

# Temple University Concert Choir

Paul Rardin, conductor

Kim Barroso, pianist

Alexander Nguyễn and Arreon Harley-Emerson,  
graduate conductors

**Craig Hella Johnson**

*Considering Matthew Shepard*

Tuesday, April 16, 2024 • 7:30PM

Lew Klein Hall, Temple Performing Arts Center

1837 N. Broad Street

Philadelphia, PA 19122



# Program

This performance runs approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

Content warning: Please be advised that there are brief depictions of violence and homophobic language in this production, in both the singing and the slideshow, particularly in Movement 9. We invite you to respond in whatever way is most comforting to you, including leaving the production temporarily if need be.

## *Considering Matthew Shepard*

Craig Hella Johnson  
(b. 1962)

### I. PROLOGUE

#### 1. Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass

Macey Roberts, tenor

#### 2. Ordinary Boy

Sadie Roser, alto (narrator)

Alison Crosley, alto (Judy Shepard)

Gabriel Eduardo Planas-Borgstrom, baritone (Matthew Shepard)

Connor Husa, tenor (Matthew Shepard, onstage)

#### 3. We Tell Each Other Stories/I Am Open

Roslyn Rich, soprano

### II. PASSION

#### 4. Recitation 1

Emma Krewson

#### 5. The Fence (before)

Benjamin Chen, baritone

#### 6. Recitation 2

Reid Shriver

#### 7. The Fence (that night)

Chase Côté, baritone

#### 8. Recitation 3

Blake Levinson

#### 9. A Protestor

#### 10. Keep It Away From Me

Isabella DiPasquale, mezzo soprano

Angela Bui, Alison Crosley, and Macey Roberts, trio

11. Recitation 4

Zachary Alvarado

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 Eduardo 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 Nguỹễn, bass

17. The Innocence

Grant Nalty, tenor

18. Recitation 6

Nālani Matthias

19. The Fence (one week later)

Jessica Corrigan, soprano

20. Recitation 7

Sydney Spector

21. Stars

Corey Price, speaker

22. Recitation 8

Kylar Sprenger

23. In Need of Breath

Roberto Guevara, tenor

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, Nālani Matthias, and Roslyn Rich, soprano

Alison Crosley, Sadie Roser, and Macey Roberts, alto

Reid Shriver, tenor

Roy Nussbaum, Andrew Stern, and Joshua Powell, baritone

III. EPILOGUE

30. Meet Me Here

Kayla Elliott, soprano

Lauren Padden, soprano; Carmelina Favacchia, alto

31. Thank You

32. All of Us

Nālani Matthias, Jiaye Xu, and Tatiyanna Hayward, trio

33. Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass (Reprise)

James Hatter, tenor

Kim Barroso, piano; Sarah Eom, clarinet

Michael Raymond, guitar; Livi Keenan, percussion

Zhanara Makhmutova, violin; Shannon Merlino, viola

Leigh Brown, cello; Daniel Virgen, double bass

Elliott Forrest, projection designer

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.

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

Please turn off all electronic devices.

Three hundred thirty-second 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 marked the 25th anniversary of the murder of Matthew Shepard. American composer Craig Hella Johnson's oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepard* invites us to grapple with 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."

In the opening Prologue, after a quotation of the famous Bach prelude that Matthew presumably played as a child, 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."

In the Passion section, Johnson borrows 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/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 ("The Fence (before)"), pop music ("The Innocence"), blues ("Keep It Away") aleatoric music (music with unstructured rhythmic qualities: "Stars"), minimalism ("I Am Like You"), and gospel ("All of Us"). 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).

In the Epilogue, Johnson invites the audience out of the grief and rage of the passion and into a community of musical healing, beginning with a heart-rending solo voice in #30 "Meet Me Here." "Thank You" reprises the opening Bach prelude before launching into the rousing "All of Us." A brief reprise of the opening movement returns us to Wyoming's spacious natural beauty. In its totality, the score is, 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.

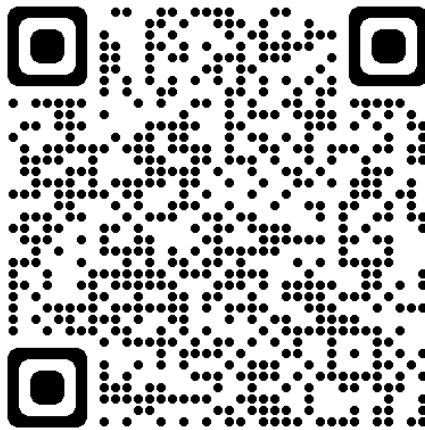
*While the poems in this book are inspired by actual events, they do not in any way represent the statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, or attitudes of any actual person. The statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes conveyed belong to me. All monologues contained within the poems are 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.

## Libretto



# Elliott Forrest, Projection Designer

Peabody Award winning broadcaster, director, producer, designer, filmmaker. Midday host, New York's Classical Radio Station, WQXR.org. National Radio Host, *The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center*. Co-Director/Projection Designer: National Tour and PBS/KLRU Special of *CONSIDERING MATTHEW SHEPARD* by Austin's Craig Hella Johnson. Executive Producer, The Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park on the Radio, *RICHARD II*. Co-Creator, Producer, Projection Designer of the National Tours of *ITZHAK PERLMAN* and *MICHAEL FEINSTEIN*, and symphony concerts at the Kennedy Center, Hollywood Bowl and Lincoln Center. Director, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* with Scrooges David Hyde Pierce, F. Murray Abraham, Brian Cox, and Kathleen Turner. Orchestra narrator: *Carnival of the Animals*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *Lincoln Portrait*. Host, A&E Television *Breakfast with the Arts*. Theater Grad, University of Texas, Austin. [www.ElliottForrest.com](http://www.ElliottForrest.com)

