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**WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT OPENS 46TH SEASON WITH BACH'S
ST. JOHN PASSION**

Sunday, October 1 at 4 p.m. at the National Presbyterian Church

WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT
BACH'S *ST. JOHN PASSION*
Sacrifice and Redemption

					
GENE STENGER EVANGELIST	JONATHON ADAMS CHRISTUS	ENRICO LAGASCA PILATE	ELIJAH McCORMACK SOPRANO	REGINALD MOBLEY COUNTERTENOR	JACOB PERRY JR. TENOR

[Click to download photos of soloists.](#)

WASHINGTON— In their first concert of the 23-24 season, the Washington Bach Consort, under the leadership of Artistic Director Dana Marsh, presents Bach's *St. John Passion* on Sunday, October 1 at 4 p.m. at the National Presbyterian Church (4101 Nebraska Ave NW, Washington, DC 20016). Tenor Gene Stenger narrates the piece as the Evangelist, baritone Jonathon Adams plays the role of Christus, and bass-baritone Enrico Lagasca plays Pilate, with additional soloists soprano Elijah McCormack, countertenor Reginald Mobley, and tenor Jacob Perry Jr. Ticket prices range from \$10-79 and are available for purchase at <https://bachconsort.org/sacrifice-and-redemption/>

“I first sang the St. John Passion as a boy in New York when I was 11,” Marsh said. “Fast forward to time in the UK while doing graduate research, I performed it many times as a countertenor with the Choir of New College. The first time I directed the piece was in 2001 at New College Chapel Oxford—it was the inaugural performance of a group I founded called *Musica Humana Oxford*, with young singers who now have international careers. Extraordinarily, it was a sellout. It’s one of Bach’s most palpably dramatic works and never fails in its effect.”

First performed on Good Friday in 1724, Bach’s St. John Passion is regarded as one of his most intense works, highlighting the extremes of human emotion and experience. The libretto follows the Passion of Jesus as told in St. John’s Gospel, where Jesus was captured, led before Pontius Pilate, judged, crucified and put to death. St. John’s account differs from that of the other three evangelists. Rather than concentrating on Jesus’s suffering, St. John depicts Jesus as a divine and eternal ruler, undertaking the Passion in fulfillment of prophecy. Bach signifies this difference immediately in the opening chorus: Herr, unser *Herrscher, dessen Ruhm in allen Landen herrlich ist* (Lord, our ruler, whose fame in every land is glorious!) Despite Jesus’s established divinity, the St. John Passion still evokes powerful visceral impact, placing listeners at the center of the drama.

Aside from being one of Bach’s most dramatic works, the St. John Passion was also one of his most experimental. Bach refined and released several versions of the piece throughout his lifetime, completing the final version in 1749, one year before his death. The Washington Bach Consort will perform the 1749 version, completely intact.

“The formal design of the work, in contrast to the St. Matthew Passion, aims first for in-the-moment dramatic impact,” Marsh said. “The St. John Passion is most often performed in the spring, following the ecclesiastical calendar, and it’s virtually never performed liturgically. We felt that it could also make for a strong start to the season, with an all-star cast.”

Audiences can join the Washington Bach Consort before the concert at 3 p.m. for “Talking Bach,” a series of free pre-concert lectures by noted Bach scholar, Michael Marissen.

Tamera Luzzatto and The Honorable & Mrs. John D. Rockefeller IV are underwriters for this performance.

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. On October 3, the Acis

label will release the ensemble's album *Myths Contested*, with the music of J.S. Bach, and a world premiere recording of a commissioned work by composer, Trevor Weston.

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 group has made regular appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington Performing Arts, and the Cathedral Choral Society. In addition, the Bach Consort has appeared at numerous festivals and on 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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