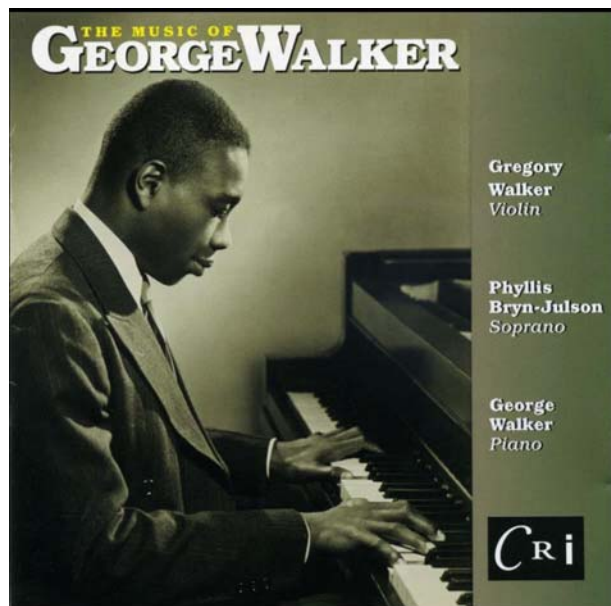


The Music of George Walker



- Piano Sonata No. 2 (1956) (10:17)
1. Adagio non troppo (2:41)
 2. Presto (1:18)
 3. Adagio (3:59)
 4. Allegretto tranquillo (2:19)
 5. *Spatials: Variations for Piano* (1960) (3:26)
 6. *Spektra* (1970) (4:29)
- George Walker, piano

7. Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano (1958) (8:46)
Lento – Allegro; Meno Mosso; Andante; . Molto adagio
Gregory Walker, violin; George Walker, piano
8. Prelude (1945) (2:05)
9. Caprice (1940) (1:32)
George Walker, piano
- Collected Songs (1940s through 1960s) (25:37)
10. Response (Paul Lawrence Dunbar) (2:26)
11. So We'll Go No More A-Roving (Byron) (2:07)
12. Hey Nonny No (anon.) (1:10)
13. Sweet Let Me Go (anon.) (1:51)
14. The Bereaved Maid (anon.) (3:50)
15. I Went To Heaven (Emily Dickinson) (1:14)
16. A Red, Red Rose (Robert Burns) (4:29)
17. What If I Say I Shall Not Wait
(Emily Dickinson) (2:52)
18. I Have No Life But This
(Emily Dickinson) (1:29)
19. Bequest (Emily Dickinson) (2:52)
20. With Rue My Heart Is Laden (A.E. Housman) (1:29)
Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano; George Walker, piano
21. Variations for Piano (1953) (5:24)
George Walker, piano

Total playing time: 62:10

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Notes

My Piano Sonata No. 2 was composed as a dissertation for the doctor of musical arts degree, which I received from the Eastman School of Music in 1956. The theoretical premise underlying its structure is the consistent project of three relationships. The theme of the first movement is reflected in the ground bass upon which six variations are built. The second movement, a brief scherzo, is followed by a monothematic slow movement. The fourth movement, in sonatina form, ends with a coda derived from the theme of the first movement.

Spatials is a set of six twelve-tone variations on an original theme called "Statement," composed in 1960. Its title suggests colors emanating from changing dispositions occurring in the different registers of the piano.

Spektra, from 1970, presents contrasts in color in a freely atonal context.

The Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 was begun in Paris in 1958 and completed in Fontainebleau, France, the following summer. After an introduction, a fugal Allegro is followed by a brief piano interlude. This initiates the second section characterized by alternating moments of playfulness and scalar intensity. The third section, a recitative for the violin, is followed by an intense lyrical section that concludes with the return of the introduction that begins the work.

The Prelude and Caprice were composed in 1945 and 1941 respectively. The latter was my first work for piano,

composed as a first semester composition student at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. The Prelude was originally one of *Three Pieces for Piano* that I composed for my Town Hall recital debut in 1945.

The songs presented on this recording are culled from works composed over a period of thirty years. The first song, *Response*, a setting of a poem by the first significant black American poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, was composed in 1941. Three of the Emily Dickinson songs, "Legacy," "I Have No Life But This," and "What If I Say I Shall Not Wait," were commissioned by Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. The last named song concludes with a canonical treatment of a quote from the folksong "I Wonder As I Wander."

The *Variations*, composed in 1953, are based on a folksong discovered in the *Songbag* of Carl Sandburg. The six variations on the theme reflect the distinctly American flavor of the folksong.

