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An Analysis of Selected Vocal Works by George Walker

Ginger Sharnell Jones-Robinson

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AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VOCAL WORKS BY GEORGE WALKER

by

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DEDICATION

To my guardian angels, Aaron Jones Jr. and Nellie Leach Jones, who raised me to be tenacious, loved me unconditionally, and were endlessly supportive of all my pursuits. To my husband Jerry, for his love and support. To my daughter, Maya, for whom I will always persist.

ABSTRACT

George Theophilus Walker (1922–2018), a prolific composer, pianist, and educator, was born on June 27, 1922, in Washington, D.C. He received degrees in music from Oberlin College, Curtis Institute of Music, and Eastman School of Music. His faculty appointments included Dillard University, Smith College, the University of Colorado, the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, and Rutgers University.

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. Perhaps most significantly, Walker holds the distinction of being the first Black composer to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music, which he won in April 1996 for his composition *Lilacs* for Voice and Orchestra.

This study is an analysis of George Walker's vocal works, *Three Songs for High Voice and Piano* and *Lilacs for Voice and Orchestra*. With reference to Walker's ideas on melody, harmony, form, rhythm, and other musical and non-musical elements, it will investigate Walker's compositional approach to vocal literature.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is an analysis of George Walker's Three Songs for High Voice and Piano and *Lilacs* for Voice and Orchestra. With reference to Walker's ideas on melody, harmony, form, rhythm, and other musical and non-musical elements, it will investigate Walker's compositional approach to vocal literature.

Background

George Theophilus Walker was born on June 27, 1922, in Washington, DC. His father emigrated from Jamaica to the US where he became a doctor after graduating from Temple University Medical School. His mother supervised his piano lessons, which began in the summer of 1927 when George was five years old. While a student at Dunbar High School, he enrolled in the Junior Department of Music at the prestigious Howard University and presented his first public recital at age 14.¹

Shortly thereafter, Walker pursued his undergraduate degree at Oberlin College. At a mere 18 years of age, he received the Bachelor of Music with highest honors. He would continue his studies at Curtis Institute of Music where he would become the first Black student to receive the artist diploma in piano and composition in 1945. What followed were an additional series of historical firsts. In 1945, Walker's New York debut

¹ Biographical information drawn from George Walker, *Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

in Town Hall, made him the first Black instrumentalist to play a recital in that venue. As the winner of the Philadelphia Youth Auditions, Walker also became the first Black soloist to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra. In 1950, he became the first Black instrumentalist to obtain major concert management after signing with National Concert Artists. 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.

In 1957, George Walker received a Fulbright Fellowship which enabled him to study in Paris under the tutelage of Nadia Boulanger. According to Walker, she was the first to recognize his aptitude as a composer. In an interview for *Music Quarterly*, he stated: “When I had my first meeting with her and showed her one of my songs, she said, ‘You are a composer’...; she immediately recognized that I wasn’t a student.... She never said, ‘You ought to do this, or you should change that.’ She would simply say, ‘Keep going, keep going’.” He went on to say: “The importance of my connection with her was that she was the very first person to acknowledge my ability as a composer and to express her confidence in it to me and to others. She also provided opportunities for my music to be played, which few Americans had done.”²

A large portion of Walker’s career was spent as a concert pianist. He completed several tours throughout Europe, playing concerts in France, Holland, and Italy. After a recital in London in 1963, he received honorary membership in the Frederic Chopin Society there.

² Mickey Thomas Terry and Ingrid Monson, “An Interview with George Walker,” *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2000): 372–88. Include here only the page numbers that refer to the quoted material.

Walker has taught on several faculties, including that of the Dalcroze School of Music, Dillard University, 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 has been awarded honorary doctorates from Lafayette College, Oberlin College, the Curtis Institute of Music, Montclair State University, Bloomfield College, and Spelman College. 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.

Additional achievements to be lauded include being the recipient of the John Hay Whitney Fellowship, two Guggenheim Fellowships, three Rockefeller Fellowships, and many others. Perhaps most significantly, Walker holds the distinction of being the first Black composer to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music, which he won in April 1996 for his composition *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra. George Walker passed away August 23, 2018, at the age of 96.

Musical Style

Grove Music describes George Walker's style as "reflective of serialism, but also characterized by neoclassical forms and texture, engaging melodies, dramatic instrumental colouring, rhythmic complexity, and frequent references to black folk

idioms.”³ Walker often spoke about the elements of music and how they presented in his musical compositions. Below are Walker’s thoughts on post-tonal techniques, meter, melody, form, harmony, folk idioms, and his compositional style as expressed in his memoirs and various interviews.

On post-tonal techniques, quotations from Walker include the following:

The only effective, strict use of twelve-tone technique would necessarily be a short work. Extended repetitions of the same notes regardless of their selectivity from the matrix, result in a constricting sameness.⁴

I have little respect for minimalism. Too often, it reflects a rejection of basic theoretical skills, and a disdain by their practitioners for self-criticism. Many composers who embrace this weak indulgence have minimal talent, and the significance given to this style is disproportionate.⁵

³ Guthrie P. Ramsey, “Walker, George,” *Grove Music Online* 2001, accessed January 30, 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029829>.

⁴ Walker, *Reminiscences*, 103.

⁵ James A. Altena, “A Conversation with George Theophilus Walker, A Pulitzer Prize Winner” *Fanfare – The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors* 33, no. 6 (July 2010): 70, <https://login.pallas2.tcl.sc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.pallas2.tcl.sc.edu/magazines/conversation-with-george-theophilus-walker/docview/753570959/se-2?accountid=13965>.

Years ago, in a New York Times article I stated that serial music had reached a dead end.... I would not say that one cannot find ways of using certain applications associated with it. But it was an overstatement to promote it as ‘the music of the future’...⁶

On meter, quotations from Walker include the following:

Conductors regard me with a certain amount of vehement displeasure because of my meter changes.⁷

What has interested me...has been the possibility of creating a linearity of unpredictable lengths, particularly with apparent cadential effects, but certainly going well beyond any classical or romantic concept of phrase (which has implicit with it whatever theorists have determined to be the norms for length). My fascination with linearity has led me to become interested in a free kind of meter that often ends up being irregular. Since it is not desirable from a conductor’s point of view to incorporate an uneven number of beats into the conventional 3/4 or 4/4 measure,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David Baker, Lida M. Belt, and Herman C. Hudson, eds., *The Black Composer Speaks* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1978), 365.

it would be better not to have a measure of 11/8 but rather a measure of 4/4 plus a measure of 3/8.⁸

In the liner notes of one of my CDs, I expressed my admiration for the technique of thematic transformation employed by Liszt in his tone poems. The music assumes character markedly different from the original material by altering the rhythm. The allusive content of the music is clearly affected by the change in note values.⁹

On melody, quotations from Walker include the following:

I have been concerned for a fairly long time with melodic content which is oriented toward twelve-tone considerations. By that I mean to say that the actual tones of the melody will be represented by nine to twelve notes without actually being part of a totally serialized system. By making use of this type of melody I am able to achieve a less tonally oriented type of harmonic implication. My pieces are intended to be melodic in a freely singable sense without being conventional in either a diatonic or a chromatic sense.¹⁰

The importance of simple intervallic relationships, the frequencies of two notes played successively or simultaneously cannot be

⁸ Ibid., 366.

⁹ Walker, *Reminiscences*, 180–1.

¹⁰ Baker, et al., *Black Composer Speaks*, 365.

underestimated. Heard as varying degrees of tension and existing as an expressive potential this tangency exerts an entrancing power that never ceases to amaze me.¹¹

I came to the realization that an interval, the relationship between two notes or the ratio of two frequencies, can create an effect that is inexplicable. To me that is mystery.

On form, quotations from Walker include the following:

I have really been a strong advocate of traditional forms simply because they provide stability to a works. The moment one ventures into a less well-defined organizational procedure, one creates the possibility of a dangerous imbalance....In my works I have tried to mix up structures which adhere to classical or Baroque concepts and have treated these structures somewhat freely, although basic aspects of these forms are still evident...I keep coming back to traditional forms because they provide a base from which I can incorporate new and more contemporary content into my music. I can also create more deviations than one would normally associate with the more classical aspects of these forms.¹²

¹¹ Walker, *Reminiscences*, 178.

