

THE FORT COLLINS LINCOLN CENTER

\*\*\* CO-PRESENTED BY THE LINCOLN CENTER AND COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY \*\*\*

C L A S S I C A L  
**CONVERGENCE**



**Conspirare**

*Considering Matthew Shepard*

Sunday, October 7, 7:30 p.m.

the LINCOLN center



Colorado State University

## Welcome

Like so many people, I was deeply moved and affected by the death of a young, gay Wyoming man in 1998, Matthew Wayne Shepard. The events surrounding his death created an enormous feeling-world in me which continued to reverberate for months and years after the event. I felt such a strong inner desire to respond somehow, especially musically. This feeling stayed with me many years. But it was not until somewhat recently that I felt ready to give voice to this inner response. In some ways, I feel that Matthew as a subject for this composition chose me rather than the other way around, as it seems is so often the case when we feel a strong inner calling. This story holds so many layers or meaning and raises many questions. My own journey with Matt and his story has proven to be an inspiring, challenging and deeply meaningful exploration that continues. Surprisingly and remarkably, although remembering the suffering of Matthew Shepard can be intense and very dark, I continue to also experience a call to the inner light which this story profoundly transmits.

As a choral musician, I am very connected to the Passion settings, especially those of J.S. Bach, *the St. Matthew Passion* and *the St. John Passion*. At first I felt called to compose a Passion setting of Matthew Shepard. I followed that instinct and created Passion music which now makes up some of the central section of this work. It has evolved and expanded from that point to include additional music including a prologue and epilogue. I very much wanted Matt's voice to be heard, even if in a small way, and to include a few musical snapshots of his strong life force. Additionally, I also especially wanted to provide a space for reflection, consideration and unity within this musical framework.

For the formation of the libretto, rather than setting the words of a single writer, I chose to gather and shape a collection of texts from several writers whose words span several centuries and represent significant cultural and geographic differences. Their writings both contribute to the telling of the story and also help create the poetic and musical structure which holds this musical meditation and reflection.

I am enormously indebted to Lesléa Newman for the poems from her extraordinary collection, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*, which created the inspiration and foundational structure for the Passion music. At just the right moment, the poem which became Matthew's aria appeared— "In Need of Breath," a beautiful Daniel Ladinsky rendering of the Persian mystic Hafiz. Other poetic voices that are woven into the texture include the German mystic Hildegard von Bingen, the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, W.S. Merwin and several others whose words were building blocks within certain texts including William Blake, Rumi, Dante and a passage from the Old Testament.

Because the American West is so important to the telling of this story and our consideration of it, I include two Wyoming poets, John Nesbitt and Sue Wallis. For me, the expression of contrasting intimacy and grandeur along with contrasting images of both the enduring and the ephemeral evoked in Sue Wallis' "Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass" creates a space in which all of the other texts can dwell. For some of the sections, I created texts myself.

A very huge and special shout of acclamation goes out to Michael Dennis Browne, the remarkably gifted writer from Minneapolis who brought all of his gifts to bear in one of the most memorable and life-giving collaborations imaginable. From the beginning, he understood my passion for creating a very special song in large form for Matthew and he met me wherever I felt there was a need in the content or the pacing of the work. Several of the texts are his, and I had the pleasure of co-writing others with him as well. He was a true partner in this work; and my heart is full of gratitude for all that he brought to *Considering Matthew Shepard*.

The singers of Conspirare inspired me at every turn. They premiered and recorded the work to great acclaim in 2016. Their voices were in my imagination as I composed *Considering Matthew Shepard* and they brought it into being with tender devotion. I am so grateful that four of Conspirare's soloists could be at this performance as the journey of *Considering Matthew Shepard* continues.

I am deeply grateful to Dennis and Judy Shepard for their incredible generosity in continuing to support all of our remembrances of their beloved son Matt, and for being such extraordinary warriors for Love in the world.

Thank you so much for your presence and participation in this performance. Conspirare's October 2018 performances in Laramie, WY; Fort Collins, CO; Lexington, KY; Greencastle, IN; Fargo, ND; Wayzata, MN; and Andover, MA are meaningful as they continue a nationwide tour in this year that commemorates the 20th Anniversary of Matthew Shepard's passing. We are delighted to be with you. I invite you to stay engaged with us by learning more Conspirare's continuing musical work at [conspirare.org](http://conspirare.org).

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Helle John". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

# Considering Matthew Shepard Craig Hella Johnson

## Libretto

Commissioned by Fran and Larry Collmann and Conspirare  
Dedicated to Philip Overbaugh

### **PROLOGUE**

Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass  
Ordinary Boy  
We Tell Each Other Stories

### **PASSION**

The Fence (before)  
The Fence (that night)  
A Protestor  
Keep It Away From Me (The Wound of Love)  
Fire of the Ancient Heart  
We Are All Sons  
I Am Like You  
The Innocence  
The Fence (one week later)  
Stars  
In Need of Breath  
Deer Song (Mist on the Mountains)  
The Fence (after)/The Wind  
Pilgrimage

### **EPILOGUE**

Meet Me Here  
Thanks  
All of Us  
Reprise: This Chant of Life (Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass)

## **PROLOGUE**

All.

