Renaissance & Response
POLYPHONY THEN & NOW

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Renaissance & Response

POLYPHONY THEN & NOW

Conspirare
Craig Hella Johnson & Company of Voices

Early Voices
Friday, January 21, 8:00 pm
Pre-concert talk at 7:00 pm

Defining Mastery
Saturday, January 22, 4:00 pm
Pre-concert talk at 3:00 pm

A Flowering in Spain
Saturday, January 22, 8:00 pm

And Then Came Bach
Sunday, January 23, 3:00 pm
Pre-concert talk at 2:00 pm

St. Martin’s Lutheran Church
606 W. 15th Street, Austin

Craig Hella Johnson
Artistic Director & Conductor

Robert Kyr
 Composer-in-Residence

Renaissance & Response is funded in part through Meet the Composer’s MetLife Creative Connections program.

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Texts and translations will be provided separately for each concert.

The concerts are being recorded for possible later broadcast. Your care to minimize extraneous sound by refraining from page turning and other motion during performance will be greatly appreciated. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. Cough drops are available at the ticket table.
Welcome & Introduction

Many Voices, Many Sounds

Polyphony: a texture consisting of two or more independent melodic voices, as opposed to music with just a single voice (monophony) or music with one dominant melodic voice accompanied by chords (homophony). The word polyphony finds its roots in the Greek word polyphonia (polys = “many”) + (phone = “voice, sound”); thus, many voices, many sounds.

On behalf of the singers, staff and board of Conspirare, I welcome you to this very special festival celebrating some of the world’s most glorious music composed for voices. In these concerts, we bring our loving attention to the art of polyphony. Specifically, we will sing music by four of the greatest European masters of polyphonic music and we will perform world premieres of musical responses by the uniquely gifted contemporary American composer Robert Kyr. It is a special opportunity and a joy to be able to share this beautiful, expressive, and exquisitely crafted music with you. Robert and I have worked together closely as partners in the shaping of this festival and we have selected some treasured works for your deep listening and inspiration.

Renaissance choral literature is a vast repertoire. Can we, as a modern community, engage this music more meaningfully as literature and language, as human expression? So often, we hear this music in the background, as a kind of aesthetic atmosphere but not as distinctive phrases, gestures, emotions, and powerful silences that are woven together into an intricate yet comprehensible whole. Through deep listening, the music begins to reveal a movement from within, which feels both ancient and freshly present.

Our festival Renaissance and Response: Polyphony Then and Now begins with music of the Franco-Flemish composer Josquin des Prez. Widely considered to be the first great master of the Renaissance, his music speaks with an incomparable depth of expression. Our festival’s composer-in-residence, Robert Kyr, has studied Josquin’s music in great detail for forty years and he has created a new performing edition for each work on Friday’s program. We believe that this concert will mark the first time in the modern era that Josquin’s music has been heard in a way that honors his true artistic intentions. Moreover, Robert has staged the concert as a candlelight ceremony that complements the sonic glory of Josquin’s mystical vision.

On Saturday, our afternoon concert highlights the Franco-Flemish composer Orlandus Lassus, one of the most prolific, inventive, and influential
composers in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century. Featured works will include Mass movements and motets such as two pieces from his beguiling settings of *Song of Songs* (*Canticum canticorum*) texts. On Saturday night, we will celebrate Tomás Luis de Victoria, the most celebrated composer of the Spanish Renaissance, whose music first made me fall in love with this entire period. Our fourth and final program features the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, which ultimately brought polyphony to unparalleled—and never surpassed—heights.

A most special highlight of our festival is new music: four world premieres of important works by Robert Kyr. When first considering the idea of a polyphony festival, I strongly felt that we needed contemporary musical responses to music of the greatest masters. Robert has contributed passionately and generously to this project; his musical responses to the masterworks of Josquin, Lassus, Victoria, and Bach are nothing short of remarkable. Quite simply, they are acts of profound reverence and love. He is a cherished colleague and friend, and I am deeply grateful that he has given so freely of himself in all aspects of this festival, our co-creation.

Many thanks must go to all members of the Conspirare staff for their wonderful contributions to this project. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Richard Gabrillo and Robert Harlan on our production team for their superb work in preparation for this festival weekend. Very special thanks to Katie Apple for her great care in preparing all the scores and her thoughtful attention to countless details that support the musical performances.

As choral artists, we have the privilege of singing our way into these incredible wonders of musical architecture and human expression. My fervent hope for you, our honored listeners, is that you will be drawn deeper into this music, in order to experience its inner life through the dynamic interplay of luminous, interwoven melodic layers. May you delight in the sheer beauty of these remarkable masterworks and may they take you to a place of enchantment both ancient and familiar.

