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George Walker Viola Sonata (1989): A History, Analysis and Practical Performance
Guide of a Great American Work

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ABSTRACT

George Walker Viola Sonata (1989): A History, Analysis and Practical Performance Guide of a Great American Work

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George Walker is an important figure in American composition. Recently, I had the esteemed privilege of interviewing Dr. Walker as the capstone for the thesis. This dissertation is a background, analysis and performance guide on his 1989 Viola Sonata. This piece is his only contribution to the viola repertoire. Walker, an African American, has written over 90 works, and continues to write and perform around the United States. His Viola Sonata is still relatively unknown in the viola catalogue.

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate how his heritage, musical pedigree and taste for progressive 20th century compositional techniques create a unique style that is demonstrated in two short art songs and, finally, in the Viola Sonata. The Viola Sonata clearly shows a depth of understanding in writing in for the instrument. The analysis is presented in a way such that the performers can have a better of understanding of the material within the work, and as a result, be able to offer a performance that will highlight the appropriate characteristics.

The dissertation is divided into three main sections. The first section gives a brief biographical sketch of Walker and what he amassed from each of his primary composition instructors. The second section provides a guide of Walker's composition style. The two shorter art songs *Lament* and *A Red, Red Rose* have similar compositional elements to the Viola Sonata.

Because they compositely have similar constructs, the songs will help to clarify the analysis of the sonata. The final section is the analysis of the sonata in detail. The analysis will cover the melodic content, rhythms, counterpoint and form. After the analysis, a performance guide gives a firsthand account of Walker's desires for the performance of this wonderful work. The guide also includes details for the violist to consider, including fingerings, harmonics, articulations, bow strokes, and timbres.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
Chapter 1: A Glimpse into the Life of a Great American Composer.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Blessed Beginnings: George Walkers Childhood and Interest in Music.....	2
The Oberlin Years.....	3
Self Discovery and the Curtis Institute.....	6
Making a Name for Himself.....	8
A Composers Dream.....	10
Winning the Pulitzer and Beyond.....	12
Chapter 2: Walker’s Composition Mentors and Their Methods.....	14
Normand Lockwood.....	14
Rosario Scalero.....	15
Nadia Boulanger.....	18
Chapter 3: Identity and Ideas: Elements of Walker’s Composition Style using <i>Lament</i> and <i>A Red, Red Rose</i>	20
Walker’s Style.....	20
Issues being African American in American composition.....	22
<i>Lament</i>	26
<i>A Red, Red Rose</i>	29
Chapter 4: An Analysis of the Viola Sonata.....	34
Overview.....	34
Melodic Components.....	34
Rhythmic Components	42
Counterpoint.....	45
Form.....	47
Chapter 5: A Performance Guide and Thoughts on Approach.....	55
General Remarks.....	55
Viola Performance Specifics.....	57
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	61
Bibliography.....	63

List of Figures

Figure Number	Page
1. <i>Cantus firmus</i> , Scalero Violin Sonata in d minor.....	16
2. Violin entrance Scalero Violin Sonata in d minor.....	17
3. Imitative entrances Scalero Violin Sonata in d minor.....	17
4. Excerpt from <i>Deep River</i>	24
5. <i>Lament</i> m. 1-15.....	27
6. Counterpoint and structure, <i>Lament</i> m. 1-15.....	28
7. Quartal relationships in subsequent voice entrances, <i>Lament</i>	28
8. <i>A Red, Red Rose</i> , m. 1-5.....	31
9. Pedal tone ostinati, <i>A Red, Red Rose</i>	32
10. Three-note interval cell, Viola Sonata Mvt. I.....	35
11. Octatonic structure without pitch F m. 6.....	35
12. Score with circled cell units, Viola Sonata Mvt. I.....	36
13. Octatonic rearrangements in m. 25, Viola Sonata Mvt. I.....	37
14. Reorganization of three-note cells in new motive, Viola Sonata Mvt. II.....	38
15. Octatonic scales in correct order mm. 9 and 56, Viola Sonata Mvt. II.....	39
16. Original <i>cantus firmus</i> , <i>L'Homme armé</i>	40
17. <i>L'Homme armé</i> in score, Viola Sonata Mvt. II.....	41
18. Rhythmic “quickenings” in long phrase, Viola Sonata Mvt. II.....	44
19. Counterpoint and thematic relation m. 33 and m. 55, Viola Sonata Mvt. I.....	46
20. Highlighted antecedent repetitions, Viola Sonata Mvt. II.....	52
21. Different forms of writing artificial harmonics, Viola Sonata Mvt. II.....	59

List of Tables

Table Number	Page
1. Viola Sonata Form, Movement I.....	48
2. Viola Sonata Form, Movement II.....	51
3. <i>L'Homme armé</i> , Original French and Translated English.....	60

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To my family, thank you, thank you, thank you! Boy, you guys listened my scratching back in 1989 when I started. (And had the nerve to tell me I was good!) But I am glad you were always there for me. What a long way we have come!

Of course to my Pops, who has always believed in me when I did not, thank you. Chad, I love you lots. As far as little brothers go, I couldn't ask for a better one. And lastly, I want to thank the most influential person in my life, my mother. Your sacrifices, your determination, and most of all your love, made my dream possible. If I become half the woman you have been all these years, I would be overjoyed. I love you so much.

Dedication

To my mother, with all my heart.

Chapter 1

A Glimpse into the Life of a Great American Composer

Introduction

Post World War I America was an ever-changing landscape: industrialization, prohibition and its repeal, women's suffrage, and the move from rural to urban living were helping to shape the country's future infrastructure. Life, for the time being, was steady, with a promising outlook. However, African Americans were omitted from this fabric and were still considered second class citizens. In the South, treatment was often sub-human. Sharecropping was a standard way of life. Inequality loomed with constant reminders, including signage outside of restrooms, water fountains, train stations, and other public venues. In the North, while conditions were somewhat better, African Americans' lives were dominated by one certainty; uncertainty. Yet despite the risks involved, Artmelle George Theophilus Walker decided to emigrate from Jamaica to America with thirty-five dollars in his pocket.¹ After taking many odd jobs, he found his way to Howard Medical School in Washington, D.C. where he became a general practitioner and eventually settled down in Washington. There, he met his wife, Rosa King, an African American whose mother had been born a slave. Her mother's first husband was sold at auction, and was never seen again.² Upon graduating from high school, Rosa King worked for the federal government. She "fervently believed in the importance of education."³

¹ Walker, George, *Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist*. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), 2.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 8.

Together, the Walkers' raised their two children with the idea that opportunity was all around. Opportunity came in the form of a piano teacher from the neighborhood, who would give George Theophilus Walker his first lesson.

Blessed Beginnings: George Walker's Childhood and Music

Born in 1922, George Walker was raised in a family that was quite well-to-do by African American standards for that time. His father's practice, coupled with the additional income provided by his mother, afforded him and his sister Frances an "upwardly mobile" childhood. Before attending B. K. Bruce Elementary, a segregated school in the South end of Washington, D.C., George Walker began taking piano lessons with Miss Mary L. Henry. He was five years old. In his memoir he describes her as "a tiny lady with a slightly raspy voice."⁴ He studied with her for several years. His parents would often host the piano studio recitals in their home. After some time, his parents recognized his talent and wondered whether his teacher competence could match his rapidly growing progress.