¹² Baker, et al., *Black Composer Speaks*, 366.

On harmony, quotations from Walker include the following:

I don't have preconceived ideas of what I'm trying to do harmonically, partially because I have a strong tendency to think linearly. I have at times been fascinated by harmonic structures involving fourths; I am fond of harmonies in which the tritone appears. But I try to evolve harmonic structures which are not symmetrical.¹³

On folk idioms, quotations from Walker include the following:

Spirituals are materials that I use in the context of a formal conception. They have been used to bring a sense of Americana to what I have written. They are not easily identifiable. They define my attachment to melodies that I value, not as a generic experience, but a personal experience.¹⁴

Snippets of other songs appear in several other works of mine, because they have associations with events in my life that have

¹³ Ibid., 365.

¹⁴ Terry and Monson, "An Interview," 381.

meaning for me in contexts unrelated to the particular compositions.¹⁵

On his compositional style, quotations from Walker include the following:

I think the so-called style varies somewhat; however, I think that the style does vary from the relatively simple diatonic idiom to an idiom that is more complex. I think it really depends on the piece. Of course, the question of any consistencies throughout my output always arises and I like to think that the lyrical quality may be the most consistent element. My more recent work in general has become somewhat more dramatic, but again I think a description of style is dependent more or less on the individual piece.¹⁶

I have utilized twelve-tone technique as well as elements of jazz and the blues in an effort to keep my music fresh and free of repetition of any sort. I think my style reflects the kind of selectivity every composer engages is when he hears something that is particularly interesting or appealing to him. He has to somehow find his own way to make use of it.¹⁷

¹⁵ Altena, "A Conversation," 72.

¹⁶ Baker, et al., *Black Composer Speaks*, 370.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The independence of the accompaniment that is found in many of Schubert's lieder is even more in evidence in my textural settings.¹⁸

The mystery of creation is imbedded in every good composition. I find satisfaction in manipulating materials, in hewing to formal concepts, and in making allusions to other music that may appear irrelevant in the context of the score. When these references are successfully incorporated, they are seamlessly inclusive.¹⁹

George Walker composed in an intentional way. It is no accident when one finds octatonic collections, folk idioms, or rhythmically and metrically complex passages in his compositions. In analyzing his vocal works, it is essential to consider the composer's thoughts on musical elements and techniques that inform his compositional processes.

Definition of terms

The following terms will be used in the analysis:

- **Diatonic Collection:** The diatonic collection is any transposition of the seven white notes of the piano. A typical tonal piece begins with the notes of one diatonic collection, moves through other transposed diatonic collections, then ends where it began.²⁰

¹⁸ William C. Banfield, *Musical Landscapes in Color: Conversations with Black American Composers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2003), 92.

¹⁹ Walker, *Reminiscences*, 178.

²⁰ Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 140.

- Octatonic Collection: The octatonic collection is an eight-note scale created by alternating half steps and whole steps. There are three octatonic collections: OCT_{0,1}, OCT_{1,2} and OCT_{2,3}.²¹ OCT_{0,1} is the one that includes the pitches C and C#; OCT_{1,2} is the one that includes C# and D, while OCT_{2,3} includes D and Eb.

Methodology for Analysis

Each piece will be analyzed and examined through the lens of the following compositional and musical elements: melody, harmony, form, rhythm, meter, and textual contexts. The analysis for each song will include a table outlining form, harmonic areas, time signature, melody, and tempo. Then, a discussion will follow.

Purpose of Study

The goal of this study is to generate interest in Walker's works, to provide a comparative musical analysis of two of George Walker's vocal works, and to facilitate the assimilation of Walker's vocal literature into the standard repertoire of singers and pedagogues.

Need for Study

Like many celebrated American composers, Barber, Copland, and the like, George Walker won the Pulitzer Prize for music, was a member of the McDowell colony, was nominated to the Academy of Arts and Letters, and he was inducted into the Music

²¹ Straus, *Post-Tonal Theory*, 144.

Hall of Fame. Like other American composers he has composed in nearly every genre except opera. Unlike these lauded composers, he is not mentioned in common university music history texts. The main texts about George Walker were written by Walker himself. Despite his enormous contributions to the field of contemporary American music, he has been largely overlooked by musicologists and historians and there are few articles readily available in scholarly, peer-review journals. To date, the only analysis of Walker's vocal works is a thesis called "Stylistic Consistency and Contextual Elements in Selected Songs of George Walker" by Walter C. Bragg.²² To date, no comprehensive study has been done of George Walker's *Lilacs*, or *Three Songs*.

Review of Related Literature

George Walker has been repeatedly recognized for his contributions to American contemporary music. Information pertaining to his education, career, and compositional process is available from various sources.

Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist, an autobiography by George Walker, provides personal accounts about his career as a pianist, educator, and composer. It also provides anecdotes from his time as a student and gives insight into his push to record his compositions and get them programmed by various music entities. Additional sources for biographical information and list of compositions are Eileen Southern's *Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians*²³ and *The*

²² Walter C. Bragg, "Stylistic Consistency and Contextual Elements in Selected Songs of George Walker" (DMA Document, University of Alabama, 2004).

²³ Eileen Southern, *Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).

Music of Black Americans: A History,²⁴ and Guthrie Ramsey's article on Walker in *Grove Music Online*.²⁵ *The Black Composer Speaks* provides a transcript of an interview with George Walker, providing his personal account of his life, career, influences, and compositional processes, as do a number of other interviews cited in the bibliography.

Musical Landscapes in Color, while also providing brief biographical information, also presents a chapter written by Walker discussing the genesis of *Lilacs*, his thoughts on composition, in general, and his opinions on contemporary classical music, and the responsibility of Black musicians to contemporary classical music written by Black composers. Several magazine articles were written when Walker won the Pulitzer Prize in music. In general, these articles give a brief overview of biographical material while some contain pertinent quotes from the composer regarding the compositional processes involved in the creation of *Lilacs* and his general writing style.

A few dissertations provide insight and serve as reference guides to Walker's compositional style. "A Pioneering Twentieth Century African-American Musician: The Choral Works of George T. Walker" by Jeffery Ames, and "Octatonic Pitch Structure and Motivic Organization in George Walker's Canvas for Wind Ensemble, Voices, and Chorus" by Ryan Nelson provide musical and stylistic analysis for Walker's choral works and provide insight into Walker's use of the octatonic collection in his compositional

²⁴ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 1997).

²⁵ Guthrie P. Ramsey, "Walker, George," *Grove Music Online* 2001, accessed January 30, 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029829>.

process.²⁶ “Twentieth Century Flesh on an Eighteenth-Century Skeleton: An Analysis of George Walker’s Poeme for Violin and Orchestra” by Nesia T. Bernstein discusses George Walker’s use of forms that were prevalent during the classical period.²⁷ “Intervallic Coherence in Four Piano Sonatas by George Walker: An Analysis” by Everett N. Jones III also discusses Walker’s approach to form in addition to motivic development based upon intervallic relationships.²⁸

Design and Procedures

This study will be comprised of four chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter one will consist of an introduction, explanation of purpose, literature review, and the design and procedure of the study. Chapter two will present an analysis of Three Songs for high voice and piano. Chapter three will present an analysis of *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra. Chapter four will provide a summary of results, a conclusion, and recommendations for further study.

²⁶ Jeffery L. Ames, “A Pioneering Twentieth Century African-American Musician: The Choral Works of George T. Walker” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2005), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Ryan Nelson, “Octatonic Pitch Structure and Motivic Organization in George Walker’s *Canvas* for Wind Ensemble, Voices and Chorus” (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2003), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

²⁷ Nesia T. Bernstein, “Twentieth Century Flesh on an Eighteenth-Century Skeleton: An Analysis of George Walker’s Poeme for Violin and Orchestra” (master’s thesis, Morgan State University, 2005), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

²⁸ Everett N. Jones III, “Intervallic Coherence in Four Piano Sonatas by George Walker: An Analysis” (DMA document, University of Cincinnati, 2005), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THREE SONGS FOR HIGH VOICE AND PIANO

Though a majority of George Walker's compositional focus was dedicated to instrumental works, he had this to say about the art song:

Since the first assignments in writing melodic lines without a text, I have continued to explore the relationship of music to poetry. The independence of the accompaniment that is found in many of Schubert's lieder is even more in evidence in my textural settings. There hardly seems to be sufficient justification for spending as much time as I have in honing the details in a miniature form, the song for voice and piano. The absence of a significant body of American classical songs is, however, a reason to attempt to make a contribution to this genre.²⁹

Ultimately Walker would compose several songs for voice and piano, *Three Songs*, for high voice and piano being one of his earliest. *Three Songs* was composed in 1992 and is a compilation of three texts by American poets.

