

Temple University Concert Choir

Paul Rardin, conductor

Kim Barroso, pianist

Vinroy D. Brown, Jr., graduate conductor

The Fence: Excerpts from *Considering Matthew Shepard*

Sunday, October 22, 2023 • 3:00PM
Lew Klein Hall, Temple Performing Arts Center
1837 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Program

Please note: This performance contains homophobic language and depictions of violence. We invite you to process these brief instances in whatever ways are most comforting to you, including leaving the performance if need be. Thank you.

From *Considering Matthew Shepard*

Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1952)

PART II: PASSION

4. Recitation 1

Emma Krewson

5. The Fence (before)

Benjamin Chen, baritone

6. Recitation 2

Reid Shriver

8. Recitation 3

Blake Levinson

9. A Protestor

11. Recitation 4

Isabella DiPasquale

12. Fire of the Ancient Heart

Vinroy D. Brown, Jr., baritone

Roy Nussbaum, bass drum; James Hatter and Isabella DiPasquale, conga
Victoria Lumia tom tom; Andrew Stern, djembe

13. Recitation 5

Gabriel Planas-Borgstrom

14. Stray Birds

15. We Are All Sons

16. I Am Like You

Jessica Gambino, soprano; Sadie Roser, alto
Blake Levinson, tenor; Alexander Nguyen, bass

17. The Innocence

Grant Nalty, tenor

18. Recitation 6

Nalani Matthias

19. The Fence (one week later)

Jessica Corrigan, soprano

20. Recitation 7

Sydney Spector

21. Stars

Corey Price, speaker

25. Recitation 9

James Hatter

26. Deer Song

Victoria Lumia, Jessica Gambino, and Roslyn Rich, soprano

27. Recitation 10

Elizabeth Beavers

28. The Fence (after)/The Wind

29. Pilgrimage

Victoria Lumia, Jiaye Xu, Nalani Matthias, and Roslyn Rich, soprano

Alison Crosley, Sadie Roser, and Macey Roberts, alto

Reid Shriver, tenor

Roy Nussbaum, Andrew Stern, and Joshua Powell, baritone

Kim Barroso, piano

Sarah Eom, clarinet

Michael Raymond, guitar

Milo Paperman, percussion

Zhanara Makhmutova, violin

Serhiy Matviychuk, viola

Leigh Brown, cello

Daniel Virgen, bass

**Please join Concert Choir for two additional performances of music from
Considering Matthew Shepard:**

“All of Us” (solo and choral excerpts)

Sunday, December 10, 2023, 3:00pm, TPAC Chapel of Four Chaplains

“Considering Matthew Shepard” (complete oratorio)

Tuesday, April 16, 2024, 7:30pm, TPAC

**The Department of Vocal Arts gratefully acknowledges the support of the
Elaine Brown Choral Chair Fund, which supports excellence, diversity, and
community in choral activities at Temple University.**

The use of photographic, audio, and video recording is not permitted.

Please turn off all electronic devices.

Thirty-fifth performance of the 2023-2024 season.

Notes from the Conspirare website

In October of 1998, Matthew Shepard, a young, gay student at the University of Wyoming in Laramie was kidnapped, severely beaten, tied to a fence and left to die in a lonely field under a blanket of stars. Five days later, when Matt passed away, the world was watching. Approaching the eve of the 20th anniversary, Craig Hella Johnson has responded with his first concert-length work, *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 speaks with a fresh and bold voice, incorporating a variety of musical styles seamlessly woven into a unified whole. Johnson sets 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 Judy and Dennis Shepard, newspaper reports and additional texts by Johnson and Browne are poignantly appointed throughout the work.

Considering Matthew Shepard debuted at #4 on Billboard's Traditional Classical Chart after Harmonia Mundi released the 2-CD Set recording in mid-September, 2016. Audiences describe this work as "brilliant," "powerful," "innovative," "dazzling," and "gripping." *The Bay Area Reporter* wrote "it has the richness, depth and complexity to compel repeated hearing, and the power to get you the first time out," and from the *The Washington Post*: "'Considering Matthew Shepard'" demonstrates music's capacity to encompass, transform and transcend tragedy. Powerfully cathartic, it leads us from horror and grief to a higher understanding of the human condition, enabling us to endure."

