



**ROBERT KYR**

**EARTH  
VIGIL**

**CONSPIRARE**

**Craig Hella Johnson**

**Awet Andemicael** soprano  
**Stephen Lancaster** baritone





Craig Hella Johnson



Robert Kyr

## AN INVITATION TO REMEMBER

Robert Kyr's *Earth Vigil* invokes the power of music to speak from the deepest parts of ourselves. In this time, when so many are feeling the extreme urgency of the climate crisis and hearing the cries of our imperiled planet, we share this new composition with tremendous gratitude. *Earth Vigil* tells a tender and moving story of two characters and their dramatic journey amidst great challenges caused by the intensifying climate crisis. Ultimately, this work and their story invite us to remember the wonder and beauty of the natural world and of our lives together on this planet. In the final scene, the music and the characters compel us forward with a profoundly hopeful and emboldening song. Our long-time relationship with Robert Kyr has yielded important contributions to the choral field. Robert has brought his formidable gifts as a composer-creator and has invested himself deeply in the creation of this *Earth Vigil* with each of the Conspirare artists in mind. We are excited to release this extraordinary new work as we share the passionate vision for a healing planet and a global circle of people who come to understand their sacred relationship with each other and with all of the natural world.

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## A VIGIL FOR THE EARTH BY ROBERT KYR

*Earth Vigil* is an environmental oratorio for two principal soloists (soprano and baritone), chorus, and seven instrumentalists that I created for Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare Company of Voices, who commissioned it. The work is a sequel to *A Time for Life*, also an environmental oratorio, which was the first of my works that Craig and Conspirare performed in 2009. This led to a decade of artistically rewarding collaborations and recordings with them, including *Songs of the Soul*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *Freedom Song*, and an arrangement of Samuel Barber's *The Lovers* for baritone, chorus, and chamber ensemble.

As a musical storytelling, *Earth Vigil* traces the journey of two persons, a woman and a man named Alesha and Tallis. They are drawn together through their love of Nature and their concern for the environment, as they personally witness the devastating effects of global climate change. This work is a fusion of oratorio and opera, which I call a "choral drama." In this new musical genre, the chorus is one of the principal characters, and its vocalists take many different roles; they are soloists, as well as members of vocal chamber ensembles and singers within the full chorus.

In this drama, Alesha is a writer who has written a book that features poetic reflections about

her experience of living in a magnificent canyon in the American Southwest. Her immediate environment is comprised of mesas that extend for 12 miles along a vast flood plain, through which flows a turbulent river. Alesha is deeply in love with her home, which exemplifies the sublime beauty and boundless mystery of Nature. The ecosystem in which she lives is based on my own experience of living in the glorious Rio Chama wilderness of northwest New Mexico for several months each year.

For his part, Tallis is a scientist, photographer, and videographer who is making a film about the impact of climate change on the lives of those who inhabit remote wilderness areas. He asks for Alesha's consent to be interviewed and she agrees, which begins their relationship and establishes the premise from which the oratorio unfolds as they fight for their lives amidst an environmental catastrophe.

In the manner of an oratorio, *Earth Vigil* is an alternation of recitative sections with solo and duo arias, vocal chamber pieces, and choral movements. The work may be performed in two versions: either with recitative sections ("narratives") sung by Alesha or with recitatives sung as conversations between both soloists ("convos"). Moreover, the oratorio may be performed as concert music or as a multimedia

piece that features my photography and video of the Rio Chama's extraordinary terrains and majestic vistas.

*Earth Vigil* is my own direct response to global climate change, which has only accelerated throughout the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath. Our planet's downward spiral has convinced a rapidly expanding number of individuals and communities that humans do not control Nature, but rather, our very survival depends upon its healthy continuance. Indeed, we are at Nature's mercy in the face of disastrous natural events, which are often triggered by human disruptions, interventions, and manipulations of vital natural processes. The sustainable solution to our predicament is to learn the best ways to live in harmony with our planet's complex ecosystem rather than abusing it through over-consumption and attempts to dominate other life forms. We are gradually learning that our actions have dire consequences, but so does inaction, which is even worse.

