GEORGE WALKER

Five Sinfonias

National Symphony Orchestra
The Kennedy Center

Gianandrea Noseda

STEINWAY & SONS

GEORGE WALKER

Five Sinfonias

Recorded live in the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Sinfonia No. 1: January 13, 15, and 16, 2022
Sinfonia No. 2: May 24 and 25, 2023
Sinfonia No. 3: June 1, 2, and 3, 2023
Sinfonia No. 4, "Strands": January 27, 28, and 29, 2022
Sinfonia No. 5, "Visions": May 12 and 13, 2023

Recording producer Blanton Alspaugh, *Soundmirror*.
Recording engineer Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*.
Mastering engineer Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*.
Executive Producers Nigel Boon and Genevieve Twomey, *National Symphony Orchestra*.
Cover photo, George Walker photos, and Sinfonia No. 5, "Visions" video stills Frank Schramm.
Cover design Scott Bushnell, *The Kennedy Center*.
Orchestra photo Scott Suchman. **Conductor photo** Stefano Pasqualetti.

National Symphony Orchestra
Gianandrea Noseda, conductor

George Walker (1922–2018)

		Sinfonia No. 1 (1984, revised 1996)	
1.	i.	♩ = 92	6:20
2.	ii.	♩ = 60	5:08
		Sinfonia No. 2 (1990)	
3.	i.	♩ = 76	6:43
4.	ii.	Lamentoso e quasi senza misura. ♪ = 63 Aaron Goldman, flute	3:16
5.	iii.	♪ = 116	5:56
		Sinfonia No. 3 (2002)	
6.	i.	♩ = 76	5:20
7.	ii.	♩ = 54	4:35
8.	iii.	♩ = 72-88	4:05
9.		**Sinfonia No. 4, "Strands"** (2011) *Co-commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra*	9:42
10.		**Sinfonia No. 5, "Visions"** (2016) Shana Oshiro, soprano | DeMarcus Bolds, tenor | Daniel J. Smith, bass-baritone V Savoy McIlwain, bass-baritone | Kevin Thompson, bass	14:12
		Total:	65:17

Sinfonia No. 1 (1984, revised 1996)

In January 2022, the National Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Gianandrea Noseda began performing and recording the complete cycle of George Walker's five sinfonias, in celebration of the composer's 100th birthday. Remembering and honoring the music of George Walker is particularly special for the National Symphony Orchestra given the mutual connection to Washington, D.C. and its unique history of collaboration and commissions.

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"I've always thought in universal terms, not just what is Black, or what is American, but simply what has quality," George Walker said in an interview on the occasion of his 90th birthday in 2012. British critic Tom Service, writing in *The Guardian* in 2015, cited Hindemith and Stravinsky as two of Walker's "musical heroes," but stressed that the American composer "has created a distinctive world that is modernist and multifaceted yet richly communicative."

This distinguished composer, pianist, and educator, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his orchestral song cycle *Lilacs* in 1996, published a fascinating memoir in which he recounted a lifetime of successes and honors and also spoke quite frankly about his musical likes and dislikes. He had studied piano with Rudolf Serkin and composition with Samuel Barber's teacher Rosario Scalero at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and first made his name with the often performed *Lyric for Strings*, a creative response to Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. As a composer, he always remained true to his classical roots and built an oeuvre of symphonic and chamber works that earned him the esteem not only of the profession but of a wide audience as well.

Between 1984 and 2016, Walker composed five sinfonias. The first of these, commissioned by the Fromm Foundation, was premiered by the Berkshire Music Center Orchestra under Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood on August 1, 1984. It is a compact work in two movements, in which moments of great energy and powerful outbursts alternate with calm, lyrical sections. There are massive, block-like chords for the brass and wild percussion passages, but also sensitive violin solos and agitated outbursts for the clarinet and the flute, among others. In turn dramatic and tender, the work covers a lot of emotional ground in just over 10 minutes, and ends with a climactic statement for the entire orchestra.

