

A John & Edie Murphy Music for Humanity Concert

Considering Matthew Shepard

Craig Hella Johnson

PROLOGUE

Cattle Horses, Sky, and Grass - Alex O'Neil

Ordinary Boy - Schauntice Shepard, Cynthia Wolcott, Sam O'Neil

We Tell Each Other Stories - Kalia Kellogg

PASSION

Recitation 1 - Linda Wayman

The Fence (before) - Dylan Armstrong

Recitation 2 - Rich Szulczewski

The Fence (that night) - Jermaine Woodard, Jr.

Recitation 3 - Mary deManbey

A Protester

Keep It Away From Me (The Wound of Love) - Traci Keen

Recitation 4 - Linda Wayman

Fire of the Ancient Heart - Dylan Armstrong

Recitation 5 - Steve Casillas

Stray Birds

We Are All Sons (part 1)

I Am Like You / We Are All Sons (part 2)

The Innocence - Eric Larivee

Recitation 6 - Mary deManbey

The Fence (one week later) - Sarah Armstrong

Recitation 7 - Rich Szulczewski

Stars - Steve Casillas

Recitation 8 - Linda Wayman

In Need of Breath - Alex O'Neil

Gently, Rest (Deer Lullaby)

Recitation 9 - Mary deManbey

Deer Song - Schauntice Shepard, Kalia Kellogg, Sarah Armstrong

Recitation 10 - Rich Szulczewski

The Fence (after)/ The Wind

Pilgrimage

EPILOGUE

Meet Me Here - Cynthia Wolcott

Thank You - Ali Singleton, Traci Keen, Greg Flower, Linda Wayman, Steve Casillas

All of Us - Schauntice Shepard, Kalia Kellogg, Cynthia Wolcott

Reprise: This Chant of Life / Cattle, Horses, Sky and Grass

AHCC Sanctuary Choir

Jack A. Pott, director

Susan Carroll, organist

Soprano

Sarah Armstrong*
Michele Burdette
Jane Carroll
Karen Conover
Mary deManbey
Stacey Grimaldi
Kalia Kellogg*
Marianne Navickas
Schauntice Shepard*
Ali Singleton

Alto

Carolyn Cass
Nancy Comeau
Judy DeLong
Holly DeYoung
Emily Gregonis
Traci Keen*
Debora Kehret
Nancy Kirchmyer
Lauren Santiago
Elizabeth Squillace
Caroline Kimrey Talbert
Ellie Tener
Sally Tresselt
Cynthia Wolcott*

Tenor

Jacob Carey
Eric Larivee*
Rob Lindauer
Paul O'Mara
Alex O'Neil*
Richard Szulczewski
Linda Wayman

Bass

Dylan Armstrong*
Steve Casillas
Mike Comeau
Jeff Doyle
Whitney Easton
Greg Flower
Eric Harrison
Barnaby Horton
Matthew Morgan
Sam O'Neil
Jermaine Woodard, Jr.*
Dick Woodworth

*Section Leader

New England Pride 247-365

Eric Larivee, director

Krista Allen
Addax Bardel
Randy Boyd
Matthew Bussell
Liam Dempsey
Pedro Figueroa

Emily Gregonis
Bobby Henry
Brighton Horan
Catherine Knight-Diaz
Jai'Shonda Lewis
Devin Orde

Melissa Paul-Perez
Chelsea Pollard
Craig Riccelli
Julia Solecki
Jermaine Woodard Jr.
Kaydin Younger
Emmy Zirbel

Orchestra

Candance Lammers, *violin*
Mary Scripko, *viola*
Carole Olefsky, *cello*
Stephen Bulmer, *bass*
Christopher Howard, *clarinet*
Nicholas DiFabbio, *guitar*
Doug Perry, *percussion*
Susan Carroll, *piano*

Agency Beneficiary



Q Plus exists to uplift and empower queer youth by providing the programming and resources they identify as most necessary in order to address the needs they identify as most important. Q Plus offers youth programming including activity and support groups for preteens, teens, and young adults, as well as the parents and caregivers of those young people. Additionally, Q Plus provides schools and families with much-needed support and guidance, offers youth and adult workshops, and provides professional development training to adults who frequently work with queer youth, including medical providers, social workers, teachers, counselors, and more. Q Plus programs include regular groups in ten towns and online,

