MSU's big night at the opera

By Elizabeth M. Oliver

The East Coast premiere of the opera, "The Voyage of Edgar Allen Poe" has as a highlight full participation of the Morgan State University Choir with Dr. Nathan Carter, director, giving a brilliant performance, live, on stage at the Morris Mechanic Theatre.

Opening night, June 6, witnessed a colorful crowd present in formal attire.

Tonight (Friday) is Morgan University night, a sellout, with MSU president, Dr. and Mrs. Andrew Billingsley official hosts.

Curtain time is 8 p.m. at the downtown theatre.

The Baltimore Center for the Performing Arts, with Peter Lawrence producer, brought the opera to Baltimore, the city where Poe died and describes it as "the joint effort of the town's cultural, educational and business community." The three hour opera not only includes the Morgan group in full costume of the year 1849 but also features the Minnesota Opera Company and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

"The two-act portrayal of the last days of Edgar Allen Poe is by composer Dominick Argento, formerly Hampton Institute, Va. music teacher and a Baltimore Peabody Institute graduate. Argento is presently professor of Composition and History of Opera at the University of Minnesota.

"Edgar Allen Poe was born in January, 1809 and was found dead in a gutter in Baltimore in October, 1849.

He was buried in Westminster Churchyard in the 500 block West Fayette St. in Baltimore after a literary career equal to none other established him as a man who dreamed what no mortal ever dared dream before.

Poe lived in the two and a half story row house on Amity St. in the heart of the inner city of Baltimore from 1832 to 1835 and courted his cousin, Virginia Clemm there and wrote his only play, "Politian."

He is recorded in history

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By Dominique and Rene de Lerma
Special to the AFRO

(Mr. de Lerma is a distinguished music scholar with extensive expertise in classical and other forms of black music. He is professor of music and coordinator of graduate studies in music at Morgan State University).

An audience, both attentive and appreciative, greeted the opening of "The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe" at the Mechanic Theatre on Monday evening. This opera by Dominick Argento featured the Morgan State University Chorus, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and various personnel from the original Minnesota production.

The reason the opera was performed in Baltimore, quite apart from its worth, rests in the fact that Poe and Argento were Baltimoreans.

It is customary in most operas that the chorus comes in for the grand finale and crowd scenes, that it sings a support behind the leads and that it contains no one with either dramatic talent or direction.

Argento's opera treats the chorus differently: it is essential to the music and the plot. As for the acting of the Morgantes, it was exemplary and quite professional.

The work does not call for a blackchorus. Morgan was not selected for this reason. Had Argento and librettist Charles Nolte cast the group for Afro-Americans (the scene takes place in 1849), it would have been a far different story.

Morgan's music maestro, Nathan Carter, is allied with many other leaders in music in his firm allegiance to the traditions and roots of the culture. He has, in fact, placed Morgan's chorus as the model choir of the distinguished choirs of Fisk, Tuskegee, Hampton and others. But he also knows he and his singers are ready to tackle the whole world of music. There was then a great tribute paid to Morgan when it was selected to participate in this production on the basis of

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(AFRO staff photo by Robin McGinty)
DONNA STEWART—"I fought and I won but the fight is not over yet."

—Graduation

(FROM PAGE ONE)

for the commencement.

"There were six of them and they all ganged up on me saying I couldn't read a speech like that," she said.

"Mr. Mosley even took me aside a little later and informed me that my efforts to get the press involved were futile. He also said he didn't care what I or anyone else did against him because 'they (the press) love me.'

Angry when it came time to make her speech Miss Stewart went to the podium and announced, "I have nothing to say because I do not have my speech."

Just as Miss Stewart turned to sit down and the choir stood to sing, a black man jumped up and yelled "Why don't you have your speech?"

"Then mother jumped up and also yelled 'Why don't you have your speech?'" said Miss Stewart. "She hadn't heard me tell the audience that I didn't have my speech and didn't know until my sister and boyfriend went angrily back to their seats after trying to take some pictures and told her."

"Soon everyone was yelling 'speech, speech'," she added.

Miss Stewart said she found herself condensing

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For All We Know

By Elizabeth M. Oliver
City Editor

SALUTE Homicide Officer Sgt. George Christian, with the murder squad and police dept. 17 years, who is now a masters degree holder from Copin and was graduated last Sunday summa cum laude. The highest ranking of his race in Homicide, he is now assigned to Criminal Investigation. His degree was earned in Criminal Justice Counseling.

ALSO please meet Sylvia Woingust Branchcomb, former Baltimorean and Saint Frances Academy grad, now residing in Yonkers and Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Her writings have been published internationally. London France, Australia, Philippine Islands, South Africa and all over the U.S. Most of all, she is sister of Baltimore's Norman Woingust whom we all know so fondly.

Her latest book, "Togetherness" has some of the finest inspirational poetry and should be used by us instead of Unity or some of those others we did not write. Get it from Harlo Press, 16721 Hamilton Ave., Detroit, Mich., 48203. It's a treasure to have.

SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL, the poems say in essence, look forward, not backward; condemn not; awaken with sunlight and do good for all mankind.

Sylvia is studying law and is a creative writing teacher at the Getty Square Neighborhood Center, Yonkers. Her husband is Julian Branchcomb and their daughters, Sylvia and Yvonne.

SPEAKING OF NEW YORK, last week we saw Bernice Holoman Pochonet, the Baltimore beautician who married the wealthy musician Gerard Pochonet of Paris some years ago.

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SGT. GEORGE CHRISTIAN summa cum laude graduate

AUTHOR SYLVIA WOINGUST BRANCHCOMB, former Baltimorean and Saint Frances Academy graduate.

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