—George Walker

In a long and varied career, **George Walker** has achieved wide recognition as an American composer and pianist. He has also been a path-breaking leader for blacks in classical music. This began when he started concertizing in his early teens and culminated in 1996, when he became the first black composer to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

George Walker was born in Washington, D.C., in 1922. He began the study of piano at age five. He gave his first public recital at Howard University when he was fourteen and was admitted to Oberlin College on a four-year scholarship. Upon graduating from Oberlin at age eighteen with the highest honors in his class, with a major in piano and a minor in organ, he was admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music. He studied piano with Rudolf Serkin and Mieczyslaw Horszowski, composition with Rosario Scalero, teacher of Samuel Barber and Gian Carlo Menotti, chamber music with William Primrose and Gregor Piatigorsky.

In 1945, he became the first black graduate of the Curtis Institute and made his acclaimed New York debut in Town Hall in a recital sponsored by Mrs. Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist. Two weeks later, he became the first black instrumentalist to play with the Philadelphia Orchestra as the winner of the Philadelphia Youth Auditions. He performed the Rachmaninov 3rd Piano Concerto with Eugene Ormandy as conductor.

In 1950, he became the first black pianist to obtain major management under the aegis of National Concert Artists and Columbia Artists Management; he toured the United States and Europe. In 1956, he became the first black to earn a doctorate degree from the Eastman School of Music. In 1957, he received a Fulbright Fellowship to Paris, where he studied composition with Nadia Boulanger. In 1958, he received a John Hay Whitney Fellowship, the first composer to be awarded that grant.

In 1960, he taught at the Dalcroze School of Music and at the New School for Social Sciences, where he initiated a course in aesthetics. In 1961, he accepted an appointment to Smith College. He became a visiting professor at the University of Colorado in 1968. In 1969, he was appointed professor of music at Rutgers University, where he became chairman of the music department and Distinguished Minority Chair at the University of Delaware. He retired from Rutgers University as Professor Emeritus in 1992.

George Walker has been the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships, two Rockefeller Foundation Fellowships, several MacDowell Colony and Yaddo Fellowships, five National Endowment for the Arts Awards, grants from the New Jersey Council on the Arts, research grants from Smith College, the University of Colorado and Rutgers University. In 1963, he received first prize in the Harvey Gaul Competition. In 1982, he received an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and a Koussevitzky Foundation

Award in 1988. Honorary doctorates were bestowed on him by Lafayette College and Oberlin College.

He has published over seventy-five works that include two overtures, two Sinfonias for Orchestra, concertos for trombone and orchestra and piano and orchestra, two works for cello and orchestra, a violin concerto entitled, *Poème*, two string quartets, two sonatas for violin and piano, four piano sonatas, sonatas for cello and piano and viola and piano, a brass quintet, works for clarinet and piano, a Mass for four soloists, chorus and orchestra, a Cantata for Boys Choir and Orchestra, numerous songs and choral works, organ pieces, works for chamber orchestra (*Serenata* and *Orpheus*), a piano trio, the famous *Lyric for Strings* and the *Address for Orchestra*.

He has been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic (Cello Concerto), the Cleveland Orchestra (*Dialogues* for Cello and Orchestra), the Boys Choir of Harlem (*Cantata*), the Philharmonia Virtuosi (Violin Concerto), the Cleveland Chamber Symphony (*Orpheus*), the Eastman School of Music (*An Eastman Overture*), the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2), the Washington Performing Arts Society (Piano Sonata No. 3), and many other important orchestras and institutions in this country and in England.

Walker received the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Music for *Lilacs* for Voice and Orchestra, which was commissioned and premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano, is widely regarded as one of the finest interpreters of contemporary vocal music. She was discovered at Concordia College in Minnesota by Gunther Schuller, who was struck by her facility at sight-reading twelve-tone music. After studying at Berkshire Music Center and Syracuse University, she made her official debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Berg's *Lulu Suite* in 1966. Works have been written for her by numerous composers, and she recorded music CRI by Robert Starer, Ned Rorem, and David Del Tredici.

Gregory Walker, the older son of George Walker, is a professor of music at the University of Colorado in Denver and the concertmaster of the Boulder Philharmonic. He has degrees in violin and composition from Indiana University, the University of California, San Diego, Mills College, and a doctorate degree from the University of Colorado. His own compositions have been performed by numerous ensembles and he has appeared as a soloist with many orchestras in the U.S.A. and Europe.

Production Notes

CD mastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Music Studios, Inc., NYC.

Piano Sonata no. 2, *Spatials*, Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Prelude, Caprice, Variations: digitally recorded and produced by George Walker, 1995-1996.

From SD 270: *Spektra*. Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, engineer. Original record made possible by a grant from the Research Council of Rutgers University.

From SD 488: Songs. Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, engineer. Original recording was made possible by the American Academy and Institute of Arts & Letters.

All works published by MMD Music (ASCAP).

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