Kleymer Company Jazz Ensemble, Ebony Chorale to highlight Temple Emanu-El concert

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A benefit concert for Temple Emanu-El of Palm Beach, titled Tantz, Samba & Soul, will unite two well-known musical groups, both dedicated to the preservation of great music.

Performing will be Kleymer Company Jazz Ensemble, part of the Kleymer Company Orchestra and the professional ensemble in residence at FAU Libraries led by accordion player and music director Aaron Kula, and the Ebony Chorale of the Palm Beaches.

The chorale has 36 members from the Palm Beaches and was originally a larger group organized as the African American Community Chorus for the dedication of the Kraws Center in 1992.

In Palm Beach, they will perform new arrangements of old standard spirituals, including My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord and Old Time Religion, both by Moses Hogan, and Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord by Undine Smith Moore.

"Our major focus is the preservation of the Negro spiritual," Lawton said, although the group also performs sacred, secular, classics, pop, jazz and gospel. In 2008, it earned the silver trophy at the International Festival of Chorale Music in Verona, Italy.

In addition to singing a cappella, the chorale will perform with the orchestra four songs, including one from George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess.

The group is unique because its singers are not professional by vocation and most of them have been with the group 10-12 years, said Lawton, who recently retired as dean of the music department and director of piano studies at the Dreyfoos School of Arts.

It last performed at Temple Emanu-El for an ecumenical service in the 1990s but have shared the stage with the Kleymer musicians on several occasions since 2004.

The 60-member Kleymer Company Orchestra, founded by Kula 13 years ago, is composed of musicians from the tri-county area.

Kula, who is also director of music collections and performances at Florida Atlantic University Libraries, spent eight months selecting music from the library's music archives to create new compositions and arrangements for the concert. Fourteen new orchestrations, four spirituals and five songs from the KCO music folio will be performed. Kula's compositions fuse contrasting styles to create a hybrid genre that he calls "Afro-Latin-Kleymer-Jazz."

"I take the original music and as a composer and as an orchestrator transform the music and update it with a modern day feel," Kula said.

For example, Kula takes an old-fashioned kleymer style of folk dance called bulgar and plays it with a Latin beat and calls it bongo bulgarita.

If you attend the concert, think dance. "The driving force of the music inspires one's soul to dance as much as feet," Lawton said.

The Tantz, Samba & Soul committee is composed of Dr. Steven Horowitz, Marc Sherman, Jerome Baumeisi and Charles Feldberg.

General admission is $25, and tickets for ages 17 and younger are free with at least one adult ticket purchase. Concertgoers will be invited to a post-concert dessert reception. A silent auction will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Preferred seating, at $125 and $250, as well as premium seating, from $500 to $5,000, will be offered. Tickets purchased prior to Thursday will be mailed; all other tickets will be at the Will Call box office during the evening of the concert. For tickets, call 832-0034. For more on the orchestra, visit www.kleymercompany.com.