



Joby Talbot's
Piedra de Sol
(Sunstone)
a setting of
Octavio Paz' epic poem

TO BE THE SUN

conspirare

Craig Hella Johnson + COMPANY OF VOICES

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TO BE THE SUN

featuring the world premiere of *Piedra de Sol*

FRIDAY / 8 PM

January 23, 2026

SATURDAY / 8 PM

January 24, 2026

ST MARTIN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pre-Concert Talk at 7 pm with
Adela Pineda Franco and **Joby Talbot**

conspirare

Craig Hella Johnson, conductor
Tom Burritt, *marimba*

Thank you to our concert sponsor
Tejemos Foundation

Piedra de Sol was commissioned with support from the
Joel Brauer Fund for New Music

Piedra de Sol Composer Note

Piedra de sol is a poem like no other. I vividly remember the profound emotional impact of reading this epic masterpiece for the first time. The hugeness of the poet's vision, the cosmic immensity of the imagery, its febrile surrealistic intensity, its random journeying through space, time and colour from reality to fantasy and back again, its moments of heartfelt intimacy that never fail to surprise, its joyful disregard of conventional narrative structure – all combined to leave me feeling astonished and deeply moved when, 584 lines after lift-off, the opening stanza repeated itself and I realised that the whole poem is one enormous, never-ending circle.

Even when simply spoken, the words flow and seem almost to sing. There is a lucid, coiling lyricism to the text which invites music in. Although every single line of the poem has a relentless eleven-syllable structure, the stress patterns within the lines change constantly so that the poem has a shifting, restless, questing energy that moves it constantly forward. It was its sense of endless fluidity and ceaseless momentum that inspired me to turn *Piedra de sol* into a long-form choral piece.

I'd previously used an extract of the poem for the climax of my ballet score *Like Water for Chocolate*, based on Laura Esquivel's novel *Como agua para chocolate*, that opened at the Royal Opera House in London in June 2022. This song – scored for mezzo soprano, guitar, and orchestra – was my first attempt at setting a substantial piece of Spanish text to music and was a revelation. The experience confirmed me in my resolve to create a larger choral piece around the text, so I was thrilled when *Conspirare* came to me with this opportunity. I selected the sections that I felt would work best for massed voices (about two-thirds of the poem's total) and constructed a seventy-minute-long musical structure that mirrored the poem's narrative journey from ecstatic vision through profound despair to eventual enlightenment. To do justice to the poem's unparalleled scale, I wanted to explore as wide a range of vocal textures as I could conceive. There are extended passages of complex rhythmic interplay, exposed solo passages for a single voice, and episodes where slabs of sound colour reflect the poem's terrifying images. Underpinning much of the music is the role of the marimba which anchors the harmonies and rhythm and contributes to the otherworldly exoticism of the musical palette.

Piedra de sol invites listeners and performers alike on a journey of infinite dimensions – a voyage whose course bends, advances, recedes, comes full circle and arrives forever.

– Joby Talbot

Octavio Paz and *Piedra de sol* (1957)

Octavio Paz was born in 1914, ground zero year of the Mexican Revolution, when the troops of agrarian leaders Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa entered Mexico City, shaking the foundations of the Mexican Belle Époque. For many historians, 1914 marked the true end of the nineteenth century. In Mexico, this agrarian revolution and the rise of urban modernity would together shape the course of the twentieth century, the century of Octavio Paz, who died just two years before the dawn of our own twenty-first century.

When Paz died, the vox populi remarked that, finally, “la literatura mexicana descansa en Paz” (“Mexican literature rests in peace”). The wordplay was far from innocent. Paz had been an essential figure in Mexican society, one of the principal architects of modern national culture. In addition to his prolific oeuvre, Paz shaped the course of Mexican culture and literature by founding and editing influential literary journals such as *Plural* (1971-1976), and *Vuelta* (1976-1998). His impact extended through public interventions, through his prominent role in literary production, and through his career as a diplomat. Despite his own reservations, this far-reaching influence transformed him from a modern poet into a national institution. As such, his work was both widely celebrated and sharply criticized; the weight of his public persona cast both a luminous presence and a long shadow.

On the other hand, his stature extends far beyond Mexico. His name carries the weight of public intellectuals like Sartre and Neruda, figures whose influence reached beyond literature into the political and cultural arenas of their time. A Nobel Prize laureate, Paz witnessed and engaged with some of the most significant movements of the twentieth century, including the Spanish Civil War and the 1968 youth movements. A true globetrotter, his years in the United States, Europe, and Asia helped shape a broad, cosmopolitan perspective while also sharpening his critical understanding of both Mexican national identity and universal poetry.