Rosa Walker inquired about lessons in the Junior Department of Music at Howard University. There were limited options in Washington, D.C. for advanced piano instruction. He enrolled and Mrs. Lillian Mitchell, who taught classical music exclusively, became his teacher. Also African American, she had a doctorate in music education, which was almost unheard of at that time. During the "roaring twenties," jazz was soaring in popularity within the African American community in many parts of the country. However, according to Walker, "jazz was for dancing and the uncultured rung of black society in Washington, D.C."⁵ When he graduated from junior high school, he chose to go to Dunbar High School, which had an excellent

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Ibid., 13.

reputation.⁶ Originally named M Street High School and subsequently renamed for poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, the school's faculty had many black scholars with master's degrees and Ph.D.s, who could not get jobs at predominantly white colleges and universities.⁷ Many of its graduates went on to Ivy League schools. Hence, it became known as one of the best secondary education schools, black or white, in the entire country. Walker, however, readily admits some of the instructors were loafers, and "simply showed up to get a paycheck."⁸

Given his natural talent and his performance skills in music, George faced a major decision in deciding where to attend college. Walker became interested in several schools, including Howard University, where he was currently studying. He requested a course catalogue from Harvard, but soon abandoned the idea when he discovered that this college did not have an instrumental music curriculum. Mrs. Mitchell encouraged him to apply to the Oberlin Conservatory, her alma mater. After playing for Oberlin's director Dr. Frank Shaw, Oberlin accepted him with a full scholarship. George was 15 years old at the time.

The Oberlin Years

Walker was the youngest person attending Oberlin College in the fall of 1937; he was also the only black student in the conservatory. Conservatory life called for a major adjustment, the most significant of which involved the new demand for him to practice a great deal more than previously. He had been used to only practicing thirty minutes daily in high school, since he was involved in several extracurricular activities. Walker did not know much about his piano

⁶ There were only three high schools blacks could attend in Washington D.C. during the late 1920s and early 1930s: Armstrong, Cordoza, and Dunbar. Of the three, only Dunbar students regularly went on to college. *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷ "Paul Laurence Dunbar." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 1.

⁸ Walker, George, *Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist*. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press Inc, 2009), 16.

teacher, David Moyer, at the time. He selected Moyer based on the fact that his “background seemed to have been more cosmopolitan than the other piano faculty members.”⁹ Moyer had studied with Ferruccio Busoni and Ernst von Dohnanyi, two prominent pianists and composers from Italy and Hungary respectively. Academics at Oberlin did not challenge Walker, which allowed him to focus piano, as well as on another budding interest – the organ. He decided that his minor field of study at Oberlin would be organ studies with Arthur Crowley. This proved to be a wise decision, as he would eventually take over the position as Organist of the Oberlin Theological Seminary. This was his first paid employment as a musician.

During the winter of his junior year, Walker decided to play a recital back in Washington, D.C. His father ticketed the event and made all the arrangements, including having a Steinway D concert grand piano brought to the venue. A young piano student studying at West Virginia Institute happened to be sitting in the audience. West Virginia Institute (WVI) was a small African American college. He was completely enamored with the performance. Upon his return, the young man asked the chairman of their music program to have Walker appear on West Virginia Institute’s Lyceum Series.¹⁰ His appearance at WVI marked Walker’s first professional concert. Following his WVI success, the faculty at Oberlin asked him to perform a piano concerto with the conservatory’s orchestra as a component of his senior recital. His performance was greeted with standing room only and an enthusiastic audience.

Walker’s tenure at Oberlin allowed him to witness some of the great masters in concert through Oberlin’s Artist Recital series. (It is still in existence today.) Included were “(Fritz) Kreisler, (Sergei) Rachmaninoff, Marian Anderson, (Vladimir) Horowitz, (Rudolf) Serkin, and

⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

many others... and other lesser luminaries.”¹¹ Rachmaninoff, Horowitz, and Serkin left the most indelible impression.

Walker saw Rachmaninoff perform twice. He had visited Oberlin in 1938 during Walker’s sophomore year. Walker is often succinctly opinionated when discussing the abilities of other artists. He describes Rachmaninoff’s playing at this particular concert as “calculated determination,” with a lack of “stylistic connection,” as well as “idiosyncratic.”¹² He saw Rachmaninoff perform a second time, with the Cleveland Orchestra, upon the invitation of his teacher, David Moyer. He fondly recalls this as a “memorable concert” and a “wonderful gift from my piano teacher.”¹³

Horowitz visited in 1940. It was Walker’s hope to interview Horowitz, but Frank Shaw, the music director at Oberlin, denied his request. Walker suspected that Shaw “was not comfortable with having a black student making contact with Toscanini’s son-in-law.”¹⁴ Nonetheless, he was able to obtain his autograph following the concert. Walker, now a senior in 1941, happened upon Rudolf Serkin during a practice session. Mr. Serkin was to play a concert in the evening. Often deemed a prodigy, Serkin was on faculty at the Curtis Institute of Music and had a prolific career as a concert pianist in Europe and in the United States. Serkin noticed Walker at the back of the recital hall and beckoned him. He was interested in the acoustics of Finney Chapel and asked a young, impressionable Walker to play. Naturally, he obliged. After attending the concert that evening, Walker told Serkin that he was interested in applying to

¹¹ Ibid., 36.

¹² Ibid., 36-37.

¹³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴ Ibid., 38.

Curtis. (He neglected to mention Serkin's response.) He auditioned six weeks following his senior recital, without the aid of his current teacher, Moyer. In Walker's words, Moyer was "oblivious to Curtis' existence."¹⁵ Walker's father met him in Philadelphia. He played for an esteemed panel: Rudolph Serkin, Jorge Bolet, and Madame Isabelle Vengerova. Bolet, who himself had attended Curtis, was a Cuban born pianist and winner of the Naumberg Competition in 1937. He was relatively new to the faculty. Vengerova was born in Minsk (currently Belarus), and was a founding member of Curtis in 1924. Directly after Walker's audition, he was informed that he had been accepted. That spring, he graduated from Oberlin with highest honors.

Self Discovery and the Curtis Institute of Music

George Walker's years at Curtis were instrumental in providing him the necessary skills to support his ever growing interest in composition. While matriculating at Oberlin, he had participated in a composition seminar taught by Norman Lockwood. The class was rather lacking in stimulation, yet it broadened his understanding of composition fundamentals. While beginning piano lessons with Rudolph Serkin in the fall of 1941, he applied for a composition course with Rosario Scalero. Mr. Scalero had been a successful violinist in Europe, and had studied composition with Eusebius Mandyczewski. Walker submitted two short works which he had written at Oberlin (one based on a Paul Laurence Dunbar text) for Scalero's approval. He was accepted and eagerly began his studies. (See below.)¹⁶ Additionally, Walker took an orchestration class with Gian-Carlo Menotti. Menotti had also studied with Scalero. However, his effectiveness as an instructor becomes a moot point concerning Mr. Walker's development as a composer:

¹⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁶ More about Scalero and Mr. Walker's lessons will be discussed later in the dissertation.

