

Names

Domingo leaves Met Opera amid harassment inquiry

In an 11th-hour reversal, the superstar singer **Plácido Domingo** withdrew on Tuesday from the Metropolitan Opera's production of Verdi's "Macbeth" and indicated he would not return to the Met amid rising tensions over how the company was responding to allegations that he had sexually harassed multiple women.

Domingo's withdrawal on the eve of the performance — opening night is Wednesday — came as a growing number of people who work at the Met expressed concern about his planned appearance. Other American cultural institutions, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and San Francisco Opera,

had already canceled Domingo's upcoming appearances, citing the need to provide a safe workplace. The backstage tensions at the Met boiled over in recent days, including at a heated, sometimes emotional meeting that **Peter Gelb**, the company's general manager, held with members of the orchestra and chorus after the "Macbeth" dress rehearsal on Saturday afternoon. Some of those at the meeting questioned what Domingo's return said about the Met's commitment to protecting women and rooting out sexual harassment.

Three days later, Domingo, who at 78 remains one of opera's biggest stars, said in a statement to The New York Times that he was dropping out of "Macbeth" — which was to have been his first US performance since the sexual harassment allegations were reported last month.

"I made my debut at the Metropolitan Opera at the age of 27 and have sung at this magnificent theater for 51 consecutive, glorious years," Domingo said in a statement. "While I strongly dispute recent allegations made about me, and I am concerned about a climate in which people are condemned without due process, upon reflection I believe that my appearance in this production of 'Macbeth' would distract from the hard work of my colleagues both onstage and behind the scenes. As a result, I have asked to withdraw and I thank the leadership of the Met for graciously granting my request."

Domingo indicated that he would not be returning to the house.

"I am happy that, at the age of 78, I was able to sing the wonderful title role in the dress rehearsal of 'Macbeth,' which I consider my last performance on the Met stage," he said. "I am grateful to God and the public for what they have allowed me to accomplish here at the Metropolitan Opera."

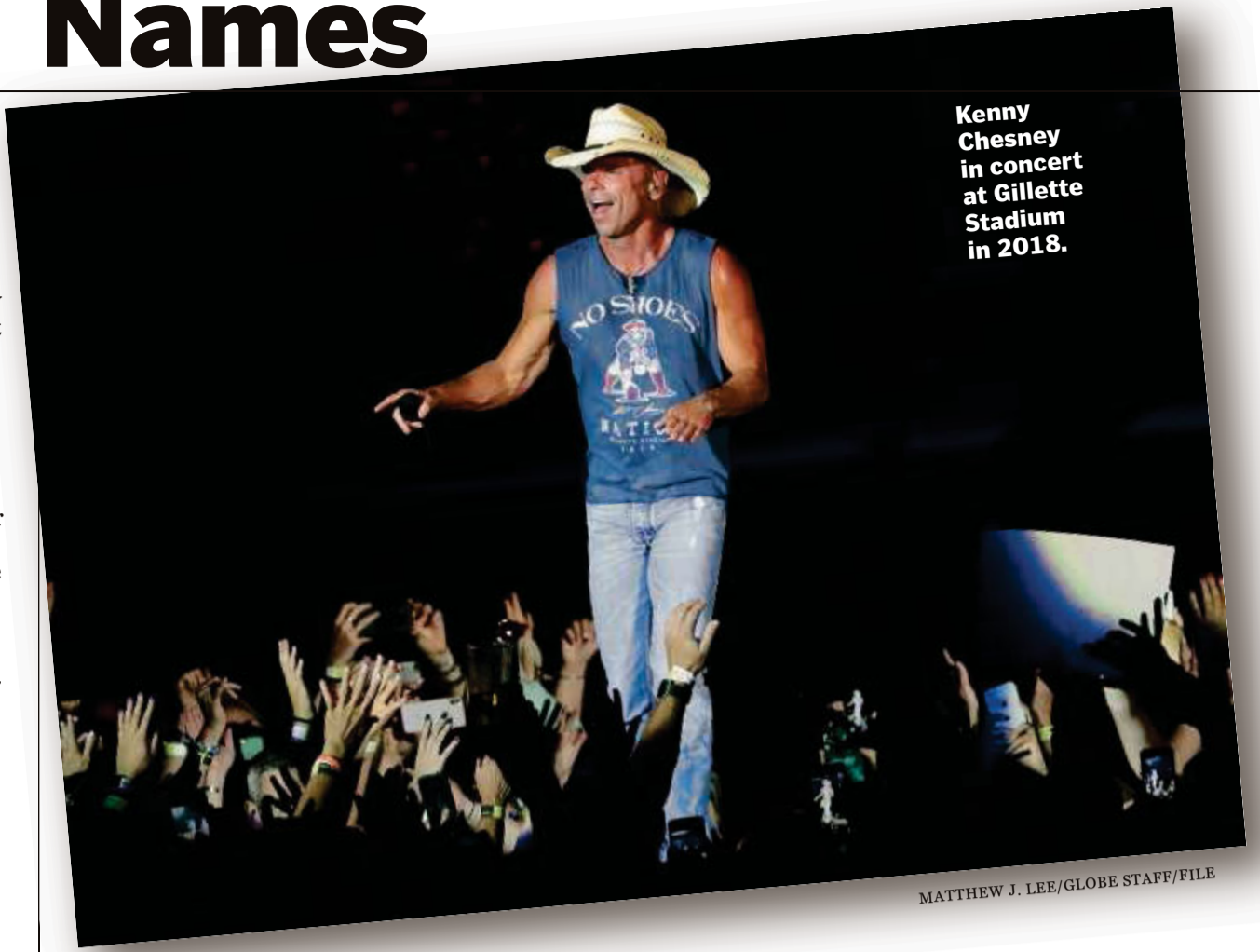
The Met issued a statement which seemed to suggest that the company had asked him to go. "The Metropolitan Opera confirms that Plácido Domingo has agreed to withdraw from all future performances at the Met, effective immediately," the statement said. "The Met and Mr. Domingo are in agreement that he needed to step down."