GSA meetup events, open mics, a summer camp, and a paid youth team and youth advisory board. Now more than ever, it is vital that we center, support, uplift, and empower young people as they build their skills and communities and learn to navigate the world. Q Plus has been, and will continue to be, here to see that mission through for as many queer youth as possible. For more info, email info@qplusct.org

PROGRAM NOTES & TEXTS

About the Music

Called a “fusion” oratorio, this piece uses an amazing amalgamation of musical styles and influences, including blues, gospel, jazz, chant, Broadway, country/western, minimalism, hymn-like passages, and aleatoric elements, along with straight-up quotations from the works of such diverse composers as Benjamin Britten, J.S. Bach, and Manuel de Falla, to engage contemporary listeners. Its unusual instrumental ensemble of violin, viola, cello, bass, electric and acoustic guitars, clarinet, percussion, and piano expands the possible musical vocabulary, creating a soundscape that is at once contemporary, attentive to historical compositional structures and styles, and capable of connecting the listener to musical ideas across space and time.

About the Texts

The majority of the sung texts come from a collection of poems called *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* by Lesléa Newman. Michael Dennis Browne, professor emeritus of poetry at the University of Minnesota and libretto creator for composers such as Stephen Paulus, wrote additional texts specifically for *Considering Matthew Shepard*. He and the composer shaped the structure of the work by including texts by Matt Shepard, his parents, Wyoming poet John D. Nesbitt, and Sue Wallis, a member of the Wyoming House of Representatives, as well as Rabindranath Tagore, Hafez, and Hildegard of Bingen. The piece also contains excerpts from *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer of mourning, Psalms from the Jewish Scripture, quotations from Christian Scripture, and a Buddhist mantra. The recitations are compilations of news reports crafted by Browne and Johnson. Lesléa Newman’s introduction to her collection of poems provides context for an understanding of the oratorio and challenges performers and listeners to work every day to replace bigotry, prejudice, and hatred with listening, compassion, and love.

PROLOGUE

Matthew

Yoodle—ooh, yoodle-ooh-hoo, so sings a lone cowboy, Who with the wild roses wants you to be free.

CATTLE, HORSES, SKY AND GRASS

Chorus

Cattle, horses, sky and grass
These are the things that sway and pass
Before our eyes and through our dreams
Through shiny, sparkly, golden gleams
Within our psyche that find and know
The value of this special glow
That only gleams for those who bleed
Their soul and heart and utter need
Into the mighty, throbbing Earth
Into the mighty, throbbing Earth
From which springs life and death and birth.
I’m alive! I’m alive, I’m alive, golden.
I’m alive, I’m alive, I’m alive . . .
These cattle, horses, grass, and sky
Dance and dance and never die
They circle through the realms of air
And ground and empty spaces where
A human being can join the song
Can circle, too, and not go wrong
Amidst the natural, pulsing forces
Of sky and grass and cows and horses.
I’m alive, I’m alive, I’m alive . . .
These are the things that sway and pass
These are the things that sway and pass

These are the things that sway and pass
These are the things that sway and pass
These are the things that sway and pass
Dance and Circle,
These are the things that sway and pass
Dance and Circle

This chant of life cannot be heard
It must be felt, there is no word
To sing that could express the true
Significance of how we wind
Through all these hoops of Earth and mind
Through all these hoops of Earth and mind
Through horses, cattle, sky and grass
And all these things that sway and pass.
Dance and sway and pass
Dance and sway and pass
Dance and sway and pass
Dance and sway and pass
Dance and sway and pass
Dance and sway and pass
These are the things that sway and pass

ORDINARY BOY

Narrator

Let's talk about Matt.

(Ordinary boy, ordinary boy, ordinary boy . . .)

Born in December in Casper, Wyoming
(Ordinary boy)
to a father, Dennis
and a mother, Judy
(Ordinary boy, ordinary boy)
Then came a younger brother, Logan
His name was Matthew Wayne Shepard.
And one day his name came to be known
around the world. But as his mother said:

Judy

You knew him as Matthew. To us he was Matt.

