

Celine Dion's Husband Dies After Courageous Cancer Battle

René Angélil, the husband of award-winning Canadian singer Celine Dion, died on Thursday at the age of 73 after a long battle with cancer, Dion announced.

"It's with profound sadness that we are announcing that René Angélil, 73, died this morning at his Las Vegas home after a courageous battle with cancer. The family wishes to mourn in private," her website said. "Other information will be provided in the next few days."

The Canadian entertainment manager, who discovered Dion, 47, when she was 12 years old and drove her career to stardom, married her in 1994 at a lavish wedding in Montreal's Notre Dame Basilica.

The couple have three sons, René-Charles, 14, and 5-year-old twins Nelson and Eddy.

Angélil's illness, first diagnosed in 1999, prompted Dion to put her career on hold in 2014, suspending her Las Vegas residency. Dion said he supported her later return to the stage.

"My condolences to @CelineDion, and to the children, friends and loved ones of René Angélil on his passing," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted.

In his native Montreal, flags were flying at half-staff in honor of Angélil, praised by the city's mayor as a man who "never forgot his roots."

Angélil stepped down as Dion's manager in 2014, turning her career over to a friend of the couple but he remained involved

in business decisions.

U.S. Senator Harry Reid on Nevada said the couple took a “risk on Las Vegas” in 2002 by committing to an extended show contract, a move he said was unprecedented for a star of her caliber at the time.

“It was seen as a risk but it has forever changed the Las Vegas entertainment model as we now know it,” Reid said in a statement.

Dion told Good Morning America in early 2015 that Angélil, who had throat cancer, had to eat with the help of a feeding tube three times a day, and was unable to talk or swallow.

Angélil first met the French-Canadian singer when she was 12 after she sent him a recorded song she had written with her mother.

He agreed to manage Dion in exchange for full control over her career and was said to have mortgaged his home to finance her first album.

When Dion was 18, Angélil instructed the French-speaking singer to remake her image by changing her hair and capping her teeth, and enroll in English school so she could record songs for the U.S. market.

Their marriage was initially opposed by Dion’s mother, not only because of their 26-year age gap but because Angélil had three children from two previous unions, the singer told media in 2013.

“I have to say that for my mom he was not the prince charming – the ideal prince charming. It was very difficult,” Dion told Access in 2013.

The singer said her mother and family of 13 siblings came to approve of Angélil.

“She had no choice. Love won.” {eoa}

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