

# *Saint-Georges, Caribbean Contradances, and the French School of Violin*

 alternative francophone  
pour une francophonie en mode mineur

<https://doi.org/10.29173/af29563>



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**Abstract:** *From a violin history perspective, our understanding of Saint-Georges' career is unfortunately limited by incomplete and scattered information. In this article, I explore three main questions related to Saint-Georges, two of which are hypothetical. First, I question whether a Rondeau by Saint-Georges could be connected to contemporary Caribbean contradance music. Second, I consider whether Saint-Georges' prolonged absence from the repertoire can be attributed to his relative position within the French Violin School. Finally, after noticing similar-sounding passages in Saint-George's symphonies concertantes from 1778-1779 and Mozart's Sinfonia concertante in E-flat (K. 364) of 1779, I wonder whether Mozart drew inspiration from Saint-Georges' music—and, if so, how he could have adapted it for his own purposes.*

**Keywords:** *Joseph Bologne de Saint-Georges; musical life in Paris (1760-1800); French Violin School; symphonie concertante; Caribbean music*

**Résumé :** *Du point de vue de l'histoire du violon, notre compréhension de la carrière et de l'impact de Saint-Georges est limitée par des informations souvent incomplètes et disparates. Dans cet article, j'aborde trois questions liées à Saint-Georges, dont deux sont hypothétiques. Tout d'abord, je me demande si un Rondeau de Saint-Georges pourrait être dérivé de la musique de contredanse caribéenne de son époque. Deuxièmement, j'interroge sur les causes possibles de la longue absence de Saint-Georges dans le répertoire, en particulier sur sa position au sein de l'École française de violon. Enfin, après avoir remarqué des passages similaires dans les symphonies concertantes de Saint-Georges de 1778-1779 et dans la Sinfonia concertante en mi bémol (K. 364) de Mozart de 1779, je me demande si Mozart s'inspira de la musique de Saint-Georges – et, si c'était le cas, comment l'a-t-il modifiée ?*

*Mots-clés* : Joseph Bologne de Saint-Georges; vie musicale à Paris (1760-1800); école française de violon; symphonie concertante; musique des Caraïbes

To some listeners, the final Rondeau of Saint-Georges’ *Symphonie concertante*, op. 13, no. 1 (1778) will evoke a Caribbean dance (Figure 1ab).

Figure 1ab. 1a: Bologne de Saint-Georges, *Symphonie concertante*, op. 13, no. 1, Rondeau (IMSLP), excerpt; 1b: excerpt of the same, in score format (IMSLP).

While preparing a performance of this piece for the conference “Artists of the Caribbean Diaspora,” I wondered what kind of dance might have inspired this movement.<sup>1</sup> On a more technical level, I also noticed unusual variation in the notated articulation (e.g., Figure 1b, solo violin versus violin 2; viola versus cello). However, most importantly, I became curious about why this Haydn-like music could evoke Caribbean music so powerfully from the start.

Musicologist Lionel de La Laurencie suggested that Saint-Georges’ rondeaux were probably modelled after Bertheaume and Paisible, students of Gaviniès (La Laurencie 493). While Saint-Georges shares many traits with his contemporaries, La Laurencie also recognized an essential difference, noting that “[...] Les concertos de Saint-Georges se recommandent par une thématique gracieuse, avec une pointe de langueur, toute créole, et de sentimentalité mélancolique.” (La Laurencie 493). The violinist-historian Gabriel Banat also hinted at a Creole character when hearing a string quartet melody by Saint-Georges; it featured the interval of an augmented second, an interval rare in his music and also unusual in Creole music (Chevalier 131). Of Saint-Georges’ melodic style, La Laurencie highlighted the influence of Gluck, who was active in Paris in the 1770s, and of Saint-Georges’ Parisian colleagues: “Comme la plupart des musiciens de son temps, il marque une forte prédisposition à multiplier les modulations chromatiques qui jettent dans la trame mélodique des touches langoureuses, mélancoliques. Sur ce point, il suit l’exemple

<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge Jean-Marc Bétrix’s significant involvement in the conference performance component and the initial exploration of topics for this chapter.

de Gaviniès et de Simon Le Duc.” (497). While the music in Figure 1 is in major and shows no chromaticism, it can certainly inspire words such as ‘gracious’, ‘languorous’, and even ‘melancholic’. The history and music of Joseph Bologne, also known as Chevalier de Saint-Georges, have attracted significant attention in recent years. Although much of the instrumental music from the later years of the *ancien régime* faded away with the Revolution, references to the legendary Saint-Georges continued to appear in various publications, music encyclopedias, and history books over time. In 1919, La Laurencie and Frederick Martens published an article about Saint-Georges in the *Musical Quarterly*, and La Laurencie followed in 1923 with a more detailed chapter in his comprehensive monograph on the French Violin School. Since then, more biographical studies have been published (notably, Banat, 2006, which offered a broader historical context). In 2024, a century after La Laurencie, historian David Leeson published a study challenging claims made about Saint-Georges that circulated in both academic circles and popular media, notably in the full-length film, “Chevalier” (dir. Stephen Williams, 2022). Leeson’s critical approach, informed by erasure studies, is likely to influence future research on Saint-Georges—particularly regarding issues of racism and colonialism, individual merit and agency, and the politics of art, music, and sports.

The resurgence of Saint-Georges’ music in performance has become a priority for various specialist groups, such as Toronto’s Tafelmusik (video documentary, 2003), as well as for several renowned soloists (e.g., Kantorow in 1974, Barton Pine in 1997, and more recently, Hadelich and Mutter). Although at times more technically daring in the concertos, Saint-Georges’ violin playing reflects the style of his era: a sensitive technique making the most of the pre-Tourte bows and thinner strings. His meticulously engraved works were sold alongside those of his notable Parisian contemporaries, including Gaviniès, Capron, Le Duc, Vachon, Davaux, Guénin, Cambini, as well as those of visiting virtuosi Lolli (his teacher) and Jarnović (a close associate, also known as Giornovich). Among Parisian violinists were a few of Tartini’s students, along with other leading violinists who occasionally visited from the courts and theatres of London, Mannheim, Vienna, Turin, and other centres.

Violin historian Victor Chapin placed Saint-Georges in the “interim period” between Leclair and Viotti. These two prominent violinists, active in Paris, studied in Turin: the first with Somis, a pupil of Corelli; the second with Pugnani, a student of Somis. They became regarded as the leading figures of the so-called ‘French School of Violin’. Between Leclair and Viotti, Chapin noted that Gaviniès was “the most successful violinist” of that era. As for Saint-Georges, Chapin writes that he “had a reputation for eccentricity and, while a sound performer and composer, probably anticipated Paganini by appealing to the public as a curiosity or exotic.” (Chapin 76). Similarly, musicologist and lexicographer Nicholas Slonimsky added that Saint-Georges “acquired notoriety by eccentric behaviour at concerts,” though he provided no specific examples (Slonimsky 1399). The mention of Paganini brings to mind Saint-Georges’ later violin teacher, Antonio Lolli, whom musicologist Eduard Hanslick described as: “[...] the forerunner and prototype of Paganini and the spiritual father among violinists of the dazzling charlatanry of virtuosity; one can also date appropriately the travelling virtuoso par excellence from Lolli...” (Mell 464). However, Chapin never mentioned Lolli; instead, he introduced the little-known French violinist Monsieur de Tremais, who is usually associated with the school of the Padua-based Tartini, describing him as “an advanced technician who worked up to the twelfth position and specialized in scordatura and multiple stops.” (Chapin 76).