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."

Matthew Shepard's story must never be forgotten.

Notes from the Conductor

October 2023 marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of Matthew Shepard. American composer Craig Hella Johnson's oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepard* invites us to confront several seemingly contradictory impulses: to acknowledge the brutality of his murder while also finding compassion for his killers; to hear deeply hurtful hate speech while also bonding to each other through love; to recognize that the figure we may see as an iconic martyr was in fact an "ordinary boy"; and to tell the story of a single human being using a multiplicity of musical styles and influences. As stated in a review from the Chicago Tribune:

"That composer Johnson has managed to draw this message from such a heinous act stands as a testament not only to his vision but to his craft as composer. It would have been very easy for this work to have devolved into treacle or pastiche ~ or both. Instead, Johnson has penned a straightforward, sublimely melodic, utterly unpretentious score, its music as all-embracing as its text."

Today's performance features the Passion section of the oratorio, the largest and middle of the two-hour oratorio's three sections. We leave for a later date (please join us for two additional performances later this year, as noted above) the opening Prologue, in which Johnson establishes a wide-open musical palette worthy of the plains of Matthew's home state, Wyoming, and shares many of Matthew's likes, dislikes, and hobbies in the catchy "Ordinary Boy." We also save for later the Epilogue, which reflects back on Matthew's life and how our awareness of his story can help "All of Us" hear a message of love and compassion from it.

Borrowing from the Passions of J.S. Bach the basic framework of alternating recitatives (here called "recitations," spoken passages that advance the story) with arias (here simply solo and choral songs, in which the singer reflects on the story), Johnson keeps the listener tied both to the individual drama and to the collective response and responsibility. While Johnson evokes earlier classical choral music in several instances - most notably references to Bach's St. John Passion in No. 9 "A Protestor," and one to Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* in that same movement - his main goal is to create a musical tapestry that is highly varied, accessible, and contemporary.

This variety encompasses country music (No. 5 "The Fence (before)"), pop music (No. 17 "The Innocence"), blues (#10 "Keep It Away" ~ join us in December or April to hear this show-stopper), aleatoric (music with random, unstructured rhythmic qualities: No. 21 "Stars"), and minimalism (No. 16 "I Am Like You.") It also encompasses texts from a wide variety of sources, most powerful of which is Lesléa Newman's excerpts from her book of poems *October Mourning* (please see below for the story of Newman's remarkable connection to Matthew Shepard). As the Tribune review stated: "...straightforward, sublimely melodic, utterly unpretentious...as all-embracing as its text."

Notes from Poet Lesléa Newman

“Introduction” from OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD

On Tuesday, October 6, 1998, at approximately 11:45 p.m., twenty-one-year-old Matthew Shepard, a gay college student attending the University of Wyoming, was kidnapped from a bar by twenty-one-year old Aaron McKinney and twenty-one-year-old Russell Henderson. Pretending to be gay, the two men lured Matthew Shepard into their truck, drove him to the outskirts of Laramie, robbed him, beat him with a pistol, tied him to a buck-rail fence, and left him to die. The next day, at about 6:00 p.m. – eighteen hours after the attack – he was discovered and taken to a hospital. He never regained consciousness and died five days later, on Monday, October 12, with his family by his side.

One of the last things Matthew Shepard did that Tuesday night was attend a meeting of the University of Wyoming’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Association. The group was putting final touches on plans for Gay Awareness Week, scheduled to begin the following Sunday, October 11, coinciding with a National Coming Out Day. Planned campus activities included a film showing, an open poetry reading, and a keynote speaker.

That keynote speaker was me.

I never forgot what happened in Laramie, and around the tenth anniversary of Matthew Shepard’s death, I found myself thinking more and more about him. And so I began writing a series of poems, striving to create a work of art that explores the events surrounding Matthew Shepard’s murder in order to gain a better understanding of their impact on myself and the world.

What really happened at the fence that night? Only three people know the answer to that question. Two of them are imprisoned, convicted murderers whose stories often contradict each other (for example, in separate interviews both McKinney and Henderson have claimed that he alone tied Matthew Shepard to the fence). The other person who knows what really happened that night is dead. We will never know his side of the story.

This book is my side of the story.

