Recommendation for Associate Professor Andre Tyson

To whom it may concern:

I am delighted to offer you this recommendation of our Associate Professor, Andre Tyson. He is completing his seventh year with us and his many strengths have been a major contributing factor to our Department's national profile and the accomplishments of our students.

Here are some of my thoughts on his many attributes.

Qualifications

Andre danced with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre for nine years as one of their most outstanding soloists. This achievement is one of the most elite of its kind in the culture of contemporary dance. His knowledge of what makes a superior dancer is first-hand, tangible and potent. His ability to understand the interplay between ballet, modern, and jazz styles is beyond measure. In my opinion there is no company, other than Ailey, that is as successful with this 'mix' of styles and as only the most gifted dancers are chosen to represent the Ailey mission Andre is, quite simply, one of a gifted few.

Teaching

There is no question that his communication of the demands of a rigorous art form and corresponding lifestyle resonates deeply with our students. Andre emphasizes physical conditioning, technical and highly athletic dancing, and human expression in equal measure. His teaching and choreographic work offers versatile dancing as the outcome.

We have never been or wanted to be a 'one style' contemporary dance program. Therefore, our appreciation of Andre's ability to offer three fully codified styles of technical training is significant. First of all, our students receive the benefits and synthesis of two renowned contemporary styles from Andre. 1) Graham, and 2) The technique of Lester Horton. These styles are not only beneficial to dancers but of lasting value.

Then there is the jazz based dancing and teaching, which I find absolutely extraordinary. His use of the jazz vocabulary demonstrates the utmost in refined theatre dance and the latest in what I will

identify as urban 'street' dance. His jazz technique class is all of this and more. It's no surprise that it is Andre's own dancing that sets a remarkable standard in this area of study. It is a tremendous skill to be able to demonstrate the bravura values of the jazz style (syncopated rhythms, isolations, aggressive dynamics, and expressive footwork) with ease, naturalness, and a powerful improvisational performance clarity. Simply put, Andre fully embodies the soul and the theatricality of this style. His expertise is complete. It is a blend of commercial theatrical accessibility, musical complexity, and technical integrity. Indeed, it is training that prepares students for broader success in the marketplace.

Soon after his arrival here in 1998, Andre added to his teaching skills by becoming a certified Pilates instructor. His own physical

instrument shows the care of a well-conditioned athlete and he brings depth in this area to our students. He has also created an introductory modern technique class specifically for men and this course has proven to be an experience which allows young men to experiment with what dance training is all about in a fun and supportive atmosphere. It is a popular course and a positive recruiting feature of our environment.

Finally, his approach to teaching all levels of Modern technique is expansive and demanding. At beginning levels, he communicates the advanced goals and aims of the simplest exercises, thereby requiring the dancers to grow to understand purposeful action and to be accountable for the actions they apply that will help them to develop. His advanced dancers possess speed, daring, and remarkable endurance. Aggressive power, clean lines, and a mastery over intricate detail is also a featured outcome of his technical training.

Choreography

In his choreographic work, Andre works with varied themes from dance to dance and often with varied crafts from dance to dance. There are the pieces that focus on virtuosi dance values and then, there are efforts that are highly theatrical and skillfully collaborative. His choreographic ambitions are often daringly large in scale. When he goes for a big idea that blends text, video and dance with an original scenic design, with costumes that he often designs himself – all supported by a commissioned musical score, the overall effect is terrifically exciting. Everybody wins. We are appreciative of his resourcefulness, audiences thrill to the unexpected, and the dancers are inspired by the 'event' nature of the arts and artists that have been brought creatively together.

In his choices of themes, Andre has explored the whimsical and playful and I enjoy how he challenges himself to reach into different directions but I must admit my enthusiasm for his rich dramatic sensibility. It is honest and passionate. As an African American, he has a unique perspective from which to view the rest of the world and those who inhabit it. It would not be untrue to say that his story is one of having faced tremendous obstacles and succeeding in spite of them. Therefore, his choreography is sometimes about social conflict as well as internal conflict and the desire to surmount (or at least make peace with) life's obstacles. The objectives of his choreographic choices are clear and offer dancers an opportunity to explore contemporary issues while also challenging them with compelling physical material. His is a unique art. His imaginative and disciplined work helps our dancers become versatile interpreters while also exposing them to multiple theatrical crafts. This is a standard of education that I deeply admire.

Colleague

Finally, he is a learner. He continues to grow. He has taken his teaching and choreographing expertise into a variety of community settings (Marquette, High School of the Arts, School of the Milwaukee Ballet, City Ballet Theatre). He has demonstrated reasoned and supportive mentoring of our students. He can be direct and uncompromising with them when standards of excellence are not met. He is diligent about his evolution as an artist, teacher, choreographer, and colleague. He continues to be offered international teaching and

choreographic assignments and last season, premiered a new work for Milwaukee Ballet. His presence on our faculty is highly valued not only for his peerless professional credentials but also for his unwaveringly high standards. As his accomplishments are at a very high level, he is a superior artistic role model for all of our students.

For all of these reasons, I wholeheartedly support Andre's many endeavors when I am called upon to do so. His training, his professional history, his generous artistry, and his commitment to his ongoing evolution make him an exciting artist/colleague to be around.

If you are giving consideration to working with Andre in any capacity that I have described here, I urge you to move him to the top of your list.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely,

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