Some of Paz’s essays are deeply rooted in national concerns, most notably *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), a widely quoted treatise on Mexican identity in which he weaves together myth and history to examine how the legacy of colonization shaped the national psyche. Yet at the core of Paz’s thought lies a sustained reflection on literature, particularly poetry. His poetic work investigates the role of poetry as a distinct, non-referential language that paradoxically illuminates the hidden meaning of the world. One of his most significant essays on the subject is *El arco y la lira* (1956, translated as *The Bow and the Lyre*), where he articulates his philosophy of poetic language, explores its connection to society, and offers readings of key modern poets, including Walt Whitman. In the prologue of this book, Paz wrote:

From the time when I began to write poems, I wondered whether it was worth while to do so, would it not be better to transform life into poetry, than to make poetry from life? And poetry, cannot its proper object be, more than the creation of poems, the creation of poetic instants? Can there be a universal communion in poetry?¹

This quote captures Paz's central concerns with cyclical time and the meaningful instant: the ephemeral breakthrough from alienation that renders life substantial and significant. These ideas lie at the heart of his poetic masterpiece *Piedra de sol* (1957). This long poem embodies his transculturation of mythology and modernity. With only three hundred copies printed, the first edition (Fondo de Cultura Económica 1957) was introduced with the following note:

On the cover of this book appears the number 585 written in the Mayan numeral system; likewise, the corresponding Mexican glyphs for Day 4 *Ollin* (Movement) and Day 4 *Ehécatl* (Wind) appear at the beginning and end of the poem. It may be useful to point out that this poem is composed of 584 hendecasyllabic lines (the last six are not counted because they are identical to the first six; in reality, the poem does not end with them but begins again). This number of lines equals the synodic revolution of the planet Venus, which is 584 days. The ancient Mexicans tracked the Venusian cycle (as well as those of the other planets visible to the naked eye) beginning with Day 4 *Ollin*; Day 4 *Ehécatl* marked, 584 days later, the conjunction of Venus and the Sun and, consequently, the end of one cycle and the beginning of another.²

Drawing on the symbolism of the Aztec calendar stone housed in the National Museum of Anthropology, *Piedra de sol* employs the techniques of modern poetry, particularly surrealist imagery, to meditate on cyclical time and the possibility of breaking its grip through poetry and love: "The world is born when two people kiss,/a drop of light from transparent juices,/the room cracks half-open like a fruit/ or explodes in silence like a star."³

Piedra de sol invites the reader on a wandering journey through a spatio-temporal dimension where history and myth collide, and human consciousness searches for meaning through flesh and emotion. History reveals its perverse masks (political corruption, war, betrayal) and language becomes the divisive force that fragments the communion of the self with the whole. Yet it is the lovers, mythic or real, who alone can illuminate and momentarily suspend the corrosive effects of that empty, linear time, though only within the fleeting, universal instant. The poem never loses its cyclical rhythm; its structure allows the poetic voice to return, to incarnate endlessly, without exhaustion.

Although the underlying philosophical idea in *Piedra de sol* may be simple, the poem's beauty lies in its masterful use of poetic imagery. Influenced by surrealism, Paz's images move fluidly between abstraction and the concrete, offering moments of both intellectual depth and sensory experience. *Piedra de sol*, like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, José Gorostiza's *Muerte sin fin*, and *Primero sueño* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, belongs to the tradition of the long poem, a form that allows for the exploration of the metaphysical, the historical, and the personal. In this sense, *Piedra de sol* resonates universally.

– Adela Pineda Franco, The University of Texas at Austin

¹ *The Bow and the Lyre*, translated by Ruth L.C. Simms. McGraw Hill, 1975.

² *Piedra de Sol*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957.

³ Sunstone, Scriptor Press. p. 17



Joby Talbot
composer (b. 1971)

Octavio Paz
poet (1914-1998)

Piedra de Sol

Commissioned by Conspirare
and Craig Hella Johnson, Artistic Director,
as part of the Joel Brauer Fund for New Music

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Piedra de Sol

Un sauce de cristal, un chopo de agua,

a crystal willow, a poplar of water,

un alto surtidor que el viento arquea,

a tall fountain arching in the wind,

un árbol bien plantado mas danzante,

a deep-rooted tree which dances still,

un caminar de río que se curva,

the course of a river which bends,

avanza, retrocede, da un rodeo

advances, recedes, comes full circle,

y llega siempre:

and arrives forever:

un caminar tranquilo

the silent path

de estrella o primavera sin premura,

of the stars, or an unhurried springtime,

agua que con los párpados cerrados

water behind closed eyelids

mana toda la noche profecías,

welling over with prophesies all night long,

unánime presencia en oleaje,

a single presence in a surge of waves,

ola tras ola hasta cubrirlo todo,

wave after wave until all is covered,

verde soberanía sin ocaso

an endless reign of green

como el deslumbramiento de las alas

like the dazzle of a pair of wings

cuando se abren en mitad del cielo,

unfolding in the middle of the sky,

una presencia como un canto súbito,

a single presence like a sudden song,

como el viento cantando en el incendio,

like the wind singing in a fire,

una mirada que sostiene en vilo

a gaze that holds in suspense

al mundo con sus mares y sus montes,

the whole world with all its seas and mountains,

cuerpo de luz filtrado por un ágata,

body of light filtered through an agate,

piernas de luz, vientre de luz, bahías,

thighs of light, belly of light, beaches,

roca solar, cuerpo color de nube,

sun-drenched rock, cloud-coloured body,

color de día rápido que salta,

the colour of daylight leaping rapidly forward,

la hora centellea y tiene cuerpo,

time sparkles and has a body,

el mundo ya es visible por tu cuerpo,

the world becomes visible through your body,

es transparente por tu transparencia,

becomes transparent through your transparency,

voy entre galerías de sonidos,

I travel between galleries of sound,

fluyo entre las presencias resonantes,

I flow through resonant presences,

voy por las transparencias como un ciego,

I go through transparencies like a blind man,

un reflejo me borra, nazco en otro,

one reflection erases me, I am born in another,

oh bosque de pilares encantados,

oh forest of enchanted columns,

bajo los arcos de la luz penetro

under arches of light I penetrate

los corredores de un otoño diáfano,

the corridors of translucent autumn,

voy por tu cuerpo como por el mundo,

I go through your body as if through the world,

tu vientre es una plaza soleada,

your belly is a sunlit market square,

tus pechos dos iglesias donde oficia

your breasts two churches where blood celebrates

la sangre sus misterios paralelos,

its own parallel rites,

mis miradas te cubren como yedra,

my gaze covers you like ivy,

eres una ciudad que el mar asedia,

you are a city that the sea besieges,

una muralla que la luz divide

a rampart that the light divides

en dos mitades de color durazno,

into two halves the colour of peaches,

un paraje de sal, rocas y pájaros

a place of salt, rocks and birds

bajo la ley del mediodía absorto,

under the rule of oblivious noon,

vestida del color de mis deseos

dressed in the colour of my desires,

como mi pensamiento vas desnuda,

like my thoughts you go naked,

voy por tus ojos como por el agua,

I go through your eyes as if through water,

los tigres beben sueño en esos ojos,

tigers drink their dreams from those eyes,

el colibrí se quema en esas llamas,

the hummingbird burns in those flames,

voy por tu frente como por la luna,

I go through your forehead as if through the moon,

como la nube por tu pensamiento,

like a cloud I go through your thoughts,

voy por tu vientre como por tus sueños,

I go through your belly as I go through your dreams,

tu falda de maíz ondula y canta,

your skirt of corn ripples & sings,

tu falda de cristal, tu falda de agua,

your skirt of crystal, your skirt of water,

tus labios, tus cabellos, tus miradas,

your lips, your hair, your gaze,

toda la noche llueves, todo el día

all night you rain, all day,

abres mi pecho con tus dedos de agua,

you open my chest with your fingers of water,

cierras mis ojos con tu boca de agua,

you close my eyes with your mouth of water,

sobre mis huesos llueves, en mi pecho

you rain on my bones, a liquid tree

hunde raíces de agua un árbol líquido,

sinking roots of water into my chest,

voy por tu talle como por un río,

I travel the whole length of you like a river,

voy por tu cuerpo como por un bosque,

I go through your body as through a forest,

como por un sendero en la montaña

as if on a mountain path

que en un abismo brusco se termina

which ends at a sudden abyss

voy por tus pensamientos afilados

I travel along the razor's edge of your thoughts

y a la salida de tu blanca frente

and at the flowering of your white forehead

mi sombra despeñada se destroza,

my shadow is hurled down and breaks into pieces,

recojo mis fragmentos uno a uno

I gather up the fragments one by one

y prosigo sin cuerpo, busco a tientas,

and go on, without a body, groping my way,

corredores sin fin de la memoria,

endless corridors of memory,

puertas abiertas a un salón vacío

doors that open into an empty room

donde se pudren todos los veranos,

where all the summers come to rot,

las joyas de la sed arden al fondo,

where jewels of thirst burn in the depths,

rostro desvanecido al recordarlo,
a face that fades as it is remembered,
mano que se deshace si la toco,
a hand that comes undone as it is touched,
cabelleras de arañas en tumulto
hair woven by spiders in turmoil
sobre sonrisas de hace muchos años,
above the smiles of many years ago,

a la salida de mi frente busco,
at the flowering of my forehead I search,
busco sin encontrar, busco un instante,
I search without finding, I search for a memory,
un rostro de relámpago y tormenta
for a face of lightning and torment
corriendo entre los árboles nocturnos,
running through the trees of night,
rostro de lluvia en un jardín a oscuras,
for a face of rain in a garden of shadows,
agua tenaz que fluye a mi costado,
relentless water flowing by my side,

