

BENCH DEDICATION TO MAURICE ROWDON 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014 KENSINGTON GARDENS

Introduction-greeting by Neil Norman

Soldier by Rupert Brooke read by Shura Shivarg

Music - Begin The Beguine played by Bob Sydor

Lou Gardy - To read local Newspaper article about Maurice during the war

Music - Someday I'll Find You by Noel Coward played by Bob Sydor

Susannah Macmillan - I went to a marvellous party by Noel Coward

Tribute by Dash Rowdon

Music - Parole Parole Parole played by Bob Sydor

Camilla Shivarg - Extract from Maurice's novel The Talking Dogs

IF by Rudyard Kipling read by Neil Norman

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Crack open Champagne -Toast to Maurice Rowdon.

Medley to be played at Picnic by Bob Sydor

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Bob - 07 976 982 372

Thank you for coming and sharing in this dedication with me. The Flower Walk was Maurice's and my favorite walk. And before we knew each other—I only got a mere 25 years with Maurice---Kensington Gardens is where Maurice used to come to write whenever the sun graced London. He said he would just pick up his clipboard in his Fulham home and off he went, all the way up to the peace of this park to write. So when at Snob's Crossing new benches were being offered for dedication Susannah and I came out to look and we thought this one a perfect place in which to remember and honor Maurice. Also because of Albert Hall is so near. We all know how much theatre and spectacle was so important to Maurice.

For me Maurice was a bright star thrust down upon the earth from the heavens to spark, inspire, thrill, provoke, prod, madden, amuse, enlighten and with such bursts of original thought and activity in so many domains as to make one dizzy. He was brilliant, far ahead of his time in thought. He was handsome, elegant, witty, modest, filled with humanity and he had marvelous twinkling blues eyes. In short, he was a Renaissance man, a true gentleman.

He came from the working class and won a scholarship to Emanuel School and from there he won another scholarship to Keble at Oxford where he came down with two degrees, one in Modern History and one in Modern Greats. And when he was working toward that scholarship from Petersfield where he and his schoolmates had been evacuated from London to escape the bombardments he was, at 17 years of age, in regular correspondence with the imminent sociologist NORBERT ELIAS whom he later declared to be a strong catalyst in the evolution of his own original and revolutionary thought which he said, with that special Maurice twinkle in the eye, was quite counter to everything Norbert espoused. They remained close friends and debating buddies for many years. Recently a German historian brought me copies of a mass of letters from Maurice to Elias when he was just a boy--the originals are lodged in the German Literary Archives in Mannheim. Frankly, they turned my head. I dare say what he was concerned with as a boy then was quite far from what your usual 17 year old is concerned with today. <sup>of concern</sup> That was far gone from even my generation. In the same breath I must say that his generation, yours Shura, was, for me anyway, the last to be guided by a strong and natural inner integrity and intelligence. In an extensive fascinating collection of letters to and from other thinkers of his time, his agent James Michie and his friends you are simply drawn into the

magnitude of their world, their far-reaching intelligence and vision so far

*removed*

from the parochial. Maurice's first job was given to him when he was a teenager by STEPHEN SPENDER and this was writing for Mass Observation.

Maurice's studies at Oxford were interrupted by the war. He was a Forward Observation Officer in the Italian Campaign. The picture of him I sent out to you was one taken of him in uniform right before he was sent to the Front. I found this after his death and I was so struck by the fact that he was just a boy. But they were mostly all boys, weren't they? And his war experience haunted him. And that gave us his cri du Coeur against war, Sins of Winter in which he attempts to reconcile his feelings of exile ~~from other creatures~~ the war produced in him. After practically living in his archives for some 5 years I'm pretty convinced that it was his war experiences that formed him more than any other, gave him his strong aversion to violence of any nature.