- Notes by Peter Laki
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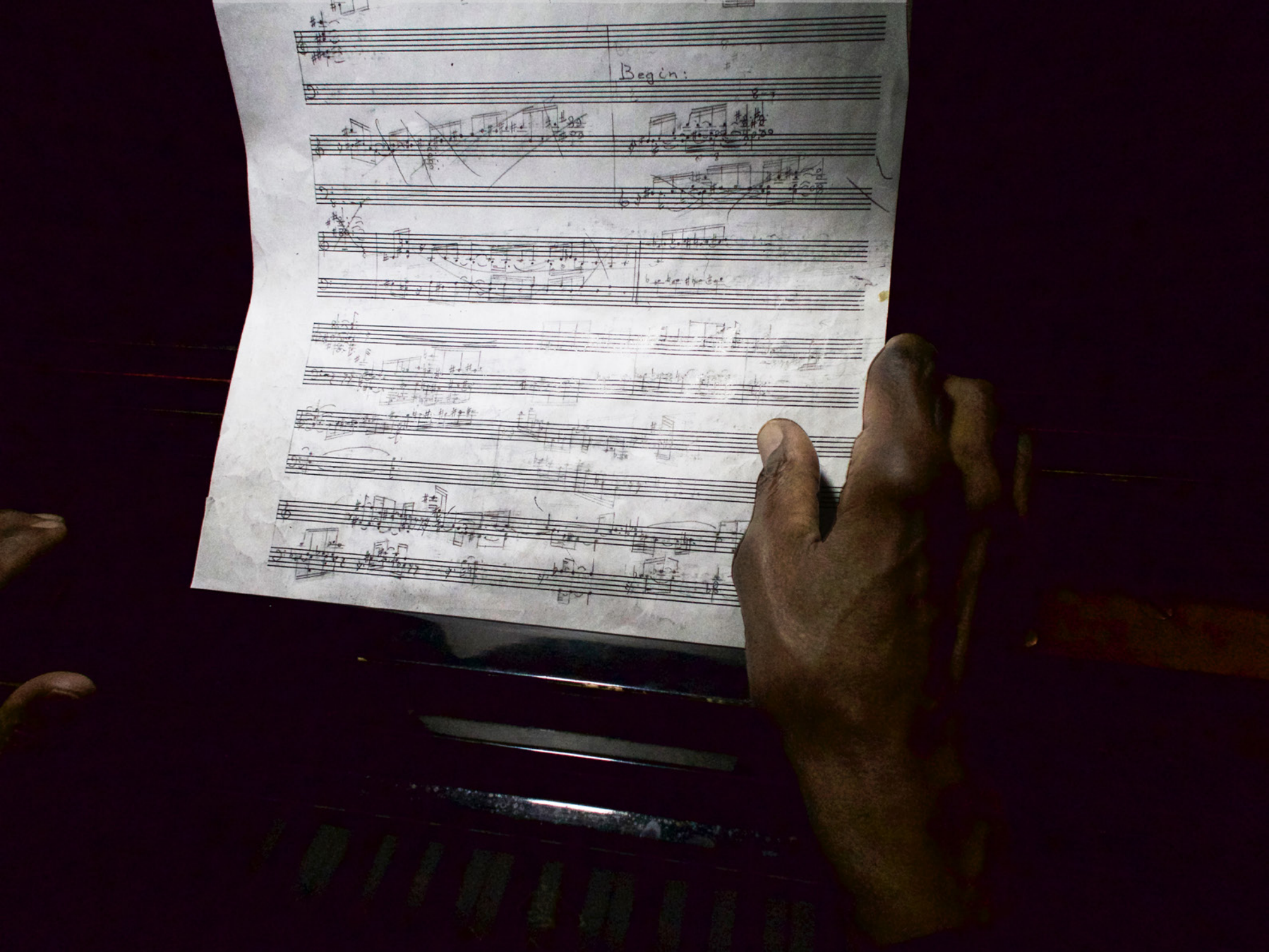
Begin:

Sinfonia No. 2 (1990)

George Walker never wanted to be seen simply as a Black composer. He refused to be pigeonholed in that way, and while he occasionally made allusions to Negro spirituals in his music, his mature style is firmly rooted in European modernism. Some critics have detected influences of Stravinsky and Hindemith, but the fiercely independent Walker was, essentially, going his own way and did not profess allegiance to any "camp."

Sinfonia No. 2 was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, one of the most prestigious organizations devoted to the promotion of contemporary music, honoring the memory of Serge Koussevitzky, long-time music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Walker's work was first performed by Neeme Järvi and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1993. The composer provided the following concise description:

The first movement begins with a four-note motive for full orchestra. An ascending melodic line in the violins continues in the woodwinds. Repeated notes in the brass terminate that section. In the next section an extended melodic line beginning in the celli and contra basses and moving to violins, woodwinds, and horns leads to a contrasting four-note motive stated by an oboe. This becomes the genesis of a new section that climaxes with a restatement of the four-note motive from the opening of the movement. Rhythmic similarities to this material appear with intervallic alterations. A flurry of notes in the strings and woodwinds subsides quickly to a sustained "D" in the violins that is punctuated by pizzicati in the lower strings. An ascending melodic line culminates in a tutti of repeated notes. A brief coda closes the movement quietly. The second movement, marked "Lamentoso e quasi senza misura," begins as a flute solo before a chord played by four celli and a guitar support the florid figuration in the flute part. With the return of the initial segment of the flute solo, three more celli and a double bass are added to the orchestration. The rhythmic impulse of five notes played initially by the English horn and bass clarinet are the core elements that can be identified in the third movement. The subtle emergence of an eighth-note pattern with a steady pulse provides the basis for the imposition of rhythmic fragments above it. Interposed between these sections are brief sustained moments that interrupt the foot-tapping insistence of the bass line of eighth notes. The brilliant conclusion of the work incorporates the five notes heard at the beginning of the movement.

- Notes by Peter Laki

Sinfonia No. 3 (2002)

George Walker's third sinfonia was premiered a decade after the second, and once more by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (conducted, in this case, by Andrey Boreyko). But it was composed a full 22 years after its predecessor. The fact that it had to wait a much shorter time for its first performance certainly speaks to Walker's growing recognition as an American master.

The present work finds the octogenarian composer at the height of his creative powers, as vigorous and full of energy as ever. In three compact movements following the traditional fast-slow-fast outline, it is a technically challenging and emotionally charged composition, in turns majestic and tender, agitated and more relaxed. An energetic opening sets the stage for an austere first movement, dominated by massive blocks of chords. The middle movement starts out with some lyrical woodwind lines, yet its elementary melodic gestures build up to a dramatic high point, followed by a resolution of the tensions. The final movement is tumultuous and intense throughout. Unlike many of his younger colleagues, Walker remained a committed modernist in his harmonic language. As the British critic Tom Service has written: [Walker's music] "has a sharp-edged clarity in its modernist dissonances and angularity, and yet you feel his essential desire to communicate with his audiences throughout."

- Notes by Peter Laki

George
WALKER

Sinfonia No. 4, “Strands” (2011)

George Walker celebrated the year of his 90th birthday with the premiere of a brand new work, Sinfonia No. 4, “Strands”. The commission came from a consortium of orchestras, including the National, Cincinnati, New Jersey, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras, with a grant from Meet the Composer, and was premiered by the New Jersey Symphony in March 2012 under the direction of Jacques Lacombe.