In *Earth Vigil*, Alesha and Tallis learn that no one is separate from Nature nor are we independent from one another: we are one human family that shares whatever outcomes we co-create. The more we attempt to subjugate Nature and bend it toward our shortsighted ambitions,

the further we remove ourselves from finding meaningful solutions to the unraveling of the natural world. However, when we cooperate with Nature through responsible action, then new opportunities arise for collaboration with the very life force that sustains us.

As a universal language, music has a crucial role to play in addressing the current environmental crisis, because it powerfully connects all of us to each other, and to our innermost beliefs and convictions. By developing a better understanding of who we truly are and the needs of our planet, we will become more deeply committed to living in harmony with Nature as the basis for our survival.

*Earth Vigil* is dedicated to Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare, and to soloists Awet Andemicael, Stephen Lancaster and Simon Barrad with my profound gratitude for their artistry. I am grateful for Conspirare's ongoing commitment to commissioning and performing music that reflects its most deeply held beliefs and values. More than ever, we need music-making and co-creation to shine the bright light of positive action on the challenges that we face during this unprecedented period in the history of the Earth, our vibrant home.

## **EARTH VIGIL**

Music & Text by Robert Kyr

### **Principal Soloists**

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**A:** Alesha  
soprano solo  
Awet Andemicael

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**T:** Tallis  
baritone solo  
Stephen Lancaster

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### **Characters** ***(The Ballad of Good Mind)***

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**G:** Grandmother  
A solo  
Lianna Wimberly Williams

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**Sn:** Son  
T solo  
Michael Jones

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**F:** Father  
B1 & B2 (sections)

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**ST:** Storytellers  
S, A, T, B (sections)

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### **Chorus**

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**C:** Mixed Chorus  
SATB (SSATBB)

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Awet Andemicael



Stephen Lancaster

## **PART I: CONNECTION**

### **Scene 1) Prologue: *The Ballad of Good Mind***

#### **[1] 1-1 Invocation: *Creation Story***

A: When I was a child,  
My grandmother told me  
A creation story.  
Our grandmothers passed it on  
From generation to generation.  
It begins with an urgent plea  
To all the forces of light.

#### **[2] 1-2 Chorus: *Hail, One Life!***

C: Hail, One Life,  
Dwarf Lightning,  
Green Lightning,  
Hawk, Hunter,  
Bearer, Engenderer,  
Grandmother of Day,  
Grandmother of Light,  
When it is light,  
When it is bright.

Hail, Former,  
Hail, Shaper,  
Look upon us,  
Hear us.  
Do not turn on us,  
Heart of Heaven,  
Heart of Earth!  
Give us our sign,  
Give us our word,  
On the road of day,  
On the road of light,  
When it is light,  
When it is bright.

### **GRANDMOTHER:**

ST: Good Mind asked his  
grandmother,  
Where his father lived  
And she said:

G: Seek your father,  
Who lives far to the east;  
Go to the end of the island,  
Go over the water  
And behold a mountain  
Rising from the sea.  
Walk up the mountain;  
Your father is there  
Seated at the top.

### **EARTH:**

ST: Good Mind traveled there,  
To the foot of the mountain,  
He looked up and shouted,

Sn: Father, where are you?

F: My son can throw the cliff  
To this peak.

ST: Good Mind seized the cliff  
And hurled it to the top.

### **WATER:**

Sn: Father, where are you?

F: My son can swim the rapids  
From below to above.

ST: Good Mind jumped into  
the falls  
And swam upward to its edge.

### **AIR:**

Sn: Father, where are you?

F: My son can wrestle  
With the wind.

ST: So Good Mind and Wind  
Struggled to overturn each other,  
But Good Mind overcame Wind  
Who departed, moaning.

### **FIRE:**

Sn: Father, where are you?

F: My son can survive the flame.

