

Lara Lynch

Submitted 9/28/2020

I am a survivor victim of David Haas. To the best of my recollection, the incident took place on Sat. March 1, 2003 around 6:30 pm. I would have been 32 at the time. I apologize for the length and possible extraneous information. As you can imagine, the memories and retelling is somewhat non-linear.

I was attending 2003 Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, staying at the Anaheim Marriott. I believe I was performing as a back up singer for a few events with at least 1 friend, [name redacted]. I paid my own way and was working as a full-time teacher (Theology and Choir Director), part time Associate Director of Music at a parish outside Chicago alongside my good friend Gary Daigle, Director of Worship at the same parish. Another good friend, Amy Florian was presenting at the conference and was standing with me at the beginning of the incident.

[Name redacted], Amy, and I were joined by David Haas and his wife, Helen, just after the afternoon's liturgy in the arena of the Anaheim Convention Center. We were engaged in a lively discussion about something liturgical. It was not the first time I had met David, but I hadn't really engaged him prior to this gathering. I think he knew me as an associate of Gary Daigle -a composer friend of his.

David was wearing a tan sport jacket, white button down shirt, no tie, and dark slacks. During the discussion, David asked me to "come here for a moment." We were all laughing and enjoying the conversation, and I agreed. He led me towards an arena exit next to where the music ministry performs. Instead of turning left towards a more populated exit, he turned right, to a place I hadn't been before. It was secluded, and no one else was around. He said, "Come over here" and grabbed my hand and pulled me into an alcove. He said something along the lines of "You're really special. I can tell." but I'm not remembering the exact words. He put both his hands on either side of my head, and leaned forward to kiss me. I didn't actually think that was happening and turned my head. He then pushed his body on me against the carpeted wall and rubbed upward. I was surprised, but also stunned -into inaction?!?! My mind could not compute what was actually happening. He was pressing his whole body on me and seeking something physical. I turned my head again and turned it into a hug and tried to duck down but he continued to press his full body weight against me and rub upwards. I again think I turned it into a hug and quickly ducked down under his arm to the general walkway. I don't remember the specifics of what he said, but I remember it was quick, felt dismissive, and suddenly he was out of sight. I walked back into the arena where [name redacted] and Amy were left and said, "I cannot believe what just happened to me." and told them exactly what happened.

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They helped me process it a bit as we went to dinner. We then went up to GIA's hospitality suite at the Marriott, where 20-30 liturgical music folk were enjoying themselves. It was about 20 minutes before David Haas arrived and I felt really uncomfortable, so my friends and I left.

[Name redacted] really pushed me to tell Gary about the incident. So I strongly requested we meet for breakfast. All 3 of us did at the Anaheim Hilton on Sunday March 2. I shared the whole story with Gary, [name redacted] being present for the conversation. He said, "You have to be careful here, because you are one step away from being a conference joke."

Again, I was stunned.

What did I do? That effectively silenced me. Gary told me to not engage David should he try to contact me. Gary was/is a well known composer. I was a guest singer, pianist on recordings and showcases. If I became known as high maintenance, I was in jeopardy of losing future jobs.

David did indeed reach out to me the following week via email. I shot back a response shutting it down-along the lines of "You knew exactly what you were doing. It was unprofessional, immoral, and wrong. Lose my number. Do not contact me again." Sure enough he replied to that email with "you've misunderstood me and my actions..." blah blah blah. I did not respond to that, but I did forward the emails to Gary and Angie. Unfortunately, I never kept a copy of them. And my email account only goes as far back as 2008.

I have shared my experience with people over the years. I had a student who was interested in attending Music Ministry Alive! I called her parents to find out how serious they were in the application process. I shared the outline of my experience and in the end they chose not to send their daughter that year.

I was surprised on June 13, 2020 when SNAP put out a public statement about several victims of David Haas. I decided to add my story to their accounts at Into Account, asking for GIA Publications INC., LA Religious Education Congress, LA Archdiocese be held accountable for their endorsement of David over the years.

And here we are today. The assault colored everything I did from that moment forward. My passion is music ministry. I am wonderful at leading all ages of groups to singing beautiful liturgies.

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But as you might imagine, singing David Haas songs is particularly painful. Currently, I am a substitute musician for several area churches. Every one of them programs Haas' music in their repertoire, and I am paid to sing his disgusting songs. It's such an odd betrayal of my spirit. It's hurtful and just plain wrong. I can't tell you Gary stopped hiring me to play for recordings because of this, but I'm rarely used on recordings anymore, and certainly not asked to sing in showcases at conferences anymore. Some of that is my desire to be more available to my children and family.

I should tell you I saw him several times at different conferences or workshops over the years. Each time he tried to engage me and I shut it down within seconds. In 2015, my home parish -St. Edna in Arlington Heights, IL, and also where I worked as an Associate Director of Music hosted a concert for Michael Joncas, Lori True, Rory Cooney, Gary Daigle, and David Haas. Because I was on staff (again Gary Daigle was the Dir of Music), I was asked to help implement this concert. I agreed only if I didn't have to be alone with David. My two associates agreed. However, David still found a way to get me alone. I walked into our Narthex and David asked if I could have a few minutes of my time. I immediately looked for the exit and tentatively agreed. He said he wanted to make amends for his behavior years ago in LA and apologized. I said I forgave him and went to leave the conversation. He asked for a hug to seal the deal. Nope. No Way!!!

Gary Daigle again brought him back to our parish in 2018 and I was livid. I confronted Gary at his home and he apologized. He didn't think I was that affected by it. I refused to go to the concert or assist in anyway.

I reported my experience to Into Account on 6/13/20. I reported the incident to Dr. Heather Banis of Victim's Assistance Ministry, Archdiocese of Los Angeles on July 1, 2020. She agreed to provide at least 10 sessions of therapy at their expense. She also informed her Archdiocese and mine about the battery. She let me decide if I wanted to report it to the Anaheim authorities. I still have not made a police report.

Amy Florian also wrote her version of events for Into Account, and copied me on the email.