

Considering Matthew Shepard

Composed & Conducted by **CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON**

CONSPIRARE

CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON (b. 1962)

Considering Matthew Shepard

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

1

56'22

PROLOGUE

- 1 (1) Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass MA 7'14
- 2 (2) Ordinary Boy KRI, HK, MA, CH 6'56
- 3 (3) We Tell Each Other Stories SM 4'06

PASSION

- 4 (4) Recitation I SB 0'36
- 5 (5) The Fence (before) CB 2'33
- 6 (6) Recitation II DF 0'56
- 7 (7) The Fence (that night) DB 5'52
- 8 (8) Recitation III MG 1'18
- 9 (9) A Protestor 3'22
- 10 (10) Keep it Away From Me
(The Wound of Love) LMW, Trio: SAW, SM, EG 3'51
- 11 (11) Recitation IV SAW 1'04
- 12 (12) Fire of the Ancient Heart DB, CB 4'51
- 13 (13) Recitation V RG 0'39
- 14 (14) Stray Birds 1'33
- 15 (15) We Are All Sons (part 1) 0'40
- 16 (16) I am Like You/We Are All Sons (part 2) Quartet: EG, KRI, CH, JP 7'35
- 17 (17) The Innocence MA 3'17

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2

49'04

- 1 (18) Recitation VI KRh 0'22
- 2 (19) The Fence (one week later) MG 3'20
- 3 (20) Recitation VII TS 0'28
- 4 (21) Stars JMi 3'17
- 5 (22) Recitation VIII MD 0'29
- 6 (23) In Need of Breath DC 5'25
- 7 (24) Gently Rest (Deer Lullaby) 4'22
- 8 (25) Recitation IX JCC 0'43
- 9 (26) Deer Song SDT, EG, SM 4'12
- 10 (27) Recitation X DB 0'33
- 11 (28) The Fence (after) / The Wind 4'57
- 12 (29) Pilgrimage SAW, CB, DF, RG, HK, JMi, KRI, SM, MG, SB, JCC, JMcc 5'14

EPILOGUE

- 13 (30) Meet Me Here KRI, SAW 4'24
- 14 (31) Thank You SM, DF 2'36
- 15 (32) All of Us SDT, MD, SM 6'06
- 16 (33) Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass (Reprise) MA 2'35

CONSPIRARE

CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON Artistic Director and Conductor

SOPRANO

Mela Dailey
Melissa Givens
Esteli Gomez
Julie McCoy
Stefanie Moore
Kathlene Ritch
Sonja DuToit Tengblad
Shari Alise Wilson*

ALTO

Sarah Brauer
Janet Carlsen Campbell
Helen Karloski
Melissa Marse
Laura Mercado-Wright
Keely J. Rhodes*

TENOR

Matt Alber
J.D. Burnett
Dann Coakwell
Paul D'Arcy*
Carr Hornbuckle
Jos Milton
Wilson Nichols

BASS

Cameron Beauchamp
Dashon Burton
David Farwig
Rick Gabrillo^*
Robert Harlan
Sam Kreidenweis
John Proft
Thann Scoggin*

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Vanguel Tangarov, clarinet
Thomas Burritt, percussion
Mitch Watkins, guitars #
Craig Hella Johnson, piano
Stephen Redfield, violin +
Ames Asbell, viola
Douglas Harvey, cello
Jessica Valls, double bass

^ Additional percussion CD1 track 1
* Additional percussion CD1 track 12
Guitar intro CD1 track 10
+ Violin solo CD2 track 7

Legacy of Matthew Shepard

On October 7, 1998, then-21-year-old Matthew Shepard was brutally attacked by two men, tied to a fence in a field outside Laramie, Wyoming, and left to die. His attackers targeted him for being gay. On October 12, he succumbed to his injuries in a hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado. This horrific chain of events became one of the most notorious anti-gay hate crimes in American history and spawned a new generation of LGBTQ civil rights activists. All of us who knew him, and millions who did not, joined in grief and outrage and demanded the world change. In a first step, his parents formed the Matthew Shepard Foundation, to spare other families from similar tragedies.

