

New York Times celebrates Metropolitan Opera dismissal of James Levine

By Eric London
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On Monday, the Metropolitan Opera in New York announced the firing of conductor James Levine after a more than 40-year career with the company. The dismissal followed a third-party investigation commissioned by the Met and prompted by the publication of allegations by the *New York Times* in December 2017. The *Times* article focused on charges of sexual abuse allegedly conducted by Levine in the 1980s.

In an article announcing the dismissal yesterday, the *Times* celebrated Levine's departure. Titled, "James Levine's final act at the Met ends in disgrace," the article called the dismissal "an extraordinary fall from grace."

No criminal charges have yet been brought against Levine, and the Met did not release any specifics regarding the alleged abuse. In a statement yesterday, the Met wrote the investigation "uncovered credible evidence that Mr. Levine engaged in sexually abusive and harassing conduct toward vulnerable artists in the early stages of their careers, over whom Mr. Levine had authority."

The statement further noted, "In light of these findings, the Met concludes that it would be inappropriate and impossible for Mr. Levine to continue to work at the Met."

In a December statement that followed the initial *Times*' article, Levine said, "As understandably troubling as the accusations noted in recent press accounts are, they are unfounded. As anyone who truly knows me will attest, I have not lived my life as an oppressor or an aggressor... My fervent hope is that in time people will come to understand the truth, and I will be able to continue my work with full concentration and inspiration."

There is no evidence that Levine broke the law, and

the allegations Levine inappropriately used his professional authority are impossible to determine considering the secretive character of the Met's investigation. Those who have publicly alleged Levine abused them, however, were above the legal age of consent in the states where the abuse allegedly occurred.

The *Times* report last December was based on the uncovering of a 2016 police report filed by a man who alleged Levine criminally abused him in Illinois in the 1980s. The *Times* acknowledged in yesterday's article that "law enforcement officials said last year that they would not bring criminal charges against Mr. Levine, noting that while the state's age of consent is now 17—and 18 in some cases—it was still 16 in 1986," the age of the accuser at the time.

Yesterday's *Times* article also explains that the accuser filed a police report thirty years after the fact, when "therapy had helped him realize how destructive those encounters had been."

Levine is the latest in a series of artists and musicians whose careers have been brought to an end by allegations of "immoral"—but not illegal—acts. The *Times* provided a short list of the casualties thus far:

"Several performing arts institutions have been confronted with complaints about the behavior of some of their leading artists. A number of orchestras severed ties with the conductor Charles Dutoit after he was accused of sexual misconduct, and the Boston Symphony, where he was a frequent guest conductor, later determined that the accusations of misconduct lodged by several women who worked for the orchestra were credible. Peter Martins retired under pressure this year as ballet master in chief of New York City Ballet after The Times and The Washington Post reported accusations that he had been physically abusive. When

the company's investigation was completed, however, City Ballet announced it had not corroborated the allegations.”

In other words, cultural institutions are being purging individuals based on uncorroborated allegations of “sexual misconduct.” As David North and David Walsh wrote in the December 5 perspective, “The public humiliation and destruction of Metropolitan Opera conductor James Levine:”

“The Metropolitan's action is a cowardly capitulation to the hysteria incited by the filthy *New York Times*, whose demented publisher and editors are sniffing the bed sheets of the nation in search of sexual malefactors. As it publishes new denunciations each day, the newspaper calls on the public to keep it supplied with reports of sexual heresy.

“The *Times* is appealing to the most backward, antidemocratic elements, as is revealed by the content and tone of many of the comments posted in response to its reports. In a manner that has not been seen in modern American history, individuals are being compelled to answer for their entire sexual history.”

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