

## NEWS RELEASE

September 4, 2020  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

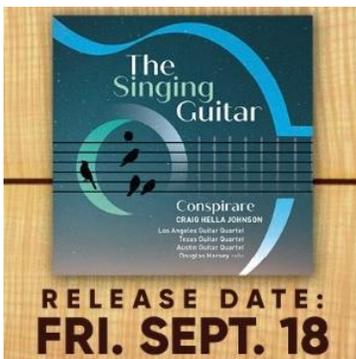
Contact: Ann McNair / Mobile: 512-740-6932 / [amcnair@conspirare.org](mailto:amcnair@conspirare.org)

---

## World Premiere Recording of New American Works from Nico Muhly, Kile Smith, and Reena Esmail to be Released September 18

*The Singing Guitar* features Nico Muhly's rarely-performed *How Little You Are* with Grammy-winning Conspirare, Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Texas Guitar Quartet, and Austin Guitar Quartet

[Online Album Release Party](#) on Tuesday, September 15 at 6 pm Central featuring conversation with Craig Hella Johnson and collaborators.



(Austin, TX) In the waning days of 2019, 12 guitarists from the Los Angeles, Texas and Austin Guitar Quartets joined Grammy-winning Conspirare vocalists under the direction of Craig Hella Johnson to perform new music of American composers in a concert made impossible in the upended landscape of 2020. The performers immediately recorded this captivating music for the forthcoming album, [The Singing Guitar](#).

On **Friday, September 18**, Delos Music will release [The Singing Guitar](#) internationally so listeners can experience this unusual musical journey woven by exquisitely crafted compositions combining voices, guitars, cello and women's stories. It is hard to overstate the power, challenge and difficulty of this unique collaboration. The public is invited to celebrate with Conspirare at an [Online Album Release Party](#) on **Tuesday September 15** at 6 pm Central.

Conspirare Artistic Director Craig Hella Johnson was eager to capture these works for posterity, offering his experience:

"From the moment I read through these extraordinary scores by Nico Muhly, Kile Smith and Reena Esmail, I sensed that they would likely be experienced most fully and beautifully as recordings. These composers have painted musical pictures unlike any I've known or experienced before. It is a wondrous thing to hear the fascinatingly broad spectrum of detail and nuance of the guitar writing and the virtuosic playing these artists offered, and there is an intimacy and emotional directionless in the vocal writing that I find both gentle and profound. These works are like interior storytelling. Truly, there are no works like these in the repertoire. These composers have painted musical pictures unlike any I've known or experienced before."

## **About the album:**

[SoundCloud Preview](#)

[Liner Notes](#)

[Album Artwork](#)

[Request CD or Downloads](#)

[Samples and Track Listing](#)

Pioneering underlies [The Singing Guitar](#) – Native American and Non-Native pioneer women provide the inspiration and text for the thematically connected music; the performance is a rare collaboration of the world-famous [Los Angeles Guitar Quartet](#), [Texas Guitar Quartet](#), [Austin Guitar Quartet](#), cellist [Douglas Harvey](#) and [Conspirare](#); and the album release comes as Americans are again traversing new frontiers.

Center stage are Nico Muhly's [How Little You Are](#) and Kile Smith's [The Dawn's Early Light](#), contrasting the perspectives of pioneer women as they confront the daunting, beautiful landscapes of the American West and Sara Winnemucca, the first Native American woman to publish an autobiography that confronts the significant divisions in our human family. Bookending the album are Indian-American composer Reena Esmail's "[When the Guitar](#)" and Craig Hella Johnson's "[The Song That I Came to Sing](#)."

Muhly's work is scored for three guitars and chorus, and has only been twice-performed given the unusual combinations of artists required. Praised for her "clear, bright voice" (*New York Times*), soprano [Estelí Gomez](#) is the featured soloist, delivering some of the most poignant moments of the music.

Following *How Little You Are*'s world-premiere, Austin-American Statesman critic Luke Quinton observed: "It's [*How Little You Are*] a strong, moving work, a richly detailed piece of art that takes worthy stories from the West and makes them into something more than the sum of their parts, piecing just tiny fragments of these women's lives together in a buzzing, humming vibrating piece of music that manages to move you not just intellectually, but emotionally."

### **ABOUT OUR SPONSORS**

This recording was made possible with the underwriting of Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department, Texas Commission on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Hella Circle and Legacy of Sound 2 and an Anonymous Foundation.

---

### **About [Conspirare](#)**

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 15 commercial albums and 19 annual self-produced live albums featuring Conspirare Christmas. Johnson and Conspirare were awarded a 2014 Grammy® for Best Choral Performance for *The Sacred Spirit of Russia* album and Conspirare albums have been nominated nine 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 Press Kit](#) (images for download, info pdf)

### **[Craig Hella Johnson](#)**

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.

### **[Delos Music](#)**

Founded in 1973, Delos has released albums featuring top artists. A pioneer in digital recording, Delos is known as a label with a strong personality that attracts a host of major performers and has garnered acclaim for the technical excellence of its recordings.