

**NAXOS**

**Joseph Bologne,  
Chevalier de  
SAINT-  
GEORGES**

**Violin Concertos  
Opp. 2 and 7**

**Fumika Mohri, Violin**

**Czech Chamber  
Philharmonic  
Orchestra Pardubice**

**Michael Halász**



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

### Violin Concertos, Opp. 2 and 7

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745–1799) – a brilliant swordsman, athlete, violin virtuoso and gifted composer – might well lay claim to being the most talented figure in an age of remarkable individuals.

The son of a former councillor in the parliament at Metz and a reputedly beautiful slave of Senegalese origin, Joseph Bologne was born near Basse Terre, Guadeloupe, and lived for some time on an estate on Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) before his family finally settled in Paris in around 1749. At the age of 13, Saint-Georges became a pupil of La Boëssière, a master of arms, and also took riding lessons at Tuileries Palace with the head of the royal riding academy, Chevalier Dugast, who considered him his best pupil. He fought his first public fencing match in Paris with the Italian fencer Giuseppe Gianfaldoni on 8 September 1766 and although he lost, his opponent predicted that he would become the finest swordsman in Europe.

Of his musical education we know very little. In old accounts of his life it is claimed that he had lessons with Platon, his father's plantation manager on Saint-Domingue, and it has also been suggested that he studied the violin with Jean-Marie Leclair and composition with François-Joseph Gossec in France. In view of his long professional association with Gossec, it is quite likely that he received a good deal of advice from him in his early career and this may have extended to instruction in composition. As the six years he spent in La Boëssière's establishment were devoted exclusively to physical training and academic studies, it is assumed that the bulk of Saint-Georges' musical education took place between 1758 and 1769, the year of his first professional engagement, as a violinist in Gossec's Concert des Amateurs. He made his public debut as a soloist with the Concert des Amateurs in 1772, performing his *Violin Concertos, Op. 2*. When Gossec became a director of the Concert Spirituel in 1773, Saint-Georges succeeded him as musical director and leader of the Amateurs which, under his leadership, quickly won recognition as one of the finest orchestras in France.

In 1777 Saint-Georges made his debut as an opera composer with *Ernestine* at the Comédie-Italienne. As is the case with many composers, the dramatic flair that served him so well in instrumental music proved largely unsuited to the theatre. The premiere was a fiasco and the work received only a single performance. The fault was not entirely Saint-Georges' own, but even his popularity as a composer of instrumental music and his gift for writing attractive and engaging music could not save the work from instant oblivion. In the course of the same year he became affiliated with the private theatre and concerts of Mme de Montesson, the secret, unacknowledged wife of the Duke of Orleans. Utilising Saint-Georges' other talents, the duke put him in charge of his hunting retinue at his seat in Le Raincy.

After the disbanding of the Amateurs in January 1781, probably due to financial problems, Saint-Georges founded the Concert de la Loge Olympique, the orchestra for whom Count d'Ogny later commissioned Haydn to compose his brilliant set of six '*Paris*' *Symphonies*. On the death of the Duke of Orleans in 1785, Saint-Georges lost his position in the household and visited London where he gave exhibition fencing matches at Angelo's Academy. He returned to Paris in 1787, composed a moderately successful comedy, *La fille-garçon*, and resumed work with the Loge Olympique.

Within six months of the outbreak of the Revolution, the Loge Olympique was dissolved and Saint-Georges returned to England in the company of the young Duke of Orleans, Philippe-Egalité. Once again, Saint-Georges supported himself by giving fencing matches in London and, on this occasion, also in Brighton where he fought before the Prince of Wales. He returned to Paris in 1790 but finding the state of affairs unsatisfactory undertook a tour of northern France with the actress Louise Fusil and a horn player, Lamothe. He took up official residence in Lille in 1792 where he became captain of the National Guard. In his desire to take a more active part in the Revolution, Saint-Georges formed a corps of light troops in the summer of 1792 which was planned eventually to comprise a thousand men of colour. Known as the Légion Nationale du Midi, the corps enjoyed little military success. Saint-Georges was relieved of his command, imprisoned for 18 months, and on his release forbidden to live near his former comrades.

Unemployed again, Saint-Georges led a vagabond existence with Lamothe and lived for a time on Saint-Domingue. Around 1797 he returned to Paris where he served briefly as a director of a new musical organisation, the Cercle de l'Harmonie, based in the former residence of the Orleans family. He died in Paris in June 1799.

By the standards of the age, Saint-Georges was not a prolific composer but this is perhaps hardly surprising given the extraordinary range of his activities. The majority of his instrumental works were published in Paris between 1772 and 1779 and include string quartets, violin concertos and symphonies concertantes. That the violin dominates his output is understandable given Saint-Georges' prowess on the instrument. The violin concertos, which he presumably composed for his own use, make extensive use of high positions and require great agility in string crossing and double-stopping, frequently in fast tempos. His friend the actress Louise Fusil wrote that 'the expressivity of his performance was his principal merit' and indeed there is far more to his concertos than mere virtuosic display. They are well written works, rich in melodic invention and displaying at times a striking degree of originality.

