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Robert Lyall Conductor



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BIOGRAPHY

Robert Lyall is widely known as a conductor of opera, symphony and ballet and as a creative Artistic Director and producer of opera. Named General Director of New Orleans Opera in 1998 and as Artistic Director of Opera Grand Rapids in Michigan since 1989, Lyall has received frequent recognition for artistic excellence in these and the other positions he has held: Music Director of the Victoria Symphony Orchestra and Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra, General Director of the Knoxville Opera, and Artistic Director of the Mississippi Opera. In addition, Lyall served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Istanbul State Opera in Turkey from 1998-2000.

During 2007 Robert Lyall gained special recognition following the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina on the City of New Orleans. Placido Domingo accepted his invitation to join the Night For New Orleans Gala in March 2006 to re-launch the city's arts seasons. Numerous opera celebrities, such as Denyce Graves, Frederica von Stade, Richard Leech, Paul Groves, Elizabeth Futral, and many others, joined Domingo in this grand affair held in the New Orleans Arena. The Night for New Orleans Gala became the single largest operatic event in the history of New Orleans, the city that boasts the longest operatic heritage on the North American continent (since 1796). As a result of this success, Lyall was recognized with a Creative Achievement Award by the City of New Orleans and the New Orleans Opera received a Special Achievement Award at the Opera America 2007 national conference. In May 2007 Lyall was also elected to the Knoxville Opera Hall of Fame for the role that he played in the development of that organization.

Lyall made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1998 with the New England Symphony and recent European guest appearances include performances of GISELLE for Italy's Arena of Verona, the Bulgarian State Opera's tour of the Netherlands (Verdi's NABUCCO), and his 2002 Russian debut at the Rostov State Musical Theatre with Puccini's MADAMA BUTTERFLY. Lyall's production of MADAMA BUTTERFLY was nominated for Russia's leading arts award, "The Golden Mask," for which he also conducted performances in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2003. Lyall returned to the Rostov State Musical Theatre in June 2006 to conduct MADAMA BUTTERFLY for their 75th Anniversary Festival. For

Robert Lyall

future performances in Russia, Lyall transcribed the English-language score of Thomas Pasatieri's opera THE SEAGULL into the original Russian of Chekov's celebrated play for the opera's Russian premiere. Recent guest engagements include FAUST for the Cleveland Opera (February 2005) and New York's Chautauqua Festival (July 2005), "The Three Maestros" gala concert with the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra (2006), a production of Menotti's THE MEDIUM for Louisiana's Music at Madewood Festival (2007), an upcoming production of DON GIOVANNI for Opera Carolina (2008), and invitations to conduct Hawaii Opera in 2009.

Significant performance highlights for Robert Lyall include a production of Mozart's THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO at Istanbul's Topkopei Palace in honor of the 700th Anniversary of the founding of the Ottoman Empire; the world premiere (Knoxville Opera) of Kenton Coe's opera RACHEL; the world premiere of Thea Musgrave's opera, PONTALBA, commissioned for the 2003 bicentennial celebration of the Louisiana Purchase; a production of the American classic, SUSANNAH, by Carlisle Floyd, broadcast regionally on Public Television; the Russian "Golden Mask" awards; the Arena of Verona (Italy) production of GISELLE; the mounting of Wagner's RING CYCLE with New Orleans Opera (GOTTERDAMMERUNG was postponed due to Katrina); and "Big Easy" Classical Arts Awards for New Orleans Opera productions of Previn's A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (2001), Wagner's DIE WALKURE (2002), Puccini's TURANDOT (2003), Mozart's DON GIOVANNI (2004), Offenbach's THE TALES OF HOFFMANN (2005), and Wagner's SIEGFRIED (2006). In addition, Lyall has enjoyed particular success with "grand" arena productions of Verdi's AIDA and Bizet's CARMEN in both Michigan and Tennessee.