Thank you for taking this journey with us.

Craig Hella Johnson,
Artistic Director
Early Voices
A Candlelight Ceremony of Music by Josquin des Prez
Musical Response and Performance Editions by Robert Kyr

Please refrain from applause until the hall is fully lighted at the end of the concert

I. Reflection

De Profundis
Josquin des Prez (1450-1521)

Illibata Dei Virgo
Josquin

Tu solus qui facis mirabilia
Josquin

II. Redemption

Gaude virgo mater Christi
Josquin

Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria
Josquin

Agnus Dei from Missa Pange Lingua
Josquin

Julie Keim, soprano
Dorea Cook, alto
Tracy Jacob Shirk, tenor

III. Remembrance

Nymphes des bois—Requiem
Josquin

Musical Response—Anthem & Recessional
Toward Dawn
Robert Kyr (b. 1952)

Abigail Haynes Lennox, soprano
Josquin des Prez (1450-1521) is often regarded as the greatest polyphonic master of the Renaissance, and almost five hundred years after his death, as second only to J. S. Bach in the art of counterpoint. As one of his colleagues remarked, “Josquin composed more motets after his death than during his life,” because so many works were falsely attributed to him (often by publishers) to assure their renown. And none other than Martin Luther declared, “God has also preached the Gospel in music, as can be seen in Josquin, from whom all composition flows gladly, willingly, effortlessly, neither compelled nor forced by rules as in the song of the finch …”

Early Voices features a wide range of some of Josquin’s greatest works, which will be presented in three groups: Reflection (I); Redemption (II), and Remembrance (III). The first part of the concert (Reflection) opens with Josquin’s setting of Psalm 130 (De profundis/Out of the Depths) for low voices. It is thought that this solemn work was sung during ceremonies related to the death and burial of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I at the end of Josquin’s life.

Next, we hear Illibata dei virgo, a motet composed on a newly written text, the first twelve lines of which form an acrostic: the initial letter of each line spells out Josquin’s name—IOSQVIND(es)PREZ. The text of the motet celebrates Mary in a lyrical and poetic manner, “So, hail, all beautiful as the moon, rejoice, O elect and brilliant as the sun.” Without pause, the first part of the concert concludes with Tu solus qui facis mirabilia (“You only, who do wonders,/you the only creator,/who created us…”), one of the few works of Josquin that is more chordal than polyphonic, and thus, sounds to us like an expansive hymn or chorale.

The second part of the concert (Redemption) begins with a bold and energetic motet (Gaude virgo mater Christi) of a rarely set text that praises Mary through asserting, “Rejoice, for your son, whose death you mourned, shines in the resurrection.” The next piece—Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria (Inviolate, pure and chaste are you, Mary)—was written during Josquin’s years in Rome as a chorister in the Sistine Chapel Choir (c. 1484-1489). I have orchestrated the
work by mixing voices and strings in a 21st century manner. The strings take the quickest moving lines, while the vocalists sing slower, chant-like melodies in canon (a melodic line set against itself at a specific distance in time), thus ensuring that the long, ethereal vocal melodies can always be clearly heard.

This part of the concert closes with one of Josquin’s most profound Mass movements, the *Agnus Dei* from his final Mass (*Missa Pange Lingua*), which he composed 7-8 years before his death. This luminous music is distinguished by the fluidity of its melodic lines and clarity of its sonic architecture, featuring an undulating series of canons at the end of the movement.

The final part of the concert (*Remembrance*) begins with *Nymphes des bois—Requiem*, Josquin’s elegy for Johannes Ockeghem (d. February 6, 1497), his beloved teacher and colleague. Josquin wrote his musical setting in rarely used black notation (filled-in notes), as though the music is dressed in *habis de doeuil* (mourning clothes). The first half of the setting is a masterful remembrance of Ockeghem’s musical style, while the remainder is pure Josquin, who laments the death of his friend and teacher with haunting intensity.