ST: Suddenly a great flame  
Surrounded Good Mind,  
And he leapt and ran  
To the mountain top  
Where behold,  
A being sat  
In a blaze of light.

### **COUNSEL:**

F: I am your father;  
You are my son.

Sn: I am here to receive power,  
To rule all things on earth.

F: You have power,  
You have conquered;  
Now I will give you  
Living creatures  
To bless the earth.

ST: Thus did father and son  
Counsel together—  
The son learned  
What he should do.  
Then the father spoke,

F: How did you find me  
Since I am hidden in elements?

## **MUSIC:**

Sn: Before my journey,  
Grandmother gave me a flute;  
I made music.  
And when I stopped,  
The flute said:  
'The Way you must go.'  
When I make music,  
The flute speaks.

F: Make music and listen,  
Then you will know  
The right way.

## **SUMMA:**

C: Hail, Former,  
Hail, Shaper,  
Heart of Heaven,  
Heart of Earth!  
Give us our sign,  
Give us our word,  
When it is light,  
When it is bright.

Make music,  
And listen:  
Then you will know  
The right way.

[Based on the Mayan "Book of Counsel," *Popul Vuh*, and a Seneca cosmological myth]

## **Scene 2) Land of the Shining Stones**

### **[3] 2-1 Narrative I: Remembering**

A: I will always remember  
When I first met Tallis.  
It was over the phone.

He had read my book  
About living in harmony  
with nature.  
He wanted to interview me  
For a film that he was making  
About global climate change.  
He lived nearby,  
So I invited him to visit.  
Then he asked me to read  
A section of the book he loved:  
Six haiku poems  
About the canyon where I live.  
I remembered grandmother's voice,  
Then I opened my book  
And read "*Shining Stonesong*."

### **[4] 2-2 Aria: Shining Stonesong**

A: I. *Dawn*  
through dawn arising  
everywhere you look—wonder—  
endless creation

II. *Morning*  
countless shades of green,  
more than one can imagine:  
from red earth, new life

III. *Noon*  
after canyon rains—  
smell of juniper and sage:  
piercing clarity

IV. *Afternoon*  
swift thunder of wings:  
a hummingbird above me  
thrumming the still air;  
whatever might be smallest,  
astonishes with great gifts

V. *Twilight*  
sunlight vanishing

while an ancient mesa-face  
glows with primal light

VI. *Deepest Night*  
above the canyon,  
Orion pours itself out—  
heaven into earth,  
starlight shining into us  
from Alpha to Omega

## **PART II: SEPARATION**

### **[5] Scene 3) Chorus: Hail, One Life! (Refrain I)**

C: Hail, One Life,  
Dwarf Lightning,  
Green Lightning,  
Hawk, Hunter,  
Bearer, Engenderer,  
Grandmother of Day,  
Grandmother of Light,  
When it is bright,  
When it is light.

Hail, Former,  
Hail, Shaper,  
Look upon us,  
Hear us.

Do not turn on us,  
Heart of Heaven,  
Heart of Earth!  
Give us our sign,  
Give us our word,  
On the road of day,  
On the road of light,  
When it is light,  
When it is bright.

#### **Scene 4) Trial by Water**

##### **[6] 4-1 Narrative II, Pt. 1: *Finding a Time***

A: Finally, we found a time  
For another time to talk.  
I asked Tallis to tell me  
How climate change  
Transformed his life.  
He told me this story:  
He was living in New York;  
A massive storm struck the city.  
He was working in his basement  
When water came surging  
Through his windows.  
He panicked,  
Kept yelling for help!  
Over and over again,  
He cried out:

##### **[7] 4-2 Aria: *Thunder Floodsong***

T: I screamed for help,  
Again and again,  
But no one  
Could hear me yelling  
Against the rising flood!  
  
O save me now  
From rushing waters,  
From the surging flood  
Rising up to my neck.  
  
I am falling  
Into unknown depths;  
Nowhere left to stand!  
  