Other notable engagements include the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Opera, Chautauqua Opera Festival, and Akron Opera. Symphonic engagements also include the Las Palmas Symphony, Guadalajara Symphony, Guanajuato Symphony, The New World Symphony, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Prince George Philharmonic, the Ashville Symphony, Corpus Christi Symphony, Knoxville Symphony, Pueblo (CO) Philharmonic, Southeast Kansas Philharmonic, and Victoria Symphony. Lyall has led ballet productions for the Dallas Ballet, Forth Worth Ballet, San Antonio Ballet, Corpus Christi Ballet, Chattanooga Ballet, and the Oak Ridge Ballet.

Robert Lyall

Robert Lyall was a winner of the American Symphony League's National Conducting Auditions and was a Conducting Fellow with that organization during which time he studied with Richard Lert (Orkney Springs/Shenandoah Valley Festival). He later studied in Amsterdam with Kyril Kondrashin, conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic. He was also the recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities ("Performance Practices in the Music of Beethoven") and was recognized by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation for his work in composition. Mr. Lyall studied at the University of North Texas where he earned a Ph.D. in Musicology and Composition and a Master of Music degree in Composition. He has served on the music faculty of the University of Houston and as a guest lecturer at the Instituto Allende in Mexico. He is widely known as a judge for national and international instrumental and vocal competitions and as a lecturer on opera. Lyall has for many years led lecture tours for the International Council for Cultural Exchange to the world's major opera houses and summer festivals of Europe.

Robert Lyall

CURRICULUM VITAE

PRESENT POSITIONS

Conductor

New Orleans Opera Association
General and Artistic Director
(1998 to present)

Opera Grand Rapids

Artistic Director
(1989 to present)

FORMER POSITIONS

General and Artistic Director

Knoxville Opera Company
(1982-1999)

Principal Guest Conductor

Istanbul State Opera
(1998-2000)

Artistic Director

Mississippi Opera
(1995-1999)

Music Director

Victoria Symphony Orchestra (TX)
(1974-1990)

Music Director

Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra (TN)
(1979-1990)

GUEST CONDUCTING

Upcoming: Carolina Opera—Don Giovanni (March, 2008)
Hawaii Opera--(2009)

Cleveland opera:

Faust (2005)

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Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra:

“Three Maestros” Gala Concert (2006)

Arena of Verona (Italy) Philharmonic and Ballet:

Giselle (2001)

Istanbul State Opera:

Don Carlo (1996)

Nabucco (1998)

Abduction from the Seraglio (1999)

Bulgarian State Opera:

Nabucco- tour of The Netherlands (1997)

New World Symphony Orchestra

Gala Concert (1996)

Rostov State Musical Theatre (Russia)

Madama Butterfly (2002/2004/2006)

Music at Madewood Festival

Menotti's *The Medium* (2007)

Carnegie Hall Debut:

New England Sinfonia (1996)

Chautauqua Opera:

Faust (2004)

Falstaff (2001)

Pirates of Penzance (1997)

Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra:

Opera Galas (1999, 2000)

Opera Theatre of St. Louis

Die Fledermaus (1986)

Seattle Opera: *I Am the Way* (1990)

Guadalajara Symphony Orchestra (1985)

Las Palmas Symphony Orchestra (1980)

Guanajuato Symphony Orchestra (1979)

Prince George Philharmonic (1985)

Knoxville Symphony Orchestra (1996)

Victoria Symphony Orchestra (1996)

Asheville Symphony Orchestra (1984)

Pueblo (CO) Philharmonic (1986)

Southeast Kansas Philharmonic (1987)

Akron (OH) Opera Theatre (1993): *The Marriage of Figaro*

Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra:

(with Doc Sevrensen – 1985)

(with Pete Fountain – 1986)

(Bayfest Concerts – 1987, 1988)

Fort Worth Ballet (1986)

Dallas Ballet (1982)

San Antonio Ballet (1981)

Chattanooga Ballet (1981)

Corpus Christi Ballet (1981, 1982, 1983)

Oak Ridge Ballet (1981, 1982, 1983)

Robert Lyall

HONORS

Special Achievement Award in Opera -- awarded by Opera America (2007)

Creative Achievement in Opera – awarded by City of New Orleans (2007)