Although the *Two Violin Concertos, Op. 2* were not Saint-Georges' first published works, their premiere effectively introduced him to the Parisian public as both a violin virtuoso and composer, and in both capacities, he made a strong impression. The confident handling of musical structure in the first movements of the concertos shows he was no novice as a composer, and there are flashes of individuality, both in the construction of the themes and their subsequent treatment, which were to become hallmarks of his style. If there is a weakness in the movements, it is that the solo sections contain a good deal of bravura passage work which is not linked in any way to the thematic materials upon which the movement is based. These passages, however, reveal what a fine violinist Saint-Georges must have been. He exploits the high register of the instrument a good deal, and combined with writing that demands great agility on the part of the performer, the solo parts in *Op. 2* possess an almost palpable physicality. Saint-Georges' striking appearance, his physical grace and athleticism must have also contributed to the impact he made as a performer. His awareness of this fact may also explain in part the strong familial resemblance between his solo concertos which represents not a failure of invention but rather an understanding of the visual dimension of performance. To some extent these same qualities are to be found in the finales of *Op. 2* but, being cast in the fashionable rondo form favoured by French composers, the display of virtuosity is rather more restrained. Both types of movement, however, also exhibit in places a more lyrical style of writing that also characterises the slow movements of his concertos.

Saint-Georges probably composed his violin concertos initially for his own use although their later publication ensured their wider dissemination. Their reputation is attested to further by the existence of manuscript copies of the works, most of which appear to postdate their publication. There are also several concertos of uncertain authenticity that are preserved in manuscript parts that possibly represent works composed later in Saint-Georges' career, but to date no detailed investigation of these works has been carried out. Saint-Georges remained active as a performer after the French Revolution, albeit in different circumstances to those under which he worked in the 1770s and 1780s, and it is possible that he continued to compose.

Saint-Georges published his concertos and symphonies concertantes in pairs, typically with one work scored for strings alone and the second with wind instruments. The *Two Concertos, Op. 7*, published in Paris by Bailleux in 1777, are no exception. The first concerto is scored for strings, and the second, on the basis of the printed parts and Bailleux's title page, for strings and a pair of horns *ad libitum*. This scoring was not uncommon in concertos composed during the middle decades of the 18th century, and there is also a considerable number of symphonies composed for this combination of instruments. Nonetheless, it is clear from the musical text of *Op. 7, No. 2* that Saint-Georges' original scoring must have included a pair of oboes or flutes. There are several passages in the first and second movements in which an upper part (or parts) is missing. In the edition used in this recording, the orchestral violin parts have been rewritten in these sections to remedy the problem.

The missing oboe or flute parts are just one of a number of textual problems that bedevil *Op. 7, No. 2*. The most striking aspect of these parts is the almost complete absence of dynamics and articulation markings. There are sporadic markings in the horns and in the viola part, but crucially, in the solo part and in the orchestral violin parts, there is virtually nothing to indicate what the composer's intentions may have been. The unusually incomplete state of Bailleux's edition of the concerto is puzzling. It was either prepared from a very corrupt engraving copy or the work was unaccountably printed before the engraving process had been completed. In either case, the printed edition of *Op. 7, No. 2* reflects very poorly on Bailleux's internal quality control processes.

The compilation of *Op. 7* also raises questions. The two concertos differ considerably from one another in critical aspects of style and structure, so much so that it appears that the two works were composed some years apart. Indeed, the curiously old-fashioned cast of the first movement of *Op. 7, No. 1*, and the employment of the hybrid sonata-ritornello structure in the finale in place of Saint Georges' favoured rondo form, may even point to the work predating the publication of the *Op. 2* concertos. When taken into consideration with the incomplete and highly corrupt state of *Op. 7, No. 2*, Saint-Georges' active involvement in the publication of the works seems highly unlikely and it may be no coincidence that Bailleux published no further works by the composer.

**Allan Badley**

## Fumika Mohri



In 2012 Fumika Mohri became the youngest and very first Japanese winner of the Seoul International Music Competition. She was also awarded Second Prize at the International Violin Competition ‘Premio Paganini’ and Sixth Prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2015, as well as Third Prize at the Montreal International Music Competition in 2019. As a soloist, Mohri has performed with major orchestras around the world including the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Korean Symphony Orchestra, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica and Chamber Orchestra of Europe. She has also collaborated with eminent artists including András Schiff, Abdel Rahman El Bacha, Ilya Gringolts, Nobuko Imai, Tabea Zimmermann and Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi. She gave her debut recital at Kioi Hall, Tokyo in 2016. Mohri has studied with Kaori Tajiri, Sachika Mizuno and Koichiro Harada. In 2014 she completed the soloist diploma course at the Toho Gakuen School of Music, and since 2015 has been studying with Mihaela Martin at the Kronberg Academy and Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln.

