

TAFELMUSIK



THE MUSIC OF  
JOSEPH BOLOGNE  
CHEVALIER DE  
SAINT-GEORGES

TAFELMUSIK  
BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

DIRECTED BY  
JEANNE LAMON





# THE MUSIC OF JOSEPH BOLOGNE CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra



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## Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745–1799)

EXCERPTS FROM *L'AMANT  
ANONYME* (1780):

- 1–3** Ouverture (also pub. as Symphony  
in D Major, op. 11, no. 2)
- |          |                |      |
|----------|----------------|------|
| <b>1</b> | Allegro presto | 3:26 |
| <b>2</b> | Andante        | 1:35 |
| <b>3</b> | Presto         | 2:35 |
- 4** Contredanse 2:32
- 5** Ballet no. 1 2:13
- 6** Ballet no. 6 1:38

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D MAJOR,  
OP. 3, NO. 1 (1774)

- |          |                  |       |
|----------|------------------|-------|
| <b>7</b> | Allegro maestoso | 10:56 |
| <b>8</b> | Adagio           | 5:38  |
| <b>9</b> | Rondeau          | 4:16  |

Linda Melsted, violin soloist

SYMPHONY IN G MAJOR  
OP. 11, NO. 1 (1779)

- |           |               |      |
|-----------|---------------|------|
| <b>10</b> | Allegro       | 4:47 |
| <b>11</b> | Andante       | 5:59 |
| <b>12</b> | Allegro assai | 3:20 |

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# Jean-Marie Leclair (1697–1764)

**13** *Allegro*, from Violin Concerto in  
F Major, op. 10, no. 4 (1745) 7:21

Geneviève Gilardeau, violin soloist

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# François-Joseph Gossec (1734–1829)

SYMPHONY IN D MAJOR,  
OP. 5, NO. 3, "PASTORELLA" (c.1761–2)

**14** Adagio lento – Allegro 4:16

**15** Adagio 3:55

**16** Minuetto & Trio 2:35

**17** Allegro 4:39

**Total timing: 72:51**

Violin I: Jeanne Lamon, Thomas Georgi, Geneviève Gilardeau, Linda Melsted, Christopher Verrette  
Violin II: Stephen Marvin, Emily Fowler, Rona Goldensher, Kevin Mallon  
Viola: Elly Winer, Patrick G. Jordan, Ivars Taurins  
Violoncello: Christina Mahler, Allen Whear  
Bass: Alison Mackay  
Flute: Elissa Poole, Alison Melville  
Oboe: John Abberger, Marco Cera  
Bassoon: Dominic Teresi  
Horn: Derek Conrod (Gossec), Ronald George (Saint-Georges), Scott Wevers  
Harpsichord: Charlotte Nediger (Leclair)

Recorded at Humbercrest United Church, Toronto, May 30–June 1, 2002.

Project Manager: Randy Barnard

Recording Producer: Karen Wilson

Recording Engineer: Doug Doctor

Assistant Recording  
Engineer & Mastering: Peter Cook

Digital Editing: Natasha Aziz

## TAFELMUSIK



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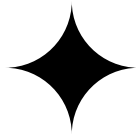
TMK1032CD



FOREWORD

# IN THE SHADOWS OF MOZART NO MORE

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-  
Georges: the 21st-century revival of the  
18th-century trailblazer



BY MARLON DANIEL

Unlike Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, is not a household name, but in the 18th century he was one of the greatest musicians of his day. At this time when Paris, the City of Light, was a cultural capital of Europe, Saint-Georges was a celebrated guest in the many salons of the French aristocracy, including those of the Austrian-born queen of France, Marie Antoinette, who was herself an accomplished musician. He inspired fellow composers of the time — Franz Joseph Haydn, François-Joseph Gossec, Carl Stamitz, and especially Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — making him a leader of his century’s musical development rather than a follower of trends. He has been unfortunately compared to the revered Austrian composer by the pejorative misnomer “Le Mozart Noir” (The Black Mozart), when in fact the comparison could have been reversed.

As a historical figure alone, Saint-Georges’ accomplishments were extraordinary. He was a celebrated colonel in the French military during the Revolution and one of the greatest fencers of the time. U.S. president John Adams declared him “the most accomplished man in Europe.” His many escapades are surmised to have inspired the classic novel *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*) by Alexandre Dumas, whose father Thomas served under Saint-Georges in the Légion franche de cavalerie des Américains et du Midi, notably called the Légion Saint-Georges.