NEW YORK TIMES



AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Plácido Domingo was to open in "Macbeth" on Wednesday.



Kenny Chesney in concert at Gillette Stadium in 2018.

MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

Kenny Chesney to play Gillette for 20th time

Kenny Chesney will reach a milestone when he steps on stage at Gillette Stadium next year.

The country star will once again be hitting stadiums across the nation next year for his Chillaxification 2020 tour, which kicks off in April at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, and concludes on Friday, Aug. 28 in Foxborough, marking the 20th time Chesney will perform at the home of the New England Patriots.

Joining him on tour are country vocalist duo Florida Georgia Line, contemporary country band Old Dominion, and jam band **Michael Franti & Spearhead**.

"These stadium shows are the most fun thing I do,"

Chesney said in a press release. "It's been a year, so when I get out there, I wanna make sure that No Shoes Nation is being rocked, having fun and getting all the music they can out of the day. We always try to do something different, bring someone new — and for anyone who's never seen Michael Franti and Spearhead, just wait!"

General ticket sales will kick off at 10 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 4, while American Express card members can purchase tickets before the general public beginning Thursday, Sept. 26 at 10 a.m. through Thursday, Oct. 3 at 10 p.m.

KEVIN SLANE, Boston.com

Michael Pollan talks psychedelics and 'How to Change Your Mind'

Michael Pollan, the celebrated author of "The Omnivore's Dilemma" and "Food Rules: An Eater's Manual," has been writing about food and the environment and their connections to society for years. But when he sat down to write his most recent book, "How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence," he wasn't expecting the experience to become so personal.

Pollan was slated to speak Tuesday at Northeastern University for the 2019 Morton E. Ruderman Memorial Lecture. Jay Ruderman, president of the Ruderman Family Foundation, said of the author: "Michael Pollan has

inspired a conversation with his writing about his exploration of his own mind and spirituality, as he has done about food and other worthy topics throughout his career."

The Globe chatted with Pollan before his talk at Northeastern.

Q. Your book has turned many heads. Audiences that might not read about psychedelics are suddenly fascinated by them. What do you think contributed to such widespread interest?

A. Well, I was writing as an outsider. You know, most books on psychedelics have been written by people who are part of the psychedelic community, so they're already persuaded of their value. I went in as a skeptic. I think I represented the readers' doubts and misgivings. It made it easier for them to entertain the topic. That approach probably resonated with readers more than if I were just evangelizing the use of psychedelics.

Q. Your book also deals with spirituali-



'The idea that a chemical found in a mushroom could change your outlook at such a profound level. I felt I had to go deeper.'

ty. When did you first begin to entertain this as a topic of research?

A. My first introduction to my research came long before I even tried psychedelics. I wrote a piece for the New Yorker in which I interviewed cancer patients who were using psychedelics as a therapeutic measure. When I talked to all these patients who had used psilocybin, most discussed a powerful spiritual experience. That led to a quantum change in their attitudes toward their death. In many cases, their fear had been completely lifted. All this was very foreign to me, but really intriguing. The idea that a chemical found in a mushroom could change your outlook at such a profound level. I felt I had to go deeper.

Q. Of all the psychedelics you experimented with, which was the one you were the most surprised by?

A. I had the most profound experience on psilocybin. It was incredibly revealing, my ego completely dissolved and I saw myself kind of explode into a little

cloud of Post-It notes and then spread out like a coat of paint on the ground. I experienced it, but at the same time, it felt like I didn't exist. It's a paradox that I still chew on a lot. So that was, I would say, the most surprising experience.

