

Name _____ Date _____

UK conductor ends life at clinic

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/entertainment/arts_and_culture/8149166.stm

Adapted from BBC News 14.07.2009 © BBC MMIX

Renowned British conductor Sir Edward Thomas Downes, CBE, has died at the age of 85, after travelling to the assisted suicide clinic Dignitas with his wife.

He and his 74-year-old wife Joan, who was terminally ill, chose to end their lives at the Swiss clinic, their family said in a statement. According to the statement, the couple "died peacefully, and under circumstances of their own choosing". Sir Edward had a 40-year relationship with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.

"Our father, who was 85 years old, almost blind and increasingly deaf, had a long, **vigorous** and **distinguished** career as a conductor," his family said. "Our mother, who was 74, started her career as a ballet dancer and **subsequently** worked as a **choreographer** and TV producer, before dedicating the last years of her life to working as our father's personal assistant.

"They both lived life to the full and considered themselves to be **extremely** lucky to have lived such **rewarding** lives, both professionally and personally. After 54 happy years together, they decided to end their own lives rather than continue to **struggle** with serious health problems."

A Metropolitan Police spokesman said their deaths were being **investigated** by Greenwich CID. "It was reported to police on Monday, July 13, that a man and woman from SE3 had died in Switzerland," he said. "We continue to investigate the circumstances of their deaths. No further details at this stage."

Born in Birmingham on 17 June 1924, the world-famous conductor began playing the violin at the age of five. His **pursuit** of conducting was aided by a two-year **scholarship** in Aberdeen, which led him to study with eminent German conductor Hermann Scherchen.

In 1952 he joined the Royal Opera where he remained a company member for 17 years. He became Associate Music Director in 1991 and conducted a huge **repertoire** at Covent Garden for over 50 **consecutive** seasons.

He began his **relationship** with the BBC Philharmonic as Chief Guest Conductor, going to become Principal Conductor from 1980 to 1991 and later Conductor Emeritus. In 1970 he became Music Director of the Australian Opera and conducted the first performance in the Sydney Opera House.

He was Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Orchestra until 1983 and travelled **widely** as a **guest conductor** to opera houses and orchestras all over the world.

Sir Edward was honoured by four music colleges and five universities as well as receiving the Laurence Olivier, Evening Standard, Critics Circle and Royal Philharmonic Society awards.

He became a CBE in 1986 and was knighted in 1991.

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A. Read the article. Now answer these questions.

1. Did the couple have a say in how they died?
2. How long had the couple been together?
3. How was Sir Edward helped in his desire to be a conductor?
4. Who are investigating the deaths?
5. When did Sir Edward leave the Royal Opera House?

B. What do you understand by the following words in the text? Can you write a definition.

a. *choreographer*

b. *pursuit*

c. *scholarship*

d. *repertoire*

e. *guest conductor*

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C. Look at the words in the text that are in **bold**. They are listed on the left below. Can you match them with a word on the right that can replace them in the text.

For example **vigorous** can be replaced by dynamic

vigorous	→	dynamic
distinguished		successive
subsequently		association
extremely		examine
rewarding		eminent
struggle		consequently
investigate		wrestle
consecutive		fulfilling
relationship		ensuing
widely		exceedingly

D. What do you think? Should people be allowed to die "under circumstances of their own choosing"? Use the space below to explain your views.

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Answers

A.

1. Yes – they died “ under circumstances of their own choosing”
2. 54 years
3. A two year scholarship in Aberdeen
4. Greenwich CID
5. In 1969

B.

- a. Someone who sets the steps for a dance or ballet
- b. Great enthusiasm
- c. Award of money towards education
- d. A collection of works/performances
- e. Someone who is invited to conduct from time to time

C.

vigorous	dynamic
distinguished	eminent
subsequently	consequently
extremely	exceedingly
rewarding	fulfilling
struggle	wrestle
investigate	examine
consecutive	successive
relationship	association
widely	extensively