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Tony Brown, a Hesston College artist-in-residence, is planning a two-week tour of war-torn Uganda this summer, but will need financial help to make the trip.

College's Brown seeks support for June singing tour in Uganda

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Internationally-acclaimed baritone Tony Brown hopes to bring hope and promote peace in Uganda when he embarks on a singing tour in the

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northern part of that country in June.

Brown, artist-in-residence at Hesston College, will travel and sing in the northern district of Pader and the eastern district of Jinja from June 12 to 26 at the request of Friends of Orphans.

The trip also includes plans to lay the first stone of a singing school to be named after Brown.

FRO is a registered non-governmental organization that addresses the urgent and long-term psycho-social needs of children, former abductees and child soldiers, women, and orphans affected by the 19 years of conflict in northern Uganda.

Brown said his first contacts with FRO director Anywar Ricky Richard occurred last February.

“He didn’t say how he got my name; maybe from my Web site,” Brown said. “He knew about my work in some of the other countries dealing with conflict, like Kosovo (2002) and Northern Ireland (2003 and 2005).”

“Richard invited me to come, but also made it clear that he didn’t have the means to bring me to Uganda,” Brown added. “So I investigated further with some people and told Richard in May that I could come for two weeks and would work to secure the funds.”

“It’s mainly travel costs for me and piano accompanist Ken Rodgers, also a Hesston College faculty member.”

Brown said individuals can send contributions for trip expenses to Hesston College, which has set up a fund for this trip. Donors will receive a tax-deductible contribution receipt.

Brown gave fund-raising concerts in the eastern United States March 2 to 4. Brown will also give a fund-raising concert this week in Sarasota, Fla.

“I’ve never been to Uganda, so I’m psyched to go,” Brown said. “But I think it’s going to be sobering when I’m connecting with so much pain in a place that has been besieged.”

“One of the things music does is help people connect across divides of race, nationality, religion, and culture,” he added.

“We find in those meetings our common humanity and sometimes we find a new way to think about each other.”

“That will happen here, but it’s a serious venture,” Brown said. “Hopefully, I’ll be able to bring some hope and goodwill, and promote peace between the factions in the region.”

FRO was founded in 1999 and is now governed and managed mostly by

former child soldiers and former abductees from Uganda's 19-year war.

Richard, one of those former child soldiers, now has a business administration degree from the University of Makerere, located in Kampala City in central Uganda.

FRO administers education and vocational training programs for children, orphans, former child soldiers and women in the IDP camp in Pader district, where 2,400 people are crammed into a small area.

In addition, FRO provides HIV/AIDS education in other parts of Pader District.

FRO's vision is a restored northern Uganda where communities affected by conflict achieve their full potential.

That vision includes the Anthony Brown Baritone School, and Brown will lay the foundation stone during his tour.

The school educates formerly abducted child mothers and former child soldiers, orphans of HIV/AIDS and war, and vulnerable children.

"I was shocked when I heard that," Brown said of the plans to name a school after him.

"But it's a nice gesture on their part and I am honored by their generosity."

Richard plans to have Brown visit FRO projects in Jinja and Pader districts and the most affected IDP camps in northern Uganda.

He will visit, perform concerts, and pray with children at night shelters in Gulu and Kitgum districts in northern Uganda. The shelters house mostly children who fear abduction.

Brown will perform concerts in churches and community centers in Kampala. And he will be hosted on a local television station in Uganda to preach peace to the people of Uganda.

"Friends of Orphans believes that Brown's coming to Uganda, a country which has been devastated by mass killings and war since its independence in 1962, is important," wrote Richard.

"His coming, concerts, and speeches will help in peace building, reconciliation, unity, and love among Ugandans."

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