

March 6, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Ashley Pankow has asked me to write a letter of reference for her and I am more than delighted to do so. I have been an Equity actor since 1970 and also an acting/music theatre professor, currently the chair of the Music Theatre Department at Viterbo University in La Crosse, WI. Ashley just graduated in May of 2007 and hasn't stopped working since. I have known her since her freshman year in the Music Theatre department, taught her in a number of classes, directed her in several shows, and observed her in others. I have watched her struggle as an actor, though never as a musician and dancer, and happily also watched her succeed. It took her a few years to learn she didn't have to show how hard she was working, but once she got that concept she was on her way. She is quite remarkable, as a person and as a talent.

First, Ashley is a musician, a fine pianist and singer. She is a belter but also sings legit. She is a dancer, particularly tap and jazz. And she is now an actor, and one who will only continue to get better as she matures and gains confidence and experience. She won our senior award for the music theatre student who best embodies those qualities that promise success. She is tireless, healthy, funny, smart, ambitious, eager, and talented. It's rare to find all those qualities in one person, but they are all essential for success in the business. I have had many students who are talented but without confidence and ambition; I've had students who are confident and ambitious but without the necessary gifts to match. Ashley has the whole package. She is now based in New York and is continuing to study and make some necessary connections. It's my understanding that she is now employed into 2009.

I know as well as anyone that there are no guarantees in this business. You can have all the qualities that ensure success and still not succeed. But if there is anyone I'd put money on, it would be Ashley Pankow. She's also brave; I've forgotten to list that invaluable quality. She knows the odds of making it, but she's going to give it her best effort anyway. Even if she doesn't manage this career, and I bet she will, she's going to have one heck of a ride. I give Ashley my highest recommendation and will be happy to go on further about her if you need any more information.

Sincerely,

Susan Rush, Chair

Viterbo University Music Theatre

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