busco sin encontrar, escribo a solas,
I search without finding, I write alone,
no hay nadie, cae el día, cae el año,
there is no one here, the day falls, the year falls,
caigo en el instante, caigo al fondo,
I fall in an instant, I fall to the bottom,
invisible camino sobre espejos
an invisible pathway over mirrors
que repiten mi imagen destrozada,
which repeat my shattered image,
piso días, instantes caminados,
I walk down the days, the well-worn memories,
piso los pensamientos de mi sombra,
I walk down the thoughts of my shadow,
piso mi sombra en busca de un instante,
I walk along my shadow in search of a moment,

busco una fecha viva como un pájaro,
in search of a real moment, as alive as a bird,
busco el sol de las cinco de la tarde
I search for the sun of five in the afternoon
templado por los muros de tezontle:
tempered by walls of red volcanic rock:
la hora maduraba sus racimos
the hour was ripening its clusters of fruit
y al abrirse salían las muchachas
and when they opened girls came running out
de su entraña rosada y se esparcían
from their pink underbellies and spread out
por los patios de piedra del colegio,
on the stone schoolyard,
alta como el otoño caminaba
tall as autumn she walked,
envuelta por la luz bajo la arcada
sheathed in light beneath the arches
y el espacio al ceñirla la vestía
and the space that encircled her dressed her
de un piel más dorada y transparente,
in a skin even more golden and transparent,

tigre color de luz, pardo venado
tiger, the colour of light, grey-brown deer
por los alrededores de la noche,
on the outskirts of night,
entrevista muchacha reclinada
girl glimpsed leaning
en los balcones verdes de la lluvia,
on balconies green with rain,
adolescente rostro innumerable,
adolescent, uncountable face,
he olvidado tu nombre, Melusina,
I have forgotten your name, Melusina
Laura, Isabel, Perséfone, María,
Laura, Isabel, Persephone, Mary,
tienes todos los rostros y ninguno,
you have all those faces and none of them,

eres todas las horas y ninguna,
you are all those hours and none of them,
 te pareces al árbol y a la nube,
you seem like a tree, a cloud,
 eres todos los pájaros y un astro,
you are all the birds and a single star,
 te pareces al filo de la espada
you are the edge of a sword
 y a la copa de sangre del verdugo,
and the executioner's cup of blood,
 yedra que avanza, envuelve y desarraiga
the ivy that advances, envelops and uproots,
 al alma y la divide de sí misma,
the soul that divides itself from itself,

escritura de fuego sobre el jade,
writing of fire on a slab of jade,
 grieta en la roca, reina de serpientes,
a cleft in the rock, the queen of serpents,
 columna de vapor, fuente en la peña,
a column of mist, a mountain spring,
 circo lunar, peñasco de las águilas,
a circle of moonlight, an outpost of eagles,
 grano de anís, espina diminuta
a grain of anise, a poisoned thorn
 y mortal que da penas inmortales,
that brings undying punishment,
 pastora de los valles submarinos
shepherdess of underwater valleys
 y guardiana del valle de los muertos,
and gatekeeper of the valley of the dead,
 liana que cuelga del cantil del vértigo,
tendrils hanging from the cliffs of vertigo,
 enredadera, planta venenosa,
creeper, venomous plant,
 flor de resurrección, uva de vida,
flower of resurrection, grape of life,
 señora de la flauta y del relámpago,
lady of the flute and the lightning flash,

terrazza del jazmín, sal en la herida,
terrace of jasmine, salt in the wound,
 ramo de rosas para el fusilado,
bouquet of roses for the man gunned down,
 nieve en agosto, luna del patíbulo,
snowfall in August, gallows moon,
 escritura del mar sobre el basalto,
writing of the sea on basalt,
 escritura del viento en el desierto,
writing of the wind on the desert,
 testamento del sol, granada, espiga,
testament of the sun, pomegranate, ear of corn,

no hay nada frente a mí, sólo un instante
there is nothing in front of me, only a moment
 rescatado esta noche, contra un sueño
rescued this night, against a dream,
 de ayuntadas imágenes soñado,
of dreamed images shackled together,
 duramente esculpido contra el sueño,
harshly hacked out from a dream,
 arrancado a la nada de esta noche,
plundered from the emptiness of this night,
 a pulso levantado letra a letra,
lifted by hand, letter by letter,
 mientras afuera el tiempo se desboca
while outside time runs amok
 y golpea las puertas de mi alma
and, beating at the doors of my soul,
 el mundo con su horario carnicero,
the world with its bloodthirsty schedules,