The subtitle refers to the “strands” from two spirituals, “There is a Balm in Gilead” and “Roll, Jordan, Roll” that the composer wove into the fabric of his composition. Walker’s use of these quotes is rather subtle and somewhat reminiscent of the way Charles Ives worked with church hymns in many of his works: the melodies are fragmented, transformed, and hinted at more than presented in full. Their “strands” are integrated into a rhythmically vibrant and colorfully orchestrated one-movement work, projecting high energy and constant excitement.

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Commenting on his piece, Walker offered the following pointers:

The Sinfonia begins with an introduction that consists of several sections before the principal theme is stated. This theme recurs several times. The quotation of the first spiritual provides a pensive relief from the proclamatory nature of the theme that precedes it.

The briefer snippet of the second spiritual is affirmative. The following section consists of a melodic bass line over which fragmented interjections are superimposed. A similar section recurs, combining with the opening phrase of the second spiritual played by the piano during the course of the work. The bass material appears briefly in the coda.

- Notes by Peter Laki
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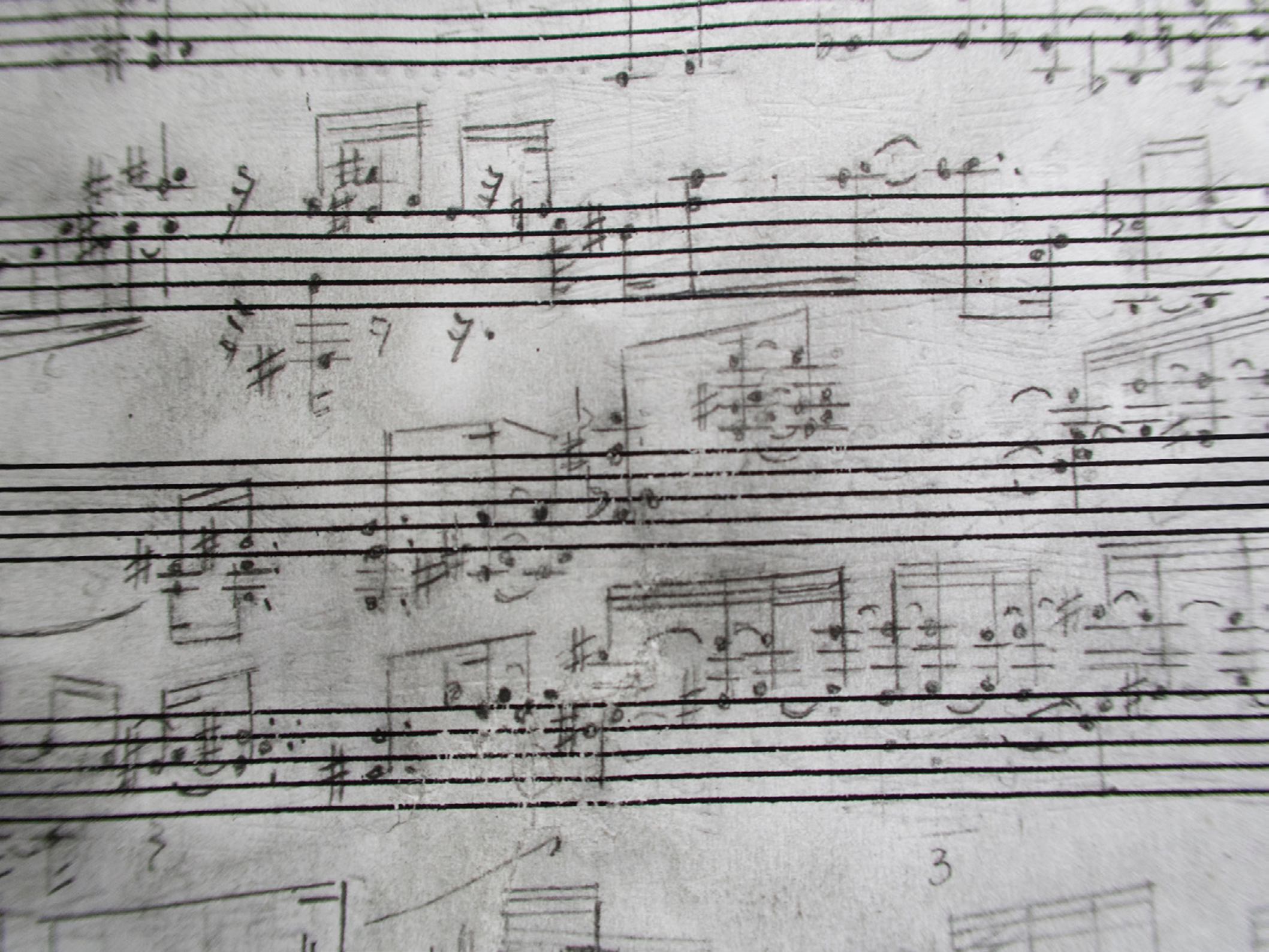
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Sinfonia No. 5, “Visions” (2016)

The last of George Walker’s sinfonias is an unrelentingly modernist work from the pen of the 94-year-old composer who seemed to become ever more radical as he grew older. On June 27, 2015, a 21-year-old white supremacist shot nine African American members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Walker, who had visited Charleston shortly before, was profoundly shaken by the news of the massacre, and decided to make his latest orchestral composition into a protest against violence. The work became more than that, however. According to Walker’s original concept, the music was supposed to be accompanied by a video of Charleston, created by the composer’s friend, photographer Frank Schramm, and by a series of poetic readings, in a multimedia presentation. However, the piece can also be performed as a purely orchestral composition.