*Yoodle—ooh, yoodle-ooh-hoo, so sings a lone cowboy,  
Who with the wild roses wants you to be free.*

### **Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass**

Cattle, horses, sky and grass  
These are the things that sway and pass  
Before our eyes and through our dreams  
Through shiny, sparkly, golden gleams  
Within our psyche that find and know  
The value of this special glow  
That only gleams for those who bleed  
Their soul and heart and utter need  
Into the mighty, throbbing Earth  
From which springs life and death and birth.

*I'm alive! I'm alive, I'm alive, golden. I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive*

...

These cattle, horses, grass, and sky  
Dance and dance and never die  
They circle through the realms of air  
And ground and empty spaces where  
A human being can join the song  
Can circle, too, and not go wrong  
Amidst the natural, pulsing forces  
Of sky and grass and cows and horses.

*I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive . . .*

This chant of life cannot be heard  
It must be felt, there is no word  
To sing that could express the true  
Significance of how we wind  
Through all these hoops of Earth and mind  
Through horses, cattle, sky and grass  
And all these things that sway and pass.

### **Ordinary Boy**

Let's talk about Matt —

*Ordinary boy, ordinary boy, ordinary boy . . .*

Born in December in Casper, Wyoming

*Ordinary boy*

to a father, Dennis  
and a mother, Judy

*Ordinary boy, ordinary boy*

Then came a younger brother, Logan

*Ordinary boy*

His name was Matthew Wayne Shepard. And one day his name came to  
be known around the world. But as his mother said:

Judy Shepard: You knew him as Matthew. To us he was Matt.

He went camping, he went fishing, even hunting for a moose  
He read plays and he read stories and especially *Dr. Seuss*

He wrote poems with illustrations for the neighbors on the street  
And he left them in each mailbox till he learned it was illegal

He made friends and he wore braces and his frame was rather small  
He sang songs his father taught him

*Frere Jacques . . .*

*Row Row Row Your Boat . . .*

*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star . . .*

Judy: He was my son, my first-born, and more. He was my friend, my confidant,  
my constant reminder of how good life can be—and . . . how hurtful. ^

How good life can be, how good life can be

Judy: *Matt's laugh, his wonderful hugs, his stories . . .*

Matt writes about himself in a notebook:

I am funny, sometimes forgetful and messy and lazy. I am not a lazy person  
though. I am giving and understanding. And formal and polite. I am sensitive. I  
am honest. I am sincere. And I am not a pest.

I am not a pest, I am not a pest . . .

I am my own person. I am warm.

I want my life to be happy and I want to be clearer about things. I want to feel good.

I love Wyoming . . .

I love Wyoming very much . . .

I love theatre

I love good friends

I love succeeding

I love pasta

I love jogging

I love walking and feeling good

I love Europe and driving and music and helping and smiling and Charlie and Jeopardy

I love movies and eating and positive people and pasta and driving and walking and jogging and kissing and learning and airports and music and smiling and hugging and being myself

I love theatre! I love theatre!

And I love to be on stage!+

Such an ordinary boy living ordinary days

In an ordinary life so worth living

He felt ordinary yearning and ordinary fears

With an ordinary hope for belonging

He felt ordinary yearning and ordinary fears

With an ordinary hope for belonging

*(Born to live this ordinary life)*

Just an ordinary boy living ordinary days with extraordinary kindness

extraordinary laughter extraordinary shining

extraordinary light and joy

Joy and light.

I love, I love, I love . . .

Ordinary boy, ordinary boy

### **We Tell Each Other Stories**

We tell each other stories so that we will remember

Try and find the meaning in the living of our days

Always telling stories, wanting to remember

Where and whom we came from  
Who we are

Sometimes there's a story that's painful to remember  
One that breaks the heart of us all  
Still we tell the story  
We're listening and confessing  
What we have forgotten  
In the story of us all

We tell each other stories so that we will remember  
Trying to find the meaning . . .

*I am open to hear this story about a boy, an ordinary boy  
Who never had expected his life would be this story,  
(could be any boy)*

*I am open to hear a story*

*Open, listen.  
All.*

## **PASSION**

### ***RECITATION I***

***Laramie, southeastern Wyoming, between the Snowy Range and the  
Laramie Range. Tuesday, October 6, 1998.***

#### **The Fence (before)**

Out and alone  
on the endless empty prairie

the moon bathes me  
the stars bless me

the sun warms me  
the wind soothes me

still still still  
I wonder

will I always be out here  
exposed and alone?

will I ever know why  
I was put (here) on this earth?



will somebody someday  
stumble upon me?

will anyone remember me  
after I'm gone?