I cry out for help,  
Screaming and wailing  
Against endless torments;  
Losing my mind,  
— Stolen by a raging river,  
8 Stolen by a raging sea!

I am falling  
Into unknown depths;  
Nowhere left to stand.  
  
O save me!  
The flood engulfs me,  
Reaching up to my mouth;  
Churning water  
Pulls me down.  
[Vocalise]

#### **Scene 5) Trial by Fire**

##### **[8] 5-1 Narrative II, Pt. 2: *Panic and Anguish***

A: His panic  
And anguish...  
Horrified me!  
I tried to calm him down.  
I invited him here to show him  
The great flood plain  
Where I write  
Under a lone evergreen  
That stands at its center.  
I call it "The Tree of Life."  
He can film me there.  
Then we said goodbye  
But he called back  
A minute later, shouting,  
"There's fire near you,  
Heavy wind, driving it,  
You don't have a car—  
I'll pick you up  
Within the hour."  
So I packed,  
Hurried down the long road!  
Fire was everywhere,  
Smoke billowing out  
From the inferno.  
If we cannot see,  
Then how will Tallis find me  
*In this lowest circle of hell?*

#### **[9] 5-2 Duo Aria: *Wildfire Smokesong***

T: One hour of madness and fear!  
A: O Lord!  
T: One hour of madness and fear!  
A: Wild flames are round  
about me!  
T: O smoke and flame,  
Confine me not!  
A: Billowing ashes  
And smoke encircle me!  
T: Nothing will stop me!  
A: I am choking  
And cannot breathe!  
T: One hour of madness and fear!  
A: O Lord!  
T: One hour of madness and fear!  
A: Wild flames are round  
about me!  
T: O smoke and flame,  
Confine me not!  
A: Billowing smoke!  
T: There she is—up ahead!  
A: Billowing ashes  
And smoke encircle me!  
T: Nothing will stop me!  
A: I am choking and cannot  
breathe!  
T: Driving straight through,  
I must go on!  
A: A sea of flames  
Has stolen my dreams!  
O save me! O save me now!  
T: Alesha!  
A: Tallis!  
T: We must escape!  
A: The river is our only hope...  
Our *only* hope!  
T: All I see is fire!  
Duo: Howl, you cruel winds and wail!



Stoking the flames  
While you torment us!  
Nowhere to hide from fire!  
No escape for runners  
From the flames!  
There is no escape!  
Wail, you cruel winds and howl!

### **Scene 6) Trial by Water and Fire**

#### **[10] 6-1 Narrative II, Pt. 3: Only One Way**

A: There was only one way to escape!  
I grabbed his arm  
Pulled him down the steep hill  
To the river!

#### **[11] 6-2 Duo Aria: Roaring Riversong**

A: We're at the river's edge:  
Grab my hand and jump!  
T: No way!  
A: Grab my hand!  
You can do it!  
T: No!  
A: Now jump!  
T: O save me now!  
O save me from rushing waters!  
I cry out for help!  
A: Hold onto me!  
Hold on tight!  
Duo: O endless burning torments!  
S: Hold on!  
Hold onto me!  
T: I cry out for help,  
S: You are safe with me!  
T: Screaming and wailing  
Against endless torments!  
Duo: I cry out for help

Wailing and screaming  
Against endless torments!  
Losing my mind—  
Stolen by red-hot flames!  
Losing my mind—  
Stolen by a roaring river,  
Stolen by a roaring fire!  
I am sinking into unknown depths!

A: You are safe with me,  
Hold onto me!  
T: I am sinking into unknown depths!  
A: Hold onto me!  
You are safe with me!  
T: I am drowning in these waters,  
Drowning in the churning water!  
O save me now!