During the Age of Enlightenment, France was home to many great artists and thinkers. Luminaries of this era included Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Among the most prominent musicians was none other than Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges. A remarkable violinist, orchestra leader, and composer, he was at the centre of Parisian musical life in the late 1700s. He was a trailblazer who commissioned and led performances of great works, such as the six Paris Symphonies of Haydn (nos. 82–87).

One can see traces of Saint-Georges and the French style in Mozart’s quartets and violin concertos following the Austrian composer’s visit to Paris in 1778. Mozart was introduced to the *symphonie concertante*, a multi-instrument concerto-symphony hybrid that was very popular in Paris, and a genre of which Saint-Georges was undisputed master. He composed 10 of these that we know about. Saint-Georges’ *Symphonie concertante* in G Major op. 13, no. 2, impressed Mozart, who wrote his *Symphonie concertante* in E-flat for violin and viola, K. 394, a year later. In this most memorable of Mozart’s works, one can find similarities in

## FOREWORD

form and structure, and certain idiomatic passages are emulated. In the third movement, the soloists' climactic and virtuosic final rising passage is almost identical to the final passage in the first movement of Saint-Georges' work. This is a good example of how Saint-Georges' innovative musical style and approach pushed the boundaries of violin technique, expanding the use of the uppermost register and foreshadowing the work of romantic-period violinist-composers such as Niccolò Paganini and Pablo de Sarasate. By shining a light on these contributions, we can challenge the Austro-Hungarian Empire's hold on defining the classical style as it is known today.

We are now gradually recognizing Saint-Georges' influence and impact on 18th-century music, although many of his works — including his operas and clarinet concerto — were lost during the French Revolution and especially during its Reign of Terror. Later, his blackness and the dominance of white supremacy in classical music became an insurmountable barrier to the recognition of his contributions. He and other composers of colour were relegated to "minor" composer status over subsequent centuries.

It was only in the late 20th century that scholars and musicians began to approach Joseph Bologne's life and music with renewed interest. Newly discovered manuscripts and the restoration of both previously published and unpublished works have led to a resurgence in the scholarship and popularity of the composer. He is now rightfully regarded as one of the foremost virtuoso violinists of his day, as well as an innovative and influential composer.

Notably, Tafelmusik, under the direction of former music director Jeanne Lamon, took part in one of the earliest efforts to recognize Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges' vast contributions to classical music. In 2003, the first and only documentary film on the composer to date was released, a collaboration between Media Headquarters, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and Tafelmusik. This groundbreaking documentary and its associated audio recording sparked a further wave of interest in the composer, engaging many new audiences with his life and works. They also helped debunk the myth that composers of colour were non-existent in the realm of classical music before the 20th century. ♦



### ABOUT MARLON DANIEL

Marlon Daniel is a noted conductor, pianist, and educator. He is the foremost exponent on the life and music of Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and a champion of works by composers of African descent. He is the Artistic and Music Director of the Festival International de Musique Saint-Georges and has given numerous lectures on the composer in Europe, North America, and the Caribbean, as well as at institutions that include Columbia and Yale Universities.

# JOSEPH BOLOGNE CHEVALIER DE SAINT- GEORGES



“Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, was widely regarded as the most accomplished man of his age. Not only was he among the most important musicians in Paris during the pre-revolutionary period, but he was also a superb all-round athlete and man of arms.

Among connoisseurs of the art of fencing, Saint-Georges was considered the finest swordsman in Europe, possessed of extraordinary speed, flexibility and grace, qualities which he also exhibited in abundance as a violinist. The combination of artist, athlete and man of action — for he also held military commands during the revolutionary period — is unique in the history of music and the man himself scarcely less extraordinary than the phenomenal range of his talents.”