Maurice wrote and published 14 books on many diverse subjects---Italian civilization in general, on Venice, on Umbria, Rome, Tuscany. He wrote on the rise of money and banking, on war and its effects on the nervous system, on animal intelligence. His book on two dogs, Elkie and Belham, who

tapped messages, really who talked through tapping and pronounced rather amazing thoughts on the human was serialized in the Daily Express in the 70s. He was fascinated by genius and wrote on Leonardo da Vinci, Lorenzo de' Medici, Diaghlov, Kokoshka, Mahler among others. He wrote on political figures such as the Borgias, Queen Kristina, Hitler, Christophe the black Haitian king. In his archives I have thus far found some 38 plays. I know he directed several of them both in the West End and in Germany. He mounted his own theatre company, he worked toward mounting the first black theatre company in Britain. I have found a giant collection of poetry, poems pertaining to ~~war and~~ his war experiences, the working class, politics, animal welfare, human cruelty toward animals. I have in his archives found a harrowing novel on animal experimentation. His love of animals was paramount and it must have burned Maurice's soul the writing of this. But Maurice was fearless. He would tackle any subject in an effort to stem violence against any sentient creature—sometimes in a chilling manner and other times in light-hearted fun such as his play entitled Genes in which a researcher befriends his laboratory mice quite convinced they are far more whole and sane than humans are. And of course, Maurice wrote on sexuality and love---every kind of love. In particular he explored the collapse of sexuality between men and women, wrote extensively on this subject

including several quite humorous novels and plays and a most captivating novel on hermaphroditism. In the seventies he was commissioned to do a BBC special based on his non-fiction of 18<sup>th</sup> century decadent Venice in which Casanova featured with all his sexual romplings and to this Maurice linked his fears in regard to the environmental dangers Venice was beginning to face in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More than anything else, Maurice was most concerned about human activity and its effects on the planet. He agonized for us humans, pondered how we had gone wrong to damage our planet, it appears now probably, irreparably. He agonized for all creatures on this planet dependent upon us for their survival. In his archives I have found several chilling Apocalyptic novels dating back to the 1950s.

Very early on, Maurice delved into oriental thought, read the major eastern spiritual masters, Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana, Vivekanda and others, finally chose his guru, began meditating and practicing Yoga—all before he reached the age of 40. He spent long periods in solitude experimenting with various ancient hermetic practices from Sufism and other wisdom paths, including that of fasting and cosmic nourishment, an ancient practice akin to sun-gazing to receive nourishment from the sun's energy, thus eliminating the need to eat. That was all hokus-pokus in the west forty years ago. Today

there is a world wide movement for sun gazing. He wrote newspaper articles on this practice in the seventies. He also delved into pranayama, the breathing disciplines from yoga. From this he was inspired to try out, in its infancy, Rebirthing newly developed by Leonard Orr in the USA. Maurice was so captivated by this hyperventilatory technique that he became a rebirther and after pushing that to its limits in experimentation he decided rebirthing was dangerous if made into a habit. This inspired him to experiment all the more with the breath on his own and gradually he developed his own meticulous breathing system to induce a cellular repose, quite the contrary of the goal of rebirthing. He called this Oxygenesis and he took this to California where he meant to stay a few weeks and stayed for almost a decade. I think in California his exchanging breaths with the now famous gorilla KoKo who 'speaks' through sign language was a deciding factor to stay put. He told me that after exchanging breaths, their way of introducing each to the other, he felt they needed to also change sides of the bars. He needed to be on the inside and she needed to be where he was.