My musical response to Josquin’s elegy is a setting of Psalm 130 (*De profundis*/ *Out of the Depths*) that is titled *Toward Dawn*. In this work, the musical lines are paraphrases of soprano melodies from *Nymphes des bois*, which are stated in chronological order. In this way, I am responding to, remembering, and eulogizing Josquin himself, by tracing the journey of his elegy through my own 21st-century polyphony that is firmly rooted in his ancient art. The concert ends with my recessional music, which is sung across the vaulted chamber of the concert space (and from beyond) as a series of remembrances that culminate in a reflective soprano cantillation, a heralding of dawn. —Robert Kyr

*Please see expanded program notes at www.conspirare.org*
Defining Mastery

Music by Orlandus Lassus
Musical Response by Robert Kyr

Please refrain from applause except where indicated by the symbol (~~~~~~~~~~~)

Musica Dei donum optimi
Orlandus Lassus (1532-1594)

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus
Lassus

~~~~~~~~~~~

From Song of Songs (Canticum canticorum)
Lassus

I. Quam pulchra es et quam decora
II. Veni dilecte mi

~~~~~~~~~~~

From Missa Bell’ Amfitrit’ altera
Lassus

I. Gloria
II. Sanctus

~~~~~~~~~~~

Lamentatio Tertia Primi Diei
(Third Lamentation for Thursday in Holy Week)
Lassus

Performance Edition by Robert Kyr
Kathlene Ritch, soprano
Pam Elrod, alto
Matt Alber, tenor

~~~~~~~~~~~

Musical Response—Lament

From the Abyss
Robert Kyr (b. 1952)

Santa Fe Vespers 2010
Kyr

(Movements performed without pause)
I. Heaven Hear My Words
II. Hail, Star of the Sea
III. Seraphim
Defining Mastery

Program Notes

Virtually all Renaissance composers started out as boy choristers. Good voices were so prized that kidnappings were common, and Orlandus Lassus (1532-1594) had the distinction of being abducted three times. The last time, at age twelve, he was taken far from his home in what is now Belgium to the court of the Viceroy of Sicily. There he was immersed in the Italian style that was already influencing many of his fellow composers from the North. After working—of his own volition—throughout Italy, he ended up in the very prestigious position of chapelmaster of Rome’s Church of St. John Lateran at the age of 21.

When Palestrina took over this post just a year later, Lassus returned to Antwerp. There he was among the first composers, beginning with Josquin, to be featured in the newly substantial market for printed music, first in 1555 with volumes printed in both Antwerp and Venice, and later throughout Europe, as major publishers vied for his work.

Lassus’s wide renown enabled him to pick and choose among the glamorous court positions of Europe. He was courted by Charles IX and Henry III of France, Emperor Maximilian I, and Pope Gregory XIII, but settled in Munich at the court of the Dukes of Bavaria, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Lassus was among the most prolific of composers, producing over 2,000 vocal works in every secular and sacred form of the time. Instrumental music is notably, totally absent. As Richard Crocker wrote, “An output of this magnitude suggests that the composer was not overly worried with the position of the next note to be written … composition, at the technical level, must have been almost automatic, the composer merely monitoring the quality of the fabric as it was produced.” —Eric Leibrock

Saturday afternoon’s concert features a wide range of works by Orlandus Lassus—motets, a lament, and two Mass movements—which exemplify the scope and stylistic diversity of his output. From the harmonic clarity and sonic richness of his motets on Song of Songs texts (Quam pulchra es, et quam decora
and *Veni dilecte mi*) to the profound melancholy and solemn anguish of his *Third Lamentation for Thursday in Holy Week* (on texts from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*), we hear the ever-original voice of a polyphonic master, whose music is complex yet always accessible and emotionally compelling.

My musical response to Lassus is a lament, titled *From the Abyss*, that is a setting of passages from Psalm 69 (lines 1-3) and the story of Jonah and the whale (Jon. 2: 3-4, 6-7). In both texts, the narrator implores God to save him from the destructive force of water: from the onslaught of the flood or the abyss at the roots of mountains, where the world closes in around one forever.

My lament begins with a paraphrase of the opening from Lassus’s *Third Lamentation*, which immediately precedes it on the program. Throughout *From the Abyss*, musical materials from Lassus’s piece serve as a theme upon which I have written a series of contrapuntal transformations. In this way, the music may be experienced as the tides of an ocean (the central image of the text)—an ebbing and flowing of Lassus and myself across a four hundred year expanse, a synthesis of ancient and contemporary polyphonic sensibilities.

The final work of the afternoon is my *Santa Fe Vespers 2010*, which is a 21st century response to one of the choral masterpieces of the European repertoire, *Vespers of 1610* by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Every line of my text is drawn from Monteverdi’s *Vespers*, which serves as both source and inspiration for my work. Although I have explored musical devices that are close to Monteverdi’s heart (canonic imitation, cantus firmus, and ritornello, among others), my music does not sound like his, nor is it Baroque in terms of style or aesthetic. Instead, it takes a journey that begins from Monteverdi’s premise in order to explore new spiritual pathways. The work was commissioned by the Santa Fe Desert Chorale (Joshua Habermann, director), to whom it is dedicated, along with the Abbot Philip and the brothers of the monastery of Christ in the Desert in northwest New Mexico.

