

CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON - BIOGRAPHY

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. Founder and Artistic Director of the Grammy Award-Nominated choral ensemble Conspirare, Johnson has assembled some of the finest singers in the country to create a world class, award-winning ensemble committed to creating dynamic choral art.

In addition to his work with Conspirare, Johnson also serves as the Music Director Laureate and Conductor 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 at the University of Texas in Austin from 1990 to 2001 leading the graduate program in conducting. He was Artistic Director of San Francisco-based Chanticleer from 1998-1999 and has served as guest conductor with the Austin Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Santa Fe Symphony, Chicago's Music of the Baroque, and the Berkshire Choral Festival. In 2008, Johnson was inducted into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame.

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 the sacred and secular as well as the classical and contemporary. 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 the spring of 2007. Johnson's distinctive programming style and commitment to the choral art led him to be honored with the 2009 Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal, an award given by Chorus America.

A composer and arranger, Johnson is an editor with G. Schirmer Publishing and is working on a 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.

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.