Matt's life and death have inspired a rich array of artistic works, including Tectonic Theater Project's plays *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*; Lesléa Newman's poetry collection *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*, Melissa Etheridge's song "Scarecrow" and Elton John's "American Triangle"; Michele Josue's documentary *Matt Shepard is a Friend of Mine*, and Roger Spottiswoode's feature film *The Matthew Shepard Story*.

Now joining this canon is Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard*. This extraordinary composition captures the fullness and complexity of the time of Matt's life and the missing piece revealed by his death. It pulls the lens of human understanding farther back around one man to show his place in the world, and the world's new place, without him.

Considering Matthew Shepard pays a priceless tribute to Matt. We at the Matthew Shepard Foundation believe that for years to come it will advance our work to replace hate with understanding, compassion and acceptance.

– JASON MARSDEN
Denver, Colorado, March 2016

Jason Marsden serves as Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation
www.matthewshepard.org

Composer Note

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 first felt led to compose a passion setting for Matthew Shepard; this music occupies the central portion of the work. I then expanded the oratorio to include a prologue and an epilogue to provide a framework in which Matt's voice could be heard and to create a space to experience and reflect upon the feelings and important questions which are raised when we bring our consideration to Matthew Shepard.

For the formation of the libretto, I chose to gather and shape a collection of texts from several writers whose words span centuries and represent significant cultural and geographic differences. I am 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. My collaboration with Michael Dennis Browne was deeply meaningful. He worked closely with me, writing several texts and bringing his wisdom and refreshing inspiration to the shaping of this work. Other poetic voices that are woven into the texture include the German mystic Hildegard of Bingen, Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, Persian mystic Hafiz (rendered by Daniel Ladinsky), W. S. Merwin, and Wyoming poets Sue Wallis and John D. Nesbitt. The words of Blake, Rumi, Dante, Gabriela Mistral, and an Old Testament passage became building blocks within certain texts. For other sections, I created texts myself.

The singers of *Conspirare* inspired me at every turn. Their voices were in my imagination as I composed *Considering Matthew Shepard* and they brought it into being with tender devotion.

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

– CRAIG HELLA JOHNSON

Anguish, Remembrance, Hope

Craig Hella Johnson's masterful fusion oratorio, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, stands out immediately as one of the most original and innovative American works of the past several decades. Combining a remarkably broad range of musical styles, Johnson tells the heartbreaking, soul-shattering story of Matthew Shepard in powerful emotional and spiritual evocations that plumb the depths of anguish in order to seek greater understanding. Johnson has remarked that he created the work to explore a seemingly unanswerable question, "At the bottom of the suffering of this story, and among all of the suffering and death in the world, is the flame of love still present?"

At its root, Johnson tells us, his oratorio arises from a kind of musical storytelling that was inspired by J. S. Bach, whose Passions he knows intimately as a singer and conductor. He was profoundly influenced by Bach's ability to know when to comfort his listeners during the intense journey of the passion, a genre that emerged from the Latin word *passio*, meaning "suffering." This is evident in the assured pacing of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, which never abandons us to anguish for too long. In the manner of Bach, Johnson leads us from suffering to hope through a transformative musical journey of diverse emotional range.

And Bach is literally present at the beginning of the work, as well. The oratorio begins with the opening eleven measures of his familiar *Prelude in C Major* from the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, played by the pianist (Johnson himself, in the initial performances). The chorus responds by singing one word—"All"—repeated as the text for each of five sustained chords that are drawn from the beginning of the prelude, but now stated over a single tone ("C") in the bass. This distillation of the prelude's opening passage invites us to enter the work in a spirit of wholeness, remembering that this is a story for *all* of us, or perhaps the story of us all. This suggests that we are taking a unifying journey that is ultimately inclusive.