After completing the work, Walker arranged for a studio recording with British conductor Ian Hobson and the Sinfonia Varsovia orchestra in Poland. The concert premiere was given posthumously by Thomas Dausgaard and the Seattle Symphony in April 2019. “Visions” is in a single movement and runs about 16 minutes in performance.

At the beginning of the score, Walker wrote the words “in memoriam…” In the words of composer Andrew Stiefel, “From the opening flourish in the orchestra, the music is agitated, restless, switching from idea to idea… through textures with outbursts of percussion declaratively punctuating each phrase.” Nervous scales, strong accents, and violent harmonic clashes express the tragic reality that in spite of all the progress that has been made, racial violence still couldn’t be eradicated from our world. The string, woodwind, and brass parts are all extremely demanding, and the work also includes several powerful piano solos, reminding us that Walker started his musical career as a concert pianist. Although the tempo is mostly on the moderate side, the piece has a strong rhythmic drive; the abundance of motifs and frequent changes in orchestration make the flow of the music utterly unpredictable. The work, as British conductor Edward Gardner put it, “is suffused with anger.” But it is a productive sort of anger: it will make us think and reflect.

- Notes by Peter Laki

Sinfonia No. 5, "Visions" (2016)

Texts

1. **Drink, drink to me!**
   Words by Ben Jonson
   Tenor and bass-baritones

2. **Sit quietly on the pebbled shore as waves crest high and peak**
   And dolphins leap and soar near reefs
   Dim, dark and bleak
   Words by Stephen Foster
   Soprano and tenor

3. **I dream**
   Hymn
   Tenor

4. **The sun sets deep into the sea**
   And ships afar glide stealthily
   Spiritual
   Soprano and tenor

5. **A lighthouse beams a stream of light that**
   Parts the misty shroud of starless night.
   Bass-baritones

6. **I see the harbors and the ports where men enslaved**
   Were beaten, chained, auctioned and bought.
   Soprano, tenor, bass-baritones, and bass

7. **Arma virumque cano!**
   Bass

8. **And it was so!**
   Tenor

George Walker (1922–2018)

A native of Washington, D.C., George Walker (b. 1922) was a child prodigy. He enrolled in Oberlin Conservatory at age 14 and received his Bachelor of Music degree with highest honors at the age of 18. He subsequently studied piano with Rudolf Serkin and composition with Rosario Scalero at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he became the first Black student to receive the Artist Diploma (in both piano and composition, 1945). This accomplishment marked the beginning of a steady procession of "firsts" that has followed Walker throughout his career. That same year, Walker's New York debut in Town Hall, sponsored by Efrem Zimbalist and his wife, made him the first Black instrumentalist to play a recital in that hall. As the winner of the Philadelphia Youth Auditions, Walker also became the first Black soloist to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. In 1950, under the aegis of National Concert Artists, he became the first Black instrumentalist to obtain major concert management. And in 1956, he became the first Black student to receive the Doctor of Musical Arts degree (in piano) from the Eastman School of Music.

Walker was the recipient of several fellowships and awards, among them a Fulbright in 1957 that enabled him to study at the American Conservatory in Fountainebleau, where he was a student of Nadia Boulanger and Robert Casadesus. Other fellowships include the John Hay Whitney Fellowship (1958), two Guggenheim Fellowships (1969 and 1987), three Rockefeller Fellowships (1971, 1972, and 1975), and two Koussevitsky Fellowships (1988 and 1998). He was also the recipient of the Harvey Gaul Prize (1963) and the Rhea Sosland Chamber Music Award (1967). Perhaps most significantly, Walker holds

the distinction of being the first Black composer to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music (April 1996), for his composition *Lilacs* for Voice and Orchestra.

Walker was a distinguished member of several faculties, including that of the Dalcroze School of Music, the New School for Social Sciences, Smith College, the University of Colorado, and the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. In 1969, he was appointed Professor of Music at Rutgers University, where he served as chairman of the music department. In 1975, he was appointed the first Distinguished Minority Chair at the University of Delaware. Walker retired from Rutgers in 1992 as professor emeritus. He was awarded honorary doctorates from Lafayette College (1981), Oberlin College (1983), the Curtis Institute of Music (1996), Montclair State University (1996), and Bloomfield College (1996). In 1998, Walker received a Letter of Distinction from the American Music Center for his significant contributions to the field of contemporary American music, and in 1999 he was elected to the Academy of Arts and Letters. Walker published over 80 works, which comprise music for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, piano, string quartet, voice, and organ. His music has been performed by virtually every major American orchestra.

George Walker died on August 23, 2018, in Montclair, New Jersey at the age of 96.

Biography by Ingrid Monson

Gianandrea Noseda
Conductor

Gianandrea Noseda is one of the world's most sought-after conductors, equally recognized for his artistry in both the concert hall and opera house. Since 2017, he has served as Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra.

Noseda's artistic leadership has inspired the NSO and reinvigrated it both at home at the Kennedy Center and beyond via media projects and on tour to New York where in 2019 and 2023, the NSO earned rave reviews both at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. The artistic partnership continues to flourish with the NSO recording label distributed by LSO Live for which Noseda also records as Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

In September 2021, Noseda began his tenure as General Music Director of the Zurich Opera House where the centerpiece of his tenure is a new Ring Cycle. Noseda has conducted the most important orchestras and at the leading opera houses and festivals including the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Edinburgh Festival, La Scala, Munich Philharmonic, The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Royal Opera House (UK), Salzburg Festival, Verbier Festival, Vienna Philharmonic, Vienna State Opera, and Vienna Symphony.

