

February 14, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

Betsey O'Hagan Merkel has asked me to write a letter of recommendation for her, and I do so, very enthusiastically. I believe the many years of personal friendship and professional association I have had with Betsey lend substance and credibility to what I write herein.

As Artistic Manager of, and harpist in the *Coryton Harp Duo*, Betsey first established a relationship with Lake Erie College in the late '80's or early '90's, bringing the *CHD* to us as a visiting ensemble in our Fine Arts programming for the academic year. Her honesty, extremely friendly, yet highly professional demeanor quickly endeared her to the faculty and staff of LEC. Her ability to very effectively wear the hat of manager, musician, and public relations personality streamlined the process of presenting their program at this college, and caused us to continue the relationship for many more years to come.

In years subsequent to their first program at LEC, Betsey's ensemble grew and she caused the college's Fine Arts programming to grow right along with her. Betsey is a visionary, and I do not use that term in a cavalier fashion. She developed new performing arts programming ideas that were infused with service to this college, local grade schools, and the community-at-large. In addition to the double harp format, the *Coryton Ensemble*, which along with the harps included flute, violin, cello and baritone voice, brought expanded versatility of program offerings to the benefit of everyone. Later, the *Coryton Singers* were added, and Betsey had everything necessary to tie our programming in with not only the Painesville area, but with Cleveland, as well. Her vision and managerial skills enabled a collaborative effort between *Coryton* and the *Cleveland Composer's Guild*, which had far-reaching impact on the artistic community of N.E. Ohio.

Betsey is tireless! I have yet to catch my breath from my efforts to keep up with her flow of activities from years ago! Her resourcefulness, personable approach, high level of effective energy, vision, imagination, and honorable reputation, allow her to be an extremely productive and effective manager. Most note-worthy about her management style is that she manages by inspiring those around her through her own active participation. In other words, she provides leadership through example – not as a device, but by her nature. This is most commendable.

Betsey is, above all, a most fine human being! This fact is apparent in her work as a sensitive artist, as well as serving her in her interpersonal dealings – both being so much a part of her daily life. Betsey is a phenomenon that I'm better for, for being able to call her my colleague and friend. My highest recommendation goes to Betsey O'Hagan!

Sincerely submitted,

Paul Gothard III, Professor of Music, Director of Fine Arts,
Lake Erie College, 391 W. Washington Street, Painesville, Ohio 44077