Q. After spending so much time investigating the effects of psychedelics, what is your biggest takeaway?

A. We have a public health crisis. A mental health crisis. We have rising rates of depression, anxiety, and addiction. The tools we have to treat these things are not very good. Mental health care is not making the kind of strides that other branches of medicine are. Psychedelic substances, which have been used for thousands of years, appear to hold great promise in treating some of these disorders. And that's very exciting. We're not there yet though; much more research needs to be done. And so support for the research is really my big takeaway.

CHRIS TRIUNFO

A corrupt president tries to forestall the inevitable in 'Nixon's Nixon'

By **Don Aucoin**
GLOBE STAFF

WATERTOWN — Jeremiah Kissel and Joel Colodner are plenty impressive on their own, but when these two exemplary actors are paired up, you lean forward in your seat a little, aware that the evening has the potential for a case of brilliance squared, a duet of virtuosity.

Kissel and Colodner deliver on those high expectations as a desperate President Richard M. Nixon and a self-serving Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the engrossing New Repertory Theatre production of "Nixon's Nixon." Their performances in Russell Lees's dark 1996 satire are a worthy followup to their stellar work together in New Rep's "Imagining Madoff" (2014) and "Two Jews Walk Into a War" (2018).

Though fictional, "Nixon's Nixon" is inspired by an actual meeting between Nixon and Kissinger at the White House on Aug. 7, 1974, the night before Nixon went on television and resigned under the threat of impeachment for his role in the Watergate scandal.

There's obvious contemporary resonance in a play about a president whose epic corruption, rampant abuse of power, and pervasive venality have created the conditions for his downfall. Nixon clearly won't be the only president on the minds of New Rep's audiences, and, just as clearly, that is fully intentional on the part of the Watertown company.

But under the taut direction of Elaine Vaan Hogue, "Nixon's Nixon" stands quite sturdily and wittily on its own merits, without relying for its effectiveness on echoes of the present



ANDREW BRILLIANT/BRILLIANT PICTURES

Joel Colodner as Henry Kissinger and Jeremiah Kissel as Richard Nixon in "Nixon's Nixon."

day. There's a grim fascination simply in watching the spectacle of two awful people in the same room who are separately strategizing ways to save their own skins and reputations while the walls close in.

Kissel and Colodner wring every ounce of juice from that scorpions-in-a-bottle spectacle as they feint and parry on Afsoon Pajoufar's large, white, cube-shaped set. When Colodner's tuxedo-clad Kissinger first enters the Lincoln Sitting Room at 10 p.m., Kissel's Nixon is listening to Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony at top volume while animatedly conducting, waving

a rolled-up transcript like a baton. Nixon then tries to play the maestro in his conversation with Kissinger, constantly waving his hands to punctuate a point or dismiss an unwelcome thought.

Initially, Nixon talks past and over Kissinger, speaking not of the damage he has done to the country but instead fretting solipsistically over whether he will go to jail and lose his government pension and what the impact of his resignation will be on his daughter Julie. As for Kissinger, his overarching concern is whether Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, will keep him on as secretary of state. He keeps prodding Nixon to endorse him, while the president deflects. When Kissinger learns that Nixon has been tape-recording their conversations, Colodner brings home

the moment with full comic force.

Kissel portrays Nixon as part cornered rat, part used-car salesman who is convinced he can close the deal if he just talks fast enough (except for one scene, the actor wisely refrains from mimicry). In the more reactive role, Colodner captures Kissinger's lugubrious self-importance, his perpetual straining after gravitas, and the seething resentment, even fury, the onetime Harvard professor feels at having to yield the spotlight to a patron he sees as unworthy of his talents. "If you're remembered, it will be for what I did," Kissinger snaps at Nixon at one point.

Strangely codependent rivals, each is obsessed with his place in history; each is uneasily aware they will be tethered together in posterity; each is willing to sell out the other in a nano-

STAGE REVIEW

NIXON'S NIXON
Play by Russell Lees
Directed by Elaine Vaan Hogue
Presented by New Repertory Theatre. At MainStage Theater, Mosesian Center for the Arts, Watertown. Through Oct. 6. Tickets \$25-\$67, 617-923-8487, www.newrep.org

second. Hostility toward Kissinger keeps erupting out of Nixon; he smells betrayal. "Somebody around here sold me out. Was it you?" he demands of Kissinger. Nixon is also looking for ways to avoid resigning, concluding at one point, in classic "*L'Etat, c'est moi*" fashion, "I've got to stay on."

"Nixon's Nixon" cuts deepest when their talk turns to the death toll brought about by their policies in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Chile. Kissel summons all his formidable gifts of nuance to convey the way Nixon simultaneously feels the weight of those deaths and pushes away guilt.

It is in that scene, and later when the two fantasize about a mad geopolitical scenario to save Nixon, that the play drives home how thoroughly they see human beings as fundamentally not much more than chess pieces. It is then that "Nixon's Nixon" — rather like today's daily headlines, come to think of it — forces us to ponder the consequences when men this small wield power this great.

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