From 2007 until 2018, Noseda served as Music Director of Italy's Teatro Regio Torino where he ushered in a transformative era for the company matched with international acclaim for

its productions, tours, recordings, and film projects. His leadership resulted in a golden era for this opera house.

Other institutions where Noseda has had significant roles include the BBC Philharmonic which he led from 2002–2011; Principal Guest Conductor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra from 2011–2020; the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, where the Victor de Sabata Chair was created for him as Principal Guest Conductor from 2010–2014; and the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, which appointed him its first-ever foreign Principal Guest Conductor in 1997, a position he held for a decade. He served as Artistic Director of the Stresa Festival from 2000–2020. He was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 1999–2003; Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI from 2003–2006; and Principal Conductor of the Cadaqués Orchestra from 1994–2020.

Noseda's intense recording activity counts more than 70 CDs on Chandos, Deutsche Grammophon, and other labels, many of which have been celebrated by critics and have received awards. He has made numerous recordings with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Gianandrea Noseda's cherished relationship with the Metropolitan Opera dates back to 2002. At the Met he has conducted 13 operas and nearly 100 performances of mainly new productions, most recently *Adriana Lecouvreur* featuring Anna Netrebko. Many of his critically acclaimed performances have been broadcast on radio, Met Live in HD, and released as DVDs.

A native of Milan, Noseda is Commendatore al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, marking his contribution to the artistic life of Italy. He has been honored as *Musical America's* Conductor of the Year (2015) and International Opera Awards Conductor of the Year (2016). In December 2016, he was privileged to conduct the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm.

The NSO Music Director Chair is generously endowed by ***The Sant Family.***

Funding for NSO recordings is provided by generous Noseda Era Fund supporters.

National Symphony Orchestra

The National Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1931 and has been lead by Music Director, Gianandrea Noseda since 2017. The Italian conductor serves as the Orchestra's seventh Music Director, joining the NSO's legacy of such distinguished leaders as Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Antal Doráti, Howard Mitchell, and Hans Kindler. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds.

Since assuming the leadership of the NSO, Gianandrea Noseda has brought a renewed sense of energy and focus to the orchestra, which has resulted in wide-ranging recognition from local, national, and international publications, increases in subscription and single ticket sales, and the expansion of the Orchestra's reach through live streamed concerts and recordings. The *New York Times* called the NSO and Noseda's 2019 Carnegie Hall appearance "Spectacular," while the *Washington Post* wrote that "There's a certain flair going on at the National Symphony Orchestra," consistently reinforcing that this artistic partnership continues to gain momentum.

The National Symphony Orchestra's media label was launched in 2020 with its first release: Dvorák's Symphony No. 9 and Copland's *Billy the Kid*, and is distributed in partnership with LSO Live.

Founded in 1931, the Orchestra has always been committed to artistic excellence and music education. In 1986, the National Symphony Orchestra became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed a full season of subscription concerts since the Center opened in 1971. The 96-member NSO regularly participates in events of national and international importance, including official holiday celebrations through its regularly televised appearances on PBS from the lawn of the U.S. Capitol for Capital Concerts, livestreamed performances from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on Medici.tv, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9FM, making the NSO one of the most-heard orchestras in the country.

Additionally, the NSO's community engagement projects are nationally recognized, including NSO *In Your Neighborhood*, an annual week of approximately 35 performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other unexpected venues; *Notes of Honor*, which offers free performances for active, veteran, prior service, and retired members of the military and their families; and Sound Health, a year-round initiative that focuses on the intersection of music and wellness. Sound Health partners include the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Career development opportunities for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and the NSO's acclaimed, tuition-free Summer Music Institute.

For more information, visit **nationalsymphony.org**

National Symphony Orchestra

Violins
Nurit Bar-Josef
Concertmaster
Ying Fu
Associate Concertmaster, The Jeanne Weaver Ruesch Chair
Ricardo Cyncynates
Assistant Concertmaster
Jane Bowyer Stewart
Teri Hopkins Lee
Pavel Pekarsky
Heather LeDoux Green
Joel Fuller
Lisa-Beth Lambert
Jing Qiao
Angelia Cho

Marissa Regni *Principal*
Dayna Hepler
Assistant Principal
Desimont Alston
Cynthia R. Finks
Deanna Lee Bien
Glenn Donnellan
Natasha Bogachek
Carole Tafoya Evans
Jae-Yeon Kim
Wanzhen Li
Hanna Lee
Benjamin Scott
Malorie Blake Shin
Marina Aikawa
Peiming Lin
Derek Powell
Meredith Riley **

Violas
Daniel Foster *Principal*
Abigail Evans Kreuzer
Assistant Principal
Lynne Edelson Levine
Denise Wilkinson
James Francis Deighan
Nancy Thomas
Jennifer Mondie
Tsuna Sakamoto
Ruth Wicker
Mahoko Eguchi
Rebecca Epperson

Cellos
David Hardy *Principal, The Hans Kindler Chair, the Strong Family, and the Hattie M. Strong Foundation Chair*
Glenn Garlick
Assistant Principal
Steven Honigberg
David Teie
James Lee
Rachel Young
Mark Evans
Eugena Chang Riley
Loewi Lin
Britton Riley

Basses
Robert Oppelt *Principal*
Richard Barber
Assistant Principal
Jeffrey Weisner
Ira Gold
Paul DeNola
Charles Nilles
Alexander Jacobsen
Michael Marks