In Time of Silver Rain

The first song of the set, "In Time of Silver Rain," is a poem written by Harlem Renaissance writer, poet, and activist Langston Hughes. The poem is about the beauty and renewing of life that comes with spring rains. As shown in Table A.1 in Appendix A, the song is written in ternary or ABA form. Walker employs a few techniques to contrast the A material from the B material. The texture of the A section is overwhelmingly

²⁹ Banfield, *Musical Landscapes in Color*, 92.

homophonic. Beginning in m. 2, there are a series of open chords that permeate the harmony under the vocal line. Harmonically, Walker makes use of the diatonic collection, F# Aeolian, to establish the soundscape of the A section, mm. 1–13.

In the opening measures, Walker uses several musical devices to create the impression of a spring rain. The composed rhythm subverts the aural expectations that typically accompany a 6/8-time signature. One might expect a compound duple meter in which the pulses of the beat are organized in a strong-weak-weak structure. Instead, the first measures are written in a simple sextuple meter where every eighth note receives equal weight. In mm. 1–4, Walker uses triplet figures in combination with octave displacement and rests to add an unpredictability to the melodic line akin to the randomness of rain drops. The trill in the second measure, coupled with the dotted rhythm, suggests the birdcalls and also brings to mind the flutter of wings of a bird. Within the first two bars, Walker establishes the importance of the piano. It is not merely a medium for accompaniment, but an equal partner in communicating the text and its meaning.

The triplet figures in the piano part continue until m. 5, where the rhythm is augmented into long-short-short “waltz-like” groupings of eighth notes commonly heard in compound duple meter. This new figure is set in the left hand of the piano, while parallel octaves continue in the right hand. The lowered voicing of the piano allows the vocal line to take over the rain imagery via the text. The displacement of the octave in the right hand returns briefly at the conclusion of the A section in m. 13.

Unlike the A section, the B section consists of a virtuosic piano section that is predominantly monophonic in texture. These measures are primarily written in pitch

collection OCT_{1,2}. Measure 14 includes a diminution of the rhythmic value from eighth notes to thirty-second notes, written in a rapid climb, from D#2 to C6, almost entirely by scale-wise motion. The ascent immediately gives way to S-shaped melodic contour of thirty-second-note and sixteenth-note figures. The “S-shaped” pattern resumes in mm. 17–18 with accents at the beginning of each measure serving to distinguish the peaks of the melodic contour. Taken together, these measures give the aural impression of birds or the butterflies of the second stanza taking flight and whizzing from flower to flower. The parts of the B section that are not strictly monophonic consist of a series of parallel fourths in the upper right hand of the piano.

Measure 20 marks the transition back to the A section. Here, Walker moves from OCT_{1,2} into a more freely chromatic texture. Using sextuplet rhythms in the upper register of the piano, Walker once again creates the impression of sporadic raindrops that precede a steady rain. In m. 22, the introductory material from the beginning of the piece, specifically the trill, indicates a firm return to the A section. Unlike mm. 3–12, the triplet “rain figure” continues until the final measures of the piece. Other differences include rhythmic and melodic alterations of the vocal line throughout the return of the A section. For example, the “in time of silver rain” of m. 3 starts on an F#, whereas in m. 23 it starts on a G#. Also, the brief introduction on a D#, in the piano part gives this section a slightly different harmonic or tonal quality.

Metrically, this song is relatively simple when compared to other works by Walker, because the time signature does not change that often. The 6/8-time signature is maintained throughout the entire A section. Two measures into the B section, the time signature changes for the first time and alternates between 4/8 and 5/8 in mm. 14–21.

The time signature returns to 6/8 at the return of the A material and is sustained until the final seven measures of the piece. The thematic material from the A section returns at the end of the piece, but the listener's expectations are subverted because Walker changes the time signature from 6/8 to 3/8 to 5/8 in mm. 31–32. The removal of the sixth eighth-note makes the melodic line sound unpredictable. Perhaps Walker's irregular rhythmic shifts are meant to allude to the excitement of the renewal of spring.

Walker ends with the same bird-like trill that opens the piece. He ends in G# Aeolian as indication by the addition of B# and D# in the piano accompaniment and bolstered by the open G# chord that concludes the piece.

I Never Saw a Moor

The second song of the cycle is a setting of the Emily Dickinson poem, "I Never Saw a Moor." The speaker in the poem states that one does not need to see or speak with God to know that He and heaven are real. Like the previous song, the piece is in ABA form, with a homophonic A section comprised of pitches from a diatonic collection and a monophonic B section consisting of a piano cadenza built upon the octatonic collection. Table A.2 shows the overall structure of the song.

The opening measures of the piano entrance are strong and confident, if not ominous, consisting of a descending octave leap followed by dissonant chord, as if the piano is posing the question, "How do you know God is real?" The forte entrance of the piano gives way to the speaker's mezzo-piano response. As the vocal line enters at a quieter dynamic, in the middle part of the voice, the undergirding accompaniment shifts to a more supportive role, characterized by sustained, tonally ambiguous chords. For

example, in m. 5, there is a G major chord in first inversion in the right hand of the piano part and a perfect fourth (A-E) in the left hand. However, when stacked, the pitches of the chord (B-E-A-D-G) are recognizable as of a series of perfect fourths. This ‘stacking’ of perfect fourths, fifths, and octaves, continues until m. 8. The open nature of the piano accompaniment is like the sweeping, undisturbed, uncultivated nature of the “moor” in the text. In shifting the style of the accompaniment, Walker allows the voice to take over the storytelling unimpeded.

Also of note is Walker’s use of meter in the opening measures. In the first five measures, Walker alters the time signature each measure. In constantly changing the time signature, it is difficult to identify strong and weak beats within the music. Walker’s use of tied note in mm. 3–6, in combination with the changing time signature results in a downbeat that is nearly imperceptible. This could be Walker alluding to a lack of surety on the part of the speaker. The A section concludes with complex sextuplets, quintuplets, and triplets in the piano part that are likely musical representations of the heather referenced in the text. Walker employs similar “floral” figures in *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra.

As in “In Time of Silver Rain,” the B section of the piece is a monophonic cadenza for the piano built primarily on OCT_{1,2}. Walker employs a brief departure from OCT_{1,2} in the first half of beat 2 in m. 12 using pitch classes 2, 3, 8 and 9. These pitches are organized as a series of descending perfect fourths, separated by half steps. The B section also introduces more complex rhythm in the piano part. For example, in m. 11, written in 4/4, Walker writes a thirty-second-note octuplet in beat 1, followed by 4 sixteenths in beat 2. The first half of beat 3 consists of a thirty-second note quintuplet,

while the second half consists of thirty-second sextuplet. The measure is completed with a thirty-second note octuplet. Measures 12–13 consist of even more complex rhythms (i.e., thirty-second nonuplets and sixty-fourth septuplets). Taken together, this B section is a musical representation of the waves referenced at the end of the A section. In m. 11, there is an ascending melodic wave that crests at D4 before receding. This wave is followed immediately by a musical swell with a larger range that starts on E2 and crests on E5 before ebbing. The third melodic wave begins in m. 12, the surf reaches the shore in m. 13 and retreats into the sea in m. 14. Here, Walker removes the improvisatory nature typically associated with cadenzas by being very specific with his rhythmic passages. These more complex rhythms are presented more often in soloistic piano sections, a nod to Walker's virtuosic skill as a pianist and his desire to use the piano as a vital part of the story-telling process.

