

March 15, 2023

Dear Jim Vagias,

If I was told only a couple of months ago that I would have the opportunity to perform, professionally, alongside experienced actors and actresses, under the direction of Hunter Foster, I might have entertained the idea in a daydream before ignoring it completely. Yet, after a performance in a sophisticated high school production—credit to your friend and colleague, Joe Mancuso—one introduction was all it took to make that far-fetched idea my new reality. Well, not *all* it took. In reality, it took an email, another email, a long consideration period, a conversation with a director, another consideration period, more emails, one hour of filming, time with an acting teacher, even *more* emails, another hour of filming, and one last email. But this amount of work has never felt more worthwhile.

It is hard to express how grateful I feel for this experience and your cooperation. Balancing two shows with high school classes and assignments is not a task many adults believe they can trust with a seventeen-year-old. However, you did so, and, seemingly, without hesitation. With your support, I felt prepared and comfortable in both performances. Was the experience difficult? At times, yes. Was it rewarding? Yes, without a doubt.

Those involved in the American Theater Group created one of the most, if not *the most* supportive and pleasant environments I have had the chance to experience. The creative and production teams quickly showed me kindness and cooperation, which was especially important considering my numerous questions concerning the rehearsal and show process. The acting company, with which I spent most of my time, was also immediately welcoming and eager to begin working as a complete cast, jumping in with full enthusiasm for each scene and musical number—an attitude I was quick to match. Not to mention, the cast was warm and helpful when I asked about their experiences in the professional world. They were quick to respond with questions about my plans for the future,

followed by their offering assistance if I found myself anxious and confused with the college audition process and further professional proceedings. Even those leading the show—who I assumed would hyperfocus on their performances and spend little to no time conversing with me—involved me in dynamic and entertaining conversations with the time we had offstage.

I was treated with respect and compassion while working with the company of *Parade*, and learned so much about the career I intend to pursue. I cannot thank you enough for this incredible opportunity. I relished every moment and **hope** to find work with the American Theater Group again. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Sincerely,

Samantha Soybel