

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JAN 11, 2017
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**KLRU-TV, AUSTIN PBS TO BRING CONSPIRARE'S
CONSIDERING MATTHEW SHEPARD TO NATIONAL PBS AUDIENCE IN 2018**

KLRU WILL FILM PERFORMANCE FEBRUARY 1, 2017 IN AUSTIN

Austin, TX – KLRU-TV, Austin PBS, in collaboration with Conspirare, is bringing *Considering Matthew Shepard* to television. KLRU has assembled an award-winning team to help adapt the three-part oratorio into a unique theatrical experience for the small screen. The *Considering Matthew Shepard* television adaptation will be formatted for a 90-minute broadcast and distributed nationally to PBS stations in 2018 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Shepard's death. The performance will be recorded live in front of an invitation-only audience February 1 at 7:30 pm at ACL Live at The Moody Theater. Watch a trailer [here](#).

Considering Matthew Shepard is a Grammy-nominated three-part oratorio composed by Craig Hella Johnson. The work is an evocative and compassionate musical response to the murder of Matthew Shepard. On October 6, 1998, University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard was kidnapped, beaten, and left to die, in what became an infamous act of brutality, and one of America's most notorious anti-gay hate crimes. Shepard's murder ultimately led to the creation of the Matthew Shepard Foundation and provided a catalyst for legislation that expanded the definition of a hate crime to include sexual orientation. In 2009, Congress passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Composer Craig Hella Johnson had a profoundly personal reaction to both the murder and its resonance. The Shepard family and Foundation engaged with Johnson in the creation of the work, and allowed the use of fragments from Shepard's personal diary.

"We are honored to be partnering with Conspirare to bring this important and meaningful work to a national audience," said Sara Robertson, KLRU's VP for Production and Technology. "*Considering Matthew Shepard* is a powerful piece that connects with you on different emotional levels. We feel public television is the perfect medium to share this message and encourage community conversations around the themes of acceptance and human rights."

Considering Matthew Shepard isn't strictly a biographical work but rather a reflection of our society and our collective experience told through the lens of one individual story. One of the most remarkable elements of Shepard's continuing legacy is the powerful inspiration his life and death have provided to artists of every genre. *Considering Matthew Shepard* joins the ranks of many significant artistic responses to Matthew Shepard's legacy. Most noteworthy is *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman and the Members of the Tectonic Theater Project, which has been seen by more than 30 million people. Jason Marsden, Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation calls *Considering Matthew Shepard* "by far the most intricate, beautiful and unyielding artistic response to this notorious anti-gay hate crime."

Produced by KLRU and directed by Peabody Award winning Broadcaster and Producer Elliott Forrest, the music's storytelling will be supported by visuals explicitly designed to appeal to the television viewing audience. The backdrop of the stage will be a large screen for projections and will augment the storyline and libretto through color, video and text.

The recording of *Considering Matthew Shepard* on the harmonia mundi / [PIAS] label debuted at #4 on Billboard's Traditional Classical Chart in mid-September, 2016. The *Chicago Tribune* called it "one of the best classical albums of 2016."

"This exciting collaboration with KLRU feels for us like the opportunity of a lifetime," said Craig Hella Johnson, Founder and Artistic Director of Conspirare. "The musicians and I are deeply committed to sharing the light and power in the story of Matthew Shepard. We feel that this television production will bring both his story and Conspirare's music to a much broader national audience. I am inspired by the level of talent, imagination, and dedication that I experience in our KLRU colleagues. Perhaps best of all, this has that great feeling of being an Austin-based creation and partnership. I feel so grateful that KLRU is bringing their distinctive brand and love to this project."

The film will be accompanied by outreach and engagement programs, providing opportunities – facilitated by public television stations – for communities to participate in a national conversation about acceptance, compassion and bullying. *Considering Matthew Shepard* is a co-production of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS and Conspirare.

About KLRU-TV, Austin PBS:

KLRU-TV, Austin PBS is dedicated to telling stories that entertain, inspire and change our lives. KLRU highlights what makes Austin unique – whether music, arts or public issues – by creating and distributing award-winning original content. KLRU produces several series including *Austin City Limits*, *Arts In Context*, *Central Texas Gardener*, *Civic Summit* and *Overheard with Evan Smith*. As a nonprofit educational organization, KLRU also prepares children to succeed in school and creates lifelong learning opportunities for all. Find out more at KLRU.org.

About Conspirare:

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 12 releases on the harmonia mundi / [PIAS] 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.