

**For Immediate Release**

## **Principal Oboe Liang Wang Files Suit Against NY Philharmonic After Suspension Without Cause**

**Wang, one of America's most prominent orchestral musicians,  
sues Philharmonic for Unlawful Suspension and Breach of Employment Agreement**

**Associated Musicians of Greater New York, Local 802  
also charged with refusal to provide fair representation**

May 1, 2024 – NEW YORK – Liang Wang, principal oboe of the New York Philharmonic since 2006, has sued the Philharmonic for suspending him without cause. As the suit explains, the Philharmonic did not suspend Liang for anything he is alleged to have done, but instead, the suspension is the Philharmonic's cynical reaction to a negative magazine article about long ago events that the Philharmonic knows to be inaccurate. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Manhattan, also names Liang's union for failing in their obligation to stand up for Liang's rights.

The suspension occurred only two days after the publication of an article in "Vulture" – an online publication of New York Magazine – criticizing the outcome of a 2019 arbitration that was favorable to Wang, which in turn was about a disputed event of a decade earlier. Most egregiously as to Liang, the article gave the completely false impression that the arbitration related to allegations of misconduct by him in 2010, in Vail, Colorado. That was not the case. As the Philharmonic's lead counsel made clear in 2019: "We don't say that [Wang] engaged in misconduct in Vail."

But the article nonetheless created a firestorm, and rather than correct the grossly misleading impressions about Wang that were circulating due to the article's mistakes, the Philharmonic's actions damaged Wang further.

Alan Lewis, Partner at Carter, Ledyard and Milburn and attorney for Mr. Wang said:

"Liang Wang is an extraordinarily fine person, a devoted husband and the father of two young children. He has an entirely unblemished record in his 18 years at the Philharmonic, and has always conducted himself with dignity, generosity and professionalism.

"The Philharmonic suspended Liang without giving a reason, other than cowering to the public reaction to a magazine article. The writer of that article did not have access to any of the extensive arbitration testimony, resulting in serious errors. But the Philharmonic conferred unwarranted legitimacy on the substantially inaccurate article. Any doubt about this is put to rest by the unfortunate words of the Philharmonic's own CEO. As he put it in his email to the orchestra announcing Liang's suspension, the article 'prompted a lot of strong feelings.' But feelings are not facts.

"The actual facts – relating to a resolved dispute about events in decades past – were fully vetted in the 20 day long arbitration hearing in 2019 presided over by Richard I. Boch, an arbitrator agreed to by the Philharmonic and perhaps the most renowned and respected labor arbitrator in the nation. And when faced with an inaccurate article relitigating the facts that were thoroughly adjudicated in the arbitration, the Philharmonic's response should

have been to stand by the binding arbitration result – and not throw Liang up as a sacrificial lamb to an angry mob misled by a magazine hit piece. Bluntly stated, the Philharmonic chose cowardice, rather than courage.

“The shockwaves of the Philharmonic’s actions have driven Liang off stage, suspended him from faculties, and cancelled him from festivals and competitions. He is separated from his fans and the orchestra to which he has devoted two decades of his life. While Liang and I are supremely confident in the merits of our case, we can never replace what’s been taken from him already.

“Finally, there are almost no words for the Union’s disloyalty, in failing to perform its solemn duty to protest the unlawful and unexplained mistreatment of Liang Wang. Our system of labor relations entrusts unions with the obligation to stand up for their members who are unjustifiably accused or mistreated. But here, Local 802 has not stood up for its loyal member, Liang Wang, even when he has been subject to mistreatment from his employer – without being accused of anything.

“The matters resolved in the thorough 2019 arbitration were resolved in a final and binding process, which Mr. Wang will not relitigate in the press, or any other lawsuit. He is demanding basic fairness and respect for the rights that are afforded to him and all of his colleagues by the collective bargaining agreement. He is seeking compensatory and punitive damages, as well as attorneys’ fees from the Philharmonic and Union for their breaches of their contractual and solemn obligations to Liang.”

The case is 1:24-cv-03356 filed in the Southern District of New York.

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