Election to ‘Hall of Fame’ – Knoxville Opera Company (2007)

“**Big Easy Award**” for Wagner’s *SIEGFRIED* (2006)

“**Big Easy Award**” for Offenbach’s *THE TALES OF HOFFMAN* (2005)

“**Big Easy Award**” for Mozart’s *DON GIOVANNI* (2004)

“**Big Easy Award**” for Puccini’s *TURANDOT* (2003)

”**Big Easy Award**” for Wagner’s *DIE WALKÜRE*--Special Creative Achievement (2002)

“**Big Easy Award**” for Previn’s *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* (2001)

Artistic Merit Award of the Knoxville Arts Council for the world premiere of *RACHEL* (1989)

Individual Artistic Merit Award—Knoxville Arts Council (1986)

American Symphony Orchestra League National Conducting Auditions winner (1978)

ASOL Conducting Fellow (Orkney Springs/Shenandoah Valley Festival) study with Richard Lert (1978)

Woodrow Wilson Fellowship recognition in composition (1968)

Pi Kappa Lambda (National Music honor Society)—elected 1973\

Leadership Knoxville (1991)

EDUCATION, TEACHING AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Ph.D. in Musicology and Composition—University of North Texas (1975)

Master of Music in Composition--University of North Texas (1973)

Study in Amsterdam with Kyril Kondrashin, Conductor, Moscow Philharmonic (1978)

National Endowment for the Humanities study grant--“Performance Practice in the Music of Beethoven” (1980)

Music Faculty, University of Houston (1975-1979)

Guest Lecturer, Instituto Allende--San Miguel, Mexico (1979)

Consultant to the first International Opera Workshop (now the Opava Opera Festival), Czech Republic (1994)

Frequent judge for the Metropolitan Opera Auditions (nationwide), vocal and instrumental competitions (such as the Turkish National Vocal Competition, Corpus Christi International Concerto Competition, Southern Regional Opera Competition), and for fifteen years lecturer for International Council for Cultural Exchange tours to major opera festivals in Italy, Paris, Vienna, Salzburg, Prague, Budapest, Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki, Savonlinna and St. Petersburg, Russia.

Robert Lyall

REPERTOIRE

During the many seasons Robert Lyall served as Music Director of the Victoria Symphony Orchestra (1974-1990) and the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra (1979-1990), he conducted the full body of symphonic, concerto, and choral-orchestral, and ballet “core” repertoire. In addition to this large body of works ranging from Baroque to Contemporary masterworks, the following is a list of major operatic repertoire performed or in preparation:

Bellini: *Norma*

Bernstein: *West Side Story*

Bizet: *Carmen*

Britten: *Peter Grimes*

Noye's Fludde

Kenton Coe: *Rachel* (world premiere)

Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor*

Don Pasquale

L'Elisir d'Amore

Carlisle Floyd: *Susannah*

Of Mice and Men

Gershwin: *Porgy and Bess*

Philip Glass: *The Fall of the House of Usher*

Gounod: *Faust*

Romeo et Juliette

Humperdinck: *Hansel and Gretel*

Janáček: *Jenůfa*

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Lehar: *The Merry Widow*

Leoncavallo: *I Pagliacci*

Mascagni: *Cavalleria rusticana*

Massenet: *Cendrillon*

Menotti: *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

The Medium

Moore: *The Ballad of Baby Doe*

Mozart: *Abduction from the Seraglio*

Così fan tutte

Don Giovanni

The Marriage of Figaro

The Magic Flute

Thea Musgrave: *Pontalba: A Louisiana Legacy* (world premiere)

Nicolai: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Offenbach: *The Tales of Hoffmann*

Thomas Pasatieri: *The Seagull*

Andre Previn: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Puccini: *La Bohème*