## Production Staff

Evelyn Shuker, lighting designer  
Emily Poll, score assistant

## 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

# Temple University Concert Choir

Paul Rardin, conductor

Kim Barroso, pianist

Alexander Nguyễn and Arreon Harley-Emerson,  
graduate teaching assistants

## SOPRANO

Angela Bui  
Jessica Corrigan  
Kayla Elliott \*  
Jessica Gambino  
Emma Krewson  
Emily Loughery  
Victoria Lumia  
Nālani Matthias  
Lauren Padden  
Roslyn Rich  
Victoria Smith  
Jiaye Xu

## ALTO

Jill Baldassari  
Elizabeth Beavers  
Alison Crosley \*  
Isabella DiPasquale  
Carmelina Favacchia  
Kaitlyn Gaughan  
Tatiyanna Hayward  
Macey Roberts  
Sadie Roser  
Sydney Spector  
Angela Thornton

## TENOR

Zachary Alvarado  
Shawn Anderson  
Ben Bian  
Jack Caldes  
Roberto Guevara \*  
James Hatter  
Connor Husa  
Jaiman Kondisetty  
Blake Levinson  
Grant Nalty  
Julian Nguyễn  
Corey Price  
Brandon Scribner  
Reid Shriver

## BASS

Vinroy D. Brown, Jr.  
Benjamin Chen \*  
Chase Côté  
Arreon Harley-Emerson  
Alexander Nguyễn  
Roy Nussbaum  
Sergio Paul  
Gabriel Eduardo Planas-Borgstrom  
Joshua Powell  
Anthony Serrano  
Kylar Sprenger  
Andrew Stern

\*section leader

## **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

Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, Associate Professor, Music Education

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

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](mailto: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 forty-five recordings, garnering five GRAMMY nominations.

[boyer.temple.edu](http://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. 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](http://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 30,000 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](http://temple.edu)

## Temple University 2023-2024 Season Upcoming Events

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### **Tuesday, April 16 at 12:00 PM**

CPCA Faculty Forum: Michael Klein, professor of music theory  
“Lifting the Painted Veil: Cinematic Adaptation, Sound and the Literary  
Imagination”  
TPAC Chapel

### **Tuesday, April 16 at 5:30 PM**

Student Recital: Jonathan Bywater and Aidan Lewis, horns  
Rock Hall Auditorium

### **Tuesday, April 16 at 7:30 PM**

Temple University Concert Choir  
Temple Performing Arts Center

### **Wednesday, April 17 at 1:00 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

### **Wednesday, April 17 at 2:30 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

### **Wednesday, April 17 at 5:30 PM**

Master’s Recital: Nick Orth, tenor  
Rock Hall Auditorium

### **Wednesday, April 17 at 7:30 PM**

Senior Recital: Marlena St. Jean, soprano  
Rock Hall Auditorium

### **Thursday, April 18 at 4:30 PM**

Rite of Swing Jazz Café: Gabriel Meyer 5+1Tet  
TPAC Lobby

### **Thursday, April 18 at 5:30 PM**

Master’s Recital: Noah Gordon, trumpet  
Rock Hall Auditorium  
Rachel Freivogel  
Rock Hall Auditorium

### **Thursday, April 18 at 7:30 PM**

Swinging Owls 6 & 8  
Temple Performing Arts Center

## Temple University 2023-2024 Season Upcoming Events

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**Friday, April 19 at 1:00 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Friday, April 19 at 2:30 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Friday, April 19 at 4:00 PM**

Student Recital: Tristan Bouyer, Jose Soto and Jacob Treat, percussion  
Klein Recital Hall

**Friday, April 19 at 5:30 PM**

Senior Recital: Jason Costello, euphonium/bass trombone  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Friday, April 19 at 7:30 PM**

Master's Recital: McKenna Brunson, mezzo-soprano  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Friday, April 19 at 7:30 PM**

**Saturday, April 20 at 2:30 PM & 7:30 PM**  
Spring BFA Concert  
Conwell Dance Theater

**Saturday, April 20 at 2:40 PM**

Temple Music Prep: Student Recital Hour  
TUCC Room 222

**Saturday, April 20 at 5:30 PM**

Master's Recital: Ben Cohen, jazz drums  
Klein Recital Hall

**Saturday, April 20 at 7:30 PM**

Master's Recital: Sophia Flores, jazz voice  
Klein Recital Hall

**Sunday, April 21 at 4:00 PM**

Temple University Symphonic Band and Collegiate Band  
Temple Performing Arts Center

## Temple University 2023-2024 Season Upcoming Events

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**Monday, April 22 at 5:30 PM**

Master's Recital: Will Mullen, saxophone  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Monday, April 22 at 7:30 PM**

Chamber Music Recital: Collaborative Students of Lambert Orkis  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Monday, April 22 at 7:00 and 9:00 PM**

Temple University Jazz Band  
Dizzy's Club, Jazz at Lincoln Center

**Tuesday, April 23 at 4:00 PM**

Saxophone Studio Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Tuesday, April 23 at 5:30 PM**

Student Recital: Zi Wang, violin  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Tuesday, April 23 at 7:30 PM**

Senior Recital: Alex Phipps, clarinet  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Tuesday, April 23 at 7:30 PM**

Jazz Band Number Three and Jazz Band Number Four  
Temple Performing Arts Center

**Wednesday, April 24 at 1:00 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Wednesday, April 24 at 2:30 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

**Wednesday, April 24 at 4:00 PM**

Chamber Music Recital  
Rock Hall Auditorium

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All events are free unless otherwise noted. Programs are subject to change without notice.

For further information or to confirm events, please call 215.204.7609

or visit [boyer.temple.edu](http://boyer.temple.edu)