

Conspirare Presents comPassion: A Festival of Musical Passions

Two-week festival explores suffering, empathy, and redemption through music

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April 21, 2014 – (AUSTIN, TX) – [Conspirare](http://conspirare.org) is pleased to announce [comPassion](http://compassion.org), a two-week choral festival to take place **June 5-15, 2014**. The festival explores the fundamental human experiences of passion (great suffering) and compassion (great sympathy and desire to alleviate suffering) through musical settings of deeply painful stories countered by heroic acts of love. The festival will showcase four different programs that celebrate archetypal stories of suffering, empathy, and redemption in different ways. Concerts include *Pietà* by John Muehleisen, *Considering Matthew Shepard* by Craig Hella Johnson, *Requiem* by Maurice Duruflé, *A Gnostic Passion* by Doug and Brad Balliett, and *St. Matthew Passion* by J.S. Bach.

“Musicians spend their lives dedicated to exploring music. We want to give patrons the same chance with the comPassion festival,” says Craig Hella Johnson, artistic director at Conspirare. “The festival will offer the audience a variety of ways to engage with performers. Leading up to individual performances, patrons will be able to attend open rehearsals and pre-concert talks. We hope to give patrons a chance to connect with musicians in an intimate way while bringing together an abundance of riches – music, friends, opportunities, and conversations – for everyone involved.”

A special festival feature is the comPassion Dialogues, expanding on Conspirare’s popular pre-concert talks to include post-concert talks and separate conversational sessions with composers and Craig Hella Johnson. The comPassion Dialogues are designed to deepen audience members’ connection to the Passion stories and their musical settings and to inspire their own acts of compassion in the modern world.

Tickets for all performances are available online at [Conspirare.org](http://conspirare.org) or by calling 512-474-5664, except as otherwise noted. Individual performance details are as follows.

***PIETÀ* by John Muehleisen**

A contemporary oratorio that explores hope and love as human responses to the tragedies and injustices we see every day. Featuring soloists Nicole Greenidge Joseph, soprano, and Ross Hauck, tenor.

Thursday, June 5, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Fredericksburg, TX

- **6:15 pm comPassion Dialogue** – Compassion and *Pietà*: A conversation with composer John Muehleisen with an introduction by Robert Kyr (pre-concert, included in ticket)
- **7:30 pm *PIETÀ* Performance**

Friday, June 6, St. Martin’s Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

- **6:45 pm comPassion Dialogue** – Compassion and *Pietà*: A Conversation with composer John Muehleisen with an introduction by Robert Kyr (pre-concert, included in ticket)
- **8:00 pm *PIETÀ* Performance**
- **9:45 pm** (immediately after Friday performance) **comPassion Dialogue** – *Pietà* Talkback with John Muehleisen, Craig Hella Johnson and artists (post-concert, included in ticket)

Saturday, June 7, St. Martin’s Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

- **6:45 pm comPassion Dialogue** – Compassion and *Pietà*: A conversation with composer John Muehleisen with an introduction by Robert Kyr (pre-concert, included in ticket)
 - **8:00 pm *PIETÀ* Performance**
 - **9:45 pm** (immediately after Saturday performance) **comPassion Dialogue** – *Pietà* Talkback with John Muehleisen, Craig Hella Johnson and artists (post-concert, included in ticket)
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comPassion Dialogue: A Passion Walk for Our Time with Robert Kyr and Conspirare Symphonic Choir

The public is invited to join composer Robert Kyr in dialogue about *The Passion According to an Unknown Witness*, a work-in-progress he is co-creating with Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare Symphonic Choir. The dialogue will be in workshop format with Johnson and the choir. (*free, open to the public*).

Saturday, June 7, 11:00 am, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

comPassion Dialogue: The Passion as Text for Music with Robert Kyr

Composer Robert Kyr gives a presentation, with question-and-answer, on the Passion text and how it has inspired some of the greatest music throughout history. (*free, open to the public*).

Saturday, June 7, 2:00 pm, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

CONSIDERING MATTHEW SHEPARD by Craig Hella Johnson & REQUIEM by Maurice Duruflé

Interactive workshop performance of a Passion in progress, inspired by a young gay man's senseless murder on a snow-blown night, and in response, excerpts from a beloved Requiem. With Lacey Roop, slam poet, and Austin Haller on organ. matthewshepard.org

Sunday, June 8, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Austin, TX

- **7:00 pm comPassion Dialogue** – A creative dialogue between Robert Kyr and Craig Hella Johnson about the passion as requiem and the requiem as passion, particularly as related to the connection between Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* and the Duruflé work. (pre-concert, included in ticket)
 - **8:00 pm *Considering Matthew Shepard* Performance**
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A GNOSTIC PASSION by Doug and Brad Balliett

The Texas premiere of new music on ancient texts by cutting-edge composers who happen to be identical twins. Presented in a workshop reading of a newly realized 4-hand piano version.

Tuesday, June 10, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Austin TX

- **6:00 pm A GNOSTIC PASSION** – free and open to the public
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ST. MATTHEW PASSION by J.S. Bach

Bach's great sacred oratorio recounts the persecution and suffering of Jesus, with tenor Dann Coakwell in his signature role as The Evangelist and baritone Paul Max Tipton as Jesus. The performances will be presented with period instruments – similar to those Bach once used – flown in from all over the world, making an old work of art new for modern patrons. Members of the Victoria Bach Festival Orchestra will join more than 35 Company of Voices singers in this not-to-be-missed Conspirare season finale. Presented in collaboration with Victoria Bach Festival.

Friday, June 13, Victoria Fine Arts Center, 1002 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX

- **6:30 pm comPassion Dialogue:** Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* as the Embodiment of Compassion. Robert Kyr discusses J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and its relationship to the theme of compassion. (pre-concert, included in ticket)
- **7:30 pm ST. MATTHEW PASSION Performance** (Tickets at victoriabachfestival.org)

Saturday, June 14, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

- **7:00 pm comPassion Dialogue:** Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* as the Embodiment of Compassion. Robert Kyr discusses J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and its relationship to the theme of compassion. (pre-concert, included in ticket)
- **8:00 pm ST. MATTHEW PASSION Performance**

Sunday, June 15, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

- **2:00 pm comPassion Dialogue:** Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* as the Embodiment of Compassion. Robert Kyr discusses J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and its relationship to the theme of compassion. (pre-concert, included in ticket)
- **3:00 pm ST. MATTHEW PASSION Performance**

Additional event details are available at conspirare.org/now-singing/compassion.

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ABOUT CONSPIRARE

To learn more about Conspirare, click [here](#).

Photos of Conspirare and Craig Hella Johnson are available [here](#); others upon request.