



Max Lyall, music prof & pianist, dies at 71

By Staff

Feb 22, 2010

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Max Lyall, a professor of music for 25 years at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, was found dead Feb. 18 in his Oklahoma City apartment. He had turned 71 on Valentine's Day.

Lyall, a nationally known pianist, had been an accompanist for The Centurymen from their beginning in 1969 until 2008. The auditioned men's chorus of directors of music in Baptist churches across America and from other countries traveled as musical ambassadors to numerous countries, including China, Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Brazil.

At the time of Lyall's retirement from Golden Gate in 1999, then-seminary President William O. "Bill" Crews, said, "The impact of Dr. Lyall upon the ministry of Golden Gate has been inestimable and will continue through the years in the lives and ministries of his students.

"He is a well-known ambassador and advocate for quality church music and worship in all settings here and abroad."

Lyall served as pianist for several meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention and Baptist World Alliance and was on the committee for the 1991 edition of the Baptist Hymnal. The Southern Baptist Church Music Conference awarded him an honorary life membership in 1992 and the California Southern Baptist Convention presented him with the Duane Barrett Award in 2007 for individuals who have "spent many years in service to Christ in SBC music ministries on the local, state or national level."

The Baptist Messenger newsjournal in his native state of Oklahoma described Lyall, who also performed as a tenor soloist and humorist, as "an extraordinary musical talent" who possessed "a quick wit, an infectious laugh, a lovable spirit and a genuine heart for the work of the Lord."

Lyall spent the early part of his career as assistant editor in the church music department of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) in Nashville, Tenn., and on the music faculty of Belmont University in Nashville. He sang and played for country and gospel recordings and local commercials in Nashville and was a piano and harpsichord soloist with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra and other ensembles.

After his retirement, Lyall served five years as minister of music at Woodbrook Baptist Church, the Baltimore home church of Southern Baptist missions legend Annie Armstrong. Lyall subsequently relocated to Oklahoma City to be near his family, where has been associate minister for music and worship at First Baptist Church.

A native of Tonkawa, Okla., Lyall earned a bachelor's degree in music from Oklahoma Baptist University, a master's in music from the University of Oklahoma and a doctor of musical arts from Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Conservatory of Music. He also studied at Columbia University and the Julliard School

of Music.

His recordings include "Max Lyall on the Piano," a 1968 album of 12 gospel numbers; "Authentic Original," a 1977 album of improvisations of hymn tunes for piano; and "Keyboard Legends," a 1966 album featuring Lyall and three other nationally known pianists.

Lyall also has been visiting professor of church music and concert performer at Baptist seminaries in Brazil, Argentina, Hong Kong and Zambia.

One of his earliest accomplishments in Oklahoma was as pianist at Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center the year he graduated from high school.

In an interview with the Baptist Messenger in 2001, Lyall said he was intimidated and flattered to play at Falls Creek at such a young age. "I was overwhelmed by the crowds of young people, as I still am," he said. "Returning to my Oklahoma roots and Falls Creek continues to be one of my favorite things to do."

Funeral services for Lyall, a lifelong single who is survived by two brothers and a sister, were Monday, Feb. 22, at First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, with burial in Riverview Cemetery in Tonkawa. Copies of a 2003 CD with 18 piano selections by Lyall, titled "It Goes Like It Goes," were given out at the funeral. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to The Legacy at First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

--30--

Compiled from reports by the California Southern Baptist and Oklahoma Baptist Messenger newsjournals.

© Copyright 2010 Baptist Press

Original copy of this story can be found at <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=32350>