

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Melissa J. Eddy, 512-476-5775 (o), 512-217-1264 (c), meddy@conspirare.org

Conspirare presents

Sing Freedom: African American Spirituals

Friday, October 1, and Saturday, October 2, 8:00pm

St Martin's Lutheran Church, 606 W. Fifteenth Street, Austin

Sunday, October 3, 3:00pm

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 8134 Mesa Drive, Austin

Tickets \$25-44

Students/youth \$10

Special pricing for groups; call for information

Tickets and information at 512-476-5775 or www.conspirare.org

Experience the exaltation as five-time Grammy®-nominated professional choir Conspirare rings the rafters with African American spirituals. Born of yearning but bursting with hope, spirituals are quintessential American music – powerful, profound expressions of universal human feeling. The program features old favorites like “City Called Heaven” and “Walk Together, Children” plus some surprises, including a new arrangement of “Lay This Body Down” by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang. Spirituals are among the most popular repertoire in Conspirare’s history, and when you hear this concert you’ll know why.

Sing Freedom will also be performed **Thursday, September 30 in Georgetown, Texas** (tickets and information at 512-864-9591) and **Tuesday, October 5, in Goshen, Indiana**, at Goshen College’s acoustically renowned Sauder Hall (tickets and information at 574-535-7566). It will also be recorded in Sauder Hall for **Conspirare’s next CD** to be released in 2011 by Harmonia Mundi.

Craig Hella Johnson on the African American Spiritual

Study and performance of the African American spiritual has long been a passion of Conspirare’s artistic director Craig Hella Johnson, who has conducted extensive musicological research into the genre to prepare for this concert and recording. The Library of Congress recently reported having more than 7000 spirituals or fragments of spirituals on record, of which only a relatively small handful are known and performed. Johnson mines this deep reserve of the music that the Czech composer Dvořák, during his American sojourn more than a century ago, famously deemed the only genuine American folk music from which a national music could grow.

Johnson calls the spiritual “incredibly moving and influential American music” that must be sung “from the deepest place in our hearts.” Commenting on the spiritual’s historic foundations, Johnson says, “The slaves/singers had deep identification with biblical stories of suffering. While singing they were truly speaking to their own suffering and one hears directly the parallels to their own experience.” He concludes, “What is made clear to me again and again, both from the melodies and words themselves and from hearing recordings by some of the great performers of spirituals, is that the essential requirement for this music to be well performed is that the singer must *feel* the spiritual deeply.” It is this commitment to the spiritual’s history, emotional intensity, and honesty that Conspirare aims to fulfill in *Sing Freedom*.

Dr. Johnson is available by appointment for interviews about his study of the spiritual and about this concert.

About Conspirare

Increasingly hailed as the “best choir in the U.S.,” Conspirare is based in Austin and led by its award-winning founding artistic director Craig Hella Johnson. Conspirare performs in Austin and other Texas communities as well as nationally and internationally. While primarily a classical choir, Conspirare performs in all musical styles and is renowned for Johnson’s signature “collage” programming style that seamlessly blends diverse musical genres into one luminous whole. Conspirare has recorded four commercial CDs, of which three received a total of five Grammy® nominations. The most recent nomination was for its CD “A Company of Voices: Conspirare in Concert” in the category Best Classical Crossover Album. Its CD “Requiem” also won a 2010 Edison Award (the “Dutch Grammy”). For more about Conspirare, please visit www.conspirare.org.

-30-

Photos of Conspirare and Craig Hella Johnson are available on request.