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More Than \$82 Million Awarded for Arts Projects Nationwide

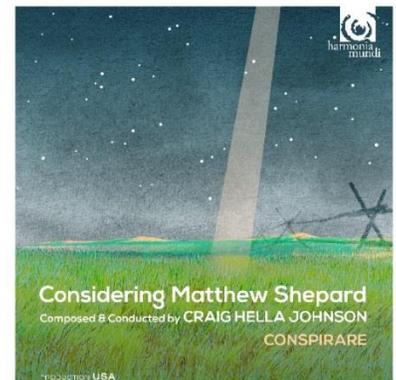
Includes \$30,000 awarded to Conspirare for multi-state tour

Austin, TX—National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$82 million to fund local arts projects across the country in the NEA's second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017. Included in this announcement is an Art Works award of \$30,000 to Conspirare to support the February 2018 multi-state tour of [Considering Matthew Shepard](#). The NEA received 1,728 Art Works applications and will make 1,029 grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

"The arts reflect the vision, energy, and talent of America's artists and arts organizations," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support organizations such as Conspirare, in serving their communities by providing excellent and accessible arts experiences."

Artistic Director Craig Hella Johnson said, "We are extraordinarily grateful for the continued support of the NEA. This support inspires Conspirare to take risks in creating musical projects which can be meaningful and relevant. The NEA funding also allows us to share our music with a national audience through touring and recording. The Endowment's support of *Considering Matthew Shepard* is especially important as it enables us to share Matt's story and our music with a broad audience as a catalyst for needed conversations our re-discovering love and respect for all members of our national community.

Since 2004, the NEA has made 13 grants to Conspirare, including awards for the 2016 recording and 2015 performances of *Considering Matthew Shepard*. Led from the piano by Johnson, [Considering Matthew Shepard](#) showcases the award-winning artistry of Conspirare's singers with a chamber ensemble of renowned instrumentalists. This three-part fusion oratorio is set to a wide range of poetic and soulful texts by poets including Hildegard of Bingen, Lesléa Newman, Michael Dennis Browne, and Rumi. Passages from Matt's personal journal, interviews and writings from his parents, newspaper reports and additional texts by Johnson and Browne are poignantly appointed throughout the work. 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." NEA funding supported Conspirare's May 2017 Texas tour of Jocelyn Hagen's *Songs for Muska*.



To join the Twitter conversation about this announcement, please use #NEASpring17. For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, go to <http://arts.gov>.

About Conspirare

Celebrating their 24th season, **Conspirare** is a professional choir under the direction of Craig Hella Johnson. Inspired by the power of music to change lives, the Grammy®-winning vocal ensemble engages singers from around the world who join forces to deliver extraordinary live musical experiences and recordings. Johnson and Conspirare were awarded the **2014 Best Choral Performance Grammy® for *The Sacred Spirit of Russia*** – one of eleven recordings released on harmonia mundi.

[Conspirare press kit page](#) (images for download, info pdf)