

Sir Andrew Davis, the renowned British conductor, passed away peacefully on Saturday, April 20, 2024, surrounded by family after a battle with leukemia.

Maestro Davis's career spanned more than 50 years during which he was the artistic leader at several of the world's most distinguished opera and symphonic institutions, including Lyric Opera of Chicago (Music Director Emeritus; Music Director/Principal Conductor, 2000-2021), the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Conductor Laureate; Chief Conductor, 1989-2000, the longest tenure since that of its founder Sir Adrian Boult), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (Music Director, 1988-2000), Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (Conductor Laureate; Chief Conductor, 2013-2019), and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (Conductor Laureate; Music Director, 1975-1988), where he also served as Interim Artistic Director from 2018 to 2020. In addition, he held the honorary title of Conductor Emeritus from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Maestro Davis led performances at many of the world's most important opera houses, among them the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Bayreuth Festival, and the major companies of Munich, Paris, San Francisco, and Santa Fe. In addition, he appeared with virtually every other internationally prominent orchestra, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, and all the major British orchestras.

Music was the center of Maestro Davis's life from an early age. Born in Ashridge, Hertfordshire, England, he played organ for the parish choir in Watford and sang in the choir at the Watford Grammar School for Boys. He put his meager earnings as a paperboy towards the purchase of a record player and his first record, a 78 rpm disc of Jussi Björling singing the "Flower Song" from *Carmen* and the "Dream Song" from *Manon*. He went on to study piano at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and later the organ with Peter Hurford. It was at the urging of Hurford that he applied for and subsequently won the position of Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, where he was under the tutelage of Sir David Willcocks from 1963 to 1967. From 1966 to 1970 he was pianist, harpsichordist, and organist with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London. In 1965, he began studying conducting with George Hurst and later worked with Franco Ferrara at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. After a successful conducting debut with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1970, Maestro Davis served as Assistant Conductor of both the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow and the Philharmonia Orchestra in London. The following year, he made his North American debut as a guest conductor with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

In 1975, he was named Music Director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra which, under his guidance, acquired an impressive reputation through major tours of North America, Europe, and Asia. In 1982, he helped establish the orchestra's new home at Roy Thomson Hall and advised on the construction of its organ. During his tenure as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Maestro Davis led concerts at the London Proms and on tour to Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, and Europe. In the 2021/22 season, Maestro Davis celebrated 50 years of partnership with the orchestra. He conducted more performances of *The Last Night of the Proms*, the final, celebratory concert of the eight-week Proms season, than any other conductor in recent history.

Maestro Davis brought this tradition to Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, when he was named Chief Conductor in 2013. His tenure there included tours to China and Europe. Maestro Davis continued to have regular performing and recording engagements with these orchestras after his directorships ended.

Opera played a significant role in Maestro Davis's professional and personal life. In 1973, Sir John Pritchard, Music Director at Glyndebourne, invited Maestro Davis to make his operatic conducting debut in a new production of Strauss's *Capriccio*, which launched his operatic career. He met his wife, soprano Gianna Rolandi Davis, in 1984 when he conducted her performances of Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Metropolitan Opera. They married in 1989 and had one son, composer Edward Frazier Davis. In 2000, Maestro Davis was named Principal Conductor and Music Director of Lyric Opera of Chicago. During his 21-year tenure, he led nearly 700 performances of 62 operas by 22 different composers. Among these works were performances of Wagner's *Ring* cycle (2004/05) – considered a professional Everest for opera conductors. He was preparing a new production of the *Ring* in the 2019/20 season, which sadly was never realized in its entirety due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Maestro Davis used the forced shutdown of the pandemic to pursue a different colossal endeavor: an original translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* from Latin into English. "I must say straight away that I do not consider myself a poet," he commented at the time. "But as I guided myself laboriously through the opening pages I realised I was making music. The manipulation of sonorities and rhythms and the search for ways of bringing to life the vividness of Virgil's imagery and at times his great emotional power struck me as remarkably similar to the search that I have been engaged in all my life on the podium." Maestro Davis completed the translation in 2021.

Maestro Davis loved collaborating with young musicians. During his tenure in Toronto, he worked with the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra regularly. He provided the impetus for the founding of the Toronto Children's Chorus when he asked Jean Ashworth Bartle to create a children's chorus to perform regularly in the TSO's season performances. The TCC premiered Maestro Davis's own compositions *Chansons Innocentes* (1984) for children's chorus and orchestra and *Alice* (2003), settings of Lewis Carroll for mezzo-soprano, tenor, and children's chorus. Maestro Davis often worked with the Ensemble of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

As a musician and conductor, Maestro Davis was a generalist for his entire career, and eschewed early advice from Thurston Dart to specialize in a period music, as many of his fellow students of the era at Cambridge did. His tastes and interests were always varied and eclectic – and he was equally intrigued in early music and period performance, as he was by the compositions by his contemporaries. Following in the tradition of English forebears he made a new orchestration version of Handel's *Messiah* – which he recorded with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and was his last public appearance in December with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. At his death was working on orchestrating some of J.S. Bach's organ music.

Maestro Davis's mastery of diverse repertoire is evident in his vast and award-winning discography. Recent recordings include Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, to be released in May 2024; and Stravinsky's Violin Concerto with James Ehnes and the BBC Philharmonic. Maestro Davis's recording of Berg's Violin Concerto/Three Pieces for Orchestra, also with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, includes his orchestrations of Piano Sonata, Op. 1 and Passacaglia. Other titles include the works of Berlioz, Bliss, Elgar (winner of the 2018 Diapason d'Or de l'Année - Musique Symphonique), Finzi, Goossens, Grainger, Delius, Ives, Holst, Handel (nominated for a GRAMMY in 2018 for Best Choral Performance), Massenet (winner of the 2021 JUNO Award for Best Classical Album: Vocal or Choral), Mendelssohn, Stravinsky, Strauss, Vine (winner of the 2022 ARIA Award for Best Classical Album), and York Bowen (nominated for a GRAMMY in 2012 for Best Orchestral Performance). His internationally acclaimed recordings with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus celebrating British composers from Teldec's "The British Line" series was released as a sixteen-CD retrospective collection by Warner Classics. Maestro Davis recorded for Chandos Records, where he was an exclusive artist since 2009.

In 1992, Maestro Davis was created a Commander of the British Empire, and in 1999 he was designated a Knight Bachelor in the New Year Honours List. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. He was the President of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society and Vice-President of the Elgar Society.

Born in 1944, Maestro Davis was the son of Florence Joyce Badminton and Robert James Davis. He is preceded in death by his wife, Gianna Rolandi Davis, and is survived by their son Edward Frazier Davis (Gabi O'Grady Sutton), sister Jill Atkins (David), brothers Martin Davis (Beverly) and Tim Davis (Caroline), cousin Margaret Badminton, brother-in-law Walter Rolandi (Linda), and numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, and grand-nephews.

Services will be private. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial contributions may be made to The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at www.lyricopera.org/ryan-opera-center/support-ryan-opera-center and King's College, Cambridge at <https://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/members-and-friends/support/how-to-give>.