*Still, still, still . . . I wonder.*

### **RECITATION II**

***Tuesday night. Matthew attended a meeting of the University of Wyoming's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Association, then joined others for coffee at the College Inn. Around 10:30, he went to the Fireside Bar, where he later met Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson. Near midnight, they drove him to a remote area, tied him to a buck and rail fence, beat him horribly and left him to die in the cold of night.***

### **The Fence (that night)**

*Most noble evergreen with your roots in the sun:  
you shine in the cloudless sky of a sphere no earthly eminence can grasp,  
You blush like the dawn,  
you burn like a flame of the sun.^*

I held him all night long  
He was heavy as a broken heart  
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes  
He was dead weight yet he kept breathing

He was heavy as a broken heart  
His own heart wouldn't stop beating  
The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing  
His face streaked with moonlight and blood  
I tightened my grip and held on

The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing  
We were out on the prairie alone  
I tightened my grip and held on  
I saw what was done to this child

We were out on the prairie alone  
Their truck was the last thing he saw  
I saw what was done to this child  
I cradled him just like a mother

*Most noble evergreen, most noble evergreen, your roots in the sun . . .*

Their truck was the last thing he saw  
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes  
I cradled him just like a mother  
I held him all night long

*Most noble evergreen . . .*

### **RECITATION III**

***The next morning, Matthew was found by a cyclist, a fellow student, who at first thought he was a scarecrow. After several days in a coma and on life support, Matthew Shepard died on Monday, October 12, at 12:53 a.m. At the funeral, which took place on Friday, October 16, at St Mark's Episcopal Church in Casper, Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church protested outside.***

### **A Protestor**

*God Hates Fags, Matt in Hell*

– Signs held by anti-gay protestors at Matthew Shepard's funeral and the trials of his murderers

*kreuzige, kreuzige!            (translation: crucify, crucify)*

A boy who takes a boy to bed?  
Where I come from that's not polite  
He asked for it, you got that right  
The fires of Hell burn hot and red  
The only good fag is a fag that's dead

A man and a woman, the Good Lord said  
As sure as Eve took that first bite  
The fires of Hell burn hot and red

*kreuzige, kreuzige!*

Beneath the Hunter's Moon he bled  
That must have been a pretty sight  
The fires of Hell burn hot and red

C'mon, kids, it's time for bed  
Say your prayers, kiss Dad good night  
A boy who takes a boy to bed?  
The fires of Hell burn hot and red

*crucify, crucify . . . the light*

*crucify the light . . .*

## **Keep It Away From Me (The Wound of Love)**

don't wanna look on this  
never get near  
flames too raw for me  
grief too deep  
keep it away from me

*stay out of my heart*

*stay out of my hope*

some son, somebody's pain  
some child gone  
child never mine  
born to this trouble  
don't wanna be born to this world  
world where sometimes yes  
world where mostly no

*the wound of love^*

smoke round my throat  
rain down my soul  
no heaven lies  
keep them gone  
keep them never  
grief too deep, flames too raw  
keep them away from me

*stay out of my heart*

*stay out of my hope*

don't try  
any old story on me  
no wing no song  
no cry no comfort ye  
no wound ever mine  
close up the gates of night

*the wound of love*

keep this all away from me

*the wound of love*

*you take away*

*the wounds of the world*

keep it away from me

## **RECITATION IV**

***National media began to broadcast the story. As the news began to spread, many people across the country gathered together in candlelight vigils, moved to (silently) speak for life over death, love over hate, light over darkness.***

## **Fire of the Ancient Heart**

*Cantor:*

*"What have you done? Hark, thy brother's blood  
cries to me from the ground." ^*

*Choir:*

Called by this candle  
Led to the flame  
Called to remember  
Enter the flame

*Cantor:*

all our flames now  
swaying and free  
all our hearts now  
moving as one  
every living spirit  
turned toward peace  
all our tender  
hopes awake

*Choir:*

*Called by this candle  
Led to the flame  
Called to remember  
Enter the flame*

**Fire: howl**  
**Fire: broken**  
**Fire: burst**  
**Fire: rage**  
**Fire: swell**  
**Fire: shatter**  
**Fire: wail**  
**Fire**

We all betray the ancient heart  
Ev'ry one of us, all of us  
His heart, my heart, your heart, one heart  
"In each moment the fire rages, it will burn away a hundred veils."#  
Burning Breaking Grasping Raging

*how do we keep these  
flames in our hands?  
how do we guard these  
fears in our hearts?*

*how long to hold these  
griefs in our songs?*

*remembering anger  
weave it with hope  
remembering exile  
braid it with praise  
longing past horror  
longing past dread  
dreaming of healing  
past all our pain*

***Fire: living in me***

***Fire: purify***

***Fire: now hold me***

***Fire: seize my heart***

*(enter the flame, enter the flame  
shatter my heart, shatter my heart  
called to enter, burn a hundred veils)*

Called by this flame  
Fire of my heart:  
Break down all walls  
Open all doors  
Only this Love

“Eyes of flesh, eyes of fire”~

*Lumina, lumina, lumina  
Open us,  
All!*

*(In each moment the fire rages, it will burn away a hundred veils.)*

### ***RECITATION V***

***Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson were arrested shortly after the attack and charged with murder, kidnapping, and aggravated robbery. The first of two trials began on October 26, 1999; both were convicted of the murder and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences.***

