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## Chorus elevates music to a higher plane

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While contestants on "American Idol" might be praying to a higher power, members of the Lanier Chamber Singers won't need any help from above when they perform this weekend - but they will be singing its praises.

The talented group presents its biannual concert, "The Bible Sings," on Friday and Sunday at Grace Episcopal Church in Gainesville.

Members range from professional musicians and music teachers to lawyers, general contractors and tax accountants who just happen to have a lot of musical training, said director Michelle Roueche, who is also professor of choral music and director of music at Brenau University.

"It's a professional-caliber community choir," she said of the group, which has performed in the area since 1991.

This weekend's program ranges from classical pieces from the Renaissance to "neat contemporary stuff to spirituals that's toe-tapping and knee-slapping," Roueche said, adding that one key element of this ensemble is that it sings acappella.

"Voices are more exposed - that's why people have to be very fine singers in this group ... everybody has to know their part or be singing the right notes or it's exposed," Roueche said. "The real challenge, with this type of literature, is getting a beautiful blend and a beautiful tone and at the same time having beautiful dynamics because we're here to move people."

Gainesville resident BJ Maher, who has been singing with the group for about seven years, said there are a number of members who hold degrees in music. Maher herself has a solid career in singing and also plays the organ at First Presbyterian Church in Gainesville.

"This is one of the finest groups that I have ever sung with, and I've sung with the Westminster choir years ago, I've sung with the Atlanta Symphony Chorus and over the years I have been in the position to sing 35 performances in Carnegie Hall," she said. "So I understand what makes a chorus work, what the standards are, the

potential of a group. So, if we keep going, we will, you know, go up."

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The Lanier Chamber Singers rehearse Tuesday evening in the sanctuary of Grace Episcopal Church as they prepare for their concert this weekend

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By Scott Rogers (The Times) | UPLOADED: March 5, 2008

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