Measure 15 marks a transposed return to the A section. The return of the A section opens similarly to the first, in that it outlines a tonic minor chord. The most prevelant accidental is Bb indicating that the return has been transposed to A Phrygian. After the recession of the wave from the B section, this entrance contrasts with the opening measures of the piece in that the voice answers the piano's forte question, "How do you know God is real?" with a forte reply of its own. The altered dynamic marking, accents, and leaps in the vocal line make this response sound more confident and assured. Instead of the piano supporting the vocal line with softer dynamics and tonally open chords, the piano part is dissonant, heavily accented, and maintains a mezzo-forte dynamic underneath the voice. The vocal line becomes more disjunct as the speaker declares "I never spoke with God or visited in heaven." Then, simultaneously, vocal, and

piano parts ascend the scale and swell to a fortissimo dynamic on the text “Yet certain I am of the spot as if the chart were given.” The piece ends with a quick descent to the lower octaves of the piano and a brief return to the melodic material, written in OCT_{1,2} in the monophonic, cadenza style displayed in the B section.

Humpty Dumpty (circa 2054)

The final song of the cycle is a setting of Irene Sekula’s poem, “Mother Goose (circa 2054).” Unlike the preceding songs, this song is through-composed with text by a largely unknown author. The text was first published in 1954 in a science fiction magazine called *Fantastic Story*.³⁰ The text is a reimagining of the classic nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty.” Aaron Carter-Cohn points out that “Sekula maintains...the original rhyme,...narrative flow,...lines and rhyming scheme of the original text, while at the same time transforming the...cultural setting by injecting contemporary technical jargon.”³¹

The piano introduction begins with a series of fourths over a pedal tone Bb in the left hand. Walker briefly departs from the perfect fourth interval, before finally settling on an augmented fourth in m. 2. The use of open chords is an example of the impressionist influence that can be found in Walker’s music. Walker then employs a series of chromatic movements in the left hand to lead into the entrance of the vocal line. The rhythmic clarity of the introduction serves to highlight the harmonics of the piano

³⁰ Irene Sekula, “Mother Goose (circa 2054),” *Fantastic Story Magazine* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1954): p. 30.

³¹ Aaron Carter-Cohn, “Understanding Songs from Mother Goose by Kenneth (Ken) Metz,” *South Central Music Bulletin* 9, no. 1-2 (Fall 2010 – Spring 2011): 10.

part. The lack of a traditional tonality alludes to the poem's futuristic subject matter. When the voice enters, the instrumental line takes on a different rhythmic character. While the open harmonic style continues, the downbeats become more ambiguous with tied notes and dotted rhythms. The left hand then shifts into a more rhythmically complex melodic line built upon OCT_{2,3}. These first five measures mirror the form of the first two songs of the cycle: an introduction, a homophonic section, followed by a soloistic, more rhythmically complex piano section.

The vocal line adheres to the musical phrasings and opening measures of the 19th-century tune by J. W. Elliott.³² The original tune begins with a perfect fourth leap from A4 to D5, followed by a minor sixth descent from D5 to F#4, then back to A4, using the text "Humpty Dumpty" to outline the tonic triad. Walker keeps a similar shape but reduces the intervals between the introductory pitches. For example, the original tune consists of an ascending perfect fourth, followed by a descending minor sixth, and then an ascending minor third. Walker contracts the opening intervals of the original tune writing an ascending minor third, a descending diminished fifth, followed by an ascending major second. Thus, instead outlining a major triad as in the original setting of the text, he instead outlines two diminished triads: a Gdim triad in m. 3 and an F#dim triad in m. 4. Interestingly, in m. 5, after the initial "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall," the piano part tumbles and descends like the Humpty Dumpty of the original 19th-century text. Here again is an example of Walker using musical devices to suggest textual meaning.

³² J. W. Elliott, "Humpty Dumpty," quoted in *National Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Songs* (London: George Rutledge and Sons, 1872), 30.

In keeping with the ultramodern atmosphere set up by Sekula's text, Walker composes melodically disjunct and rhythmically jagged melodic lines in the piano in addition to frequent metric changes, as summarized in Table A.3. The vocal line alternates between lyrical, chromatic passages and detached, syncopated passages. In mm. 6–7, the vocal line is less lyrical and becomes part of a rhythmic interplay with the piano part, functioning as a duet, both exerting equal weight over the other. In these same measures are a series of chords in the right hand made up of augmented and perfect fourths, once again, highlighting the lack of a tonic or even centric pitch in the opening measures. Furthermore, this interplay happens in conjunction with the text “a non-electromagnetic ball.” The definition of electromagnetic is anything relating to or caused by magnetism (the power of an object to attract other objects to it) that is produced by electricity.³³ Walker's use of open fourths and octaves, reinforces the lack of a tonal center, mirroring the non-electromagnetic forces in the text.

The soundscape changes to a more homophonic texture with implications of an A minor chord in the right hand and a Bb minor chord in the left, in m. 8, serving as a brief introduction to the text “All the Supers' polariscopes.” A polariscope is an optical inspection device used to detect internal stresses in various materials.³⁴ In m. 10, a truncated version of the “falling” figure returns in the right hand of the piano, depicting the fractures being detected by the polariscope.

³³ *Cambridge Dictionary Online*, s.v. “Electromagnetic,” accessed January 15, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/electromagnetic>.

³⁴ U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *Polariscope*, November 7, 2014, accessed January 15, 2023, <https://www.fda.gov/inspections-compliance-enforcement-and-criminal-investigations/inspection-guides/polariscope>

In the final measures of the piece Walker incorporates a walking bass line with an even rhythm and stepwise motion that further contrasts the highly syncopated, disjunct setting of the vocal line. The bass line gives the impression of the marching of the king's horses and men who fail to put Humpty together in the original text. The broken utterances of the vocal line serve to further highlight the fractured subject of the song, even mimicking the fall of the final "topes" with a descending portamento in the vocal line.

Walker used the various musical devices to clearly marry the meaning of the original text with the Sekula text in a decidedly unique and innovative style.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF *LILACS* FOR VOICE AND ORCHESTRA

Background

Lilacs for voice and orchestra was commissioned and premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1995. The premiere was part of a series of events honoring the late Roland Hayes, a tenor whose career in the US began with his Boston Symphony Orchestra debut in 1923, becoming the first black concert singer to perform with a major American Orchestra. Originally, Walker composed *Lilacs* for tenor and orchestra but because the singer chosen for the debut could not learn the work in a timely fashion, soprano Faye Robinson sang the premier performance. As a result, *Lilacs* for tenor and orchestra became *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra.³⁵

The text for the work is taken from stanzas one, two, three, and thirteen of “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” an elegy by famed American poet Walt Whitman. Whitman wrote “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” in the summer of 1865 in response to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln that had occurred mere months earlier. Lincoln is the “powerful, western, fallen, star” of the second stanza. Whitman’s grief is palpable in the words of the poem. With his setting, Walker seeks to give sound to the extreme grief of Whitman’s poem.

³⁵ George Walker, *Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist*, 150.

In discussing the genesis of *Lilacs*, Walker states “having gone through many anthologies, I came back to poetry that I felt that I really wanted to set for two reasons. First, I wanted to write a work that would have some significance in my total output of works. Secondly, I wanted to write a work that I thought would convey more effectively the mood or the atmosphere of the poem than the settings by Hindemith and Sessions.”³⁶ Whether Walker achieved his goal is debatable, but what is certain is that he created a moving offering to the multiple settings of Whitman’s text.

Lilacs I: When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d

In the first stanza of *When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d*, the poet introduces the beauty of nature and the pain of death with the image of the “lilacs” and “drooping star in the west.” The poet mourns the death of his loved one, Abraham Lincoln, and will grieve the loss with each spring.

Harmonically, Walker alternates between the three octatonic collections for the majority of the first movement, as laid out in Table A.4 of the Appendix. While not traditionally tonal in the sense of tonic-dominant frameworks, the piece is not atonal. In setting up the harmonic space of the piece, Walker leans into familiar intervals (seconds, thirds, and fourths).

