
ANN CLOSS-FARLEY

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REFERENCES

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Below are 3 Letters of Recommendation in print from the above References.

MATT ALMOS

214 N. Naomi St., Burbank, CA 91505 | mattalmos@gmail.com

April 24, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing to recommend costume designer Ann Closs Farley for the position for which she's applying.

I've worked on multiple occasions with Ann where I've held two different roles: as a freelance theater director and as a senior creative leader and executive creative director for the Walt Disney Parks & Resorts global live entertainment organization. On all occasions, she's demonstrated tremendous professionalism and imagination, as well as a true hunger for innovation. I have no doubt that your students would benefit from her range of experience and her wholly unique creative approach.

For Disney, I first brought Ann onboard to design costumes for a musical version of *Toy Story* that ran successfully on the Disney Wonder cruise ship for eight years. She had to balance creativity with strategy: bringing the characters to life in the most vivid way possible while adhering to the very limited storage space available on the ship. The resulting product was an utter delight, capturing the characters in a whole new way that allowed a surprising range of expression and movement. She partnered closely with heavyweight talent, like Michael Curry (puppet designer for Broadway's *Lion King*) and John Lasseter (director of the film and former creative leader of Pixar), and was loved and respected by all who worked with her.

Years later, I moved on to lead overall creative development for the opening live entertainment program of Shanghai Disney Resort. Ann handled costume design for two major components of the program: the park's atmosphere entertainment program and the groundbreaking stage show *Eye of the Storm: Captain Jack's Stunt Spectacular*. All of her work on the program was infused with an irresistible sense of fun and joy that "met the moment" of the park's historic launch. She fully embraced our charter to collaborate with talent from mainland China, and approached that aspect with enthusiasm and sensitivity. Her work in Shanghai was also highly innovative. For the atmosphere program, she essentially was tasked with reinventing the look of the Disneyland Band. In every other Disney park in the world, the band is costumed in classic Americana, but the team quickly realized that this framing had no emotional resonance for the Chinese audience. Her solution was a contemporary and playful riff on Mickey Mouse shapes and colors. The act immediately became a favorite of parkgoers (and CEO Bob Iger) and an iconic symbol of the park itself. For *Eye of the Storm*, Ann had a completely different assignment: bringing to life a cast of pirates and sailors, along with a Baron Von Munchausen style theater company. Her work was beautiful, but most impressive were the costumes designed for the climax of the show, which saw Captain Jack Sparrow battling his nemesis in the middle of a tornado, suspended in midair without wires. This scene was performed in the middle of a vertical wind tunnel, with winds close to 200mph. Ann had to create costumes for the characters that were recognizable, that integrated the required safety equipment and were able to withstand the hurricane force winds . . . up to 10 shows per day. Putting it plainly, this had never been done before. Again, it demanded tremendous imagination coupled with strategic thinking, and an ability to leverage cutting edge technology to solve the puzzle.

I've also worked as a director with Ann, through the L.A. based theater company Burglars of Hamm, where I'm a co-founder. Ann designed two shows for us: *Land of the Tigers* and *The Behavior of Broadus*. Both plays are over-the-top satires featuring a wild array of characters: post apocalyptic talking tigers seeking to create a new form of government, singing and

dancing lab rats, etc. We didn't just need brilliant designs from Ann, we needed ideas. It's no understatement to say the ideas Ann delivered were central to the success of those shows (and resulted in multiple awards and nominations for her). I'll also add that I know her as theatergoer as well. Her work in Los Angeles theater is truly legendary, especially the utter delight that is the *99Cent Only Spectacular* series. And she continues to collaborate successfully with world-class talent like Alex Timbers, Bobby and Kristen Anderson-Lopez, Paul Reubens (Pee Wee Herman), Sheila Callaghan and more.

Obviously, her world-class experience, talent, imagination and technical know-how would be of great benefit to your students. Aside from that, Ann exudes a warm and generous spirit. When you work with her, she does not treat you like a cog in a machine or a "layer of approval" to be managed. She treats you as a human being. As unique as she is as an artist, I think this humanity is what truly distinguishes her and makes people seek her out as a collaborator. Again, I'm pleased to offer you my highest recommendation on Ann's behalf.

Sincerely,

Matt Almos
818.736.1128



February 18, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Jon and I are very pleased to provide a letter of recommendation for Costume Designer/Producer Ann Closs-Farley. Renaissance Entertainment, LLC produces feature films and theme park shows and attractions. Ann Closs-Farley has become a trusted co-creator and we rely on her positive approach, amazing talent and strong work ethic to help us create award winning films and shows!

Our first project with Ann Closs-Farley was a stunt show called "Eye of the Storm – Captain Jack's Stunt Spectacular" for Shanghai Disneyland. Disney executives highly recommended we work with Ann on the concepts and designs for the show costumes. Ann did a phenomenal job developing beautiful costumes for the performers. Special attention was given to the stunt requirements and the ability for the cast to move freely while wearing stunt pads and harnesses that were not obvious under their wardrobe. Also, the show features a 4-meter wind tunnel that Jack Sparrow and a British Admiral free-fly in as they fight each other. These two cast members had to have costumes that could work in 200-mph wind and also hide their helmets and other protective gear. Ann worked passionately with our team to overcome all of these obstacles!

