

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY CHOIR

Dr. Eric Conway, Director

The Morgan State University Choir is one of the nation's most prestigious university choral ensembles. The choral forces of this critically acclaimed choir include The University Choir, which is over 120 voices strong, and The Morgan Singers – approximately 40 voices. While classical, Gospel, and contemporary popular music comprise the choir's repertoire; the choir is noted for its emphasis on preserving the heritage of the spiritual, especially in the historic practices of performance.

The Morgan State University Choir has performed for audiences throughout the United States and all over the world – including Virgin Islands, Canary Islands, Canada, Africa, Asia and Europe. One of the choir's most historic moments was performing under the baton of Robert Shaw, conducting the Orchestra of St. Lukes and joined by Jessye Norman and others in Carnegie Hall's One Hundredth Birthday Tribute to Marian Anderson. A major milestone happened 1996-1997 season when the "Silver Anniversary" concert was broadcast throughout the state of Maryland. The concert won three Emmy Awards for Maryland Public Television (MPT). MPT continues to air this hallmark performance during sections of their membership drives.

Known for their consistency of excellent performances, the choir probably performs with more major orchestras of the United States than any other university choir. During the 1999-2000 season, the choir was featured with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in a (then) newly commissioned work for the millennium, "All Rise," by Wynton Marsalis. The choir reprised "All Rise" in Prague, in October 2000 and recorded it with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra; the Los Angeles Philharmonic; and in 2003, the choir recorded it in Paris. In December 2003 the choir performed "African Portraits" with the Baltimore Symphony, at the Gala Concert for the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture. In its May 2004 issue, *Reader's Digest* named the Morgan State University Choir "the Best College Choir in the U.S." in its list of "America's 100 Best."

In February 2005, the choir performed at the invitation of Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice for the State Department's annual African American History Month Celebration. The Choir sang later that year for the service honoring Rosa Parks, who lied in state at our nation's Capitol Rotunda. In 2006, the choir performed in a televised benefit for victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans to critical acclaim; performed two concerts in Prague, Czech Republic, with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. In March 2007, the choir sang at the Kennedy Center for a Living Jazz Legends Concert performing with jazz icons: Nancy Wilson, Billy Taylor, Regina Carter, Jon Faddis, and T.S. Monk. In August 2007, US Ambassador Bridgewater to Ghana invited the choir to help that country celebrate its 50th year of Independence.

In April 2008, the Morgan State University Choir sang at Carnegie Hall performing Faure's *Requiem Mass* with Bobby McFerrin and the Orchestra of St. Lukes. October, of the same year, the choir returned to Carnegie Hall, with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. The BSO featured a seldom-performed piece - Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* - to celebrate his 90th birthday. In 2009, the recording of *Mass* was released and subsequently heralded by critics as the definitive recording of the work! As a result of this acclaim, the recording was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Classical Album of 2009. Also, in 2009, the choir traveled to: Bogotá and Medellín, Colombia in South America at the invitation of the US Ambassador to Colombia; and in July 2009, the choir traveled to South Africa to sing in an international choral festival. One of the highlights of the tour was singing Happy Birthday to President Nelson Mandela for his 90th birthday celebration on national South African television.

In May 2010, the choir received acclaim for its performance with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Kathleen Battle on a program entitled *The Underground Railroad*. A week later, the choir was off to a ten-day, five-city tour of China. The Chinese tour included two concerts at the Shanghai Expo – The World's Fair, performing an eclectic program comprised of music from Beethoven to Michael Jackson. In October 2010, the choir travelled to St. Petersburg, Russia to participate in a Conservatory-week Festival at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, one of only three U.S. universities to participate. In May of 2011, Maryland Public Television released a new DVD of the choir in high definition, simply entitled: *Lift Every Heart*. Also in 2011, the choir travelled to Italy, which included performances at the Vatican in Rome.

In August 2011, the choir sang for an event celebrating the unveiling of the Martin Luther King Memorial in Washington, DC. On September 11, 2011, the choir sang for the unveiling of the Maryland State 911 Memorial in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. In November, the choir sang with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in a concert at Carnegie Hall, singing Honegger's Joan of Arc at the Stake. In April of 2012, the choir premiered a symphony, "*Affirmations*," by Williams Benfield with the acclaimed group, Sweet Honey in the Rock and the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center. In 2012, the choir toured Brazil. and toured Jamaica--invited by of US Ambassador to Jamaica, Pamela Bridgewater In 2013, the choir performed Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the BSO. In June 2013, the choir traveled to their farthest destination in Australia to share their music!

During the summer of 2014, the choir traveled to Qatar, Oman, and United Arab Emirates with performances in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. During their Eastern European tour, the choir travelled to Belarus. In September, the choir sang for the 200th anniversary of the National Anthem at Fort McHenry. In April 2015 at the request of First Lady, Michelle Obama, the choir was part of a televised performance at The White House—before President and Mrs. Obama—a PBS Special entitled *Music in the Gospel Tradition*. The choir sang background for Aretha Franklin, Shirley Caesar and Tamela Mann. They also performed at the installation of Attorney General, Loretta Lynch. And in November 2015, the choir performed a world premiere with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, the world premiere of *One Land, One River, One People*, by renowned composer Hannibal Lokumbe. In 2016, the choir performed a semi-staged performance of *Porgy and Bess* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra to rave reviews. In 2016, the choir toured Cuba, where they had concerts in Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, and Havana! In summer of 2017, the choir toured Spain and Portugal! In September 2017, the Morgan State University choir sang for the funeral of Dick Gregory in Washington, DC. And the choir performed the Sacred Concerts of Duke Ellington with the Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra at the Nation Museum of Natural History.

During the summer of 2018 the choir traveled to Slovakia, Germany, and Austria, where they sang in St. Marks Cathedral (one of Vienna's most famous cathedrals and performed in Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*, with the Peabody Symphony, under the baton of Maestra Marin Alsop. In 2019, they performed with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra a world premier by composer, Hannibal Lokumbe, performed *Porgy and Bess* with the BSO under Maestra Alsop. The Choir also toured England and Scotland, including a performance in Windsor Castle. In May 2022 the choir toured Peru and Ecuador—a tour that included the Galapagos Islands. Other 2022 highlights include performing at the Monterey Jazz Festival and singing the National Anthem for a Baltimore Ravens Sunday Night Football game. Most recently, the Choir performed at the Christmas lighting at the Washington Monument at Baltimore's Mt. Vernon Place and the Choir performed with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society at the Baltimore Basilica. In May 2023, the Choir will travel to West Africa to perform in Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, and Togo.

The Morgan State University Choir continues to share its musical gifts on many grand stages all over the world – with numerous dignitaries and celebrated performers – making them cultural ambassadors for Morgan State University, the City of Baltimore, the State of Maryland and the United States. Please visit www.msuchoir.org for additional information.