

This eulogy was given by Dr. Craig Singleton
at Tiburon Baptist Church on Feb 28, 2010,
at the memorial service of Dr. Max Lyall (1939-2010).

Max Lyall

How do you pay tribute to Max Lyall?

As you can imagine, these past ten days I've been flooded with thoughts about Max. I could use our entire time telling you stories that I've remembered about him—and so could you.



But one capsule keeps coming back to me—it won't let me go. It comes from the title of one of his recordings—it may have been his first. It is a recording of some hymn improvisations at the keyboard. The album (yes album—not CD, or mp3, but vinyl) simply has a picture of Max on the front with the title above his name—*Authentic, Original*.

What a great description of Max. Authentic, Original. I know there are many wonderful words we could use to describe him, but I really like the words Authentic, Original.

Max was authentic. I knew Max well—about as well as anyone could know him. We worked closely together for seventeen years at Golden Gate Seminary and served together at Tiburon for many years. He and I did choral and vocal concerts together. We traveled together doing recital programs and choir tours. And we practiced together for hours, in preparation for these trips.

He was an authentic lover of God and follower of Christ. He used to say that he didn't preach. But his life was a sermon. And his dedication to God flowed beautifully in the way he played, taught, and served.

He was an authentic churchman. He was so faithful to his churches. He served as a deacon at TBC. And he was serious at that task. In fact he called himself deacon for life for Richard and Nenita Anderson. He loved to accompany choirs and play services. And we at Tiburon were so blessed to have him and Beth lead us in our singing. If there were Olympics for church musicians, they would get the gold.

And he served all his churches that way--in his home town of Tonkawa, OK, to Nashville, to Baltimore, to Tiburon, to San Francisco, back to Baltimore and then to OK City. In fact, the reason people knew something was wrong the day he died, was because he wasn't in church on Wednesday night.

He was an authentic family man. He loved his family. He talked about his brothers and sisters and cousins and nieces and nephews and grand nieces and grand nephews and on

and on. He said he could always get a crowd in Oklahoma, because the Lyalls came out in droves to his concerts.

He was an authentic musician. His musical gifts were extraordinary. He was completely at home with the music of Bach, Rachmaninoff, Miles Davis, Henrietta Davis, Cynthia Clawson, and just about any other style of you can name. Like you, I was simply in awe of his creativity and versatility. And add to this, he could sing. I count among my highest joys and privileges, singing duets with Max.

He was an authentic teacher. He loved to teach and students loved to study with him. And his students were so fortunate. You see Max studied with Leon Fleisher, who studied with Artur Schnabel, who studied with Theodor Leschetizky, who studied with Carl Czerny, who studied with Beethoven—six degrees of separation from Beethoven to us.

He was an authentic friend. I don't need to say more about that, because you know.

Max was authentic.

Max was original.

His humor is legend. I hope you were able to hear him do his tribute to the wedding soloist, "I'll be loving you, always." (Max would sing out of tune).

I remember the first time hearing this, a person sitting next to me leaned over and said to me—"does he know he's off?" Or, do you remember this one he did at our church.

"Leprosy, all my fingers falling off of me,
I'm not half the man I used to be.
I believe in leprosy." (to the tune of "Yesterday")

And I will never forget this line at his 50th birthday recital. "I'm at that magical time in which my age, IQ, and waistline intersect."

Anyone here get a card from Max? I couldn't help but wonder—is there a card shop in heaven?

Max had an original wit. He said he had the little known spiritual gift of sarcasm. And shooting barbs back and forth with Max was like getting in a stinking contest with a skunk. You just couldn't win.

He was willing to go anywhere and play for anyone—regardless of the honorarium. One night we drove three hours to sing and play for a group of church young people who were pastored by a friend of Max. At the end they took up a collection and put it in a jar—all coins. Afterward, we stopped at the local Burger King and blew the whole wad.



No one could do what Max could do with hymns. I treasure every time he would take hymn requests from his audiences and weave together two or three or more hymn tune in one seamless improvisation.

Max was original.

Max was authentic.

One more thing—Max was loved. That is why we are here. We all loved him. We all miss him.

We loved him for many reasons, but the main one was that he loved us. And he showed that love. On the day he died he was asked to play at another church musician's funeral—and he accepted. He was booked to come to Tiburon's 50th anniversary celebration this summer, and he was to be here for Beth's 25th anniversary as minister of music at Tiburon, two weeks from today. He loved us and we loved him.

Last spring, Max came to California to sing the Brahms **Requiem** with the Dominican University Winifred Baker Chorale. I will treasure that memory as well. One of the pieces is from Psalm 84.

How lovely is thy dwelling place,

O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, yea, even faints

for the courts of the Lord:

my heart and my flesh cry out

for the living God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:

they will always be praising thee. *Psalm 84:1,2,4*

The authentic and original Max Lyall is there.

Amen.