What little information was conveyed came as a casual reference to instrumental timbre. No textbook was used or suggested. There was no discussion about many of the instruments of the orchestra. Nothing was said about percussion, and there was only one assignment for the entire course.¹⁷

Of particular interest to this thesis was William Primrose's involvement in Walker's development. He is one of the few musicians, outside of violinists, pianists, or composers, who Walker mentions during his formative years. Primrose is often touted the "greatest violist of the 20th century." He was the director of Chamber Music studies at Curtis from 1942 until 1951, though he was often *in absentia* because of concert engagements. Walker, while studying at Curtis, had a chamber music ensemble. The group regularly received coaching from Primrose. However, Walker's interactions were limited, and he remembers Primrose mostly as a handsome and caring man.

Curtis was only to be a two-year endeavor, but Walker decided to remain for an additional year of study. His desire was to enlarge his repertoire. Prior to his graduation recital, he received word that Efreim Zimbalist wanted to "do something for him." He later learned that Mr. Zimbalist had made it possible for him to give his New York debut recital in Town Hall. In November of 1945, Walker gave his New York debut with a program that included Beethoven's Sonata, Opus 101, *Kriesleriana*, by Schumann, and one of his own works. The reviewer gave Walker's performance high praise:

Mr. Walker revealed an authentic talent of marked individuality and fine musical insight. He disclosed a rare combination of elegance and sincerity, an unusual technique and a nice basic tone, with lovely coloring.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., 56.

¹⁸ Ibid., 63.

Two weeks later Walker made his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra -- a high achievement, and rare opportunity during that time period for a person of color.

Walker continued his studies at Curtis, eventually staying longer than he had originally intended to do postgraduate work. However, this time his purpose was to spend a greater amount of time working on composition. It was during this time that he would compose his most famous work, the *Lyric for Strings*. As his postgraduate year at Curtis was coming to an end, Walker made the decision to further his skill set and seek instruction at the American School in Fontainebleau, France.

Making a Name for Himself

After receiving less-than-satisfying instruction at the American School, Walker decided, in 1947, to take a leave of absence. Initially, he visited Prague, but this musical city was still in the grip of World War II's aftermath, and concert promotion, even the ability to purchase basic supplies, was an impossibility. He returned to Fontainebleau, and, after staying for the summer, Walker returned home to Washington, D.C. The nation's capital, however, was not the ideal epicenter for a young, budding concert pianist and composer. Since his sister was already living in New York City to study at the Manhattan School of Music, and since Walker's father was willing to invest in a house for them in Long Island, Walker moved north to New York.

After settling in New York, Walker was able to concertize prolifically, including two recitals in Town Hall. The second, in 1953, was attended by *The New York Times* reviewer Harold Schoenberg. According to Walker's memoir, Schoenberg "carefully avoided writing anything positive in the paper that could be quoted."¹⁹ Despite Schoenberg's comments, Walker

¹⁹ Ibid., 79.

was set to embark on a lengthy tour throughout Europe. It was to be sponsored by the National Concert Artists. It included debut recitals at The Hague, Amsterdam, Frankfurt am Main, Milan, London, and several in Italy. It also included some recorded programs for radio stations in Lausanne and Basel, Switzerland.²⁰ He was received well overseas, often having many attendees line up to meet with him backstage following his performance. Though he was reaching new heights with his playing career, a severe ailment plagued him during his tours. He described having severe abdominal cramping and would try alleviating the symptoms with diet, most notably with milk. Upon his return to D.C. his father diagnosed an ulcer. Because of this illness, he was unable to perform his last scheduled tour concert in England.

Upon his father's suggestion, George Walker sought a teaching position. He found one in New Orleans at Dillard University, an African American college, in 1953. Walker did not much care for New Orleans, and never spent much time in the city due to the overt racism.

Late that academic year, Walker discovered that the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York had a new Doctor of Musical Arts program for performers. Since he did not have a Masters degree, he earned an insufficiently remunerative salary at Dillard. Eastman would be the last stop for his education in the United States. Before he was able to attend, however, tragedy struck at home. His father died of cancer. The man who had done everything for his son had now left him. During my interview with Dr. Walker, just the mention of his father elicited trembling and tears. Walker's father had had a profound impact on his life. He deferred his enrollment until the spring semester of 1955.

²⁰ Ibid., 79.

Walker completed his DMA “as quickly as possible.”²¹ The requisites for the degree proved to be not very challenging. He completed his core requirements the next year following his arrival, and he was able to substitute an original composition for a dissertation, and the result was Walker’s Piano Sonata No. 2. While at Eastman, he wrote his Trombone Concerto and Cello Sonata. Drawing ever closer to composition, Walker applied for two fellowships, the Fulbright and the John Hay Whitney Foundation in 1957. His desire was to study piano and composition in Paris. He received both fellowships. Originally, he applied for the Fulbright only to study piano. When he arrived in Paris, he was given the freedom to select a private instructor of his choosing if he did not wish to study at the Conservatoire. He chose instead to study with Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger, a prominent French composition teacher. Walker says, “Upon looking at my Piano Sonata No. 2, she said that ‘it was a masterpiece.’ ‘I was already a composer.’”²²

Boulanger was what Walker had been searching for: encouragement, honesty, and, most of all, recognition of his talents. After his Fulbright year, the fellowship from the Whitney Foundation commenced. He continued his studies for one more year before returning to the United States. His time in Paris, albeit short, was productive and insightful.

A Composer’s Dream Fulfilled

After accepting a few adjunct professorships at the Dalcroze School of Music and the New School of Music, Walker was offered an appointment as an instructor at Smith College. Smith came with its challenges. Other faculty often scorned him for giving more than one recital per year, as this was not a customary practice of the faculty. Additionally, they were jealous of

²¹ Ibid., 87.

²² Walker, George, interview by author, March 22, 2012, Montclair, New Jersey.

his sterling reputation with his students. Walker worked on several projects while at Smith, including a cross promotion of new works by Brandeis University and Smith College, composing, and getting his works published. Smith elevated Walker to an assistant professorship in the matter of a few years. When time came for a promotion to associate professor, to his astonishment, he found out he would be relieved of his position. Walker realized there could have been a motive:

A majority of the tenured professors in the Music Department... had no intention of breaking the existing precedent of the college by giving an associate professorship and tenure to a black person. The quality of performance and teaching that I brought to a rather run-of-the-mill department was ignored.²³

Their efforts proved futile. His position was restored after students, colleagues and members of the community wrote the college in protest. He became the first black professor at Smith to be granted tenure.

After his tenure had been established, Walker took leave from Smith to teach for one year at the University of Colorado. Then, having been offered a position at Rutgers University by Alfred Mann, a fellow Curtis graduate, Walker left Smith for Rutgers, where he would remain until his forced retirement in 1992. He left there only to accept a guest faculty position with the Peabody Institute of John Hopkins University in 1975. Having settled in Montclair, New Jersey, Walker became well known as a teacher, composer and performer. From the 1970s through the 1980s, he continued to concertize. Many of his pieces were given their premieres by prominent institutions, orchestras, and soloists.

²³ Walker, 111.

Becoming more commonplace were requests for commissioned compositions. Cleveland Orchestra, National Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Houston Symphony and the New York Philharmonic are a few. His alma mater, Curtis, surprised Walker.

[Curtis] has never done a piece of mine...People say it is because it is hard for contemporary composers. Don't tell me that you've never heard of Philip Glass, [John] Corigliano, John Adams? ! When you have to go through that, from the moment you start your career, and you're still going through it?²⁴

This was a surprising and rather egregious oversight. His downturned grimace said everything. Rather than dwell, he quickly changed the subject. Overall, his successes heavily outweigh the “passovers” that were in his life.