This is where I met Maurice, in San Francisco. I was one of his many clients. It was in 1984. He was 62, a tall, elegant and slim Englishman with a remarkable ease about him and an openness that inspired trust in all who

knew him. With Maurice you could be whomever you were, you could be your authentic self without any hesitation and you knew you were going to be received and seen. How could I not fall for Maurice? He dazzled me . I could see quite clearly when I met him that his concerns did not turn around his personal happiness. Nor did they turn around personal ambition either. He was on another wicket altogether and that was going to lead us down an unusual path. We hadn't been together two months when he started his most important book that was the culmination of all his years of exploration. This was the non-fiction now entitled The Ape of Sorrows that I put out after his death in 2009. I didn't realize back in 1984 how ambitious a project this was for him. He said it was the book for which a writer can wait a lifetime--- and maybe never get. I wasn't quite sure what that was going to mean for him and for us together but one thing for sure--- when he drew me into his magical orbit, rather sparked me into it, I was thrilled and honored and that thrill lasted his entire lifetime and I carry my awe, my love, my respect and deep gratitude for all he was ---to this day. Maurice was <sup>stunning</sup>~~amazing~~, an original. He was brilliant, loving, ~~he was~~ lion-hearted.

I'd like to close this with a poem I found in his collection.

H7

The Blue.

In the silence round you,  
The high dark blue round the earth,  
You can't find a theme if you like, or none;  
If none, then that's the message  
Your eyes will carry, their light the pale light,  
Your touch that of hands  
Left in space, like darkness on darkness,  
With nothing to reflect them.

But if the message you bear  
Is continuous and long, and glows  
And stays in the sky like someone  
Always there but never known, the breeze  
That touches the leaves at night and then  
Is done, the bird that alone in the tree  
Dwells on his theme, the hawk that  
Wheels in the silence above, then the  
Light, like the blue of the sky  
Always there behind the storms and  
Turns of fate, will be in your eyes,  
Though it may not be seen.

Fishing Boats at Fiumicino.

Below the cobbled pier, asleep

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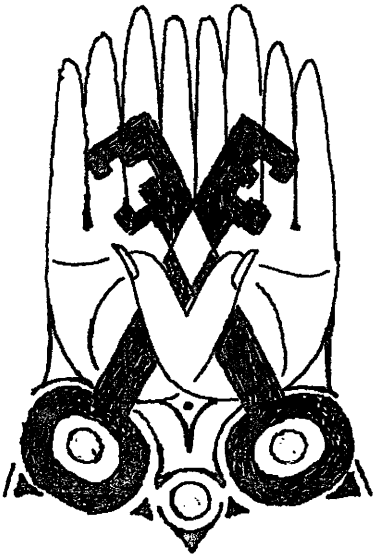
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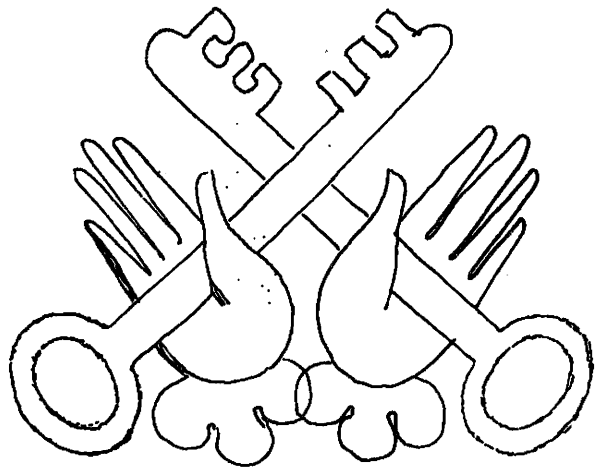
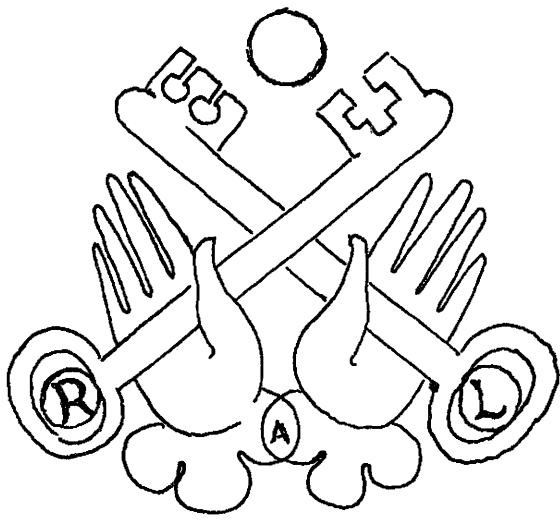
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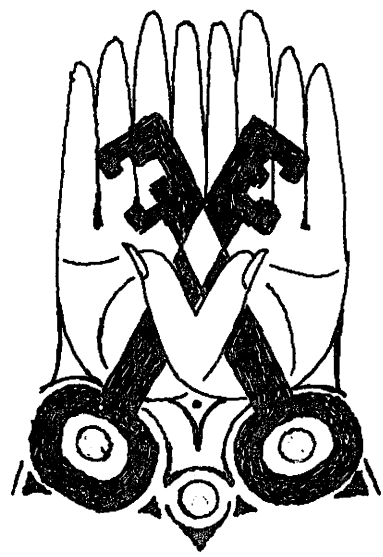
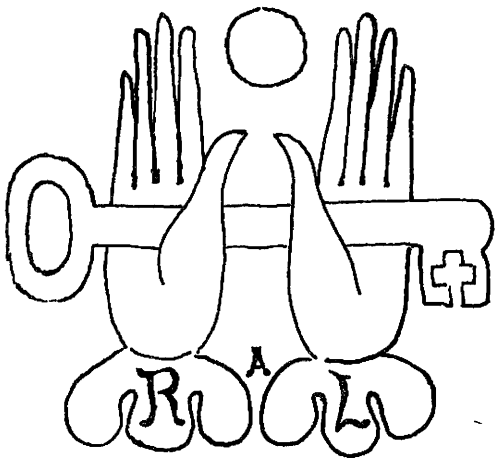
! You free of chaos and confusion for your re-BIRTH!