Duo: [*Vocalise*]

### **PART III: RECONCILIATION**

#### **[12] Scene 7) Chorus: Hail, One Life! (Refrain II)**

C: Hail, One Life,  
Dwarf Lightning,  
Green Lightning,  
Hawk, Hunter,  
Bearer, Engenderer:  
Hail, Former,  
Hail, Shaper,  
Heart of Heaven,  
Heart of Earth!  
Give us our sign,  
Give us our word,  
When it is light,  
When it is bright.  
Then you will know:  
Take action,  
Then you will know  
The right way.

### **Scene 8) Lament & Aria: I Will Go On**

#### **[13] 8-1 Narrative III, Pt. 1: Emerging**

A: Finally, we emerged  
From this blazing hell.  
Within an hour,  
We found my home:  
Only ashes!  
I knelt down,  
Touched the earth  
And wept...

#### **[14] 8-2 Lament: All Is Gone**

A: All is gone.  
Everything that I loved:  
Gone is my home,  
Gone is the forest.  
All is gone.  
Only cinders  
And embers remain.  
Only scorched earth:  
Ashes, only ashes.  
This deepest agony,  
Unbearable grief.  
Desolation: all is gone.

#### **[15] 8-3 Chorus I: The Joyless Land**

C: The earth is laid waste;  
Stripped and barren.  
The world is polluted  
Because of its inhabitants,  
Who have broken many laws.  
They who dwell on earth turn pale,  
And only a few good people are left.  
Broken down are the cities of sorrow.

[Isaiah 24: 3-6]

**[16] 8-4 Chorus II:**  
***All of You Who Pass By***

C: O all of you  
Who pass by on the road:  
Pay attention and see!

[Lamentations 1:12]

**[17] 8-5 Aria: *I Will Go On***

A: Though forests burn,  
Though lakes are deserts,  
Though the earth is scorched,  
I will go on.

Through surging floods,  
Through howling wind,  
Through freeze and drought,  
I will go on.

Through sweltering heat,  
Through bitterest cold,  
Through all afflictions,  
I will go on.

For I am the forest,  
I am the rivers,  
I am the earth.  
I care for all,  
I will go on.

**Scene 9) *Circle of Arms***

**[18] 9-1 Narrative III, Pt. 2:**  
***Night Falling***

A: Night was quickly falling.  
I led him away  
To a part of the canyon  
Where wind cleared the smoke.  
Then I heard my grandmother's

voice;  
Asking me to listen  
And find the right way.  
Then the sky opened,  
Alive with stars.

And I wrote one more haiku  
And read it to him:

*Light of the heavens  
Always you are here with us  
Joy of creation*

Then we fell into a deep sleep  
Until daybreak. . .

**[19] 9-2 Aria: *Circle of Arms***

A: in the dawning  
and time to awaken  
finally we embraced  
pulling into each other  
in a circle of arms  
an embrace of seconds  
seemed without time  
in silence we stayed  
and held each other closely  
in our eyes  
and even the ashes  
stopped falling  
refused to cross  
our line of vision

**Scene 10) *Tree of Life Song***

**[20] 10-1 Narrative III, Pt. 3:**  
***Early Light***

A: In the early light,  
I began walking,  
Very slowly at first.  
I led Tallis  
To the great flood plain.

In the early light,  
I began to run  
Toward my Tree of Life:  
Rejoicing to see it,  
Radiant and always alive!

**[21] 10-2 Chorale Aria:**  
***Tree of Life Song***

C: I always loved to be in Nature  
on this plain of heaven  
with its one tree  
near the farthest horizon in sight.

The drop dies  
In the river of its joy  
Pain goes so far  
It cures itself

While walking, looking out,  
I imagine sitting  
beneath the tree in solitude,  
the sounds of life beyond human,  
a vast music over it all,  
and then my soul is free  
in this waking dream.

In the spring  
After the heavy rain  
The cloud disappears  
That was nothing but tears

And when the wind rustles  
through everything near me,  
gratefully I release my thoughts  
into thundering silence.

In the spring  
The mirror turns green  
Holding a miracle  
Change the shining wind  
And I encounter eternity  
in this tree of life

and the present alive  
in our being.  
So in this immensity,  
my thinking drowns,  
and living is sweet to me  
here and now.