Winning the Pulitzer and Beyond

Having steady employment at Rutgers afforded Walker a style of life that allowed still greater dedication to his growing passion of composition. He chaired the Department of Music after 1976, and became a distinguished professor.²⁵ His output during the 1970's-1990's reached its zenith. During this time period he composed over 60 of the more than 90 works he published as his life's work.

When asked about *Lilacs for Voice and Orchestra*, his posture elevates and a hidden smile coyly appears on his lips. In 1995, the Boston Symphony commissioned this work from Walker to honor the black tenor, Roland Hayes. Hayes, like Walker, “had so profound an effect” in classical music and is considered a “pioneer in breaking racial barriers.”²⁶ The commission

²⁴ Walker Interview.

²⁵ Walker, 128.

²⁶ Woolsey, F. W. and Roland Hayes, “A Conversation with Roland Hayes” *The Black Perspective in Music* 2, No. 2 (Autumn, 1974): 179.

was a surprise to Walker since he had “submitted numerous scores to the Boston Symphony in the past without any acknowledgment.”²⁷ Originally the work had been designated for tenor and orchestra, but the original tenor slated to give the performance could not sing the part. The symphony requested a substitution and Walker approved. Faye Robinson, a black soprano, would do the premiere. The work had four performances for which Walker obtained an audio copy. His son, Ian Walker, submitted the work to the Pulitzer Committee.

The Pulitzer Prize brought legitimacy to George Walker’s music, not necessarily for him, but for the greater public at large. He was a true master, and had been for a very long time. His works continue to garner success despite prejudicially motivated setbacks. He is not bitter about the ordeals, but rather has offers words to live by about the experiences.

Walker still lives in his beautiful home in Montclair, New Jersey. His library contains an extensive number of books dealing with music and composition, as well as many other fascinating subjects. His slight frame, small voice and penetrating smile are a welcome sight. Entering his 90th year in June of 2012, his schedule remains full of premieres and concerts (he still gives recitals), and his mind remains exceptionally sharp. This is a man who has lived a thousand lifetimes in one and is still going. As we come to discover his influences and compositional style, it will become evident that all of his experiences made him the composer he is today.

²⁷ Walker, 147.

Chapter 2

Walker's Composition Mentors and Their Methods

George Walker credits his love for theory as the first catalyst for his composing activity.²⁸ During the course of his studies, three instructors influenced his writing abilities: Normand Lockwood, Rosario Scalero, and Nadia Boulanger. Looking at how each impacted his approach will give greater insight on deciphering some of Walker's compositional process.

Normand Lockwood

Walker's first composition instructor, Normand Lockwood, opened Walker's eyes to the world of being a composer. Born in New York City, and raised in Michigan, Lockwood found success in Europe. After studying at the University of Michigan (his father was a member of the music faculty,) he studied in Rome with Respighi, and later with Nadia Boulanger, as would Walker. Lockwood taught at Oberlin from 1932-45. It was he who first interested Walker in the works of Stravinsky and Ives, two composers he still admires.²⁹ One of the pieces Walker was drawn to was the *Symphony of Psalms*, and he immediately became enamored with the work. Many of the rhythmic structures in his works, including the Viola Sonata, emulate Stravinsky's style.³⁰

Little is known about how much Walker actually learned from Lockwood, as he only studied with Normand for one semester. What is known is that Lockwood would consistently

²⁸ Walker Interview.

²⁹ This is mentioned in both the *Black Composer Speaks* as well as the Walker's memoir. In the interview he speaks of Stravinsky fondly. Baker, David N., Kidia M. Belt, and Herman C. Hudson, *The Black Composer Speaks* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1978): 212.

³⁰ There are multiple texts and articles that compare Walker's work to Stravinsky's. It is often a topic of interviews with Walker. See Baker.

give Walker low marks for his work.³¹ Lockwood would ask him to write melodies that were not harmonized. After doing this, he would write harmonized versions and finally songs. He was allowed to choose any text of his liking. Following his class he went to write his first piece, *Danse Exotique*. The title was later changed to *Caprice*. Regardless of the amount of knowledge passed, Lockwood exposed young George Walker to contemporary musicians, their music, and gave him an impetus to move ahead with his composition.

Rosario Scalero

Rosario Scalero taught a number of notable composers of the twentieth century, including Samuel Barber and George Rochberg. Scalero was particularly interested in Brahms' lack of counterpoint instruction. He believed that this lack of proper counterpoint instruction was problem still plaguing many composers of the early twentieth century. While Scalero was a great admirer of Brahms, he alludes that there are a few technical difficulties in the faculties of Brahms' writing that, he suggests, could have been corrected with the study of counterpoint.³² Scalero had a unique approach to teaching composition:

All of Scalero's students, regardless of their previous accomplishments, began by working with six or seven *cantus firmi*, creating counterpoint above and below them. Beginning with note against note in two-part eighteenth-century species counterpoint, they progressed into five-part writing before harmony was studied. After harmony came the writing of motets, chorale preludes, variations using models, and finally, as a graduation work, a sonata.³³

Walker's account is congruent with Scalero's didactic entry in a prominent scholastic journal:

³¹ In *The Black Composer Speaks*, Walker reflects on Lockwood giving him poor marks based on possible prejudice. In the interview he states it was one of the reasons he did not continue the course.

³² Scalero, Rosario, and Theodore Baker, "A Contribution to the Pedagogy of Composition," *The Musical Quarterly* 12, No. 3 (Oct., 1922): 493.

³³ Walker, 47.

Instead of commencing our studies with harmony, we should go back to the earlier practice of counterpoint. The important, the essential matter is, to give the student clear and accurate guidance through his studies in counterpoint. We must not attribute to the ancient and modern treatises on counterpoint a disciplinary value excepting with regard to the series of exercises...” “the point of departure for the technique of counterpoint, like that of the simple exercise, should be strictly defined...” “the most vital and palpitant phase of the art there finding expression through the simplest and most fundamental means.³⁴

Scalero employs several of these techniques in his own Violin Sonata in D minor from 1910. (The work is dedicated to Albine Mandyczewski, the wife of his former teacher.) Looking at the primary theme and transitional material of the exposition only, the counterpoint ranges from the most simple to more complex. The opening piano line suggests a *cantus firmus* for the establishment of the mode (which suggests an Aeolian mode due to the C ♭).



Figure 1. *Cantus firmus* of Scalero Violin Sonata in D minor

From there he places the *cantus firmus* in the violin part and uses a means of third species below by arpeggiation.

³⁴ Scalero, 493.



