



Jordan Journeys

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MSC L.T. JORDAN INSTITUTE

Spring 2017

Celebrating



years of exploring!

A JORDAN JOURNEY: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS

In November, the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness celebrated a monumental milestone – 30 years of providing international awareness and exposure to Texas A&M University. Hosting a diverse group of student, staff, and faculty leaders, as well as former international program participants, MSC L.T. Jordan took the opportunity to thank the many individuals whose efforts have carried forward the organization's purpose.

celebration, showcasing various samplings from goods from countries we send our students too as well as beautiful pictures our students captured during their time overseas.



The remarkable outpouring of support from the Texas A&M University community serves as a testament to both the legacy of the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness, as well as Mr. Leland Thomas and Mrs. Jessie Wright Jordan themselves. Their generosity, and that of supporters since, has offered students of Texas A&M University a world of opportunity beyond our own borders – from the 628 students sent abroad through the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute Internship and Living Abroad and International Service programs to binders of original research formulated with the support of the Jordan Fellows program, the thirty-year record of experience ensures students speaking to the banquet's guests were neither the first nor the last to travel as ambassadors of the Jordan legacy. An organization both by the student and for the student, MSC L.T. Jordan's regimen of increasingly impactful on-campus programming and personal development experiences for student leaders will only leave a deeper, more impactful mark on campus throughout the organization's many years to come.

By Christopher Oleska

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Throughout both the banquet and the entertainment that followed, the focus of the night's events were remarkably clear: the Texas A&M University community, much like the world in which we live, is increasingly diverse – and that opportunities to engage in other cultures are both personally and professionally enriching. To make this point truly resonate, multiple recent participants of the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute's international programming shared their experiences with the audience. The speakers detailed the ways in which their experiences served well towards their future careers – and just as importantly, how their international immersion, made possible through the work of the MSC L.T. Jordan students and staff, empowered and changed them as individuals.

The evening also featured an array of student talent and community contribution. Ballet Folklorico Celestial offered banquet attendees a glimpse into traditional Mexican dance. The NIU Musicclub of Texas A&M University performed two songs at the event, and TAMU Sahithya, the university's first Indian classical dance team, also shared their time and abilities with the banquet's audience. Local businesses, Touch of Elegance Cakes & Catering, courteously provided their services in the form of an ornate display of desserts from around the world – everything from English bread pudding to empanadas and traditional Chinese egg tarts – with each dessert representing a country in which MSC L.T. Jordan currently sends students to. A silent auction was also held at the



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR...

The MSC LT Jordan Institute for International Awareness celebrated its 30th birthday this past year. Not only do we celebrate the incredible vision and forethought of our namesakes Leland T. and Jessie W. Jordan, we celebrate a year of progress. During my time as Chair, quite a few defining moments have occurred for our committee. For starters, we have added a new country to our International Service Program — Costa Rica. In expanding one of our travel abroad programs, we greatly increase the opportunity to make a positive, lasting impact within students at Texas A&M and in a community with need. Additionally, we have doubled the participants in the Fellows Program from last year where we are able to fund research abroad. The ability for growth can be traced to the relationships that have been created and strengthened over the course of the year with LAUNCH: Honors, various graduate departments, and Texas A&M Faculty.

Our On-Campus programming has found success as well. Our fall recurring program, Russian Film Festival gathered so many attendees that we had to turn people away. During Brazos Valley WorldFest, MSC L.T. Jordan Institute's largest community outreach event, our tabling booth received fifth place from

the numerous outstanding displays. Over a year in the making, we brought a Grammy nominated and winning choral group *Conspire* to Texas A&M to perform the life of Matthew Shepard. Influenced by renowned international figures such as Bach, Hafiz, and Hildegard von Bingen, *Conspire: Considering Matthew Shepard* was our largest and most impactful program. With the help of MSC OPAS and the support of 17 different sponsors ranging from the Mays Business School to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, there were over 1300 attendees, an overwhelmingly positive amount of feedback all over campus, and the spark of diversity discussions and programs around campus. Lastly and certainly not least, the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute has partnered with the Texas A&M International Advisory Board to create a mentorship program for our executive team. The immense international experience the IAB holds will more than benefit the students participating, and we cannot be any more excited for that partnership.

