



George  
**WALKER**

**Complete Piano Works • 2**

**Alexandre Dossin, Piano**

**University of Oregon Philharmonia • David M. Jacobs**



## George Walker (1922–2018)

### Complete Piano Works • 2

This recording completes the series started with its companion album, Naxos 8.559916. Together they offer for the first time a recording of George Walker's complete piano works by one pianist. *Volume 2* contains works from 1971 until 2003, including the first commercial recording of the *Concerto* for piano and orchestra in over a decade.

Walker's piano music is very colorful and brings to life a unique musical soundscape. His mostly linear compositional style travels through mountains and valleys, abysses, and cliffs, exploring the entire keyboard. These almost physical, 3-D sonorous architectures combine perfectly with his choices of colors, articulation, and refined use of pedals.

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1922, George Walker was a precocious student who finished high school at age 14. In 1937, he was admitted to the Oberlin Conservatory as the youngest student in his class. He studied piano with David Moyer and started composition lessons with Norman Lockwood during his senior year. Upon graduation, he was immediately accepted at the Curtis Institute, in the studios of pianist Rudolf Serkin and composer Rosario Scalero. Walker introduced himself as a composer and performer during his debut in New York's Town Hall in 1945. The program included works by Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, and Chopin, in addition to his own compositions.

The years following his 1945 successful New York debut were dedicated to building a performance career in the United States and abroad. After two more recitals in New York (1947 and 1953), George Walker signed a contract with National Concert Artists and embarked on a European tour in 1954.

In 1955, George Walker was admitted to the inaugural doctoral program in piano performance at Eastman School of Music, where he joined the studio of José Echániz.

The years following his doctoral studies at Eastman (1958–61) were dedicated to a second European trip, sponsored by prestigious fellowships such as Fulbright and the John Hay Whitney Foundation. During his stay in Paris he studied under Nadia Boulanger, before returning to the United States for more performances. During the 1960s George Walker consolidated his position in academia with a decade-long position at Smith College, MA, in addition to guest teaching in other institutions.

During the decade of teaching at Smith College, George Walker had to endure constant obstacles in his career advancement, despite his professional achievements. In 1969, Walker started his longest academic partnership, having accepted a full professorship at the Rutgers University, Newark campus. Rutgers became his new academic home until his retirement in 1992.

George Walker composed several songs during the 1970s and 1980s, and this album opens with an arrangement for solo piano of *Leaving*, composed in 1971 and first published in a collection of nine songs in 1994. Oscillating between elements of jazz and popular music, this simple yet refined song includes an expressive use of the whole-tone scale in its central section. The composer wrote the lyrics and recorded a version for solo piano, under the title *Song Without Words*. The performance on this album was recorded live, as an encore for the West Coast premiere of Walker's *Piano Concerto* (Beall Hall, University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, 20 November 2023).

The *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* was composed in 1975 and made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, as part of the United States Bicentennial celebrations, when George Walker was temporarily teaching at the Peabody Institute and the University of Delaware.<sup>1</sup> It is Walker's second attempt at composing a concerto for piano and orchestra. According to the composer, an early work for that combination of instruments was discarded in 1947.<sup>2</sup> Natalie Hinderas premiered the concerto with the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Paul Freeman, in 1975.

Composed in the traditional three movements, the piano concerto utilizes classical forms, including sonata form and fugue. The heavy and dramatic first movement comprises almost half of the concerto. It displays Walker's characteristic linear writing, where motivic intervals are the musical driving force. The return of the lyrical second theme is delayed until the solo piano cadenza, closer to the end of the movement. The second movement is inspired by Duke Ellington's 1934 song *In My Solitude*. Also born in Washington D.C., Ellington was often a source of inspiration for Walker, who masterly disguised several of the famous jazz musician's tunes in his compositions, such as *Guido's Hand* (included in this album) and *Tangents*, for chamber orchestra. The melodies are never copied or quoted; in the case of the concerto's second movement, the theme is intertwined throughout several registers between soloist and orchestra, in augmentation. However, the more one experiences this movement, the better the connection becomes. The concise and rhythmic third movement starts with highly polyphonic fugal textures, expertly exchanged between soloist and orchestra. As with the other two movements, it is very pianistic and includes a solo piano cadenza.

Written in 1984, *Piano Sonata No. 4* was commissioned by Frederick Moyer, the grandson of David Moyer, who was Walker's piano instructor at Oberlin. Both movements have slow tempo indications (*Maestoso* and *Tranquillo*) and oscillate between lyrical and virtuosic sections. The opening gesture of the first movement returns several times, with innovative textural developments. The same theme starts the second movement in inversion, and returns at the end of the sonata, creating a satisfying cyclical form. Walker masterly inserted a quote from the powerful spiritual *Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child* at the end of this movement.