Chorus

He went camping, he went fishing, even hunting for a moose
He read plays and he read stories and especially Dr. Seuss
He wrote poems with illustrations for the neighbors on the street
And he left them in each mailbox till he learned it was illegal
He made friends and he wore braces and his frame was rather small
He sang songs his father taught him

Frere Jacques . . .

Row Row Row Your Boat . . .

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star . . .

Judy

He was my son, my first-born, and more. He was my friend, my confidant, my constant reminder of how good life can be—and . . . how hurtful.

(How good life can be, how good life can be)

Judy

Matt's laugh, his wonderful hugs, his stories . . .

Narrator

Matt writes about himself in a notebook:

Matthew

I am funny, sometimes forgetful and messy and lazy. I am not a lazy person though. I am giving and understanding. And formal and polite. I am sensitive. I am honest. I am sincere. And I am not a pest.

(I am not a pest, I am not a pest . . . not a pest)

I am my own person. I am warm. I want my life to be happy and I want to be clearer about things. I want to feel good.

I love Wyoming . . . I love Wyoming very much.

Chorus

I love Wyoming

I love Wyoming

I love Wyoming so very much . . .

Matthew

I love theatre

I love good friends

I love succeeding

I love pasta

I love jogging

I love walking and feeling good

Chorus

I love Europe and driving and music and helping and smiling and Charlie and Jeopardy

I love movies and eating and positive people and pasta and driving and walking and jogging and kissing and learning and airports and music and smiling and hugging and being myself

I love theatre!

I love theatre!

Matthew

And I love to be on stage!

Chorus

How I love the stage . . .

Such an ordinary boy living ordinary days

In an ordinary life so worth living

He felt ordinary yearning and ordinary fears

With an ordinary hope for belonging

He felt ordinary yearning and ordinary fears

With an ordinary hope for belonging

(Born to live this ordinary life)

Just an ordinary boy living ordinary days with extraordinary kindness

extraordinary laughter extraordinary shining

extraordinary light and joy

Joy and light.

I love, I love, I love . . . I love, I love, I love . . . I love, I love, I love . . .
Ordinary boy, ordinary boy.

WE TELL EACH OTHER STORIES

We tell each other stories so that we will remember
Try and find the meaning in the living of our days
Always telling stories, wanting to remember
Where and whom we came from
Who we are
Sometimes there's a story that's painful to remember
One that breaks the heart of us all
Still we tell the story
We're listening and confessing
What we have forgotten
In the story of us all
We tell each other stories so that we will remember
Trying to find the meaning . . .

Chorus

I am open to hear this story...about a boy, an ordinary boy
Who never had expected his life would be this story,
 (could be any boy)
I am open to hear a story

Open, listen.
ALL.

PASSION

RECITATION I

Laramie, southeastern Wyoming, between the Snowy Range and the Laramie Range. Tuesday, October 6, 1998.

THE FENCE (BEFORE)

Out and alone on the endless empty prairie
the moon bathes me
the stars bless me
the sun warms me
the wind soothes me
Still, still, still . . . I wonder.
will I always be out here
exposed and alone?
will I ever know why
I was put (here) on this earth?
will somebody someday
stumble upon me?
will anyone remember me
after I'm gone?
Still, still, still . . . I wonder.

RECITATION II

Tuesday night. Matthew attended a meeting of the University of Wyoming's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Association, then joined others for coffee at the College Inn. Around 10:30, he went to the Fireside Bar, where he later met Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson. Near midnight, they drove him to a remote area, tied him to a split-rail fence, beat him horribly, and left him to die in the cold of night.

THE FENCE (THAT NIGHT)

Chorus

Most noble evergreen with your roots in the sun:
you shine in the cloudless sky of a sphere no earthly eminence can grasp,
You blush like the dawn,
you burn like a flame of the sun.

Fence 2

He was heavy as a broken heart
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
He was dead weight, yet he kept breathing
He was heavy as a broken heart
His own heart wouldn't stop beating
The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
His face streaked with moonlight and blood
I tightened my grip and held on

The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
We were out on the prairie alone
I tightened my grip and held on
I saw what was done to this child

We were out on the prairie alone
Their truck was the last thing he saw
I saw what was done to this child
I saw what was done to this child
I saw . . .
I cradled him just like a mother

Chorus

Most noble evergreen,
Most noble evergreen, your roots in the sun, Most
Noble evergreen . . .

