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Tribute helps local disabled musician, teacher

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Jimmy Cutrell has endeared himself to students and colleagues.

Now, they are returning the favor with a concert to benefit the musician and instructor, who suffers from spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal cord.

The Lanier Chamber Singers and other musicians are set to perform starting at 3 p.m. Sunday at Brenau University's Pearce Auditorium.

The 30-voice ensemble, directed by Michelle Roueche, specializes in a cappella literature from the Renaissance and 20th century periods.

Other featured performances include a piano duet by Keith and Priscilla Jefcoat; Mary Alice Swope on cello, Leanne Kinney on piano and Carla Ganyard on violin; a piano and violin duet by Megan and Carla Ganyard; and You Ju Lee on piano.

Also, the youth choirs of Gainesville First United Methodist Church and Gainesville First Presbyterian Church will combine for a performance directed by Robin Parr and Mike Henry.

Ten students will perform - mainly vocalists and dancers (tap and Irish dance) representing elementary, middle and high school and college, said Elena Trear, who is helping coordinate the event.

Trear's daughter was one of Cutrell's students at Preparatory Music Inc. at Brenau.

"We decided we wanted to give him a tribute and also (raise money) to help with his medical expenses," she said.

Cutrell found out about his condition when "he fell ... and was paralyzed immediately" from below his neck down, said Marolyn Cutrell, Jimmy's wife.

Trear said, "We all love him and he has been very kind and generous to many of his students, giving them scholarships throughout the years and making it possible for them to do wonderful things."

Several students have received four-year music scholarships, Trear said.

"It's been through his kindness, encouragement and generosity that a lot of these kids have done well as they go off to college," she said.

She credited Brenau officials for "being very kind in supporting our effort to do this (event) at Brenau."

Keith Jefcoat, director of preparatory music, said he and his wife will play two Edward MacDowell four-hand pieces for piano.

"This benefit concert honors a fine man who has devoted his life and music career to people of all ages," he said. "I am honored to call him my colleague and friend."

Jefcoat said Cutrell is "especially gifted in working with young people of all ages. He has the most incredible way with students and young musicians at church."

The concert has no admission fee, but organizers will accept donations.

"We decided not to charge because a lot of the students come from large families and a lot of the people in the community that I know would love to come have large families," Trear said.

And with the ongoing recession, "for a family to pay admission charges might keep them away."

"I have had the experience that when you do a love offering, those who can give more will give more and (others) will give whatever they can, and I don't want to leave anybody out," Trear said.

Marolyn Cutrell said she and her husband are "very, very grateful" for the concert.

"We have some great friends here in Gainesville," she said.

"... I don't even care if they give anything. We'd just like to have everybody together so we can see them again ... and for Jimmy to get back in the public."

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