Figure 2. Scalero Violin Sonata in D minor, Violin entrance

Strict imitation in the following passage uses another commonplace counterpoint technique, as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Imitative entrances

As the piece develops, so too does the counterpoint. Scalero's propensity for labored counterpoint can be viewed as counterintuitive for the music of that time. Free composition and unabashed free tonality, while still new, were becoming more commonplace. The works of Debussy, as well as Stravinsky's less tonal compositions, are now widely known. It was said that

Scalero called Stravinsky's music "destructive."³⁵ Whether in an effort to preserve a seemingly sacred institution, Scalero's sonata appears determined to uphold musical dogma of the previous century. Walker himself states he wasn't sure if Scalero "could hear beyond triads and seventh chords. He was certainly a very closed minded individual" and "obsessed with the technical things."³⁶³⁷

Avoiding the monotonous, Walker uses some of Scalero's approaches to counterpoint in the recurrences of thematic (or motivic) material in many of his works. The use of *cantus firmus* is also present. (See below.)³⁸

Nadia Boulanger

Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger contributed to George Walker's development in a rather different manner. Her style was much less dogmatic than Scalero's. To quote Virgil Thompson, a former student, "Her teaching... is full of rigor, while her toleration of the expressive and stylistic variety in composition is virtually infinite."³⁹ Boulanger, herself, did not do very much composition. Her gift resided in her ability to look at and instantly understand a piece of music, its meaning, and its purpose.⁴⁰ After all, she had trained some of the greatest composers of the 20th century including Aaron Copland, Walter Piston, Elliott Carter and Howard Swanson. Her

³⁵ Walker, 48.

³⁶ Walker, 97.

³⁷ Walker Interview.

³⁸ These items will be discussed further in the next chapter.

³⁹ Thompson, Virgil, "'The Greatest Music Teacher' at 75," *Music Educators Journal* 49, No. 1 (Sep.-Oct. 1962): 43.

⁴⁰ Thomson, 43.

lessons varied from student to student. No two students had the same instruction.⁴¹ She also had an amazing memory that gave her instant recall of any music. In her effort to encourage originality in her students, she developed a reputation for telling students that their compositions sounded too much like existing pieces, often naming the exact composer and piece she felt the student was emulating. Walker states that she did not believe in inspiration, but rather in self-discovery.⁴² She did not offer him corrections to his music, nor did she ask him to rewrite something he had done. For Walker, her contribution to his craft was less about technique and more about the support she provided. The “Boulangerie,” as her students have since been called, varied greatly in culture, ability and host of other aspects. However, they are all tied by one woman’s desire to express music beautifully through each of them.

⁴¹ Thomson and Walker have similar accounts concerning the tutoring of Mlle. Boulanger. Thomson, 43.

⁴² From an interview with Bruce Duffie, an ex radio announcer and classical music writer. He speaks on what Boulanger contributed to his thought process concerning composition. The interview took place in 1987.

Chapter 3

Identity and Ideas: Notable Elements of Walker's Compositional Styles using *Lament* and a *Red, Red Rose*

Walker's Style

It is difficult to generalize about a body of work as varied as George Walker's. However, there are several commonalities between many of his pieces that cannot be ignored. They stem from a combination his heritage, his primary teachers, and the progressive composition techniques he was exposed to during his formative years. A prominent feature in many of Walker's works is his affinity for dodecaphonic-like music. Unlike the total serialism of the Second Viennese School, Walker makes use of an aggregate, or "set," where it feels appropriate, and without rigidity. The set may or may not be comprised of 12 notes. He often opts for 9 to 11 pitches. It is uncommon for him to use a completely serialized row. This allows him to be tonally free without any implication of what the harmony would or should otherwise be.⁴³ When his works are not 12-tone like he often opts for modal music. This may stem from his affinity for Gregorian Chant, which he considers as "quite a strong influence."⁴⁴ His former teacher, Scalero, also seemed drawn to chant and *cantus firmus*.

There is often a lack of "harmony" in Walker's music. Walker "thinks linearly."⁴⁵ During the 1940s, composers such as Hindemith, Bartok and Stravinsky, in particular, published works with this "new" kind of counterpoint. Stravinsky's *Octet* and the *Song of Psalms* had

⁴³ Baker, 365.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 370.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 365.

become the subject of many articles and musicologist's critiques. It is fitting that Walker would be enamored by this technique since it took root and flourished during his formative years at Curtis. In this technique, the primary thought is for how two lines can fit contrapuntally together while maintaining their own identity.⁴⁶ There are very few, if any, blocked, or stacked chords in any of the three pieces discussed later in this dissertation. If they are present, they are simply "coloration" for the other material, or motives presented in that bar, or for emphasis. Again, Walker's focus is not harmonic function but musical function.

Walker often draws from forms of the past, but he does not totally comply with their rigid formats. Instead he may opt for a looser version of the original, but not so loose that the form would be unidentifiable. It is important to him to achieve a balance between the old with the new.

Walker can be a motivic or "idea" composer. His ideas may refer to one motive, a series of motives, meters, etc. They are sometimes not initially perceptible, but become more apparent when one is working with the score. This is not a new development, but shows likeness to the composers of the Second Viennese School and to late Stravinsky.⁴⁷ Often, Walker will take an idea, and subject it to exploitation such as truncation, augmentation, and interpolation.

Lastly, Walker enjoys prolific use of syncopation. When asked about his inclination toward this rhythmic element, he said that

The purpose [syncopation] is to add a dimension that cannot be related to other music.... It is a well known device to what one typically finds in 18th, 19th, and even through Stravinsky, finding things that perhaps relate more to jazz.... to inject something that not

⁴⁶ Katz, Adele, *Challenge to Musical Tradition-A New Concept of Tonality* (New York, A.A. Knorpf, 1946), 340.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

only has vitality but a certain amount of astonishment. You are not, and even I am not certain of what is coming next. ⁴⁸

The easiest assumption is to make is that he gravitates to this style because it has long been a tradition of many forms of African American music. There are, however, other possible sources. Many composers of the 1940s, when Walker was forming his musical views, opted for intense levels of syncopation. Thus, it is difficult to qualify music of Western trained ethnic composers.

Issues Being Afro-American in American Composition

Walker has long straddled the fence of different worlds: the world of being a composer, and the world of being an African American. When the two meet, they can have unintended consequences. One of the foremost issues for African American composers is being pigeonholed into an external category of composers for being black. It is as if to say, one cannot be a composer without, inherently, using musical elements that are African or African American.

Walker warns against this stereotyping:

This is really problematic. Although the term black music is currently being used as a subject for discussion about music by black composers or music which shows influences of black music, it is virtually impossible to define to any degree of satisfaction, either in a narrow sense or a general sense...The danger in referring to black music is that it makes it possible for this type of critic to make his own interpretation of what he thinks is black music... on the basis of his own experience.⁴⁹

This has been a very common application since the beginning of the twentieth century. With the century that saw the rise of jazz, and rhythm and blues, both considered black musical aesthetics,

⁴⁸ Walker Interview.

⁴⁹ This was in response to a critic from the Minneapolis Tribune improperly qualifying much of the music from a black composer's concert in 1975. Banfield, William C., *Musical Landscapes in Color: Conversations with Black American Composers* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press Inc. 2003), 177.

it is often difficult to separate blacks involved in other Western musical disciplines. The black contribution is often seen only through white eyes.⁵⁰ Hence, the dichotomy continues to be pervasive. Walker is quick to say that he is proud to be black, but that attribute does not exclusively define him, or his music.⁵¹

On the other spectrum, Walker evidences parallels to *some* attributes typically associated with African American traditions. Much of his music, notably his spiritual-based work, evoke similar qualities of what are considered African-esque music styles and techniques. One is the common use of the half step. The half step is the interval by which spirituals and gospel music typically modulate. It can also be used for “bending” of an established chord. The half step functions similarly to a common tone diminished seventh chord in a barbershop quartet piece, or a diminished secondary to its home chord. *Deep River*, a traditional spiritual demonstrates traditional half step motion as well as diminished chord “bending” in between a phrase, as in Figure 4.