### ***We Are All Sons***

*Stray birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.  
And yellow leaves of autumn which have no songs flutter and fall there  
with a sigh.  
Once we dreamt that we were strangers.  
We wake up to find that we were dear to each other.^*

we are all sons of fathers and mothers  
we are all sons

we are all rivers  
the roar of waters, we are all sons

### **I Am Like You**

I am like you

Aaron

and Russell

When I think of you (and honestly I don't like to think about  
you)  
but sometimes I do,  
I am so horrified, and just so angry and confused (and scared)  
that you could do things to another boy—they were so cruel  
and  
so undeserved, so dark and hard and full of (I don't know)

Late one night I had a glimpse  
of something I recognized, just a tiny glimpse—  
I don't even like to say this out loud,  
it isn't even all that true—  
but I wondered for a moment,  
am I like you? (in any way)

(I pray the answer is no)  
Am I like you?  
I bet you once had hopes and dreams, too.

Some things we love get lost along the way,  
That's just like me — get lost along the way—  
I am like you, I get confused and I'm afraid  
and I've been reckless, I've been restless, bored,  
unthinking, listless, intoxicated,  
I've come unhinged,  
and made mistakes  
and hurt people very much.

Sometimes I feel (in springtime, in early afternoon)  
the sunshine warm on my face;  
you feel this too (don't you?),  
the sunshine warm on your face.

I am like you  
(this troubles me)  
I am like you  
(just needed to say this)

Some things we love get lost along the way.

we are all sons of fathers and mothers  
we are all sons

sometimes no home for us here on the earth  
no place to lay our heads  
we are all sons of fathers and mothers

if you could know for one moment  
how it is to live in our bodies  
within the world

if you could know

you ask too much of us  
you ask too little

### **The Innocence**

When I think of all the times the world was ours for dreaming,  
When I think of all the times the earth seemed like our home-  
Every heart alive with its own longing,  
Every future we could ever hope to hold.

All the times our laughter rang in summer,  
All the times the rivers sang our tune-  
Was there already sadness in the sunlight?  
Some stormy story waiting to be told?

*Where O where has the innocence gone?  
Where O where has it gone?  
Rains rolling down wash away my memory;  
Where O where has it gone?*

When I think of all the joys, the wonders we remember  
All the treasures we believed we'd never ever lose.  
Too many days gone by without their meaning,  
Too many darkened hours without their peace.

*Where O where has the innocence gone?  
Where O where has it gone?  
Vows we once swore, now it's just this letting go,  
Where O where has it gone?*

**RECITATION VI**

***In the days and weeks after Matthew's death, many people came to the fence to pay homage and pray and grieve.***

**The Fence (one week later)**

*I have seen people come out here with a pocketknife and take a piece of the fence, like a relic, like an icon. – Rev. Stephen M. Johnson, Unitarian minister*

I keep still  
I stand firm  
I hold my ground  
while they lay down

flowers and photos  
prayers and poems  
crystals and candles  
sticks and stones

they come in herds  
they stand and stare  
they sit and sigh  
they crouch and cry

some of them touch me  
in unexpected ways  
without asking permission  
and then move on

but I don't mind  
being a shrine  
is better than being  
the scene of the crime



## RECITATION VII

**Matthew's father made his statement to the court on November 5, 1999.**

### STARS

*By the end of the beating, his body was just trying to survive. You left him out there by himself, but he wasn't alone. There were his lifelong friends with him—friends that he had grown up with. You're probably wondering who these friends were. First, he had the beautiful night sky with the same stars and moon that we used to look at through a telescope. Then, he had the daylight and the sun to shine on him one more time—one more cool, wonderful autumn day in Wyoming. His last day alive in Wyoming. His last day alive in the state that he always proudly called home. And through it all he was breathing in for the last time the smell of Wyoming sagebrush and the scent of pine trees from the snowy range. He heard the wind—the ever-present Wyoming wind—for the last time. He had one more friend with him. One he grew to know through his time in Sunday school and as an acolyte at St. Mark's in Casper as well as through his visits to St. Matthew's in Laramie.*

*I feel better knowing he wasn't alone.*

Stars

across

scattered

the

sky

in

blinking

dismay

unable

being

to help

light

years

away

**RECITATION VIII**

**Matthew was left tied to the fence for almost eighteen hours.**

**In Need of Breath**

*Matt:*

My heart

Is an unset jewel

Upon the tender night

Yearning for its dear old friend

The Moon.

When the Nameless One debuts again

Ten thousand facets of my being unfurl wings

And reveal such a radiance inside

I enter a realm divine –

I too begin to sweetly cast light,

Like a lamp,

I cast light

Through the streets of this

World.

My heart is an unset jewel

Upon existence

Waiting for the Friend's touch.

Tonight

Tonight

My heart is an unset ruby

Offered bowed and weeping to the Sky.

I am dying in these cold hours

For the resplendent glance of God.

