A portrait of George Walker, an elderly man with glasses, wearing a patterned jacket and a watch, standing in front of a red curtain. The entire image has a red tint.

GEORGE WALKER

Sinfonia No. 2



**National
Symphony
Orchestra**

The
Kennedy
Center

Gianandrea Noseda



National Symphony Orchestra

Gianandrea Noseda, conductor

George Walker (1922–2018)

Sinfonia No. 2 (1990)

- | | | | |
|----|------|--|------|
| 1. | i. | ♩ = 76 | 6:43 |
| 2. | ii. | Lamentoso e quasi senza misura. ♩ = 63
Aaron Goldman, flute | 3:16 |
| 3. | iii. | ♩ = 116 | 5:56 |

Recorded live on May 12 and 13, 2023 in the Concert Hall of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

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.

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

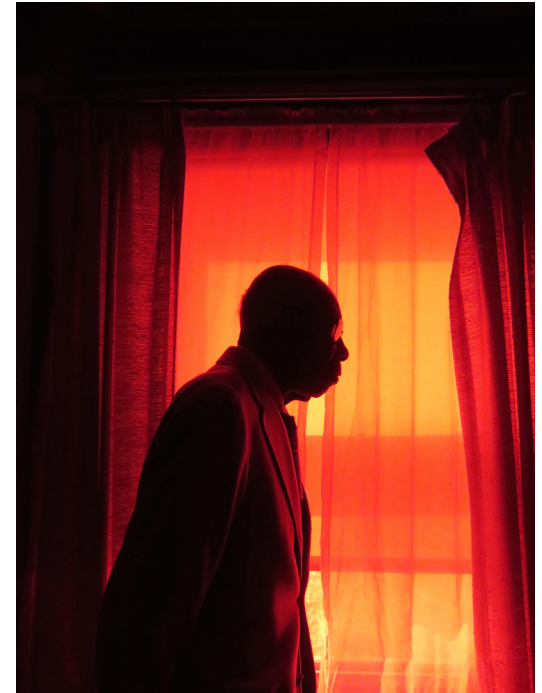


George Walker (1922–2018)

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 Fontainebleau, 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 reinvigorated 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 Nosedà 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.

Nosedà'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 Nosedà'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, Nosedà 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 Nosedà 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, Tbe*