sólo un instante mientras las ciudades,
only a moment while cities,
 los nombres, los sabores, lo vivido,
names, tastes, the experience of life itself,
 se desmoronan en mi frente ciega,
crumble away inside my blind forehead,

mientras la pesadumbre de la noche
while the enormous weariness of this night
mi pensamiento humilla y mi esqueleto,
crushes my thought and my skeleton,
y mi sangre camina más despacio
and my blood runs more slowly
y mis dientes se aflojan y mis ojos
and my teeth loosen and my eyes
se nublan y los días y los años
cloud over and the days and the years
sus horrores vacíos acumulan,
accumulate their empty horrors,
mientras el tiempo cierra su abanico
while time snaps shut its fan
y no hay nada detrás de sus imágenes
with nothing stirring behind its images
el instante se abisma y sobrenada
the moment plunges down and floats
rodeado de muerte, amenazado
surrounded by death, threatened
por la noche y su lúgubre bostezo,
by night and its dismal yawn,
amenazado por la algarabía
threatened by the furious gibberish
de la muerte vivaz y enmascarada
of death, masked and alive,
el instante se abisma y se penetra,
the moment plunges down and penetrates itself,
como un puño se cierra, como un fruto
like a closing fist, like a fruit
que madura hacia dentro de sí mismo
which ripens from within
y a sí mismo se bebe y se derrama
and, drinking from itself, bursts open,
el instante translúcido se cierra
the translucent moment closing itself off
y madura hacia dentro, echa raíces,
and ripening within itself, sending out roots
crece dentro de mí, me ocupa todo,
that grow inside me, taking me over entirely,

me expulsa su follaje delirante,
its delirious foliage flinging me out,
mis pensamientos sólo son su pájaros,
my solitary thoughts are its throng of birds,
su mercurio circula por mis venas,
its mercury goes circulating through my veins,
árbol mental, frutos sabor de tiempo,
tree of the mind, fruits tasting of time,

oh vida por vivir y ya vivida,
oh life to be lived and already lived,
tiempo que vuelve en una marejada
time that comes back as a heavy swell
y se retira sin volver el rostro,
and withdraws without turning its head,
lo que pasó no fue pero está siendo
that which passed is not passed but is coming now
y silenciosamente desemboca
and silently flows, breaking into
en otro instante que se desvanece:
another moment which immediately disappears:

frente a la tarde de salitre y piedra
facing an afternoon of saltpetre and stone,
armada de navajas invisibles
armed with invisible razor blades,
una roja escritura indecifrable
in an red, indecipherable script
escribes en mi piel y esas heridas
you write on my skin, and these wounds
como un traje de llamas me recubren,
cover me like a suit of flames,
ardo sin consumirme, busco el agua
I burn without being consumed, I search for water,
y en tus ojos no hay agua, son de piedra,
but in your eyes there is no water, only stone,
y tus pechos, tu vientre, tus caderas
and your breasts, your belly, your hips

son de piedra, tu boca sabe a polvo,
all are of stone, your mouth tastes like dust,
tu boca sabe a tiempo emponzoñado,
your mouth tastes of a poisoned time,
tu cuerpo sabe a pozo sin salida,
your body tastes like a sealed well,
pasadizo de espejos que repiten
a passageway of mirrors which reflect
los ojos del sediento, pasadizo
these thirsty eyes, a passageway
que vuelve siempre al punto de partida,
which always leads back to the point of departure,
y tú me llevas ciego de la mano
and you take me, a blind man, by the hand
por esas galerías obstinadas
through these relentless galleries
hacia el centro del círculo y te yergues
towards the centre of the circle and you rise up
como un fulgor que se congela en hacha,
in a brilliance which freezes into an axe,
como luz que desuella, fascinante
a light which flays alive, as entrancing to me
como el cadalso para el condenado,
as the gallows are to the condemned,
flexible como el látigo y esbelta
flexible as a whip, and slender
como un arma gemela de la luna,
as a weapon twinned with the moon,
y tus palabras afiladas cavan
and your sharp words dig out
mi pecho y me despueblan y vacían,
my chest and depopulate and empty me,
uno a uno me arrancas los recuerdos,
one by one you tear out my memories,
he olvidado mi nombre, mis amigos
I have forgotten my name, my friends
grüñen entre los cerdos o se pudren
grunt among the pigs or rot away
comidos por el sol en un barranco,
eaten by the sun in a ravine,

no hay nada en mí sino una larga herida,
there is nothing inside me but a large wound,
una oquedad que ya nadie recorre,
an empty cavity that no one visits,
presente sin ventanas, pensamiento
a windowless present, a thought
que vuelve, se repite, se refleja
which comes back, repeats, reflects itself
y se pierde en su misma transparencia,
and loses itself in its own transparency,
conciencia traspasada por un ojo
a consciousness pierced by an eye
que se mira mirarse hasta anegarse
which watches itself watching until it is drowned
de claridad:
in clarity

