



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2016

Austin, Texas

World Premiere
Considering Matthew Shepard
A Major Work by Craig Hella Johnson

Conspirare's Grammy® award-winning Artistic Director Craig Hella Johnson will debut his groundbreaking contemporary oratorio this February. Following a 2014 Grammy for Best Choral performance, and a recent nomination in the same category, the incomparable singers of Conspirare will deliver a poignant concert experience, inspiring hope, compassion and empowerment.

In October 1998 a shocking hate crime was committed against Matthew Shepard who was brutally beaten and left tied to a fence to die. Shepard's story haunted Johnson for years and finally impelled him to compose a musical response to this tragedy. "The entire process has been about asking questions, particularly this enduring question of whether or not love itself is part of our essential nature, even amidst the many painful and confounding realities of our existence," said Johnson.

An ensemble of 29 singers and eight instrumentalists, including Johnson on piano, will lead the listener through a tapestry of musical textures and styles of this contemporary oratorio. "It began as a passion setting and expanded from that into a fusion oratorio with a breadth of musical styles such as chant, choral movements, arias, folk songs and theater songs," said Johnson.

Each Austin performance will commence with a pre-concert talk by acclaimed author Elizabeth Neeld and conclude with a post-concert discussion with prolific composer Robert Kyr, Jason Marsden, Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation, and Craig Hella Johnson.

This work will be recorded for a fall 2016 album release on Harmonia Mundi.

Considering Matthew Shepard performances

2.20.16, 8pm at AISD Performing Arts Center, Austin, TX
pre-concert talk 7pm

2.21.16, 4pm at AISD Performing Arts Center, Austin, TX
pre-concert talk 3pm

2.25.16, Western American Choral Directors Association Conference, Pasadena, CA
(conference attendees only)

2.27.16, 8pm at First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, CA

TICKETS: CONSPIRARE.ORG

***Considering Matthew Shepard* ancillary events**

1.31.16, 7pm at The Marchesa Hall & Theater

Matt Shepard Is a Friend of Mine film screening, panel discussion with director Michele Josue

TICKETS: AUSTINFILM.ORG

Celebrating their 23rd season, Conspirare is a Grammy® award-winning vocal ensemble that creates exceptional concert experiences and recordings. With the world-class artistry of its extraordinary voices and the incomparable direction of conductor Craig Hella Johnson, Conspirare is one of the finest choirs performing today. Inspired by the power of music to transform lives, Conspirare performances are musical magic. conspirare.org

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