While the poems in this book are inspired by actual events, they do not in any way represent the statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, or attitudes of any actual person. The statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes conveyed belong to me. All monologues contained within the poems are figments of my imagination; no actual person spoke any of the words contained within the body of any poem. Those words are mine and mine alone. When the words of an actual person are used as a short epigraph for a poem, the source of that quote is cited at the back of the book in a section entitled “Notes,” which contains citations and suggestions for further reading about the crime. The poems, which are meant to be read in

sequential order as one whole work, are a work of poetic invention and imagination: a historical novel in verse. The poems are not an objective reporting of Matthew Shepard's murder and its aftermath; rather they are my own personal interpretation of them.

There is a bench on the campus of the University of Wyoming dedicated to Matthew Shepard, inscribed with the words *He continues to make a difference*. My hope is that readers of *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* will be inspired to make a difference and honor his legacy by erasing hate and replacing it with compassion, understanding, and love.

Acknowledgments

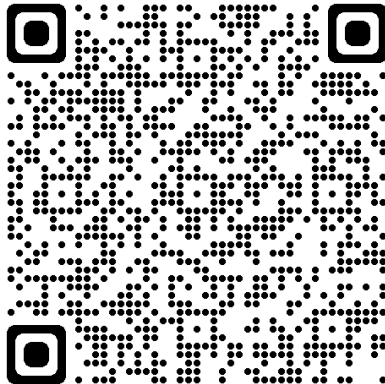
Concert Choir wishes to thank the singers, faculty, staff, and friends who have supported their musical and human growth as part of the rehearsal process. We thank them for helping us in this important and powerful journey.

Corey Price
Noah Slade-Joseph
The Matthew Shepard Foundation
Felipe Fuentes
Dennis Shepard
Brandon McShaffrey

Thanks also to our colleagues and students who assisted with instrumentalists and instruments:

Aisha Dossumova
Phillip O'Banion
Adam Rudisill
Eric Schweingruber

Libretto



Temple University Concert Choir

Paul Rardin, conductor

Kim Barroso, pianist

Vinroy D. Brown, Jr., graduate teaching assistant

SOPRANO

Angela Bui
Jessica Corrigan
Kayla Elliott
Jessica Gambino
Emma Krewson
Emily Loughery
Victoria Lumia
Nalani Matthias
Roslyn Rich
Victoria Smith
Marlena St. Jean
Jiaye Xu

ALTO

Elizabeth Beavers
Alison Crosley
Isabella DiPasquale
Carmelina Favacchia
Kaitlyn Gaughan
Tatiyanna Hayward
Macey Roberts
Sadie Roser
Sydney Spector

TENOR

Shawn Anderson
Ben Bian
Roberto Guevara
James Hatter
Connor Husa
Blake Levinson
Grant Nalty
Julian Nguyen
Corey Price
Brandon Scribner
Reid Shriver

BASS

Vinroy D. Brown, Jr.
Benjamin Chen
Chase Côté
Alexander Nguyen
Roy Nussbaum
Gabriel Planas-Borgstrom
Joshua Powell
Anthony Serrano
Kylar Sprenger
Andrew Stern

Boyer College of Music and Dance

Temple University Choirs

Concert Choir

Graduate Conductors Chorus

Recital Chorus

Singing Owls

University Chorale

University Singers

University Voices

Department of Vocal Arts

Choral Activities Area

Kendra Balmer, Adjunct Professor, Conducting

Dustin Cates, Assistant Professor, Choral Music Education

Leslie Cochran, Coordinator, Department of Vocal Arts

Rollo Dilworth, Professor, Choral Music Education

Mitos Andaya Hart, Associate Director, Choral Activities

Paul Rardin, Chair, Department of Vocal Arts; Elaine Brown Chair of Choral Music

Kathleen Shannon, Adjunct Instructor

Julia Zavadsky, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Conducting

Jeffrey Cornelius, Professor Emeritus, Choral Music

Alan Harler, Professor Emeritus, Choral Music

Janet Yamron, Professor Emeritus, Music and Music Education

The Temple University Choirs have enjoyed a rich tradition of excellence under the batons of some of Philadelphia's most prominent conductors. The seven ensembles comprise nearly 200 students each year, and have enjoyed regional and national acclaim for their performances both individually and collectively. Between the 1940s and 1980s the combined choirs performed annually with The Philadelphia Orchestra, and since 2002 have collaborated annually with the Temple University Symphony Orchestra at the Kimmel Cultural Campus.