Madama Butterfly

Tosca

Manon Lescaut

La Fanciulla del West

Robert Lyall

Turandot

Il Tabarro

Suor Angelica

Gianni Schicchi

Rossini: *Il Barbierie di Siviglia*

Cenerentola

Saint-Saens: *Samson et Dalila*

Strauss, J: *Die Fledermaus*

Strauss, R: *Salome*

Der Rosenkavalier

Sullivan: *The Pirates of Penzance*

H.M.S. Pinafore

Tchaikovsky: *The Queen of Spades*

Eugene Onegin

Verdi: *Aida*

Rigoletto

La Traviata

Il Trovatore

Ballo in maschera

Macbeth

Otello

Don Carlo

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Falstaff

Nabucco

Wagner: *Der Fliegende Holländer*

Lohengrin

Das Rheingold

Die Walküre

Siegfried

Götterdämmerung

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CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Strauss: SALOME

“SALOME SHINES WITH A SINGULAR BRILLIANCE” “At the end of the performance, someone should have been there to hand out small gold statuettes for the excellent production. Members of the Louisiana Philharmonic, under the direction of Robert Lyall, were adept at revealing every instrumental evocation of action and emotion in Strauss’ immensely rich and complicated score.”

The Times Picayune

Verdi: AIDA: “TRULY TRIUMPHAL—LONG-AWAITED ‘AIDA’ DAZZLES THE SENSES”

“A triumphal march for Opera Grand Rapids. A triumphal event for all of Grand Rapids. On Saturday evening Aida inaugurated the Van Andel Arena as a haven for opera, too. Superlative soloists, stalwart musicians and dancers and a chorus, not to mention a technical cast of hundreds, all combined into an extraordinary performance that transformed the Van Andel Arena into something out of a living, breathing Cecil B. DeMille epic. For those who came for the spectacle, there were enough elephants for a three-ring circus, plus one to spare. Yet, the performance under the baton of General Director Robert Lyall never abandoned art for the sake of a dog and pony show. Opera orchestras too often get too little credit, but the Grand Rapids Symphony gave an excellent performance of a very difficult score that kept the musicians on the edges of their seats all evening. A production of this size and scope demands a tremendous amount of resources by many people who have made sacrifices of time and effort. Their contributions made Opera Grand Rapids’ Aida a truly triumphal and unforgettable experience.”

The Grand Rapids Press

Verdi: FALSTAFF “JOYOUS FOR ALL”

“Falstaff is the ultimate musician’s opera, in part because of the many musical references and wry generic commentaries. Jay Lesenger’s imaginative staging does Verdi the admirable service of engaging the visual and dramatic aspects, while the strong performances allow the music to work its more discreet charms. Lesenger’s deft stage direction is matched by excellent singing and conducting, which may even surpass the fine performances of seven years ago when this production was unveiled. The end of Act 2 and the opera’s incomparable fugal finale pose considerable challenges. Conductor Robert Lyall met them handsomely and the orchestra played more securely than they usually do.”

Chautauquan Daily

Stravinsky: THE RITE OF SPRING

“Was it a collective musical biorhythmic high, or was it the sheer challenge of a very demanding program? Whatever the cause, the result last night was one of the best performances ever given by the Victoria Symphony Orchestra. Many a conductor would be content to merely survive Stravinsky’s difficult “The Rite of Spring,” but Robert Lyall nailed it with a truly impressive conducting effort, characteristic of an entire evening during which the musicians abounded with energy and confidence. More than anything, there was poise. It was such that one quickly realized there would be few takers on the seemingly thousands of little and large opportunities for musical error contained in the “Rite.” One thing is certain, the Victoria Symphony has left itself a difficult act to follow.”

The Victoria Advocate

Robert Lyall

Puccini: MADAMA BUTTERFLY

"It came as something of a surprise that the Rostov-na-Donau production of Madama Butterfly was by Yuri Alexandrov, a director long associated with the Kirov, and an American conductor. Robert Lyall, Artistic Director of the opera companies in New Orleans and Grand Rapids, shaped Puccini's score powerfully and had Rostov's orchestra sounding first rate."