⁵⁰ In the Terry -Monson and Banfield interviews, Walker makes this point to say that often other non-ethnic music scholars feel the need to delineate a line between “black classical music” and “classical music.”

⁵¹ Walker Interview.

Deep riv-er, my home is o - ver Jor - dan,

The first system of the musical score for 'Deep River'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics 'Deep riv-er, my home is o - ver Jor - dan,' are written below the treble staff. There are two circled annotations in the treble staff: one around the first two notes (D4 and E4) and another around the notes for 'o - ver' (G4 and A4).

Deep riv - er, Lord, I want to cross o - ver in - to

The second system of the musical score. It continues with two staves. The lyrics 'Deep riv - er, Lord, I want to cross o - ver in - to' are written below the treble staff. There are two circled annotations in the treble staff: one around the first two notes (D4 and E4) and another around the notes for 'Lord,' (F#4 and G4). A rectangular box highlights the notes for 'I want to cross' (A4, B4, C5, B4, A4) in the treble staff and the corresponding bass line notes (D3, C3, B2, A2, G2).

camp - ground. Oh don't you want to go to that

The third system of the musical score. It consists of two staves. The lyrics 'camp - ground. Oh don't you want to go to that' are written below the treble staff. The treble staff begins with a double bar line. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

gos - pel feast, That prom - ised land where

The fourth system of the musical score. It consists of two staves. The lyrics 'gos - pel feast, That prom - ised land where' are written below the treble staff. The treble staff features a melodic line with some slurs. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment.

Figure 4. Excerpt from *Deep River*

After an initial statement of the theme, improvisation begins to “loosen” the harmonies. This is typical of several black music genres including gospel and jazz. In *Deep River*, a typical performance approach is to bend the chord on the word “long” after several repetitions of the verses. Walker also has been known to use modal scales which are associated with spirituals, such as Dorian, Phrygian, Mixolydian and minor pentatonic. Yet, these are also the modes used in chant music that existed long before spirituals. Walker, admittedly, enjoys chant greatly.⁵²

Walker’s rhythms tend to be very intricate and lean heavily towards syncopation. While this not unique to African American music, it has been a longstanding feature of such music since the pre-slavery period in western Africa. Many musical traditions from the areas where slaves originated (i.e., Ghana, Angola, Nigeria, Benin, etc.) are heavily based in rhythmic polyphony rather than in a harmonic or melodic polyphony. Many West African ethnic groups commonly have mixed meter, polyrhythm and even polymeter in performances.⁵³

Almost all black persons whose ancestors were brought to the West Indies, or to North and South America prior to the 1860’s, can trace their roots to some portion of West Africa. The art forms from West Africa have migrated and mutated into the song and dance forms of many of the cultures of the Americas. The cultures include Afro-Latins, African Americans and Creoles in the United States. It is fitting that Walker, being both of West Indian as well as African American descent, would find a voice in this complex style.

It is important to note that none of these features of Walker’s music are mutually exclusive. They are all byproducts of both his musical and ethnic heritage, and have seamlessly

⁵² Walker mentions this in both his memoir, and in *The Black Composer Speaks*.

⁵³ Agawu breaks down many of the standard drumming patterns of West African cultures. For more information, see “Structural or Cultural Analysis? Competing Perspectives on the “Standard Pattern” of West African Drumming,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, No. 1 (Spring 2006):1- 39.

blended together to create an individualized aesthetic. Examination of his two art songs makes evident how these traditions are woven together.

Lament

Walker wrote both art songs in 1971. They exemplify Walker's ability to "free compose" in no particular style or in adherence to any particular "period" in his compositional output. These works, which serve as precursors to those explored later in this study, are a brief composite of the aesthetic seen in the Viola Sonata. It will also help the performers know what to seek interpretively in his music.

Upon review of the scores, it seems incomprehensible that these works were written by the same man within weeks of each other. The text for *Lament* is based on a poem by Countee Cullen, a leading poet during the height of the Harlem Renaissance. The overall mood of the work is melancholy with ebb and flow. The voice is kept simple, enjoying little variation in rhythm, while the piano helps to push the music slightly in the middle section. In the opening, one sees that a pseudo *cantus firmus* in Phrygian mode is employed in a manner similar to the opening of the Scalero Violin Sonata shown in Figure 1.

COUNTEE CULLEN

GEORGE WALKER

p *legato*

Tempo: ♩ = 96

Piano

Voice

p

Now let all love - ly things em - bark up - on the sea of mist —

— with her whose lus - cious mouth the dark, grim trou - ba - dour has kissed..

The sil - ver clock that ticked a -

pp

Ped. Ped.

Figure 5. *Lament m. 1-15*

One notices how the opening statement focuses more on counterpoint than on the harmonic framework. The lowest bass line moves in complete contrary motion to the upper notes of the right hand.

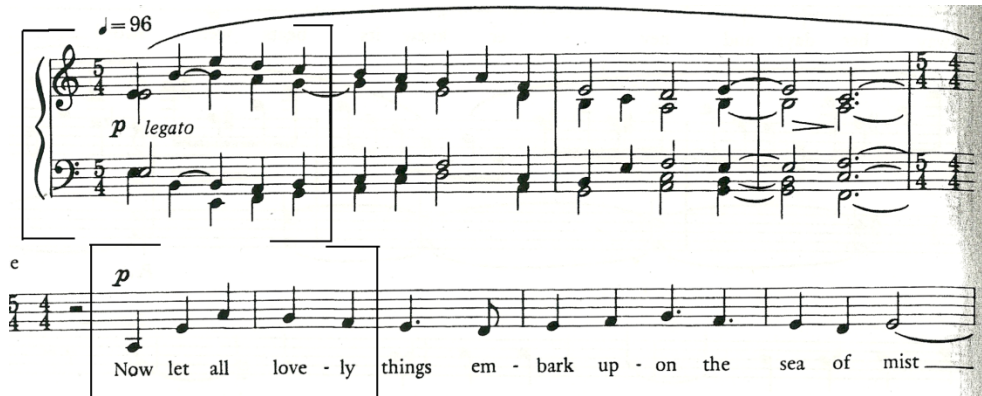


Figure 6. Opening of *Lament*, counterpoint and structure

In the voice entrance, we see a similar *cantus firmus* to the opening but transposed down a fifth. This ties in to the next element; meter and rhythm.

The meter initially is in 5/4, but when the voice enters, the meter shifts every bar from 5/4 to 4/4. This immediately creates syncopation without the need to introduce new rhythms. The interplay between '5' and '4' is a common one throughout the song. The first two intervals of both the piano line and the voice line are a perfect 5th and perfect 4th respectively. Several subsequent entrances also demonstrate the play.

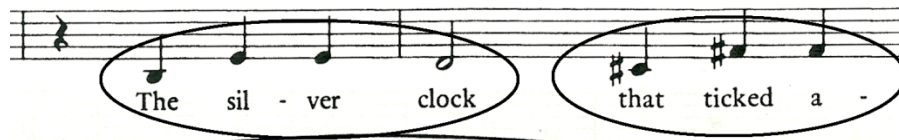


Figure 7. Quartal relationships in subsequent voice entrances, *Lament*

Though Walker typically steers away from “harmony,” the counterpoint helps to create interest. The piano block chords are overwhelmingly quartal and quintal harmony. This again, ties back to the juxtaposition of 5 and 4. After the piano interlude, the middle section changes focus harmonically. Now using a Phrygian-Dorian hybrid, the focus has shifted from counterpoint to more traditional harmonies mixed with secundals, chromatics and the ever-present quartals and quintals. There is a method to the sudden introduction of new harmony: “Prolonged use [quartals] induces blandness and limits the composer’s capacity for achieving dramatic effects. Consistent quartal usage replicates the same effect.”⁵⁴ Since these new chords occur at the climax of the piece, Walker’s statement is true to his techniques.