Their truck was the last thing he saw
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
I cradled him just like a mother
I held him all night long

Chorus

Most noble evergreen, most noble
evergreen, most noble evergreen . . .
All night long

RECITATION III

The next morning, Matthew was found by a cyclist, a fellow student, who at first thought he was a scarecrow.
After several days in a coma and on life support, Matthew Shepard died on Monday, October 12, 12:53 a.m.
At the funeral, which took place on Friday, October 16, at St Mark's Episcopal Church in Casper,
Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church protested outside.

A PROTESTOR

Kreuzige, kreuzige! (translation: crucify, crucify)

A boy who takes a boy to bed?

Where I come from that's not polite
He asked for it, you got that right
The fires of Hell burn hot and red
The only good fag is a fag that's dead.

A man and a woman, the Good Lord said
As sure as Eve took that first bite
The fires of Hell burn hot and red

Kreuzige, kreuzige!

Beneath the Hunter's Moon he bled
That must have been a pretty sight
The fires of Hell burn hot and red

C'mon, kids, it's time for bed
Say your prayers, kiss Dad good night
A boy who takes a boy to bed?
The fires of Hell burn hot and red

crucify, crucify . . . the light
crucify, crucify . . . the light

KEEP IT AWAY FROM ME (THE WOUND OF LOVE)

don't wanna look on this
never get near
flames too raw for me
grief too deep
keep it away from me
stay out of my heart
stay out of my hope
some son, somebody's pain
some child gone
child never mine
born to this trouble
don't wanna be born to this world
world where sometimes yes
world where mostly no
the wound of love
the wound of love

smoke round my throat
rain down my soul
no heaven lies
keep them gone
keep them never
grief too deep, flames too raw
keep them away from me
stay out of my heart
stay out of my hope
don't try
any old story on me
don't even try
no wing no song
no cry no comfort ye

no wound ever mine
close up the gates of night
 the wound of love
keep this all away from me
 the wound of love
 you take away
 the wounds of the world
keep it away from me

RECITATION IV

National media began to broadcast the story. As the news began to spread,
many people across the country gathered together in candlelight vigils,
moved to (silently) speak for life over death, love over hate, light over darkness.

FIRE OF THE ANCIENT HEART

Cantor

“What have you done? Hark, thy brother’s blood cries to me from the ground.”

Chorus

Called by this candle
Led to the flame
Called to remember
Enter the flame

Cantor

all our flames now
swaying and free
all our hearts now
moving as one
every living spirit
turned toward peace
all our tender
hopes awake

Chorus

Called by this candle
Led to the flame
Called to remember
Enter the flame

Fire: howl
Fire: broken
Fire: burst
Fire: rage
Fire: swell
Fire: shatter
Fire: wail
Fire

Chorus

We all betray the ancient heart.
Ev’ry one of us, all of us.
His heart, my heart, your heart, one heart.
In each moment the fire rages, it will burn away a hundred veils.
Burning. Breaking. Grasping. Raging.

Cantor

How do we keep these flames in our hands?

How do we guard these fears in our hearts?

How long to hold these griefs in our songs?

Remembering anger

weave it with hope

Remembering exile

braid it with praise

Longing past horror

Longing past dread

Dreaming of healing

Past all our pain

Fire: living in me

Fire: purify

Fire: now hold me

Fire: seize my heart

(enter the flame, enter the flame

shatter my heart, shatter my heart

called to enter, burn a hundred veils)

Called by this flame

Fire of my heart:

Break down all walls

Open all doors

Only this Love

Eyes of flesh, eyes of fire

Lumina, lumina, lumina

Open us,

All!

Cantor

(In each moment the fire rages, it will burn away a

hundred veils.)

RECITATION V

Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson were arrested shortly after the attack and charged with murder, kidnapping, and aggravated robbery. The first of two trials began on October 26, 1999; both were convicted of the murder and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences.

STRAY BIRDS / WE ARE SONS (part 1)

Stray birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.

And yellow leaves of autumn which have no songs flutter and fall there with a sigh.

Once we dreamt that we were strangers.