The oratorio is structured in three parts: *Prologue* (three movements); *Passion* (the body of the work, 15 movements); and *Epilogue* (three movements plus a brief reprise). The prologue establishes the natural beauty and vastness of Wyoming as the place of our journey, and we are introduced to Matt Shepard in the person of a vocalist, who sings words from his high school journal. He is portrayed as "just an ordinary boy living ordinary days with extraordinary kindness... extraordinary light and joy." Finally, at the end of the prologue, we are offered only three words by the chorus—"Open, listen ... All." This is a variation of the text and music related to Bach's prelude, but in a new key area (A major instead of C); the journey of transformation has already begun.

The sonic journey that follows, entitled *Passion*, is an interweaving of several streams of compelling musical storytelling: ten recitations objectively recount Matt Shepard's story (a kind of spoken "recitative"); five movements tell the story of the fence that held Matt as he lay dying; three extended solo arias are personal reflections; and there are seven diverse movements for vocal ensembles and/or chorus (men's, women's or mixed voices).

The choral movements express the reactions of various groups of individuals who constitute the community, spanning the emotional spectrum from primal and impassioned ("Fire of the Ancient Heart") to celestial and serene ("Stars"). During the latter, Dennis Shepard's court testimony—a keenly affecting eulogy for his son—is merged with a musical evocation of stars appearing above Matt in the course of his suffering. Through the shifts of perspective in *Passion*, we explore the viewpoints of Matt's mother, father, and others who accompany him on his life path. Ultimately, he becomes much more than an icon: he is our son, our brother, and our friend. His suffering takes on direct personal meaning for us.

From start to finish, the dramatic storytelling of *Passion* includes musical resonances from diverse sources that are "fused" in a completely original way: Lutheran hymnody; spirituals; blues, gospel and jazz; country, folk, and Country Western music; pop ballads; new music (pointillism); chant traditions including Gregorian chant; lullaby; Broadway styles including Sondheim; British, American and Scandinavian traditions including Barber, Holst, Vaughan Williams, Britten, and Pärt (*tintinnabuli* style); and Russian Orthodox music.

Unlike many "fusion" composers of the past two decades, Johnson works with the fundamental connections (rather than differences) between diverse musical traditions, reminding us of our essential connectedness. He gives us this experience through his uncanny command of an array of styles, which he cross-connects at a deep, motivic level, ensuring that the oratorio is always unified and organic as a composition. As listeners, we become members of a community whose range of experience is as inclusive as the diversity of styles that are melded into the musical fusion of the oratorio.

In *Epilogue*, three final movements balance the three of the prologue, and now we arise from our anguish with new understanding. This is reflected through a succession of styles that celebrates "All"—both our diversity and connectedness, symbolized here by: American revival hymnody ("Meet Me Here"); a transformation of Bach's *C Major Prelude* ("Thanks"); and an ecstatic gospel/Motown mix fused with Lutheran hymnody ("All of Us") that leads to a reprise of the cowboy song from the prologue.

Now we experience Bach's prelude as destination, rather than departure. While it is played in its entirety, the chorus weaves a song of gratitude around it, as two narrators read W. S. Merwin's poem, "Thanks," which ends, "we go on saying thank you ... we are saying and waving / dark though it is." Yet there is new hope as the chorus sings "All of Us," beseeching us to remember: "Bind up every wound, / Every cause to grieve; / Always to forgive, / Only to believe." Ultimately, Johnson leads us to a place of unity in diversity, celebrating the human potential to go beyond hatred and loss toward compassion and deeper understanding, a greatly needed message for our times.

— ROBERT KYR

Robert Kyr's work in the field of music composition was recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Letters with a 2016 Arts and Letters Award; as a Philip H. Knight Professor of Music, he chairs the composition department at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, where he also directs the Oregon Bach Festival Composers Symposium.

“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.

October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard.
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Somerville, MA.

1 (1) Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass

All.

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

(These are the things that sway and pass
Cattle, sky, and grass
Dance and dance
Never die, never die, they circle
Sky, cattle, horses
Grass dancing)

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 . . .

These are the things that sway and pass
Dance and circle
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.

These are the things that sway and pass . . .

The authors whose texts are designated by the
symbols ^ / + / * / # / - are listed on page 15.