sigo mi desvarío, cuartos, calles,
I follow my delirium through rooms and streets,
camino a tientas por los corredores
I grope my way through corridors
del tiempo y subo y bajo sus peldaños
of time, climb and descend stairs,
y sus paredes palpo y no me muevo,
touch the walls and do not move,
vuelvo adonde empecé, busco tu rostro,
I return to where I began, I search for your face,
camino por las calles de mí mismo
I walk through the streets of myself
bajo un sol sin edad, y tú a mi lado
under an ageless sun, and you, by my side,
caminas como un árbol, como un río
walk like a tree, like a river
caminas y me hablas como un río,
you walk with me, talking like a river,
creces como una espiga entre mis manos,
you grow in my hands like an ear of corn,
lates como una ardilla entre mis manos,
you tremble like a squirrel in my hands,

vuelas como mil pájaros, tu risa

you fly like a thousand birds, your laughter

me ha cubierto de espumas, tu cabeza

dashes me with sea spray, your head

es un astro pequeño entre mis manos,

is a tiny star in my hands,

el mundo reverdece si sonríes

the world becomes green again when you smile

comiendo una naranja,

eating an orange.

el mundo cambia

the world changes

si dos, vertiginosos y enlazados,

if two, dizzy and entwined,

caen sobre las yerba: el cielo baja,

fall onto the grass: the sky falls,

los árboles ascienden, el espacio

the trees rise, space becomes

sólo es luz y silencio, sólo espacio

just light and silence, just space

abierto para el águila del ojo,

for the eagle of the eye to cut across,

pasa la blanca tribu de las nubes,

a white tribe of clouds goes by,

rompe amarra el cuerpo, zarpa el alma,

the body breaks its moorings, the soul sets sail,

perdemos nuestros nombres y flotamos

we forget our names and float

a la deriva entre el azul y el verde,

adrift between the blue and the green,

tiempo total donde no pasa nada

total time where nothing happens

sino su propio transcurrir dichoso,

but time's own blessed passing,

vida y muerte

life and death

pactan en ti, señora de la noche,

make a pact in you, lady of the night,

torre de claridad, reina del alba,

tower of clarity, queen of the dawn,

virgen lunar, madre del agua madre,

virgin of the moon, mother of the mother waters,

cuerpo del mundo, casa de la muerte,

body of the world, house of death,

caigo sin fin desde mi nacimiento,

I have been falling endlessly since my birth,

caigo en mí mismo sin tocar mi fondo,

I fall into myself without touching the bottom,

recógeme en tus ojos, junta el polvo

gather me up in your eyes, collect the scattered dust

disperso y reconcilia mis cenizas,

and reconcile my ashes,

ata mis huesos divididos, sopla

bind together my divided bones, breathe

sobre mi ser, entiérrame en tu tierra,

upon my being, bury me in your earth,

tu silencio dé paz al pensamiento

let your silence bring peace to the thought

ontra sí mismo airado;

that rages against itself;

abre la mano,

open your hand

señora de semillas que son días,

lady who sows the seeds that are days,

el día es inmortal, asciende, crece,

the day is immortal, it rises, it grows,

acaba de nacer y nunca acaba,

it has just been born and its birth never ends,

cada día es nacer, un nacimiento

every day is to be born, every dawn

es cada amanecer y yo amanezco,

is a birth and I am dawning,

amanecemos todos, amanece

we are all dawning, the sun dawns

el sol cara de sol, Juan amanecer

with the face of the sun, John dawns

con su cara de Juan cara de todos,

with the face of John, the face of everyone,

puerta del ser: despiértame, amanecer,

gateway of being: awaken me and dawn,

déjame ver el rostro de este día,

let me see the face of this day,

déjame ver el rostro de esta noche,

let me see the face of this night,

todo se comunica y transfigura,

everything transmits and transfigures,

arco de sangre, puente de latidos,

arch of blood, bridge of heartbeats,

llévame al otro lado de esta noche,

take me to the other side of this night

adonde yo soy tú somos nosotros,

where I am you, where we are each other,

al reino de pronombres enlazados,

in the kingdom where pronouns are laced together,

puerta del ser: abre tu ser, despierta,

gateway of being: open your being, awaken,

aprende a ser también, labra tu cara,

so that you too may be, carve your face

trabaja tus facciones, ten un rostro

develop your features, hold up your face

para mirar mi rostro y que te mire,

to gaze at my face which gazes at you,

para mirar la vida hasta la muerte,

to gaze at life until death,

rostro de mar, de pan, de roca y fuente,

face of the sea, of bread, of rocks and of the fountain,

manantial que disuelve nuestros rostros

the wellspring that dissolves our faces

en el rostro sin nombre, el ser sin rostro,

in a face without name, the being with no face,

indecible presencia de presencias . . .