We wake up to find that we were dear to each other.

we are all sons of fathers and mothers

we are all sons

we are all rivers the roar of waters

we are all sons

I AM LIKE YOU

I am like you
Aaron and Russell

When I think of you (and honestly I don't like to think about you) but sometimes I do, I am so horrified, and just so angry and confused (and scared) that you could do things to another boy—they were so cruel and so undeserved, so dark and hard and full of (I don't know)

Late one night I had a glimpse of something I recognized, just a tiny glimpse—
I don't like to say this out loud,
It isn't even all that true—
But I wonder for a moment,
Am I like you?

(I pray the answer is no)
Am I like you?
I bet you once had hopes and dreams too.

Some things we love get lost along the way.
That's just like me...get lost along the way.
I am like you, I get confused and I'm afraid
and I've been reckless, I've been restless, bored,
unthinking, listless, intoxicated,
I've come unhinged,
and made mistakes
and hurt people very much.

Sometimes I feel (in springtime, in early afternoon)
the sunshine warm on my face;
you feel this too (don't you?),
the sunshine warm on your face.

I am like you
(this troubles me)
I am like you
(just needed to say this)

Some things we love get lost along the way.

WE ARE ALL SONS (part 2)

we are all sons of fathers and mothers
we are all sons
we are all rivers the roar of waters
we are all sons

sometimes no home for us here on the earth
no place to lay our heads
we are all sons of fathers and mothers
we are all sons

if you could know for one moment
how it is to live in our bodies
within the world

if you could know

you ask too much of us
you ask too little

THE INNOCENCE

When I think of all the times the world was ours for dreaming,
When I think of all the times the earth seemed like our home
Every heart alive with its own longing,
Every future we could ever hope to hold.

All the times our laughter rang in summer,
All the times the rivers sang our tune
Was there already sadness in the sunlight?
Some stormy story waiting to be told?

*Where O where has the innocence gone?
Where O where has it gone?
Rains rolling down wash away my memory;
Where O where has it gone?*

When I think of all the joys, the times we remember
All the treasures we believed we'd never ever lose.
Too many days gone by without their meaning,
Too many darkened hours without their peace.

*Where O where has the innocence gone?
Where O where has it gone?
Vows we once swore, now it's just this letting go,
Where O where has it gone?*

Where O where has the innocence gone?
Where O where has it gone?
Rains rolling down wash away my memory;
Where O where has it gone?

RECITATION VI

In the days and weeks after Matthew's death, many people came to the fence
to pay homage and pray and grieve.

THE FENCE (ONE WEEK LATER)

I keep still
I stand firm
I hold my ground
while they lay down

*flowers and photos
prayers and poems
crystals and candles
sticks and stones*

they come in herds
they stand and stare
they sit and sigh
they crouch and cry

flowers and photos

*prayers and poems
crystals and candles
sticks and stones*

some of them touch me
in unexpected ways
without asking permission
and then move on

but I don't mind
being a shrine
is better than being
the scene of the crime

RECITATION VII

Matthew's father made his statement to the court on November 5, 1999.

STARS

By the end of the beating, his body was just trying to survive. You left him out there by himself, but he wasn't alone. There were his lifelong friends with him—friends that he had grown up with. You're probably wondering who these friends were. First, he had the beautiful night sky with the same stars and moon that we used to look at through a telescope. Then, he had the daylight and the sun to shine on him one more time—one more cool, wonderful autumn day in Wyoming. His last day alive in Wyoming. His last day alive in the state that he always proudly called home. And through it all he was breathing in for the last time the smell of Wyoming sagebrush and the scent of pine trees from the snowy range. He heard the wind—the ever-present Wyoming wind—for the last time.

He had one more friend with him. One he grew to know through his time in Sunday school and as an acolyte at St. Mark's in Casper as well as through his visits to St. Matthew's in Laramie.

I feel better knowing he wasn't alone.

Chorus (under spoken text above)

Stars
across
scattered
the sky
in
blinking
dismay
unable being
to help
light years
away

RECITATION VIII

Matthew was left tied to the fence for almost eighteen hours.

IN NEED OF BREATH

Matthew
My heart
Is an unset jewel
Upon the tender night

Yearning for its dear old friend
The Moon.

When the Nameless One debuts again
Ten thousand facets of my being unfurl wings
And reveal such a radiance inside

I enter a realm divine —
I too begin to sweetly cast light,
Like a lamp,
I cast light
Through the streets of this
World.

