and the easy and trusting rapport she had nurtured with her "children" was clearly evident.

I have had the opportunity to view Ms. Haley's acting work at the Michigan Shakespeare Festival, at UM-Flint, and at Flint Youth Theatre on many occasions. She is an actor of towering strength, impressive vocal command, and fierce passion for her art. She is also a cherished theatre colleague.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M Gillespie".

Michael Gillespie, Ph.D.
Fmr. Paul and Doris Travis Professor of Theatre
Teaching Member, Alexander Technique International