

June 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with distinct pleasure that I recommend for your organization, Miss Louise Keeton. Louise was recently my cast mate in a Roanoke Children's Theatre production of *Go! Dog! Go!* Over a two-week rehearsal period and four weeks of performances (including a tour of very diverse performance venues) I found Louise to be a creative and collegial actor. She is considerate of her fellow actors, empathic and cooperative towards production staff, charming and appreciative towards audience members and extremely passionate about theater for youth as an art form and an essential genre for building future audiences for live theater.

It is the latter element on which I would like to focus. I have had the distinct pleasure to work in educational theater and opera for youth for nearly thirty years. In that time I have seen artists approach the work needed to succeed with youth audiences either enthusiastically or begrudgingly. It's actually rare to find young actors willing to commit their life's work to educational theater or to the outreach component of a performing arts organization. Many merely view such work as a steppingstone to more "adult" or main stage roles. That is acceptable; but finding an individual like Louise whom wishes to commit her life's work to theater for youth is a rare find. She has that rare understanding that outreach and theater for youth is a lifeline for arts organizations and an art form to be taken seriously.

Additionally, Louise has demonstrated that in order for this art form to work it has to be presented and performed with commitment and quality. She recognizes that children and families are a deserving audience and therefore can only be reached through mutual respect and not pandering. As we traveled together throughout southwest and central Virginia I learned that Louise Keeton has a strong knowledge of the repertoire, she can quickly identify what makes a good piece of theater for youth and she performs with verve and zeal.

I hope you take a great interest in this special young lady. She has a bright future in the theater and an unwavering passion for children's theater. Please contact me with any questions (540-345-1688), and accept my hopes that you have continued success with your programs and productions.

Sincerely,

Les Epstein  
Actor/Director/Playwright  
Chair, Department of Theater

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