Harp
Adriana Horne

Flutes
Aaron Goldman *Principal*
Leah Arsenault Barrick
Assistant Principal
Alice Kogan Weinreb
Alyce Johnson **
Carole Bean *Piccolo*

Oboes
Nicholas Stovall *Principal*
Jamie Roberts
Assistant Principal
Harrison Linsey
Kathryn Meany Wilson
English Horn

Clarinets
Lin Ma *Principal*
Eugene Mondie
Assistant Principal
Paul Cigan
Peter Cain *Bass Clarinet*

Bassoons
Sue Heineman *Principal*
David Young
Acting Assistant Principal
Steven Wilson
Samuel Blair ** *Contrabassoon*

Horns
Abel Pereira *Principal*
Laurel Bennert Ohlson
Associate Principal
James Nickel
Acting Associate Principal
Markus Osterlund
Robert Rearden
Scott Fearing
Geoffrey Pilkington **

Trumpets
William Gerlach *Principal, The Howard Mitchell Chair, the Strong Family, and the Hattie M. Strong Foundation*
Michael Harper
Assistant Principal
Thomas Cupples
Keith Jones
Timothy McCarthy **

Trombones
Craig Mulcahy *Principal*
Evelyn Carlson
Assistant Principal
David Murray
Matthew Guilford
Bass Trombone

Tuba
Stephen Dumaine *Principal, The James V. Kimsey Chair*

Timpani
Jauvon Gilliam *Principal, The Marion E. Glover Chair*
Scott Christian
Assistant Principal

Percussion
Eric Shin *Principal*
Scott Christian
Greg Akagi
Joseph Connell *

Keyboards
Lambert Orkis *Principal*
Lisa Emenheiser *

Organ
William Neil *

Librarians
Elizabeth Cusato Schnobrick
Principal
Susan Stokdyk *Associate*
Karen Lee *Assistant*

* Regularly engaged extra
** Temporary position

Sinfonia No. 5, “Visions” (2016)

Soloists

Shana Oshiro, soprano – Shana Oshiro is an alumna of Morgan State University with a bachelors of fine arts in vocal performance and is a former Miss Maryland. She has appeared with Opera Philadelphia in productions of *Porgy and Bess* and *Margaret Garner*, and made several appearances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as a featured ensemble member. Oshiro has appeared with multiple local orchestras, opera and theater companies, and chorales in the D.C. area, including INSeries Opera, Handel Choir of Baltimore, Theatre Alliance, and Coalition of African Americans in the Performing Arts. Oshiro has received awards and recognition in vocal competitions and showcases, nationally and internationally, including Opera Ebony, the Boris Martinovich Vocal Competition, and Music International Grand Prix.

DeMarcus Bolds, tenor – Hailing from Dallas, Texas, Bolds received a bachelor of music in vocal performance from the University of Maryland, College Park, where he excelled both academically and artistically. During his time in Washington, D.C., he collaborated with organizations including the National Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and as a member of the esteemed University of Maryland Chamber Singers. Bolds has also been a distinguished member of The Houston Symphony Chorus and The Phillip Hall Singers, and served as manager of The Choraleers. His exceptional talents have landed him significant roles in numerous musical productions and world premieres, including C.C. White in *Dreamgirls*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Life Stories*, *Sweeney Todd*, Andre in *Ain’t Misbehavin’*, and *Feels, Thrills and Trainwrecks*.

Daniel J. Smith, bass-baritone – A graduate of George Mason University with a master of music in vocal performance and an alumnus of Winston-Salem State University, Smith appeared as Dewain in *I Was Looking At The Ceiling And Then I Saw The Sky* with INSeries Opera. Smith also appeared as Shango in the debut of *Oshun* with Washington National Opera. He also played Zechariah in *What Sweeter Music* by Timothy Amukele. Smith was also seen in *Requiem* with INSeries; The Invisible Man in *The Burning Bush* by Jasmine Barnes and Joshua Banbury with Washington National Opera; Jerry in *Spirit Moves* by Timothy Amukele and Jarrod Lee with INSeries; Elephant Geralard in *Slopera!* by Carlos Simon based on the book *I Really Like Slop* by Mo Williams; and “Dew” from *Our Queer Mother, Gabriela*.

V Savoy McIlwain, bass-baritone – A graduate of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and the creator of The Savoy Series Emerging Artist Project, McIlwain holds a bachelor of music degree from the University of Northern Iowa and a master of music degree from the University of Maryland. McIlwain is a 2007 Metropolitan Opera regional finalist, NATS regional finalist, Omega Psi Phi first place winner, and former National Endowment for the Arts award recipient. McIlwain has numerous national and international operatic and concert credits. His recent performances include Spencer Coyle in Britten's *Owen Wingrave*, Officer Jones in Nembeko's *Sunder*, and his debut in Tulsa Opera's 75th Anniversary production as Haly in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, where he serves as a 2022–2023 resident artist.

Kevin Thompson, bass – Thompson was born in Washington, D.C. He is an alumnus of the Juilliard School in New York, San Francisco Opera's prestigious Merola Program, and the Santa Fe Opera Program. Acclaimed by the *New York Times* as a "stentorian bass," he "possesses a voice with extraordinary range, depth, color combined with a commanding stage presence… a mountain of a voice, with resonance from the Escorial of Philip II to the throne of Boris Godunov, and the majestic court of Sarastro…" (San Francisco Classical Voice). Recent credits include debuts with Washington National Opera in *Elektra*, as both Der Pfleger des Orest and Ein Alter Diener; with Fort Worth Opera in *Aida* as Il Re; and with Utah Opera as Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. In concert, Thompson returned to Opera Omaha for an Opera Outdoors concert with scenes from Boito's *Mefistofele* as Mefistofele; with Roanoke Opera for their Opera Gems Gala Concert; and Eureka Symphony for Verdi's Requiem.

