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May 18, 2020

By Email to: twincitiesarts@gmail.com

Twin Cities Arts Reader
c/o Basil Considine, Performing Arts
Editor and Senior Classical Music Critic

Re: Stephen Lord w/Twin Cities Arts Reader

Dear Mr. Considine:

This law firm represents Stephen Lord.

Please take notice of the following:

1. The article which you wrote and published about Mr. Lord in the Twin Cities Arts Reader of June 18, 2019, contains numerous false and defamatory statements. It was plainly designed to destroy Mr. Lord's reputation, which had been created through nearly half a century of consistent work at the highest levels of the operatic profession in America. The apparent intention was that Mr. Lord would never work as a conductor again. As a result, Mr. Lord has suffered overwhelming reputational harm and substantial monetary damage.

2. Given the times we are living in, people who do not know Mr. Lord were ready to declare him guilty, without proof or trial, on the strength of your vicious and unsupported allegations alone. In addition to being based on anonymous sources, these poisonous lies were sufficiently amorphous that they easily spread and metastasized online with devastating effect. Indeed, one person wrote that he heard Mr. Lord was accused of molesting forty women. Given Mr. Lord's openly homosexual orientation, claims of his harassment of women are rendered that much more offensive. In fact, prior to your article, he had not been accused of any impropriety whatsoever,

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and following the article, not a single individual of any gender or orientation has come forward to make any claims against Mr. Lord. Nonetheless, anyone who Googles Mr. Lord's name is immediately confronted by your scabrous article.

3. Twin Cities Arts Reader explicitly claims that it subscribes to fundamental journalistic standards. It will escape no one's attention that your character assassination of Mr. Lord did not even attempt to follow those standards. He was never contacted for comment prior to the publication of your article and was given no opportunity to defend himself or even to offer you any information which might have given a genuinely objective journalist pause before printing such serious allegations. This failure to meet even elementary and minimal journalistic standards is made more egregious by the fact that your article relies wholly on anonymous sources, reminiscent of the worst days of McCarthyism and blacklisting in this country. In the 1950s, many of those instances were found to have been improperly motivated, by self-aggrandizement, power, money or malice. Legal action against you and your publication will certainly explore the issue of similar improper motivation here. A jury will surely be interested in why, although you never contacted Mr. Lord for comment or rebuttal, his employers were made aware that the article was going to appear, so as to cause him maximum damage.

As we believe you are aware, the prime "source" for your article was a woman who claimed to be offended because Mr. Lord did not immediately accede to her demand to dismiss a singer -- who happened to be her former boyfriend -- and whom she had accused of sexually harassing her. Regardless of the merits of any claim against her former boyfriend, she had no factual basis for transferring the allegations of harassment to Mr. Lord. This was a plainly biased source, which was never acknowledged as such.

4. Your article also notably excluded information, all of which was readily available to you, which would have refuted your false and defamatory allegations about Mr. Lord. To the best of Mr. Lord's knowledge, there was never any complaint -- either formal or informal -- of sexual misconduct or professional impropriety made against him to any of the companies or any of the venues at which he worked over many years. This fact was promptly confirmed by a Boston Globe reporter who, actually following journalistic standards, contacted Mr. Lord's employers after your article appeared. Moreover, a senior administrator at the English National Opera was willing, in public and

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in print, to declare that he had worked extensively with Mr. Lord and had never seen or heard anything to make him believe that Mr. Lord was guilty of the sort of sexual influence peddling you alleged.

Finally, no investigation has ever turned up any evidence against Mr. Lord of any impropriety. None of this was included in your supposedly objective article, and a jury will easily conclude that any information favorable to Mr. Lord was omitted, despite high-minded talk about journalistic standards, because such information did not further the salacious narrative you were so determined to sell.

5. This letter will serve to put you on notice that, pending legal action, you should not destroy or dispose of any documents in your possession, directly or indirectly, concerned with Mr. Lord or having anything to do with the Twin Cities Arts Reader article of June 18, 2019. Destroying evidence is both a civil and criminal offense, and you should be governed accordingly.

6. Finally, please take notice that this is your final opportunity to mitigate the extraordinary damage you have caused Mr. Lord by printing, in the Twin Cities Arts Reader, a retraction, clarifying that you did not live up to journalistic standards, that Mr. Lord had no opportunity to comment, and that he denies all of the accusations. Your failure to do so will have additional legal consequences and you should be governed accordingly.

This is not a full and complete statement of the facts of this matter, and we reserve all of Mr. Lord's rights and remedies, including without limitation his claims for exemplary, punitive and consequential damages, as the facts may develop in the premises.

Yours very truly,

GEORGE BIRNBAUM LAW

By: /s/ George Birnbaum
George Birnbaum

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