—Robert Kyr
A Flowering in Spain
Music by Tomás Luis de Victoria
Musical Response by Robert Kyr

Please refrain from applause except where indicated by the symbol (○○○○○○○○○○)

Reading: St. Theresa of Ávila
Lectio I

Reading: St. Theresa of Ávila
Lectio III (from Lamentations for Maundy Thursday)

Reading: Sappho
O vos omnes

Reading: Salve Regina (Marian antiphon)
Salve Regina
Veni Creator Spiritus

Ne timeas Maria
O magnum mysterium

Reading: Sappho
Magnificat sexti toni

Reading: Song of Songs
Vidi speciosam

Musical Response—Solo, Duet & Polychoral Motet

A Time for Song
Robert Kyr (b. 1952)

Abigail Haynes Lennox, soprano
David Farwig, baritone
Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611), the great late-Renaissance Spanish composer, was a native of the province of Ávila, where he received his early musical training. His music is often described as embodying the mysticism of his contemporary, St. Theresa of Ávila, a great figure of the Counter-Reformation. St. Theresa, aided by her fellow mystic St. John of the Cross, founded a strict reformed order known as the Discalced (Barefoot) Carmelites.

Like St. Theresa, Victoria was immersed in the changes of the Counter-Reformation. In 1565, he entered the German Seminary in Rome, a college devoted to combating Lutheranism. He may have studied with Palestrina, and he served as Palestrina’s successor as master of music at the Roman Seminary in 1564.

Victoria was ordained as a priest in 1575 and served with distinction as an organist, singer, and chapelmaster. In contrast to other famed composers of the late Renaissance, the wealthy courts of Italy did not attract him. He returned to Spain in 1587 and spent the rest of his life as chaplain to the Dowager Empress Maria at the Convent of Descalzes Reales to which she and her daughter had retired in Madrid.

Victoria composed sacred music exclusively, avoiding even the common practice of modeling sacred works after secular tunes. His style is close to that of Palestrina but is viewed as having more harmonic color (expressiveness) and more rhythmic energy. As Gustave Reese wrote, “In addition to melodic curves and leaps characteristic of the Gregorian and Palestrina styles, more abrupt and vigorous lines, with leaps that neither of those styles would allow, make their appearance in Victoria, particularly in his early works.”

Victoria’s compositions were published widely during his lifetime in Italy, Germany, and Spain. After the passing of the Dowager Empress, he remained in his austere but quite comfortable post at the Convent of Descalzes Reales until his own death. –Eric Leibrock
Saturday evening’s concert features many of Victoria’s finest works: two of his deeply moving Lamentations for Maundy Thursday; his ever popular yet intimate O vos omnes and O magnum mysterium; the luminous responsory Vidi speciosam, and Magnificat sexti toni for three choruses, which is one of his grandest polychoral works. Throughout the concert, Victoria’s music is complemented by readings from a variety of writers who reflect his aesthetics and spirituality, such as St. Theresa of Ávila and the unnamed author(s) of the biblical Song of Songs texts (Canticum canticorum), whose erotic poetry was close to the hearts of 16th century mystics.

The program closes with my response to Victoria, a setting of several texts for which he also composed music. Some of these works were performed earlier in the concert, in particular his settings of poetry from the Song of Songs, as well as Vidi speciosam. In addition, my response piece features an excerpt from verse 5 of Noche oscura (Dark Night) by St. John of the Cross, who was a contemporary of both Victoria and St. Theresa.

The response, titled A Time for Song, is a polychoral motet for soprano and baritone soloists, four choruses (two men’s and two women’s), and string trio. The music is continually in the process of flowering—from a solo song (soprano) into a duet (soprano and baritone) into an ever more ecstatic dance of men’s and women’s ensembles that celebrates the sensual and spiritual joys of love. My writing for four choruses is a tribute to Victoria, who was celebrated for his lush polychoral works.

