Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799)
First known as Joseph de Bologne

Name ______________________________

Joseph de Bologne, Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges, was a composer, violinist, and conductor. He was a kind and gentle man, and one of the most important musicians in France 1765-1789. Through the years, he was also known as an amazing marksman, equestrian, ballroom dancer, and the best fencer in France.

Joseph was born on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. His father was a wealthy plantation owner and his mother was a slave.

His family moved to France when he was 10 years old and Joseph was enrolled in a boarding school. In the mornings, he studied literature, science, music, language, and dance. He excelled playing the violin. His afternoons were spent in the weapons room. By the age of 15, Joseph was developing a reputation in fencing. Through much of his life, he would find that the best fencers in the world wanted to fence with him.

When Joseph left boarding school, he entered life as a nobleman. He had an excellent education and refined manners. He was accepted in many circles at a time when there was serious racial unrest. It was King Louis XV who gave Joseph the title of Chevalier de Saint-Georges, after this father’s title, because of his extraordinary fencing abilities.

In 1766, Saint-Georges began studying composition. Early in his career he published six string quartets. He went on to compose seven violin concertos, more string quartets, small symphonies, vocal music, a ballet, and six operas.

Throughout his career, Saint-Georges was a part of various privately funded and highly regarded orchestras. He made his solo debut performing one of his own violin concertos. His music was very expressive but also required virtuoso skill! He was also a busy conductor, and well respected by the musicians. Sometimes Saint-Georges played first violin in the orchestra.
His reputation as a conductor continued to grow. It didn’t take long before Saint-Georges was appointed director of the prestigious Paris Opéra. The offer was withdrawn, however, when some singers, dancers, and actresses refused to take direction from him because of the color of his skin. He moved on.

By the 1780s, Saint-Georges was the main conductor of one of the best orchestras in France, maybe the best in all of Europe. This orchestra commissioned Franz Joseph Haydn to write six symphonies, numbers 82-87. These were nicknamed “Paris” symphonies.

Saint-Georges was a very busy and popular person! He took a few students, including Queen Marie Antoinette, and had developed a large following. He had many friends and attended lots of parties. Aristocrats all across Europe knew of him. He was very generous with his own money. For as much as he was included as a peer in circles of the wealthy, however, he was also often reminded of his mixed heritage. He seemed to have been the only black man of the time who lived the life of a nobleman.

Everything changed for Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges in 1789 with the start of the French Revolution. He was a nobleman (and friends with King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette) but sympathetic to the Revolution. The peasants were fighting to change inequities such as high taxes and restrictions on both land ownership and hunting. Saint-Georges gave up his wealth, music, and comfortable life to join their cause. He commanded a group of men from the West Indies who had come to France to offer their services.

At one point during the Revolution, Saint-Georges was wrongly accused of misusing money meant for his troops and sent to prison. His high military rank was taken away. By the time he was released, all of his friends had been killed or were living in exile in another country, and he had no money.

Saint-Georges decided to go back to his father’s plantation to see if he could claim and sell the land. When he arrived, he found a slave rebellion in progress across the entire island.

With nothing left there, Saint-Georges returned to Paris. Everything was different. The city had changed. No one knew him. The fame and respect he had for much of his life had disappeared. He lived a much quieter life now and died within a couple of years.
Two final thoughts...
Why don’t we know more about Joseph de Bologne and his music?
We acknowledge there has been a centering of white experience in history, including music history. Information on non-white composers and performers is often difficult to find, let alone supported in multiple sources. That is the case with Joseph de Bologne or Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges.

Adding to that, the French Revolution cut-off the work of artists and destroyed a lot of the existing art. There was no way to preserve music in the late 1700s other than holding the written parts. Much of the music composed by Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges was lost during the French Revolution when so many buildings in Paris were burned.

Why is Saint-Georges sometimes called the “Other Mozart” or “Black Mozart”? Perhaps it should be the other way around.
There are conflicting accounts of how, or if, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart knew Saint-Georges. Saint-Georges was about 10 years older than Mozart.

A couple of sources report that Mozart lived as the guest of a nobleman for 6 months during the same time Saint-Georges lived there. It seems as though several ideas in Saint-Georges’ music appeared in some of Mozart’s music for the first time after he returned to Austria. It is rumored that Mozart was very jealous of Saint-Georges. It is also suggested that Monostatos, the evil character in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, is modeled after Saint-Georges.

Another source tells of young Mozart attending a concert where Saint-Georges performed one of his violin concertos, but that the two never met.

I can relate the life and music of Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges to personal experience.

Complete these tasks and be prepared to discuss your thoughts and observations in small groups.

A. Copy one sentence from the reading that seems important. 

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

B. Write one question you have about information in the reading. 

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

C. Write one sentence about something you already know that connects to the reading. 

______________________________________________________________________________

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______________________________________________________________________________
I can analyze music notation.

Study the solo violin part for the first movement of Saint-Georges’ Violin Concerto No. 2. **Begin to answer your choice of 4 out of 6 questions.** Then, listen to the performance and add to your answers. [https://youtu.be/TT5cbArFpiw](https://youtu.be/TT5cbArFpiw) (20:49-30:22) *In case you get lost, notice there are time stamps in the written part that correspond to the video.*

1. Describe the use of dynamics and how they might create interest for the listener. Give at least one example and cite measure numbers in your explanation.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. Use the orange, green, or blue boxes to prompt your thinking on repeated or recurring phrases. Give at least one example and cite measure numbers in your explanation.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. Give an example of where the interval (distance) from one note to the next is larger than an octave.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

4. Other markings in the score.
   - Measure 37: What do the 2 slashes across the stem mean? ______________________
     __________________________________________________________________________
   - Measure 144: What does *tutti* mean? _________________________________________
     __________________________________________________________________________
   - Measure 163: What does the 8 and wavy line mean? _____________________________
     __________________________________________________________________________
5. Why is the measure number sometimes not at the left end of the staff, but moved in to the first bar line?
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________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

6. If this is a piece you were going to learn, explain 3 strategies you would use to get started.
   a. ____________________________________
      ____________________________________
      ____________________________________
   b. ____________________________________
      ____________________________________
      ____________________________________
   c. ____________________________________
      ____________________________________
      ____________________________________

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Hugh Brewster and Eric Velasquez, The Other Mozart (2006)

Lesa Cline-Ransome and James E. Ransome, Before There Was Mozart: The Story of Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-George (2011). James has received the NAACP Image Award and Coretta Scott King Award.


DEUX CONCERTO
A VIOLON PRINCIPAL
Premier et second Dessus Alto et Basse, Hautbois, ou Flutes, et deux Cors, ad Libitum.
COMPOSÉ
PAR
M. DE S. GEORGES
ŒUVRE V.
Mis au Jour par M. BAILLEUX
Prix 7n. 4f.
À PARIS
Chez M. Bailleux, Md de Musique, Ordinaire des Menus-plaisirs du Roy,
Rue St-Henere, à la Règle d'Or.
à Lyon, chez M. Castaud; à Toulouse, chez M. Brunet;
à Bordeaux, et à Lille, Chez les Marchands de Musique.
Grave par Mme Annereau.