Just a 30 short years ago, MSC L.T. Jordan Institute was founded by a couple from Lufkin, Texas who truly understood the meaning of global citizenship. I find it easier to talk about the end products of our work, the programs, but

the real impressive part of our committee is the students that drive us forward and put into practice the vision we were founded upon. I

cannot commend the members of MSC L.T. Jordan Institute enough in their abundance of hard work, unyielding drive, ambition, and fiery passion to constantly push for the right thing. With guidance from Cory Arcak, our wonderful advisor who always finds ways to develop our students, and a creative, innovative executive team that faces adversity without fear, we have come a long way to solidify our foundation. All of these individuals have invested so much time, energy, and heart into this committee to ensure its success and path to perpetual progress. What is next for MSC L.T. Jordan Institute? I may not know the answer now, but whatever it may be I am truly excited and know that it will be incredible and something worth seeing.

*Yours,
Nathaniel Teplitskiy '18
2016 MSC L.T. Jordan Chair*



ILAP INTERVIEW

By Christina Long

Matthew Russell '20 - Business Honors

What are some reasons you applied for the Internship & Living Abroad Program? What interested you?

The number one reason I applied to ILAP is because of my love of travel. I was blown away by not only the international internship, but the immersion within the cultures. So I sought it out, looked up what was going to happen. What really piqued my interest was the fact that the internships were molded to each student's career goals and what they are studying in college. You get to have your say in what you want to do.

What are some expectations you have for the summer (what you will gain from it, what you will experience)?

I told Affandi that I'm a business major (he's the in-country coordinator for Singapore). However, my real passion is music and entertainment, and when I graduate, I would like to work on the business side of the

music industry. Affandi said that could be possibly arranged. And then I said, well my real passion is music and entertainment, and I think that's what I want to work in after I graduate.

Is there a specific reason you picked Singapore?

I wanted to go somewhere in East Asia, because not the stereotypical place to choose as a study abroad location. It's not Spain or Europe. There's nothing wrong with those places, they're amazing. When you go on vacation, you go to London, Madrid, Barcelona, but you don't go to Singapore. So I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity while I'm in college, while the resources are available to go somewhere many people wouldn't.

What are some of the biggest differences you are expecting to see?

Definitely the people, the food, and, I want to say language, but they all speak English. Albeit, it will be a different kind of English that I am used to. I have chosen to live with a Chinese host family, so I'm really excited

FELLOWS CLASS OF 2016-17 BIOGRAPHIES

By Marcell Harmati

Camille Goblet

Camille is a Master's Candidate in Biomedical Sciences and will be traveling to the Chaqueño para la Conservación e Investigación (CCCI), in the Chaco region of Paraguay. She will conduct physical exams and collect samples and various health parameters on Chacoan and White-lipped peccaries, endangered species native to the region. She will be working alongside local researchers to learn the methods and techniques necessary for conducting isolated field research at the CCCI.

Christopher Holland

Chris is a Ph.D. Candidate in Animal Behavior and Communication and Biology, and will be traveling to Calnali Hidalgo, Mexico for three months to conduct field work on pheromone communication and environmental disturbance in Xiphophorus ecosystems. Chris hopes to collect rare and valuable data for his research and immerse himself into the Mexican culture by engaging with locals and exploring the highlands of the Sierra Madre.

Annah Lee

Annah is a Ph.D. Student in Veterinary Pathobiology and will be traveling to various regions of northern and central Tunisia, mostly staying at the National Veterinary School of Sidi Thabet. She will be collecting *Ixodes ricinus* (castor bean tick) during weekly field visits to local national parks with graduate students from the National Veterinary School. Annah will extract and sequence the DNA from the collected specimens to ultimately compare the pathogens found in European and American ticks.