International Herald Tribune

"BRAVO TO LYALL AND ALEXANDROV"

"The Rostov State Musical Theatre surprised not only its audience, but itself, too. Madama Butterfly was given birth with such a fine performance that it will be the standard for many years. Not only was the music and the harmony perfect, but also the expressiveness of the cast members. All of this was possible only through the work of Robert Lyall (conductor) and Yuri Alexandrov (stage director); and we can truly say that this is their latest victory." Rostov Journal "Exquisite, exotic colors of the Orient expressed in Puccini's music were brilliantly re-created on the Rostov stage...and every movement on the stage expressed Japanese life in all its details. The music was just as good as the scenic elements. The orchestra under the leadership of Robert Lyall sounded clear, balanced and was played with technical abandon, It is better to say that Lyall leads not just everything in the orchestra pit, but everything you hear."

Kultura Dona

"A conductor as experienced as Lyall didn't just accompany the singers, he implanted this opera's sensitive images in our minds. The orchestra, the chorus and the singers sounded like one unified whole, and that's why the whole premiere was so successful."

Donau Region Gazette "MADAMA BUTTERFLY A TRIUMPH"

"What a triumph. The standing ovation that followed Friday's performance in Devos Performance Hall lasted longer than five minutes, ending only because the curtain fell. The audience would have gone on. Lyall expertly shaped Puccini's arias, and the segue between Act II and Act III, all orchestra all the way, was played wonderfully. This is a production not to be missed."

The Grand Rapids Press

Adam: GISELLE

"L'orchestra, ben diretta da Robert Lyall, ha ricercato quei colori e quelle sfumature che caratterizzano questa partitura di Adam considerata da sempre una della piu fresche ed eleganti composizioni per il balletto." ("The orchestra, well conducted by Robert Lyall, revealed all those colors and that effervescence that characterizes this score of Adam, always considered one of the freshest and most elegant compositions for ballet.")

L'Arena di Verona

Musgrave: PONTALBA (world premiere)

"New Orleans Opera's General Director, Robert Lyall, lavished evident care on the music, eliciting a fluid, gleaming performance from the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra; no detail of Musgrave's orchestration went unremarked, and the chorus sounded immense, polished and flavorful."

Opera News

Robert Lyall

Beethoven: SYMPHONY NO. 9

“For the audience the performance was something akin to a religious experience, and at the conclusion of the evening the orchestra received a lengthy standing ovation. The performance can be described with only one word—Magnificent!”

The Victoria Advocate

“To say that he has vitality, grace and an instinctive feel for the real heartbeat of all the music he conducts is one thing, but when he conducts the Beethoven Ninth without a score, that’s incredible.”

The Oak Ridger

Previn: A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

“Robert Lyall led the Louisiana Philharmonic through the score—performing it even better than Previn himself did in San Francisco.”

The Times Picayune

Orff: CARMINA BURANA

“It happened in the Oak Ridge Auditorium but it could have been Carnegie Hall. The Oak Ridge Chorus and Symphony Orchestra’s performance of Carmina Burana was fantastic. Then, there’s conductor Robert Lyall, who is too good to be true. He walked to the podium at the beginning of this complex concert with his scores in his head rather than in his hands. After the final thrilling thrust of the music, the audience rose to its feet. He is artistically remarkable, never sidetracked by his fanciful treatment of rubatos, phrasing and long swelling crescendos. He was very passionate about Carmina, but never lost sight of shape and rhythm. He is a community treasure.”

The Oak Ridger

Wagner: DAS RHEINGOLD

“Those Wagnerites who want Wagner productions to tell the story—and they are legion—should rush to New Orleans. In that city audiences have been treated to just such stagings, the latest being the Opera Association’s DAS RHEINGOLD. Robert Lyall, who heads the company, drew impressive playing from the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra.”

Wagner Society Newsletter

Wagner: DIE WALKÜRE

“This Walküre had an attractive young cast and ran with a clarity and smoothness that would be the envy of a much larger company. This, the company’s first venture into the RING operas, was obviously a labor of love from General Director, Robert Lyall, who conducted a smooth, crisp performance by the Louisiana Philharmonic. But, highest praise to the company. From this first step, the Crescent City is ready to journey further into the RING.”