My heart

Is an unset jewel

Upon the tender night

My heart is an unset ruby

Offered bowed and weeping to the Sky.

**RECITATION IX**

***Sheriff's Deputy, Reggie Fluty, the first to report to the scene, told Judy Shepard that as she ran to the fence she saw a large doe lying near Matt—as if the deer had been keeping him company all through the night.***

**Deer Song**

*Deer:*

A mist is over the mountain,  
    The stars in their meadows upon the air,  
Your people are waiting below them,  
    And you know there's a gathering there.  
All night I lay there beside you,  
    I cradled your pain in my care,  
We move through creation together,  
    And we know there's a welcoming there.

Welcome, welcome, sounds the song,  
    Calling, calling clear;  
Always with us, evergreen heart,  
    Where can we be but there?

*Matthew:*

I'll find all the love I have longed for,  
    The home that's been calling my heart so long  
So soon I'll be cleansed in those waters,  
    My fevers forever be gone;  
Where else on earth but these waters?  
    No more, no more to be torn;  
My own ones, my dearest, are waiting —  
    And I'll weep to be where I belong.

Welcome, welcome, sounds the song,  
    Calling, calling clear;  
Always with me, evergreen heart,  
    Where can I be but here?

**RECITATION X**

***The fence has been torn down.***

**The Fence (after)/The Wind**

prayed upon  
frowned upon

revered  
feared

adored  
abhorred

despised  
idolized

splintered  
scarred

weathered  
worn

broken down  
broken up

ripped apart  
ripped away

gone  
but not forgotten

*The North Wind  
carried his father's laugh  
The South Wind  
carried his mother's song  
The East Wind  
carried his brother's cheer  
The West Wind  
carried his lover's moan  
The Winds of the World  
wove together a prayer  
to carry that hurt boy home*

prayed upon  
frowned upon

revered  
feared

*North Wind, South Wind, East Wind, West Wind*

*(Splintered, scarred, weathered, worn, broken down, gone)*

*Winds of the World: carry him home.*

### **Pilgrimage**

*The land was sold and a new fence now stands about fifty yards away. People still come to pay their respects. – Jim Osborn, friend of Matthew Shepard*

I walk to the fence with beauty before me  
*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want*

I walk to the fence with beauty behind me  
*Yit'gadal v'yit' kadash (may his great name grow)*

I walk to the fence with beauty above me  
*Om Mani Padme Ham (Om! the jewel in the lotus, hum!)*

I walk to the fence with beauty below me  
*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit*

I reach the fence surrounded by beauty  
*wail of wind, cry of hawk*

I leave the fence surrounded by beauty  
*sigh of sagebrush, hush of stone*

*(Beauty above me, beauty below me  
By beauty surrounded)*

Still, still, still, I wonder...  
*wail of wind, cry of hawk*

Still, still, still, I wonder . . .  
*wail of wind, cry of hawk*

Still still still

### **EPILOGUE**

#### **Meet Me Here**

*Meet me here*

*Won't you meet me here  
Where the old fence ends and the horizon begins  
There's a balm in the silence  
Like an understanding air  
Where the old fence ends and the horizon begins*

We've been walking through the darkness  
On this long, hard climb  
Carried ancestral sorrow  
For too long a time  
Will you lay down your burden  
Lay it down, come with me  
It will never be forgotten  
Held in love, so tenderly

*Meet me here  
Won't you meet me here  
Where the old fence ends and the horizon begins  
There's a joy in the singing  
Like an understanding air  
Where the fence ends and the horizon begins.*

Then we'll come to the mountain  
We'll go bounding to see  
That great circle of dancing  
And we'll dance endlessly  
And we'll dance with the all the children  
Who've been lost along the way  
We will welcome each other  
Coming home, this glorious day

*We are home in the mountain  
And we'll gently understand  
That we've been friends forever  
That we've never been alone  
We'll sing on through any darkness  
And our Song will be our sight  
We can learn to offer praise again  
Coming home to the light . . .*

## **Thanks**

*Choir: Thank you*

Listen  
with the night falling we are saying thank you  
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings  
we are running out of the glass rooms  
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky

and say thank you  
we are standing by the water thanking it  
standing by the windows looking out  
in our directions

*Thank you, thank you*

*Hohou, hohou (Arahapo—thank you)*

*Yontonwe (Huron—thank you)*

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging  
after funerals we are saying thank you  
after the news of the dead  
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you  
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators  
remembering wars and the police at the door  
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you  
in the banks we are saying thank you  
in the faces of the officials and the rich  
and of all who will never change  
we go on saying thank you thank you

*Hohou, Yontonwe . . .*

*Thank you*

with the animals dying around us  
our lost feelings we are saying thank you  
with the forests falling faster than the minutes  
of our lives we are saying thank you  
with the words going out like cells of a brain  
with the cities growing over us  
we are saying thank you faster and faster  
with nobody listening we are saying thank you  
thank you we are saying thank you and waving  
dark though it is

### **All Of Us**

What could be the song?

Where begin again?

Who could meet us there?

Where might we begin?

