

Michael Lasserson

Cofounder of the European Doctors Orchestra

Michael Lasserson, general practitioner (b 1938; q 1969, Charing Cross Hospital, London), died from metastatic mucosal melanoma on 25 July 2011.

Michael Lasserson was a doctor for whom medicine was as much an art as a science. He was especially passionate about the links between medicine and music. A keen double bass player, in 2004 he cofounded the European Doctors Orchestra, an institution that continues to perform in concert halls throughout Europe. Twice a year, once in London and once elsewhere in the continent, as many as 100 doctors from all over Europe gather for a weekend of “furiously hard rehearsal,” to use Michael’s own words.

Musical ambition

“Musical ambition fuels our efforts and, for three enchanted days, the three horsemen of the apocalypse—audit, facilitation, and management—are banished from our lives as we assault, with suicidal courage, the commanding heights of the repertoire: Brahms and Sibelius symphonies, Mahler and Tchaikovsky,” he said.

“The orchestra embodies the principle of *The Colonel’s Lady and Judy O’Grady*,” Michael said, “The concertmaster is a neurosurgeon whose desk partner has just completed her general practice training; a junior surgical house officer and a consultant colorectal surgeon are joint principal flute; an Austrian psychiatric registrar and a research pharmacologist from Hungary share the first desk of the double basses; consultant gastroenterologists and anaesthetists share desks with general practitioners, and pathologists play alongside retired surgeons.”

Music and medicine had been profoundly linked for Michael all his life, through his father, Ernest, a professional violinist whose change of career saw him become a general practitioner at the dawn of the NHS. Michael’s mother, Doris, was a pianist, and his uncle Sascha was a violinist who had studied in St Petersburg, from whom a whole generation of British professional musicians learnt the Russian school of string playing. In 2006 Michael edited a fine book of tributes to the late Sascha Lasserson, including his own reminiscences. Even after the untimely death of his mother, Michael kept music alive in the family home. While studying dentistry at Guy’s Hospital, London, he would bring student friends home to play chamber music. However, home life was becoming more difficult with the onset of Ernest’s deafness and increasing isolation.

After doing his first jobs as a dentist in the army and at dental hospitals in London, Michael chose to study again, reading medicine at Charing Cross, where he also conducted the student orchestra. This was when he met and married Nadia Grindea, a piano student at the Royal Academy of Music, and he moved in to live above her parents, finding himself in a very different world: the Grindeas were intensely colourful Romanian émigrés, deeply involved in European music and literature, who hosted European-style salons for writers, artists, actors, and musicians, whom Michael often found himself being dragged downstairs to meet.

Michael’s career stabilised in general practice in Mitcham, Surrey, curiously on the same patch as his late brother John, who was also a general practitioner. Michael confided that he swapped his life as a dentist for that of a medical student so that he could become “a maxillofacial hero.” However, once he started his medical training, it rapidly became clear to him how he wanted to care for his patients: not in fact with the knife of a surgeon, but by being with patients in their darkest hour, wherever and whenever that may be. His concept of a doctor was that you are a witness to events in a patient’s life, events that shape and mould and set a lifetime. He weaved events and experiences from the distant past into decisions about what was needed now, understanding, for example, that what his patients at Nightingale House, originally known as the Home for Aged Jews, had experienced decades before in Europe was crucial for their holistic care.

Literacy standards

It was not only the communication between doctor and patient that preoccupied him, it

was also communication between doctors. As editor of *The Writer*, the journal of the Society of Medical Writers, he urged fellow medics to explore and refine their writing skills. He considered this in his article in March 2011 for the *British Journal of General Practice* about the art of writing a referral letter and his concern that literacy standards were dropping (2011;61:232-3). His interest in writing brought him into contact with the GP Writers’ Association, later to become the Society of

Medical Writers, whose journal he went on to edit. Michael’s own great pleasure in letter writing often elicited a delighted response, and several years later he would still be enjoying a correspondence with someone whom he had never met.

From the outpouring of international condolences on the news of his death, it is clear that participants of the European Doctors Orchestra value not just the music making but also the exchange of ideas that takes place every time the orchestra meets. In 2007 Michael served as

president of the general practice with primary healthcare section at the Royal Society of Medicine, and he used his valedictory address to share how music and medicine had informed his career and life. His legendary modesty may have prevented him from acknowledging that many other careers and lives were informed by him. He leaves Nadia and three children.

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See www.europeandoctorsorchestra.com.



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John Pascoe Bound



Former consultant paediatrician Victoria Hospital, Blackpool (b 1920; q University College London 1943), d 12 September 2011.

John Pascoe Bound trained at University College London, where he took his first post and met his future wife, Gwen. During the war John worked in India for the sprue research team. On his return he worked at the North Middlesex Hospital, Hillingdon Hospital, and University College Hospital, before becoming a consultant at the Victoria Hospital in Blackpool, where he worked for 27 years. Newborn babies were his research interest, and he became an expert with worldwide recognition, publishing many papers and journal articles. During his career he was a member of various committees, including the expert group on special care for babies (DHSS 1971) and the academic board of the British Paediatric Association. John leaves two daughters and four grandchildren.