In A Time for Song, I explore a wealth of polyphonic techniques, most notably various forms of canon (a melody or “subject” set against itself at a specific distance in time). While traditionally a canonic subject is a single melodic line, I have composed subjects consisting of three lines (triads) that are set against themselves to create luxuriant harmonies of 3, 6, 9 and 12 parts. At the end of the work, all the principal musical materials of the motet are synthesized in order to embody the mystical union at the heart of St. John’s text: “Amado con amada,/ Amada en el Amado transformada!” (“Lover to beloved,/ Beloved transformed to lover!”) —Robert Kyr
And Then Came Bach
Music by Johann Sebastian Bach
Musical Response by Robert Kyr

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Processional Chorale:
Freu dich sehr
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

From Cantata BWV 110: J. S. Bach
String trio: Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe Transcribed by Peter Baekgaard

Motet: Lobet den Herrn BWV 230 J. S. Bach

From Cantata BWV 140: Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme J. S. Bach
Duet: Wann kommst du, mein Heil?
Sonja Tengblad, soprano
Robert Harlan, baritone

Chorale: Zion hört die Wächter singen
Chorale: Gloria sei dir gesungen

From St. John Passion BWV 245 J. S. Bach
Aria with chorus: Mein teurer Heiland
David Farwig, bass

From Magnificat BWV 243 J. S. Bach
Trio: Suscepit Israel
Julie Keim, soprano
Gitanjali Mathur, soprano
Cecilia Kittley, alto

Chorus: Sicut loctus est

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And Then Came Bach

Continued

From St. Matthew Passion BWV 244
Recessional Chorale: *Befiehl du, deine Wege*  
J. S. Bach

Recessional Chorale: *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*  
J. S. Bach

—Intermission—

Processional Chorale:
*Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid* (BWV 44)  
J. S. Bach

Matt Alber, tenor

Musical Response—Cantata in the Manner of J. S. Bach

*Songs of the Soul*  
Robert Kyr (b. 1952)

Abigail Haynes Lennox, soprano
David Farwig, baritone

I. *Descending: From the Abyss*  
(Lament for chorus & strings)

II. *Venturing: On a Dark Night*  
(First Duo for soloists & strings)

III. *Hoping: Toward Dawn*  
(Anthem for chorus & strings)

IV. *Transforming: Loved into Lover*  
(Second Duo for soloists & strings)

V. *Arising: A Time for Song*  
(Polychoral Motet for chorus & strings)

VI. *Uniting: Leaving My Cares*  
(Third Duo for soloists & strings)

VII. *Transcending: And Love Remains*  
(Fugal Motet for chorus & strings)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was the consummate composer of the Baroque period; his mastery of polyphony may be seen as his own response to the Renaissance. As Manfred F. Bukofzer wrote, “…at the beginning of the Baroque era the old style was not cast aside, but deliberately preserved as a second language, known as the stile antico [old style] of church music.”

Bach came from a long line of family musicians, and like Josquin, Lassus, and Victoria, he started his career singing in a choir. His three major professional positions correspond to his compositional periods, and in each he focused on different genres: in Weimar, keyboard and orchestral works; in Cöthen, keyboard and chamber music; and in Leipzig, the St. John and St. Matthew Passions, Christmas Oratorio, Magnificat, and B Minor Mass, as well as five yearlong cycles of cantatas. —Eric Leibrock

The final work of the afternoon is a cantata—Songs of the Soul—that I have created in the manner of J. S. Bach. This seven-movement work features my previously heard responses to Josquin, Lassus, and Victoria, while adding three intervening solo/duo movements and a final fugal motet. The odd-numbered movements are choral pieces, while the even-numbered movements feature the soprano and baritone soloists singing Noche oscura/Dark Night, a mystical poem by St. John of the Cross, who was a contemporary of Victoria.

The journey of Songs of the Soul begins in the depths of despair with a lament, Descending: From the Abyss (Mvt. I, my Lassus response piece). The soul cries out to God to save it from psychological chaos, as represented by the destructive force of water: “Out of my distress, I cry to you, O Lord,/For you cast me into the deep,/Into the heart of the sea…” (Psalm 69)

The second phase of the journey is Venturing: On a Dark Night, in which the baritone sings about a “happy venture” on a “dark night/aflame with fervent love” (verses 1-2 from Noche oscura), while the soprano sings a haunting wordless song from afar. Throughout the cantata, the baritone represents the earthly personality, while the soprano personifies the soul. The chorus—
embodying the community—responds with an anthem, *Hoping: Toward Dawn* (Mvt. III, my Josquin response piece), which is a setting of Psalm 130 (*De profundis*): “Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord…/My soul waits upon your word;/My soul hopes…”

The fourth phase is *Transforming: Loved into Lover*, which culminates in an ecstatic duet sung by the soloists, “O night that joined Lover to beloved,/Beloved transformed to lover!” (verses 3-5 of *Noche oscura*). Then the chorus divides into four choirs—two women’s and two men’s ensembles—and rejoices with a quick, dance-like movement, *Arising: A Time for Song* (Mvt. V, my musical response to Victoria). Throughout, the entire community celebrates the joys of love, both earthly and spiritual. Then, in *Uniting: Leaving My Cares* (Mvt. VI), the soloists express love’s blissful nature in a lyrical setting of the final three verses of *Noche oscura*. Ultimately, they sing as one, “All things ceased, I left myself,/Leaving my care/Forgotten among the lilies.”

