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CONTACT

Amanda Sweet/Bucklesweet
Amanda@bucklesweet.com

347-564-3371



**ACIS RELEASES WASHINGTON BACH
CONSORT'S FIRST ALBUM IN OVER A
DECADE**

Myths Contested: J.S. Bach's *The Contest between Phoebus and Pan* (BWV 201), and Trevor Weston's *A New Song* – out October 3, 2023

WASHINGTON– Washington Bach Consort will release its first album in over a decade through the Acis label on October 3. The theme, *Myths*

Contested, offers both a historical and modern-day look at perspectives and values that society connects to music. J.S. Bach's *The Contest between Phoebus and Pan* (BWV 201) dramatizes a musical competition told through a Greek myth; Trevor Weston's *A New Song* reflects thoughtfully on similar musical values, with meaningful reverberations in our own time.

Bach's drama recounts Ovid's story of the God Pan (bass-baritone, Ian Pomeranz) challenging Phoebus Apollo (bass-baritone, Paul Max Tipton) to a singing contest. Each competitor is supported by an advocate/champion—King Midas (tenor, Patrick Kilbride) supports Pan, but also judges the contest, and Tmolus (tenor, Jacob Perry) supports Phoebus Apollo. The remaining characters, Mercury (alto, Sarah Davis Issaekhouri) and Momus (soprano, Sherezade Panthaki), provide moralizing commentary. Between all speaking characters, we

hear six arias in as many keys, in five different rhythmic formats, and five different instrumental combinations. King Midas declares Pan the winner, much to the shock of all other characters. Pan is scolded and declared a mere boaster, with little or nothing to show for his arrogance. Yet, he has somehow charmed King Midas into choosing him as the victor.

“We selected a dramatic Bach work that is comparatively less performed and recorded than others, but also tells a story that speaks to audiences today,” Artistic Director **Dana Marsh** said. “Trevor Weston’s brilliant, commissioned work, *A New Song*, was the perfect modern complement to Bach’s work, exploring and expanding the tonal canvas offered by period instruments, chorus, and vocal soloists.”

Although focused on similar questions of musical value, Weston’s *A New Song* is not set in a competition format. Soloists instead embody one unified and compassionate voice, dealing with important musical ideals. Commissioned by Washington Bach Consort in 2019 and premiered in September 2022, *A New Song* explores a range of sounds, colors and articulation using period instruments and voices.

“I did not want to write a new Bach cantata, but a work in my own voice reflecting what I have learned from Bach,” **Weston** said. “There are some specific ornaments and musical turns that can be identified as Bach-like. My larger concern was to compose a piece that promotes thought through various musical movements using period instruments.”

Myths Contested allows for important reflection on differing musical genres, past and present.

Trevor Weston

Trevor Weston’s music has been called a “gently syncopated marriage of intellect and feeling.” (*Detroit Free Press*) Weston’s honors include the George Ladd Prix de Paris from the University of California, Berkeley, a Goddard Lieberman Fellowship and the Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and residencies from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the MacDowell Colony and a residency with Castle of our Skins at the Longy School of Music. Weston co-authored with Olly Wilson, chapter 5 in the Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington, “Duke Ellington as a Cultural Icon” published by Cambridge University Press. Weston’s work, *Juba* for Strings won the Sonori/New Orleans Chamber Orchestra Composition Competition.

Weston won the first Emerging Black Composers Project award sponsored by the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the San Francisco Symphony. The resulting work, *Push*, premiered by the San Francisco Symphony under the direction of Esa-Pekka Salonen in Davies Symphony Hall. *Push* was noted for, “Working in terse, delicate strokes, Weston covers a range of references from the African American musical tradition,” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “...an energetic and colorfully orchestrated mini-symphony, is the kind of work that makes you want to hear more of Weston’s music,” according to *San Francisco Classical Voice*. Weston’s *Flying*

Fish, co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall for its 125 Commission Project and the American Composers Orchestra, was described as having, "...episodes of hurtling energy, the music certainly suggested wondrous aquatic feats. I was especially affected, though, by an extended slower, quizzical episode with pensive strings and plaintive chords." (*New York Times*). *Subwaves*, a musical tribute to the NYC Subway, premiered at David Geffen Hall by the Music Advancement Program orchestra and the New York Philharmonic.

Trevor Weston's musical education began at St. Thomas Choir school in NYC at the age of ten. He received his BA from Tufts University and continued his studies at the University of California, Berkeley where he earned his MA and PhD in music composition. His primary composition teachers were T. J. Anderson, Olly Wilson and Andrew Imbrie and Richard Felciano. Dr. Weston is currently a Professor of Music and Chair of the Music Department at Drew University in Madison, NJ and an instructor for the Music Advancement Program and Pre-College at The Juilliard School, NYC.

The Washington Bach Consort

Founded in 1977 by the late Dr. J. Reilly Lewis, the Washington Bach Consort is a professional choral and period-instrument ensemble based in Washington, DC, led since 2018 by Artistic Director, Dr. Dana Marsh, presenting over 25 live concerts each season.

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 ensembles, the ensemble has made regular appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington Performing Arts, and the Cathedral Choral Society. In addition, the group has appeared at numerous festivals and a number of European tours. Recordings include Bach's complete motets, both J.S. and C.P.E. Bach's Magnificats, the first American recording of the masses in F major and G minor, and three solo soprano cantatas with opera luminary Elizabeth Futral. Having completed Bach's entire 215-cantata cycle, the Consort continues to present these works free of cost to the Washington DC public. 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," Marsh has worked variously as an accomplished organist, vocalist, conductor and musicologist. He is Professor of Music and Director of the Historical Performance Institute at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

In May 2019, the Council of the District of Columbia honored the Washington Bach Consort in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Consort's annual series of free classical music performances. In a 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."

Following a performance of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in December 2019, the *Washington Post* opined that the Bach Consort "could go head-to-head with period performance ensembles anywhere." For further information please visit bachconsort.org

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