This tree led us to our eyes  
Let whatever is be open.

[adapted from Leopardi, *The Infinite*,  
and Mirza Ghalib, *The Drop Dies in  
the River*]

### **Scene 11) Epilogue: *Hope and Resilience***

#### **[22] 11-1 Narrative III, Pt. 4: Fire and Water**

A: Through fire and water,  
We were severely tested.  
We are grateful to survive.  
Now we must take action  
To save everything we love.

All of us with our ancestors,  
Together on this journey:  
To find the right way,  
To heal our earth,  
To live in this world  
In truth and peace—  
With honor,  
With respect—  
In unity—  
In wholeness.

#### **[23] 11-2 Finale: *Now Is the Time***

C: We were divided.  
We had forgotten who we are.  
Now we must always remember  
To walk again in wholeness.  
Now rejoice in the breath of winds!  
Now rejoice in the flow of waters!

Now is the time  
To heal each other.  
Now is the time  
To preserve Nature,  
In which we live and move  
And have our being.

Now rejoice in the breath of wind!  
Now rejoice in the flow of waters!  
Now rejoice in living and being!

Now acclaim, now be glad,  
Now enthrall, now extol,  
Now exult, now proclaim,  
Now rejoice!

Now is the time  
To take action,  
Now is the time  
To heal our planet,  
To live again as one.

Now rejoice in the greater changing!  
Now rejoice in living and being!  
Now rejoice in the light!  
Now adore, now commend,  
Now delight, now exalt,  
Now respect, now revere,  
Now rejoice!

#### **[24] 11-3 Chorale: *Eternal Wonder Arising***

All: O Eternal Wonder  
Arising before me:  
Glory of Creation,  
O Majesty of Nature!

Now and always,  
Creation unfolding:  
Light unto Light,  
Life unto Life,  
Light unto Life!

## **ROBERT KYR** COMPOSER

Robert Kyr is a composer, writer, photographer, videographer, and filmmaker. He has composed twelve symphonies, three chamber symphonies, three violin concerti, a piano concerto, chamber music, and more than 100 works for vocal ensembles of all types. His music often explores themes related to peace-making, environmental stewardship, and spiritual issues of love, compassion, and forgiveness.

Kyr's music was recognized with an award for distinguished artistic achievement from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The award citation stated, "Robert Kyr's powerful vision of fostering peace through music shines brightly and steadily in all his work, from the passionate and often ecstatic polyphonic motets of his *Songs of the Soul*, to the triumphant close of his trilogy of violin concertos, *On the Nature of Peace*. Kyr's music is intensely concerned with the human condition and the soul in its search for beauty and transcendence."

Many recordings of Kyr's works are available including albums titled *Songs of the Soul*, *Violin Concerto Trilogy*, *In Praise of Music*, *A Time for Life*, *All-Night Vigil*, *The Passion according to Four Evangelists*, *Paradiso*, and *Unseen Rain*. Kyr is Professor of Composition and Theory, and Chair of the Composition Department at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance.

## **CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON** CONDUCTOR

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, Hella Johnson is also artistic partner at the Oregon Bach Festival. He is a celebrated guest conductor of choral and orchestral works, a published composer, arranger, and educator. He 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 for a 2016 album release. *Considering Matthew Shepard* has been performed by more than 60 choirs worldwide. 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 Art, Texas State Musician, the Matthew Shepard Foundation's Dennis Dougherty Award for Community Leadership and most recently, Wartburg College's 2023 Graven Award.



## **AWET ANDEMICAEL** SOPRANO

Joy is the hallmark of soprano Awet Andemicael's artistry. She has been acclaimed for her "sparkling solo verses" (*Opera News*), "vivid musical personality" (*Boston Globe*), "honeyed tone" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), and "superb singing" (*Washington Times*).

Andemicael has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Knights, and the Sebastians; in concert halls including Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center; and with festivals including Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Aldeburgh (UK).