Walker writes “there are three symbols in Whitman’s poem—the lilac, the star, and the bird. There is musical representation for the two of them, the lilac, and the bird.”³⁷ At the beginning of the first movement, a musical pattern is introduced that,

³⁶ Mickey Thomas Terry and Ingrid Monson, “An Interview with George Walker,” 383.

³⁷ Banfield, *Musical Landscapes in Color*, 92.

according to Walker, is symbolic of the lilac at the heart of the poem.³⁸ This flourish consists of a triplet figure, first played by flute, oboe, and bassoon, and appears throughout the work whenever the speaker is referencing the lilac. In m. 8, after the vocal entrance on the text “when lilacs,” a variation of the lilac figure is played by the clarinet.

Another pattern heard for the first time in mm. 4–5 and played by strings is the “bird call” figure heard later in *Lilacs*. This melodic idea, written as a series of repeated notes in quintuplet and sextuplet rhythmic patterns culminating in an ascending leap, is representative of the bird that is the subject of the last movement and will reoccur periodically throughout the work.

Beginning in m. 14, the musical language and instrumentation for the text “and the great star early drooped in the western sky in the night” stands in stark contrast to that of the lilac and the bird. The orchestration underneath the vocal line is distinguished by a series of repeated thirty-second note figures in the strings. The more prominent role of the timpani, trombone, and contrabass in these measures lowers the overall register of the harmonies underneath the vocal line. In addition to the change in instrumentation in reference to the star, the vocal line becomes more disjunct in this section. Within the first few measures of the work, Walker sets up the soundscapes for each of the pivotal figures of the text.

In addition to instrumentation and voicing, Walker uses other devices to establish the aural characteristics of the lilac, bird, and star and the work as a whole. He displays an affinity for the tritone, demonstrated by its prominence in the melodic line. In m. 9, the

³⁸ Walker, George, *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra (Walt Whitman), (St. Louis, MO: Keiser Publishing, 2008).

second measure of the vocal line, a descending tritone is presented on the repetition of the word “lilacs.” An ascending tritone is then heard as the initial interval of a melismatic passage on the word “bloom’d” in m. 11. This passage is also an example of Walker’s use of text painting as a compositional device. Here, in mm. 11–12, the tritone is followed by a minor sixth leap to F#5, with a half-step embellishment up to G5 and back. The voice ascends to the top of the staff and literally blooms on the word “bloom’d.” As the vocalist sustains F#5, the “bloom” recedes via a decrescendo, in preparation of the entrance of the “drooping star” of the next section.

The “star” of the text is introduced by a series of descending fourths, alternating between perfect and augmented fourths. A descending tritone on the word “drooped” is another example of text painting and is followed almost immediately by another descending tritone in the opening of the phrase “in the western sky.” In mm. 18–21, Walker alters the musical treatment of the repetitions of the word “night” as if to depict a burst of emotion or anger at the loss of the star. In the first iteration, Walker combines a major seventh leap with an ascending tritone and a half-step descent written at a forte dynamic to give the impression of a disjunct emotional outburst. In m. 19, “night” is sung with a mezzo-forte dynamic, on a descending major seventh leap. On the third and final utterance, the vocal line leaps from G#4 to C#5, before immediately settling on C5. The articulations on “night” get shorter with each repetition and the dynamics get softer. Taken together, this writing implies the fading of night and the speaker’s resignation to the loss of the star.

Another example of text painting occurs in mm. 24–26, on the word “mourned.” In the first utterance, the vocal line descends a tritone from C5 at a mezzo-piano

dynamic. In the second repetition, the vocal line is a melismatic weeping, expanding the overall range of the passage from an augmented fourth to a minor sixth. The third “mourn” is more straightforward, but immediately gives way to the climatic “ever returning spring.” Here, Walker encapsulates the range of emotions that occur in grief. Sometimes mourning is reserved and subdued, as seen in m. 24, other times it is an extended lament as seen in m. 25. Still other times, emotions can lead to an all-out wail as seen in the transition from mm. 26–27.

One of the more poignant examples of text painting comes in mm. 31–40. For example, toward the end of the first movement, the text reads: “Ever-returning spring, trinity to me you bring/Lilac, blooming perennial and /drooping star in the west /And thoughts of him I love.” Walker assigns a specific soundscape to each part of the “trinity: the lilac, the star, and the thoughts of Lincoln.” For the lilac, Walker brings back the triplet figure along with lyrical melodic lines in the strings, like what was heard at the beginning of the movement. He then undergirds this thematic material with relatively tonal harmonies. These chords are striking because until this point he has used dissonant, dense chordal structures. To suddenly hear such consonance by comparison, orchestrated with harp and strings, almost feels as if the mood of the piece is shifting away from the plaintive tension that opens the work.

The relief from tension is short-lived and changes within two measures, as the focus shifts to the “drooping star” and the music returns to disjunct melodic lines in the accompaniment. The repeated thirty-second notes in the orchestration create a tension that is expanded upon in m. 2. For further contrast with the soundscape of the lilac, Walker adds woodwinds and timpani to the “star’s” aural introduction. Walker then

orchestrates the third part of the trinity, the “thoughts of him I love,” with a sustained chord played by muted brass and a dissonant melodic line played by pizzicato string. The tempo slows, and the vocal line drops to the middle lower range of the singer. The forte dynamic invites the use of chest registration from the soprano voice. The effect is a harmonically and melodically thin, dissonant texture, symbolic of the bitterness felt by the speaker at the loss of the person he loved.

Lilacs II: O Powerful Western Fallen Star

In the second stanza, the poet talks of the falling of the great star, Lincoln. The “shades of night” and “moody, tearful night” symbolically refer to the night Lincoln was shot. The line “the black murk that hides the star” refers to the sad and untimely nature of his death. Walker once again employs several compositional devices to communicate the anguish felt by the speaker.

The opening of the second movement lacks the rhythmic stability of movement one. The time signature changes twenty-nine times within thirty-six measures, displayed in Table A.5. In addition to metrical variations, Walker often obscures the downbeat. Consider mm. 1–3, in which the orchestra enters on the second sixteenth of beat 1, and then sustains the chord, with no re-articulations. This compositional style would make it difficult for anyone to feel the pulse of the song aurally. The first downbeat articulation does not arrive until m. 4 and not again until m. 7. It is not until m. 9, at the introduction of the repeated sixteenth note figure that was introduced in movement one, that anything akin to a steady pulse is heard. This rhythmic ambiguity continues until the 3/8-meter change in m. 15.

As in the first movement, Walker utilizes the tritone in the melodic line to convey the emotions of the speaker. In the opening phrase of the vocal line, the text “O powerful western fallen star” is set with a descending tritone on the word “western” and again then a descending perfect fourth on the word “star” from C#5 to G#4.

In contrast to the first movement, which began with lilting rhythms on intervals of thirds and fourths, the second movement opens with a descending line that seems to reflect the trajectory of the star. The descending tritone returns on “shades of night.” The opening motive returns in an intervallically diminished variation in m. 14. Again, there is the D# to E motion of “O moody” that is first encountered on “O powerful.” Here, instead of being followed by a tritone descent, the D#-E motive is succeeded by a minor third descent.

The brass section features prominently in this movement, alluding the soundscape that was briefly established for the star in movement one. A repeated ostinato pattern is heard in the first violin section that creates a relentless tension not shown in the first movement. The pattern, repeated sixteenths on one pitch, can be interpreted as the pangs of grief caused by the loss of the star. On the text “O great star disappeared,” the ostinato briefly gives way to tremolo in the string section, mm. 15–19. The repeated sixteenth figure then returns and moves through the viola and cello sections, to the first violins, and in a truncated variation in the first trombones.

As the vocal line drops to a lower register for the next section, Walker immediately highlights the descending tritone interval on “disappeared” in m. 19 and “star” in m. 22. Rhythmically, there is increased syncopation in the voice and orchestra that rarely lines up on the downbeats of the subsequent measures. The shifts from 3/8,

6/8, to 7/8 in these measures blur any attempt at a steady beat. Taken together, these compositional choices contribute to the chaotic nature of the movement.

As the notated pulse changes from the quarter note to the eighth note, the music starts to feel more agitated as the texture moves from a largely homophonic texture to one that is more polyphonic. The frantic nature of the passage continues as the vocal line becomes more syncopated.