Tim Campbell (Jordan Fellows Class 2015-16) in Tanzania conducting research.



Fellows Banquet 2016

Cody Moser

Cody is a Ph.D. student in Biological Anthropology and will be traveling to the Central Kalimantan province of Indonesian Borneo for ten weeks. He will be conducting collecting population counts and density data on Bornean tarsiers to assess conservation threats and field preliminary research for his future dissertation. With this experience, Cody hopes to become acquainted with the conservation challenges and cultural factors facing Borneo's disappearing rainforests.

Brie Myre

Brie is a Ph.D. student in Biology and will be traveling to Costa Rica for two months to study the reproductive physiology of sea turtles. She will identify and capture females shortly after mating and track them throughout the summer to recapture them for ultrasound and blood samples. This research will help inform management plans of Olive Ridley sea turtles and enrich the local communities in which Brie will work.

Whitney Preisser

Whitney Preisser is a Ph.D. Candidate in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences and will be traveling to the Texas A&M Soltis Center in Costa Rica for six weeks. She will be investigating the latitudinal gradient of parasite diversity using rodents and their helminths (flukes, tapeworms, and roundworms) for her doctoral dissertation. Whitney hopes to gather additional host and parasite data from this experience and expose undergraduate students to international field work.

to see how that's going to be. I can't imagine it will be anything like my normal home life in San Antonio. However, I want to practice speaking a language with them to better connect with Singaporean people. Overall, I anticipate the food to be the biggest difference.

Have you been to East Asia before?

No, never before. Hence, my immense excitement.

What have you already done to prepare or what do you plan to do to prepare?

I'm going to brush up on my Chinese for sure. In the past, I have taken a Chinese class, so I know a few words, but I want to get to actually experience the language while I'm in Singapore, and I need to understand some of it going in. I also intend to learn about Singapore's culture; i.e.: what to expect from people and what is considered offensive. And learning about the food of course; where to eat, what is Singapore's specialty. I plan to thoroughly do my research.

How do your friends and family feel about the program?

They were all surprised I'm going to go to Singapore for 6 weeks this summer, but they're all excited. And my parents are definitely supportive because they wanted me to go and gain new experiences.

What are you most excited about for the summer?

The food, definitely the food. I hear it's the number one draw of Singapore. The food everywhere, delicious food from all over the world, and that's what I'm looking forward to the most.

Are you nervous about any aspects of the internship? If so, what aspects?

I'm more excited than nervous, I cannot wait to go! I'm not even that anxious, I'm just really really excited and thrilled to be a part of this program.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM

By Casey Price

"I would wake up at 5:45 in the morning because of all the howler monkeys, the birds, stray dogs and cats, and I'd be perfectly okay with it."

Biomedical Sciences major Nathaniel Teplitskiy woke to find himself completely immersed in the organic greenness of Costa Rica. Nathaniel pioneered in San Isidro de Peñas Blancas for MSC L.T. Jordan Institute's first International Service Program in the area. For six weeks, he worked with the local Red Cross organization, was embraced as a member of a Costa Rican family, explored magical parts of the country, and learned invaluable life lessons.

Surviving off of approximately nine months of self-study, Nathaniel found the informality and rapid speed by which the Costa Ricans, or Ticos, spoke Spanish the most challenging.

"At that point, I didn't feel comfortable enough to respond, but as time went on, I picked it up really quickly." Nathaniel went from drowning in a sea of confusion to swimming in it, adapting in complete immersion. "By the end, I felt 50 times better at Spanish. If I didn't speak Spanish, I wouldn't be saying anything."