2 (2) 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

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
*Frère Jacques, frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?
Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines!
Ding ding dong. Ding ding dong . . .*

*Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream . . .*

*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star,
How I wonder what you are.*

*[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 bugs, 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 very much . . .

I love Wyoming so 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! +
How I love the 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 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.*

4 (4) Recitation I

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

5 (5) 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.

6 (6) 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 split-rail fence, beat him horribly and left him to die in the cold of night.

7 (7) 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 . . .

8 (8) 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.

"God Hates Fags, Matt in Hell"
– Signs held by anti-gay protestors at Matthew Shepard's funeral and the trials of his murderers

9 (9) A Protestor

kreuzige, kreuzige! [German—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 . . .

10 (10) 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, pain 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
don't even try
no wing no song
no cry no comfort ye
no wound ever mine
close up the gates of night
the wound of love
keep it all away from me
the wound of love
you take away
the wounds of the world
keep it away from me*

11 (11) Recitation IV

National media 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.

12 (12) 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 [Latin—light]
 Open us,
 All!

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

13 (13) 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.

14 (14) Stray Birds

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.

15 (15) We Are All Sons
(part 1)

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

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

16 (16) I am Like You / We Are All Sons
(part 2)

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 that 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

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

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 ^

17 (17) 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 times that 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?

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?

2 1 (18) Recitation VI

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

"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

2 (19) The Fence (one week later)

*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*

flowers and photos . . .

*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*

*I keep still
I stand firm*

Some of them touch me in unexpected ways

flowers and photos . . .

*Some of them touch me in unexpected ways
and then move on*

3 (20) Recitation VII

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

4 (21) 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 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

5 (22) Recitation VIII

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

6 (23) 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
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.*

2 7 (24) Gently Rest (Deer Lullaby)

Gently rest now, you the child of angels
 Spirit shining, resting in creation
 Universe is holding you so deeply
 Gently rest now, you the child of angels

Deer beside you, hear your brother breathing
 With you always in your starry shelter
 Dreaming in the holy home of wonder
 Universe is holding you so deeply
 Light of every sun you felt around you
 Blessing bringing our own hearts of longing
 Spirit sleeping in the arms of ages
 Gently rest now, you the child of angels

Universe now dreaming you so deeply
 Spirit shining, home within creation
 Dreaming in eternal light of wonder
 Gently rest now, you the child of angels
 Spirit sleeping in the arms of angels
 Gently rest

8 (25) 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.

9 (26) 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?

10 (27) Recitation X

The fence has been torn down.

11 (28) 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

Carry him home

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

Winds of the World: carry him home.

12 29) Pilgrimage

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
 [Hebrew—may his great name grow]

I walk to the fence with beauty above me
Om Mani Padme Hum
 [Sanskrit—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 hmm . . .

13 (30) 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 old 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 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 . . .*

14 (31) Thank You

[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
smiling by the windows looking out
in our directions*

Thank you, thank you

Hohou, hohou [Arapaho—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 and waving
dark though it is*

15 (32) 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.

16 (33) Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass (Reprise)

(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. ^*



Michael Dennis Browne

Michael Dennis Browne's latest collection of poems is *The Voices*, published in 2015 by Carnegie Mellon University Press. His poems have been published in many magazines and anthologies, and his awards include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bush Foundation, the Jerome Foundation and the McKnight Foundation. Two of his collections have won the Minnesota Book Award for poetry. As a librettist, he has written many texts for music, working for almost four decades with composer Stephen Paulus. Their post-

Holocaust oratorio, *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in music by the Minnesota Orchestra. Browne is a professor emeritus of English at the University of Minnesota, where he taught for thirty-nine years and was a member of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.



Lesléa Newman

Lesléa Newman is the author of seventy books for readers of all ages, including the children's books *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Ketzel, The Cat Who Composed*. Her recent poetry collection, *I Carry My Mother*, explores a daughter's journey through her mother's cancer battle. Ms. Newman, a former poet laureate of Northampton, Massachusetts has received poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Artists Foundation. She teaches at Spalding University's low-residency MFA in Writing program.