From the shadows climb,

Rise to sing again;

Where could be the joy?  
How do we begin?

Never our despair,  
Never the least of us,  
Never turn away,  
Never hide our face;  
Ordinary boy,  
Only all of us,  
Free us from our fear,  
Only all of us.

What could be the song?  
Where begin again?  
Who could meet us there?  
Where might we begin?  
From the shadows climb,  
Rise to sing again;  
Where could be the joy?  
How do we begin?

Never our despair,  
Never the least of us,  
Never turn away,  
Never hide your face;  
Ordinary boy,  
Only all of us,  
Free us from our fear.

Only in the Love,  
Love that lifts us up,  
Clear from out the heart  
From the mountain's side,  
Come creation come,  
Strong as any stream;  
How can we let go? How can we forgive?  
How can we be dream?

Out of heaven, rain,  
Rain to wash us free;  
Rivers flowing on,  
Ever to the sea;  
Bind up every wound,  
Every cause to grieve;  
Always to forgive,  
Only to believe.



[Chorale:]

*Most noble Light, Creation's face,  
How should we live but joined in you,  
Remain within your saving grace  
Through all we say and do  
And know we are the Love that moves  
The sun and all the stars?+  
O Love that dwells, O Love that burns  
In every human heart.*

(Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up!)

*This evergreen, this heart, this soul,  
Now moves us to remake our world,  
Reminds us how we are to be  
Your people born to dream;  
How old this joy, how strong this call,  
To sing your radiant care  
With every voice, in cloudless hope  
Of our belonging here.*

Only in the Love . . .  
Only all of us . . .

*(Heaven: Wash me . . .)*

All of us, only all of us.

What could be the song?  
Where do we begin?  
Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up.

All Of Us

All.

**Reprise: This Chant of Life (Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass)**

(This chant of life cannot be heard  
It must be felt, there is no word  
To sing that could express the true  
Significance of how we wind  
Through all these hoops of Earth and mind  
Through horses, cattle, sky and grass  
And all these things that sway and pass.)

*Yoodle—ooh, yoodle-ooh-hoo, so sings a lone cowboy,  
Who with the wild roses wants you to be free.*

## Considering Matthew Shepard

Text authors and publication credits.

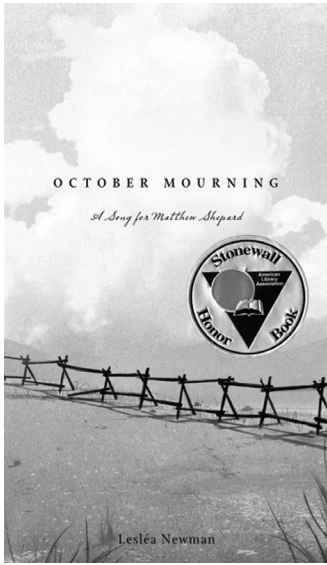
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## **“Introduction” from OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD by Lesléa Newman**

On Tuesday, October 6, 1998, at approximately 11:45 p.m., twenty-one-year-old Matthew Shepard, a gay college student attending the University of Wyoming, was kidnapped from a bar by twenty-one-year old Aaron McKinney and twenty-one-year-old Russell Henderson. Pretending to be gay, the two men lured Matthew Shepard into their truck, drove him to the outskirts of Laramie, robbed him, beat him with a pistol, tied him to a buck-rail fence, and left him to die. The next day, at about 6:00 p.m. – eighteen hours after the attack – he was discovered and taken to a hospital. He never regained consciousness and died five days later, on Monday, October 12, with his family by his side.

One of the last things Matthew Shepard did that Tuesday night was attend a meeting of the University of Wyoming’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Association. The group was putting final touches on plans for Gay Awareness Week, scheduled to begin the following Sunday, October 11, coinciding with a National Coming Out Day. Planned campus activities included a film showing, an open poetry reading, and a keynote speaker.

That keynote speaker was me.

I never forgot what happened in Laramie, and around the tenth anniversary of Matthew Shepard’s death, I found myself thinking more and more about him. And so I began writing a series of poems, striving to create a work of art that explores the events surrounding Matthew Shepard’s murder in order to gain a better understanding of their impact on myself and the world.

What really happened at the fence that night? Only three people know the answer to that question. Two of them are imprisoned, convicted murderers whose stories often contradict each other (for example, in separate interviews both McKinney and Henderson have claimed that he alone tied Matthew Shepard to the fence). The other person who knows what really happened that night is dead. We will never know his side of the story.

This book is my side of the story.

*While the poems in this book are inspired by actual events, they do not in any way represent the statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, or attitudes of any actual person. The statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes conveyed belong to me. All monologues contained within the poems are figments of my imagination; no actual person spoke any of the words contained within the body of any poem. Those words are mine and mine alone. When the words of an actual person are used as a short epigraph for a poem, the source of that quote is*

*cited at the back of the book in a section entitled "Notes," which contains citations and suggestions for further reading about the crime. The poems, which are meant to be read in sequential order as one whole work, are a work of poetic invention and imagination: a historical novel in verse. The poems are not an objective reporting of Matthew Shepard's murder and its aftermath; rather they are my own personal interpretation of them.*

There is a bench on the campus of the University of Wyoming dedicated to Matthew Shepard, inscribed with the words *He continues to make a difference*. My hope is that readers of *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* will be inspired to make a difference and honor his legacy by erasing hate and replacing it with compassion, understanding, and love.

