

Introducing an Unknown African Composer to the World- at- Large During the Age of Enlightenment



Charles Pettaway

Professor, Music Department, Lincoln University, USA

Joseph Bologne, Le Chevalier de Saint- Georges was a Gemini (June 9, 1745). His historical background as a biracial man of color who took France by storm, England and even the second president, of the United States, John Adams stated; "St Georges was such an incredible shot that he could hit a tiny button on the coat or waistcoat of the greatest masters." "He could even hit a coin as it was tossed in midair."

I will discuss his early upbringing on the island of Guadeloupe from a union of a wealthy white Frenchman and a slave woman named Nanon.

In France, he rose to unbelievable heights as a fencer, a composer, conductor, violin virtuoso, an artful equestrian, an exceptional marksman, an elegant dancer, an accomplished man of his time and one of the most important musicians of the classical period.

He was known as Le Mozart Noir.

His rise took place during the Age of Enlightenment. His contemporaries were Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Montesquieu and John Locke.

My lecture will explore, in detail :

His Childhood in the Antilles

His ascension and success at Paris

Becoming a Gentleman

Saint Georges in London

The French Revolution

Henry Angelo wrote, "The Chevalier de Saint- Georges died at Paris regretted by his friends and by the few who knew how to feel for, or excuse, the imperfections of humanity---qualities from which none of us can hope to be exempt."