



# A DIFFERENT FIRING AT THE BACH FESTIVAL

**Linda Ackerman's**  
departure from OBF in 2016  
has similarities to that of  
**Matthew Halls**

BY BOB KEEFER

**W**hen Linda Ackerman was fired by the Oregon Bach Festival in 2016, her story didn't end up in *The New York Times*.

Her departure from the festival wasn't the subject of outraged posts on classical music blogs like *Slipped Disc*.

But the tale of Ackerman's firing — pushed through that summer by OBF Executive Director Janelle McCoy — may shed light on the still-unexplained firing this past summer of OBF's Artistic Director Matthew Halls, a case that has drawn international news coverage and nearly unrelenting criticism of the 47-year-old festival and of the University of Oregon, which operates it.

In both cases, it appears that McCoy was behind the firings. Ackerman, a contract artist liaison, was closely allied with Halls, whom she considers a friend. And, like Halls, she insists she still doesn't understand why her contract was terminated.

Ackerman, who lives in Eugene, had worked for the festival in various capacities, starting out as a volunteer, for about 30 years. For about the previous eight years she had been hired as an artist liaison, meaning that she was one of several people who made sure that visiting performers got from the airport to their hotels or other lodgings, had everything they needed during their stays, and made it to rehearsals and performances on time.

The job is demanding, requiring a person to be on call from 8 am to midnight every day during the two-and-a-half-week festival and to have the poise to navigate the world of top musicians and high-end donors.

Ackerman says that during the 2016 festival McCoy accused her of being rude to performers.

"She said Sheri Panthaki had complained to her agent about how rude I was," Ackerman says.

Sherezade Panthaki is a New York City soprano who performed at the 2016 festival. In an email she sent Ackerman shortly after the 2016 festival ended, Panthaki presented quite a different picture of their relationship.

It read, in full:

"Thank you so much! It was a great pleasure to be at OBF! I've heard about it for so long and am really happy to have experienced it in person. Everyone has been so kind and friendly, and you are absolutely the best, more efficient, and trustworthy Artist Liaison one could hope for!"

After Ackerman was fired, Panthaki wrote to Ackerman: "I have heard, over the grapevine this past week, that there have been some very strange happenings (I don't really know any details) for which you are bearing unfortunate and unjust consequences. I don't know what has instigated all

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