Scordatura, the practice of tuning a violin differently, was occasionally used by Tartini (e.g., his Sonata “Pastorale” for solo violin) and by Nardini, his pupil (e.g., his “Sonate Enigmatiche”). Lolli, who shared a desk with Nardini in the Stuttgart court orchestra, made scordatura a signature element of his touring

performances, which apparently polarized violinists and audiences. Playing “à cordes ravallées” (i.e., lowered strings) or “à la manière de Lolli” became fashionable for a time in Paris and met with Gaviniès’ strong objections. As for Saint-Georges, who took lessons with Lolli, his scores show no evidence of scordatura.

Although “eccentricity” strongly aligns with many descriptions of Lolli as a musician and personality, it only partially applies to what we can infer about Saint-Georges the performer, who seemingly built a reputation for excellence as leader of the Concert des Amateurs in Paris. In this regard, the “eccentricity” in Saint-Georges’s case may have referred to an ‘exotic’ element – specifically, a Creole character – recognizable in his music. (The duel-like opening scene of the recent film “Chevalier,” where Saint-Georges is shown engaging with Mozart on stage and improvising in a style that seems to borrow from a distant future, seems to exploit these “eccentric” and “exotic” characterizations).

Saint-Georges, the “célèbre” fiddler, fencer, soldier (and spy?), will undoubtedly remain a subject of speculation due to limited verifiable historical details. In the following pages, I will explore three main questions, two of which are hypothetical. First, could there be a direct link between Saint-Georges’ music and Caribbean dance music? Second, what combination of factors might explain Saint-Georges’ prolonged absence from the repertoire? Finally, considering Mozart: if Mozart had borrowed music from Saint-Georges’ for his Sinfonia concertante, how might he have transformed it? Although these questions may not yield definitive answers, they will allow us to review relevant literature and hopefully foster discussion and further research.

## CAN WE FIND CARIBBEAN ROOTS IN SAINT-GEORGES’ MUSIC?

In the scores of Saint-Georges, the eye is often drawn to details of musical notation, such as slurs and wedges (Figure 2). In the opening melody of the Rondeau from his *Symphonie concertante* op. 13, no. 1, a disciplined approach to notation is evident.

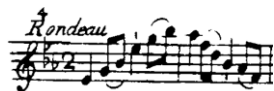


Figure 2: excerpt from the first theme of *Symphonie Concertante* op. 13, no. 1, Rondeau.

Notes with wedges are generally interpreted within their context (Tarling 17). They are typically shorter than the “staccato” dot (i.e., staccatissimo), separated from the slurs by a lift of the bow or even accented with a quicker movement for a humorous effect (Tarling 3). In his 1752 treatise, Quantz observed: “If a little stroke stands above only one note, after which several of lesser value follow, it indicates not only that the note must be played half as long, but also that it should be accented with a pressure of the bow.” (Tarling 17). This description resembles that of the *piqué* bow stroke, described by La Laurencie: the bow strikes and rebounds from the string, a technique apparently common among Mannheim composers (La Laurencie 499). Since the rondeaux of symphonie concertantes are typically played at a moderate tempo, it is unlikely these wedges called for the heavier, *sforzando*-like accentuation expected in slow movements. In a dance-like movement, wedges seem intended to help set the dance in motion (i.e., the lilt, the upbeat).

However, examining Saint-Georges' notation from the score's perspective (Figure 1b), one notices a variety of articulations across the engraved parts. Why are there different bowings and wedges for similar parts? On one hand, shorter notes in the bass instruments of an ensemble should not be surprising, as they often reflect resonance times in reverberant halls. On the other hand, the heterogeneity seen in Figure 1b, if intentional, is unusual; it suggests a degree of heterophony, perhaps to evoke a different culture.

What kind of dance would this rondeau suggest or imitate? According to music theorist David Neumeier (*The Contredanse*, Classical, 2006), the final rondo movements in the classical period often adopt the style of a dance, particularly a menuet (or minuet, in 3/4 time) or a contredanse (a term derived from 'country dance', in 2/4 or 2/2).<sup>2</sup> Contredanses (or, more generally, contradances, in various spellings) were quite popular; musicologist Georges Cucuël described how they gradually replaced the menuet during the 18th century.<sup>3</sup>

[...] la contredanse, d'origine anglaise et populaire, qui commençait à faire fureur en 1750, mais qui connut sa plus grande vogue sous Louis XVI et la Révolution, jusqu'au moment où l'assemblage de plusieurs contredanses donna naissance au quadrille. Entre 1740 et 1750 on a assisté à une production intense de contredanses dont les titres reflètent l'actualité de la façon la plus curieuse ; [...] Mais parmi tant de personnages illustres, voire même amis de La Pouplinière, qui ont donné leur nom à des contredanses, nous n'avons pas rencontré le fermier général ; on s'attendrait pourtant à le trouver en compagnie du prince de Carignan, de la princesse de Conti, de la duchesse de Condé, de Mlles Camargo, Salé, Vestris, Chevalier, Colombe. Un volume de contredanses publié chez Bouin et Castagnery renfermait les Soirées de Passy à côté des Plaisirs de l'Isle-Adam et il se pourrait bien qu'il y eût là quelque allusion aux fêtes de La Pouplinière. (396-397)

Advertised alongside symphonies, concertos, and symphonies concertantes (Figure 3), collections of menuets and contredanses were used by musicians, dancers, and – we should assume – composers.<sup>4</sup>

RECUEILS de Menuets.	
Recueil 1 <sup>er</sup> . . . . .	1 #
Recueil 2 . . . . .	1 #
Recueil 3 . . . . .	1 #
Recueil 4 . . . . .	1 #
Recueil 5 . . . . .	1 #
RECUEILS de Contredanses.	
Recueil 1 <sup>er</sup> . . . . .	1 #
Recueil 2 . . . . .	1 #
Recueil 3 . . . . .	1 #

Figure 3: Advertisement for Recueils de Menuets and Recueils de Contredanses, from the advertising page (ed. Bailleux) attached to Saint-Georges' Violin Concertos op. 5 (IMSLP).

<sup>2</sup> The middle movements of a classical four-movement symphony or string quartet are typically a song-like piece and a minuet or minuet-like piece. The first movement is a sonata form, and the last is usually a rondo.

<sup>3</sup> "Pour le menuet, il n'y a plus de bal où on en danse. La mode en reviendra peut-être un jour, mais actuellement elle est entièrement passée, on ne danse que des contredanses et il n'y a presque plus personne, ni en hommes ni en femmes, qui dansent un peu honnêtement le menuet." (Cucuël 394),

<sup>4</sup> Mozart composed five contradances, K. 609, in 1787 or 1791, recycling older ideas in a simpler mould. Beethoven also composed 12 contradances for orchestra, WoO 14, between 1791 and 1802.

Such collections, or “recueils,” could include contra dances from various countries, sometimes accompanied by verbal instructions and drawings illustrating the steps and body movements. In a ball setting, contradances were arranged in sequences as “quadrilles” or “cotillons.” Contradances were also danced in the colonies. Therefore, it is plausible that Saint-Georges first encountered them during his early years in the Caribbean. Renowned as a social dancer and entertainer, he must have been familiar with a repertoire of contra dances (he notably included a contra dance in the second act of his opera, *L’amant anonyme*).<sup>5</sup>

Recent studies on Caribbean quadrilles (“kadrils” in La Guadeloupe) showcase examples of 18th-century contradances from the former colonies. Comparing some of these sources with Saint-Georges’ music, we sometimes find similar melodic and rhythmic patterns.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the intriguing initial motive of cascading thirds in Saint-Georges’ *Symphonie concertante* op. 9, no. 2 (Figure 4a) appears to be transposed a fourth down from the Caribbean melody, “Johnny O, come, my Name so” (Figure 4b).<sup>7</sup>

The image contains two musical excerpts labeled 'a' and 'b'. Excerpt 'a' is a multi-staff score for a 'Rondeau' in G major, 2/4 time, from Saint-Georges' *Symphonie concertante*, op. 9, no. 2. It features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Excerpt 'b' is a single-staff melody in G major, 2/4 time, titled 'Johnny O, come, my Name so'. It features a simpler, more melodic line with a repeating rising-falling motif (D-F#-B).

