

March 1, 2000

University Research Services:

This letter comes in support of an application for a research/travel grant from Donovan King, who is a graduate student in the Department of Drama. I am Donovan's supervisor for his Master of Fine Arts degree in theatre directing.

Our program stresses the relationship between theory and practice. Students must do extensive research in support of their directing projects. Donovan's thesis production will be Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET, a challenging topic. Graduate students do not often undertake major classical works for their theses; in some cases the graduate studies division actively discourages such an undertaking. However, Donovan has demonstrated a particularly strong directorial talent. His work this year has been strong in many different styles of theatre, and he has shown an interest and a talent in directing plays that many students would avoid, e.g., 19th century melodrama, ancient Greek comedy, eighteenth century farce. In this last category, he recently directed POLLY HONEYCOMBE -- a generally neglected but lively eighteenth-century piece -- for an evening of theater and lectures around our main stage production of THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL. Donovan made the bold choice to do the show in contemporary dress, while leaving the language untouched. He made many inventive staging decisions and coached the actors carefully in their delivery of the language. The production was a resounding success.

Donovan is blessed with that magical combination of a creative imagination and a capacity for the concrete sequential work in research and preparation. This combination will serve him well as a director. His approach to ROMEO AND JULIET is a mix of startling ideas and a methodical approach to research. He has already organized his research into specific areas. The opportunity to visit the locations and archives he mentions in his proposal would be extremely valuable to him. The archives are particularly rich in "prompt books," i.e., production copies of texts, some as early as the seventeenth century. A study of these would give Donovan an important insight into the production history of the play. Also, the newly reconstructed Globe Theatre in London is

a must-see for theatre students, especially one undertaking a production of a Shakespeare play.

I consider Donovan to be an unusually strong candidate for a travel grant, and I would ask you to give him your special consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Dugan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.

James Dugan
Professor