



ensemble who played the Capulet family mourners, seemed to have more of a sense of the style of the piece, not to mention brighter voices that were better suited to the period. Perhaps that is why the funeral set piece, when they make their first and only appearance, had more impact than the rest of the opera. The production, too, was more imaginative here (though obviously the libretto does not allow much scope for dramaturgical imagination elsewhere): the mourners entered ceremonially from the back of the church, which itself became a more appropriate venue for the opera in this ‘tomb scene’. On the whole, Matthew Halls’ conducting was sympathetic to the singers, if a little rigid at times. The playing of the London Mozart Players was well balanced and the textures were always lucid; the highlight was the final number in D major, when the trumpets entered the galleries to play their fanfare-like parts.

On the whole, then, it is hard to be convinced about the quality of both the opera and the performance, but that is no reason not to look forward to the company’s 2008 productions, a revival of Haydn’s *La vera costanza* and the UK premiere of Paer’s *Leonora*.

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JOSEPH BOULOGNE, CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES (c1745–1799)

VIOLIN CONCERTOS. CONCERTO IN D, OP. POST. NO. 2, CONCERTO NO.10 IN G, CONCERTO IN D,

OP. 3 NO. 1

Qian Zhou, Toronto Camerata, conductor Kevin Mallon

Naxos, 2004, 8.557322; one disc, 65 minutes

This is an excellent disc to swell the burgeoning Saint-Georges discography. Saint-Georges’s star began to rise with an early Erato LP of the beguiling symphonie concertante in G, Op. 13 (LDE 3037). The LP linked his name to Mozart’s but gave an incorrect opus number. Barry S. Brook’s 1962 score ensured wider recognition. On this *Contemporains Français de Mozart* LP Saint-Georges quite eclipsed the other composers, Guénin and Bertheaume, whose fortunes have not risen. ‘Le Mozart noir’ proclaims Jeanne Lamon’s 2003 disc of music by Saint-Georges. Another under Martin Gester sports the familiar portrait of the elegant fencer (as on Naxos) with the title ‘Un Africain à la cour’. Well, admittedly, his mother was Senegalese. ‘Le nègre des Lumières’ is the subtitle of a 1999 Forlane disc, while an internet posting seeks the burial location of the Black Mozart. Such marketing hyperbole and fanciful metonymy distort the reality. Saint-Georges’s core output was not abundant, comprising above all ten concertantes, at least fourteen violin concertos, eighteen string quartets, some sonatas, songs and some (mostly lost) stage works. Questions arise regarding his name, his paternity, his date of birth: Joseph de Boulogne or Boullogne or Bologne, chevalier de Saint-George(s) – he signed without an ‘s’. The death certificate gave his age as sixty but it has been argued that he was born in Guadeloupe in 1745 or 1748. Some uncertainty shrouds his works too. Chappell White (*From Vivaldi to Viotti: A History of the Early Classical Violin Concerto* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1992)) could locate only eleven violin concertos, but fourteen have now been recorded. Confusion surrounds the numbering of the concertos – for example, Naxos’s No. 10 in G is Avenir’s Op. 8 No. 11, while an Arion LP gave this work as Op. 7 No. 2, which was not corrected on the CD reissue. Op. 7 No. 2 is a fine work in B flat with a marvellous muted Andante (available on Forlane). Gabriel Banat (*The Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Virtuoso of the Sword and the Bow* (New York: Pendragon, 2006)) offers a new numbering whereby Naxos’s No. 10 becomes Op. 12 No. 2 (472). Despite these problems Saint-Georges has been fortunate on disc, with almost all his extant output recorded, except the two symphonies concertantes Op. 6. Several violin concertos boast four versions and 2005 saw two recordings of the final set of string quartets Op. 14 (1785).



This Naxos disc contains different performers from the previous Naxos CD of Saint-Georges's violin concertos and is mercifully free of its predecessor's tiresome harpsichord. The principal attraction is undoubtedly the D major concerto Op. Post. No. 2, published by Pleyel in 1799. Banat (*Chevalier de Saint-Georges*, 475) controversially maintains that this concerto is one of two works published by Baillieux in 1774 as Op. 4, but all known sources give Op. 4 as a single work, unrelated to this concerto which sounds much later. The first movement is distinctly odd. The graceful second subject bizarrely never recurs, and another simpler theme presented by the soloist takes precedence. The sublime slow movement is quite unlike any other of Saint-Georges's pieces. Surely Rossini recalled it in 1819 when he came to add the great prayer to Act III of *Mosè in Egitto*. It consists of a brooding introduction followed by a simple, melancholy theme akin to a minor version of 'Ah, vous dirai-je, maman'. The finale's bittersweet theme resurfaces as a contredanse in the 1780 comédie-ballet *L'Amant anonyme*. (The contredanse can be heard on Jeanne Lamont's disc, *Le Mozart Noir* SMCD 5225.)

This impressive work exhibits a freedom and spaciousness, especially in its opening Allegro, which sets it apart from previous Saint-Georges concertos. It even surpasses the considerable dimensions of Giornovich's opening movements. Phrases redolent of comic opera add colourful Italianate touches, which make it easy to see why this concerto found favour with Pleyel whose symphonies often enter the realm of opera buffa. Moreover, the first movement shares many features with Pleyel's own violin concerto (c1786), including a massive development section, largely in the minor, settling into a strange, almost hypnotic section. As usual with Saint-Georges it is not a thematic development. The concerto is cadenza-free but still has the longest opening movement of any of the concertos. Qian Zhou and the Toronto Camerata under Kevin Mallon give a splendid, thoughtful performance of this work with perfectly judged tempos. (Miroslav Vilímeč's version on Avenir spins out the Adagio to nearly twice the length of Zhou's version.) At times, tricky repetitions in the passagework of the Allegro lead to slight unsteadiness, but this is of little consequence. Naxos was right to put this magnificent concerto first on the disc.

