

January 10, 2009

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Alan Souza who I have known for the past two years. He first worked at our theater as a performer in the musical, *Bookends*, by Katharine Houghton. It was immediately evident that he is an exceptionally talented actor with a broad range of experience in musical theater.

After the play closed he indicated that for the past several years his passion had turned to directing and asked if we would look at a project that he had dreamt of doing for some time. The proposed project was *The Little Hours*, a musical based on the short stories of Dorothy Parker written by David Bucknam. It was a very ambitious undertaking because Bucknam had died ten years earlier, the play had never been produced, and the book and libretto were still in draft form. In addition, the script was three-and-a-half hours long and required significant and sensitive editing without compromising Bucknam's vision.

Alan hired Helen Gregory, a musical director who knew Bucknam's work and esthetics and also negotiated with Bucknam's sister who was anxious to protect her brother's vision while at the same time recognizing that in its current form it could not be presented to the public. From our perspective he did a brilliant job not only in directing the play but in handling the additional responsibility of editing the script into a coherent and compelling piece of musical theater.

Our theater develops and produces almost entirely new works so we were able to appreciate what a massive undertaking this project was from a directorial standpoint. We also observed during the rehearsal process that Alan worked beautifully with his cast and was very effective in coordinating all the technical and design elements of the production. The sets and lighting were an esthetic tour de force and the reviews for this world premiere were laudatory.

Because of our experience with Alan in 2007 we asked him to direct our current musical, *Cupid and Psyche*. From casting through rehearsals he brought the same energy, creativity, and esthetic sense to this musical as we had witnessed with *The Little Hours*. The play received some of the most glowing reviews that we have ever received in ten seasons including the *New York Times* as well as New Jersey's two major papers. He only had three weeks to put the production together and remained unflappable. Once again, we noted his patience and supportiveness of the cast which we greatly value at our theater. We have found that this is not something that

can be taught. He protected them from all the pressures he was under so that they could concentrate only on their work. It is clear that he loves actors, understands their process, and despite the fact that he himself is an accomplished performer tends to gently shepherd them along while at the same time achieving his vision seamlessly.

Given our faith in his work we recently recommended Alan to Vasi Laurence who is a Broadway producer with credits including *Passing Strange* and *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. She is developing a musical, *Stage and Screen*, in partnership with our theater and asked us to suggest the director for the project. She had already seen Alan's work in the prior two musicals and after interviewing him immediately shared our views and hired him. Once again, this is an entirely new work and Alan is called upon not only to direct but to collaborate with the writer in the evolution of the piece. One of his strengths is that he is very astute in identifying vulnerabilities in a script or character that require work which makes him especially effective in bringing new plays to life.

I am generally not this effusive when I write a letter of recommendation for an individual but I find it important to give Alan his due because he is an unusually gifted individual. He directs with great confidence while at the same time remaining sensitive to the needs of his actors and being highly collaborative with his technical and design staff.

Each year we deal with at least six directors on full productions and twenty directors in our reading series. He is among the few that stand out and when we turn a project over to him we are confident that he will give us a beautiful production whose elements are innovative and that will continually surprise us. Unlike with some directors we are never anxious when we turn a play over to him.

I recommend Alan without any reservations and feel that he will contribute greatly to any production or theatre that is fortunate enough to recruit him. If called upon I am happy to provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Gabor Barabas
Executive Producer
New Jersey Repertory Company