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## WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT CONCLUDES MILESTONE 45<sup>TH</sup> SEASON WITH MASS IN B MINOR, BACH'S FINAL CHORAL MASTERPIECE

**Sunday, April 30 at 4 p.m. at National Presbyterian Church**

**(Washington, D.C.)** In the final performance of their milestone 45<sup>th</sup> season, Washington Bach Consort, under the leadership of Artistic Director **Dana Marsh**, perform their signature work, Bach's renowned **Mass in B Minor** on **Sunday, April 30 at 4 p.m.** at the **National Presbyterian Church** (4101 Nebraska Ave NW, Washington, DC 20016). The Consort is joined by soloists **Paulina Francisco**, soprano; **Crossley Danielle Hawn**, soprano; **Roger O. Isaacs**, countertenor; **Kyle Stegall**, tenor; and **Mischa Bouvier**, bass. Tickets start at \$10 and can be purchased at <https://bachconsort.org/mass-in-b-minor/>

Considered by many to be Bach's greatest achievement, Mass in B Minor was composed and assembled in the last year of his life, and was likely never performed in its complete form in his lifetime. The piece is a testament to the Baroque era, encompassing a variety of styles, scorings, and musical types from austere counterpoint to virtuosic concerto writing to energetic dances. One nineteenth-century advocate for the work went so far as to call it "the greatest artwork of all times and all peoples."

"There has always been something about Bach's music, a quality, that just speaks directly to the heart," Marsh said. "There is something immediately recognizable about it, even if you've never experienced his music before."

Marsh recommends the piece to all audiences, even those who have little knowledge of classical music. The communicative nature of Bach's music and the passionate musicians of the Consort give Mass in B Minor wide appeal.

"Bach is the musicians' favorite, the true musicians' musician," Marsh said. "The Mass in B Minor reveals a composer at his most profoundly committed and inspired."

Much of the Mass in B Minor draws on music Bach had composed across his long career, including the "Kyrie eleison" and "Gloria in excelsis Deo" portions that open the work. Bach composed those as a sort of job application in 1733 to the Dresden electoral and royal court. Three years later, Bach's work paid

off, and he was named court composer to Elector Friedrich August II. Other parts of the complete Mass, which Bach assembled in 1749/50, were adapted from vocal works spanning his career.

The first complete performance of Mass in B Minor took place more than 100 years after Bach's death, but the work was known even before then to Haydn, Beethoven, and others from manuscript copies that circulated widely. It was published in two parts in 1833 and 1845, and quickly generated broad appeal.

That appeal continues today, with the Consort's performances of Mass in B Minor always drawing a dedicated and captivated audience. As Marsh said, once an audience member experiences the piece live, they are hooked.

"Beyond bringing to life the heights and depths of human emotion in a way that can move us all, the Mass in B Minor is a work that goes a step beyond even our own humanity and touches the sacred spaces of the soul," Marsh said.

### **The Washington Bach Consort**

Founded in 1977 by the late Dr. J. Reilly Lewis, the Washington Bach Consort is a professional choral and orchestral ensemble based in Washington, DC, now led by Artistic Director, Dr. Dana Marsh. The Consort is committed to ensuring that current and future audiences experience the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and his contemporaries by performing the music of Bach and his contemporaries to the highest artistic standards, sharing the joy of Bach's music by broadening audiences in the nation's capital, nurturing the appreciation of Bach's music through education and community outreach activities, and interpreting the music of Bach for audiences of today, thereby ensuring his legacy.

The Bach Consort is noted for its historically informed performances of 18th-century music on period instruments. As one of the DC area's most critically acclaimed and nationally recognized performing arts organizations, the Consort has made regular appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington Performing Arts, and the Cathedral Choral Society. In addition, the Consort has appeared at numerous festivals and presented three European tours. Recordings include Bach's complete motets, both J.S. and C.P.E. Bach's Magnificats, the first American recording of the F major and G minor masses, and three solo soprano cantatas with opera luminary Elizabeth Futral. Furthermore, the Consort completed Bach's entire 215-cantata cycle. In association with this monumental achievement, the Library of Congress welcomed the Washington Bach Consort performance recording and concert program archives into its permanent collection.

In August 2018, the Bach Consort welcomed Dana Marsh as its new Artistic Director. Acclaimed by *The Washington Post* as "a superb choral conductor, energetic and precise," Over three decades, Marsh has variously worked as an accomplished organist, vocalist, conductor and musicologist. He serves as Professor of Music and Director of the Historical Performance Institute at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he has directed a broad range of performances and NPR broadcasts. Marsh succeeds founder, J. Reilly Lewis, who led the Washington Bach Consort for 39 years until his untimely passing in 2016.

In May 2019, the Council of the District of Columbia honored Washington Bach Consort in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Consort's free classical music performances. In their written proclamation, the Council cited the Consort's musical mission to "enrich the quality of life" by "recognizing that not everyone is able to afford a regular subscription concert ticket" and celebrated the Consort's attempt to "reach as many people as possible." For further information please visit [bachconsort.org](http://bachconsort.org)

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