Next, Ann joined our team to develop the "Universal Studios Orlando Bourne Stuntacular" based on the Bourne film franchise starring Matt Damon and Julia Stiles. She worked through the Stunt and show costume elements to develop a look that worked for the intellectual property. She also directed wardrobe and hair & make-up for Julia Stiles's pre-show film. Julia was so pleased with Ann's support on the shoot and her wardrobe and styling that we sent her home in the clothes!

Ann's next project was wildly creative. The summer of 2020 she designed fantastical costumes for an elaborate parade in Guanzhou, China.

Most recently, Ann Closs-Farley designed the actors' look and costumes for our feature film "Because of Charley" starring John Amos. The story takes place in Celebration, FL during the 2004 Hurricane Charley. Despite being in the middle of the Covid pandemic, Ann directed all of the wardrobe choices for our cast of 9. Her dedication to the project contributed beautifully to the overall beauty of the final film. We look forward to our next production together! Congratulations Ann, well done!

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa E. Smith".

Lisa Enos Smith
President/Executive Producer

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon E. Binkowski".

Jon Edward Binkowski
Chief Executive Officer

www.ren-ent.com

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825 Veranda Place
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(407) 861-0600

April 30th, 2021

The USC Search Committee
[via email]

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to passionately recommend the brilliant Ann Closs-Farley for your teaching position. Ann is a core collaborator for me, I have had the privilege of working her on numerous occasions, both at my own theatre, and in various LORT houses of various sizes, and she is always my first choice costume designer to bring on any project. I have seen her work countless times as well. And I have experienced her as a teacher and mentor of the next generation of costume designers, and I find her to be an incredibly powerful teacher, mentor, and nurturer of the next generation of artists. There simply couldn't be a better choice than Ann.

I find Ann's design to be brilliant, inventive, ingenious, and always makes the project far more powerful than it could ever have been without her. Ann is not just a designer, she is an inventor of worlds, a profound and kinetic thinker about the ways in which the play will illuminate the human condition. I'd say she thinks out of the box, but what she really does is invent the box that the project belongs in, and then we her fellow collaborators just step inside with her. Frequently, her deep connection to an element is the spark and springboard that informs the rest of the path of the production. Her work is an essential, passionate artistic element. Her costumes can be subtle where the work wants to disappear, brilliantly loud and quirky, gasp-inducingly beautiful where it wants to be beautiful, artfully hideous or dark, exceedingly simple, or richly colorful. It is art that always illuminates and serves the project's best self. And we've also worked together on a number of new plays, where the demands of an ever-changing script requires continued adjustment, and Ann always understands what the production needs, even when it means radically adjusting a choice.

Ann is a designer of national significance, she works routinely in LORT houses as well as places as diverse as Disney Theatricals, PeeWee's Playhouse, the 99 cent shows, on tiny budgets and huge ones. Regardless of the budgetary limitations, Ann finds genius work-arounds that make the production sing. I no longer remember what our first collaboration was, although I think it was possibly a Carlos Murillo world premiere play at Boston Court called *Unfinished American Highwayscape #9 & 22* that required actors to behave like half humans, half cars. I still treasure the literal seatbelts Ann designed into the garments. Recent forays include a show at South Coast Rep that had Ann designing puppet heads, bird bodies, giants, and required seven actors to constantly quick-change with practically no help. She somehow made that show happen brilliantly.

And most recently, I had the privilege of collaborating with Ann again at Boston Court on a world premiere by Kit Steinkellner called *Ladies*, about the birth of the first Feminist movement. The play called for actors to *dress themselves* in period garb with corsets and bustles that floated down from above the stage. It simply could not have happened without Ann's ingenuity. And it wasn't just ingenious, it was gorgeous. I count on Ann's original turn of mind, her intuition, her passion, and her deep heart to enhance every project we make together.

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But perhaps more important for you to know, Ann truly has the heart of a teacher. She is a glorious mentor, collaborator, one who can both innovate or teach classic principles. And I've had the chance to witness her nurturing style as she always brings a young designer she's mentoring to every tech and dress to learn from the professional situation she happens to be in, and it's always a pleasure to hear how she illuminates each challenge for her proteges.

In addition to all that, Ann is the kind of faculty member who will enhance any cohort she's a part of. She has a real sense of humor, she is social justice warrior, passionate about true inclusivity and equity, and all about continuing to create opportunities for all people to grow and prosper in the field. She is passionate and compassionate, filled with integrity and heart. She's also, quite simply, an amazing human being, and one of my favorite people.

I really mean that you could not do better than to hire Ann Closs-Farley for this position. You would be so lucky to have her, and her students would be so thrilled.

Please let me know if I can answer any further questions about Ann.

Thanks so much.

Sincerely yours,

Jessica Kubzansky

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