Figure 4ab. 4a: Saint-Georges, *Symphonie concertante*, op. 9, no. 2, Rondeau (9) (IMSLP); 4b: “Johnny O’, come, my Name so” (from C. E. Long Papers, British Library).

In the same example, the repeating rising-falling motif D-F#-B (found in the 3rd bar of Figure 4b) appears as C#-E-A in both excerpts (concluding the 16-bar section in Figure 4a, at the 11th and 15th bars in Figure 4b).

According to Neumeyer, contradances are based on ‘quadratic’ units of music (18), meaning multiples of four bars (such as 8, 12, or 16 bars). Quoting Caplin, Neumeyer explained that a “looser” phrase structure indicates that the music is meant for listening rather than dancing; extensions and deviations might otherwise cause problems for dancers. Saint-George seems to have enjoyed creating varied phrase structures. In the Rondeau theme of op. 13 no. 1 (Figure 9a), for example, the first half features a 4+4 structure, repeated with a variation (such as 4+5+2 or 4+3+4, an ‘expansion’ of the dominant). The second half, introduced by one measure of repeated eighth notes (Figure 9b), begins with an ascending 3-note motive in half notes answered by the solo violin, developing into a 4+4 structure. The following passage in parallel sixths, however, is set as 4+2 (a codetta), followed by 4+1+4 (a shortened codetta and

<sup>5</sup> Saint-Georges apparently injured his Achilles’ heel while dancing, and this impacted his legendary speed when fencing.

<sup>6</sup> For more research on quadrilles and music in the Caribbean, see Yvonne Daniel (“A Critical Analysis”)

<sup>7</sup> Musical examples found at <https://ecda.northeastern.edu/jamaican-music-exhibit-leigh/tunes-in-general-use/air-i-johnny-o-come-my-name-so/>.

coda). Neumeier discussed how these types of hypermetric deviations were expected in contradance-style finales by Haydn in the 1770s. Saint-Georges undoubtedly would have been familiar with Haydn's works.

Figure 9ab. 9a: Rondeau theme, from Saint-Georges, *Symphonie concertante*, op. 13, no. 1, II; 9b: excerpt of the same (in score format), transition, mm. 18-20.

To maintain the dance's momentum, upbeats are often emphasized, sometimes marked with grace notes (e.g., middle of the third line of Figure 4a, reproduced below as Figure 5).

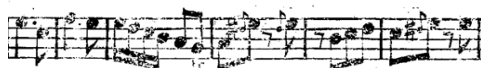


Figure 5: excerpt from Saint-Georges, *Symphonie concertante*, op. 9, no. 2, Rondeau.

A striking sequence of upbeat figures stands out at the end of the first statement of the Rondeau of op. 13, no. 1 (Figure 6). It features a descending scale in parallel sixths (upper strings), initially lacking a third to complete the harmonies (m. 34-35), then three chords in second inversions (m. 36-37) – the fourth chord is missing an implied B flat – a first inversion. (Notice the presence of wedges in the viola and dots in the cellos, and their absence in the violins.)

Figure 6: excerpt from Saint-Georges, *Symphonie concertante*, op. 13, no. 1, Rondeau, mm. 32-37.

Two-by-two melodic movements, as seen in the opening tones of this 'calemba' from the Caribbean collection (Figure 7), also suggest an upbeat emphasis; a sixteenth-note motif decorates each bar (Figure 7, above).



Figure 7: *Calemba* (from C.E. Long papers, British Library).

Sixteenth notes are often arranged in descending four-note scales, as seen in the following “Air III,” (Figure 8), a song “used as a country dance.” These figures typically precede a longer ‘stopping’ note (or ‘repos’).<sup>8</sup>



Figure 8: Air III, in C.E. Long Papers, British Library.

If upbeats are subtly emphasized in these dances, it follows that a contradance-styled rondeau would adopt a similar approach. Performers might slightly shorten and lengthen certain notes to create the desired lilt and character.<sup>9</sup>

If Saint-Georges aimed to evoke the character of a Caribbean contradance or even quoted segments from genuine Caribbean contradances, one might ask why. A more challenging question then arises: could his intention have been simply to entertain and amuse his audience? While the piece is charming and in a major key, deeper layers of meaning might have been perceived, as Yvonne Daniel explained in her study of Caribbean quadrilles.

When African [dance] performance was outlawed by local prohibitions and the *Code Noir*, in effect the dances of Europeans became “preferenced” entertainment and Europeans associated it with prestigious social status, lingering from French court culture (Moreau de Saint-Méry [1789] 1803, 37–38; Emery 1988, 21, 23). African-descended performers imitated, parodied, or ridiculed European dance style and performance, sometimes for their own pleasure and sometimes as entertainment for those colonists who found the display amusing. Thereafter, African descendants taught the dance practices to younger generations, appropriating a revered symbol of their oppressors by means of a physical assertion or a finessed affront. Recent publications on Martinican quadrilles have established that contredanse-derived performance by both Europeans and African descendants became a dialogue between Europeans, Africans,

<sup>8</sup> Another collection of contradances can be found at [https://imslp.org/images/0/04/PMLP438562-Clarchies\\_Recueil\\_des\\_Contre-danses\\_et\\_Walzes\\_12.pdf](https://imslp.org/images/0/04/PMLP438562-Clarchies_Recueil_des_Contre-danses_et_Walzes_12.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Interesting examples of “kwadril” music with fiddle can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiqQYkXbx8Q> (“The Folk Was In Me: A Film on the Kwadril Culture of St Lucia”) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8ffm0ykwwM>.

and their descendants (Cyrille 2006). In the performed dialogue, both groups understood that dance performance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries meant eligibility for elite, educated, or recognized social standing. When Africans performed in the European style and were able to display knowledge of the intricacies within spatial configurations, elaborated dance steps, and abundant choreographic sequences, their bodies danced a public affront, a kind of “danced blasphemy” against enslaved status in colonial society. [...] dance by African-descended performers was often a form of resistance [...]. Other analyses have uncovered particular cultural values behind the longevity and pervasiveness of contredanse-derived dancing throughout the Caribbean region, values concerning identity, ancestor reverence, and the colonial experience. (Daniel, “An Ethnographic” 225-226)

Could Saint-Georges have evoked the character of a Caribbean contradance to provoke his audience? This seems unlikely; his talents in dancing and inspiring others to dance were crucial to his ongoing success in society.<sup>10</sup> However, unlikely does not mean impossible. The same question arises about the discrepancies in the notation of articulations and bowings, which one might initially interpret as a copyist’s oversight. The ‘eccentric’ notation may have been part of a deliberate approach to inspire a ‘world of difference’, without resorting to giving the piece some ‘othering’ label (such as ‘Rondeau Créole’). On that note, the duelling scene opening the movie ‘Chevalier’ features Mozart’s 5<sup>th</sup> violin concerto, K. 219 (1775), the last movement of which is a Rondeau featuring a minuet and a vividly contrasting “Alla Turca” middle section (however, not labelled as such). The words “Alla Turca” are found in the title of the Rondo of K. 311 (1785), while the first edition of Haydn’s Piano Trio op. 73/82 no. 2, known as “Gypsy Rondo”, includes ‘in the Gypsies stile’ (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Haydn, Piano Trio, op. 73/82, no. 2, III. Rondo “in the Gypsies stile”, first edition, 14

