

## **Survivor, name redacted**

Submitted 8/16/2020

I met David Haas through Music Ministry Alive as a participant in 2016 and 2017, the final two years of the institute. I was a youth participant, though I was no longer a minor. One of the other survivors described MMA as having an aura of prestige; I would go a step further than that. There was a general insinuation, by the leadership of the program, that if you could prove yourself important during that week at St. Kate's, you would be important in music ministry professionally – a world I desperately longed to enter. I wrote about this longing in the extensive application that MMA required. I was also very involved with music ministry at home, and I was immediately and overwhelmingly excited about the prospect of being at a program with names that people would recognize so easily. DH had name value, so much that my friends began to refer to the program as "David Haas camp", rather than by the actual name of the program, and that summed up my primary interest in the program. I knew very little else about MMA or about DH as a person before I attended virtually nothing at all except that he wrote a few big hits before I was born. I think that's how most people in my life who encountered DH felt the first time; the name is fairly meaningless as a standalone, but everyone knows the music.

The first thing that I remember about meeting DH is that during the first group meeting of the year, he told the whole community -every single youth participant -that he would LOVE it if we could refer to him as "Papa Bear", because so many MMA participants from previous years had done the same. I know that this was truthful, because other friends of mine who were participants in previous years knew about this nickname and brought it up without prompting when I mentioned my attendance. He would call himself Papa Bear several times over the course of the week, which I thought was gross and weird, but wrote it off because other youth participants would call him the same. It was grooming, right from the start, and just extremely gross.

Another big part of my excitement was seeing the representation of women in the leadership of the program. In my college town, the community of sacred music professionals was completely dominated by men, but at MMA, there were so many women who were so involved and important! Of course this was the DH Show and everyone else was just a side character, but these women led significant portions of the program and I wanted to see more of that... wanted to BE that. I am sure that DH picked up on my excitement and interest. Throughout the week, he would take moments to single me out, to tell me that I was doing wonderfully during all parts of the program, from the large choir to the instrumental lessons to participation during peer group sessions.

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Now, at the time, I was dealing with some significant trials: my relationship with my father was at rock bottom, I was a few months out of a hospital stay that was mentally very taxing, and some other traumatic experiences from my past left me with visceral reactions to undesired physical touch. I had a history of mental disorders that was managed by medication and talk therapy, but I was much more emotionally vulnerable during that summer. DH was very concerned when, during a conversation about the final concert of the week, I told him that my family would not be flying out to see the performance; my dad and I weren't speaking, and my mom was under the impression that this was no different than any other school concert. I didn't share that reasoning with him directly, but I had told another adult about my relationship (or lack thereof) with my father. Because of my knowledge of the way private information was shared, as well as the fact that I believe this adult honestly trusted DH, I strongly believe that DH would have known about this broken relationship and my upset with it.

DH also attempted to hug me and touch me several times after the final concert, even after I explicitly said that I did not like anyone to touch me. Of course it bothered me, but I had heard, "He's touchy-feely" from participants and from staff, and the program itself was very encouraging of physical touch, so I didn't think to do much about it. It's worth noting that the post-concert celebrations were chaotic and dark, both in the reception outside of the theater with families and in the dance party-style celebration just for participants. It would have been very easy to conceal actions underneath the pandemonium.

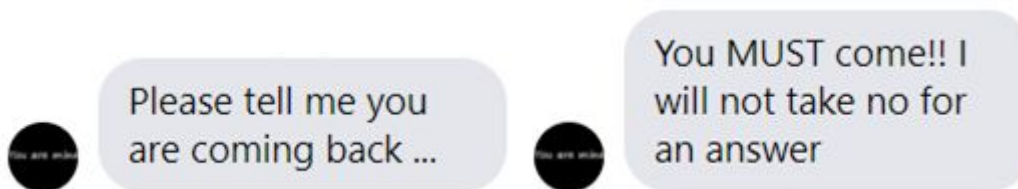
Throughout the year between MMA 2016 and MMA 2017, I received numerous messages from DH, mostly through Facebook. He asked me for my phone number on one or two occasions, as well as sent me his personal email address, but I never gave my phone number to him or did anything with his email. Many of the public Facebook comments he made were about how beautiful I was, how special, how loved. He played it off as a sort of spiritual fatherhood, as an adult who genuinely wanted to see how I was doing. The program encouraged us to join a group Facebook page to "check in" with each other, and DH encouraged us doing so, potentially to be able to see what his victims were getting into. Some other messages were related to a series of Taize services that he conducted in Minnesota. He knew that I often worked with that style of music, and even though I reminded him several times that I didn't live in Minnesota and couldn't fly out for a two hour service, he kept sending me these messages in the hopes that I would plan a visit. As an aside, I do truly love the Taize musical repertoire, and program that style often in my professional work. It sickens

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me that there is a whole portion of music from that repertoire that I can't bring myself to program because it reminds me so strongly of DH and of MMA. It's not just the music that he composed that comes with bad memories.