Silence would have been extremely ineffective and possibly destructive to Nathaniel's goals. He was there to serve, specifically as a volunteer with the local Red Cross. Focusing on community outreach, Nathaniel worked diligently to promote and develop "charlas", or community discussions, for health education purposes. He organized the charlas with the "juventud," the youth of the community, and consulted with the board of directors to lay logistical and technological foundations for the organization. His outreach efforts also involved systemizing donation collection routes and surveying residents on their knowledge of the Red Cross.

"It was interesting because I was the youngest one there, and they looked to me a lot for answers," Nathaniel explained, "It made me realize my ability more than anything else. And that I am capable of helping a multinational organization, such as the Red Cross, as a student."

Successes would only come, however, after all preconceived notions had been disregarded. Nathaniel went with a plan, but after spending time with the Ticos, he discovered what they considered to be important and effective. With a hunger to serve to the best of his ability, he learned to be flexible and available to do as much as he could.

Costa Rica taught Nathaniel that discomfort is good. His trip held many "firsts", most of which rested far on the outskirts of his comfort zone. However, Nathaniel stepped up and adapted, for himself and the community.

"Progress is beautiful," he said, "Even when the end is not near."

Despite not seeing any end or tangible finished product, Nathaniel found comfort in the fact he was an essential component to helping initiate and encourage progress. "That was amazing to see, and the fact that they trusted me to be a facilitator was incredible to me."

In Costa Rica, Nathaniel was a leader, servant, friend, and brother. In only six weeks, he became part of San Isidro and drew inspiration from locals to consistently persevere toward what is good. "It really keeps you pushing and trying to do the right thing for everyone."

Mountain view on the drive from Lake Arenal to Monteverde, Costa Rica.



JORDAN MEMBER INTERVIEWS

By Emma Nelson

What is your classification & when did you join MSC L.T. Jordan?

Gabby Vah: Freshman, joined this semester.

Ellen Dangtran: Sophomore, joined this semester.

Matthew Faller: Sophomore, joined this semester.

Marcell Harmati: Junior, finishing my fourth semester.

If you had to describe MSC L.T. Jordan in one sentence to a friend what would you say?

Gabby: It has an important purpose on campus.

Matthew: It's pretty good at increasing international awareness and helps with studying abroad.

Marcell: MSC L.T. Jordan helps bring the world to Texas A&M.

What's your favorite accomplishment or event you've attended with MSC L.T. Jordan?

Marcell: What's your favorite accomplishment or event you've attended with MSC L.T. Jordan?

(The Fellows Program provides highly qualified Texas A&M University undergraduate and graduate students with an opportunity for personal enrichment and education through an international research experience)

You've just won \$10,000 to travel abroad. Where are you going and why?

Ellen: The Maldives is a cool place and not that many people visit there. Also, it's predicted to go underwater in the future.

Matthew: Norway. It has gorgeous mountains and landscape, and seems pretty cool.

Marcell: The International Space Station-

Matthew: Could you get there with \$10,000?!

