



February 26, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

It has come to my attention that, in the coming weeks, Ms. Julie Ray is preparing for formal review in anticipation of acquiring tenure and I could not be more thrilled to provide my sincerest recommendation for her future endeavors and potential advancements at The University of Georgia.

As the Associate Artistic Director at Aurora Theatre in Lawrenceville, Georgia (the second largest professional and Equity theatre in the metro Atlanta area) and an adjunct faculty member with the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University, I am privileged to work with some of the finest artists by locally and nationally. Julie, by far, rises to the top with regards to her professionalism, artistry, and ability to frame a story and craft a world through the language and execution of design. Last semester, Fall Semester 2015, Julie and I had the privilege of collaborating together on the UGA Department of Theatre and Film Studies' production of George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's seminal classic, *You Can't Take it With You*. From initial concept meeting to fully realized production, not only did Julie meet the needs of the script, but also demonstrated scalable panache and impeccable attention to time-period detail.

Our conversations about the play, points of inspiration, and how we wanted to frame and approach the play began early in the summer of 2015. It was evident that Julie had given substantial thought to the play, and while we both entertained the notion momentarily of reimagining the aesthetic, we quickly realized that the world of the narrative was best rooted in realism. Based on that meeting she provided a series of sketched options, allowing me to voice likes and dislikes of each and lend even more direction through collaborative conversation. This funnel-like director/designer approach continued in this mode through several iterations and adjustments that led us to something that would not only be serviceable to actors and action of the play, but would provide a canvas of visual interest that honored the architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century while also capturing the quirkiness and fullness of décor of the Sycamore family.

As a part of a design team comprised of professional faculty and graduate students, Julie treated all involved with grace, courtesy, and artistic respect. Graduate student, Michelle Gersten, served as props artisan and props master for the show, working side by side Julie in all aspects of acquisition, fabrication, and dressing of the set. Their partnership was seamless and full of creative momentum. And truly, I don't know if I've ever experienced such a degree of intentional applied mentorship in my artistic life. It was deeply fulfilling to witness, knowing what an education Michelle was receiving from such a skilled professional and educator who treated her as an equal.

In the few years Julie has been a part of the faculty, she has solidified her place as a cornerstone for the department. I don't think anyone (faculty, staff or student alike...at least those with whom I spoke while in residence there) can think of the department without mentioning the potency, the prowess, and the endless contributions Julie has made in the classroom and on stage. Julie elevates the quality of the pedagogical and professional instruction, mentorship, and artistic direction that The University of Georgia Theatre and Film Studies Department strives to promote, maintain, and retain. Any institution is stronger and more fully equipped to have her on their rosters. Any relationship is more complete and well rounded for having known and worked with her.

Sincerely,



Justin Anderson  
Associate Artistic Director  
Aurora Theatre, Inc.  
678-852-8666  
justin@auroratheatre.com