

In Memoriam Rodolfo de Bernart (1947-2019)

A Noble Man in Blue and Yellow

A loss has befallen IASA and the world of psychotherapy. At the age of 71, Rodolfo de Bernart, IASA Co-Chair and one of the most important systemic family therapists, passed away.

Rodolfo, MD and specialist in psychiatry, in his early years was trained under the supervision of important therapists, including Eric Fromm, Maurizio Andolfi, Salvador Minuchin and Carl Whitaker. From 1981, he was the founder and the director of the Florence Family Therapy Institute (ITFF) and, in almost half a century of intense clinical and teaching activity, created a web of 35 institutes and schools of family therapy. Supported by the international recognition of colleagues and students, he was also President and Board Member of many European and American associations and institutions for Psychotherapy. In these roles, carried out with authoritativeness, balance and great mediation skills, Rodolfo contributed to the diffusion of psychotherapy outside Europe with the creation of the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP) and the recognition of this in Russia, China and Australia.

His clinical approach was always creative, because the mind of Rodolfo was complex and allowed him to see the problems of patients from different points of view, using a network of meanings and theories. Interested from the beginning in attachment theory and its applications to family therapy, he was trained by Patricia Crittenden and in 2015 joined her as Co-Chair of the International Association for the Study of Attachment. He played a leading role in our association, contributing in a fundamental way to the organization of many clinical

workshops and scientific meetings, in particular to IASA International Conference in Miami (November 2016) and to IASA's 10-Year Celebration (June 2018), which was held in Florence at his institute. We remember with great affection his final talk in Florence, where he discussed so effectively about the past, present and future of the IASA and the new perspectives in the clinical applications of the DMM.

Rodolfo was a friend of mine and I was honored to share workshops, conferences and projects with him. I had the privilege and pleasure of meeting his family, and with him and his wife Daniela we spent many good moments. Rodolfo was really a noble man, not only in the literal sense (he was the descendant of an ancient Florentine family related to the Borgia), but for his qualities as a human being.

In personal relationships and in clinical work, Rodolfo radiated a sense of tranquility and wisdom and could be convincing and effective without showing any particular effort. He was also an elegant man, and he could dress in a very original way with great naturalness and simplicity (I remember him often dressed in a deep blue jacket with yellow trousers, colors he loved).

For me and all of us, he was a precious example of creativity, sensitivity, generosity and intelligence. We are sincerely grateful to Rodolfo for all he did and all that he was. We will miss him very much.

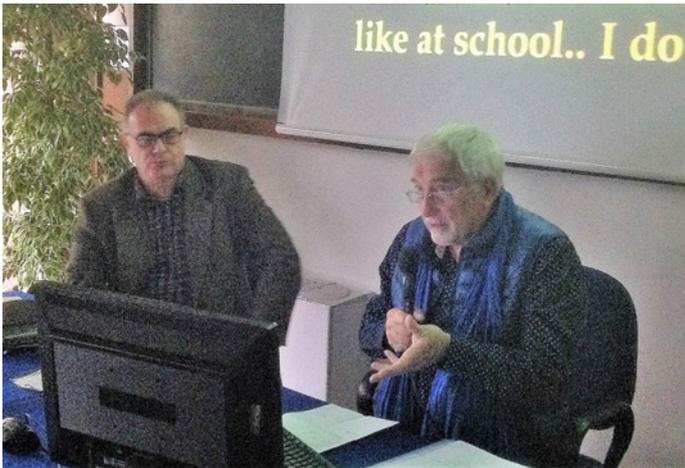
Franco Baldoni, MD, PhD, DMM News Editor

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Patricia M. Crittenden, Clark Baim and Andrea Landini



Rodolfo and Andrea in Bologna

anniversary, which took place in the same room where we were. During the day I recalled and shared with the audience those occasions, when Rodolfo's generosity was brought forward warmly, with a smile. Even when irritated or angry, I never saw him sharp or distant: his full presence was right there, and I think that quality of presence was a sign of his generosity.

In Miami, he and I had shared a presentation about how to make meaning of errors in treatment. We had joked, comparing different therapist roles to famous detectives: I took the role of Lt. Columbo, and gave him the role of Sherlock Holmes.

Remembering Rodolfo

A week ago, I was starting a DMM course at Rodolfo's institute in Firenze. It was time to begin, we were all there. But there was an empty seat in the front row, all the way to the left. It was his seat on other similar occasions, when he had honored me with his presence and attention, occasionally speaking up to point out some ideas that he specially cared about. So, last week I mentioned to the students his absence... and at the same time his presence. Indeed, some of them, who had been students of Rodolfo and were now on the faculty at the institute, agreed that they missed him, and they decided to come to this course after all, even in this moment of grief, just because of how Rodolfo had urged them to, because he felt this set of ideas was an important tool for the next step ahead. So, many of us in the room last week missed him and felt his presence strongly at the same time.



Rodolfo and Andrea in Miami

I now wish I'd found a more fitting character: Rodolfo was indeed very quick, but rather than deductive logic, he preferred imaged intuition. Also, quirky Sherlock was not a refined gentleman like Rodolfo. His elegant image will stay with me as an inspiration.

I am sure it's the same for many others.

Andrea Landini, MD, Director of the Family Relations Institute (FRI)



I went ahead with the teaching, noticing all the times I was quoting him on DMM and family therapy. Those citations were part of my ordinary presentation; they felt special now, honoring his absence and continuing presence. There were many posters in the room, including those for the Miami IASA conference, and the Florence IASA 10th

Rodolfo Had a Special Meaning to Each of Us



Rodolfo and Patricia Crittenden in Florence

Rodolfo had a special meaning to each of us. To me, he was someone who saw the potential in my work long before it was fully developed. Back in the 1990's, when I was still groping forward to complete the basic DMM model, he supported my work. Seeing the potential in others and nurturing it is a special gift and Rodolfo gave that gift freely – to me and to ever so many others. The DMM is richer for his support, and for the students whom he brought to my courses in Firenze. Moreover, the cases from his institute emphasized the place of attachment relationships within families.

A decade or so went by when we had only intermittent contact. Then, as our careers were moving toward their closing, I needed help. IASA needed new leadership. I was the chair and the next generation of leadership wasn't ready.

IASA needed a transitional leader and Rodolfo rose to the occasion. He chaired our first IASA conference in the USA and then, just last June, an IASA conference at his institute in Florence.

That conference welcomed new members of the ever-growing DMM family and was an opportunity of us 'oldies' to celebrate 10 years of IASA. IASA and the DMM will reflect his generosity and wisdom for years to come. In spite of many fond memories, I – and many others – will always miss him.

Patricia Crittenden, PhD, Co-Chair & Founding President of IASA



Rodolfo speaking in Miami

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Rodolfo and Pat in Miami