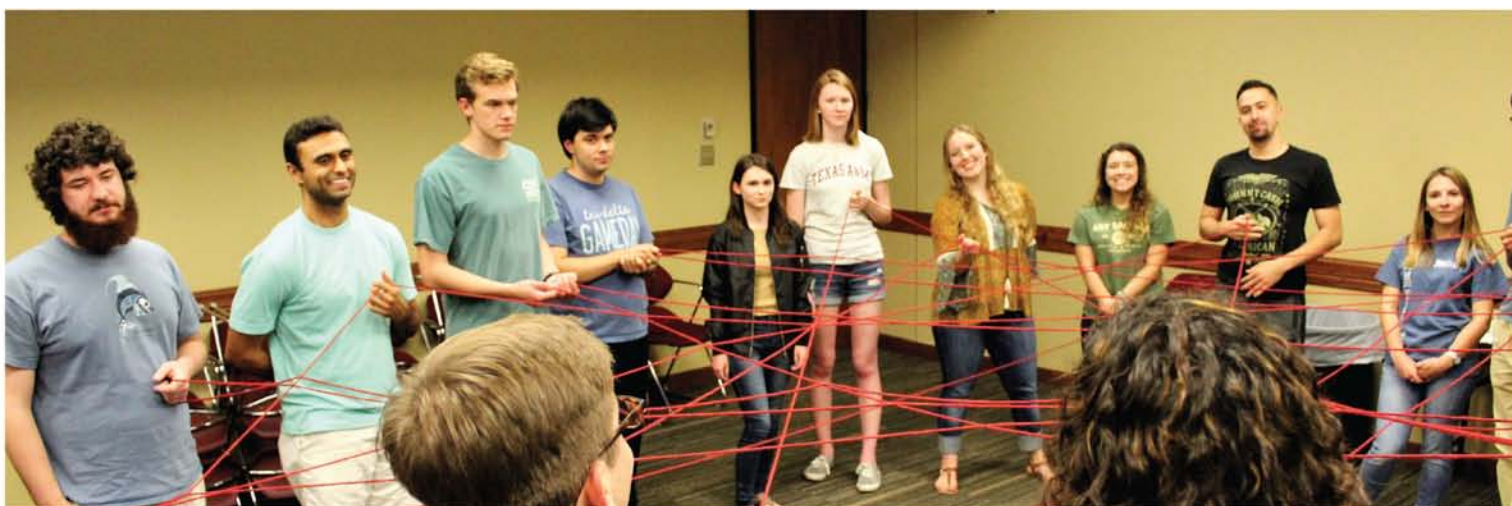
Editor: We'll make it stretch. Why the space station?

Marcell: Well I'd be able to see the whole world and not just individual countries.

Is there anything else you'd like to add about the importance of MSC L.T. Jordan to you?

Matthew: I've travelled abroad before, but never for very long, MSC L.T. Jordan makes me want to go longer.

Ellen: It's nice to have a platform to talk about issues that are important to me, like international awareness.



Members at the MSC L.T. Jordan Spring '17 Retreat.

BREAKING STEREOTYPES


By Alaina Smith

In April 2016, MSC L.T. Jordan had the pleasure of working with the Muslim Student Association to bring Azhar Usman to campus for Breaking Stereotypes program. The Muslim stand-up comedian started the evening hot, appearing on stage and shouting "ISIS in the house!" Usman's no-holds-barred attitude continued from there as he regaled the audience with relatable personal stories and anecdotes of his experiences with prejudice and stereotyping.

Usman effectively razed every politically correct term you've ever heard, and broke down the national divide, which he refers to as the "white civil rights movement," with perspectives and insights that, relevant then, have only become more so in intervening months. Usman kept the crowd in fits of laughter with tales of airport interactions before bringing the audience back down to earth and finishing his performance by urging students to look past ethnicities and identity definitions by simply being ourselves and keeping an open heart and mind.

A panel followed, putting Usman on stage with three Muslim Aggies for a moderated Q&A session covering topics ranging from their experiences in the Bryan-College Station community to media portrayal of Islam. The program was a powerful and a thoroughly honest reflection that has continued to resound in our community, and was a major success from our on-campus programming team.

BREAKING STEREOTYPES



with comedian **Azhar Usman**

April 19th, 2016

Rudder Theatre

7PM-9PM

"AZHAR USMAN IS UNTOUCHABLE."
~ DAVE CHAPPELLE

"AMERICA'S FUNNIEST MUSLIM"



WORLDVEST

By Riya Santra

In November, 2016, MSC L.T. Jordan participated in Worldfest which was a whirlwind of interesting weather, culture, and experiences. Those with booths arrived very early in the morning to set up. Even then, it was evident the weather would pose an issue as it was extremely windy with dark clouds already rolling in. The MSC L.T. Jordan booth had a hand-drawn map of the world as their main feature with paper dolls visitors were allowed to decorate to represent themselves and then place on the map on a country that closely resonated with them. It was incredible to see the large amounts of diversity in a city that people perceive as lacking in culture. There were people from Kenya, South Africa, and even Australia, just to name a few.