The final phase of the journey is *Transcending: And Love Remains* (Mvt. VII), a fugal motet that is my response to Bach’s music. It is a Latin setting of a revered text from Corinthians I: “Love is patient,/Love is kind…Faith, hope, love; these three, but the greatest of these is love.” The chorus divides into four choirs and sings a wide range of canonic and fugal treatments that are developed from the opening theme of the movement. The continual harmonic ebb and flow represents the process of becoming self-aware through the experience of love: “…For now we see/In a mirror, dimly,/But then we will see face to face./Now I know only in part; Then I will know fully,/Even as I have been fully known.”

With deepest gratitude, I dedicate *Songs of the Soul* to Craig Hella Johnson, David Farwig, Abigail Haynes Lennox, and all the singers of Conspirare Company of Voices, who never fail to inspire me through the commitment and musicality that they infuse into the living of their art. —Robert Kyr

*Please see expanded program notes at www.conspirare.org*
Artistic Personnel

Craig Hella Johnson, *Artistic Director & Conductor*
Rick Gabrillo, *Associate Conductor*
Robert Kyr, *Composer-in-Residence*

COMPANY OF VOICES

**SOPRANO**
Julie Keim
Abigail H. Lennox
Gitanjali Mathur
Kathlene Ritch
Sonja Tengblad

**TENOR**
Matt Alber
Paul D’Arcy
Jos Milton
Tracy Jacob Shirk

**ALTO**
Dorea Cook
Cina Crisara
Pam Elrod
Cecilia Kittley
Emily Lodine

**BASS**
Cameron Beauchamp
David Farwig
Rick Gabrillo
Robert Harlan
John Proft

Faith DeBow, *keyboard continuo*
Stephen Redfield, *violin*
Greg Luce, *viola*
Greg Sauer, *cello*

Conspirare
Craig Hella Johnson
& Company of Voices

To read biographies of the artists, visit conspirare.org/renaissance-response-singers-instrumentalists/
Robert Kyr (b. 1952) is considered to be one of the most prolific composers of his generation; he is also a writer and filmmaker. His output features a wide range of music for vocal ensembles of all types, as well as twelve symphonies, three chamber symphonies, three violin concerti, and works for diverse chamber ensembles.

Three compact discs of Kyr’s music are currently available through New Albion Records: Violin Concerto Trilogy (NA 126), Unseen Rain (NA 075), and The Passion according to Four Evangelists (NA 098). His Freedom Song was recorded for Sing Freedom!, Conspirare’s soon-to-be-released compact disc of American spirituals on Harmonia Mundi. In addition, Kyr’s music has been featured on several compilation discs including Faces of a Woman (MDG 344-1468), Celestial Light: Music by Hildegard von Bingen and Robert Kyr (Telarc CD 80456), The Fourth River: The Millennium Revealed (Telarc CD 80534), and Strange Attractors: New American Music for Piano (Albany Records CD TROY 231).

Over the past three decades, Kyr has received commissions from numerous music organizations including Conspirare, Cappella Romana (Portland/Seattle), Chanticleer (San Francisco), Cantus (Minneapolis), Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum, Yale Camerata/Pro Musica, Cappella Nova (Scotland), Revalia (Estonia), Putni (Latvia), Moscow State Chamber Choir (Russia), Harvard Glee Club, Radcliffe Choral Society, Ensemble Project Ars Nova, Back Bay Chorale (Boston), Oregon Repertory Singers, Pacific Youth Choir, San Francisco Symphony Chorus, New England Philharmonic, Oregon Symphony, Yale Symphony, Berkshire Symphony, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, New West Symphony (Los Angeles), Third Angle (Portland), California EAR Unit (Los Angeles), and San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, among others.
Many foundations and institutions have commissioned Kyr’s music, including Paul G. Allen Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Meet the Composer, Chamber Music America, Scottish Arts Council, Canada Council, Estonian Choral Society, Nagasaki Peace Museum, Chase Foundation (Boston), New England Foundation for the Arts, Hopkins Arts Center (Dartmouth), Templeton Foundation, Collins Foundation, Oregon Regional Arts and Culture Council, Oregon Humanities Center, and Massachusetts Council for the Arts and Humanities.