My heart is an unset jewel
Upon existence
Waiting for the Friend's touch.
Tonight

Tonight
My heart is an unset ruby
Offered bowed and weeping to the Sky.
I am dying in these cold hours
For the resplendent glance of God.

My heart
Is an unset jewel
Upon the tender night

My heart is an unset ruby
Offered bowed and weeping to the Sky.

RECITATION IX

Sheriff's Deputy, Reggie Fluty, the first to report to the scene, told Judy Shepard that as she ran to the fence she saw a large doe lying near Matt—as if the deer had been keeping him company all through the night.

GENTLY REST (DEER LULLABY)

Gently rest now, you the child of angels
Spirit shining, resting in creation
Universe is holding you so deeply
Gently Rest now, you the child of angels

Deer beside you, hear your brother breathing
With you always in your starry shelter
Dreaming in the holy home of wonder
Universe is holding you so deeply
Light of every sun you felt around you
Blessing bringing our own hearts of longing
Spirit sleeping in the arms of ages
Gently rest now, you the child of angels

Universe now dreaming you so deeply
Spirit shining, home within creation
Dreaming in eternal light of wonder
Gently rest now, you the child of angels
Spirit sleeping in the arms of angels
Gently rest...

DEER SONG

Deer:

A mist is over the mountain,
The stars in their meadows upon the air,
Your people are waiting below them,
And you know there's a gathering there.

All night I lay there beside you,
I cradled your pain in my care,
We move through creation together,
And we know there's a welcoming there.

Welcome, welcome, sounds the song,
Calling, calling clear;
Always with us, evergreen heart,
Where can we be but there?

Matthew

I'll find all the love I have longed for,
The home that's been calling my heart so long
So soon I'll be cleansed in those waters,
My fevers forever be gone;
Where else on earth but these waters?
No more, no more to be torn;
My own ones, my dearest, are waiting —
And I'll weep to be where I belong.

Welcome, welcome, sounds the song,
Calling, calling clear;
Always with me, evergreen heart,
Where can I be but here?

RECITATION X

The fence has been torn down.

THE FENCE (AFTER)/THE WIND

Prayed upon
Frowned upon

Revered
Feared

Adored
Abhorred

Despised
Idolized

Splintered
Scarred

Weathered
Worn

Broken down
Broken up

Ripped apart
Ripped away

Gone
But not forgotten

The North Wind carried his father's laugh
The South Wind carried his mother's song
The East Wind carried his brother's cheer
The West Wind carried his lover's moan
The Winds of the World wove together a prayer
To carry that hurt boy home.

PILGRIMAGE

I walk to the fence with beauty before me
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want

I walk to the fence with beauty behind me
Yit'gadal v'yit' kadash (may his great name grow)

I walk to the fence with beauty above me
Om Mani Padme Ham (Om! the jewel in the lotus, hum!)

I walk to the fence with beauty below me
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit

I reach the fence surrounded by beauty
wail of wind, cry of hawk

I leave the fence surrounded by beauty
sigh of sagebrush, hush of stone

Beauty above me
Beauty below me
By beauty surrounded

Still, still, still . . .
wail of wind, cry of hawk

Still, still . . . mmmmmmmmm

Recitation XI

Eleven years after Matthew's Death, President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. For fear Matthew's final resting place would be desecrated, Judy and Dennis Shepard held on to his ashes for 20 years.
In 2018, Matthew's remains were interred at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC.

EPILOGUE

MEET ME HERE

Meet me here
Won't you meet me here
Where the old fence ends and the horizon begins

There's a balm in the silence
Like an understanding air
Where the old fence ends and the horizon begins

We've been walking through the darkness
On this long, hard climb
Carried ancestral sorrow
For too long a time
Will you lay down your burden
Lay it down, come with me
It will never be forgotten
Held in love, so tenderly

Chorus

Then we'll come to the mountain
We'll go bounding to see
That great circle of dancing
And we'll dance endlessly
And we'll dance with the all the children
Who've been lost along the way
We will welcome each other
Coming home, this glorious day

We are home in the mountain
And we'll gently understand
That we've been friends forever
That we've never been alone
We'll sing on through any darkness
And our Song will be our sight
We can learn to offer praise again
Coming home to the light.

