



**BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH**

2023 - 2024 SEASON PRESENTS



A Passion: Considering Matthew Shepard

Craig Hella Johnson

November 18, 7:30 PM

November 19, 4:00 PM

Artistic Director: Thomas W. Douglas

solace
...comfort or cheer
in a time of distress or sadness.



**BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH**

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BACH CHOIR OF PITTSBURGH

presents

A PASSION

Considering Matthew Shepard

Thomas W. Douglas
Artistic Director and Conductor

Jon Erik Schreiber
Associate Conductor

GUEST ARTISTS
MJ Lintern

PIANO / ACCOMPANIST
James Burns

FEATURING
Members of the Academy Chamber Orchestra
Dr. Warren Davidson, Concertmaster

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November 18 + 19, 2023



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Happy to be singing my second season with this great
choir!

about the



BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH

The Bach Choir of Pittsburgh (BCP) was founded in 1934 to exclusively perform works of Johann Sebastian Bach. The repertoire soon expanded to include other composers, and has even included music commissioned by the Bach Choir. Under the leadership of current Conductor and Artistic Director Thomas W. Douglas, the Choir continues to evolve, becoming more inclusive, innovative and diverse. Today, the Choir performs choral works by composers from the Renaissance through the present.

Mission

The Bach Choir of Pittsburgh presents unique and moving interpretations of choral works to engage and captivate arts-loving audiences across the Pittsburgh region.

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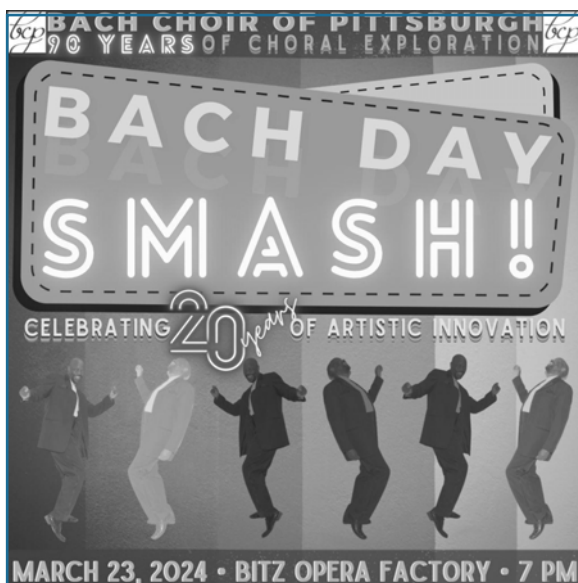
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PROGRAM

THOMAS W. DOUGLAS, Artistic Director and Conductor
JON ERIK SCHREIBER, Associate Conductor

PROLOGUE

Cattle, Horses, Sky, and Grass

Solo: MJ Lintern

Choir Ensemble: Mary Jeffries, Polly Swanson, Sarah Richards, Andrea Walczak

Ordinary Boy

Solos: MJ Lintern, Maria Ketter

We Tell Each Other Stories/I Am Open

Solo: Tracy Keys

PASSION

Recitation 1

Randal Bryant

The Fence (before)

Solo: Matt Dooley

Recitation 2

Ellen Stolpe

The Fence (that night)

Solo: Ben Filippone

Recitation 3

Theo Towns

A Protester

Keep It Away From Me

Solo: Nicole Tascarella

Choir Trio: Sarah Richards, Nancy Long, Julie Galati

Recitation 4

Megan Kelly Thomas

Fire of the Ancient Heart

Solo: Erich Stein

Narrator: Claudia Broman

Choir Duo: Tracy Keys, Nicole Tascarella

Recitation 5

Ceinwen King-Smith

Stray Birds

We Are All Sons

PROGRAM *Continued*

I Am Like You

Choir Quartet: Sandra Gibson, Julie Galati, Jon Erik Schreiber, Ben Filippone

The Innocence

Solo: MJ Lintern

Recitation 6

Mel Vatz

The Fence (one week later)

Solo: Maria Ketter

Recitation 7

Wendy Carson

Stars

Narrator: Albert Flasck

Recitation 8

Ellen Stolpe

In Need of Breath

Solo: MJ Lintern

Recitation 9

Tybe Brett

Deer Song

Solos: MJ Lintern, Beth Jacobs, Sarah Richards, Maria Ketter, Tracy Keys

Recitation 10

Matt Dooley

The Fence (after)/ The Wind

The Bach Choir Core Members

Pilgrimage

Choir Ensemble: Mary Jeffries, Tracy Keys, Wendy Carson, Nancy Long, Ellen Stolpe, Julie Galati, Erich Stein, Nick Eustis, Ron Kludo

EPILOGUE

Meet Me Here

Solo: Nicole Tascarella

Thank You

Narrators: Joanna Obuzor, Mel Vatz

All of Us

Choir Trio: Beth Jacobs, Nancy Long, Erica Shadowsong

Cattle Horses, Sky and Grass (Reprise)

Solo: MJ Lintern

Program Notes by Choir Member Paul Tellers



Considering Matthew Shepard is a 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.

