

## Ellen Larson

Submitted 8/11/2020

I have a hard time talking about how unspeakably angry this makes me. I met David when I was 16 years old. I was his student at Cretin Derham Hall, an MMA youth participant, a member of the MMA team, and one of his young mentees.

There are so many situations and moments I can now highlight and warning signs and abusive behaviors, but here's three that have haunted me for months:

I was 17 years old, and having lunch alone with David before one of our liturgical choir practices at CDH. We were talking about MMA, and he lowered his voice to tell me about the medical records of the youth participants. He told me, "You wouldn't believe how many kids are on medication for depression and anxiety." I was a minor, and he was telling me about the medical records of other minors, disclosing points of vulnerability.

I was 20 years old. I had recently cantored at an event where he was one of the accompanists. It was a busy event, and one of my good friends was the other cantor. After the event, I received an accusatory nine paragraph email, stating his concerns that I had not interacted with him enough. An excerpt from the email I have kept to this day:

"I wanted to write you a note to express a concern that I have been having for some time now. For the past year, especially since you have been back here in MN from Chicago -I have sensed a real aversion toward me from you, and I am picking up that I must have done something to hurt you or cause disappointment from you, or something else. Or maybe you heard from someone, something about me that has troubled you in some way ... I just don't know. But there has definitely been a change in how you and I used to interact ... in fact, I sense that you do not want to interact with me at all."

I was 21 years old when I told adults that I trusted that I didn't like how David's overbearing personality forced us all to cater to him and his emotions. I didn't like that we were expected to fall in line and center ourselves toward him in all situations. One of these adults told me, "We all know he's like that. You just have to do it and get over it."

I feel betrayed by adults who I have trusted for virtually all of my teenage and adult life until now. The Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul received a report of misconduct in the 80s, yet he was allowed to teach at multiple Diocesan high schools, hold countless workshops, and run a summer youth program for almost 20 years. We were children, and we were led ceaselessly toward him.

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I have absolutely no interest hearing about how we must pray for and forgive the sinners among us. I have no interest in hearing again and again how we can separate the artist from the art. David Haas abused and assaulted women for decades as those in positions of power turned a blind eye.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the incredibly brave women who have come forward to tell their stories. Let every step we take from here be a step towards justice and believing women.

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