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

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*

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

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

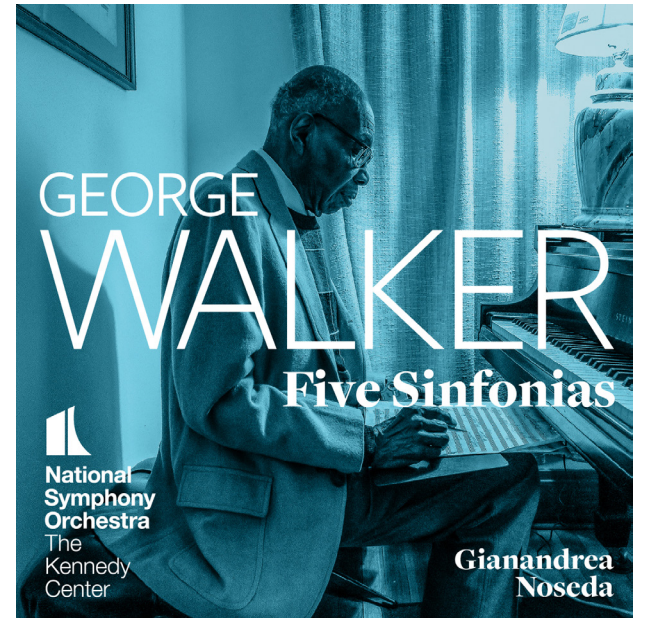
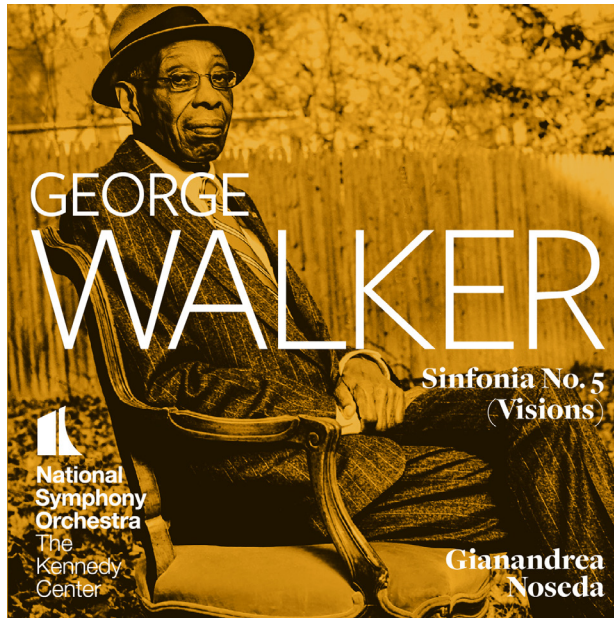
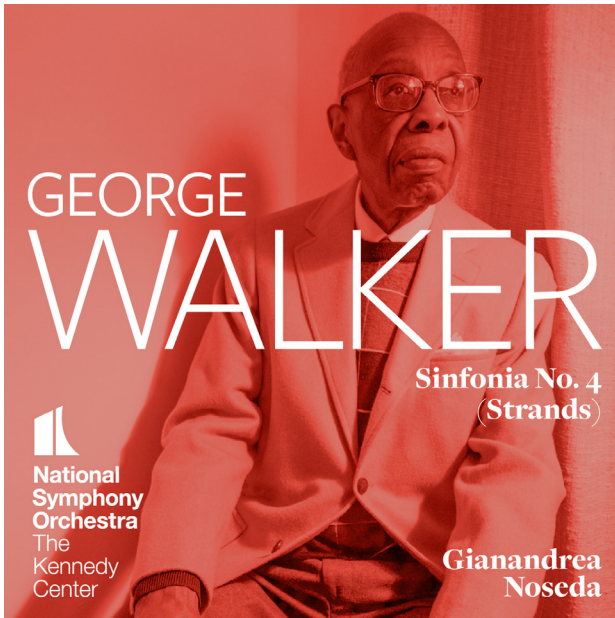
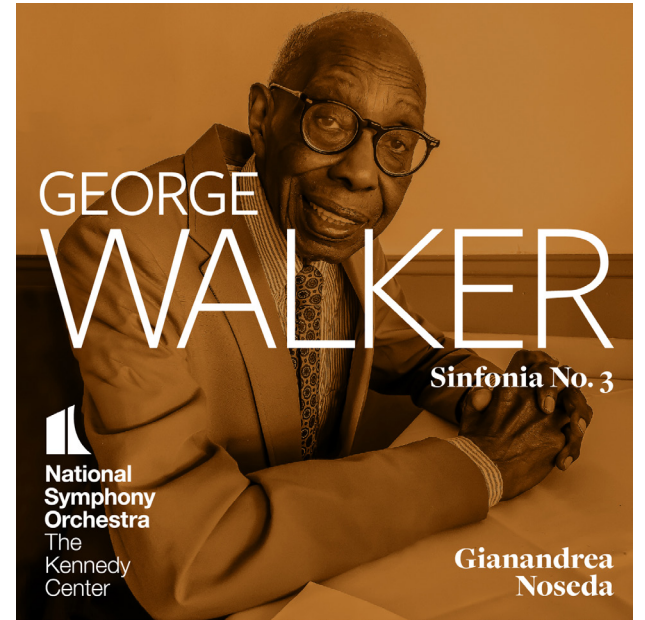
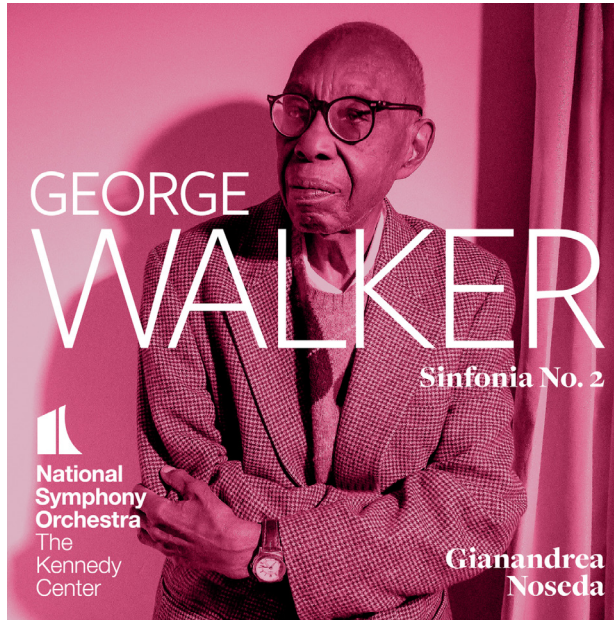
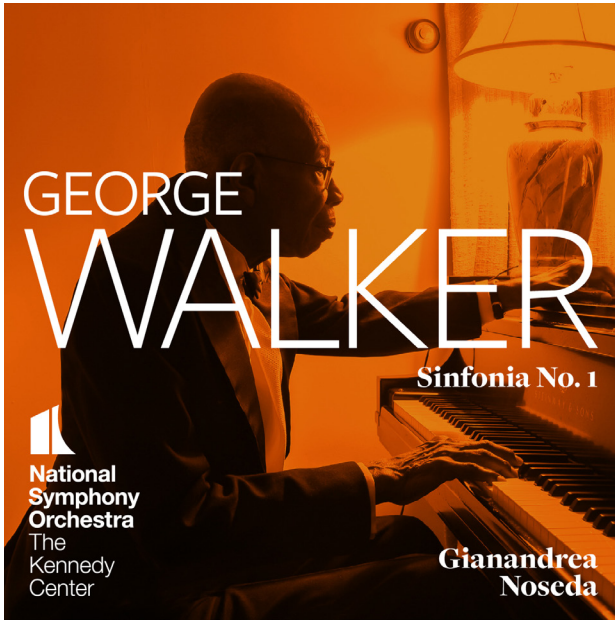
Susan Stokdyk *Associate*

Karen Lee *Assistant*

* Regularly engaged extra

** Temporary position





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.