In 2016 composer Craig Hella Johnson responded with *Considering Matthew Shepard*, his first concert-length work. This three-part oratorio incorporates 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 appear throughout the work.

The work combines a variety of musical styles, from country and gospel to chant and oratorio, to create a powerful and moving experience for audiences.

"The piece actually became a whole lot more than just the story of the suffering," Johnson said. "It needed to become this larger invitation to return to love. And to return to remember who we are as human beings, in the deepest sense of our essence."

“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.

Reflections on **Considering Matthew Shepard**, by Choir Member **Anna-Noel Bass-Riley**

When Matthew Shepard died in a hospital in Colorado, he was two months shy of his 22nd birthday. As a queer young adult myself - I'll be turning 23 in about a month - singing about a queer youth being murdered for his queerness is a sobering experience. Hearing the story is one thing, but spending a good portion of my time focusing on it is another. It makes me question how much has changed. Could I be the next person killed for whom she loves?

Possibly. In 2021, hate crimes targeting sexual orientation were the second most common hate crime after those of race, according to the Department of Justice, and there was a 13.8% increase in hate crimes against people because of their sexuality from 2021 to 2022. There was a 32.9% rise in hate crimes targeting people for their gender identity, and many laws have been passed that are specifically aimed against those who don't identify within the gender binary. Things may have gotten better, but they're certainly not perfect.

But *Considering Matthew Shepard* isn't just about the murder of a gay man. It's also about the aftermath, the response by the public. It's about the righteous anger against the killing of an innocent young man and the outpouring of love towards Matthew's friends and family. And that is what I would like you to take away from this composition.

In this time of division, both social and political, love and compassion is something that is desperately needed. Towards friends, towards family, and even towards your enemies. That is what I'd like you to walk away from this performance thinking about.

I hope you enjoy listening to *Considering Matthew Shepard* as much as I enjoy performing it, and thank you for coming to our performance.

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(Yes, I am the Bach Choir Executive
Director, too!)

BIOS



THOMAS W. DOUGLAS *Artistic Director*, is a compelling and passionate conductor having performed more than 250 opera, oratorio, orchestral and musical theater productions. As the Artistic Director of the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh he regularly receives accolades for innovative, creative and dramatically provocative productions. He was also the music director of the Newton Symphony in Kansas. Career highlights include conducting Webber's

Phantom of the Opera in Basel, Switzerland, Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, the Pittsburgh premiere of the classic silent films *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, with live orchestra and chorus, the U.S. premiere of David Chesky's *The Agnostic*, the rousing *Carmina Burana Africana*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Don Giovanni* and a production of *Ain't Misbehavin'* in Malaysia.

Douglas works regularly as Musical Director at Music Theater Wichita where he has done many productions including *Smokey Joe's Café*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Ragtime*, *Hairspray*, *The Full Monty*, *Miss Saigon*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Les Misérables* among many others. He has also conducted the Anchorage Opera, San Diego Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Des Moines Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, at the City Theater, Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Canton Symphony, Wichita Symphony, Dallas Symphony and the River City Brass Band. In addition, Douglas has conducted classical guitarist and Latin Grammy winner Berta Rojas, Tony winner Kelli O'Hara, and Leslie Odom Jr., Tony winner for his role in *Hamilton*.

Thomas has enjoyed the stage roles of Amonasro in Elton John's *Aida*, Caiaphas in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Balthazar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. He has been a vocal soloist with the River City Brass, Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Symphony, Canton Symphony, the Children's Festival Chorus and sings frequently with jazz legend Joe Negri in his *Mass of Hope*. Douglas is the Director of Opera Studies and also Choral Activities at Carnegie Mellon University. This is his 19th season with the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh.

BIOS *Continued*



JON ERIK SCHREIBER *Associate Conductor*, is a teacher, singer and conductor with a background in vocal pedagogy, choral and solo song literature, and has experience in musical theater, folk and popular styles. With over two decades of experience directing high school choirs, church and community choirs, Schreiber is grateful for the rich and varied experiences leading and collaborating with all sorts of musicians young and old, challenged

and gifted, small groups and large. In addition to serving the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh as Associate Conductor, Schreiber teaches music and directs the Chorus at Pittsburgh Allderdice High School. He is the founding Artistic Director and Conductor of the Indiana Community Choir at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), and also maintains an independent studio of voice students. Above all, he is thankful for the opportunity to serve his family as a father and husband.