From confusion to acceptance, from alienation to ingenuity – Saint-Georges may have cleverly utilized the shared, ambiguous spaces of the contredanse and musical notation to create an original, meaningful work inspired by the distant culture within him. This hypothetical case resembles that of the violinist-composer Ivan Khandoshkin, an almost exact contemporary of Saint-George, who served at the court of Catherine the Great in Saint Petersburg (coincidentally, Khandoshkin was a colleague and rival of Antonio Lolli from 1774). A folk music enthusiast, Khandoshkin composed numerous variations on Russian and Ukrainian folk tunes, a pioneering practice that Catherine and General Potemkin strongly supported (Lolli and Jarnović also contributed). Khandoshkin is widely recognized as the founder of the Russian violin School. His family hailed from Ukraine, a disputed territory then exploited as a colony. On a related note, Tartini was known to have enjoyed listening to street musicians and encouraged others to do the same.

## SAINT-GEORGES AND THE FRENCH VIOLIN SCHOOL

<sup>10</sup> See also “le partage du sensible” by J. Rancière. See also descriptions of the “beau” in *When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities Across Borders*, edited by Jennifer Fisher, Anthony Shay.

From the perspective of violin history, Saint-Georges is part of the French Violin School that predates Viotti. However, his direct lineage and influences as a violinist remain uncertain. Although Chapin and Fétis claimed that Leclair *l'aîné* was Saint-Georges' violin teacher, there is no evidence to support this assertion (Accajou fn 7).<sup>11</sup> Banat suggested Gaviniès as a potential early teacher, but then again, why would this information remain unconfirmed? (Would Gaviniès have imposed silence on his student after learning that the visiting virtuoso Antonio Lolli was teaching him?) Without additional clues, the credit for Saint-George's core musical education goes to François Gossec (1734–1829), who worked closely with Rameau at the home of Le Riche de la Pouplinière. Gossec likely taught Saint-Georges both violin and keyboard, and may have introduced him to other in-house violinists, like the visiting Johann Stamitz from Mannheim (Saint-Georges apparently befriended Stamitz's son, Carl).

Saint-Georges was initially considered an “amateur” supported by his wealthy father, who owned plantations in the Caribbean and held a title connected to the King's Chamber (Banat, *The Chevalier* 495).<sup>12</sup> He graduated as a Gendarme de la Garde du Roi in Paris after completing the required training. As the son of a slave, he could not inherit his father's estate in 1774 (at age 29). However, by that time, Saint-Georges had gained recognition as a violinist and composer. He was appointed conductor of “Le Concert des Amateurs” by Gossec, who had agreed to lead the Concert Spirituel alongside Gaviniès and Le Duc.<sup>13</sup> He published most of his instrumental works in his late twenties and early thirties (Figure 11).

<i>With opus number</i>	<i>Without opus number</i>
1770-1771: opus 1, 6 quatuors	c. 1770: 3 sonates p-vn (publ. Leduc, 1781)
1773-1777: opus 2, 2 concertos, in G and D	1777: 6 quartettos concertans “aux goûts du jour” (publ. Durieu, 1779)
1774: opus 3, 2 concertos, in D and C	1777: <i>Ernestine</i> , opéra-comique en 3 actes, libr. P. Choderlos de Laclos, rev. By Desfontaines (fragments)
1774: opus 4, 2 concertos in D	1778: <i>La chasse</i> , comédie en 3 actes et en prose, mûlée d'ariettes, libr. Desfontaines (fragments)
c. 1775: opus 5, 2 concertos, in C and A	1780: <i>L'amant anonyme</i> , comédie mûlée de ballets, en 2 actes, libr. after Mme de Genlis
1775: opus 6, 2 symphonies concertantes, in C and B flat	1782: concerto for bassoon (premiered at <i>Le Concert Spirituel</i> )
1777: opus 7, 2 concertos, in A and B flat	
1776: opus 8, 2 concertos, in D and G	
1777: opus 9, 2 symphonies concertantes, in C and A	
1777: opus 11, concerto	

<sup>11</sup> One of Leclair's prominent students, Barnabé de Saint-Sevin (dit L'Abbé le fils), published a violin treatise in 1761, *Les Principes du Violon* (Saint-Georges was then 16 years old). Michel Corrette had also published an interesting violin method, *L'École d'Orphée*, in 1738.

<sup>12</sup> Lolli wrote to Saint-Georges père, *en dédicace*: “Ses succes brillians et universels sont l'Ouvrage de vos soins.”

<sup>13</sup> Le Concert des Amateurs is surprisingly not treated in the Oxford Music Online database. According to Leeson, Saint-Georges' music was performed nine times at Le Concert Spirituel (248).

1777: opus 12, 2 symphonies concertantes, in D and G	<i>Lost works</i>
1778: opus 13, 2 symphonies concertantes, in E flat and G	1787: <i>La fille-garçon</i> , opéra-comique en 2 actes, sur un livret de Desmaillot
1779: opus 10, 2 symphonies concertantes, in F and A (2 violins and viola)	1788: <i>Aline et Dupré</i> , ou <i>La marchande de marrons</i> , opéra pour enfants en 2 actes
1799: opus 11(?), 2 symphonies, in G and D (the 2 <sup>nd</sup> is the overture from <i>L'amant anonyme</i> )	1790: <i>Guillaume tout cœur</i> , ou <i>les amis du village</i> , opéra-comique en 1 acte, libr: Monnet
n.d. (1785?): opus 14, 6 quatuors concertans	1792: sonata for cello
	n.d., 6 duo sonatas (3 published by Pleyel in 1800)
	n.d: collections of airs and duets with orchestra
	n.d.: sonata, harp and flute

Figure 11: works by Joseph Bologne de Saint-Georges (adapted from “Chevalier de Saint-Georges 1745-1799”).

In 1781, the Concert des Amateurs disbanded after one of its supporters experienced a financial collapse. The following year, another ensemble, Le Concert de la Loge Olympique, was formed, with Saint-Georges as its conductor. By the time Viotti arrived in Paris in 1782 (Saint-Georges was then 37, while Viotti was ten years younger), Saint-Georges had published nearly all of his instrumental works. He also had composed and staged a few operas, partly because of his role as director of the theatre of Madame de Montesson, the morganatic wife of the Duke of Orléans.

The death of the Duke in 1785 prompted Saint-Georges to accept invitations to participate in demonstration fencing matches in London, a period documented with portraits of him. His ongoing association with the Duke's son, later known as “Philippe-Égalité” (a supporter of a constitutional monarchy in France), resulted in another trip to London. Le Concert de La Loge Olympique ended its activities with the Revolution in 1789, and Joseph-Bologne Saint-Georges joined the Revolutionary Army to defend France's northern border (499).<sup>14</sup> While he was credited with military actions in the Lille area, he also faced setbacks and intrigues, which led to his imprisonment until the Fall of Robespierre in late July 1794. Unable to rejoin the army, he may have left Paris for a period of two years. He returned to organizing concerts in Paris, this time for a new society, “Le Cercle de l'Harmonie.”