Candlewick.com

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*Considering Matthew Shepard* was developed with the support of Conspirare. Please visit **conspirare.org** to learn more about this project and learn more about the many individuals and organizations who support this work.

**Conspirare, The Matthew Shepard Foundation, and KLRU-TV, Austin PBS are partnering to ensure that *Considering Matthew Shepard* reaches as many people as possible on the stage and screen.** The Matthew Shepard Foundation has provided ongoing support in outreach and project development. Conspirare and KLRU-TV, Austin PBS are co-producing a *Considering Matthew Shepard* television special commemorating the 20th anniversary of Matthew Shepard's passing. KLRU profiled Craig Hella Johnson's creative process in their documentary series *Arts in Context* (available at [artsincontext.org](http://artsincontext.org)). The film will be accompanied by outreach and engagement programs.



## Craig Hella Johnson

As Conspirare's founder and Artistic Director, Johnson assembles some of today's finest singers to form a world-class ensemble. Johnson is also music director of the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble and conductor emeritus of the Victoria Bach Festival. He has served as guest conductor with Austin Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Oregon Bach Festival, Harvard University and many others in Texas, the U.S. and abroad. Through these activities, as well as Conspirare's many recordings on the internationally distributed [PIAS]harmonia mundi label, Johnson brings national and international recognition to the Texas musical community.

Beloved by audiences, lauded by critics and composers, and revered by musicians, Johnson is known for crafting musical journeys that create deep connections between performer and listener. A unique aspect of Johnson's programming is his signature "collage" style: marrying music of many styles from classical to popular to create moving experiences. The *Wall Street Journal* has praised Johnson's ability to "find the emotional essence other performers often miss." Composer and collaborator Robert Kyr has observed that "Craig's attitude toward creating a community of artists... goes beyond technical mastery into that emotional depth and spiritual life of the music."

Johnson was Director of Choral Activities at the University of Texas at Austin from 1990-2001 and remains an active educator, teaching workshops and clinics statewide, nationally, and internationally. In fall 2012 he became the first Artist-in-Residence at Texas State University School of Music.

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 own original compositions and arrangements. His music is also published by Alliance Music Publications. Johnson's pieces are in high demand by choirs across the United States who also commission his work.

Johnson's first concert-length composition *Considering Matthew Shepard* was premiered and recorded by Conspirare for a 2016 CD release. *The Bay Area Reporter* wrote: "*Considering Matthew Shepard* is a deeply American piece, performed with utter dedication by performers for whom it was composed. But its universality lies in the fact that it could be performed by many others — and must be, for all our sakes."

Johnson's accomplishments have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. Notably among them, he and Conspirare won a 2014 Grammy® for Best

Choral Performance, Chorus America granted him the Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art in 2015, and the Texas State Legislature named him Texas State Musician for 2013. Other honors have included 2008 induction into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame, Chorus America's 2009 Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal, and the 2011 Citation of Merit from international professional music fraternity Mu Phi Epsilon. Johnson studied at St. Olaf College, the Juilliard School, and the University of Illinois, and earned his doctorate at Yale University.

## **Considering Matthew Shepard Encore Performances Winter 2018**

### **Conspirare**

Craig Hella Johnson,  
conductor & pianist

Singers & Instrumentalists

#### SOPRANO

Katy Avery (Philadelphia, PA)  
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#### ALTO

Sarah Brauer (Portland, OR)  
Janet Carlsen Campbell (Omaha, NE)  
Ana Baida (Atlanta, GA)  
Tynan Davis (New York, NY)  
Lauren McAllister (Cincinnati, OH)  
Laura Mercado-Wright (Austin, TX)  
Keely J. Rhodes (Austin, TX)

#### TENOR

Matt Alber (Portland, OR)  
Dann Coakwell (Ithaca, NY)  
Zach Finkelstein (Seattle, WA)  
Carr Hornbuckle (San Antonio, TX)

Michael Jones (Philadelphia, PA)  
David Kurtenbach (San Francisco, CA)  
Jos Milton (Oxford, MS)  
Wilson Nichols (New York City, NY)  
Jason Vest (Cincinnati, OH)

#### BASS

Jason Awbrey (Dallas, TX)  
Simon Barrad (Cincinnati, OH)  
Dashon Burton (New York, NY)  
Charles Wesley Evans (Macon, GA)  
Rick Gabrillo (Round Rock, TX)  
Robert Harlan (Austin, TX)  
Harris Ipock (Austin, TX)  
Tim O'Brien (Austin, TX)  
Thann Scoggin (San Antonio, TX)

#### INSTRUMENTALISTS

Vanguel Tangarov, Clarinet (Austin, TX)  
Stephen Redfield, Violin (Hattiesburg, MS)  
Ames Asbell, Viola (Austin, TX)  
Douglas Harvey, Cello (Austin, TX)  
Jessica Valls, Double Bass (Austin, TX)  
Mitch Watkins, Guitar (Austin, TX)  
Thomas Burritt, percussion (Leander, TX)

Company personnel vary by performance.