It was a great experience to see the performances in between booth shifts. The Indian, Latin, and Turkish dancers were some of the most entertaining to watch. Festival goers also had the opportunity to buy handmade artifacts from different countries and interact with booths. They could make paper lanterns or get their names written in calligraphy at the Chinese booth or eat fried bananas and delicious satay from the Indonesian booth. It was also enjoyable to see that people present at Worldfest were of all ages and areas. There was a booth of middle schoolers promoting their school's French club next to a booth of adults displaying Mexican artifacts. It was great to see people mingling and asking intelligent questions about others' cultures and

to see a flow of discussion across national boundaries.

Once the weather took over, the MSC L.T. Jordan booth switched to a "create your own flag" activity. Flags from every country were printed out in case children wanted to create one representing their background and what the symbols and colors on each flag represented. It was surprising to see parents point out specific symbols to their kids showing their genuine interest in their children learning about different cultures. It was especially enjoyable to see all the people who came out despite the weather and a lack of an incentive to come. Many visitors said they weren't part of an organization or required to come but did so because they had heard great things about it and genuinely wanted to see what diversity existed in College Station.

Even though it was so cold and poured continuously for about five hours I genuinely enjoyed my first time at Worldfest. The high point of the day was definitely winning fifth place for cultural display. However, I would come back anytime regardless of whether there was a prize waiting, because cultural diversity is important. True societal peace comes from being aware of the people who surround us and the background they bring to the tiny melting pot that is College Station.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH MSC L.T. JORDAN

By Carly Rice

As a graduate student embarking on my second and final year in the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to work with Cory Arcak, the director of the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute. Working with her has opened my eyes to a new advising style and how to truly challenge students while providing constant support at the same time. Student affairs provides learning opportunities for students outside the classroom in many different ways, and the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute is no exception. The international experiences and on-campus programs are amazing opportunities for students to experience. From international internships and service projects to cultural programming, the students who participate, as well as those who are organizing behind the scenes, are learning so much and have chances to integrate what they are learning in the classroom with their experiences with the Jordan Institute. As a future student affairs professional, I can honestly say that this group of students has



truly been a pleasure to work with. I have learned so much more from each of the members of the exec team than they probably realize.

I have learned about so many different cultures through my interactions with the students in Jordan and through the programs offered. As we have worked together, I have seen so much growth from the students of the executive team and have been truly impressed with how hard they have worked. Every Monday night exec meeting is a new opportunity to learn something new as updates are shared, current events are discussed, and ideas are brought to the table. Each member of the team is so crucial, because without them, we would not be a complete team. I am looking forward to the spring of 2017 and feel truly honored to have the opportunity to work with these brilliant students and watch them achieve great things in the Jordan Institute and in their studies as students at Texas A&M University.

RUSSIAN FILM FEST

By Victoria Iams

The screening of *Save My Speech Forever* was introduced by director of photography, Roman Sivozhelezov. He travelled all the way from Moscow, Russia to share his award-winning 2015 film with us in October, 2016. The film's goal was to help the viewer gain a better understanding of one of the world's greatest poets, Osip Mandelstam. Although the filming style was unusual and complicated, Sivozhelezov hoped to show the importance of Mandelstam within Russian culture. Mandelstam was not the only poet to be persecuted for his works. The film director decided the film would be "dedicated to the innocent victims of our country" who suffered for their cause, whatever it may be.

The film covered the life of Mandelstam through 21 chapters. The director was influenced by modernism and other artistic movements of the 20th century. The style was a compilation of many artistic genres, forms of storytelling, and editing processes. Sivozhelezov later explained the film was done in this way because Mandelstam's poetry itself was multi-layered. The puppeteering that was featured was done to mirror the image and movements of Mandelstam. The backgrounds were photographs from locations Mandelstam visited either in real life or in his poetry, and these were overlapped with drawings to give depth and complicate the feelings given off by the scenery.