Among the many violinists and violinist-composers who interacted with Saint-Georges, we briefly discuss here Gaviniès, Lolli, Jarnović, Robineau, and Viotti. Nicknamed “the French Tartini” by Viotti, Pierre Gaviniès was admired for “the precision, elegant style, and polish of his playing”.<sup>15</sup> A talented and

<sup>14</sup> This form of his name appeared as such on his military file in 1791.

<sup>15</sup> “De même, Boisgelou couvre Gaviniès de fleurs : “Nous ne dirons rien, écrit-il, du jeu de cet admirable artiste ; il est au-dessus de tout Éloge ; nous nous contenterons de remarquer que si tout Professeur auroit dû se proposer pour modèle L'Exactitude et le fini du jeu de M. Pagin, tout musicien aimable, tout amateur de goust auroit envié Les grâces de L'Exécution et le velouté de Gaviniez. Le premier et celui dont le talent a été le plus universel et qui n'a pu être égalé en quelque sorte depuis que par Lolli, Jarnovich, et surtout M. Viotti. M. Gaviniez, après avoir fait

innovative player, Gaviniès was said to have influenced all violinists in France and beyond for over thirty years.<sup>16</sup> He apparently stopped performing as a soloist after witnessing Lolli's success in Paris, whose "new manner" featured high-flying acrobatics and scordatura that captivated the audience for a time. We do not know if Gaviniès' open rivalry with Lolli affected Saint-Georges.

At the time, Lolli was based at the Stuttgart court as a solo violinist working under composer Jommelli. Little is known about his background. Believed to be from Bergamo, also the birthplace of the virtuoso Locatelli (composer of the stratospheric *L'Arte del Violino*, op. 3), he might have been largely self-taught. He corresponded with the influential Padre Martini for some time. How much Lolli interacted with Saint-Georges remains unknown, though his first visit to Paris in 1764 (the year Leclair was murdered) involved performances with le Concert Spirituel over three months. He dedicated his first concertos, op. 2 (1764) and op. 4 (1766), to Saint-Georges, acknowledging, on one hand, the support of Saint-Georges père and, on the other, the exceptional artistic promise of his son. Lolli befriended the Austrian violinist-composer Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, who apparently quickly mastered Lolli's techniques and offered advice on occasion. Dittersdorf described Lolli in these terms: "C'est un vrai régal que d'entendre Lolli exécuter quelque œuvre pour violon ; son jeu était remarquablement pur, délicat, ferme, sans nervosité." (Dittersdorf 611). Figure 12ab illustrates some of the characteristic contrasts between Lolli and Gaviniès: Lolli's figurations emphasize speed and range, while Gaviniès makes more extensive use of double-stops and cantilenas.

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pendant longtemps les délices des Amateurs au Concert spirituel, en a été directeur. C'est à son École que se sont formez les plus excellens artistes." (La Laurencie 314)

<sup>16</sup> « Cartier [...] assure que, « pendant près de trente ans, tous les violons de France et de l'étranger vinrent échouer auprès de lui au Concert spirituel ». Bernadau, rappelant que, malgré ses éclatants succès, Gaviniès « quitta le violon à l'âge de quarante ans », attribue la cause de cette retraite prématurée à la préférence que le public semblait marquer alors pour le jeu de Lolli. Il est certain qu'il doit y avoir quelque vérité dans cette observation ; [...] « Lolly avait, sans doute, beaucoup de mérite, mais la nouveauté du genre qu'il avait adopté dans l'exécution, constituait son seul avantage. » Bernadau ajoute que Lolli « n'a maintenant qu'un rang secondaire parmi les artistes cités pour avoir bien joué du violon » et que « Gaviniès, dont la manière était large et belle, eut la gloire de survivre à son concurrent. » (La Laurencie 316)

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Figure 12ab. 12a: Lulli, concerto in A major, op. 4, no. 1, I, solo violin (IMSLP); 12b: Gaviniès: Concerto in A major, op. 4, no. 1, solo violin. (BnF)

Viotti's later public successes in Paris were compared to Lolli's, although Viotti was said to have a more powerful singing tone (the press mentioned: "He stood above all his peers").<sup>17</sup> Although Lolli was occasionally criticized for his musicianship and compositional skills, he might have been an effective teacher; before leaving Russia, he published a series of annotated exercises, *École du Violon en Quatuor* (1784), still worthy of serious consideration. (Figure 13ab presents figurations that bear resemblance to passages in Saint-Georges' works.)

<sup>17</sup> "Pour le Mercure de France, 'M. Viotti est un des plus grands violons qui se soient fait entendre au Concert spirituel depuis vingt ans ; quand sa tête est montée, il exécute parfaitement et les morceaux d'expression et les choses difficiles'. *Le Journal de Paris* loue sans restrictions : 'Depuis le fameux Lolli, il n'avait pas paru de violon de la force de M. Viotti. Il surpasse dans le premier morceau de son concerto par la facilité incroyable et la netteté avec laquelle il exécuta les plus grandes difficultés ; il entraîna tous les suffrages par le fini avec lequel il joua l'Adagio ; ce fut dans ce morceau qu'on sentit vraiment combien le talent de cet artiste était précieux.' Enfin, *l'Almanach musical* disait, en 1783 : 'Dès le premier jour qu'on a entendu M. Viotti, tout le monde s'est accordé pour le placer au-dessus de tous ses concurrents.'" (La Laurencie 508). See also Lister, chapter 3

Figure 13ab: excerpts (beginning and ending) of Lolti, *L'École du Violon* (IMSLP), first and last pages.

In the introductory « Notice sur Lolti » of his *Sonate fantô-magique* “L’Ombre de Lolti” (c. 1800), violinist-composer Michel Woldemar mentioned that “le haut prix de ses leçons fut cause qu’il forma peu d’élèves directs : on le suivait, l’entendait, saisissait son genre, mais Jarnovick et l’omni-talent S<sup>t</sup>. Georges furent seuls ses disciples favoris” (Figure 14).<sup>18</sup>

Figure 14: Woldemar, *4 Fantomagic Sonatas*, “L’ombre de Lolti” (n.d.), in one of the *scordatura* tunings associated with Lolti (i.e., the G-string lowered to F) (IMSLP).

In this brief, intriguing passage, Woldemar (who described himself as a student of Lolti) also noted that Lolti had, at some point, adopted a “large” manner of playing that anticipated Viotti’s. However, he abandoned it to follow the “originality of Esser,” probably referring to the little-known virtuoso violinist, Karl Michael von Esser (1736–1795?) (Woldemar 1).<sup>19</sup> Did Lolti teach Saint-Georges a broader style of playing before Viotti arrived in Paris? Was this style also evident in Jarnović’s playing, who was praised during his visits to Paris between 1773 and 1777? Judging by the critics’ reactions to Viotti, who performed his first concerto at the Concert Spirituel, it was not the case. Woldemar reiterated that Lolti’s successes in Paris had disruptive effects, i.e., the end of Gaviniès’ career as a soloist [“sa retraite”] and “with it the end of the old French school of violin.”<sup>20</sup> Twenty years later, this apparently created an opportunity for the charismatic Viotti to fill a perceived gap in leadership and historical lineage. Despite the expected competition on the main stages of the French capital, frequent and essential displays of collegiality and collaboration were observed. Concerts by one local artist often featured works by colleagues, and musicians regularly exchanged services as part of benefit concerts or joint professional

<sup>18</sup> Woldemar, however, seemed confused about Lolti’s final days, which he places in Portugal in 1787.

<sup>19</sup> More about Michael von Esser at <https://www.swedishmusicalheritage.com/composers/esser-karl-michael-von/>.

