

Remembering Erin Wall

October 21, 2020



The TSO was deeply affected by the death on October 8 of Canadian soprano Erin Wall. She was 44 years old.

*Erin sang many times with the TSO, beginning in 2004, in programs with Conductor Emeritus Peter Oundjian and notably with Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis, including her final TSO concert performance in November 2019 in the title role of Massenet's *Thaïs*.*

Tributes to her, some of which we share with you here, have poured in from TSO musicians, guest artists, staff, and patrons.

*Father-and-daughter TSO musicians **John Rudolph** and **Theresa Rudolph** had known Erin Wall since she was a child.*

“My wife, Kathleen, and I had known Erin from the first year of her life when our families moved to Vancouver—Erin’s parents Mike and Suzanne were our friends and colleagues in the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. Our daughter, Theresa, and Erin’s sister, Shannon, formed a special bond as friends studying Suzuki violin at the Vancouver Academy of Music, where Erin studied piano. The girls were always together.

I remember Erin as a sweet child, always ready with a smile. Even as she became a world-renowned singer, Erin never lost her warm, unassuming personality. In the many times I was fortunate enough to be in the Orchestra accompanying her angelic voice, I always felt special when Erin would say hi from the front of the stage. Often, when I was setting up the percussion section before rehearsal, I would hear this cheerful “Hi, John!”, turn around, and it would be

Erin! And she always had time to see us backstage after another memorable performance, even with many fans waiting.

I remember TSO performances of Mahler Symphony No. 2 when the soloists were placed on stage at the back of the Orchestra, near the percussion section. It was a thrill to be so close to Erin, to hear her magnificent voice, and to play with her as though it were chamber music.”



*Erin Wall sings the title role in Massenet's *Thaïs* with the TSO in November 2019. She is pictured here on stage alongside baritone Joshua Hopkins and TSO Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis.*

“Words fail at times like this. We can only offer prayers and condolences to Mike, Suzanne, Shannon, Erin’s husband, Rob, and children, Julia and Michael, with the knowledge that this beautiful soul who brought happiness to all of us is no longer in pain. Erin was a superb musician in every sense of the word. Her performances never failed to transport her audience beyond this world we struggle in.”

—John Rudolph, TSO Percussion

“Erin and I grew up together in Vancouver, BC, as “symphony brats,” as she used to say. Erin’s sister, Shannon, and I were best friends growing up, and our families spent countless weekends and holidays together throughout our childhoods.

I have always admired Erin on so many levels, but, most of all, I admired her warm, down-to-earth, and bubbly personality. It was so inspiring to get to perform with her when she would sing with the TSO, and she always made time to catch up backstage. She genuinely cared about how I was doing, would ask after my kids, and we would chat about balancing motherhood and performing, about our shared obsession for running, and laugh and joke in a way that left me elevated after seeing her. Even as her career took off, over the years, when our paths would cross, she was always the same authentic, warm person. Erin also communicated these beautiful qualities on stage, both in rehearsals and in performance. She was constantly sharing—with her colleagues and her audience—and it was a gift to make music with her.

I am sure that Erin is now singing with the angels. She is so deeply missed here on earth.”

—**Theresa Rudolph, TSO Assistant Principal Viola**

“I heard and met Erin for the first time at Santa Fe Opera (SFO). This was just before I joined the TSO. After that initial meeting, I had the pleasure of working with her many times at both the TSO and SFO. She always sounded incredible, and had an intensity about her during rehearsals that I loved. She also had a wonderful sense of humour—kind of self-deprecating—which would come out during rehearsals. It showed how much she cared, how human she was, and how willing she was to take chances.

My partner and I were in tears watching her during *Arabella* at the Canadian Opera Company (October 2017), a role she also sang at Santa Fe Opera. The last time I saw her was at the COC during *Elektra* (January/February 2020), and the last time I worked with her was during the concert recordings of *Thais* with the TSO.