Temple Choirs strive for excellence, artistry, and individual growth. They embrace both standard choral works and contemporary music from all around the world. In 1967, under the preparation of Robert Page and the baton of Eugene Ormandy, the choirs performed Carl Orff's *Catulli Carmina* with The Philadelphia Orchestra, a performance that tied with Leonard Bernstein's Mahler's Symphony No. 8 for that year's Grammy Award for Best Classical Choral Performance (Other Than Opera).

Auditions for Temple Choirs

All choirs are open to Temple students of all majors by audition. For audition information, contact Leslie Cochran at leslie.cochran@temple.edu.

Boyer College of Music and Dance

The Boyer College of Music and Dance offers over 500 events open to the public each year. Students have the unique opportunity to interact with leading performers, composers, conductors, educators, choreographers and guest artists while experiencing a challenging and diverse academic curriculum. The Boyer faculty are recognized globally as leaders in their respective fields. Boyer alumni are ambassadors of artistic leadership and perform with major orchestras, opera and dance companies, teach at schools and colleges and work as professional music therapists, choreographers and composers. Boyer's recording label, BCM&D records, has produced more than thirty recordings, five of which have received Grammy nominations.

boyer.temple.edu

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts consists of the Boyer College of Music and Dance, School of Theater, Film and Media Arts, the George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater and the Temple Performing Arts Center. The School of Theater, Film and Media Arts engages gifted students with nationally and internationally recognized faculty scholars and professionals. A hallmark of the School of Theater, Film and Media Arts is the Los Angeles Study Away program, housed at historic Raleigh Studios. The George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater engages visiting performers, guest artists, set designers, playwrights and other Broadway professionals. The Temple Performing Arts Center (TPAC), a historic landmark on campus, is home to a state-of-the-art 1,200 seat auditorium and 200 seat chapel. More than 500 concerts, classes, lectures and performances take place at TPAC each year.

arts.temple.edu

Temple University

Temple University's history begins in 1884, when a young working man asked Russell Conwell if he could tutor him at night. It wasn't long before he was teaching several dozen students—working people who could only attend class at night but had a strong desire to make something of themselves. Conwell recruited volunteer faculty to participate in the burgeoning night school, and in 1888 he received a charter of incorporation for “The Temple College.” His founding vision for the school was to provide superior educational opportunities for academically talented and highly motivated students, regardless of their backgrounds or means. The fledgling college continued to grow, adding programs and students throughout the following decades. Today, Temple's more than 35,000 students continue to follow the university's official motto—*Perseverantia Vincit*, or “Perseverance Conquers”—with their supreme dedication to excellence in academics, research, athletics, the arts and more.

temple.edu

Temple University 2023-2024 Season Upcoming Events

Tuesday, October 17 at 12:00 PM

CPCA Faculty Forum: Peter d'Agostino, professor of film and media arts
World-Wide-Walks / climate, wars, temples
TPAC Chapel

Thursday, October 19 at 4:30 PM

Rite of Swing Jazz Café: Danny Jonokuchi Big Band
TPAC Lobby

Thursday, October 19 at 7:30 PM

Guest Artist Recital: Patricio Cosentino, tuba
Rock Hall Auditorium

Friday, October 20 at 1:00 PM

Music Studies Colloquium Series: David Middleton
Presser 142

Friday, October 20 at 7:30 PM

Doctoral Chamber Recital: Sarah Lee, piano
Rock Hall Auditorium

Saturday, October 21 at 2:40 PM

Temple Music Prep: CGYM Master Class: Marcy Rosen, cello
TUCC Room 222

Sunday, October 22 at 3:00 PM

Temple University Concert Choir
Paul Rardin, conductor
Temple Performing Arts Center

Monday, October 23 at 4:00 PM

Student Recital: Zi Wang, violin
Rock Hall Auditorium

Tuesday, October 24 at 5:30 PM

Student Recital: Yuan Tian, violin
Rock Hall Auditorium