THANK YOU

Thank you... Thank you... Thank you
Hohou, hohou (Arapaho—thank you)
Yontonwe (Huron—thank you)

Hohou, Yontonwe . . . Thank you

ALL OF US

What could be the song?
Where begin again?
Who could meet us there?
Where might we begin?
From the shadows climb,
Rise to sing again;
Where could be the joy?
How do we begin?
Never our despair,
Never the least of us,
Never turn away,
Never hide our face;
Ordinary boy,
Only all of us,
Free us from our fear,

Only all of us.

Chorus

What could be the song?
Where begin again?
Who could meet us there?
Where might we begin?
From the shadows climb,
Rise to sing again;
Where could be the joy?
How do we begin?
Never our despair,
Never the least of us,
Never turn away,
Never hide your face;
Ordinary boy,
Only all of us,
Free us from our fear.

Only in the Love,
Love that lifts us up,
Clear from out the heart
From the mountain's side,
Come creation come,
Strong as any stream;
How can we let go? How can we forgive?
How can we be dream?
Out of heaven, rain,
Rain to wash us free;
Rivers flowing on,
Ever to the sea;
Bind up every wound,
Every cause to grieve;
Always to forgive,
Only to believe.

[Chorale:]

Most noble Light, Creation's face,
How should we live but joined in you,
Remain within your saving grace
Through all we say and do
And know we are the Love that moves
The sun and all the stars?
O Love that dwells, O Love that burns
In every human heart.

Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up!

This evergreen, this heart, this soul,
Now moves us to remake our world,
Reminds us how we are to be
Your people born to dream;
How old this joy, how strong this call,
To sing your radiant care
With every voice, in cloudless hope

Of our belonging here.

Only in the Love . . .

Only all of us . . .

Only in the Love . . .

Only all of us . . .

Trio

(Heaven: Wash me . . .)

Chorus

All of us, only all of us.

What could be the song?

Where do we begin?

Only in the Love, Love that lifts us up.

Only in the love . . .

Love that lifts us up.

REPRISE: THE CHANT OF LIFE

(CATTLE, HORSES, SKY AND GRASS)

Chorus

This chant of life cannot be heard

It must be felt, there is no word

To sing that could express the true

Significance of how we wind

Through all these hoops of Earth and mind

Through horses, cattle, sky and grass

And all these things that sway and pass.

Yoodle ooh, yoodle ooh-hoo, so sings the

lone cowboy, who with the wild roses

wants you to be free.

Considering Matthew Shepard

Text authors and publication credits.

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"Introduction" from OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD by
Lesléa Newman

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.

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Please visit conspirare.org to learn more about this project and learn more about the many individuals and organizations who support this work. Conspirare, The Matthew Shepard Foundation, and KLRU-TV, Austin PBS are partnering to ensure that Considering Matthew Shepard reaches as many people as possible on the stage and screen. The Matthew Shepard Foundation has provided ongoing support in outreach and project development. Conspirare and KLRU-TV, Austin PBS are co-producing a Considering Matthew Shepard television special commemorating the 20th anniversary of Matthew Shepard's passing. KLRU profiled Craig Hella Johnson's creative process in their documentary series *Arts in Context* (available at artsincontext.org). The film will be accompanied by outreach and engagement programs.

Craig Hella Johnson is the founding artistic director and conductor of Conspirare and music director of Cincinnati's Vocal Arts Ensemble. Known for crafting thought-provoking musical journeys that create deep connections between performers and listeners, Johnson is in frequent demand as a guest conductor of choral and orchestral works. Johnson joined the faculty at Texas State University as Artist in Residence in fall 2016 and was awarded the 2022 Presidential Award for Excellence in Scholarly/Creative Activities. He is a published composer and arranger, guest conductor, and educator. Johnson's first concert-length composition, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, was premiered and recorded by Conspirare for a 2016 CD release. *Considering Matthew Shepard* continues to be performed around the world, most recently in Berlin and around the United States. Johnson's accomplishments have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. Notably among them, he and Conspirare won a 2014 Grammy® for Best Choral Performance, Chorus America awarded him the Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art in 2015, and the Texas State Legislature named him Texas State Musician for 2013. In 2021, the Matthew Shepard Foundation recognized him with the Dennis Dougherty Award for Community Leadership.