Associated especially with Christian sacred music, Andemicael's affinity for eighteenth-century sacred works has been featured in concerts with the Bach Collegium Japan and the Handel and Haydn Society; with symphony orchestras including those of Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Orlando; and in festivals, churches, and other performance venues in North America, Europe, and Africa. Her performance of *Earth Vigil* reflects her interest in contemporary works of spiritual and religious significance, including Bernard Gilmore's *Journey to Freedom* and *Two Songs from Torah*, which she also premiered.

A writer and theologian as well as musician, Andemicael holds degrees from Harvard University, UC Irvine, the University of Notre Dame, and Yale Divinity School (YDS). She is an alumna of the Yale Institute of Sacred Music (ISM) and earned a Ph.D. in theology from Yale University. She currently serves as Associate Dean for Marquand Chapel and Assistant Professor (Adj.) in Theology at YDS and the ISM.

## **STEPHEN LANCASTER** BARITONE

"A fine storyteller" (*American Record Guide*), "varied in tone and alive to feeling" (*Fanfare*), baritone Stephen Lancaster engages audiences through a diverse repertoire of vocal music. Winner of the Nico Castel International Master Singer Competition and The American Prize for men in art song and oratorio, he has performed in venues around the world, including Carnegie Hall, Chiang-Kai Shek Memorial Hall, and Centro Cultural de Belém. A passionate performer of art song, he has sung for the Gstaad New Year Music Festival, Brooklyn Art Song Society, Atlantic Music Festival, Musique dans le Grésivaudan, Journées Musicales d'Uzerche, and Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts. Concert and operatic appearances include Distinguished Concerts International New York, Lisbon Summerfest, UMS Choral Union, South Bend Symphony, and Eugene Opera. He is honored to contribute in performance and recording as a member of the GRAMMY® award-winning vocal ensemble Conspirare as well as the Sphinx Organization's EXIGENCE vocal ensemble. Lancaster's solo discography includes *Le Menu des Mélodies* with Martin Katz (Centaur), *Sacred Song* with Kevin Vaughn (Albany), and *Dichterliebe & Liederkreis, Op. 39* with Laure Colladant (Blue Griffin). He serves as an Associate Professor of the Practice in voice at the University of Notre Dame.

## CONSPIRARE

Conspirare is a professional choral organization under the leadership of artistic director 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 20 self-produced live albums. Hella Johnson and Conspirare were awarded a 2015 GRAMMY® for Best Choral Performance for *The Sacred Spirit of Russia* and their recordings have received 11 total nominations. Conspirare has performed throughout the United States and internationally, including appearances as a featured choir at the American Choral Directors Association annual conference and regional ACDA conventions. At home, Conspirare performs a full annual season in Austin where it has received ongoing recognition from local organizations and critics. Conspirare has been the subject of PBS documentaries and was awarded a Texas Medal of Arts and garnered international recognition such as the Dutch Edison Award. The group is also committed to an ongoing outreach program which includes free community Big Sings. The organization also includes the Conspirare Symphonic Choir, a large, auditioned ensemble that performs works for chorus, and Conspirare Artist Citizen Choral Collective.

### **Craig Hella Johnson**

*artistic director & conductor*

#### **soloists**

Awet Andemicael *soprano* – New Rochelle, NY  
Stephen Lancaster *baritone* – South Bend, IN

#### **soprano**

Chelsea Helm – New York, NY  
Julie Keim – Washington, DC  
Tabitha Lewis – Scranton, PA  
Gitanjali Mathur – Austin, TX  
Miriam Sheehan – Portland, OR

#### **alto**

Ana Baida – Atlanta, GA  
Sarah Brauer – Eugene, OR  
Lauren McAllister – Cincinnati, OH  
Laura Mercado-Wright – Austin, TX  
Lianna Wimberly Williams – Atlanta, GA

#### **tenor**

Haitham Haidar – Montreal, QC  
Michael Jones – Peoria, IL  
David Morales – Los Angeles, CA  
Jason Vest – Cincinnati, OH

