



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
MARCH 13, 2008

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TOP CHORAL ENSEMBLE VISITS THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
--Morgan State University Choir to perform on St. Thomas and St. Croix--

Reichhold Center for the Arts and the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts welcome the return of Morgan State University Choir to the Virgin Islands. The Choir performs at the Island Center on St. Croix Friday, March 28, 2008 and at Reichhold Center Saturday, March 29. Both shows begin at 8 p.m.

The choir's powerful performances celebrate various musical traditions. In one concert, the talented students can weave their voices around the reverent sounds of spirituals, switch up to the subdued power of classical, or shout and handclap to the liveliest in contemporary music.

During Reichhold Center's 1983-1984 season, Morgan State University Choir performed alongside the then College of the Virgin Islands Choir. This year, choirs from Ivanna Eudora Kean and from Charlotte Amalie high schools will perform with the Morgan State choir at Reichhold Center. Monet Davis leads the 20-member group from Ivanna Eudora Kean, while Francis Callwood leads about 12 student singers from Charlotte Amalie. The three choirs sing together on "*Great is thy Faithfulness*."

The 40-member MSU student ensemble, part of a larger 140-member mass choir, will perform several other songs from their repertoire, which includes classical, contemporary, and gospel selections. The Choir has also become world-renowned for their renditions of spirituals. On the line up for their Virgin Islands performances are the spirituals "*Swing Low*" and "*Rock-A-My-Soul*." Morgan State University Choir is also performing selections from George Gershwin's "*Porgy and Bess*," including "*I Got Plenty of Nothing*," "*Summertime*," and "*Oh Lawd, I'm on my Way*."

Morgan State choir recently performed at Strathmore Hall, just outside Washington, DC, in the program "Free to Sing: The story of the first African-American Opera Company." The concert featured Virgin Islands native Gylchris Sprauve. After their Virgin Islands tour, the choristers will join conductor Bobby McFerrin and St. Luke's Orchestra of New York for a concert at Carnegie Hall. Performances are also set for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Smithsonian Museum.

The Choir accompanies and collaborates with many notables in the music world. They performed with the New York Philharmonic on Wynton Marsalis' commissioned piece "All Rise." The students have also sang alongside and/or recorded with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the National Symphony.

Morgan State University Choir has had a steady rise to the top since 1970, when the late Nathan Carter took over as director. In 2004, the Reader's Digest magazine voted the Choir "One of the best in the nation." However, 2004 also marked a transition for the Choir with Carter's death in July of that year. Carter, a graduate of the Hampton Institute, the Juilliard School of Music and the Peabody Conservatory of Music, took the Choir to new heights. During his 34-year tenure, the students sang before several presidents and dignitaries, including the late Pope John Paul II.

Carter also took his students across the world, playing venues in Russia, Canary Islands and the Bahamas. That tradition continues with current director Eric Conway. In 2006, Morgan State University Choir traveled to Prague, Czech Republic to perform with maestro Paul Freeman. And in 2007, the students got rave reviews for their tour across Ghana in celebration of the nation's 50 years of independence.

Support for Morgan State University's performance in the Virgin Islands came from Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. Reichhold Center's season sponsors are: First Bank, First Insurance, Marriott Frenchman's Reef Resort, Tropical Shipping, the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts and Innovative Cable TV.

Tickets are \$25 and \$15 on St. Croix and are available at Alliance Clothing, Urban Threadz and UVI Bookstore. On St. Thomas, tickets are \$ 25, \$18 and \$15 and are available at Modern Music, UVI Bookstore, V.I. Bridal & Tuxedo, Urban Threadz, Essentric Shoe Boutique, Island Video (Nisky), Home Again (Red Hook) and the Reichhold Center Box Office at 693-1559.

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