<sup>20</sup> It is unclear whether Woldemar sent Paganini a copy of his “Sonates Fantômagiques” or not.

efforts (e.g., *La Société des Enfants d'Apollon*). French violinists not only celebrated Italianate virtuosity in concertos or elaborate variations on favourite airs; they also fostered the simpler pleasures of the *romance* and the developing sonata in various chamber settings, particularly for the many salons of the capital. In this regard, salons played a vital role in the exchange of ideas and the shaping of musical style.

Parisian publishers also contributed to this lively scene, responding to the intense creativity and the process of stylistic convergence and differentiation across borders. La Laurencie, for example, highlighted notable similarities between Guénin and Mozart: “La mélodie de Guénin s’écoule avec une allure d’élégance aisée et sobre qui la rapproche beaucoup de celle de Mozart. Mozart, bien certainement, connut les ouvrages du violoniste français, soit avant son séjour à Paris de 1778, soit pendant celui-ci.” (La Laurencie 414). The brief “product cycle” of works reflected a culture expecting a steady stream of new, original offerings (Leeson 247). Naturally, a composer’s legacy depended on how widely print music was circulated and how often works were performed. A growing ‘canon’ of audience favourites helped manage risk-taking in the public concert arena.

Among the favourite pre-Viotti violin concertos were those of Jarnović (or Giornovich), who Woldemar described as a pupil of Lolli. Jarnović built a notable career despite frequent disputes with fellow musicians. He replaced the embroiled Lolli at the court in Saint Petersburg in 1783 and toured extensively. Saint-Georges maintained ties with him despite some strains; Jarnović, in turn, taught Saint-Georges’ music to his students, notably the prodigies Franz Clement and George Bridgetower, both of whom later became associated with Beethoven. In 1789, the Anacreontic Society in London, a musical club, reported that Jarnović and Saint-Georges had prepared a presentation combining music and the art of self-defence (Wright 75–76). It remains unclear whether and to what extent Jarnović engaged in plagiarism of Saint-Georges or others. Viotti’s move to London marked new competition for Jarnović from 1792. In 1796, Jarnović was apparently expelled from England over a conflict involving Viotti and Cramer.<sup>21</sup> Figure 15ab illustrates the many textural similarities between Jarnović and Saint-Georges.

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<sup>21</sup> I do not know the motive of the dispute; it could have been about Jarnović’s former student, Bridgetower, who had been under the protection of the Prince and was in frequent contact with London-based violinists Barthelémon, Cramer, Viotti, Giardini, and others. Bridgetower’s eccentric and abusive father had been ousted from England in 1791. (I presume that Bridgetower *père* had accompanied Jarnović and his young pupil on tour in Europe, from Vienna to London.) The well-known story about the sudden re-dedication of Beethoven’s 9<sup>th</sup> piano-violin sonata, written for Bridgetower’s later Vienna concert — on his way to visit his mother — strangely echoes other tales of problematic behaviour by Lolli and Jarnović. (Did Beethoven — or his biographer — know of these stories?).

Figure 15ab. 15a: Jarnović Violin Concerto No.5 in E major, solo violin part (ca.1777); 15b: Bologne de Saint-Georges Violin Concerto, op. 7, no. 1 in A major, solo violin part (n.d.) (IMSLP).

As musicologist Chappell White explains, both Jarnović and Saint-Georges contributed to the gradual adoption of the Classical concerto structure:

One would expect a composer of [Jarnović]’s generation to use a form tending toward a sonata form that is bithematic (or polythematic). Once again, however, it is necessary to remember that the solo violin concerto was relatively late in absorbing the conventions of Classical structure. By the 1760s, it tended to be more old-fashioned in form than either the symphony or the keyboard sonata. In his first published concerto, Giornovichi adopted a structural formula in which no transitional features look back to the older Baroque concerto or even to the binary first-movement form sometimes used by Tartini. Compared with Gaviniès and Lolli, his immediate predecessors, Giornovichi’s first-movement form represents a decisive step into the conventions of Classical structure. Compared with his contemporaries and early competitors — Saint-Georges, Simon Le Duc, Carl and Anton Stamitz — this form represents a stabilization of those conventions. Only in Mozart’s five examples written in 1775 does one encounter contemporary violin concertos in which the concerto sonata form is so clearly and decisively articulated. The influence of the older ritornello structure survived (as it did in all classical concertos) in the four tutti passages that Giornovichi invariably employed; but the first tutti functions as an introductory exposition and the other three as closing sections of the major structural divisions. In no case does the tutti serve as a propulsive, structural ritornello, but simply as a thematic and dynamic sectional contrast. Unlike some other consistent features in Giornovichi’s concertos, which by the end of his career seem anachronistic, the first-movement form remains modern through the 1780s and into the 1790s. (White 30)

Another of Lolli's versatile students was A. A. Robineau (1747–1828), who initially studied with Gaviniès in Paris and later with Lolli in Naples. He published a set of sonatas in 1768, an example from which (Figure 16) demonstrates his range of abilities.



Figure 16: Robineau Sonata no. 6, II, Variations.

Following in his father's footsteps, Robineau also became a professional painter, focusing on portraits and special occasions. After serving the aristocracy in Paris, he relocated to London, where he was sometimes asked to accompany the Prince of Wales on his violin. The Prince commissioned him to depict Saint-Georges in fencing poses in London. Earlier in his career, Robineau dedicated a set of concertos to the notable painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier (1724-1806), a colleague of his father. Bachelier had painted (c. 1750) a Still Life with Flowers and a Violin (Figure 17ab). In this painting, a soap bubble beside the thinner strings and the shorter fingerboard of the older violin setup symbolizes the brevity or fleeting nature of life (see "Symbolism in Art").



Figure 17ab. 17a: Bachelier, *Still Life with Flowers and a Violin*, oil on canvas, c. 1750; 17b: same, detail.

As *Peintre du Roy* and Director of Enamelling at the Vincennes porcelain manufacturer, Bachelier demonstrated the finesse of technique and sensitivity of feeling expected in paintings and porcelains of that period. These qualities were also highly valued in the musical arts — a notable era of stylistic integration. Occasional references to exotic cultures, such as Chinoiserie, also appeared across various

artistic disciplines. Bachelier was passionate about education and in 1766 devised a plan for a Royal Free School for Drawing, with branches throughout France, to which Gaviniès and Gossec contributed a musical component (both musicians later became involved in the Conservatoire).

Viotti's significance during this transitional period is often linked to his soloistic performance style, which capitalized on the new Tourte bow design and the thicker strings also used by Pugnani, his symphonic conception, and his inspiring teaching. Although Viotti ceased performing as a soloist in public concerts in 1783, he remained an active guest at Versailles and various salons in the capital. He privately mentored many students who later gained recognition across Europe. A close friend of the opera composer Cherubini, Viotti supported his operas in Paris. His interest in opera conducting allowed him to influence more violinists, including the notable Rode, Kreutzer, and Baillot, who, along with Gaviniès, led the first violin classes at the new Conservatoire. Viotti's 29 concertos, some written for his students, became required repertoire for the Conservatoire's final exams.

In his biography of Saint-Georges, Banat surprisingly claimed that "a glance at a page of one of [Saint-Georges'] concertos confirms that it was he (not Viotti) who initiated the 'modern' French Violin School and influenced, from a technical perspective, the violin compositions of Beethoven. That same violin technique went on to serve romantic composers and is still in use today" (*Le Chevalier* 135). While Banat's side-by-side comparisons of melodic and rhythmic figurations that appear to have been borrowed or modified by Beethoven are convincing, his perspective does not seem to thoroughly account for the many changes associated with Viotti (Schwartz 431–447).<sup>22</sup> There is no clear evidence that Saint-Georges' performing style (i.e., the distribution of the bow, the types of stroke, and the performance effect) was not still rooted in the "older" style that contemporaries claimed was displaced with Viotti's arrival on the Parisian scene.

