

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS



Castleton

We were fortunate to host a visit from PUSH Physical Theatre at Castleton University in October 2016 as part of our 2016-2017 season, during which they also provided a physical theatre workshop for our theatre majors and a behind-the-scenes look at their working process as part of our undergraduate liberal arts program called Soundings. When I became Director of the Fine Arts Center at Castleton in 2013, I found a facility and programming schedule in dire need of rejuvenation and have undertaken a comprehensive restructuring designed to provide more diverse, challenging, and innovative arts experiences for our students and community at large. In PUSH, we found the perfect artists to make this idea manifest. Their ability to work across traditional aesthetic and communicative lines in order to reach a wide spectrum of audience members is unparalleled, as is the pure enthusiasm with which they approach both process and performance.

In only three hours, they were able to provide our undergraduate theatre students with an approach to physical acting that was described by one attendee as “utterly life-changing.” Their presentation to our liberal arts students from a variety of academic disciplines was able not only to give the students a glimpse into the process of developing physical theatre through group improvisation but also to extrapolate this to a lively discussion of the importance of being able to respond to life’s challenges by “saying yes” and embracing them. The workshop was truly inspirational to this group, many members of which have historically had difficulty making connections between the arts and their own lives. Finally, their formal concert frankly turned the theatre on its head as PUSH presented a series of pieces that in turn made the audience laugh, cry, gasp, and, most importantly--think.

It’s fair to say that PUSH’s visit was a turning point in our initiative to strengthen the arts at Castleton. We can’t wait to have them back!

Sincerely,
Rich Cowden
Assistant Professor, Director of Fine Arts Center
Castleton University



FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Hi Robin,

What a great week for the Arts in Fairfield! As you know, we’ve been so excited to welcome PUSH Physical Theatre to our schools. They were at my boys’ school today and the response was exceptional. One student described their performance as “one million out of five” and another as “A-MAZING”! I would agree--it was an extraordinary performance all-around!

It is such a pleasure to work with Darren, Heather, and their team. They have been extremely professional and flexible in their approach, which is a key combination when working in a school environment! They are also gifted educators and are really wonderful in engaging the kids outside (before and after) the performances. We’re looking forward to 5 more days of PUSH!

Thanks so much for your help!

Best,
Carol Guernsey
Fairfield PTA Council



After your performance, a member of the audience made a comment that I came to hear over and over again throughout the following week: “PUSH made me laugh, they made me cry, they were just amazing! Are you going to bring them back next year?”

I am grateful for your attentiveness to the theme of the festival. PUSH so aptly and movingly explored the human condition or what I like to call “the universal condition.” The emotions, paradoxes and conflict we face as humans and that you explore through physical theater provides a mirror to illuminate our own values.

Bravo to you, PUSH Physical Theater. I was happy to join the Jackson Hole audience in their standing ovation to you. Your art form transcends the banality of our everyday actions and thoughts. You took us outside of ourselves to show us a bigger picture of the world we live in.

Thank you very much. I look forward to future collaborations.

Sincerely,
Marylee White
JH Wild Festival Director

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It is with great pleasure that I am writing about and recommending PUSH Physical Theatre.

After planning and implementing the residencies, almost 2000 students (over 6 performances) and their dozens of teachers saw the performance. The quality was spot on and magnificent. Students and teachers were enthralled at the dance and movement. They made the many learning connections we had planned for and more. Each segment was introduced by Mr. Stevenson who identified the art as well as the possible content connections. Additionally, during the Q&A at the end of the performance, Mr. Stephenson fielded the students' questions with depth and sensitivity. I can't tell you how pleased I was at the complexity of his understanding of both his art and the students in the audience.

I highly recommend PUSH Physical Theatre for the depth and breadth of their artistic capacities as well as the direct and inferred connections to student learning. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Best regards,
Carol D. Brown
Administrative Coordinator,
Arts in Education & Exploratory Enrichment



This letter serves as an unqualified recommendation for Darren, Heather and the PUSH company.

The troupe gave a thrilling and artful performance and workshop to three, very diverse audiences, including a free showing for our local elementary and middle school students. PUSH was open and flexible to our programming and master class needs, and adapted their storytelling specifically for each audience. Their incredible experience, practice and skill showed through in their performances, and our programming for the year benefited from their imaginative contribution.

From first booking to the final performance, PUSH was open, communicative and professional. They were easy to work with, flexible, and engaging. We will be happy to have them back again, and we would recommend them highly for a performance or a workshop.

Sincerely,
Alli Crandell
Edwards College of Humanities and Fine Arts
Coastal Carolina University

This letter should serve as an unqualified rave for the nimble and innovative PUSH Physical Theatre Company.

By far, their performances of their repertory were the highlight of the entire season – so much so that I invited them back this year to perform alone in our regular Nextstage season: the only company I did so.

Their work incorporates humor, pathos, musicality, character, and theme. They only create a piece if they have a question to explore, and any answers come out of their collaborative rehearsals. I was deeply involved in their rehearsal of a piece we commissioned from them after the Theatre-Fest performances so I know first-hand their process. I had asked them to create a wordless “announcement” of all ten plays that we would be producing – sort of a collage of scenarios inspired by our selections. They performed this at our annual subscriber night when I unveiled the new season...and again they stole the show. Good thing I didn't have to follow them.

In short, Darren and Heather are superb people, superb artists, and superb collaborators. We are blessed to have them in our community though I am hopeful that they have an opportunity to reach audiences outside Western New York, too. They are a treasure.

Regards,
Mark Cuddy
Artistic Director
Geva Theatre Center



Their innovative vision of bringing dance to communities and populations that broaden the understanding and definition of dance movement and visual theatre continues to amaze and inspire audiences, sponsors and colleagues wherever they go. The level of aesthetic and artistic quality that PUSH produces – not only within their company but in the students they work with – is an astounding feat.

I have been able to observe their unique ability to work with and teach a wide variety of students from a myriad of backgrounds, abilities and ages. Their expertise is not merely in their breadth of knowledge and intimate understanding of dance, music, theatre, mime and the arts of nonverbal communication but as exceptional educators as well.

Most Sincerely,
Thomas Warfield
Director
RIT/NTID Dance Company