In mm. 30–31, despite the indication that the eighth note equals 72, which might suggest that it is the beat, it may feel to the listener as though the sixteenth note is the pulse rather than the eighth note because the repeated sixteenth notes from m. 29 have become repeated thirty-second notes in m. 30. In m. 33, the meter changes to 9/16, where, in the approach to this meter change, the thirty-second note, rather than the sixteenth note, can act as the referential rhythmic value, so as not to get lost in the syncopation of the passage. The result is a steady diminution of the beat that corresponds with the climax of the tension in the final measures.

The last notable rhythmic idea occurs in mm. 32–34. Here, the meter changes from 3/8 to 9/16 and the interaction between the vocal and the orchestral lines consists of ties and syncopation, and very few moments where the voice and orchestra are articulating at the same time. The effect is a continuous unraveling of dissonance, the climax of the tension first introduced in m. 9. With various rhythmic and harmonic conventions, Walker aurally depicts the “harsh surrounding” grief experienced by the speaker in the text.

Lilacs III: In the Dooryard Fronting an Old Farmhouse

In a 2010 interview, Walker indicates that snippets of other songs appear in several of his works, because they have associations with events in his life that are meaningful in contexts unrelated to the compositions.³⁹ In an instance of unrelated associations, of the third movement of *Lilacs*, he writes that the movement recalls family trips to his cousin's home in Northumberland County, Virginia. The vague recollection of her plot of land underscores the text "in the dooryard fronting an old farmhouse," heard in the third movement.⁴⁰

In the third stanza, the poet again focuses on the beauty and miraculous nature of spring, describing the tall lilac, with its strong fragrance, growing among the "heart-shaped leaves." Because the subject of this movement is the lilac, the melodic line is more lyrical and accessible than in any other movement. In movement one, the range of the opening line was a tenth, from E4 to G5, with many leaps within the phrase. In movement two, the range is a minor sixth. Here, the range is an augmented fourth, with stepwise writing that makes the vocal line more conjunct and hummable, in contrast to the other movements.

Walker uses varying instrumentation to further simplify the soundscape of movement three. Strings play fully throughout the movement while percussion is reduced to timpani paired with vibraphone, glockenspiel, celesta, or the triangle. Regarding the wind instruments, Walker groups them in small groups so that at no point in the movement are all wind instruments playing at the same time; trumpets and tuba are

³⁹ Altena, "A Conversation," 72.

⁴⁰ Walker, *Reminiscences*, 147.

removed from the orchestration all-together. The aural effect is a more ethereal sound than what is heard in the other movements.

The triplet lilac theme presented in the first movement introduces the orchestral line in movement three, which is written in a 6/8-time signature. In mm. 1–4 of the orchestral introduction, the pitches of the melodic lines are written in groups of three. Based on the melodic shape, this pattern can be interpreted as a rhythmically augmented variation of the thematic material introduced in movement one. In addition to developing the thematic material, Walker also uses interesting melodic language in these measures.

The melodic lines of the orchestral introduction, played by the alto flute and the viola, create a bitonal, polyphonic texture. The melody played by the flute revolves around E, and oscillates between E Major and E minor, while the viola's line centers around B, oscillating between B Major and B minor. Not only does he employ bitonal writing, but he also invokes a jazz feel by incorporating the minor third and major third of each key area, characteristic of the blues scale. In mm. 16–19, as in movement one, Walker invokes the jazz idiom by using seventh and ninths chords to create a moment of consonance in an otherwise dissonant work.

In this same section, despite the absence of a key signature, the accidentals that have been added to the accompaniment and the vocal line imply that Walker is operating in the three-sharp diatonic collection. Since harmonies seem to be centered around B, one can infer that the harmonies in this section are written in B Dorian. This is not the only pitch collection utilized in this movement. As with prior movements, Walker also makes extensive use of the octatonic collection in movement three of *Lilacs*, as laid out in Table A.6.

In movement three, the vocal line, and the underlying harmonies in mm. 7–14, are built upon OCT_{0,1}. Within this octatonic area, Walker maintains the tonal ambiguity that was established in the opening measures of this movement, oscillating between the use of C and C# (pitches classes 0 and 1, respectively). After moving through the measures of B Dorian, Walker moves through A Mixolydian, and on to OCT_{2,3} for the remainder of the movement.

In mm. 27–29 the trombone plays on the text “a sprig with its flower, I break!” for the first time in the entire movement. The use of low brass, coupled with disjunct melodies in the winds and horn instruments in the final measures is reminiscent of the tension apparent in the second movement.

Lilacs IV: Sing On, Sing On You Gray Brown Bird

The text for the fourth movement is taken from the thirteenth stanza of Whitman’s poem. Here, the poet encourages the gray-brown bird from previous stanzas to keep singing for he thinks that is the only consolation. The overall structure for this movement is summarized in Table A.7.

During his time as a concert artist, Roland Hayes gave many recitals in the US and in Europe. One song that he was famous for was “Lil’ Boy How Old Are You?” In the song, the question is asked three times before an answer is finally given: “Sir, I’m only twelve years old.” In his memoirs, Walker writes that he chose to quote this spiritual in the entrance of the vocal line in the fourth movement of *Lilacs* because, like the boy in

the song, he was only twelve years old when he met Roland Hayes at Howard University.⁴¹

The bird's chirps are heard in the initial interplay between the flutes and piccolo entrance at the beginning of the movement. This musical play then gives way to the vocal declaration for the bird to "sing on!" The tone color of the piece takes a noticeably darker turn as the brass and timpani employ a more prominent role in m. 12, as the speaker encourages the bird to sing from the murkiness of the swamps and the recesses. The timbre changes yet again in mm. 20–21 as the limitless bird rises out of the dusk and soars above the trees. Here, the orchestral accompaniment shifts from the contrabass, cello, timpani, bassoons, and bass clarinets to the harp, violin, oboe, flute, and piccolo.

Walker's propensity for word-painting is highlighted in mm. 22–25. Not only does he use the "Roland Hayes" interval as the speaker implores the bird to "sing on" in m. 22, but he also writes an octave descent from D#5 to D#4 that is immediately followed by an ascending tri-tone leap to A4, giving a musical illustration of the "warble" text sung by the vocalist. In another instance of using the orchestra to word-paint, on the text "reedy song", the reed instruments (oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, and bassoon), dominate the orchestral texture in m. 25.

The height of the movement comes in m. 31 with the fortissimo entrance of the voice and quick ascending passages from the strings and timpani tremolo. This musical moment helps to emphasize the text "O wild and loose to my soul." The quick ascending passages that pass through the orchestra mimic the path of a bird taking flight with a final song from the bird played by the piccolo. This sonically high passage gives way to a

⁴¹ Walker, *Reminiscences*, 147–148.

lower, more ominous tone as the speaker begins to reference the departing star of the second movement.

Measure 19 brings an almost exact restatement of the opening nine measures of the first movement which introduced the bird and lilac themes. The piece ends with a series of dissonant ascending passages that travel throughout the orchestral texture alluding to the unsettled tension that the speaker feels, despite being held by and finding comfort in the lilac.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

When considering *Three Songs* and *Lilacs* one may question why the meter constantly shifts or why the beat is obscured. Walker tends to leave precious little stability for the performer or the listener in the way of a steady beat. Walker used complex compositional devices in service to the text to illustrate nature, a post-modern society, or the throws of grief and mourning. In his songs, Walker's use of rhythmically complex, virtuosic piano passages is a testament to his abilities as a pianist and his thorough nature as a composer. Instead of leaving it up to chance or the variations inherent in improvisation or performer preferences, he wrote down exactly how his cadenzas are to be played, down to the sixty-fourth note. His use of rhythmically complex, cadenza piano passages is the result of Walker's thorough nature as a composer. Instead of leaving it up to chance or the variations inherent in improvisation or performer preferences, he wrote down exactly how his cadenzas are to be played, down to the sixty-fourth note. George Walker was an exacting musician and composed with such specificity that the way his pieces were to be played would not be in question. If questions arose, one could easily reference the early recordings of Walker's work where he was either the performing pianist or in the room with the performers.

