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To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter in support of Sheryl William's application. I am an Associate Professor and Area Head of Directing at UC San Diego's Department of Theater & Dance, and a professional theater director. I am greatly familiar with academic job searches and the critical role they play in sourcing partners to foster a dynamic and inspired educational environment. Sheryl Williams is that special colleague you are searching for, and I highly recommend her for your program.

I've known Sheryl Williams for about 4 months and came to know her through her work as a Violence and Intimacy Director on *Fen*, a production I directed for The Court Theatre this January and February, 2023. Sheryl met and exceeded all my expectations for a fellow collaborator - expertise in her specialization, excellent interpersonal communication skills, and an ability to be flexible with the changing needs of the creative process in real time.

First and foremost, Sheryl is an expert in Violence and Intimacy Direction. Throughout the process of working with her, I was constantly impressed by her expansive knowledge regarding the storytelling needs of each moment of violence and/or intimacy. For example, on the production of *Fen*, Sheryl was able to explain to the actors and myself the biological reasoning behind specific actions and responses that the body might have in a moment of violence or intimacy. She was able to do this through her in-depth knowledge of the muscles, bones, veins, and neurological make up of the human body. In this way, the movement was not only supported with realistic detail, but the actors were able to invest in the movement through understanding biological responses.

Sheryl has amazing interpersonal communication skills. Crafting moments of violence and intimacy is a sensitive practice, and can, under less capable hands, make actors and directors feel nervous that they are going to "make a mistake" and thus become scared to take risks or make discoveries in the moment of crafting. Sheryl was able to craft an incredible atmosphere that provided the team with a specific and easily accessible understanding of consent, and paired this

understanding with specific tools and vocabulary so that team members could be free to experiment and make discoveries in real time without feeling a constant need to interrupt each discovery with a request for consent. This was only possible due to the specific tools and exercises that Sheryl provided to help set up ways for actors to provide their partners with parameters for their work ahead of jumping into the work as well as how to navigate moments that felt uncomfortable or unsafe if they happened in real time.

In addition, Sheryl supports her work through written communications. This was a great help to the process as all involved were able to refer to Sheryl's written notes to review or double check the blocking that had been devised. This was the first time I worked with a V&I Director who provided such a thing. I was so appreciative.

Lastly, Sheryl is an artist and has a deep respect for storytelling and process. She is constantly on the lookout for understanding what the goals of the storytelling moments are, and is ready to change choreography if it isn't suiting the actors or discoveries made.

A creative problem solver, a delightful team player, an expert in her field, these are the descriptions that come to mind when I think of Sheryl Williams. Should you have a chance to work with her I am confident you will come to share my high opinion of her. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vanessa Stalling".

Vanessa Stalling  
773-505-6290