

Corey Fischer

March 1, 2008

To Whom it May Concern:

I'm delighted to write this letter in support of Michael Navarra. I can praise – without reservation – his acting, his passionate concern for theatre and his qualities as a human being.

I had the good fortune to act with Michael in two different productions for Traveling Jewish Theatre, a company I founded in 1978. The first, in 2003, was an original work developed by the ensemble and two directors from San Francisco's Word for Word Performing Arts Company, with whom TJT was collaborating. Titled *Windows and Mirrors* it was a theatricalization, in the Word for Word style, of short stories by Grace Paley, Bernard Malamud, and Maxim Biller. Michael played at least a half dozen different characters, clearly differentiating each one using only his own actor's instrument. The Word for Word style (inherited from Seattle's Book It! Company) is rigorous and demanding. Since every word of the original prose is used, the memorization challenge alone is quite daunting. Moreover the style requires a highly developed understanding of the dramatic power of language and an intuitive grasp of narrative momentum. Actors have to be able to "fly at anything," since they often become non-human elements of a story – landscapes, objects, animals or machines – as well as shifting between several characters. Michael excels in all these areas. Since the ensemble included only four of us, we worked very closely together. I found Michael to be an incredibly supportive, inventive, reliable and generous on-stage partner.

In 2007, Michael rejoined us for TJT's major re-imagining of *Death of a Salesman*, playing Biff to my Willy. In a sense, this project was the polar opposite of *Windows and Mirrors*. Michael's work was amazing. Night after night he reached a level of vulnerability, of truthful intensity available to very few actors. Once again, I found partnering with him to be an unusually powerful experience. His presence never wavers, his concentration is exemplary. He understands which elements of a performance require consistency and which require spontaneity. He has a thorough understanding of dramatic structure, rhythm and pacing on one hand, and, on the other, a deeply felt knowledge of character, motivation and the wild diversity of human experience.

In addition to our time together on stage, I had many long conversations about theatre and acting with Michael. It became clear to me that in addition to his great gifts as an actor, he was also steeped in the *culture* of theatre – its history, its challenges and its vital importance to all human societies. I recognize in Michael the kind of actor who approaches theatre-making not as a job, but, rather, as a calling.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