George Walker composed and published nearly one-hundred works including fourteen vocal works, four of which are large vocal works that incorporate multiple soloists, choir, orchestra, or chamber ensemble. Despite his historical Pulitzer Prize win,

Walker's music has not found a place among standard classical repertoire. Walker himself commented that the Pulitzer did not increase the frequency with which his music was performed by American orchestras and even less has been written about his works.⁴²

Walker was intentional about making sure his pieces were recorded through companies such as Composers Recordings Incorporated and Albany Records. He then wrote and published his own memoirs and conducted multiple interviews. Because of his commitment to his own works, and his belief in his esteem as a composer, he left behind a wealth of information and music that few scholars have written about, and musicians have been performed. Recently, on the 100th anniversary of his birth, Walker's compositions have seen a resurgence with several orchestras, but there is so much work to be done.

⁴² Walker, *Reminiscences*, 155.

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APPENDIX A

MUSICAL OVERVIEWS

Table A.1: A Musical Overview of George Walker’s Three Songs, no.1, “In Time of Silver Rain”


Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	mm. 1-4	F# Aeolian	6/8	84	
A section	mm. 5-12	---	---	---	---
	m.13	G# Phrygian	---	---	---
B section	mm.14-15	OCT _{1,2}	---	---	---
	mm.16-18	---	4/8	---	---
	m.19	---	5/8	---	---
Transition	m.20	---	4/8	---	---
	m.21	---	2/8	---	---
A ¹ Section	m.22	F# Aeolian	5/8	---	---
	mm.23-30	---	6/8	---	---
	m.31	---	3/8	---	---
	m.32	---	5/8	---	---
	mm.33-34	---	---	---	---
	m.35	G# Aeolian	---	---	---
	mm.36-37	---	4/8	---	---

Table A.2: A Musical Overview of George Walker's Three Songs, no.2, "I Never Saw a Moor"




Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	m.1	F# Phrygian	4/4	42	
	m.2	---	3/4	---	---
A Section	mm.3-8	---	4/4	---	---
	m.9	---	5/8	---	---
	m.10	---	3/4	---	---
B Section	m.11	OCT _{1,2}	4/4	50	
	mm.12-13	---	2/4	---	---
	m.14	---	7/8	---	---
A ¹ Section	mm.15-18	A Phrygian	3/4	42	
	m.19	---	2/4	---	---
	m.20	---	3/4	---	---
Coda	mm.21-23	---	5/8	---	---

Table A.3: A Musical Overview of George Walker’s Three Songs, no.3, “Humpty Dumpty (circa 2054)”






Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	m.1	OCT _{0,1} / OCT _{2,3}	6/4	76	
	m.2	---	5/4	---	---
A Section	m.3	---	3/4	---	---
	m.4	---	3/4	---	---
	m.5	---	4/4	---	---
	m.6	OCT _{1,2}	2/4	---	---
	m.7	---	5/8	---	---
Transition	m.8	---	4/4	---	---
B Section	m.9	---	3/4	---	---
	m.10	---	4/4	---	---
	m.11	OCT _{2,3}	3/4	---	---
C Section	m.12	OCT _{1,2}	3/4	92	
	mm.13-15	---	5/8	---	---
	m.16	---	3/4	---	---
	m.17	---	6/16	---	---

Table A.4: A Musical Overview of George Walker's *Lilacs*, movement I

Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	m.1	OCT _{2,3}	7/8	56	
	m.2	---	3/8	---	---
	m.3	OCT _{1,2}	3/16	---	---
	mm.4-5	---	3/8	---	---
	m.6	OCT _{2,3}	8/8	---	---
	m.7	---	6/8	---	---
A Section	m.8	OCT _{1,2}	---	---	---
	m.9	---	4/8	---	---
	m.10	OCT _{2,3}	6/8	---	---
	mm.11-12	OCT _{0,1}	---	---	---
	m.13	---	4/8	---	---
B section	m.14	OCT _{2,3}	5/8	---	---
	m.15	OCT _{0,1}	3/8	---	---
	m.16	OCT _{2,3}	5/8	---	---
	m.17	---	6/8	---	---
	m.18	---	5/8	---	---
	m.19	---	4/8	---	---
	m.20	---	5/8	---	---
	m.21	---	8/8	---	---
C section	m.22	Bb Aeolian	6/8	---	---
	m.23	---	8/8	56	
	m.24	---	4/8	---	---
	m.25	---	5/8	---	---
	m.26	---	8/8	---	---
	mm.27-28	---	6/8	---	---
	m.29	---	8/8	---	---
	m.30	---	6/8	---	---
	m.31	---	4/8	---	---
	m.32	---	7/8	---	---
	m.33	---	4/8	---	---
	m.34	---	7/8	---	---
D section	mm.35-37	OCT _{2,3}	3/8	40	


Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
D section (<i>continued</i>)	m.38	---	4/8	40	
	m.39	---	5/8	---	---
	m.40	---	4/4	---	---

Table A.5: A Musical Overview of George Walker's *Lilacs*, movement II



Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	mm.1-2	OCT _{0,1}	4/4	60	
	m.3	---	3/4	---	---
	m.4	---	4/4	---	---
	m.5	---	3/4	---	---
	mm.6-7	---	4/4	---	---
	m.8	---	3/4	---	---
	m.9	---	4/4	---	---
A Section	m.10	---	---	---	---
	m.11	---	5/4	---	---
	m.12	---	6/4	---	---
	m.13	---	4/4	---	---
	m.14	---	6/4	---	---
	mm.15-16	---	3/8	---	---
B section	mm.17-18	---	---	---	---
	m.19	---	6/8	---	---
	m.20	---	7/8	---	---
	m.21	OCT _{1,2}	---	---	---
	m.22	---	6/8	---	---
	m.23	OCT _{2,3}	7/8	---	---
	m.24	---	5/8	---	---
	m.25	---	2/4	---	---
	m.26	OCT _{1,2}	3/4	---	---
	m.27	---	5/4	---	---
	m.28	---	7/8	---	---
	m.29	---	5/4	---	---
	m.30	---	6/8	72	
C Section	m.31	---	5/8	---	---
	m.32	---	3/8	---	---
	m.33	---	9/16	---	---
	mm.34-35	---	3/8	---	---
	m.36	---	8/8	---	---

Table A.6: A Musical Overview of George Walker's *Lilacs*, movement III









Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	mm.1-3	E Ionian/ E Aeolian	6/8	80	
	m.4	---	5/8	---	---
	m.5	---	4/8	80	
A Section	mm.6-9	OCT _{0,1}	6/8	---	---
	m.10	---	8/8	---	---
	m.11	---	6/8	---	---
	m.12	---	9/8	---	---
	m.13	OCT _{0,1} / B Dorian	6/8	---	---
	m.14	B Dorian	---	---	---
B Section	m.15	---	5/8	---	---
	mm.16-19	---	4/8	---	---
	m.20	A Mixolydian	5/8	---	---
	m.21	---	3/8	---	---
	mm.22-23	---	6/8	---	---
	mm.24-26	OCT _{2,3}	---	---	---
C Section	m.27	---	4/8	---	---
	m.28	---	5/8	---	---
	m.29	---	3/8	---	---
	mm.30-32	---	4/8	---	---
	m.33	---	5/4	---	---
	m.34	---	4/4	---	---
	m.35	---	2/4	---	---
	m.36	---	4/4	---	---

Table A.7: A Musical Overview of George Walker's *Lilacs*, movement IV

Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
Introduction	m.1	OCT _{2,3}	4/4	72	
	m.2	---	3/4	---	---
	m.3	---	5/8	---	---
	mm.4-5	---	2/4	---	---
	m.6	---	5/8	---	---
	m.7	---	4/8	---	---
A Section	m.8	OCT _{0,1}	5/8	---	---
	m.9	---	5/4	---	---
	mm.10-11	---	2/4	---	---
B Section	m.12	---	5/8	88	
	mm.13-14	OCT _{1,2}	4/8	---	---
	m.15	---	2/8	---	---
	m.16	---	5/8	---	---
	mm.17-18	OCT _{0,1}	2/8	---	---
	m.19	---	3/8	---	---
	m.20		6/8	---	---
	m.21		9/8	---	---
C Section	m.22	OCT _{0,1}	3/4	50	
	m.23	---	9/8	---	---
	m.24	OCT _{2,3}	---	---	---
	m.25	---	2/4	---	---
	m.26	---	---	---	---
	mm.27-28	---	3/4	---	---
	m.29	OCT _{1,2}	9/8	---	---
	m.30	OCT _{0,1}	3/4	---	---
D Section	m.31	---	---	46	
	m.32	OCT _{1,2}	2/4	---	---
	m.33	---	5/4	---	---
	m.34	---	4/4	40	
	m.35	---	3/4	---	---
	m.36-37	---	2/4	---	---
	m.38	---	5/4	---	---