Wagner Society Newsletter

“A TO DIE FOR DIE WALKÜRE”

“As they say in certain circles, ‘it was to die for.’ Wagner’s creation is astounding. When rendered as written, the effect is mesmerizing theatrical magic, and in this production, conducted with fierce intensity by the Opera’s General Director, Robert Lyall, and sung unflaggingly by an ensemble of stupendous singers, a full house was transported to their own Valhallas. With this sublime production of Die Walküre now history, the New Orleans

Robert Lyall

Opera continues to present first-class opera, which can only be accomplished by hiring and casting such excellent talent.”

Ambush Magazine

Wagner: SIEGFRIED

”An exuberant and secure Jon Frederick West clearly demonstrated that his acclaimed performance of Siegfried in the Met’s Ring Cycle last spring was no fluke, as he took on the role again for New Orleans Opera. And kudos for their fine playing were also earned by the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra under the able baton of Robert Lyall, who is to be congratulated for bringing this ambitious project to New Orleans. This Siegfried left me eager to return for the company’s Götterdämmerung (penciled in for 2006) and again for the entire cycle.”

Wagner Society Newsletter

Gounod: FAUST

”Much of the magic in this Chautauqua Opera performance emanated from the baton of conductor Robert Lyall. His tempi were lively but never forced and instrumental sonority was clear, secure and often quite distinguished.

Chautauquan Daily

”Robert Lyall conducted a shapely, urgent account of Gounod’s score and drew vivid playing from the Cleveland Opera Orchestra.”

Cleveland Plain Dealer

Dvorak: “NEW WORLD” SYMPHONY

”Lyall conducted in masterly style the celebrated Symphony No. 9 by Dvorak. Lyall has a genius for discovering the essence of a work and because of this every instantly recognizable passage took on fresh appeal. But the thing that I admire most about his conducting is that he just about always inspires a flowing musical line. The music is always going somewhere, and dead spots or rough detours are rarities.”

The Oak Ridger

Puccini: TURANDOT

”Coming on the heels of December’s glorious Die Walküre, expectations were very high, and the New Orleans Opera did not disappoint. The large chorus was beautifully prepared by Carol Rausch, who has built them into a formidable group. The Louisiana Philharmonic played steadily and securely under Robert Lyall. He elicited the wide range of sounds Puccini demands in this score. He allowed the orchestra the power it needed to convey Puccini’s passion. It was a lyrical performance, punctuated by the strong rhythms required in the score. All the elements fell into place in this production and the audience recognized this as it jumped to its collective feet to applaud even before the final notes had sounded and the curtain had descended.”

Opera Archives

“A STUNNING, ELECTRIFYING PERFORMANCE”

”For two decades I have been reviewing the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. I have been moved by many memorable concerts, but nothing has ever struck a spark like the stunning, radiantly alive performance of the opera “Turandot.” The air was charged. Puccini’s rich, breathtaking music was often overwhelmed by applause. The distinguished

Robert Lyall

driving force behind the production was ORSO's conductor, Robert Lyall. His conducting always has tension and dramatic energy, but he was "on" Saturday—never sharper or more impassioned."

The Oak Ridger

"The orchestra, under the direction of Robert Lyall, has never sounded better; whether in the middle of Puccini's dense instrumental passages, in the composer's beautiful, bombastic swells, or in delicately nuanced figures. Most important, Lyall captured Puccini's vivid style. Both the audience and the singers were well served by Lyall's control. When the orchestra sang on its own, whether along with the singers or alone, the passages were suffused with plaintive loveliness."

The Times Picayune

Berlioz: REQUIEM

"When news spread that Lyall would conduct the monumental Berlioz Requiem, it was not a question of whether they could bring it off, but how well they could do it. I am overjoyed to report that the audience sat up in astonishment at the level of greatness coming from all sides of the auditorium. Lyall recognizes what constitutes greatness in musical execution. This brilliant conductor knows what he is doing. I find him mesmeric. Though he is accustomed to conducting without a score, it was nevertheless surprising and super that he would also tackle the colossal and busy Berlioz Requiem. He did and he conquered. Bravo!"

The Oak Ridger

Robert Lyall

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