an indescribable presence among presences . . .

quiero seguir, ir más allá, y no puedo:

I want to continue, to go further, but cannot:

se despenó el instante en otro y otro,

as each moment plunged into another and another,

dormí sueños de piedra que no sueña

I slept, dreaming the dreams of dreamless stones

y al cabo de los años como piedras

and, at the end of all the stone-like years,

oí cantar mi sangre encarcelada,

oh my imprisoned blood sang,

con un rumor de luz el mar cantaba,

the sea sang with a rumour of light,

una a una cedían las murallas,

one by one the walls collapsed,

todas las puertas se desmoronaban

all the doors crumbled

y el sol entraba a saco por mi frente,

and the sun came bursting through my forehead,

despegaba mis párpados cerrados,

unsticking my closed eyelids,

desprendía mi ser de su envoltura,

detaching my being from its swaddling clothes,

me arrancaba de mí, me separaba

pulling me out of myself, separating me

de mi bruto dormir siglos de piedra

from my animal sleep and its centuries of stone

y su magia de espejos revivía

and its magic of mirrors resurrected

un sauce de cristal, un chopo de agua,

a crystal willow, a poplar of water,

un alto surtidor que el viento arquea,

a tall fountain arching in the wind,

un árbol bien plantado mas danzante,

a deep rooted tree which dances still

un caminar de río que se curva,

the course of a river which bends,

avanza, retrocede, da un rodeo

advances, recedes, comes full circle,

y llega siempre:

and arrives forever:

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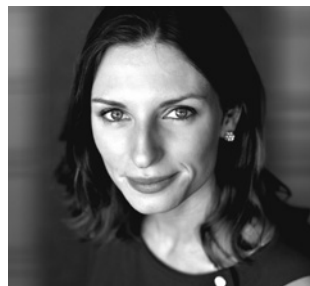
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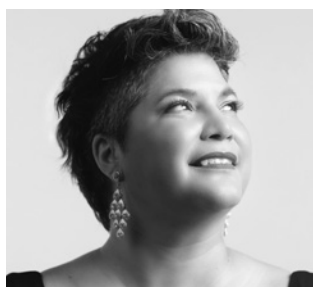
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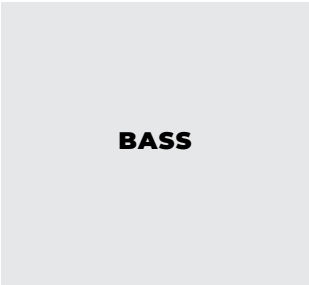
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Leander, TX



rehearsal pianist
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Austin, TX

Photo: Anna McCarthy



JOBY TALBOT was born in London in 1971. He studied composition privately with Brian Elias and at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, before completing a Master of Music (Composition) at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under Simon Bainbridge.

Talbot's diverse catalogue includes contemporary dance works for Wayne McGregor (*Chroma*, 2006; *Genus* 2007) and full-length narrative ballets with Christopher Wheeldon for The Royal Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, American Ballet Theater and The Australian Ballet (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 2011; *The Winter's Tale*, 2014

for which Talbot was awarded the prestigious Benois de la Danse; *Like Water for Chocolate*, 2022; *Oscar*, 2024).

For the concert hall he has composed choral and vocal works (*The Wishing Tree*, 2002; *Path of Miracles*, 2005; *A Sheen of Dew on Flowers*, 2019); orchestral pieces (*Sneaker Wave*, 2004; *Chacony in G Minor*, 2011; *Worlds, Stars, Systems, Infinity*, 2012) and concerti (*Desolation Wilderness*, 2006; *Ink Dark Moon*, 2018).

His scores for the screen include *The Lodger*, 1999 and *The Dying Swan*, 2002, for the British Film Institute; and *Vampyr*, 2018, for LA Opera. Talbot has also scored numerous feature films including *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, 2005; *Sing*, 2016; *Sing 2*, 2021; and *Wonka*, 2023.

Talbot's critically acclaimed first opera, *Everest*, was given its premiere in 2015 by The Dallas Opera. His second opera based on the true story *The Diving Bell and The Butterfly*, a further collaboration with librettist Gene Sheer, premiered in November 2023. Upcoming projects include a percussion concerto for Wade Culbreath and LA Chamber Orchestra, and a further collaboration with Christopher Wheeldon.

CONSPIRARE commissioned *Piedra de Sol* as part of the Joel Brauer Fund for New Music. Established in 2021 so that Conspirare may commission new works of choral music, the fund places Conspirare in the forefront of premiering contemporary choral music created in response to the times we live in and informed by the rich centuries-old tradition of choral music.

