

# The Huntsville Times

## Christmas comes early for music fest

**Headliners set for annual concert of traditional songs**

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It's not even the Fourth of July, and Brice Marsh is nearly finished with his Christmas list - his Christmas music list, that is.

Marsh is the artistic director and one of the founders of the annual Festival of Sacred Christmas Music, a concert sparkling with a variety of traditional Christian music. This week, Brice released the list of headliners for this year's fourth annual concert, set for matinee and evening performances Dec. 18.

Mark Lowry, a Bill Gaither Vocal Band baritone known for his quick humor and his heartbreaking anthem, "Mary, Did You Know?" headlines this year's lineup.

The Lamb Family Violin Ensemble, now based in Tuscaloosa, brings three beautiful sisters and their kid brother to the stage at the Von Braun Concert Hall. The group plays with assured fiddling and surprising virtuosity, no matter if they are playing old-time music, classical or pop.

Stan Whitmire, an award-winning pianist for the Bill and Gloria Gaither Homecoming video series, will also be featured, as will LordSong, a gospel ensemble.

The concerts, sponsored by the nonprofit Keep Christmas Alive organization, are designed as a public reminder of the Christian basis for the winter holiday season. Speeches during the concert urge Christians to greet everyone, whether Christian or not, with a hearty "Merry Christmas" during December.

"I've had people tell me they have definitely changed the tenor of things in Huntsville," Brice said by phone this week. "Even at Marshall Space Flight Center, it's much easier to say 'Merry Christmas' because of the Christmas Festival. People are much bolder.

"That makes it worthwhile."