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27 April 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

The Clinical Translational Science Center and the Division of Medical Ethics at Weill Cornell Medical College had the pleasure of hosting and producing a performance *Playing God: The Rock Opera*, on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Danny Kaye Playhouse in Manhattan as part of our public outreach efforts to bring bioethics to the broader community.

We were delighted to collaborate with Finnish philosophers Matti Häyry and Tuija Takala and the American musician Corky Laing on such an innovative effort to bring an artistic consideration of the ethics of genetics and bio-enhancement to an academic and general audience. As co-executive producer of the performance, I was honored to be associated with such dedicated scholars and fine musicians from both Finland and the United States.

As a musical performance, *Playing God* is a post-modern *Tommy*, a good old rock opera with a purpose. Evocative melodies bring artistic life to the many bioethical debates spawned by modern medicine and scientific advance. Mr. Laing was never better on drums and as composer. His collaboration with Professors Häyry and Takala led to music on a grand scale with meanings and melodies that left our audience both thinking and humming about the human quest for perfection.

The performance in the Kaye Playhouse was extraordinarily successful. Over 500 people attended and the audience was a broad cross section of New Yorkers. We received enthusiastic reviews from audience members and everyone was taken by the music, the story, and the talented cast. As a native New Yorker who often goes to theatre, I can say without a doubt the performance was on par with Broadway, and the music was better!

Following the performance, there was an ethics panel discussion that I was privileged to moderate. The panelists included the rock opera's creators Professors Häyry and Takala, Mr. Laing, and Ms. Josephine Johnston, Director of Research and a Research Scholar at The Hastings Center, a bioethics research institution in Garrison, NY. The discussion was lively and the audience followed it keenly. The combination of performance and discussion demonstrated the importance of bringing the arts and philosophy together as a means to foster deliberative democracy.

My colleague, Dr. Julianne Imperato-McGinley, Director of Weill Cornell's CTSC, and our Associate Dean for Translational Research and Education put it this way: "Engaging the community in important biomedical research is an essential aspect of the CTSC's mission, and we're always looking for innovative ways to promote that dialogue. *Playing God* will reach audiences in a fresh, entertaining way about questions that will become increasingly important as gene technology grows."

Dr. Imperato was absolutely right in her sentiments. Last week's performance of *Playing God* was a creative approach to some of the most perplexing questions in bioethics and a terrific way to use the arts to inform and inspire us to think deeply about the promise and peril of medical technology.

Thank you for your support of Professors Häyry and Takala and their innovative scholarship. You should be exceedingly proud of what they have accomplished. I hope that there will be other opportunities to collaborate with them and further disseminate *Playing God* both in Europe and the United States. The quality of the opera deserves nothing less than a large international audience in the years ahead. Thank you for sharing some of Finland's most creative thinkers with us. We certainly benefitted from this trans-Atlantic partnership.

Sincerely yours,

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