October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard received an American Library Association Stonewall Honor and the Florida Council Teachers of English Joan F. Kaywell Books Save Lives Award. Ms. Newman works closely with the Matthew Shepard Foundation as a member of their speakers bureau. She has visited schools all over the country giving her presentation "He Continues to Make a Difference: The Story of Matthew Shepard."



Craig Hella Johnson

Craig Hella Johnson brings depth of knowledge, artistic sensitivity and rich imagination to his programs and is known for crafting musical journeys that create deep connections with listeners. As founder and artistic director of Conspirare, Johnson assembles the finest singers in the country to form a world-class ensemble. Johnson serves as Music Director of the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble and Resident Artist in Choral Music at Texas State University. He is a published composer and arranger, guest conductor and educator. In 2015 Johnson and Conspirare received a Grammy® for Best Choral Performance for *The Sacred Spirit of Russia*, and Chorus America recognized him with the Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art. In 2013 the Texas Legislature named him Texas State Musician.

Conspirare

Conspirare is a professional choral organization under the leadership of Craig Hella Johnson. Inspired by the power of music to change lives, this ensemble engages singers from around the world who join voices to deliver world-class, extraordinary live musical experiences and recordings. Their discography includes 12 commercial albums and 17 self-produced live albums. Johnson and Conspirare were awarded a 2014 Grammy® for Best Choral Performance for *The Sacred Spirit of Russia* album and have been nominated seven other times. Based in Austin, Texas, they perform an annual concert series and tour in the United States and abroad. Conspirare also consists of Conspirare Symphonic Choir, boasting more than 100 volunteer voices, and Conspirare Youth Choirs, an educational program for singers in second through twelfth grade.

CONSPIRARE

DISCOGRAPHY

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CD HMU 907534 / DVD HMD 9907535

Tarik O'Regan –Threshold of Night
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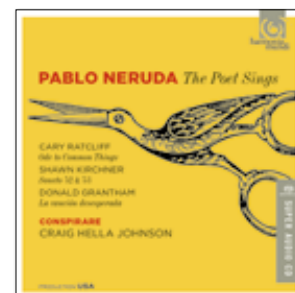
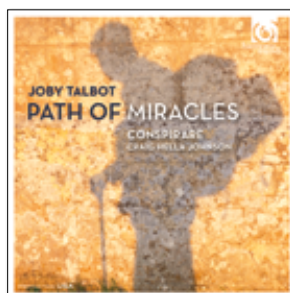
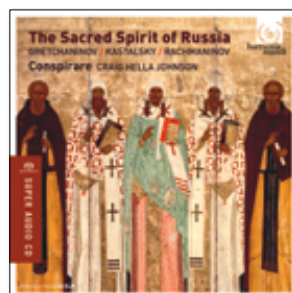
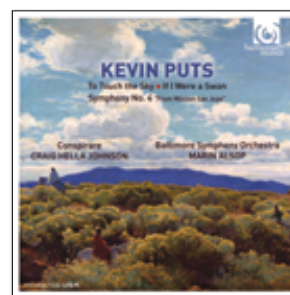
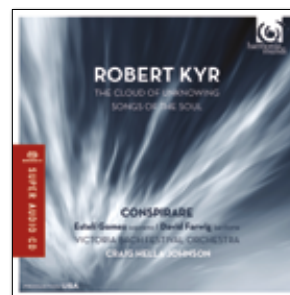
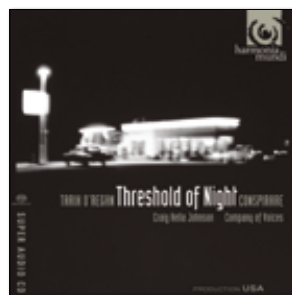
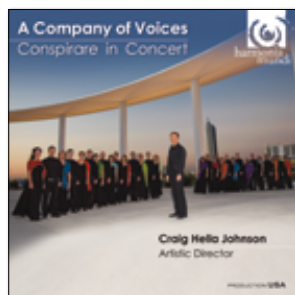
Kevin Puts
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The Sacred Spirit of Russia
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Considering Matthew Shepard

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