#### CREATIVE CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Dennis Browne,  
*Poet & Co-Librettist*  
Lesléa Newman, *Poet*  
Rod Caspers, *Co-Producer & Co-Director*  
Elliott Forrest, *Co-Director & Projections*

*Please visit <https://conspirare.org/project/considering-matthew-shepard/> for creative contributor biographies.*

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Viera Buzgova, Stage Manager

Willa J. Snow, Assistant Stage Manager

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Walter Olden, Lighting Supervisor

Christy Butler, Printed Program Content Director

Jennifer Braham, Program Design

Karin Elsener, Cover illustration

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Nina Revering, Conspirare Youth Choirs Director





Established in Austin, Texas in 1991, Conspirare is a Grammy-winning and internationally recognized choir with a reputation for “expanding the boundaries of choral performance” (Wall Street Journal). Conspirare, which translates from Latin as “to breathe together,” is led by founder and Artistic Director Craig Hella Johnson, and is comprised of soloists from around the country. Conspirare’s extensive discography includes 11 releases on the Harmonia Mundi label. The 2014 album *The Sacred Spirit of Russia* won the Grammy for Best Choral Performance. Conspirare’s ambitious mission is to engage the power of music to change lives. Through its artistic excellence, creative programming, commissioning, and educational endeavors, the organization has established itself as an agent of change and a bedrock of the Texas arts community and beyond.

Conspirare's current touring project, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, is a three-part oratorio composed by Craig Hella Johnson. The work, which debuted at number four on Billboard's Traditional Classical Chart, is an evocative and compassionate musical response to the murder of Matthew Shepard. The Washington Post calls the impact "immediate, profound and, at times, overwhelming." The album received a Grammy nomination. Conspirare debuted *Considering Matthew Shepard* in Austin in 2016, and presented the work at Boston Symphony Hall and Texas A&M in 2016-17. The work is being presented as part of a national tour in 2018.

Conspirare has commissioned works from wide-ranging composers including David Lang, Tarik O'Regan, Jocelyn Hagen, Donald Grantham, Eric Whitacre, Nico Muhly, Mark Adamo, Robert Kyr, Jake Heggie, and Eric Banks. A commitment to new music and willingness to showcase a broad context through diverse programming is evident from the first recording in 2004. *Through the Green Fuse* features a Gaelic hymn, African-American spirituals, and works by Sibelius, Stephen Foster, Eric Whitacre, among others. *Green Fuse* was followed in 2006 by *Requiem* (works by Howells, Whitacre, and Pizzetti) which received two Grammy Award nominations. In 2008, *Threshold of Night* (music by Tarik O'Regan) also received two nominations, including Best Classical Album. The 2009 PBS television special "A Company of Voices: Conspirare in Concert" received the Grammy Award nomination for Best Classical Crossover, and *Pablo Neruda: The Poet Sings* was nominated for Best Choral Performance in 2016. Conspirare's "astonishing" (Bay Area Reporter) 2012 recording of works by Samuel Barber includes two new arrangements for chamber choir and orchestra by Robert Kyr. In Europe, Harmonia Mundi's re-release of *Requiem* in 2009 won the Netherlands' prestigious 2010 Edison Award. In 2015, *Path of Miracles* was awarded the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik in Germany. Conspirare represented the U.S. at the Eighth World Symposium on Choral Music in Copenhagen in 2008, joining invited choirs from nearly 40 countries. In 2012, the group was invited to France for six performances at the Polyfolia Festival and a public concert in Paris. In 2016, the Olavsfestdagene festival, in Trondheim, Norway, presented the group in a collaboration with the internationally acclaimed ensemble Trondheimsolistene.

Conspirare has performed throughout the U.S., 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 and Central Texas where it has received ongoing recognition from local organizations and critics, and Artistic Director Craig Hella Johnson was named Texas State Musician. The group is also committed to an ongoing outreach program which includes free community Big Sings and performances at Travis County Correctional Facility. In 2013, Conspirare became a Resident Company of Austin's Long Center for the Performing Arts. Conspirare is a growing organization, and while known for the flagship vocal ensemble, the organization also boasts the Conspirare Symphonic Choir (a large auditioned ensemble that performs works for chorus, often with instrumental ensemble), the Conspirare Chamber Orchestra, and Conspirare Youth Choirs, an educational program made up of three choirs (Prelude, Kantorei, and Allegro) under the direction of Nina Revering.

## ***Our Profound Gratitude:***

With the support of donors like you, Conspirare is able to continue presenting Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* to national audiences. Conspirare gratefully acknowledges the following supporters of *Considering Matthew Shepard*:

### **Season Sustaining Underwriter**



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