The form of *Lament* could be interpreted as unorthodox rounded binary. The original A section which starts at the beginning and ends at the *lunga*, comes back as only the first fraction of what is was following a heavy B section. This was a popular form during the Classical era, but one that has since waned. Interpolating an antiquated form with 20th century melodic techniques brings freshness to the work. This is typical of Walker’s style.

Overall, *Lament* differs from many of his other works. The simplicity of the texture is a substantive change from *A Red, Red Rose*.

A Red, Red Rose

Walker wanted to create a piece with more of a “blues implication” and where the melodic line was “tonally free”.⁵⁵ With that, this song more closely resembles the aesthetic of the Viola Sonata, hence making it a good preface of Walker’s style. Robert Burns’ 1794 poem, based on a Scottish text, provides the title and lyrics for the work. In a few ways, it bears

⁵⁴ Walker, 97.

⁵⁵ Walker Interview

likeness to *Lament*. Meter changes occur in almost every bar. However, in this work there is much more metric variety; the interplay between beats of two three four and five help the distortion of time as well as tempo. While there are more notes present in this work, Walker favors the use of intervals to shape his lines. Similar intervals (fourths, fifths, seconds and sevenths) make up the majority of the both the melodic and piano material while maintaining an intense level of chromaticism. Every entrance of the voice begins with a perfect fourth or fifth. This correlates similarly to the entrances in *Lament*.

Moreover, there are many more ideas that are in direct contrast to the direction of *Lament*. The time signature fluctuations help to maintain the unsettled feeling of the song. The rhythm's seemingly haphazard nature is misleading. Often, the largest rhythmic groupings in the piano are played unimpeded by the voice. This allows for the "improvised" runs to be played or sung freely. The rhythm variation is much denser. It spans the gamut, from half notes to octuplets.

A Red, Red Rose

ROBERT BURNS

GEORGE WALKER

$\text{♩} = 48$

Voice

Piano

p

mp

O, my love _____ is like a

Figure 8. *A Red, Red Rose* m. 1-5

This work is more of a nod to dodecaphonic music. The opening set, however, is incomplete. This allows the parts to sound as if they were improvisatory, but the improvisation is actually written in. This is also evident in the Viola Sonata.

Another element to Walker's musical style that is evident in this work is pedal tone rhythmic repetitions. Instead of having one note held in a single value, he repeats the note in a rhythmic setting. This is similar to how Stravinsky uses ostinati pedals in several of his works.⁵⁶ The declamatory nature makes a striking emphasis even in a soft dynamic, as seen in Figure 9. He frequently uses these during the middle going towards the apex of a work. They are used to build tension.

The image displays a musical score for the song "A Red, Red Rose". It consists of two systems of music. The first system features a vocal line in 5/4 time, marked *a tempo* and *mp*, with lyrics: "As fair art thou, my". Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment in 5/4 time, marked *a tempo cantabile* and *p*. Two rectangular boxes highlight specific rhythmic patterns in the piano part: the first box covers the first two measures, and the second box covers the last two measures. The second system features a vocal line in 4/4 time, marked *mf*, with lyrics: "bon - nie lass, So deep in luv am I, And". Below it is a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. A rectangular box highlights a rhythmic pattern in the piano part during the final measure of the system.

Figure 9. Pedal tone ostinati, *A Red, Red Rose*

⁵⁶ Horlacher gives a thorough explanation of Stravinsky's ostinato styles. Horlacher Gretchen, "The Rhythms of Reiteration: Formal Development in Stravinsky's Ostinati," *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, No. 2 (Autumn, 1992): 171-187.

Despite the infinitely varied constructs in each of Walker's works, there still remains a certain homogeny. It may not always be clearly visible, but the common links are always there. These songs serve as a foundation for Walker's Viola Sonata, which was written almost twenty years later.

Chapter 4

An Analysis of the Viola Sonata (1989)

Overview

The only work by Walker for the instrument, the Viola Sonata of 1989 is formidable in density as well as comprehension. This approach to the analysis of the work divides a range of attributes from the smallest to the largest: pitch and interval content, rhythm, counterpoint between the instruments, and form. (Note: There are some errors that need to be mentioned: in the first movement, measure 9, the time signature is incorrect. The meter should be 6/8. In bar 14, the G sixteenth note should not have a dot. The A# in the next measure should.⁵⁷ In bar 33, there should be a D # in the right hand of the piano following the dotted eighth note.)⁵⁸

Melodic Components

In the first movement, the drive of this piece starts with an intervallic cell. Looking at the viola part alone will better define the content. The main interval motive is comprised of a minor second and another interval. To give an example in bar 3 where the viola enters, the first three notes are F# C# and C ♮ . To demonstrate how Walker infuses the music with these numerous interval cells, some from the first few bars of the viola have been highlighted.

This happens again in the following entrance of the viola from an A # down to an F and E. As is customary with Walker's style, the motives mutate. After the initial viola entrance, in bar 4, the motive appears again, B ♭ to A to E, but this time the intervals are reversed with the semitone

⁵⁷ Sills, David L., "Viola Sonata for Viola and Piano (1989) by George Walker: Review," *Notes, Second Series* 50, No. 2 (Dec. 1993): 764.

⁵⁸ Two corrections were given by the composer and written in an original score by his own hand. Walker Interview.

being first and the leap of the perfect fourth follows. The next grouping, E to B and C, has the intervals in the original order, but the semitone is inverted. And in bar 5, the motive is in complete retrograde inverse with E to F to B \flat as seen in Figures 10 and 12. These tiny structures are the foundation for the entire work. There are an infinite number of permutations. These small clusters help to make up the two bar antecedent.

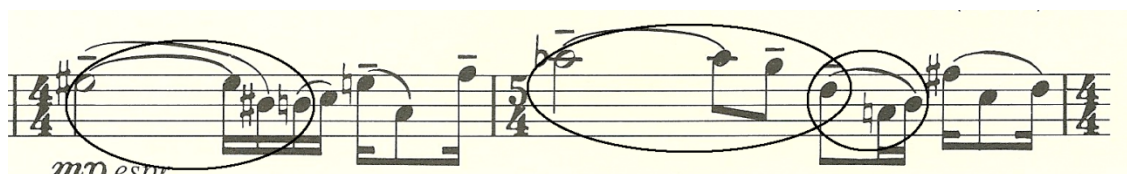


Figure 10. Three-note interval cell m. 3-4 (alto clef), Mvt. I

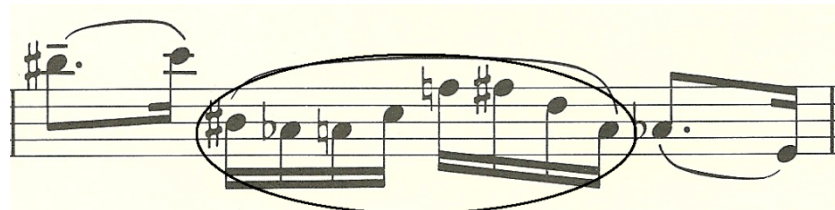


Figure 11. Octatonic structure without pitch F m. 6 (alto clef), Mvt. I

♩ = 63 I

The score is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. Measure numbers 1, 3, 6, and 9 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. Performance markings include *f*, *p*, *mp espr.*, *p secco*, *dolce*, *riten.*, *a tempo*, *ten.*, *pp*, and *mp*. Circled cell units are present in measures 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The tempo changes from 63 to 72 at measure 9.

