

**Les Délices: Concert Series continues
with online “Winds of Change” (Nov. 18)**

by Daniel Hathaway



Parallel revolutions in France and Haiti have inspired the second episode of this season’s online concert series from Les Délices. “Winds of Change,” which went live on November 18 and is available both on subscription and as a single performance, includes late 18th-century music by Joseph Bologne (Chevalier de Saint-Georges), Karl Bochsa, and Luigi Boccherini, and the premiere of a commissioned piece, Haitian-born composer Sydney Guillaume’s *A Journey to Freedom*.

Following centuries of injustice and exploitation, new ideas of equal opportunity and representative government in one of the principal documents of the French Revolution, the [*Declaration of the Rights of Man*](#), led enslaved Africans in the



French colony of Saint-Domingue (which included what is now Haiti) to mount their own revolution in 1791, only two years after the French. Struggles for racial justice are ongoing.

After an introduction by artistic director Debra Nagy, flutist Emi Ferguson, violinist Shelby Yamin, violist Allison Monroe, and cellist Rebecca Reed set the musical scene with a sparkling performance of a piece by Guadeloupe-born composer Joseph Bologne. Known also as the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, this dashing, mixed-race figure joined a French abolitionist group in France and visited Haiti in the 1790s.

What was originally a sonata in E-flat for flute and harp has been adroitly arranged by Nagy as a quartet for flute and strings. Delightful and tuneful, the sonata, Nagy writes, “belies the racism that he faced forging a path as a Black performer and composer in late 18th-c. France.”



Sydney Guillaume introduced his new piece, *A Journey to Freedom*, standing on the bank of a river in Portland, Oregon, where he now lives, having emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 11. Restless and yearning, the work combines neoclassical musical rhetoric with traditional Afro-Haitian “[yanvalou](#)” rhythms. Recurring motives pass back and forth through the ensemble of flute, oboe, and strings, wafting the music forward, yet never reaching a conclusion — much like the journey to freedom, still incomplete although Haiti achieved its independence two centuries ago.

An enduring image of the French Revolution is the storming of the notorious Parisian prison, la Bastille, the psychological after-effects of which can be heard woven into

the fabric of Karl Bochsa's D-Minor Oboe Quartet. Laden with attractive tunes played out over foreboding undercurrents, this is a substantial work that should receive more attention in the chamber music world.

"Winds of Change" ends with a splendid performance of Luigi Boccherini's *Quintet in C*, a piece seemingly so unrelated to the theme of the program that it might have just dropped out of the sky.

The quintet features challenging writing for the wind players, and Ferguson and Nagy step up smartly to the plate and deliver flawless playing. In addition to allowing the listener to get lost in the music, the piece shows how resourceful Boccherini can be in finding ways to decorate and complicate a C-Major scale. Perhaps the vision of civilization Boccherini builds into this Quintet is one of the reasons we fight revolutions.



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