

October 5, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my extreme pleasure to have the opportunity to offer this "Peer Review" letter in support of Professor Janet Haley.

I believe I was first introduced to Janet just over ten years ago while I was serving as a visiting assistant professor in theatre at the University of Michigan-Flint and then later had the opportunity to collaborate with her when she was cast as *Maria* in a 2005 production of *Twelfth Night* that I directed for the Michigan Shakespeare Festival (MSF) in Jackson. My respect and admiration for Janet as a creative and dedicated craftsperson began during that memorable season and if that assessment ever needed reaffirmation or "cementing", her most recent performance as Mmme. Pernelle in Robert Kauzlaric's exceptional production of Moliere's *Tartuffe* at MSF did that "in spades".

A day or so before witnessing Janet's performance at the July 30th matinee of *Tartuffe* this summer, I happened to be doing some prep work for a Career Seminar I'm teaching this fall at Eastern Michigan University for our senior theatre majors. Within the pages of a small handbook entitled *Acting Strategies For The Cyber Age* authored by actor and teacher Ed Hooks. I read these words :

"Let's go back to basics. *The actor leads and the audience follows.* That's the natural order of things."

Mr. Hooks was emphasizing the need for actors to communicate strong status and confidence in most any performance or audition situation and the above phrase was never better personified than in the bold, specific choices Janet made as Mmme. Pernelle in *Tartuffe*. Janet's voice is the first we heard in the production, and her "sweep in" to the playing space served not only to immediately communicate Moliere's zealous matriarch, but also clearly and quickly defined the high comedic style that Mr. Kauzlaric would so successfully layer into the entire production. In short, Ms. Haley "lead" and we *eagerly* followed".


In addition to Janet's strong and versatile vocal dynamics that made Richard Wilbur's verse translation of *Tartuffe* sound utterly second nature, her physical choices were an absolute "clinic" for any actor who might one day be called upon to

collaborate on such an "archetypal" farce with a complete set of late 17th century accoutrement at their disposal. Moving effortlessly and quite naturally in Melanie Schussler's authentic costumes, Ms. Haley found delightful and surprising ways to employ Madame Pernell's fan: sometimes using the hand prop both as an exclamation point and a weapon. The contrast between Janet's choices that convinced us of her character's aging matriarch and the near "ninja-like" reflexes she gave Mme. Pernell's "fan-hand" was a comedic highlight for the audience and yet never ventured into any territory outside of the style of the piece. Indeed, Ms. Haley's choices, to me, really became the "punctuation marks" that made Mr. Kauzlaric's concept for the play really work. When Mme. Pernell's last line is delivered in Act Five...("I'm thunderstruck!"), we delight in watching Janet physically "freeze" on stage for the last five to ten minutes of the play, a choice that, in less capable hands, might become distracting or that potentially upstages the remaining resolution of the piece. When Janet's Mme. Pernell is rendered motionless, she is *absolutely* frozen. This audience laughed, marveled for a few seconds at the discipline of the actor and then found that they were quickly focused on the rest of the scene. It's a small point perhaps, but to me, was a profound statement about how the well-trained, disciplined actor can find their moment to shine and yet still stay fully committed to the work of the ensemble and the storytelling. As I told Ms. Haley after the performance, I was "thunderstruck" as well.

I am encouraged to know that there are such gifted and dynamic theatre artists who devote so much of their time and energy to training a younger generation of actors. Janet Haley's example, I hope, is one that others instructors in theatre programs throughout the country might attempt to successfully emulate and it would be my profound hope that she will continue to be valued at the fine institution that I'm confident The University of Michigan at Flint continues to be.

Please feel free to contact me with any further comments or questions.

Most Sincerely,



John Seibert

Lecturer III- Communication, Media and Theatre Arts @ Eastern Michigan University, (MFA, The University of Minnesota 1987)

Member: Actors Equity Association, Screen Actors Guild, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists

Associate Artist: Performance Network of Ann Arbor and The Purple Rose Theatre Co. **Freelance Director** (Wilde Award Winner for Best Drama :*DOUBT* 2008, and Best Comedy: *CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION* 2011)