—ALLAN BADLEY, SAINT-GEORGES BIOGRAPHY, ARTARIA.COM

BY CHARLOTTE NEDIGER

JOSEPH BOLOGNE,  
CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES

Details of the birth of Joseph Bologne Saint-Georges are sketchy, but it is likely that he was born in 1745. His father, George de Bologne, a former Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber, was a wealthy plantation owner in the commune of Baillif in the Basse-Terre region of Guadeloupe. His mother, Nanon, was one of the enslaved people on the plantation and believed to be of Senegalese descent. In 1753, the Bologne family left for France, settling in Paris. The domestic situation of George Bologne de Saint-Georges was unconventional: accompanying him to France was his legal wife Elizabeth, his mistress Nanon, and his illegitimate son Joseph; a legitimate daughter was already in Paris. Later, Joseph was given the family name, and George went out of his way to ensure that his son received the best possible education.

George's interest in his son's education was undoubtedly encouraged by Joseph's extraordinary natural abilities. He spent six years at Nicolas Texier de la Boëssière's Académie royale polytechnique des armes et de l'équitation (fencing and horsemanship), receiving a strong academic and physical education. Joseph's teachers were astounded by his facility for learning: in addition to his prodigious talent as a fencer, the young Joseph excelled in riding, skating, swimming, running, target shooting, and dancing. He became a member of the Gendarmes de la garde du roi and seemed destined for a military career.

Although his musical talents were obviously as noteworthy as his many other gifts, no account of his musical education has survived. His father was a notable patron of music and received dedications from a number of composers, among them the violinists Antonio Lolli and Carl Stamitz, who might have been among Joseph's teachers. The dedication of Stamitz's *Orchestral Quartets* op. 1 thanks George Bologne for "his invaluable gift in the person of his son." Other teachers might have included the violinist Jean-Marie Leclair and the composer François-Joseph Gossec.

The master swordsman Henry Angelo wrote that "Saint-Georges combined in his person his mother's grace and good looks and his father's vigour and assurance." Tall, handsome, and gifted, Joseph was a fashionable and welcome guest in many salons, where his musical talent and magnetic charisma shone.

# “Saint-Georges’ success as a violinist, director, and composer of instrumental music was unquestioned.”

In 1769, concert life in Paris was remarkably rich. There were regular concerts in the homes of the musically inclined members of the aristocracy, in addition to several successful concert series, notably the highly successful *Concert spirituel*, and Gossec's newly established *Concert des amateurs*, where Saint-Georges undertook his first professional engagement as an orchestral violinist. Both of these organizations boasted large and highly skilled orchestras, and Gossec's series in particular featured newly composed music. Saint-Georges made his solo debut with the *Concert des amateurs* in 1772, performing his two *Violin Concertos* op. 2. When Gossec left a year later to take over direction of the *Concert spirituel*, he handed over the direction of the *Concert des amateurs* to Saint-Georges. It was among the finest orchestras in Europe, with some 75 players, and it thrived under Saint-Georges' direction until he disbanded it in 1781. He immediately replaced it with the *Concert de la loge olympique*, founded under the auspices of the *Société olympique*, a masonic lodge. It was essentially a reincarnation of his former orchestra, sponsored by the comte d'Origny and with the support of the duc d'Orléans. Its reputation continued to increase, and the orchestra moved from its premises at the duke's Palais Royal to the prestigious *Salle des gardes* in the Tuileries. It was for this orchestra that the comte d'Origny commissioned Haydn's *Paris Symphonies*, with Saint-Georges as intermediary. Saint-Georges directed their triumphant premieres in 1787.

JOSEPH BOLOGNE,  
CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES

Saint-Georges' success as a violinist, director, and composer of instrumental music was unquestioned. This led to the publication of numerous violin concertos, symphonies concertantes, quartets, and sonatas. From the mid-1770s, Saint-Georges devoted increasing time to the composition of opera, despite an early rejection at the Académie royale de musique (known today as the Paris Opera). He had been proposed as music director of the Académie in 1775, but his nomination was withdrawn after the submission of a petition to Queen Marie Antoinette signed by three of the leading ladies of the company, stating that "their honour and the delicate nature of their conscience made it impossible for them to be subjected to the orders of a mulatto" (as recounted by Baron von Grimm in his *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*). This overt discrimination may well have discouraged Saint-Georges, but it did not dampen his enthusiasm for opera, and he devoted considerable energy between 1777 and 1790 to composing and producing seven comic operas, with varied success. The only complete opera score to survive is *L'amant anonyme*, produced in 1780.