*Guido's Hand (Five Pieces for Piano)* is a suite of five interconnected pieces composed in 1987. The title refers to Guido d'Arezzo, the 11th-century Italian monk who developed a solfège method later known as the Guidonian Hand. The five pieces share some thematic/textural ideas and an overall cyclical return of the first theme in the last piece. Musical elements from Duke Ellington's 1953 classic tune *Satin Doll* can be faintly recognized, even if in a disguised character, in the fourth piece.

George Walker received the Pulitzer Prize in composition in 1996, for his work *Lilacs* (voice and orchestra). He remained active as a composer and pianist after his retirement from Rutgers University in 1992.

*Piano Sonata No. 5* was composed in 2003. It is a very passionate work, highly motivic, and heavily based on the intervals of seconds and ninths. It feels much bigger than its short duration and combines Walker's pianistic language in a concise and well-organized form.

With this powerful sonata, George Walker concluded his impressive contribution to the modern piano repertoire. Between 2003 and his death in 2018, he received several honorary doctorates as well as the prestigious Aaron Copland Award, and focused on composing orchestral works, including *Sinfonia Nos. 4* (2011) and *5* (2016), and the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, premiered by his son Gregory Walker and The Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Neeme Järvi in 2009.

**Alexandre Dossin**

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ethan Iverson, accessed 12 March 2024 [ethaniverson.com/interview-with-george-walker](https://ethaniverson.com/interview-with-george-walker)

<sup>2</sup> See Footnote 1

## University of Oregon Philharmonia

The orchestral program at the University of Oregon is one of the finest and most comprehensive academic programs on the United States West Coast. The University of Oregon Philharmonia was created especially for the performance and recording of George Walker's piano concerto. It is a project-based orchestra comprising the finest string, woodwind, brass, and percussion players at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance performing alongside faculty members. In addition to the UO Philharmonia, the University of Oregon has a full symphonic orchestra of approximately 75 music majors, and a string orchestra comprised students from the larger university community.

[www.uosymphony.com](http://www.uosymphony.com)

### **Violin I**

Hal Grossman, principal  
Allison Quade  
Madison Vanderwall  
Megan Fraser  
Clare Petrou Griffith  
Isabel Pinney

### **Violin II**

Ben Ehrmantraut, principal  
Sarah Wilfong Joblin  
Tera Murdock  
Xiaoyin Zhang  
Alfonso Keller-Casielles

### **Viola**

Arnaud Ghillebaert, principal  
Luis Ricardo Ramos Lopez  
Erika Metzenberg

### **Cello**

Steven Pologe, principal  
Adam Broce  
Pete Amawattana  
Tomas Estigarribia

### **Bass**

Tyler Abbott, principal  
K.C. Isaman  
Raquel Armendariz

### **Flute**

Jacqueline Cordova-Arrington,  
principal  
Mallory Wood  
Jaden Sumner

### **Oboe**

Melissa Peña, principal  
Avery Rowzee

### **Clarinet**

David Zechariah Kwek, principal  
Johwan Song  
Dexter Hidalgo, bass clarinet

### **Bassoon**

Steve Vacchi, principal  
Bronson York  
Derek Lund, contra

### **Horn**

Margarite Waddell, principal  
Madeline Grenier  
Evan Doster  
Raymond Randol

### **Trumpet**

Miki Sasaki, principal  
Sam Taylor  
Andrew Pelto

### **Trombone**

Graham Middleton, principal  
Lorenzo Jamesbarry  
Robert Bomar, bass

### **Tuba**

David Buttson, principal

### **Timpani**

Pius Cheung, principal

### **Percussion**

Keegan Vaughan  
Mitch Vogel  
Enzo Valdez  
Emi Alvarez Hernandez

### **Harp**

Laura Zaerr, principal

### **Piano/Celeste**

Grant Mack, principal

## David M. Jacobs



Photo: University of Oregon

David M. Jacobs is currently an associate professor of conducting at the University of Oregon. His work with university students is nationally recognized, having been invited to guest conduct orchestras at Baylor University, Florida State University, Bob Cole Conservatory and Northern Arizona University, as well as two longer guest artist residencies at the prestigious Eastman School of Music. Dr. Jacobs' conducting students have gone on to programs such as Peabody, Eastman, Michigan State, Bard College, Cincinnati Conservatory, and the Aspen Conducting Academy. His students have also won conducting positions with professional orchestras across America. In addition to his teaching, Dr. Jacobs has conducted professional orchestras on three continents, including the Palm Beach Symphony, Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, Pazardjik Symphony Orchestra in Bulgaria, the Orquesta Sinfónica EAFIT in Colombia, and the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra in Russia. This Naxos release marks his fourth commercial album, having been previously credited as assistant conductor on *Manhattan Music*, conductor for *Let Others Name You*, and conductor/instrumental performer on *We Proclaim*.

