

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conspirare Christmas Returns with Songs of Remembrance and Joy

GRAMMY® Award-winning Choir Reinvents the Traditional Holiday Concert

AUSTIN, Texas (November 3, 2022) On Monday, December 5th, Conspirare Christmas, a beloved Austin holiday event, returns to the Long Center to kick off the holiday season. **Conspirare Christmas reinvents the traditional holiday concert with songs of hope, courage, and love.** Artistic Director Craig Hella Johnson's innovative and daring blend of sacred and secular music, including popular and classical music, along with songs of the season and an audience sing-along, are on the program. Austin Jazz Hall of Fame inductee Mitch Watkins, guitar, and Thomas Burritt, percussion, will also return to the stage. **This year's concert, entitled "Conspirare Sings Remembrance and Joy," features nationally celebrated soloists from GRAMMY®-winning Conspirare.**

Conspirare Christmas will tour to three Texas communities before its culminating performance in Austin:

- **Victoria** -Thursday, December 1 at 7:30 pm, Victoria ISD Fine Arts Center, 1002 Sam Houston Dr., Victoria, TX 77901. Presented by the Victoria Bach Festival.
- **Houston** - Friday, December 2 at 7:30 pm, St. Luke's United Methodist Church Sanctuary 3471 Westheimer Rd, Houston, TX 77027. Presented by St. Luke's United Methodist Church.
- **Uvalde** - Saturday, December 3 at 7 pm, Uvalde High School, John H. Harrell Auditorium, 1 Coyote Trail, Uvalde TX 78801. Presented in partnership with Uvalde H.S.
- **Austin** - Monday, December 5 at 7:30 pm, The Long Center for the Performing Arts, Dell Hall 701 W. Riverside Dr., Austin, TX 78704. This concert will also be live streamed from Austin's Long Center on the Conspirare website.

“Conspirare is an ensemble of gifted soloists from around the country,” says Craig Hella Johnson. “So this year I am choosing to feature several of them so listeners can enjoy some of their gorgeous individual voices.” The concert soloists have performed across North America and Europe and include:

- Simon Barrad - baritone, San Francisco, CA
- Gregory Fletcher - bass, Los Angeles, CA
- Melissa Givens - soprano, Los Angeles, CA
- Haitham Haidar - tenor, Montreal, Québec
- Laura Mercado-Wright - alto, Austin, TX
- Savannah Porter - soprano, Provo, UT
- Kathlene Ritch - soprano, Santa Fe, NM
- Lianna Wimberly Williams - soprano, Athens, GA

“Conspirare Sings Remembrance and Joy” features Craig Hella Johnson performing and leading 30 singers in a genre-bending night including unexpected surprises, world premieres, and traditional favorites including:

- New text by Welsh-Scottish choral poet Euan Tait known for his songs of celebration and belonging
- New work by composer Deke Sharon who writes of “the most joyous moment” he can imagine—when Helen Keller broke through her dark solitude with her teacher Anne Sullivan
- Renditions of popular songs by Cold Play, Stevie Nicks, and Michael Franti including arrangements by Blake Morgan
- A holiday carol sing-along
- A unique weaving of songs on themes of place, peace, and hope.

About the program Johnson shared, “With this musical offering, it is our intention to express a message of comfort and love to all, and especially to those who have experienced tremendous loss in this past year.”

Among the audience members at Austin’s Long Center will be nearly 400 middle and high school choir students and their teachers from Pflugerville, Dripping Springs and Austin, some of whom will have had Conspirare singers visit them in their classroom in advance. Such classroom visits inspire some students to study music professionally while others discover that singing and listening to choral music can be a lifelong joy.

Conspirare’s music is for everybody. \$10 Student tickets are always available. Anyone serving our community (such as but not limited to teachers, military, and service industry pros) or with a limited income can order tickets at half off with the code WELOVEYOU.

ABOUT OUR SPONSORS

Conspirare thanks Season Underwriter is H-E-B. The Conspirare Christmas performance sponsor is Per Stirling. Conspirare Season Sponsors include Blackfeather Vintage Works, Tejemos Foundation, Still Water Foundation, Texas

Commission on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Hella Circle and Legacy of Sound 2. KMFA is Conspirare's Media Sponsor and Gusto/Flavor is this season's Hospitality sponsor.

ATTENTION MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

To arrange interviews or request high-resolution images please contact Ann McNair at 512-476-5775 or amcnair@conspirare.org.

ABOUT CONSPIRARE

[Conspirare Press Kit](#) (images for download, info pdf)

Conspirare is a professional choral organization under the leadership of Craig Hella Johnson. Inspired by the power of music to change lives, this ensemble engages singers from around the world who join voices to deliver world-class, extraordinary live musical experiences and recordings. Their discography includes 13 commercial albums and 20 self-produced live albums. Johnson and Conspirare were awarded a 2014 Grammy® for Best Choral Performance for *The Sacred Spirit of Russia* album and have been nominated seven other times. Conspirare was awarded the Texas Medal of Arts in 2019. Based in Austin, Texas, they perform an annual concert series and tour in the United States and abroad. Conspirare is committed to the deepest and widest exploration of new expressions, styles and presentations through commissioning new works and engaging diverse artists.

Craig Hella Johnson is the founding artistic director and conductor of Conspirare and music director of Cincinnati's Vocal Arts Ensemble. Known for crafting thought-provoking musical journeys that create deep connections between performers and listeners, Johnson is in frequent demand as a guest conductor of choral and orchestral works. Johnson joined the faculty at Texas State University as Artist in Residence in fall 2016 and was awarded the 2022 Presidential Award for Excellence in Scholarly/Creative Activities. He is a published composer and arranger, guest conductor and educator. Johnson's first concert-length composition *Considering Matthew Shepard* was premiered and recorded by Conspirare for a 2016 CD release. *Considering Matthew Shepard* continues to be performed around the world, most recently in Berlin and around the United States. Johnson's accomplishments have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. Notably among them, he and Conspirare won a 2014 Grammy® for Best Choral Performance, Chorus America awarded him the Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art in 2015, and the Texas State Legislature named him Texas State Musician for 2013. In 2021, the Matthew Shepard Foundation recognized him with the Dennis Dougherty Award for Community Leadership.

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