Kyr holds degrees from Yale (B.A. 1974), University of Pennsylvania (M.A. 1978), and Harvard (Ph.D. 1989). He has held teaching positions in composition and music theory at Yale, UCLA, Hartt School of Music, Aspen Music School, and the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was Director of Compositional Studies. Currently, he is Philip H. Knight Professor of Music and chair of the composition department at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance. In addition to teaching, Kyr directs the Oregon Bach Festival Composers Symposium, the Music Today Festival, and the Vanguard Concert and Series. He is also President-elect of the University of Oregon Senate. Robert Kyr’s website is www.robertkyr.com and he can be contacted at rkyr@uoregon.edu.

Performing Note

Conspirare has the privilege of performing in a variety of beautiful venues. We seek out acoustical and aesthetic environments that can best enhance choral performances and we are deeply grateful to our hosts. While our performing venues may represent specific traditions and the texts of some of our repertoire may also be representative of specific traditions, it is in no way intended to be exclusive of any individual whose experience or set of beliefs is not represented.

Conspirare respects and celebrates the great diversity of religious, artistic, and human experiences represented among our singers and audience members. Our shared musical experiences are intended to bring us together as we all seek to be inspired by the power of great choral music. The audience creates the space in which the music is held.
About Conspirare

The word “conspirare” derives from the Latin “con” and “spirare” translated as “to breathe together.”

Founded in 1991 to present a summer classical music festival in Austin, Texas, Conspirare has rapidly grown to become an internationally recognized, professional choral organization that combines outstanding vocal artistry with innovative programming. Led by founder and artistic director Craig Hella Johnson, Conspirare is comprised of two performing ensembles and an educational program. A chamber choir (“Conspirare”) of extraordinarily talented singers from around the country is presented in an annual concert series in Austin, other Texas communities, and locations in the U.S. and abroad. The Conspirare Symphonic Choir of both professional and volunteer singers performs one or more large choral/orchestral works annually. The Conspirare Youth Choirs is an educational program for singers ages 8-16, who learn and perform in two separate ensembles, Kantorei and the Conspirare Children’s Choir.

Conspirare produced its first commercial recording, *through the green fuse*, in 2004 on the Clarion Records label. A second CD, *Requiem*, also on Clarion and since
reissued by Harmonia Mundi, was released in 2006 and received two Grammy®
nominations (Best Choral Performance and Best Engineered Album, Classical).
Harmonia Mundi also released Requiem in Europe in 2009, and it received the
Netherlands’ prestigious 2010 Edison Award in the Choral Music category. The
Edison is the Dutch equivalent of the U.S. Grammy.

A third recording, Threshold of Night, was released worldwide in September
2008 on the Harmonia Mundi label, Conspirare’s first title for the distinguished
recording company. Threshold of Night received two Grammy nominations, Best
Choral Performance and Best Classical Album. In October 2008, in cooperation
with Austin’s public television station KLRU, Conspirare filmed a PBS television
special, “A Company of Voices: Conspirare in Concert,” that was broadcast
nationally in March 2009 and is available on both CD and DVD. “A Company
of Voices” received a Grammy nomination as Best Classical Crossover Album.
Conspirare’s next CD “Sing Freedom: African American Spirituals” was recorded in
October for release in 2011 by Harmonia Mundi.

In 2005 Conspirare received the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence,
given by national service organization Chorus America. In 2007, as one of the
select choruses to receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts under
its American Masterpieces initiative, Conspirare presented a four-day festival that
featured a distinguished gathering of composers and conductors, performances
of three world premieres, and a gala closing concert with a choir of 600 singers.
In July 2008 Conspirare represented the United States at the Eighth World
Symposium on Choral Music in Copenhagen, joining invited choirs from nearly
forty countries. In February 2010 Conspirare was an invited, featured choir at
the annual convention of the American Choral Directors Association/Eastern
Division in Philadelphia. Conspirare received the 2010 Dale Warland Singers
Commission Award from Chorus America to support the commission of a new
work by Seattle composer Eric Banks. In February 2011 Conspirare will give three
invited performances in New York City under auspices of the Weill Music Institute
of Carnegie Hall.
About Craig Hella Johnson

Renowned as one of the most influential voices in choral conducting in the United States, Craig Hella Johnson brings a depth of knowledge, artistic sensitivity, and imagination to his programs. As founder and artistic director of Conspirare, Johnson has assembled some of the finest singers in the country to form a world-class, award-winning organization committed to creating dynamic choral art.