She was very transparent about her cancer, and always projected positivity and strength. We will all miss her so much.”

—**Joseph Johnson, TSO Principal Cello**



Brahms's German Requiem, Sep 27–30, 2017, with Russell Braun and Conductor Emeritus Peter Oundjian.

*Erin Wall sang several times over the course of **Conductor Emeritus Peter Oundjian's** tenure as TSO Music Director. They shared the stage for performances of two Mahler symphonies—No. 8 in E-flat Major “Symphony of a Thousand” in the 2011/12 season, and No. 2 in C Minor “Resurrection” in 2014/15—Vaughan Williams’s A Sea Symphony in 2015/16, and Brahms’s German Requiem in fall 2017.*

“Erin
Regal without an ounce of pretension.
Formidable without a hint of intimidation.

A voice that could float or cut and everything in between.
A musician of such talent and flexibility that there was nothing she couldn't do.
Generosity always flowing from her soul.
What a gift and what a loss."

—Peter Oundjian, TSO Conductor Emeritus

"My dear colleague Erin Wall was an incredible force of sublime artistry and integrity. I greatly admired her honesty, her devotion to the craft, and her infectious laughter. I had the privilege of singing with her many times, most recently opposite her extraordinary *Thaïs* last November. She simply SOARED above Roy Thomson Hall when she sang this role. She will be deeply missed."

—Joshua Hopkins, Baritone (Athanaël in *Thaïs*)

"Her performance in *Thaïs* was one of the standouts of my career! She was truly a remarkable woman as well as a phenomenal singer. She will be sorely missed by the entire musical community."

—Wendy Rose, TSO Associate Principal Second Violin

"On the Saturday night of the *Thaïs* performance last November, I was chatting with her parents in the Maestro's Club Lounge. They had flown in for the concert. They told me that, that morning, Erin had been up at the crack of dawn to take one of her kids to a cheerleading tryout at a community arena. They were there for hours in the cold arena. Erin rested in the afternoon and then put on that stunning performance in the evening. It's just so heart-breaking."

—David Hallman, TSO Maestro's Club member

*Erin Wall's association and friendship with **Sir Andrew Davis** predates her relationship with the TSO by several years. They met when Erin launched her professional career in 2001 as a member of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center, where Sir Andrew is Music Director and Principal Conductor. Sir Andrew's wife, Gianna Rolandi, was Erin's singing teacher for nine years.*

*After Erin and her husband, Roberto Mauro, Director of Artistic Planning for the Canadian Opera Company, settled in Canada in 2009, she and Sir Andrew continued to perform together around the world in concerts, operas, and recordings, including several with the TSO—among which Handel's *Messiah* and Massenet's *Thaïs* were recorded for Chandos Records.*



Erin Wall sings Berg's Seven Early Songs, conducted by TSO Conductor Laureate, Sir Andrew Davis, in November 2013.

“With the immensely sad passing of Erin Wall we in the musical world have lost one of the brightest lights in our firmament. The radiance of her personality, which spoke so eloquently through her voice, has blessed us all immeasurably. Her ability to transport us through a soaring phrase of Mozart, Strauss, Britten, Mahler, and so many other composers was completely innate, and will stay with us forever through our memories and the legacy of recordings that she has left. I count myself privileged to have shared so many performances with her over nearly 20 years.

The times my wife, Gianna, and I spent with her were a source of constant joy. She was generous, funny, intuitive, and always a true friend. Our thoughts and love go out to her family at this time. May the gifts she has given us continue to illuminate all our lives.”

—Sir Andrew Davis, TSO Conductor Laureate

The last three years of Erin’s life may have been characterized by the strategies she adopted and the sheer will it took to sing between and during months of cancer treatments, but she described her concerts as “taking a vacation from cancer-world.” She will be greatly missed.

This tribute originally appeared at: <https://www.tso.ca/content/remembering-erin-wall>