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Light in your soul for a HAPPY RE-BIRTHDAY

Intensify the light on your Re Birthday



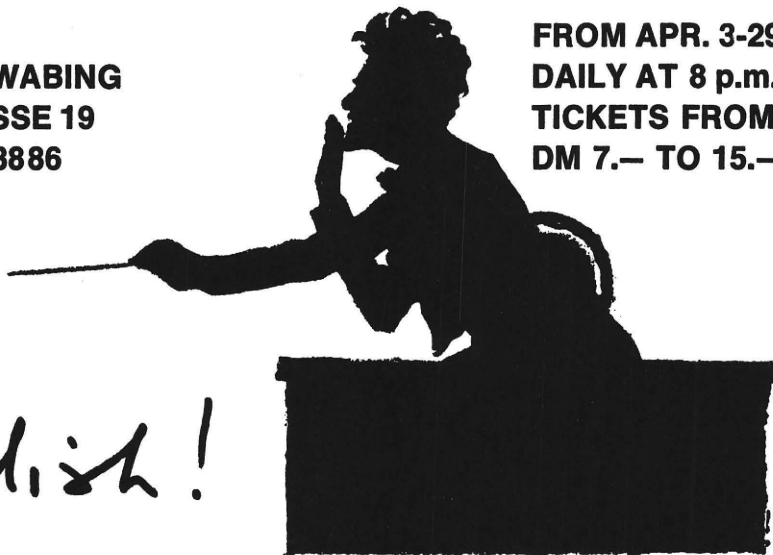
The moon never beams without bringing me dreams of my darling Manolee / You free of chaos and confusion for your re-BIRTH!

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FROM APR. 3-29  
DAILY AT 8 p.m.  
TICKETS FROM  
DM 7.— TO 15.—



In  
English!

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A PLAY BY MAURICE ROWDON

WITH BRENDAN DONNISON + RUTH CAMERON  
AS GUSTAV AS ALMA

DIRECTED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR



SET  
BY  
EGON STRASSER

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