Learn more at: conspirare.org/who-we-are/the-joel-brauer-fund-for-new-music/



CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON is the founding artistic director and conductor of Conspirare. Beloved for crafting thought-provoking musical journeys that create deep connections between performers and listeners. Recent additional leadership roles include serving as Artistic Partner with the Oregon Bach Festival and Music Director for Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble. Hella Johnson is a celebrated guest conductor of choral and orchestral works, a published composer, arranger, and educator. Hella Johnson is an Artist in Residence at Texas State University, earning the 2022 Presidential Award for Excellence in Scholarly/Creative Activities.

Hella Johnson's concert-length composition *Considering Matthew Shepard* was premiered and recorded by Conspirare and continues to have broad national and international reach.

Hella Johnson's accomplishments have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. Notably among them, he and Conspirare won a 2015 GRAMMY® for Best Choral Performance. His honors also include Chorus America's Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral, Texas State Musician, the Matthew Shepard Foundation's Dennis Dougherty Award for Community Leadership and most recently, Wartburg College's 2023 Graven Award.

CONSPIRARE is a GRAMMY®-winning choir and nonprofit performing arts and music education organization that believes in the power of music to change lives, inspire peace, and foster belonging.

Conspirare was established in 1991 in Austin, Texas, by Craig Hella Johnson and a band of dedicated supporters.

OUR IMPACT

Every day, Conspirare brings life-changing music to Austin and beyond. We come together in Song — to create art, to take risks, to play, to express something unique — to breathe together. **In the last year, we:**

Received our **12th GRAMMY®-nomination** for latest recording, *advena: liturgies for a broken world*.

Gathered with **5,898 audience members** through **14 performances** across 4 cities and 3 states and 1 country.

Lifted the voices of **156 singers** and the artistry of **86 composers**.

570,772 listeners streamed Conspirare's music 2,510,413 times on Spotify!

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In an emergency, please listen for instructions from the stage.
Most patrons will exit towards the back.

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Conspirare is grateful to our Artist Hosts for providing artist accommodations.

If you have a spare bedroom (or more!) and would like to learn more about hosting an artist, please contact **Meri Krueger** at mkrueger@conspirare.org.

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Conspirare is grateful to our Ambassadors for serving as ushers, providing office and storage assistance, and many other jobs that keep us singing!

To learn more about becoming an Ambassador, contact **André Trahan** at atrahan@conspirare.org.

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Performance Note

Conspirare performs in a variety of venues designed to enhance choral sound. Choral music has a rich history in religious and cultural traditions. In performing such works and in such places, Conspirare is committed to the vastness of human expression, belonging, and love. We value and celebrate the great diversity of religious, artistic, and human experiences that our musicians and audience members bring. All are welcome here. Come, create the space in which the music is held today.

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HELLA CIRCLE

Hella Circle is our community of monthly supporters who believe in the transformative power of music. Inspired by the visionary performances, recordings, and special projects of Conspirare, Hella Circle members provide sustained support through making monthly gifts.

"The current climate against what we value has made us reconsider where we might be able to help out more, even if a little bit. What you are doing is important in so many ways"

– Chandra Muller, Hella Circle member since 2022

Keep Conspirare Singing *with a monthly gift*

Hella Circle membership comes with exclusive benefits like attending private concert rehearsals with Craig and the singers, tickets and CD discounts, and Hella Circle parties. Hella Circle members love connecting with each other to share the joy of Conspirare's music.

A LITTLE GOES
A LONG WAY

Your monthly gift in any amount provides Conspirare with steady income. Here are some ways your monthly gift helps co-create the music:

- \$200** Purchases sheet music for one song for all the singers
- \$100** Helps share Conspirare's music with listeners and choirs everywhere through concert videos and Grammy-winning recordings.
- \$50** Helps create inspiring and beautiful concert programs.
- \$25** Provides healthy snacks (and chocolate!) to hard-working musicians at rehearsal.
- \$10** Covers rideshare from homestay to rehearsal

Learn more about becoming a Hella Circle member and see all members thanked by name at conspirare.org/support-us/



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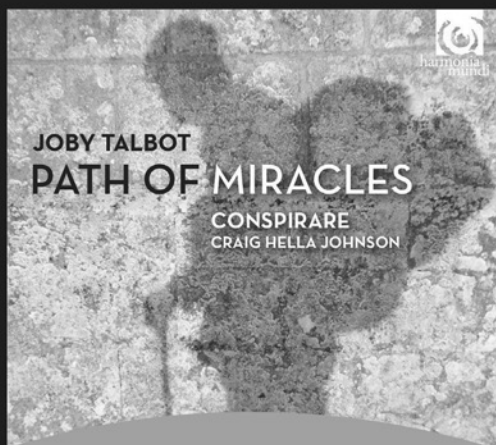
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