In addition to his work with Conspirare, Johnson also serves as Artistic Director of the Victoria Bach Festival, an annual event that draws musicians and critical praise from around the country. Of Johnson’s performance of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, Mike Greenberg of the San Antonio *Express-News* wrote: “Through all the amazing ebbs and flows of dynamics, the radiant balances, the seamless connection of episodes, the theatrically astute tempo relations, the unified structural arc, the music shone forth with organic naturalness. Nothing sounded fussed over. Everything just sounded right.”

Johnson served as Director of Choral Activities (1990-2001) at the University of Texas in Austin where he led the graduate program in conducting. He was
artistic director of San Francisco-based Chanticleer (1998-1999) and has served as guest conductor with the Austin Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Santa Fe Symphony, Chicago’s Music of the Baroque, Berkshire Choral Festival, and Oregon Bach Festival. In September 2009 Johnson travelled to Taiwan to conduct the Taipei Male Choir.

Praised by audiences and critics, Johnson’s programs are hailed as thought-provoking musical journeys. One unique aspect of Johnson’s programming is his signature “collage” style: through-composed programs that marry music and poetry to seamlessly blend sacred and secular, classical and contemporary, classical and popular. In 2006 he was engaged to create a special peace-themed collage program for the North Central ACDA convention. He was also engaged by the St. Olaf Choir to create and conduct a collage program during a five-week residency with the choir in spring 2007.

A composer and arranger, Johnson works with G. Schirmer Publishing on the Craig Hella Johnson Choral Series, featuring specially selected composers as well as some of his original compositions and arrangements. His works are also published by Alliance Music Publications. Also an accomplished vocalist and pianist, he released his first solo CD “Thorns on the Rose” in 2008 on the Booker Music label.

Johnson’s distinctive style and commitment to the choral art have led him to be honored with several awards, including 2008 induction into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame and the 2009 Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal, given by Chorus America.

A native of Minnesota, Johnson studied at St. Olaf College, the Juilliard School, and the University of Illinois and earned his doctorate at Yale University. As the recipient of a National Arts Fellowship, Johnson studied with Helmuth Rilling at the International Bach Academy in Stuttgart, Germany.
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**Watch for the release of our new CD this year!**

We gratefully acknowledge the underwriters of the forthcoming recording of “Sing Freedom: African American Spirituals,” to be released later this year on the Harmonia Mundi label:

**Fran and Larry Collmann, Crutch and Danna Crutchfield,**

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Recordings allow us to share Conspirare’s unforgettable artistry with a worldwide audience, and to create a permanent record for future generations. If you are interested in helping to shape this legacy, please contact executive director Ann Hume Wilson at 512-476-5775.
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‘TIL DEATH DO US PART:
LATE NIGHT CATECHISM 3
JUNE 15-26

DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN
JUNE 17-18

* Presented in association with Texas Performing Arts and Broadway Across America

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Festival of Children’s Voices
with St John’s College Choir

Featuring over 250 local voices from the UT Combined Choirs, Austin Children’s Choir, Austin Girls’ Choir, and the Conspirare Youth Choir, in concert with the UT Symphony Orchestra

Sunday
April 10, 2011, 5pm
Bass Concert Hall

$10 STUDENT TICKETS
Tickets at texasperformingarts.org, 800.982.BEVO (2386), and all Texas Box Office outlets. Groups: 512.471.0648

photo: Ronald Knapp
This is Conspirare
2010-2011 Season

Roberto Sierra’s Missa Latina
A performing force of two hundred musicians from Conspirare Symphonic Choir, Conspirare, Victoria Bach Festival, and the Texas State Chorale perform Sierra’s Grammy®-nominated blockbuster, spiced with Latin color and energy. Featuring soloists Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano, and Nathaniel Webster, baritone.

June 11, Victoria, June 12, Austin

Conspirare Youth Choirs
Spring concert “Voices of Joy”
May 6-7, Austin

Big Sing! Where the audience is the choir
Thursday, March 3
Admission free, no musical experience required!

Concert details and tickets at 512-476-5775 Conspirare.org

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Roberto Sierra’s
Missa Latina

SEASON FINALE!

A performing force of two hundred musicians from Conspirare Symphonic Choir, Conspirare, Victoria Bach Festival, and the Texas State Chorale perform Sierra’s Grammy®-nominated blockbuster, spiced with Latin vibrancy, color and energy.

June 11th in Victoria & June 12th in Austin

Conspirare
Craig Hella Johnson & Company of Voices

Concert details and tickets at 512-476-5775 Conspirare.org