About the Photographer

Frank Schramm

Frank Schramm is a photographer and filmmaker celebrated for his portraits of musicians and artists. His work encompasses a wide range of subjects which he documents meticulously, sometimes over the span of several years. A boundless curiosity and obsession with the technical and formal qualities of his subject matter challenge him to document the familiar in new and unexpected ways. His work is held in many permanent collections including the Metropolitan Museum (New York), Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery (Washington), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles County Museum, The Library of Congress, Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris), and the Musée de l'Elysée (Lausanne).

Frank Schramm on

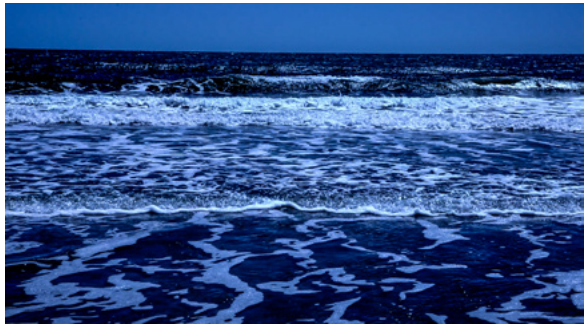
Documenting George Walker

I had the great honor and unexpected privilege to document George Walker's life for over 14 years. I met George after hearing one of his works on the radio back in 2004 and reached out to him the same evening to see if I could get a copy of his Sinfonia No. 3 which was performed by the Detroit Symphony. I did not realize that in fact we lived in the same town, Montclair, New Jersey, until he personally hand-delivered a cassette recording, dropping it through my front door mail slot. George and I became very close friends, and I assisted him in many of his projects.

"Even though he won the Pulitzer Prize and was the first African American to do so, it was a continual uphill effort for him to make contact with orchestras and have his works performed. George shared with me many times his running into "Dead ends!" in his efforts to be recognized as a classical composer.

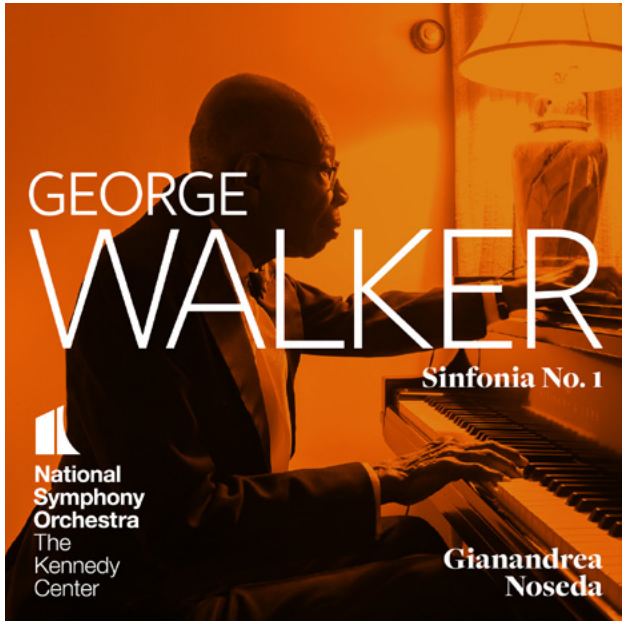
He was frequently confronted with stereotypical questions; "Are you a jazz pianist?" Is your music "Jazz oriented?" During the 14 years I spent documenting George Walker, I felt that God had placed me in the serendipitous presence of a great genius; one who became a very close friend. In 2017, I made a short film *Discovering George Walker*, which had its world premiere at the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland presented at the festival *Les Nuits des Images*. I also worked with George in making a video which is a projection for his now final work, Sinfonia No. 5 "Visions" for Orchestra. Walker asked me to create a video to commemorate the Charleston massacre of 2015 (see page 14). He wanted specific images: the Charleston harbor, a slave ship, a lighthouse, ocean waves, and other images related to slavery. Though relatively short, the Sinfonia includes a full orchestra, five voices and the film.

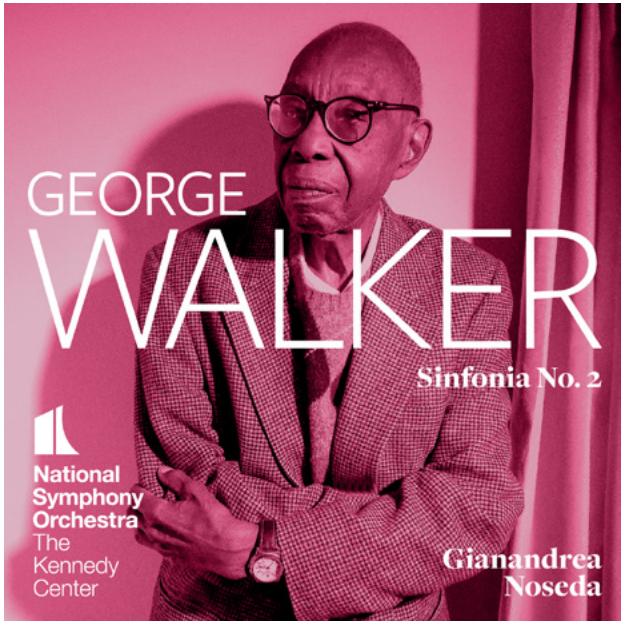
As Walker said, "This work will be like no other..."