[www.fumikamohri.com](http://www.fumikamohri.com)

## Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice



The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice is valued for its stylistic interpretations and the extraordinary quality of its orchestral sound, and it is rightly ranked amongst the world's leading representatives of Czech musical culture. It often performs at the most prestigious festivals in the Czech Republic and venues throughout Europe such as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, the Herkulesaal and the Gasteig, Munich, the Musikverein, Vienna, the Brucknerhaus, Linz, and the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg among many others. Outside Europe the orchestra has performed in Japan and toured extensively around America. The first principal conductor, Libor Pešek, quickly raised the orchestra to a high standard, and subsequent principal conductors have included Marco Armiliato and Mariss Jansons. The orchestra has also welcomed numerous world-renowned soloists such as Isabelle van Keulen, Vladimir Spivakov, Ludwig Güttler, Radek Baborák, Gábor Boldoczki and Sergei Nakariakov. Aside from concerts, the orchestra regularly engages in operatic and theatre projects and has recorded dozens of successful albums on record labels including Naxos, ArcoDiva, Supraphon, Classico, Monitor-EMI and Amabile. [www.kfpar.cz](http://www.kfpar.cz)

## Michael Halász



Michael Halász's first engagement as a conductor was at the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, Munich, where, between 1972 and 1975, he directed all operetta productions. In 1975 he moved to Frankfurt to work as principal Kapellmeister with Christoph von Dohnányi, and here he conducted the most important works of the operatic repertoire. Many engagements as a guest conductor followed and in 1977 Dohnányi took him to the Staatsoper Hamburg as principal Kapellmeister. From 1978 to 1991 he was GMD (general music director) of the Hagen Opera House and in 1991 he took up the post of resident conductor at the Wiener Staatsoper for 20 years. Michael Halász's recordings for Naxos include ballets by Tchaikovsky, operatic excerpts of Wagner, symphonies by Beethoven, Schubert and Mahler, Rossini's overtures, three volumes of Liszt's symphonic poems (the latter critically acclaimed by the *Penguin Guide*), *Fidelio* (8.660070-71), *Don Giovanni* (8.660080-82), *Le nozze di Figaro* (8.660102-04), *Die Zauberflöte* (8.660030-31), and a pioneering recording of Schreker's opera *Der ferne Klang* (8.660074-75). He has also recorded Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* and *Orfeo* (8.550766), Richard Strauss's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (8.553379), Rubinstein's *Don Quixote* (8.555394) and, for Marco Polo, ballet music by Rubinstein (8.220451) and Schmidt's *Symphony No. 1* (8.223119).

*The orchestral parts and scores of the following works are available from:*

**www.artaria.com**

*Sources*

The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

**Violin Concerto in G major, Op. 2, No. 1**

Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE625

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: K 5437 (Bailleux, 1773)

**Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 2, No. 2**

Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE626

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: K 5437 (Bailleux, 1773)

**Violin Concerto in A major, Op. 7, No. 1**

Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE628

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: K 5404 (Bailleux, 1777)

**Violin Concerto in B flat major, Op. 7, No. 2**

Edited by Allan Badley – Artaria Editions AE629

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: K 5404 (Bailleux, 1777)





Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, possessed a panoply of talents – leading swordsman, athlete, virtuoso violinist, composer and musical director – so it is not surprising that by the standards of his age he was not especially prolific. Nevertheless, Saint-Georges' violin concertos demonstrate a gift for writing attractive and engaging music as well as a virtuoso technique with which to dazzle audiences, not least in his own performances. Published in pairs, the concertos recorded here show his originality of expression, his command of structure and a bravura exploitation of the violin's higher register.



## Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de **SAINT-GEORGES**

(1745–1799)

<b>Violin Concerto in G major, Op. 2, No. 1 (pub. 1773)</b>	<b>20:13</b>	<b>Violin Concerto in A major, Op. 7, No. 1 (pub. 1777)</b>	<b>16:58</b>
<b>1 I. Allegro</b>	<b>9:45</b>	<b>7 I. Allegro moderato</b>	<b>5:51</b>
<b>2 II. Largo</b>	<b>6:33</b>	<b>8 II. Adagio</b>	<b>5:18</b>
<b>3 III. Rondeau</b>	<b>3:52</b>	<b>9 III. Allegro moderato</b>	<b>5:47</b>
<b>Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 2, No. 2 (pub. 1773)</b>	<b>18:31</b>	<b>Violin Concerto in B flat major, Op. 7, No. 2 (pub. 1777)</b>	<b>20:57</b>
<b>4 I. Allegro</b>	<b>9:50</b>	<b>10 I. Allegro moderato</b>	<b>9:19</b>
<b>5 II. Adagio</b>	<b>4:22</b>	<b>11 II. Andante moderato</b>	<b>7:33</b>
<b>6 III. Rondeau</b>	<b>4:15</b>	<b>12 III. Rondeau</b>	<b>4:02</b>

**Fumika Mohri, Violin**  
**Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice**  
**Michael Halász**

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