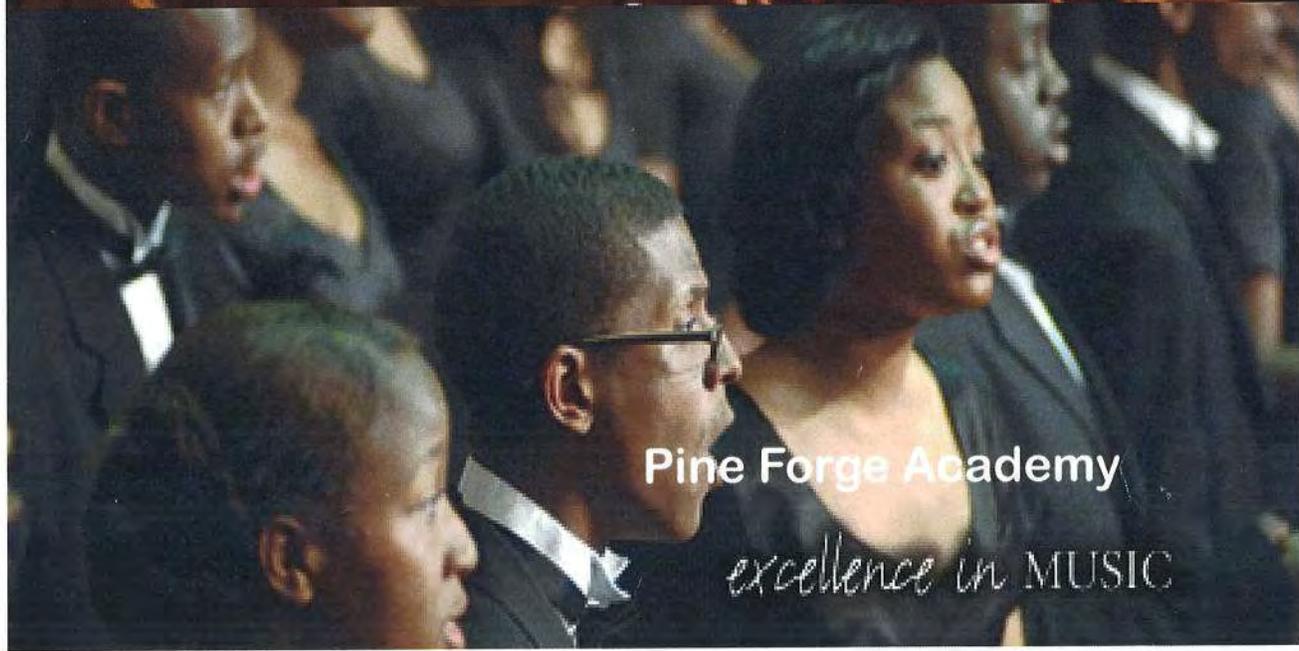


Wilberforce University  
Department of  
**MUSIC**



Pine Forge Academy

*excellence in* MUSIC

Mount Zion  
African Methodist Episcopal Church  
and  
Bethuel Seventh-Day Adventist Church

*present*

*The Wilberforce University Choir  
and*

*The Pine Forge Academy Choir*

Date: March 5, 2010

Time: 7:00 P.M.

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## Allen 250

### “Singing Amazing Grace”



#### **Richard Allen (1760-1831)**

February 14, 2010 marks the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Richard Allen. Allen was born in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the Benjamin Chew estate, in 1760. He is primarily recognized for the founding of “Mother” Bethel in Philadelphia in 1794; being elected and consecrated the first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church established in 1816; and, the first Christian denomination founded by persons of African descent in the western hemisphere.

Allen’s life was extraordinary, in that he was born a slave in Philadelphia, and his family was sold to plantation owner, Stokeley Sturgis, near Dover, Delaware. At seventeen years of age, in 1777, he was instrumental in the conversion of his master by convincing Sturgis to invite the famous Methodist circuit preacher, Freeborn Garretson to the plantation. Allen in later life reflected on his conversion experience, “...all of a sudden, my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and ‘Glory to God’, I cried, ‘my soul was filled’, I cried, ‘Enough for me the Savior died.’” He also convinced his master to allow him to purchase his freedom, in which through work with the Continental Army, he was able to purchase his freedom and that of his brother. Upon returning to Philadelphia, Allen joined the St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest Methodist Church in America and became a licensed preacher of the church. However, because of segregation practices and unfair treatment of people of African descent, Allen led to a walkout in November of 1787. Allen along with Absalom Jones, a native Delawarean and the first African American ordained an Episcopal priest in America, earlier that same year, founded the Free African Society. This society was the first of its kind among Africans in America. It spoke to the abolition of slavery and the basic need of African-Americans in Philadelphia. This mutual aid society was the basis of Allen and Jones’ leadership during the Yellow Fever epidemic in 1793. Because of the efforts of Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, in the caring of sick and the burial of the dead, both received commendation from the Mayor of Philadelphia. During the war of 1812, when Philadelphia was under threat of attack from the British, Allen raised a Black League of 2,500 men to aid in the protection of Philadelphia. In 1830, a year before his death, Allen called together the first convention of African Americans. This meeting hosted by “Mother” Bethel was crucial beginning to African Americans dealing with the salient issues of slavery, basic human rights for free blacks and a successful battle against the American Colonization Society’s efforts to relocate free blacks to West Africa. During the Centennial Exposition (1876) of the birth of the nation held in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park, Richard Allen’s legacy was the only African-American presence on exhibit.

Richard Allen was the first national leader of Africans in America. Because of Richard Allen’s work, commitment and leadership, despite all the odds, African-Americans, the nation and the world are beneficiaries of his legacy.