When it came time to send in an application for MMA again in 2017, I received multiple messages over a series of months from him, asking when I was going to submit the application. I wasn't dead-set on attending MMA again, in spite of what I told DH (I was trying to find paid work for the summer, things that would look better on a grad school application or professional resume), but I sensed that I didn't want to make him angry. I was so kind (almost peppy, even though that's not my personality at ALL) in my responses because of that recognition. I was particularly worried that if I made him angry, I wouldn't be able to move forward professionally within that scene. I did not want to ruin my professional life before it even began. However, I ended up not getting the jobs that I wanted, so I signed up to attend MMA for a second year, the program's 19th and final year of existence.



At the beginning of MMA 2017, David made a point to specifically direct me towards the liturgical dance "elective" that was offered each year, as well as to the liturgical planning sessions that involved working with LT and other adult staff members to plan the morning prayer services for each day. In the weeks before MMA, I received the solo performance opportunities list in the mail, and I was disappointed that I didn't receive more of those opportunities. He told me later that because he knew I was a music education major, he thought I might enjoy those types of opportunities more. He framed it as his desire to give me something special, personalized, tailored, just for me. As I type out this narrative, I recognize that I do not know what sort of hand he actually had in making those decisions. I wonder whether he actively created a situation in which he could objectify and demean me, or if it was just an easy opportunity for him to twist the narrative into something he could use to his benefit.

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Those planning sessions for morning liturgies were really nothing special. I only remember the adults in charge were very frustrated with us and with each other (my particular sessions were run by Lori True, though I believe other staff members ran them on different days). The part that I feel most deeply violated by and angry about was the liturgical dance elective. It was made up of almost all girls, mostly college aged with a couple high schoolers mixed in. We would rehearse on the third floor of the hall, where the adult staff could sit in a study room on the fourth floor or look over the balconies and watch us from above. David pulled me aside no fewer than 3 times over the course of that week to tell me how happy he was that I agreed to do this for him, that my body was so beautiful and I should never hide it, that he was mesmerized by the way my body danced and moved. He stopped me to make that comment as I was walking into Sunday Mass (right before I was supposed to dance again for the liturgy), and said that in front of another staff member, another man, who very literally turned the other way. As far as I know, no other youth participants were around to hear that statement except for myself. But that man heard. And I don't know who he was, but I still feel angry that he couldn't even look at me.

In 2017, DH did not actively overstep my physical boundaries as much as he did the year prior. In the beginning of the week, I found myself in a position where I had to be very vocal with another participant about my boundaries, and DH was within earshot of that conversation. I am unsure of whether DH chose to be sneakier about the ways in which he ignored my levels of comfort, or whether he chose to forgo physical contact entirely for verbal harassment. Through planned activities like the Taize evening and the foot-washing ceremony and through encouragement by adult staff and peer leaders, the entire program incentivized emotional and physical expressions. You were rewarded with attention; you were rewarded by being seen. I was more comfortable with those expressions in 2017, but I knew what I was walking into as a second year participant, so I was able to set that boundary more effectively from the moment I walked onto campus.

On Sunday morning before we all flew home, I remember crying at breakfast about leaving all of my friends; the connections I made with other youth participants were real, and I was genuinely upset about leaving them. DH expressed deep concern for me, asking me if I wanted to talk to him alone in a classroom, away from the dining hall where we ate every morning, describing it as a mode of allowing me to speak to him in confidence about the emotions I was feeling. I said no, but he pushed it. I said no again, and that I was crying because I knew that this would be my last year at MMA.

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He told me how sad he was, that this couldn't be the end, that he would make an exception for me to come back (there were age requirements that I was aging out of, though these "requirements" weren't set in stone, as I remember at least one other young woman for whom an exception was made). At that point, my airport shuttle was called, and I had to leave. I don't know how I would have responded if I didn't have to leave; I still felt like it was very important not to upset DH. However, based upon what I now know about DH's grooming and abuse processes, and based on the reports of other survivors, I believe wholeheartedly that DH would have sexually assaulted me had he gotten me alone.

An adult from my parish attended MMA 2017 with me, as well as two other youth participants. The adult who attended was entranced by DH's intense spiritual manipulation and aura of importance, and I did not believe that he would take my concerns seriously in those moments. The other youth participants were oblivious to anything that seemed wrong (and I didn't want to "ruin" their experiences by tainting their enjoyment with my discomfort). So, I did nothing. I didn't think I could trust anyone.