JAMES BURNS *Accompanist*, has been a frequent performer with groups such as the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and the Mendelssohn Choir. As a pianist for the Civic Light Opera he has performed in over 100 musical theater productions. He has had the pleasure of bringing music to young students through his work with educational outreach programs for Gateway to Music and the Pittsburgh Opera. Burns holds piano

performance degrees from Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the Juilliard School and a Masters degree in Sacred Music from Duquesne University. He is the organist at Westminster Presbyterian Church and Temple Emanuel.

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GUEST ARTISTS

MJ LINTERN (they / them)



MJ Lintern (they/them) is a singer/songwriter based out of South Orange, New Jersey. They are a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University's School of Music where they studied Voice Performance (2022) under the tutelage of Daniel Teadt. Most recently seen on stage as a soloist with the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh during their Queens concert, MJ is absolutely thrilled to be back again in the Steel City making beautiful music together! Performing everything from Mozart, Bach, and Hahn to Phillip Glass, Mahler, and The Beatles, MJ's love of music has carried them through a lot. MJ also plays eleven different instruments

including clarinet, saxophone, low-brass, and bass guitar, and is expecting to be ready to release their debut album, Proof of Concept, sometime in 2024. While not performing, MJ enjoys time spent with friends, their partner, playing video games and writing poetry/journaling. Additionally, MJ would like to thank Professor Douglas for this incredible opportunity to continue to do what they love the most in the world, as well as their family for the years of unconditional love and support!



The Western PA LGBTQ+ Older Adult Advocacy Team...

this grassroots Team meets virtually and is currently focused on

- (1) the issues of safe and affordable housing
- (2) legislation to benefit the older LGBTQ+ community.

Our vision is a fully inclusive community where **LGBTQ+ older adults** have adequate and equal access to resources to live and thrive in safety, comfort, and with respect.

lgbtqadvocacywpa@gmail.com for information or to join our Team.

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The Academy Chamber Orchestra, led by artistic director and concertmaster Dr. Warren Davidson, was created in 2001 to provide excellent orchestral accompaniment for choral groups. The orchestra is made up of leading players from the Pittsburgh area who have performed around the nation and around the world. The Academy Chamber Orchestra has been the “orchestra of choice” for the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh for twenty years, and has performed with the Mendelssohn Choir, the Pittsburgh Concert Chorale, and at many area churches.

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Special guests: Fox Chapel High School Choir

Dec 08, 2023 7:30pm | St Andrew's Episcopal Church

Dec 10, 2023 3pm | Shadyside Presbyterian Church

Jonathan Dove's *The Passing of the Year*

Special guests: The Pittsburgh Girls Choir

Feb 04, 2024 3pm | Shadyside Presbyterian Church

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Beverly Gray
Avery Greenaway
Beth Jacobs *
Mary Jeffries

Tracy Keys *
Ceinwen King-Smith
Mary Kate Mannion
Joanna Obuzor
Sarah Richards *
Erica Shadowsong

Polly Swanson
Nicole Tascarella *
Frances Verschuure
Andrea Walczak

ALTOS

Elizabeth Arkush
Wendy Arons
Anna-Noel Bass-Riley
Tybe Brett
Claudia Broman
Joan Cosgrove
Elizabeth Criss

Julie Galati *
Keren Gifford
Abbie Johnson
Megan Kelly-Thomas
Maria Ketter *
Nancy Long *
Cynthia Magistro

Joy McNally
Polly McQueen
Shelly Parver Lenkner
Sue Phillips
Mary Sabol
Kathy Schlosser
Ellen Stolpe +

TENORS

Peter Carras
Kevin Davies
Brian Filtz ^
Kane Karsteter-McK-
ernan *

Ron Kludo
Jack McLaughlin
Jon Erik Schreiber *
Rob Schwartz +

George Spencer *
Steven Suarez

BASSES

David Allan
Randal Bryant
Matt Dooley *+
Nicholas Eustis
Ben Filippone *
Albert Flasck
Ayres Freitas

Michael Friedrich
Stephen Fuegi
Tristan Hurst
George Libby
Doug McCullough
Andrew Sabol
Erich Stein

Jim Storch
Paul Tellers
Theo Towns
Mel Vatz
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* Professional Core

^ Core Guest

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BCP would like to acknowledge all of its new singers this season! We are an 80-member choir, bringing us back to pre-pandemic numbers.

We appreciate your attendance and support!

A special thank you to those who attended our 2022-23 Season! Without your support, we could not do what we love and give the gift of music to the Pittsburgh community.



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BCP appreciates the many volunteers who make our performances possible!

Drew Keys

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