The other two works on the CD date from the period when Giornovich was the darling of Paris until leaving suddenly in 1779. A personality as flamboyant as Saint-Georges, he produced a similar number of violin concertos, neither composer writing a concerto in a minor key. Giornovich's themes are usually less formulaic than Saint-Georges's, his romances more touching. However, Op. 3 No. 1 (1773), Saint-Georges's third concerto, is an imposing work with a fine minor-key slow movement and a pleasing minuet rondeau. The opening Allegro, marked *maestoso*, features florid passagework over pizzicato strings. As before, Zhou and Mallon are extremely effective throughout, although there is some stiff competition for this concerto from Jeanne Lamont with a period band giving a gentler performance, at times infusing the music with a floating, hallucinatory quality. But Zhou's economical cadenza for the opening Allegro is preferable to Lamont's tedious one.

For No. 10 in G (Op. 8 No. 11) Zhou easily sees off the competition from Miroslav Vilímeč on Avenir. Avenir's 1999 set of Saint-Georges (five CDs) was a godsend, with its twelve violin concertos and six concertantes, though, with ponderous slow movements, not an unmitigated success. A major blemish was Vilímeč's interminable cadenzas. (Was he unaware that the soloist's self-indulgence can vitiate an otherwise desirable disc?) Vilímeč's version of No. 10 (Op. 8 No. 11) is disappointing on account of its empty first-movement cadenza, and an overly extended two-and-a-half-minute cadenza dragging out to 10 minutes 49 seconds the already protracted Largo. Zhou and Mallon are brisker (6 minutes 38 seconds) with a shorter cadenza. Quite why Saint-Georges reused the slow movement of Op. 5 No. 2 (c1774) in No. 10 is a mystery. Naxos dates the work around 1777, while Avenir suggests 1782. The later date would be plausible for the reusing of material that the public had only recently heard, but the earlier date is on the whole more convincing. The substantial first-movement development is largely in the minor, with solo bravura passages over pizzicato accompaniment featuring in both outer movements. The rondo is Saint-Georges's longest finale, though the material hardly warrants such length.

Artaria's Allan Badley who edited the concertos, and apparently wrote the apposite cadenzas, provides informative insert notes. Some typographical errors are evident, for example in the dating of Op. 5 No. 2 to



1800, although the German translation gets the right date of the mid-1770s. Badley, while enthusiastic, is commendably honest about Saint-Georges's prolixity, a criticism akin to Chappell White's charge of facility. In White's authoritative assessment one senses frustration with Saint-Georges to whom he devotes less space than to seven (unrecorded) concertos of Gaviniés. In his eagerness to demonstrate the thematic lack of variety White even resorts to quoting the second half of a theme from Op. Post. No. 2. But he also praises the 'simple and attractive' galant melodies (*From Vivaldi to Viotti*, 244), a gift that should not be underrated at a time when composers such as Cannabich and Gossec often struggled for memorable melodies. The performers, engineers and editor have produced a highly desirable disc – a splendid bargain too – and essential for the glorious D major Op. Post. concerto.

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FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

*THE UNAUTHORIZED PIANO DUOS. VOLUME 2: THE GAHY FRIENDSHIP. TRIO IN B-FLAT, D. 898, SONATA IN A MINOR, D. 821, ARRANGED FOR PIANO DUET BY JOSEF VON GAHY*

Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow, piano duet.

Divine Art Record Co. 25039, 2006; 70 minutes

With this first recording of transcriptions for piano duet by Joseph von Gahy (1793–1864), Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow recreate the type of music-making in which Gahy himself would have participated. Near the end of his life when he was suffering from partial paralysis of the right hand, Gahy arranged about thirty Schubert compositions. These arrangements were especially written to accommodate his disability and were intended for him and a friend, Marie von Stohl, to play in private. Following the death of Gahy, the manuscripts of the arrangements were taken by the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek and have since remained unpublished. Other than the occasional mention in the Deutsch documents, little interest has been shown in them before this recording. Considering Gahy was a friend and duet partner of Schubert's, this is hard to understand. As a young man, he played four-hand works with the composer and became familiar with his style of playing, as revealed in comments made later in life. Although little is known about Gahy, a Hungarian émigré who lived and worked in Vienna as a civil servant, he seems to have been well regarded by Schubert. At social events, the two men regularly performed together, covering a range of works that included variations, arrangements and dances, and they would sometimes take it in turns to play solo dances. In the composer's absence, Gahy was permitted to perform some of the more ambitious solo compositions, such as the Sonatas in A minor, D845, and in D major, D850.

In a more passive role, it is likely that Gahy attended rehearsals and the first performances of Schubert chamber works. As a member of the composer's inner circle, he would have mixed with other musicians and had the opportunity to discuss interpretative issues with them. From instrumentalists involved in private and public music-making, such as Ignaz Schuppanzigh, Josef Linke and Karl Maria von Bocklet, he would have gained insight into how a performance might be adapted to a particular environment. Though it is difficult to assess the influence of these early experiences on the way Gahy would later transcribe works, his contact with musical figures close to Schubert further emphasizes the significance of his past.

Goldstone and Clemmow highlight the connection between the two men in their programme. Each transcription is of a work imbued with lyricism, a Schubertian characteristic that greatly appealed to Gahy. Two of the works, the trio and the sonata, also have the distinction of being performed in the composer's lifetime. The final item, the Rondo in D, is an original Schubert composition for four hands and was