

Joseph Bologne, “ Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges”, was born on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe on December 25, 1745. His mother, an enslaved black girl called "La Belle Nanon" was sixteen years old at the time of her son's birth. Joseph's father was George Bologne, a wealthy, white plantation owner. George Bologne was married to Elisabeth Mérican, with whom he had a daughter, Elisabeth, Joseph's half-sister.

Joseph was educated in France and became a renowned swordsman violinist, composer, and conductor.

At the age of seventeen, Joseph Bologne was made an officer of the king's guard (Louis XVI) and became “Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges”. In 1792, he commanded the *Légion des Américains et du Midi*, a cavalry unit for “citizens of color”, but due to the Reign of Terror of the following year, he was imprisoned for eighteen months.

In a necrology (or obituary) for Bologne, written in 1799 by J.S. A. Cuvelier, this contemporary of Bologne's expressed the following: “The entire world knows St. George's superiority in the art of fencing. He was no less superior in the dance, equitation, music, and without exception in all the physical exercises.” The full necrology is available in Gabriel Banat's painstakingly researched book *The Chevalier de Saint-Georges: Virtuoso of the Sword and Bow*. [Here](#) is a link to a lengthy excerpt (64 pages) of the book.

Resources

Banat, Gabriel (2006). *The Chevalier de Saint-Georges: Virtuoso of the Sword and the Bow*. Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press. ISBN 978-1-57647-109-8

Petre-Baumer, Chris. “Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges.” *Handel and Haydn Society*, 21 Sept. 2022.

For more information about the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, explore the following links:

Read the article by Runoko Rashidi: "[Joseph Bologne: The Chevalier de Saint-Georges of France](#)", published by the Atlanta Black Star.

At this [link](#), David Smith writes about the Chevalier in light of the movie of the same name that came out in 2023.

[Watch](#) the opening scene of the Chevalier movie.

This [LA opera link](#) includes a “limited time offer” to watch the company's production of Bologne's 1780 chamber opera *L'Amant Anonyme (The Anonymous Lover)*.

Scroll down a bit to find a [fantastic performance](#) of the Chevalier de Saint-George's Violin Concerto Opus 5, No.2 in A major, performed by Itamar Zorman, violinist and top prize winner of the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition.

You can listen to the [Buskaid Soweto String Ensemble](#) in South Africa. Buskaid has this to say on its Facebook page: “Buskaid is a musical charity offering high quality string tuition to underprivileged young people at its music school in the township of Soweto.” In this video, the orchestra is performing the Allegro movement of Chevalier's double violin concerto Symphonie Concertante in G major.

[Here](#) the Royal Scottish National Orchestra shares its performance of another Chevalier violin concerto: the A major, Opus 7, No.1, with soloist Maya Iwabuchi.