Emma Johnson

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William Lewson Burrowes

Former general practitioner, Corsham (b 1920; q Queens University Belfast 1943; MD, MRCPI), d 17 August 2011.

William Lewson Burrowes joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve after qualifying and served in Palestine, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq for two years. On his return to Belfast he realised that there were few career opportunities in hospital medicine in Northern Ireland and accepted a six week locum post as a general practitioner in Corsham, Wiltshire. Once a partner, he stayed at the practice until retirement in 1975, although he continued locum work and DSS assessments for a further five years. He worked as a clinical

assistant in medicine and neurology at the Royal United Hospital, Bath, from 1951 to 1972. A GP trainer and a deputy police surgeon, he sat on many local committees. He was a president of the Corsham division of St John Ambulance brigade, a serving brother of the order of St John, and a founder member of a volunteer patient transport charity called Link. Predeceased by his wife Nancy, he leaves three children and seven grandchildren.

Peter Burrowes

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Kenneth Fowler Wood

Former consultant surgeon, Leicester Royal Infirmary (b 1923; q Leeds 1946; MD, FRCS, ChM, DSc), d 5 August 2011.

Born in Manchester, Kenneth Fowler Wood ("Ken") studied medicine in Leeds and at Washington Medical School, St Louis, USA, returning with an MD in 1945. As a newly appointed consultant in Leicester in 1960 he introduced a "five day ward" (admit Monday and close Friday) schedule, to abolish the waiting lists for non-urgent surgery. He was keen on postgraduate education and initiated a postgraduate medical centre at Leicester Royal Infirmary, later to become the first postgraduate dean at Leicester University medical school. His devotion to further medical education was recognised by Leicester University, which conferred on him a DSc honorary degree. Predeceased by his wife, Mary, he leaves two daughters, two granddaughters, and partner Betty.

K Aubrey Stewart

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Leslie Ernest Hughes

Former professor of surgery Cardiff (b 1932; q Sydney 1954), died from acute myeloid leukaemia on 3 March 2011.

Born in New South Wales, Leslie Ernest Hughes ("Les") studied and worked in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States before becoming professor of surgery and head of department at the Welsh National School of Medicine in Cardiff from 1971 until his retirement in 1992.

An outstanding general surgeon, he was an innovator with wide ranging research interests and a strong belief in the importance of education as a core component of the work of his department. He developed myelodysplasia at the end of his life but continued to strive to improve the lives of others, organising residents' committees even near the end of his life. He is survived by his wife, Marian; two daughters; a son; and five grandchildren.

Bronwyn R Hughes

David Webster

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Bryan Jones

Former occupational physician North-West Gas, Altrincham (b 1928; q Cardiff 1952), d 10 August 2011.

Bryan Jones was born in Colwyn Bay and obtained a BSc (Wales) in 1949 before qualifying in medicine. He was appointed medical officer to North Western Gas in 1957 and was soon made chief medical officer, a post that he held until his retirement in 1993. During this time he became a fellow of the faculty of occupational health of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. He was particularly interested in the condition of vibration finger and wrote several papers on this topic. Outside his work he was interested in first aid and became a commander of the Order of St John. He leaves his wife, Morwena; two daughters; and five grandchildren.

C D R Pengelly

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William Patrick Lambie



Former general practitioner, Sheffield (b 1924; q Sheffield; MRCS (Eng), LRCP (Lon)), d 10 May 2011.

William Patrick Lambie ("Pat") read medicine at Edinburgh and Sheffield.

He worked as a general practitioner in Sheffield from 1953 until his retirement in 1980. Throughout his career he was involved in medical politics and acted as a medical referee with the Ministry of Health, while serving on several professional and health service committees and tribunals. Pat is perhaps most fondly remembered as the founder and chairman of the deputising service (originally Air Call in the late 1960s). In recognition of his services to the profession Pat was made a fellow of the British Medical Association in 1980. Married for 60 years, Pat leaves his wife, Hazel; six children; 15 grandchildren; and seven great grandchildren.

Hazel Lambie

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Raleigh Barclay Lucas



Emeritus professor of oral pathology (b 1914; q Edinburgh 1937), d 11 October 2011.

After a war posting to India, Raleigh Barclay Lucas trained in general pathology at the Middlesex and then worked at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. In 1949 he was encouraged to apply for a post at the Royal Dental Hospital School of Dental Surgery in London and was appointed professor of oral pathology in 1952. The 1963 textbook *Pathology of Tumours of the Oral Tissues*, was his major contribution. The book is now in its fifth edition and is published as *Lucas's Pathology of Tumours of the Oral Tissues*, authored by several colleagues. Raleigh published other textbooks and continued to work up to his 86th year. Raleigh was predeceased by his son. He leaves Violet, his wife of over 70 years, and a daughter.

Graham J Roberts

Victoria S Lucas

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