It is interesting to note that Viotti arrived in Paris in 1782 after being offered the opportunity to replace the often-absent Lolli at the court in St. Petersburg. At that time, Viotti had completed a European tour as part of a duet with his long-time mentor, Gaetano Pugnani, who himself had studied with Leclair's teacher, Giovanni Battista Somis, in Turin.<sup>23</sup> That same year, Saint-Georges was involved with the new Concert de la Loge Olympique. Unfortunately, there appears to be no record of the relationship between Saint-Georges and Viotti from that period, despite their shared involvement in many of the same circles (e.g., Versailles, private salons, the same Masonic Lodge, and later in London, in the entourage of the Prince of Wales). Viotti apparently stepped in as conductor of Le Concert de La Loge Olympique while Saint-Georges was in London.

Many of Saint-Georges' long-time orchestral colleagues, such as Navoigille, Guénin, Guérillot, Blasius, Bertheaume, and Alday, were later appointed to teach at the emerging Conservatoire (de la Grandville, 191-205). Among them, there does not seem to be an advocate for Saint-Georges or his works. The complete absence of Saint-Georges' name in Baillot's 1803 *Méthode du Conservatoire* and in his monumental *L'Art du Violon* of 1834 is surprising. The lack of Saint-Georges in Cartier's compendium *L'Art du Violon* of 1798 may have been due to Cartier's focus on the sonata repertoire, to which Saint-

<sup>22</sup> Mozart, born in January 1756, was about six months younger than Viotti (May 1755). Mozart added two parts to Viotti's 16<sup>th</sup> violin concerto (1788-90).

<sup>23</sup> According to Victor Chapin, one of the first musical treatments of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther* (1774) was that of Gaetano Pugnani (*Werther, a Novel Set to Music*), produced in Turin in 1796. On another note, Fritz Kreisler's popular *Praeludium und Allegro (in the style of Pugnani)* presents Kreisler's take on the 'grand bow' technique usually associated with Pugnani.

Georges contributed little. Leeson mentioned that no work by Saint-Georges was performed at the Conservatoire's annual prize-giving concerts during the early period up to 1815. The earliest (1871) re-edition of a minor work by Saint-Georges—a violin duet published in 1800—appears to have been by Baillot's successor, Delphin Alard, as part of *Les Maîtres Classiques du Violon*, a collection of works by older masters (including Robineau and Lolli). I suspect that Alard's motivation in this specific effort was linked to a biographical notice on Saint-Georges published by Fétis in 1868.<sup>24</sup>

The complex and sometimes controversial history of Saint-Georges, both before and after the Revolution, may have caused the next generation to distance themselves from him. There is no evidence to suggest that the long silence surrounding Saint-Georges was due to the law of 20 May 1802, which restored slavery in the sugar-producing colonies and, according to Nemeth, involved “the removal from official documentation of the picture of any man of colour who could have played a role in the recent period (80).” (There is also no evidence that the then-defunct Bologne “could have played a role” in this case.) It might be impossible to determine whether Baillot, Rode, and Kreutzer, who proposed the *Méthode du Conservatoire* for review during that period (it was published in 1803), were influenced by this law.<sup>25</sup>

### **MOZART IN PARIS, SYMPHONIES CONCERTANTES: WHAT IF MOZART HAD BORROWED AND TRANSFORMED MUSIC BY SAINT-GEORGES?**

Tartini's French student, Lahoussaye, served on the committee that approved the *Méthode du Conservatoire*. He played important roles in numerous Parisian ensembles, especially at the Concert Spirituel when Mozart's new symphony was premiered in 1778. Although the concert was a success, the 22-year-old Mozart was shocked by the rehearsal. His overall experience in Paris (March–September 1778) certainly did not meet his expectations, and he shared his disappointment with his father.

If this were a place where people had ears to hear or hearts to feel, and understood just a little of music, and had some degree of taste, these things would only make me laugh heartily, but as it is (so far as music is concerned), I am surrounded by mere brute beasts. But how can it be otherwise? For in all their actions, inclinations, and passions, they are just the same. There is no place in the world like Paris. You must not think that I exaggerate when I speak in this way of the music here; refer to whom you will, except to a Frenchman born, and (if trustworthy) you will hear the same. But I am now here and must endure it for

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<sup>24</sup> Alard selected the third sonata for two violins, published in 1800 by Pleyel (Bologne). On another note, the ongoing release of Saint-Georges' music in full scores (instead of individual parts) will also undoubtedly support future analytical discussions.

<sup>25</sup> In 1789, the American Minister to France, Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), witnessed a performance by the young Bridgetower at the school attended by his daughters in Paris. Jefferson was an enthusiastic amateur violinist and music collector—a passion he developed as a young man alongside another Founding Father of the United States, Patrick Henry (1736–1799). Interestingly, both Jefferson and Henry played important roles in the movement toward abolition in the United States. Henry ended the importation of slaves into Virginia in 1778, while Jefferson was a reluctant owner of over six hundred slaves. Jefferson, as President of the United States from 1801 to 1809, signed an 1808 law banning the importation of slaves into the country. France had abolished slavery in 1794, but this decision was reversed in 1802 by Napoleon for the sugar-planting colonies. In 1815, Napoleon abolished the slave trade, a move further confirmed by Louis XVIII in 1818. Additional anti-slavery laws were enacted between 1845 and 1848. In England, the slave trade was abolished in 1807, and slavery was outlawed across the British Empire in 1833.

your sake. I shall be grateful to Providence if I get away with my natural taste uninjured. I pray to God every day to grant me grace to be firm and steadfast here... (Mozart, Letter to his father, May 1, 1778).

Mozart also grew frustrated with the new management of Le Concert Spirituel for losing track of one of his new symphonies concertantes (he suspected an intrigue involving Cambini, who had written a piece for the same instruments).<sup>26</sup> It was a missed opportunity for the position-seeking Mozart, at a time when Symphonies concertantes were very popular. If Mozart and Saint-George had met (there is no record), they might have commiserated: the year before, Saint-Georges' first opera, *Ernestine*, had failed. However, that failure had led to the consequential opportunity to work for Madame de Montesson. In 1778 and 1779, Saint-Georges published new Symphonies concertantes: two as op. 13 in 1778 and two more as op. 10 in 1779, for two violins and viola. That same year, Mozart wrote his *Sinfonia concertante* for violin and viola.









One should dispel the misconception that a symphonie concertante is a musical duel between soloists with orchestral accompaniment.<sup>27</sup> Symphonies concertantes typically begin with march-like motifs in a major key and feature moderate virtuosity from the soloists, who maintain a pervasive "conversational" lyricism throughout, and conclude with a cheerful rondo. A significant number of such works were performed and published in Paris during the 1760s and 1770s (e.g., J. C. Bach, Cambini, Davaux, Stamitz, etc.).<sup>28</sup> Figure 18 presents lead themes from Saint-Georges' Symphonies concertantes, most of which are in two movements.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For a more comprehensive listing of symphonies concertantes, see Riemann and Brook.