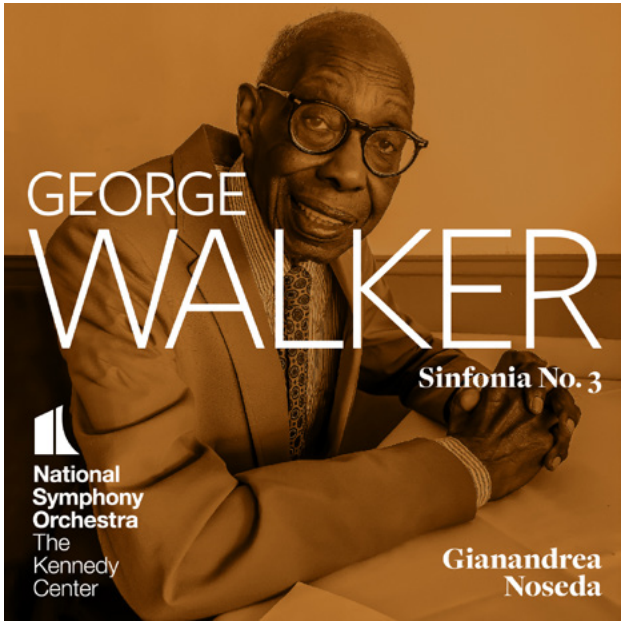


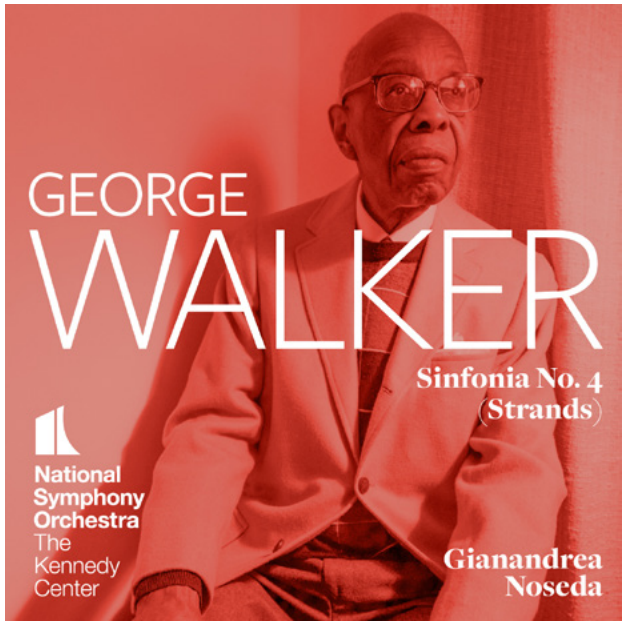
To view the video of Sinfonia No. 5 visit https://www.kennedy-center.org/nso/home/nso-media-projects/walker/

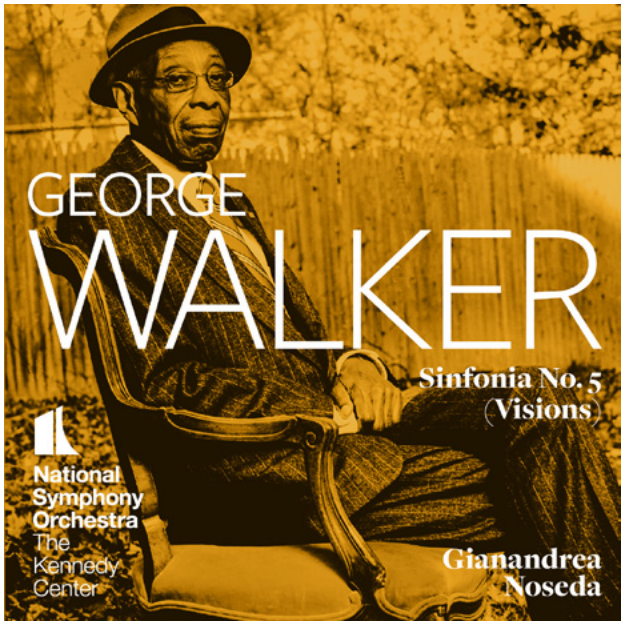
National Symphony Orchestra performing Sinfonia No. 5, May 2023

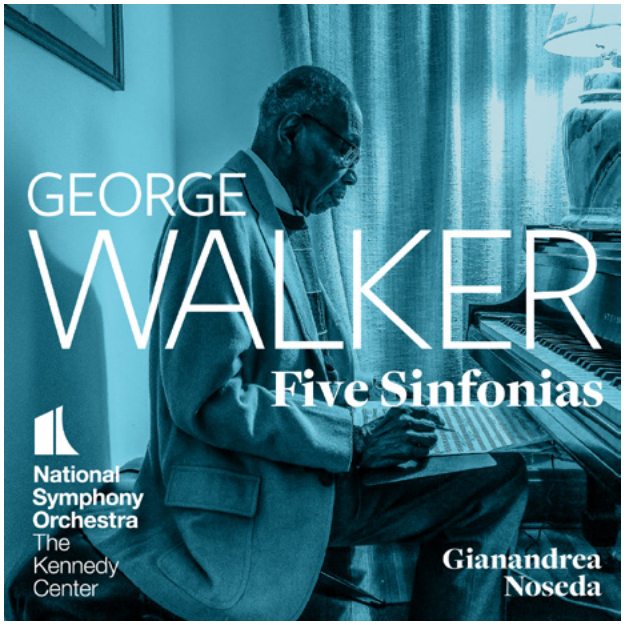












Celebrate George Walker's work with this digital recording cycle of performances from the National Symphony Orchestra.

Download the complete album or purchase the CD, available September 2023.