

SERGE GINGER

EAP REGISTRAR

A TRIBUTE

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PRESIDENT

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

Madame Ginger, Serge's Family, distinguished colleagues.

As President of the European Association for Psychotherapy, I bring to you the deepest condolences of the EAP. Although our loss cannot in any way match up to your loss, I represent an international community deeply shaken by the loss of our colleague, Serge.

How much we wish it were not this way. We should not be meeting like this, in this New Year. And yet, if it has to be, it is very good to be here.

For it was only February last year, that the whole EAP spent a full evening celebrating Serge, as he stepped down as Registrar. With great enthusiasm and profound respect and love, delegate after delegate stepped up to the microphone to praise Serge for what he has done for psychotherapy. The whole Board had earlier acclaimed him as Honorary President - and the evening was full of celebration and the honouring of Serge.

But a matter of days later, Serge was taken ill; by the autumn meeting, we heard that his condition was very serious - and a few days after, we heard of his death. Again, message after message echoed around the EAP - but this time, messages of sadness and shock and of real grief.

Serge was Registrar of the EAP for over 10 years. It would be hard to overestimate the importance of what he did in this role. He became Registrar at a difficult time, when the EAP was still unstable and with questions about its credibility. That has changed greatly - and central to the change was the establishment of the European Certificate of Psychotherapy - the responsibility of the Registrar. Serge was fiercely passionate about the necessity for maintaining the highest standards in awarding the ECP - so that the public and national bodies could be certain that an ECP holder was a psychotherapist of high quality of training and of ethics. Beyond the ECP, Serge also developed the system for accrediting training institutes within the EAP - so that their graduates could be awarded the ECP.

Serge was tireless in doing this work - and ruthlessly rigorous. I remember as a new delegate from the UK, being quite terrified when presenting applications for the ECP to Serge. Because, if the paperwork was wrong, or you didn't know what you were talking about, he would be ruthless in exposing failure. More than once, Serge sent me away, like a naughty schoolboy.

Serge worked himself to the limit and beyond; his commitment and his standards pushed him to do a phenomenal amount of work - work which is now bearing much fruit. Indeed, I believe that it was largely Serge's work, which has given the EAP - and psychotherapy - a claim to professional credibility within Europe, which it did not have before. When I look at what was at the centre of the life of the EAP, it is the setting and the holding of standards in the ECP which has given **the** thable place in the EAP. SERGE GINGER WAS, FOR OVER TEN YEARS, THE ROCK ON WHICH THE EAP WAS BUILT.

But just to speak of the mechanics of what Serge did - incredible as that was - is to miss the point. Within the EAP, Serge was honoured as a man of huge wisdom, knowledge, experience - and integrity. When he spoke, people stopped to listen - as his words were always wise, always persuasive. He was also a man full of vitality - the light of life shone bright within him. He was a good friend to us all - though not always an uncritical friend. Once, he told my (English) wife that she didn't speak English correctly! And at the start of our last meeting in Vienna, I met him and shook his hand. "Ah - you British" he said. "You don't know how to say 'Hello'. You shake hands - but you never look people in the eye when you do so! Shake hands - and greet people with the light of your eyes". "Yes, Serge" I said. And I try to do so.

For many of us, Serge was more than a friend - he was a guide and a mentor. One of my personal sadnesses is that he is not with me in the EAP, to guide me in my time as President. Indeed, in June last year, as I started as EAP President, I emailed him, to ask for his advice about how to be President; but he was not well enough to reply.

Or perhaps, in not replying, he has indeed replied.

This personal loss for me, only echoes the loss of the whole European psychotherapy movement. We are deprived of his passion, his commitment, his wisdom, his guidance - his fun. But perhaps Serge would smile at that thought - and tell us to work it out for ourselves.

We will try, Serge. But it will be so much harder, so much bleaker, so much less fun, than when you were amongst us.

Farewell, Serge.