Conspirare gratefully acknowledges the following:

*Considering Matthew Shepard*

able to continue presenting Craig Hella Johnson's *Dawn,* with composer Stephen Paulus. Their post-Bush Foundation. Two of his collections have been published by 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 of Teachers of English. Joan F. Kaywell Books Save Lives Award. 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.* She lives in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Tonight’s program is taking place as part of the City of West Hollywood and WeHo Arts’ *One City One Pride* commemoration of this important anniversary.

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**Ignite @ The Ford!**

Presented by the Ford Theatre Foundation. *Ignite @ The Ford! is a series comprised of world-renowned contemporary artists whose work is thought-provoking and reflects the world in which we live. If you enjoy tonight’s performance, we invite you to explore the other events in the series.*

Curated by John Isaacson, Executive Director of the Ford Theatre Foundation.

*Ignite @ The Ford! is supported by Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. Proceeds from tonight’s performance benefit the Ford Theatre Foundation. The Ford Theatre Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves the community of Los Angeles through its support of the John Anson Ford Theatres every year, with support from the Foundation, the Ford Theatre presents an eclectic array of categories diverse music, dance, theatre, film and performing arts. *Ignite @ The Ford!*, a portion of the season is programmed in partnership with L.A. County Arts, L.A. County-based artists, producers and arts organizations. Complementing its work to support the arts, the Foundation presents programs that provide opportunities to connect and engage audiences. For more information or to get involved, please visit FordTheatres.org.*

*Chris Isaacson Presents (Considering Matthew Shepard Co-Presenter) has created, produced and promoted more than 700 events since the company’s founding in 2004. From small clubs to major theatres, CIP has presented some of the most influential stars of this generation. Most recently, CIP produced an extravaganza for the new Harvey Milk Foundation. IGNITE @ the FORD! is produced by the Ford Theatre Foundation.*

Presented in association with Chris Isaacson Presents.

The Julie Ann Sanudo Theatres of Los Angeles present:

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**Support also comes from the National Endowment for the Arts, Texas Commission on the Arts and the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.**

**Special thanks:**

- Maria Bogdany, Fred Cooper, Ellen Forrest, Carol Henschel, Gregory Horne, Chris & Virginia Kindel, Lee Mortimer & Cassie Mass, Cathy Neuman

For complete list of donors contact the Collaborators tab at conspire.org/project/ considering-matthew-shepard

*Compania is engaged in ongoing fundraising to support future performances as part of the national tour. Please contact Marcela Chávez at chavez@marcelachavez.com for information or to get involved.*

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THE LEGACY OF MATTHEW SHEPARD

Because of what I do, I often ask to share how Matthew Shepard’s life, death and legacy mean to me and to our community and nation today. The passage of time has made it harder to give a short answer.

Matt – as his friends invariably called him – was a friend, one of a few that I lost the year before he disappeared, and of the larger than life presence he left behind. His larger than life presence made him hard to forget and his continuing life as a historic figure and symbol stands alone amongst those of my loved ones who left us too soon. In that sense, his legacy means to me what it means to so many – a fixed point in the path toward LGBT acceptance in our society, ultimately having achieved, despite, or because of, fallen heroes.

What means the most to me to say, though, is that the heroic aspect of his humanity is what a man who lived. He had a family, artistic aspirations, his dates, photography, foods he disliked, politicians he despised more, and always, the opinions. So many opinions, so rich, so passionately advanced and skilfully defended in debate. He was also gay. And I’m glad that’s all so many people ever knew of him.

Matt loved the theatre, films, and music, and so is it fitting that part of how he is remembered and remembered is through the artistic achievements of those who, like himself, moulded his passage and refused to fully accept the life or death that we all felt at his violent, needless death, and his life and the scar that held for places of poetry, of politics, of dreams, of goals, of hopes and aspirations. It is a gateway to a fitting place of pilgrimage for our passions.

Matt’s life tells us, live yours as you. Be authentic. Follow your head and your heart and celebrate them both.

As we will hear in this performance, what is the sound of a place that went undiscovered for What we will hear in this performance is the artistic achievements of those who, like Matt, the remarkable writer who brought all of his gifts to bear in one of the most membrane collaborations imaginable. From the beginning, he understood my passion for creating a 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.

The singers of Conspirare inspired me at every turn. Their voices were in my head and wherever I felt there was a need in the content or the pacing of the work. The singers of Conspirare inspired me at every turn. Their voices were in my head and wherever I felt there was a need in the content or the pacing of the work.

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like so many people, I was deepley moved and affected by the death of a young, gay Wyoming man in 1998, Matthew Shepard. The events surrounding his death created a movement in me which continued for the remainder of the years after and 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. This story holds so many layers of 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 connected to the Passion settings, especially those of J.S. Bach, the Matthew Passion and the St. John Passion. As I first felt called to compose a Passion setting of Matthew Shepard, which created the inspiration and foundational structure for the Passion music. At the just the moment, the poem which became Matthew’s aria appeared - In Need of Breath by Daniel Ladinsky. Other poetic voices include the German mystic Hildegard von Bingen, the remarkable writer who brought all of his gifts to bear in one of the most

Considering Matthew Shepard

Johnson’s first concert-length composition Considering Matthew Shepard was premiered with numerous awards and honors. Notably among these, he was a 2016 GRAMMY® for Best Choral Performance. Chorus America granted him the Michael Karn 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 awarded him 2009 Louis Loubo Award for Innovative Artistic & Entrepreneurial Measure 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.

Conferring, in Conspirare, which means “to breathe together,” is comprised of soloists from around the country. Conspirare is a 40-member chorus which has performed with a reputation for “expanding the boundaries of choral performance” (Wall Street Journal).

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