

PARKESTONE FOUNDATION ACQUITTAL FOR CONSIDERING MATTHEW SHEPARD (2023)

Recipient: Soundstream New Music

Amount received: \$1000

The project: Production of oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepard* in Elder Hall, North Terrace, Adelaide SA on October 12-14 (the 25th anniversary of Matthew's death).

Considering Matthew Shepard, by Craig Hella Johnson, is a three-part oratorio that reflects on the 1998 homophobic murder of 21-year-old Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, USA.

A Grammy-nominated work, *Considering Matthew Shepard* communicates a compelling social narrative, telling an important story of our community that cultivates an understanding of the other: Matthew's death led to significant US law reform, and his tragedy connects with similar cases including George Duncan's 1972 drowning in Adelaide, 1980s Sydney bashings, 2016 Pulse Nightclub mass shooting, and ongoing anti-trans rhetoric.

Through the music of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, we gain a deeper understanding of tolerance and compassion, as the Washington Post notes: "Powerfully cathartic, it leads us from horror and grief to a higher understanding of the human condition, enabling us to endure".

Considering Matthew Shepard received its Australian premiere in November 2019 at Adelaide's Feast Festival, produced and conducted by Jesse Budel. A review of this production, written by Ewart Shaw for Broadway World can be [found here](#).

In October 2023, on the 25th anniversary of Matthew's death, Soundstream New Music presented a remount production of this important work, again produced and conducted by Jesse Budel with co-producer Riana Chakravarti, joined by soloists Mark Oates, Jennifer Trijo, and esteemed choristers from the ranks of Adelaide Chamber Singers, Adelaide Graduate Singers, Festival Statesmen Chorus, Young Adelaide Voices and the State Opera of South Australia Chorus.

The production was critically acclaimed by both [Limelight Magazine](#) and [The Barefoot Review](#).

A full recording of the Saturday 14 October performance is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzMw2UsPSis>

Our project had the following objectives:

- Present this important 21st century oratorio, and Matthew's story, to Adelaide audiences
- Provide performance opportunities to South Australian queer musicians at industry award rates, with over 50% of the cast and crew identifying as sexual and gender diverse.
- Contribute queer-themed material to the artistic and cultural life of Adelaide and South Australia

Spending breakdown:

- \$858.00 to EnvyUs Design, providing advertising collateral design in the form of HP ad, poster, flyer and socials.
- \$142.00 towards expenses at Finsbury Green for flyer and poster printing.

Jesse Budel

Producer/Conductor, Considering Matthew Shepard

Associate Artistic Director, Soundstream New Music

See attached feedback from audience members:

Q: What did you like about the performance?

The standard of the musical performance was amazing, I really enjoyed how the ensemble performed together as a group to convey the piece that has so much emotional depth. The intimate feel of the hall was very appropriate for the event. How the performers used the space was also creative and powerful. Listening and being open to the story told in this way was a deeply moving experience. Mark Roberts' performance of The Fence (That Night) was sublime and very impactful. Jesse's conducting was beautiful to watch. Thanks to everyone!

The sensitivity, passion, the music and sound was incredible. Simple but so effective with the set. Just a brilliant performance.

Outstanding vocal performances and blending of different musical genres by the various musicians. Although confronting material, the audience was treated to an emotionally uplifting experience that was truly inspiring.

The spirit of the evening. I felt a very strong rapport with the excellent performers who were very open emotionally. We went to the Saturday performance and I shall never forget it. Everyone on the stage gave us the audience the best they could do, and Jesse Budel orchestrated everything beautifully.

Excellent production with engaging visuals and passionate performers.

The quality of the music and singing performance was very high. The production elements (lighting, sound, staging, ambience etc) were excellent and strongly empathetic to the text.

The atmosphere. The quality of the musicians and participants. The variety of the singing locations across the hall. The hall itself. The connection to the story.

Having a gay son, I found this production an important (albeit emotional) experience. Brilliant!

So peaceful and respectful to the memory of Matthew Shepard.

That it gives context & life to this really tragic story creating a greater awareness of gay hate crime. Also that it honours the memory of Matthew. I loved when the male chorus came up and sang from the balcony it gave me chills, really moving. The production was excellent so well done.

Everything. the tragedy then uplifting end; the divine voices; your enthusiasm.

The honesty and freshness of the performance; the strong clear narrative; the delightfully varied music; the energy and engagement of the performers.

It was so moving. An extremely important message. The vocalists and musicians were impeccable.

The changing, small, adhoc ensembles in addition to the main choir. The music generally. The skill level of the singers.

Everything: Music, Performances, Presentation and Venue

High performance standard

No chit chat just beautiful singing and moving music

The music

The story telling

Some wonderful vocals

Enjoyed the music, the range of music, the way the story was presented and woven together, the depth and complexity. Such a beautiful sound and so much variation to keep it interesting.

Wonderful production, marvellous singing, musically so satisfying.

Outstanding musically and vocally.

Combination of visual and sound was immersive

Excellent performance that left me emotionally moved and uplifted.

It was an absolutely stunning production - incredibly moving and beautifully staged. I saw it last time it was produced in Adelaide, but the 2023 version was next-level.

I was living in the USA when Matthew was murdered and recall what a traumatic event it was. This concert was a kind of memorial service for me. The musical was very moving and a beautiful tribute to him.

I loved everything about the event. The movement of the performers around the room to experience the voice coming from behind and the sides of the audience was really fabulous effect

The 'visual' fence, clothing, soloists moving separate from the choir - all really powerful.