

Erika Bailey
January 10th, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I had the honor and pleasure of working with Cayla Bellamy in the fall of 2019 during the University of Northern Iowa's production of *Cabaret*, as she served as the guest conductor and I was a part of the main cast. While our time working together was brief, it has left a lasting impact on me as to how to work as a truthful, compromising, collaborative, and resilient artist and leader.

Cayla's collaborative instinct and spirit is unmatched by any other guest artist I have worked with. While *Cabaret* was her first interaction working with the theatre department on campus, she came in on the first day with an open mind, spoke to the cast – comprised of all students – like young professionals, and took the time to actively listen to the music, musicians, actors, and directors in the room. Cayla was diligent in making sure that everyone's thoughts were heard and concerns were handled in a timely manner. Technical and dress rehearsals are an extremely stressful and rushed time in the theatre profession, and Cayla would find every cast member and musician after the show – after all the costumes and make-up were taken off and instruments put away – and if there was an issue she picked up on during the run, she would discuss it with the person and find a solution. Many times this included her staying late into the night. She cared deeply about presenting the most authentic, truthful show possible. She went well beyond what role as conductor required her to do.

The cast would receive emails from Cayla after every show. These would include notes she took but could not relay to us afterward, comments for the band, as well as short, meaningful thoughts about art and why we create it. *Cabaret* is an extremely difficult, emotional show to get through, and Cayla would take the time to make sure that everyone around her was physically and emotionally grounded afterwards. There have been faculty members I have worked with for over four years who do never take the time to do this. Through all of the technicalities, specificities, and minute details of the work that goes into conducting and sculpting music for a show, Cayla never lost the humanity within it all.

Cayla showed her advanced knowledge and skills in working with students of all musical backgrounds. From her score and from the music that was being created in the space, she had the ability to stop and clearly articulate to those around her what needed to be fixed. Everyone in the room – from seniors who have taken four years of theory, professional musicians, all the way to freshmen who have only sung along to musical soundtracks in the past – could understand what she was asking them to do. Watching her conduct the smallest of moments up to the largest was a master class in detail and timing. She has an instinctual ability to read the room and adjust her technique as needed.

Cabaret brought along the unique opportunity for Cayla to involve herself within the story and the characters. Along with professionalism, dedication, and honesty, she brought with her the willingness to have fun and play. In fact, Cayla had one of the most gut-wrenching moments on stage with a lead character at the end of the show. She did not let her title of conductor limit her to the possibilities of what could be created on stage. Had she denied all opportunities that fell beyond that role, we would have never found that beautiful, artistic moment.

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As someone who will be entering the professional world in a few short months, I can only hope to work with someone with the same qualities as Cayla again; although, there is no one else quite like her. As both a collaborator and leader, her truthfulness, rigor, adaptability, technique, and kind nature is unmatched. Wherever the next endeavor takes her, rest assured that Cayla will give all of herself and more into the creative and collaborative process. Any project that she involves herself with will be pushed to new heights. If there is any other aspect of Cayla's professional work that needs clarifying or you would like to follow up on anything you have read, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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