

# FEATURES

## Guitarist devoted to music ministry

### Musician performs at Flat Creek

BY DANA TOWNS  
dtowns@gainesvilletimes.com

Rodrigo Rodriguez, a worship guitarist who has performed in venues throughout the world, including Carnegie Hall in the United States, held an intimate concert July 13 at Flat Creek Baptist Church.

Chuck Bridwell, minister of music at Flat Creek, planned to bring Rodriguez to perform shortly after joining church's ministry in May.

"The last two years we've been in Sandy Springs (Ga.) at a church, and I brought him to Sandy Springs," Bridwell said. "When I became the music minister here, one of the first things I wanted to do was bring Rodrigo Rodriguez to Flat Creek Baptist Church because he's been a blessing everywhere he's been."

Born in Quito, Ecuador, Rodriguez became interested in music at a young age after hearing his uncle and father playing guitar.

"That was my first opportunity that I had to connect to the guitar," Rodriguez said.

He began playing at 9 years old with training from his uncle. Rodriguez recorded his first LP when he was 12 and at 16 went to Spain to seek proper training.

Since then, Rodriguez has performed in France, England, Damascus, Syria, Venezuela, Spain, Malaysia, Cuba, Canada and the United States. In 1986, he taught classical guitar at Eastfield College in Mesquite, Texas.

In 1992, Rodriguez decided to change his profession from entertainer to full-time worship guitarist after "finding a new direction" in his life.

"Music was created for divine purposes. I use music to share that God is important in people's lives," Rodriguez said. "I'm just trying to expose my identity as an artist. I want to expose the amazing opportunity in my life, to be used by God."

Rodriguez has recorded 16 CD's, including Inspired by You, The Prayer and My Father's World, which was recorded with the City of Prague Philharmonic orchestra. The professional symphony orchestra, founded 60 years ago, is known for playing music for film and animation productions made at Prague Studios.

"I've heard him play hundreds of songs and every one of them has been absolutely wonderful," Bridwell said. "I'm excited for our congregation to hear him for the first time, because I know



Dana Towns | The Paper

Guitarist Rodrigo Rodriguez spoke of his life and relationship with God between musical selections during a performance at Flat Creek Baptist Church.

'I use music to share that God is important in people's lives ... I want to expose the amazing opportunity in my life, to be used by God.'

**Rodrigo Rodriguez**  
classical guitarist

what a wonderful time, not only of great music, but of great worship, that we are going to have tonight."

In addition to performing, Rodriguez uses the online communication program, Skype, to help aspiring musicians worldwide hone their craft.

"Music is a very interesting tool," he said. "I would love to share the gift to different people all around the world and take advantage of the technology for those who want to learn."

"Polish your gift," Rodriguez continued. "God gave you the gift. You polish it,

make it shiny, and then give it to the Lord. He will take you to the top of the mountain."

Though Rodriguez has a full schedule the remainder of the year, he said he has no firm plans when it comes to his career and the future.

"I have no plans, my plans fail," he said. "That's the wonderful thing when you put your life in God's hands. I allow for God to make my plans."

Rodriguez is scheduled to perform in South Carolina later this month before traveling to Hawaii and Singapore in August.



For The Paper

Classical guitarist Rodrigo Rodriguez has toured worldwide since age 15. He now devotes his passion for music to a melodic ministry.



Dana Towns | The Paper

Ryan Kyranakis, co-owner and manager of Runner's Fit, shares his personal pick in a running shoe.

## Local expert offers tips to new runners

BY DANA TOWNS  
AND LISA LASKEY  
dtowns@gainesvilletimes.com  
llaskey@gainesvilletimes.com

Jogging entered the American lexicon in the early 19th century and was used to condition athletes for other sports. But, ask any cave dweller in search of dinner, and it has been around since time began.

In the 1960s, University of Oregon track coach Bill Bowerman became the leisure past-time and sport's greatest champion. Today, nearly 36 million Americans participate in a running activity, according to statistics from the U.S. National Library of Medicine, with the goal of many participating in at least one road race.

Ryan Kyranakis, co-owner and manager of Runner's Fit, a runner's specialty store located in Flowery Branch, has seen an increase locally

in those interested in running. And, he's also noticed a greater number of inexperienced runners looking to train for races.

"We opened seven years ago and at the time there was one race that I can think of," said Kyranakis. "Now there are more than I can count. There are several at the downtown Flowery Branch course; there are several at the high school. Participation has grown throughout the years."

Runner's Fit hosts "Monday night track" workouts, allowing people of all ages and abilities to train together and gain running experience. "You have to find a good plan," said Kyranakis. The group meets on the Flowery Branch High School track at 7:15 p.m. The free workout is open to all.

Kyranakis routinely answers questions from

Please SEE RUNNERS, 4B