



Hercules at the Crossroads

2023



Washington Bach Consort presents *Hercules at the Crossroads* Teachers' Guide

Overview

Thank you for your interest in *Hercules at the Crossroads*! We, the musician/teaching artists, and staff of Washington Bach Consort, are looking forward to working with you and your students.

Hercules at the Crossroads is a two-part program for 3rd–5th graders, featuring an inclusive, participatory performance of a cantata (a mini-musical!) by J.S. Bach about the hero, Hercules.

Bach's Cantata *Hercules at the Crossroads* is originally in German. In this production, the Washington Bach Consort presents most of the text in English, and some of the text in German with translations. Students will have the opportunity to hear and sing music in English and in German as a part of the in-school workshop and the concert.

What to Expect

At the school visit:

Before the performance, two teaching-artists from WBC visit your class to provide musical, mythical, and historical contexts of the music, and familiarize participants with the key elements of the story and the music. Students will learn to sing (in German) and sign (in ASL) short musical selections from Hercules and will participate at key moments in the performance. A note sheet will be provided to help guide the students.

At the concert:

The concert performance of *Hercules at the Crossroads* lasts about 45 minutes. A slide-show with key images and text translations is projected over the stage. Students will participate in the concert (remaining in their seats, singing along with the professional orchestra and singers), performing music learned during the school visit. A discussion session follows the performance to reinforce concepts introduced in the workshop.

Connecting to ELA Standards for Grades 3–5**BEING**

Students will learn about the story-telling power of the cantata and its role in 18th-century European culture, and today.

PERCEIVING

Students will learn about how the elements of the music (e.g., meter, melody and accompaniment, imitation, and text-painting) play a role in telling the story.

CONNECTING

Students will participate in the interpretive process as they learn to perform key sections of the music.

BUILDING

Students will learn the structural elements of Cantata form, including recitative, aria, and chorus/chorale, including what distinguishes each of these elements.

TRUSTING

As a part of the in-school workshop, teaching artists will guide students through the process of creating an original recitative.

BRIDGING

Students will participate in a question-and-answer session with visiting musicians about their careers as professional musicians specializing in Bach, and the life experiences that led them to this career.

Special Accommodation

Hercules at the Crossroads is an all-inclusive event. Children of all abilities are welcome. If you require special accommodation, please reach out to DC Arts Collaborative (contact info below) who will communicate your needs to WBC staff and facilitate necessary accommodations for both the school visit and concert.

The performance space is fully handicap accessible. Slides will be captioned but we will not have an ASL interpreter.

Preferred seating is available for those who require it.

Although participants are encouraged to demonstrate respectful concert hall behavior to the best of their abilities, there is no need for participants to stay seated/quiet during the performance. For those who “need a break,” the performance venue includes a small soundproof viewing area (“quiet room”) where participants can see and hear the performance. Ushers can direct participants to this space.

Contacts

For questions regarding transportation or special accommodation, please contact:

DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative

202.470.6467 ext. 1

schools@dccollaborative.org

www.dccollaborative.org

For questions regarding curriculum, performance, or school visits, please contact:

Savannah Hanley

Educational Program Coordinator

Washington Bach Consort

202.429.2121

shanley@bachconsort.org

www.bachconsort.org

The Washington Bach Consort looks forward to you and your students' participation and aim to provide an excellent experience. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any thoughts or questions.



Suggested Program Follow-up

Here are a few follow-up discussion topics Hercules at the Crossroads.



Discussion Topics and Activities

and activities for classes that have attended

- In the cantata *Hercules at the Crossroads*, Hercules is learning to make good choices—whether to have Fun all the time or do the harder work of a Virtuous life. Why do you think Bach chose this theme to mark the birthday of Crown Prince Friedrich?
- What costumes did you see Hercules, Fun, Virtue, and Mercury wear? Did those costumes represent ideas? What costumes would you choose for these characters?
- What is the mood in the first aria, sung by the character Pleasure? How does Bach paint in music the idea of laziness?
- What energy did the aria sung by Virtue have? Was it lazy, or was it more energetic? Did it seem like it was hard work?
- What was the mood of the chorus ending the cantata?
- Did you have fun singing in German? What was the hardest thing for you? What was easy?
- What one word would you use to describe the concert?
- What about the concert might you remember for a long time?