Music for this film was chosen for the purpose of bringing Mandelstam into the modern world. The main song used at both the opening and closing credits was a rap, and the artist who wrote it fully understood Mandelstam

and the director's purpose in the film. The MC used a mixture of Mandelstam's words and his own to incorporate into one meaningful set of lyrics.

"The words uttered to his wife as he was being arrested can be better translated as 'keep my words forever'."

The title of the film comes from a famous quote by Mandelstam to his wife Nadezhda. He was being sent to prison for his published works that included an epigram of an unflattering portrayal of Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin. The words uttered to his wife as he was being arrested can be better translated as "keep my words forever." She devotedly did just this, and memorized all of Mandelstam's works. Years later she felt it was finally safe enough to write them down. It is only through Nadezhda that Mandelstam's words live on.

The director chose to make the film because of current parallels he is seeing in Russia today with suppression of freedoms, and he hopes the movie's message is clear about this. Sivozhelezov continued answering audience questions after the film, and I was left wondering why Mandelstam continued condemning himself by writing for an audience he never thought he would have? The film only gives a glimpse at the answer to this, and it is truly up to the viewer to decide.

CONSPIRARE

By Abby Christopher & Alaina Smith

On January 29th and 30th, 2016, MSC L.T. Jordan, in conjunction with MSC OPAS and our partners across campus, brought our biggest, and arguably most influential, program to Texas A&M: Conspirare: Considering Matthew Shepard. Conspirare is a Grammy nominated, Austin-based choral ensemble that tour internationally. The group resolutely pushes through boundaries and "engages the power of music to change lives" in both the audience and the musicians, ambitiously addressing universal problems and emotions to encourage love, expression and connection.

"...it's important for the world to breathe together in times of strife."

One of the many amazing things about this choral ensemble (other than their amazing music) is their name: Conspirare, which is derived from the Latin words "con" and "spirare" which mean "to breathe together." Not only is this meaning significant to a choral group, it is a great sentiment to have when referring to the world as a whole. This meaning is so beautiful because it's important for the world to breathe together in times of strife. To take a deep breathe, assess the problem and work together to fix it.



One problem the world faces today is the oppression of the LGBTQ+ community. The director of Conspirare is deeply affected by the challenges of the community, and more specifically the story of Matthew Shepard. Matthew Shepard was a 21 year old university student who was described



by his friends and family as extremely optimistic and approachable. He had a great passion for equality and had the special gift to relate to almost everyone. He was an amazing person, but because of his sexual orientation, he was brutally attacked, tied to a fence, and left there to die. A few days after the assault, he succumbed to his wounds and passed away.

Moved by this story, ensemble director Craig Hella Johnson composed *Considering Matthew Shepard*, his first concert-length work, in response to Shepard's story. The eloquence of Craig Hella Johnson's work offers an enduring and profound impression of humanity, and incorporates selections from Shepard's journal, his parents' writings, and poetry from other artists. The result is a powerful and inspiring performance which kindles reverence for hope, compassion, and life.



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On behalf of the L.T. Jordan Institute, the Jordan Journeys staff would like to thank you for your contributions. We are looking forward to another successful year! Thanks & gig 'em!

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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Please make your check payable to Texas A&M Foundation and indicate below how you would like your contribution to support the L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness.

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College Station, TX 77843-1237
979.845.1914
- _____ **MSC Jordan Institute Annual Programs** (05-53059) — Support the Jordan Institute's on-campus and abroad programs such as International Educational Outreach, Internships and Living Abroad Programs (ILAP), and Jordan Fellows. *To give by credit card, go to give.am/SupportJordanInstitute.*
- _____ **MSC Jordan International Awareness Endowment** (04-53059) — Help build the endowment to support the Jordan Institute's mission of providing Texas A&M and the community with international exposure through on-campus programming and travel abroad opportunities.

All contributions are tax deductible as defined by law. Please include company gift matching information if applicable. **Thanks & Gig 'Em!**