



MATTHEW HALLS CONDUCTS THE OBF CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA AT LAST SUMMER'S FESTIVAL.

PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

this, but I'm utterly dismayed that this has happened, and I wanted to offer any support I can. Apparently there is a rumor floating around that I complained to my agent about my OBF artist liaison, and I'm APPALLED to hear that my name is being used as part of this complete fabrication."

Ackerman says she was also accused of being rude to Eugene festival supporter Anise Thigpen.

Thigpen, similarly, denied in an email to Ackerman that there was any problem.

"I am writing to reiterate and clarify my experiences with you in your capacity as a volunteer for the Oregon Bach Festival, 2016," she wrote in an email a week after Ackerman's contract was terminated. "For the record, you have not been offensive; on the contrary, I have enjoyed my interactions with you and all agents of the festival."

Eugene Weekly has verified the authenticity of the emails from both women.

Ackerman describes a tense meeting with McCoy on July 8, 2016, while the festival was still in full swing, at which, she says, she was fired after forcefully denying that there was any problem between her and festival artists and supporters.

When Ackerman insisted the problems hadn't actually occurred, she says, McCoy "jumped out of her chair and lunged toward me. She was shaking and white. She said, 'Are you calling me a liar?'"

"Yes," Ackerman responded.

At that point, Ackerman says, McCoy threatened to sue her for harassment and told her she was dismissed from her job.

Heavily redacted documents about Ackerman's firing obtained from the UO under public records law generally support this account, although they never specify the actual grounds for her termination. They describe a tense atmosphere at a festival whose staffers were under a strain due to the unavailability of hotel rooms in Eugene on account of the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials taking place here, meaning performers were scattered in private homes around Eugene.

These documents paint Ackerman, perhaps accurately, as a forceful personality who didn't hesitate to speak her mind in staff meetings.

The records show that McCoy's staff continued to seek out complaints about Ackerman even after she had been terminated.

On Aug. 11, 2016 — more than a month after Ackerman was fired — Sandy Cummings, the festival's finance director, sent an email, apparently to OBF staffers, soliciting reports of misbehavior by Ackerman.

"I am collecting documentation regarding the incident during the festival involving Linda Ackerman," it said, without specifying what incident. "I'm not sure if you were affected or involved but it would be very helpful if you could document in writing anything you witnessed or experienced with Linda. If you could please describe the quality of interactions and if there was any hostile, intimidating, disrespectful, or inappropriate behavior."

'WARNING — MATTHEW MAY BE CALLING'

The documents also suggest that Halls accused McCoy of misleading him about the reasons for letting Ackerman go.

In an Aug. 11, 2016, email to Doug Blandy, then the UO's senior vice provost for academic affairs, McCoy wrote: "I believe I mentioned that Matthew and I had met before I canceled her contract. He now maintains that I misled him in that discussion and this is a personality difference between me and Linda." The subject line of the email was "Warning — Matthew may be calling."

Since the Halls firing in August, McCoy has referred most media questions to Tobin Klinger, the university's senior spokesman. When *EW* asked them both for comment on the Ackerman case, Klinger replied, "We wouldn't be able to comment on personnel matters."

Since signing a non-disparagement agreement with the UO following his departure, Halls has declined any comment on the festival.

There seems to have been little love lost between McCoy and Halls. Two insider accounts say that during a board retreat following the 2016 festival, Halls and McCoy had a strong public disagreement in front of board members. Halls, by one account, called out McCoy for providing inaccurate financial figures to the board, and was later accused of "humiliating" her.

Halls' firing resembles that of Ackerman's in this regard: The charges against him remain unclear. The UO released a complaint accusing Hall of sexism, with no named accuser, in response to a records request by *EW*. Halls insists he never saw the accusation before the information was published in *EW*. (See *EW*'s "Matthew Halls says he was

never presented with Bach Fest sex discrimination charges" 11/15 and "UO document: Matthew Halls was fired from the Oregon Bach Festival while under investigation for 'gender discrimination [and] harassment based on sex and race'" 11/14.)

The charges in the recently released documents also include the now well-known incident in which Halls was accused by an OBF participant of making racially insensitive remarks while joking with countertenor Reginald Mobley at an OBF post-concert reception. Mobley, an African-American, has insisted there was nothing insensitive about the conversation, which was simply good-natured joking between two longtime friends.

The UO has insisted that neither the Mobley incident nor the accusation of sexism is necessarily the reason for his firing, but will not say what the reason was.

AN UNEXPECTED HIRE

When McCoy was hired by the festival in late 2015, many observers were surprised. Her résumé seemed thin compared to the job. In a story for *Oregon Arts Watch* earlier this year, former NPR classical music critic Tom Manoff called her "relatively inexperienced for OBF."

Her predecessor, the late John Evans, had worked before coming to Eugene as a producer at the BBC and was a published authority on the music of classical composer Benjamin Britten.

McCoy, by contrast, is a singer with a modest record of performance. Before coming here she had been executive director of the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia and, more briefly, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.

The Bach job was a big professional jump for her. At the Mendelssohn Club her 2012 salary was \$65,300. Her salary at OBF is \$170,363.

McCoy drew good reviews for her work with the two music organizations in Philadelphia. At the Mendelssohn Club in 2014 she oversaw a world-premiere production of Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields*, which earned Wolfe the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2015.

Since Halls' firing came to light in an *EW* story on Aug. 27, McCoy has largely remained out of public view. She is going to work each day, OBF staffers tell *EW*, but she has skipped public appearances such as the October dedication of Berwick Hall, the festival's new facility next to the School of Music and Dance.