The last decade of Saint-Georges' life was dominated by the French Revolution, his musical career all but abandoned. He had continued throughout the years to use his prowess as a swordsman and athlete to replenish his oft-ailing fortunes. In England, he was probably better known as a fencer than as a musician and successfully mounted exhibition matches: his only extant portrait, with sword in hand and violin relegated to the background, was done in England and copies sold by the thousands. When, in 1789, the Revolution proclaimed the equality of all men, Saint-Georges was among the first to join the National Guard. A few years later, he was named colonel of the Légion franche de cavalerie des Américains et du Midi, a thousand-strong troop of Black soldiers commonly referred to as the Légion Saint-Georges. It attracted volunteers from all over the country, including Thomas Alexandre Dumas, the father of author Alexandre Dumas. Dumas the younger would presumably have learned about the fencing prowess of Le Chevalier from his father, and it is likely that Saint-Georges was the inspiration for the character d'Artagnan in *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*).

During the Reign of Terror (1793–1794), Saint-Georges spent 18 months in prison. His close friend and fellow activist Philippe Égalité, the young duc d'Orléans, met his end at the guillotine. An attempt by Saint-Georges to rejoin the army was unsuccessful. The end of his life was rather scattered and included a visit in 1795 to Saint-Domingue, where he witnessed a bitter civil war between Revolutionary forces and those wishing to restore slavery. Disillusioned, in 1797 he returned to France and to music, founding a new orchestra, the Cercle de l'harmonie, at the former residence of the Orléans family. Saint-Georges died of a bladder infection in 1799 at the age of 53. He was legendary in his time, as attested by the U.S. president John Adams, who referred to him as "the most accomplished man in Europe."

This recording includes a selection of the orchestral works of the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, as well as the works of two of his mentors, Leclair and Gossec. Both of Saint-Georges' two extant symphonies are included; he used the second of these as the overture to his opera *L'amant anonyme*, and we have appended a few dances from the opera. Saint-Georges' strongest compositions are those in which his bow guided the pen. In the Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 3, no. 1, one has the sense that it is Saint-Georges' remarkable skill as a player that inspires the work, from the virtuosity of the first movement, to the lyricism of the second movement, to the playfulness of the final Rondeau.

Whether Saint-Georges undertook formal study with Jean-Marie Leclair is not known, but Leclair's influence on French violinists continued to be strong to the end of the 18th century. He was renowned for both the brilliance of his technique and the sweetness of his tone.

The prolific composer and conductor François-Joseph Gossec outlived his protégé Joseph Bologne by 30 years. His encouragement and public support of the young Saint-Georges was pivotal in ensuring the latter's successful entrance into Parisian musical society. Gossec was a remarkable entrepreneur, and eventually became the musical spokesman of the Revolutionary movement, and his influence on Saint-Georges in these arenas undoubtedly continued long after their musical partnership ended. ◆



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## Cover Artwork

*Opus 7*, oil  
Gordon Shadrach, 2021

Gordon Shadrach has had a lifelong fascination with the semiotics of clothing and its impact on culture. In particular, his interest lies in the intersection and codification of race and fashion. These codes impact the way we navigate through spaces and influence how people associate with one another. Shadrach's portraits of Black men utilize fashion — contemporary or historical dress — to create narratives that pull viewers in to explore the biases embedded in North American culture. Shadrach seeks to disrupt the colonial constrictions of portraiture by inviting viewers to reflect upon the depiction of Black people in art and culture. Shadrach is a graduate of OCAD.

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## About Tafelmusik

Led by Music Director Elisa Citterio and Executive Director Carol Kehoe, Tafelmusik is an orchestra, choir, and experience that celebrates beauty through music of the past.

Founded over 40 years ago on the pillars of passion, learning, and artistic excellence, Tafelmusik continues to bring new energy to baroque music and beyond. Historically informed performances of 17th- to 19th-century instrumental and choral music (led by Chamber Choir Director Ivars Taurins) share the stage with vibrant, insightful multimedia programs, and bold new music written just for the group. Each piece is played on period instruments, underscored and illuminated by scholarship.

Through dynamic performances, international touring, award-winning recordings, and comprehensive education programs, Tafelmusik invites audiences to engage with beauty and experience the breadth of emotion music can inspire.

[tafelmusik.org](https://www.tafelmusik.org)

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