

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

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DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE

April 1, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

During Shane Lutz's study toward an MFA in Directing at the University of Montana, I was a guest faculty member in the department on two occasions. In the spring of 2019 I taught two courses, Movement for Actors and Directing for students in the MFA acting and directing programs. Shane was a student in both these courses. During that semester, I also saw his production of Woyzeck, his first year directing project. Then in the fall of 2020, when Shane was a third year student I was, once again, a guest faculty member, this time directing John Guare's Six Degrees of Separation. For this production, Shane was assigned to be the Production Stage Manager. Through these experiences and interactions with Shane I have come to know him and his work very well.

Shane is very smart, well-read, disciplined, creative and has a strong grounding in theater history and literature. He maintains strong opinions about the role of theater in our society and has expressed an interest in working with all kinds of populations in both production and educational settings. According to colleagues at the University of Montana, he is an excellent teacher; dedicated, organized and clear in the classroom. He is one of the few graduates entrusted to serve as a teaching assistant for theatre history and dramatic literature courses.

As a director he is inclined toward interpretations of plays that respond to current social issues and is always motivated to challenge mainstream theatrical boundaries. In his production of Woyzeck he cast a young woman in the title role and turned upside down many assumptions about the character. The production had a very physical bent as did his thesis production, Mother Courage and her Children. Due to the coronavirus pandemic Mother Courage was videotaped with actors wearing masks, staged in a socially distant fashion and without an audience on the mainstage at the University of Montana.

The play began with the camera entering the building from a rear door next to the loading dock and was ushered into the space by stage managers, actors and technicians scurrying around making final preparations. In an expansive physical space, the camera recording the piece was expertly choreographed, occasionally circling the action or rotating to capture something new. The lighting saturated the action regardless of where the action was in space, making it feel as if the piece was taking place outside, and yet, the event was unmistakably occurring in a theatre space. Lighting instruments were visible as were

the seats of the theatre. This approach supported the inherent theatricality of the play, despite its virtual existence.

This is a challenging play for undergraduate actors, but Shane appears to have generated both enthusiasm and textual understanding among the cast. The actors were physically confident and thoroughly committed to the project, appearing to thoroughly enjoy themselves. This is not surprising. Enthusiasm and positive encouragement is embedded in Shane's approach to directing and that energy is evident on stage in his productions.


I was especially grateful that Shane was assigned to stage manage *Six Degrees of Separation* in the fall of 2020. Like many directors, I place a high value on having a good stage manager and Shane was excellent. He was organized, pleasant and positive with me and the cast, providing creative and useful suggestions and solutions to problems encountered along the way. This was my first virtual production and I can honestly say that I would have been lost without him. In particular, Shane happened to mention early on his interest in editing and this led to his serving in the role of editor. Shane executed all the editing remaining faithful to the structure I had laid out and using his own ingenuity to smooth out the rough edges and give the show a polished and professional look. I never thought a zoom production recorded within the confines of the cast's apartments and dorm rooms would look that good.

Shane has a combination of skills and interests that will make him a versatile and productive faculty member. His knowledge of theater history (including the work of modern groundbreaking artists), his strength as a director and acting teacher, and his concern for students will allow him and his students to thrive. He will be an asset to any theater program searching for an emerging artist who is equally dedicated to his craft and his students.

I believe that Shane will make an excellent colleague too. We need smart and motivated faculty members to bring new energy to our programs. Shane has the capability to be one of those welcome colleagues who can be instrumental in moving a theater program forward.

I would be happy to answer any questions I can about Shane's work and qualifications

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Oates', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charlie Oates
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