#### **bass**

Rick Gabrillo – Austin, TX  
Robert Harlan – Austin, TX  
John Proft – Austin, TX  
Sean Taylor – Brownsville, TX  
Paul Max Tipton – New York, NY

## Instrumentalists

Adrienne Inglis *flute* – Lago Vista, TX  
Ian Davidson *oboe* – Austin, TX  
Jonathan Gunn *clarinet* – Austin, TX  
Corinne Stillwell *violin* – Tallahassee, FL  
Bruce Williams *viola* – Austin, TX  
Barbara George *cello* – Austin, TX  
Thomas Burritt *marimba & percussion*  
(Arias & Choruses) – Leander, TX  
Matthew Teodori *marimba* (Narratives) – Austin, TX  
Joseph Choi *rehearsal pianist* – Austin, TX  
Eric Thompson *rehearsal pianist* – New Braunfels, TX

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Recorded at St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Austin, TX,  
on 6 & 7 May 2022 and 15 & 16 February 2023

Executive Producers: Craig Hella Johnson,  
Robert Kyr and Ann McNair

Producer, Recording, Editing, Mixing, Mastering  
Engineer: Randall Squires

Assistant Producer and Technical Director: Robert Harlan

Recording Assistant: Allyson Moreno

Cover Photo: *Mesa & Rocks in Late Afternoon* © Robert Kyr

Digisleeve Photo of Choir Members: © Cassandra Weyandt

Headshots:

Craig Hella Johnson: © Cassandra Weyandt

Robert Kyr: © Tom Forgas

Awet Andemicael: © Chris Buck

Stephen Lancaster: © Brian McConkey Photography

Cover Design: Karin Elsener

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Label Manager: Timothée van der Stegen

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**ROBERT KYR**

# EARTH VIGIL

- 1. Scene 1-1. Invocation:** Creation Story  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 2. Scene 1-2. Chorus:** Hail, One Life!  
LIANNA WIMBERLY WILLIAMS alto  
MICHAEL JONES tenor
- 3. Scene 2-1. Narrative I:** Remembering  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 4. Scene 2-2. Aria:** Shining Stonesong  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 5. Scene 3. Chorus:** Hail, One Life! (Refrain I)
- 6. Scene 4-1. Narrative II, Part 1:** Finding a Time  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 7. Scene 4-2. Aria:** Thunder Floodsong  
STEPHEN LANCASTER baritone
- 8. Scene 5-1. Narrative II, Part 2:** Panic and Anguish  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 9. Scene 5-2. Duo Aria:** Wildfire Smokesong  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano  
STEPHEN LANCASTER baritone
- 10. Scene 6-1. Narrative II, Part 3:** Only One Way  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 11. Scene 6-2. Duo Aria:** Roaring Riversong  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano  
STEPHEN LANCASTER baritone
- 12. Scene 7. Chorus:** Hail, One Life! (Refrain II)
- 13. Scene 8-1. Narrative III, Part 1:** Emerging  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 14. Scene 8-2. Lament:** All Is Gone  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 15. Scene 8-3. Chorus I:** The Joyless Land
- 16. Scene 8-4. Chorus II:** All of You Who Pass By
- 17. Scene 8-5. Aria:** I Will Go On  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 18. Scene 9-1. Narrative III, Part 2:** Night Falling  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 19. Scene 9-2. Aria:** Circle of Arms  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 20. Scene 10-1. Narrative III, Part 3:** Early Light  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 21. Scene 10-2. Chorale Aria:** Tree of Life Song  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 22. Scene 11-1. Narrative III, Part 4:** Fire and Water  
AWET ANDEMICAEL soprano
- 23. Scene 11-2. Finale:** Now Is the Time
- 24. Scene 11-3. Chorale:** Eternal Wonder Arising

**CONSPIRARE**

Craig Hella Johnson *conductor*

**Total Running Time 69:59**