In later months and years, he continued to send me messages and invitations through Facebook to attend events in Minnesota that he sponsored or was a part of. The comments about my physical appearance didn't stop, but were on public forms where other people could see them, so they were toned down; more along the lines of "Beautiful!" or other one-word comments, but I knew what he meant because he would have said those things to me in person if he felt like he could. I was added to daily email groups that would ramble on about nothing; I received hundreds of these emails. He would also create Facebook groups, inviting hundreds of people, but creating the sense that they were secret and special. I know now that so much of his modus operandi was to invite you in and make you feel like you were important and special and different, while really repeating the same patterns over and over again. As of September 2020, I can find history of at least 4 of these groups of which I was a part, and I remember at least 2 more that I deleted. He would emphasize community and individual secrecy, going as far as to put in the description of one such group, created in 2017 and updated in 2019:

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WELCOME! "Praying as Living Reminders" is a SECRET group for a select gathering of companions to share in the spiritual, musical, pastoral, liturgical, and other musings of David Haas. The posts here will include daily reflections, prayers, recommended resources for ministry in the areas of liturgical music, liturgy, youth ministry, catechesis and spirituality. Members of this group are NOT to "share" any posts from here at all; and all correspondence or talk about this page is to be here on this page only - not through any other mode either in writing (email) or verbally. In other words, please do NOT speak verbally about this page with anyone, including actual members. All conversations here are to be "posts" only (in writing) in response to posts provided here. Membership for this group is by invitation ONLY. It is expected that all respect these conditions. It is understood that everyone here is aware of David's public presence, and that there are many who would want to be part of this group that have not been invited. So please, do not "spread the word" in any way about this page, either in writing or verbally, and even when you are with David in person, as others might be in earshot. If this sounds a bit paranoid ... there is history to justify such concern. God bless you all - and may God be given the glory for all that appears here.

This "history" he mentions, I can only assume, would be the 2018 allegations of sexual harassment and assault, as well as his letter of suitability being rescinded from the Archdiocese.

In September 2017, against my better judgement, I went to a concert of his at another parish in my diocese, so that I could reconnect with some of my friends from MMA. There were a large group of us there, maybe 10-15, and he repeatedly brought up MMA and the wonderful work the program did, partially to solicit funds and partially to solicit attention. Just like he did at St. Kate's, he attempted to pull me away to speak with me alone after the concert. I had driven to the church with a friend, so I had the perfect excuse not to separate myself completely. However, he was persistent, and he didn't forget.

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Via private message, in August 2018, DH asked for my mailing address. This was the summer before my senior year of college. I was under the impression that this request was for MMA related information. By that point, the program had shut down for financial reasons, but we had all been told that they would continue holding smaller workshops and institutes. I had no idea if there were official channels anymore, or if he was just collecting information personally. Of course, it wasn't actually MMA related at all. DH mailed me greeting and prayer cards, personal notes telling me about how proud he was of me and that he loved me, that sort of thing. I'm so freaked out now that he could know where I live, even though I've moved twice since then. He would have at least had access to my parents' home address, my medication and medical history, my education history, and "recommendation letters" from people who love me and have supported me professionally. I really have no idea where any of this information went and who continues to have access to it. I do not trust that it was discarded appropriately.

For the record, this all became a joke to my closest friends. In a way I let it, because I never said anything, because humor is my coping and by taking things seriously, I would have to acknowledge my hurt. They would crack jokes about "Papa Bear" (which, again, what the fuck? Who let him say that, out loud, more than once? How did any adult allow themselves to sit there and listen to that and talk themselves out of it being problematic on a million different levels?) and about liturgical dance and all of these deeply painful memories that I just didn't have the emotional stability to correct, because then I would have to explain. I'm angry at them for not recognizing how hurt I was.

I'm angry at the institutional Church. The Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul let this pattern of grooming and abuse go on. There are allegations from over 10 years before I was born, and they didn't stop him. DH could have been stopped before I was even alive. But the paths that the Church has for reporting independent contractors and musicians like DH, who are as much celebrity as they are worker, are essentially nonexistent. When there is no way to shut him out everywhere, to stop him completely from having access to women and children through the Catholic Church, I cannot bring myself to believe that there could a true escape for his survivors.

I'm angry at my previous diocese and parish for sending children in the first place. I was sponsored by the parish where I grew up, whose staff incidentally told me that "wiping away all of his music doesn't seem like a very Christian thing to do" when I asked them to publicly clarify their policies on DH's music in July 2020. But here's the thing: I am anxious to walk into any church service where I

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am not planning the music, because my area dioceses haven't made a statement on the restriction of his music. Beyond that, it's not just his music that's a trigger. It's the music he brought into my life. A communion hymn by a composer other than DH knocked the breath out of me last week, because all I could think about was the corresponding ceremony at MMA and the things he said to me that night.

I'm angry at every adult who looked at me in all of my teenage fragility, and still sent me to a camp run by evil. The adults who bought into DH's pitiful excuses of spiritual guidance and let me go back for a second year. The adults who knew what he was and didn't do enough to protect me. I wrote a lot of things off, ignored a lot of red flags, but so did the adults who were supposed to be there to protect me. I was a mentally ill teenager subjected to repeated grooming and harassment, and I should not have felt responsible for rescuing myself from this alone.

MMA was a community that told us it would bring joy and acceptance and love. It emphasized brokenness, redemption, healing, and all of the things that a high school or college student might desperately want to feel. Hell, in the second-to-last year of the program, the theme was mercy. We were invited to stay in touch after the fact, to connect and share life updates, to remain a community though we spanned the nation. We were encouraged to share pictures and good memories and reminisce about what had been. We were too young to know; for one week a year, we were sucked into a world that seems too good to be true. Now I know that it was.