## Alexandre Dossin



Photo: Erin Zysett

A Steinway Artist, Brazilian-born pianist Alexandre Dossin has already firmly established himself as an internationally acclaimed artist of the first rank. He was awarded both the First Prize and the Special Prize at the Martha Argerich International Piano Competition, with other awards including the Silver Medal at the Maria Callas International Grand Prix and Third Prize and the Special Prize at the Mozart International Piano Competition, among many other international and national accolades. Conductors with whom he has performed include Charles Dutoit, Isaac Karabtchevsky, and Peter Bay, with orchestras including the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, Mozarteum University Symphony Orchestra, Austin Symphony, Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory symphony orchestra. He is a graduate of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory and

received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Dossin is professor of piano and chair of keyboard at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, and the artistic director of the Oregon Piano Institute. His recordings for Naxos include three acclaimed releases for the Liszt Complete Piano Music series (8.557904, 8.572432, 8.574106) and two albums of Kabalevsky piano music (8.570976, 8.570822) in addition to solo music by Bernstein (8.559756), Prokofiev (8.573435) and Walker (8.559916). [www.dossin.net](http://www.dossin.net)

George  
**WALKER**  
(1922–2018)

- |           |                                                                  |              |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Leaving</b> (1971)<br>(arr. Alexandre Dossin [b. 1970], 2022) | <b>2:07</b>  |
|           | <b>Piano Concerto</b> (1975)                                     | <b>24:50</b> |
| <b>2</b>  | Movement I                                                       | <b>11:38</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | Movement II                                                      | <b>6:55</b>  |
| <b>4</b>  | Movement III                                                     | <b>6:17</b>  |
|           | <b>Piano Sonata No. 4</b> (1984)                                 | <b>15:37</b> |
| <b>5</b>  | I. Maestoso                                                      | <b>8:31</b>  |
| <b>6</b>  | II. Tranquillo                                                   | <b>7:06</b>  |
|           | <b>Guido's Hand:<br/>Five Pieces for Piano</b> (1987)            | <b>11:17</b> |
| <b>7</b>  | I.                                                               | <b>1:14</b>  |
| <b>8</b>  | II.                                                              | <b>1:21</b>  |
| <b>9</b>  | III.                                                             | <b>3:37</b>  |
| <b>10</b> | IV.                                                              | <b>2:21</b>  |
| <b>11</b> | V.                                                               | <b>2:44</b>  |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Piano Sonata No. 5</b> (2003)                                 | <b>5:28</b>  |

**Alexandre Dossin, Piano**

**University of Oregon Philharmonia** **2-4**

**David M. Jacobs** **2-4**

Recorded: 8–10 January **5-7-11** and 2 April **6-12** 2023  
at Moon Mountain Studios, Eugene, Oregon, USA,  
and 20 November at Beall Hall (live) **1**, 27 and 29 November  
2023 at Aasen-Hull Hall **2-4**, University of Oregon School  
of Music and Dance, USA • Executive producer: Alexandre Dossin  
Producers: David M. Jacobs **2-4**, Tung Nguyen **5-12**  
Assistant producers: Andrew Cannestra, Rodrigo Gonzales-  
Jacob **2-4** • Engineers and editors: Lance Miller **1-12**,  
Jack Gabel **5-12** • Assistant engineer: Jasper Walton **1-4**  
Booklet notes: Alexandre Dossin  
Publisher: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing  
Piano: Steinway, Model D • Piano technician: Mike Reiter  
Cover photograph: Ian Robin Walker



**AMERICAN CLASSICS**

George Walker's international reputation as a composer and pianist was recognized with numerous commissions and awards, including a Pulitzer Prize in 1996. His piano music is colorful and brings to life unique musical soundscapes as heard in the cyclical *Fourth Piano Sonata* which alternates between sections of virtuoso muscularity and lyrical repose. The *Piano Concerto* integrates expansive Classical forms with inspiration derived from songs by Duke Ellington, something also cleverly hidden in *Guido's Hand*. Walker concluded his impressive contribution to the modern repertoire with his passionate *Fifth Piano Sonata* – a work that packs monumental expressive range into an extremely concise span. Volume 1 of this two-volume complete edition can be heard on Naxos 8.559916.

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Playing  
Time:  
**60:02**