

## **Obituary: Graham Alexander Maule**

by Neil Cooper, The Herald, 28 January 2020

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/18191416.obituary-graham-maule-revered-iona-community-youth-leader-founder-member-wild-goose-resource-group/>

### **Graham Maule, revered Iona Community youth leader and founder member of the Wild Goose Resource Group**

Page | 1



Liturgist, writer, artist, musician

Born: September 28, 1958

Died, December 29, 2019

Graham Maule, who has died aged 61, was a visionary, whether as youth worker, artist or musician. In the main, and at its most public, with his creative partner John Bell, Maule was co-creator of some of the most powerful, inclusive and socially engaged Christian liturgies across the globe. Throughout all of this, he brought an instinctive desire to reach outwards and bring people into everything he did. Driven by a deceptively quiet dynamism and a willingness to engage with everyone and everything that interested him, Maule fused art, activism and worship into a rich life in which his modesty and generosity of spirit shone through.

Graham Alexander Maule was born in Glasgow, the eldest of four children to Tom and Margaret Maule, and showed artistic inclinations from an early age. This manifested itself first at Glasgow High School, then at Glasgow University's Mackintosh School of Architecture, from which he graduated in 1980. If things had gone according to plan, his life would have been mapped out as precisely as a technical drawing. But three months before sitting his professional examinations, he left architecture, signed on the dole, and moved as volunteer youth worker into what was then a socially degraded area of Glasgow.

This was partly due to a chance meeting with John Bell, then youth co-ordinator for Glasgow Presbytery. It saw the start of a forty-year collaboration in youth work, liturgical innovation, song writing and engagement in action for social justice. From an innovative gathering for teenagers called Last of the Month, Bell and Maule formed a cadre of youth volunteers based in deprived housing areas. Under the aegis of The Iona Community, they formed a worship group of young adults which developed new materials for corporate liturgy and led to the formation of the Wild Goose Worship Group, whose publications are translated and sold world-wide.

Numerous recordings and publications which they co-authored saw them share resources that became a template for a form of liturgy rooted in the everyday experience of the common man and woman. While song was the bedrock of the Group, it's not difficult to recognise in some of the scripted dialogues the influence of poet Tom Leonard and other Glasgow writers introducing a localised demotic into previously rarefied worlds, ruffling feathers as they went.

More than thirty publications produced by the Group and its professional successor, the Wild Goose Resource Group, were illustrated by Maule. While his monochrome images resembled expressionist wood-cuts, in colour, their figurative largesse looked born from the same imaginative universe as Alasdair Gray or the 1980s new wave of Glasgow-sired painters.

In this way, Maule's work tapped into both art history and popular culture, and while he continued to work with the Wild Goose Resource Group, his eventual re-connection with artistic expression in a broader way was inevitable. He enrolled at Leith Art School in Edinburgh, then at the University of Edinburgh, where he gained first an MA, then a Ph.D. For the latter, his thesis *Sacer Ludus* (Sacred Game) explored the relationship between ritual, performance and worship as well as architecture and spirituality. The previous thirty years' experience, it seemed, had been building blocks working towards a much larger philosophy rooted in Maule's faith.

Maule's own practice was a kind of total art that bridged film, sculptural installation and performance to create a form of social sculpture that tapped into the power of a shared communal experience he'd been engaging with his whole life. In this way, Maule's creations shown at home and abroad chimed with a current of socially engaged art rooted in the work of German artist Joseph Beuys and, closer to home, the community-based environmental and public art of David Harding. In this sense, Maule's created environments were both holy and deeply political. This was the case both in its democratic intent and in the fact that it couldn't be monetised and sold off to the highest bidder.

Here again, sound and song were vital parts of Maule's art in an attempt to evoke both an emotional and a physical response as it conjured up sense memories in the minds and bodies of those immersed in the experience. Throughout all this, Maule possessed a deep-rooted and passionate integrity, so art, faith and politics existed as one alongside his personal relationships in a life driven by the power of faith, hope and love.

*Maule is survived by his partner Mel, his mother Margaret, his sisters Aileen and Susan and his brother Stuart.*