

August 11, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure and honor to write this letter of support for Dr. Ruth Ellis, soprano and voice teacher. I have known Ruth since our days at Manhattan School of Music thirty years ago. We have kept in touch and performed together at Snow College and at an MSM reunion concert. I invited her to give a recital and masterclass at Valdosta State University in 2016 and have asked her to present a virtual recital and class for my students this Fall.

As a performer, Ruth excels. Her coloratura rings as clear as a bell and her pristine agility seems effortless. Her expressive face shows both a natural dramatic flair as well as a profound study of character acting. Her performing career and ongoing concertizing is an asset to any institution as a recruiter and mentor.

After reviewing several lesson videos and seeing her students in performance, I can report that Ruth's teaching style is very enthusiastic, positive, and complimentary. She efficiently covered breath management, legato line, vowel formation, use of head voice and chest resonance, and agility, in her use of appropriate vocal exercises. She defined objectives, explained concepts clearly for the level of each student, and responded appropriately to the students' questions. After the warmup, she helped the students effectively apply the technique to the repertoire in preparation for jury performances. She encourages students to take notes in their music, which empowers the students to be independent learners. I believe that her pedagogical research is a huge benefit to her students, because she takes the time to provide individually tailored syllabi. Student performances demonstrate proficient diction, improved breath management technique and steadier vibrato, as well as a more developed expressiveness in their singing.

Ruth adapted well to teaching voice lessons online when schools shut down due to the Covid 19 global pandemic. She effectively utilized technology by implementing video submissions for masterclasses and juries and helped the students with their use of technology. She warmly offered advice for dealing with anxiety during this very stressful time.

Ruth devotes a lot of time to service at the department level as an active recruiter and performer. Her professional service is demonstrated by her leadership in NATS. Ruth is also very connected to her community and participates in various groups and charitable works.

If I were asked about a weakness or area to improve, I would really have to wrack my brain. Ruth is the epitome of a wonderful person, gifted performer, thoughtful researcher, and encouraging pedagogue, and would be an asset to any institution and community. Please be in touch if you have any questions; I am available for phone calls or Zoom meetings.

Sincerely,

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