Form	Sub-section	Harmonic Collection	Time Signature	Beats Per Minute	Beat
D Section (continued)	m.39	---	7/4	---	---
	m.40	---	6/8	56	
	m.41	---	5/8	---	---
E Section	m.42	---	3/8	---	---
	m.43	---	4/8	---	---
	m.44-45	OCT _{2,3}	---	---	---
	m.46	---	3/8	---	---
	m.47	---	5/8	---	---
	m.48	---	7/8	---	---
	m.49	OCT _{1,2}	10/8	---	---
	m.50	---	4/8	---	---
	m.51	OCT _{0,1}	---	---	---
	m.52-53	---	6/8	---	---
	m.54	---	5/4	---	---

APPENDIX B

WALKER'S VOCAL WORKS


Table B.1: Published Vocal Works by George Walker

Title	Publisher	Catalog Number	Recording Information	Performing Forces
A Red, Red Rose	Keiser Southern Music https://www.keisersouthernmusic.com/	LKMP S814008/ HL 40325	<i>George Walker: Great American Concert Music</i> (Albany Records, 2012, TROY 1370)	Medium Voice and Piano
“And Wilt Thou Leave Me Thus” from <i>Two Songs for Baritone and Piano</i>	-----	LKMP X814037/ HL 42205	<i>George Walker: Great American Chamber Music</i> (Albany Records, 2009, TROY 1082)	Baritone and Piano
<i>Cantata</i>	-----	LKMP S800008 / HL 40310	<i>George Walker: A Portrait</i> (Albany Records, 1994, TROY 1036)	Soprano and Tenor Soli Boys Choir/SATB Chamber Orchestra
<i>Emily Dickinson Songs</i>	-----	LKMP S814019 / HL 40327	<i>The Music of George Walker</i> (Composer Recordings, Inc, 1997, CD 719)	High Voice and Piano
Ev’ry Time I Feel de Spirit (Spiritual)	-----	LKMP X814027 / HL 42195	<i>George Walker: Great American Concert Music</i> (Albany Records, 2012, TROY 1370)	High Voice and Piano
I Got a Letter from Jesus	-----	LKMP X814026/ HL 42194	<i>George Walker: Great American Concert Music</i> (Albany Records, 2012, TROY 1370)	Medium Voice and Piano
<i>Lilacs for Voice and Orchestra</i>	-----	LKMP S078011/ HL 40092	<i>Lilacs: The Music of George Walker</i> (Summit Records, 2000, 274)	Soprano or Tenor Solo and Orchestra

Title	Publisher	Catalog Number	Recording Information	Performing Forces
Mary Wore Three Links of Chain	Keiser Southern Music https://www.keisersouthernmusic.com/	LKMP X814025 / HL 42193	<i>George Walker</i> (Albany Records, 2005, TROY 697)	Medium Voice and Piano
<i>Mass</i>	-----	LKMP X078065 / HL 41272	<i>George Walker: Mass</i> (Albany Records, 2013, TROY 1447)	SATB Soli SATB Chorus Chamber Ensemble
Nine Songs	-----	LKMP X814018/ HL 42187	<i>George Walker: Great American Chamber Music</i> (Albany Records, 2009, TROY 1082)	Medium Voice and Piano
Poem	-----	LKMP X081003 / HL 41302	<i>George Walker: Chamber Music</i> (Albany Records, 1995, TROY 154)	Mezzo-soprano and Chamber Ensemble
Softly, Blow Lightly	-----	LKMP X814028 / HL 42196	<i>George Walker</i> (Albany Records, 2005, TROY 697)	Medium Voice and Piano
“Take, O Take Those Lips Away” from <i>Two Songs for Baritone and Piano</i>	-----	LKMP X814017/ HL 42186	<i>Great American Chamber Music</i> (Albany Records, 2009, TROY 1082)	Bass/Tenor and Piano
Three Songs	-----	LKMP X814014/ HL 42184	<i>George Walker</i> (Albany Records, 2005, TROY 697)	High Voice and Piano

APPENDIX C

RECITAL PROGRAMS



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

GINGER JONES-ROBINSON, *soprano*

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

With
Matthew Ganong, *piano*

**Friday, April 7, 2017
7:30 PM • Recital Hall**

<i>Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen</i> Wenn mein Schatz hochzeit macht Gieng heut Morgen uber's Feld Ich hab ein gluhend Messer Die zwei blauen Augen	Gustav Mahler (1860 – 1911)
From <i>Un ballo in maschera</i> “Morro, ma prima in grazia”	Giuseppe Verdi (1813 – 1901)
<i>Four Songs, Op. 51</i> Ich sagte nicht Wir drei Juni Je demande à l'oiseau	Amy Beach (1867 – 1944)
From <i>Alceste</i> “Divinites du Styx”	Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714 – 1787)
<i>Vier Lieder, Op.27</i> Ruhe, meine Seele Cacilie Heimliche Aufforderung Morgen	Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949)

Mrs. Jones-Robinson is a student of Janet Hopkins. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

GINGER JONES-ROBINSON, *soprano*

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

with

Matthew Ganong, *piano*

Thursday, April 5, 2018

4:30 PM • Recital Hall

From *Suor Angelica*
Senza Mamma

Giacomo Puccini
(1858 – 1924)

Семь Стихотворений А. Блока, Opus No. 127

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906 – 1975)

Песня Офелии
Гамаюн птица вещая
Мы были вместе
Город спит
Буря
Тайные знаки
Музык

Latannia Ellerbe, *violin*
Fan Zeng, *cello*

Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, D. 965

Franz Schubert
(1791 – 1828)

Jennifer Deudkoontod, *clarinet*

Mary Oliver Songs
Mushrooms
Sleeping in the Forest
At Blackwater Pond

Matthew Ganong
(b. 1974)

*Mrs. Ginger Jones-Robinson is a student of Janet Hopkins.
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.*



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

GINGER JONES-ROBINSON, *soprano*

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

with

Dr. Alan Rudell, *piano*

Thursday, November 15, 2018

6:00 PM • Recital Hall

Death of an Old Seaman
Epitaph for a Poet

Cecil Cohen
(1894-1967)

To My Little Son
Resignation
Words for a Spiritual

Florence B. Price
(1887-1953)

A Set of Three Dunbar Poems

Dawn
Theology
Compensation

Betty Jackson King
(1928-1994)

Five Millay Songs

I. Wild Swans
II. Branch by Branch
III. For You There is No Song
IV. The Return from Town
V. Gone Again is Summer the Lovely

H. Leslie Adams
(b. 1932)

Four Love Songs

Gramercy Park
Union Square
Central Park At Dusk

William Foster McDaniel
(b. 1940)

O What a Beautiful City
Lil' David
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child
Balm in Gilead
Git On Board

Evelyn Simpson Curenton
(b. 1953)

*Mrs. Ginger Jones-Robinson is a student of Dr. Donald Gray.
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.*



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

GINGER JONES-ROBINSON, *soprano*

in

DOCTORAL LECTURE RECITAL

with

Alan Rudell, *piano*

Monday, April 19, 2021

4:30 PM • Recital Hall

Three Songs

In Time of Silver Rain
I Never Saw a Moor
Mother Goose (circa 2054)

George Walker
(1922-2018)

Lilacs

I. When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd
II. O powerful western fallen star!
III. In the dooryard fronting an old farmhouse
IV. Sing on! Sing on, you gray-brown bird

George Walker

Mrs. Ginger Jones-Robinson is a student of Donald Gray. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.