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed review of the concertante as a genre, see Brook. Some predecessors of the genre include: Corelli's concerti grossi (Op. 6, 1714), Vivaldi's concerti for 3 and 4 violins (in the 1710s), J. S. Bach's concerto for 2 violins and the "Brandenburg" concertos (c. 1720). Brook explains: "it was no accident that the focal point for the establishment and development of the genre was the city of Paris. The French capital, with half a million in population, second only to London, boasted more concerts, more composers, more performers, engravers, and publishers of music than any other city in Europe. The symphonie concertante was specifically tailored for this milieu. Its composers consciously wooed the concert-going public by writing the most melodious, scintillating, and instrumentally - varied works within their power. To perform these pieces they engaged the leading virtuosi available. Since the composers were often themselves solo performers, they could reciprocate when their colleagues wrote concertante works of their own. This gentlemen's agreement, which is reflected in citations from title pages given below, supports the hypothesis that the symphonie concertante helped musicians improve their status and augment their income. They were not peregrinating virtuosi in the 19th-century sense, dazzling audiences wherever they went. Rather, they were, for the most part, first-rate local musicians, some of whom had no ambitions for demanding solo careers. Their participation as symphonie concertante principals, however, sufficed to place their names before the public, thus helping them secure additional pupils, wider sales of their printed works, and better contracts with publisher." (24)

<sup>28</sup> One can find many other examples by Abel, Boccherini, Bréval, Devienne, Holzbauer, Ditters von Dittersdorf, Krommer, Krumpholz, Pleyel, Fiorillo, Haydn, Gossec, Kreutzer, Viotti, etc. Beethoven's *Triple Concerto*, for piano, violin, and cello, op. 56 (1803) follows in that tradition.

<sup>29</sup> Brook indicates ten symphonies concertantes by Bologne de Saint-Georges.

Saint-Georges <i>Symphonies concertantes</i>	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 6, no. 1 (1775)</p> 	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 6, no. 2 (1775)</p> 	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 9, no. 1 (1777)</p> 	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 9, no. 2 (1777)</p> 	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 10 no. 1 (1778 or 1779), for 2 violins and viola</p> 	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 10 no. 1 (1779), for 2 violins and viola</p>	



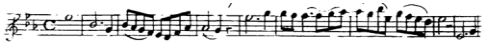

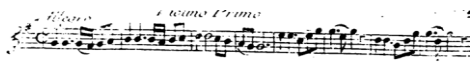

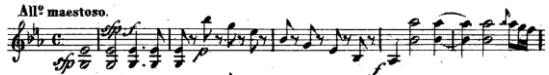



	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 13, no. 1 in Eb major (1778)</p> 	
<p>2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 13, no. 2 in G major (1778)</p> 	

Figure 18: Lead themes in Symphonie Concertantes by Saint-Georges. (IMSLP)

Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante K. 364, composed in Salzburg in 1779, was possibly inspired by a desire to recover the music lost in Paris or to strengthen his portfolio after witnessing the genre's rising popularity. In this piece, Mozart expects the solo violist to tune up a semitone for extra brilliance, likely following the example of the Mannheim composers Vanhal and Stamitz. (Paganini later adopted this tuning in many of his violin works. Figure 19 shows the main themes of Mozart's Sinfonia concertante, published in 1802.

<p>1<sup>st</sup> movement</p> 	<p>Cadenza I</p> 
<p>2<sup>nd</sup> movement (decorated solos)</p> 	<p>Cadenza II:</p> 


<p>3<sup>rd</sup> movement</p> <p>Presto. </p>	
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Figure 19: Lead themes in Mozart, *Sinfonia Concertante*, KV. 364 (IMSLP)

A direct comparison between Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante* (1779) and Saint-Georges' *Symphonie concertante* op. 13 no. 1 (1778) is facilitated by the fact that both are in E-flat major. Although a detailed, formal comparison is beyond the scope of this article, examining a few functionally similar passages (Figures 20 and 21) can help highlight stylistic differences between the two, especially in areas where Mozart might be thought to have borrowed from Saint-Georges.

The first passage (Figure 20a) is transitional and could have been transformed twice by Mozart (Figures 20b and 20c). While both (20a) and (20b) feature the same repeated tonic in the bass, (20b) includes a slowly rising chromatic scale that extends the structure. Although (20a) resembles (20c) — as a rising arpeggio to an upper, energized plateau — (20c) is harmonized differently (i.e., the bass descends by steps), and more orchestral layers are activated. In both instances, Mozart adds extra layers to the texture (e.g., sixteenth notes, martial dotted rhythm, sustained winds).

<p>a</p> 	
<p>b</p> 	<p>c</p> 

Figure 20abc. 20a: Saint-Georges *Symphonie concertante*, op. 13, no. 1, I, mm. 12-17 (first pub. 1778; ed. D. Wolfson); 20b: Mozart *Sinfonia concertante*, K.364/320d, mm. 47-56; 20c: same, mm. 27-30; (IMSLP).

In Figure 21abc, Mozart appears to focus on Saint-George's typical use of the repeated-chord cadence as an opportunity for textural and melodic invention. In (21b), the repeated quarter-note chords from (21a) are varied with alternating eighth notes, doubled in sixteenth notes, and voiced down halfway. Both the rhythmic intensification and voicing shift prepare for the dramatic modulation to C minor, *subito piano*. In (21c), the repeated-note cadential formula in eighth notes that sets the pedal tone B-flat is repeated in another register and transformed into a *melodic* motif (solo violin) against the beginning sequence's first descending tetrachord (also *subito piano*). It is then further varied (solo viola) in sixteenth notes with lower neighbour-tones. Notice similarities between these solo figures and those in Saint-Georges' op. 10 no. 2, in Figure 18.

The figure consists of three panels of musical notation. Panel (a) shows a score with four staves (violin I, violin II, viola, and cello/bass) featuring repeated quarter-note chords. Panel (b) shows a score with five staves (violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass) with more complex rhythmic patterns including eighth and sixteenth notes. Panel (c) shows a score with five staves, highlighting a melodic motif in the violin and viola parts.

Figure 21abc. 21a: Bologne de Saint-Georges, 2 Symphonies concertantes, op. 13, no. 1, I, mm. 81-86 (9); 21b: Mozart *Sinfonia concertante* in E-flat major, K.364/320d, I, mm. 88-94; 21c: same, mm. 263-268 (IMSLP).

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The life story of Saint-Georges includes narratives of excellence and merit but also raises various questions and dilemmas, especially regarding his Caribbean origins. In particular, I wondered if he had in any way hinted at a Caribbean identity or culture in his works. The Rondeau of the *Symphonie concertante*, op. 13, no. 1, seemed to project such a Caribbean character. It felt familiar, folk-like, and made me think perhaps Saint-Georges drew from a Caribbean dance repertoire, which led me to the Caribbean contradance repertoire. Some initial research in this area showed promise. If this connection is ultimately confirmed, I believe it would be a significant step in our understanding and appreciation of Saint-Georges as an artist. Not only would this help resolve some of the dilemmas about his identity,

culture, and authenticity, but it would also, to some extent, confirm his emerging ‘voice’ and modernity. The latter, however, is not in the sense Banat used for Viotti and the ‘modern’ school of violin playing, but more fundamentally at the level of asserting self in the creative and recreative pursuits (which remains relevant today). In that regard, the image of the artist as a fencer may serve as a powerful metaphor or reminder of these ideas, with the foil, pen, and violin bow taking on similar symbolic significance.

Saint-Georges played a significant role in the lively final three decades of the 18th century, a period that violinists and music lovers will find worth exploring further—if only to deepen their appreciation for Mozart, Beethoven, and Paganini. Fortunately, important legacies are being gradually rediscovered, helped by greater access to resources and improved scholarship. By examining the connections among these artists, we learn to observe the ongoing exchange and development of ideas and styles, from imitation to innovation.

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