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To Whom It May Concern

February 5th, 2016

RE: A Letter of Recommendation for New Line Theater

I am excited to have this opportunity to write this letter of recommendation for the Gateway City's very own bad boy of musical theater, New Line Theater. I am qualified to speak about the wonderful educational benefits that New Line brings to our community. I have a wonderful history with the company as an actor and designer, but I have also been a secondary speech and theater teacher at Webster Groves High School for the past eleven years, and I have been activity involved in the St. Louis Theater community as a producer, director, actor and designer for over twenty years. There are many theater companies in St. Louis, but there is only one New Line Theater. They are exceptional in so many ways. Whether it's their inventive stage productions, their exploding web presence, informative talk back sessions with the creative staff held opening for the public, or specials for students, New Line brings collaboration front and center.

The high school theater community is aware of New Line and what they are offering each season. When I attended *Heathers* this past Fall I sat next to a theater student all the way from a catholic high school in Washington Missouri and when I got back to school on Monday a group of my acting students were talking about the show in my advanced acting class. The show was given a New Line interpretation and they liked the actors and the band. This isn't the first time the company's unique viewpoint and perspective becomes the topic of conversation. New Line shows also strike up conversation with the other teachers in my own building that don't even teach in the fine arts. I also have many conversations about New Line with my fellow MO State Thespian sponsors when we gather at conferences. I have spoken with English teachers who attend quite a few shows each season and also encourage their students to see shows as well. Certain Shakespeare inspired titles are rare to be given full production like New Line's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, or *Return to the Forbidden Planet*. Some history teachers have been known to tell kids to attend some of their more historically significant musicals like *Hair*, the recent *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, Sondheim's *Assassins* or even *Cabaret*. New Line's minimalized and energized production of *Evita* was another favorite for the musical theater students.

Staying present in the digital world has been a priority for new Line Theater since websites first became a thing. New Line has made it their mission to provide information about musicals, for people want to know more about musicals and anything you may want to know about a show they are producing in their season. There is an inexhaustible list of educational resources on their website. There are all kinds of ways students can access interesting information about the latest musicals on Broadway and coming to St. Louis. The links they provide make it easier to learn more about the art form and all of the rich history it has to offer the next generation. There is a focus of education in a lot of what New Line does and their mission is clear. New Line has links to all of the theaters and what is happening around town. All of my students know New Line's website is the place to go for the St. Louis theater links. Staying in the moment is tough but New Line consistently has cast members who blog about their experiences while working on the shows as well, this I a great resource and it allows my students to see how a bit of the industry operates. They also have "tweet seats" that have a patron who tweets out stuff about the show as they watch and the students can follow to read commentary about a show as it happens. New Line is also a part of many social media sites and trends. The students today are digital driven and as a teacher I see them tapping into those resources more and more.

We can all agree that social relevant, political, issue driven, edgy, important, complex musical theater must be brought to the local St. Louis audience, and that we must invest in the art form in some way. Being a patron is most popular but students don't always have a lot of money. New Line helps the students by using social media to offer cheaper student tickets on special nights. I have witnessed it helping many of them get in the door to see these shows. So many of my students now see almost every show. A lot of them also look forward to attending the creative staff "talk back sessions" where the production team answers questions and discusses the creative process. Sometimes they hear of a show that didn't do well on Broadway, but they'll get excited to see how New Line is going to treat the show. I am not alone, you only have to attend one show to see that there are many fans of the company who strongly believe in their mission statement and Scott Miller's focused artistic direction.

I hope my words on New Line Theater's behalf help paint a clearer picture of their benefit in the community and how teachers appreciate what New Line provides and the educational opportunity for students studying fine arts.

Sincerely,

Todd Schaefer

WGHS Theatre