Figure 12. Viola sonata score with circled cell units, Mvt. I

The sonata is a presentation of 12-tone music, though it is not serial. The notes appear initially in this order (per the viola part): F# C# C D F B G B b A E before another note repeats. There does not seem to be a systematic method for how the note presentations are considered; rather it seems to be more based on fluidity, and rises and falls within a given line. Another way Walker uses the 12-tone system to his advantage is through the use of “hidden” octatonic scales. The half step to whole relationship of this scale makes it ideal for a 12-tone like system. In Figure 11, an octatonic scale from bar 6 of the viola part is out of sequence making it less obvious to see as well as hear. This is also true in bar 9. The scale is first presented out of sequence, but then in sequence to close the measure. It also occurs in the piano. Figure 13 is an example of how the octatonic scale is hidden in the texture again by taking just a few notes out of sequence. These rearrangements allow for a plethora of variety in both chromaticism and shapes. This interval motive appears in almost every bar of the work in both parts.



Figure 13. Octatonic rearrangement in m. 25, Mvt. I

As the movement develops, this small portion begins to get more complex as it is paired with other notes to create new sonorities as in bar 13. The piano has the motive but with a secondal note at the end. The viola then follows with double stops stacked in a 3rd then 4th. In

essence, Walker continues to present the same material in multiple ways so that it never sounds the same.

Movement Two shows a reorganization of the previous melodic components in the first movement. Walker mentions that he wanted to try something new by incorporating the essence of the first movement in the second. This, he says, is “rarely done.”⁵⁹ The three-note cell is still present. Looking at the viola in bar 7, the half step to another interval is featured once again, as seen in Figure 13.

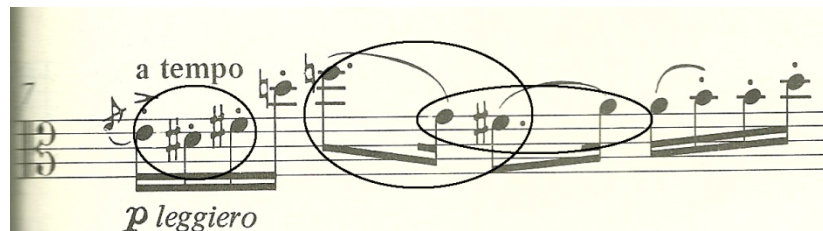


Figure 14. Reorganization of three note cells in new motive, Viola Sonata, Mvt. II

The opening pitches from the second movement are demonstrated very differently from their presentation in the first movement. The second movement does not appear to be as pitch set driven. Many of the notes are repeated right away in both parts. In Figure 14, the F# is played twice within close proximity. The B later in the bar is also played twice. These findings are also congruent with the piano part.

The octatonic scales are a more present component in this movement than in the previous. The viola participates more in showcasing the scale in order and completeness.

⁵⁹ Typically in a two movement Sonata structure, the material from the two movements will vary. It is highly unusual to have the melodic material relate so closely.

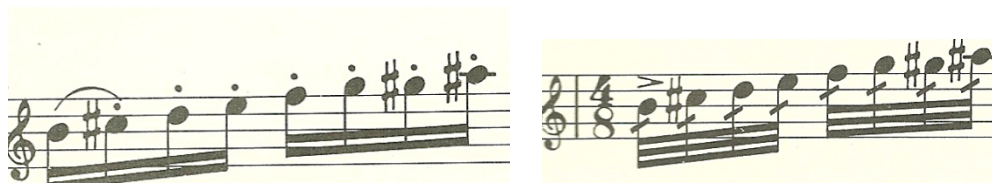


Figure 15. Octatonic scales in correct order mm. 9 and 56, Viola Sonata, Mvt. II

The scales in bars 2 and 4 are both octatonic. The octatonic scales in the piano are designed similarly in timbre as well, including measure 40 in the second movement, and measure 44 in the first. These measures are similar to what is presented in Figure 15. Through these scale patterns, Walker is again relating the structure of the two movements, both thematically and melodically. What we can assess is that Walker uses several forms of octatonic scale patterns to make numerous permutations, keeping the melodic content fresh.

As the movement progresses, so too does the density of the tonality. In bar 40, there is a reorganized chromatic scale with the B being out of place. The end of this scale implies a whole tone pattern with E, F# G and A closing the measure. The density of the tonal explorations is in correlation with the density of the rhythm. Depending on how one views it, the tonal “thickness” occurs as the rhythmic values become smaller or vice versa. This makes the middle passages of the movement harmonically move faster.

Finally as he closes the work, something drastic happens. The piece, which had been completely based on a series of interval cells, suddenly changes direction. From bar 117 onward, there is a definitive scale that carries until the end of the work. The ending is based on an old French piece *L’Homme armé*.⁶⁰ *L’Homme armé* was a popular, secular Renaissance piece. There

⁶⁰ The significance of *L’Homme armé* will be discussed in the next chapter.

are several *cantus firmi* and tropes based on the work. It was also commonly used as part of the Ordinary in Mass.⁶¹ Figure 16 shows the song in its entirety:

The image shows a musical score for the song 'L'Homme armé' in 3/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The melody is simple and consists of quarter and half notes. The lyrics are: 'L'hom - me, l'hom - me l'homme ar - mé, l'homme ar - mé, L'homme ar - mé doibt on doub - ter, doibt on doub - ter. On a fait par - tout cri - er, Que chas - cun se viengne ar - mer, d'un hau - bre - gon de fer. L'hom - me l'hom me l'homme ar - mé, l'homme ar - mé, l'homme ar - mé doibt on doub - ter.'

Figure 16. Original *cantus firmus*, *L'Homme armé*

L'Homme armé, in the sonata, is set in A Aeolian, or natural minor mode. Walker leaves a note underneath the piano lines, in the score, stating that the quote comes directly from the first and last lines of the piece “*L'Homme armé doibt on doubter.*” Walker uses the same melodic scheme in constructing his quote from the piece. The quote is found in the moving line of the right hand in the piano, as seen in Figure 17. Several bars later, in 119, he does a similar quote, but it is up a major second.

⁶¹ Plainchart, Alejandro E., “The Origins and Early History of *L'Homme armé*,” *The Journal of Musicology* 20, No. 3 (Summer, 2003): 305-306.

Figure 17. *L'Homme armé* in score, Viola Sonata Mvt. II

While the quote is in natural minor, Walker harmonizes this theme with a B \flat and an F \sharp .

These notes would imply Dorian and Phrygian modes. The viola floats on top in with A's and E's giving the melody hollowness due to the quintal/quartal nature of the intervals. All of this is consistent with what Walker did in *Lament*. In the last two bars, the right hand of the piano outlines a major 7th, the inverse of a minor 2nd. It is as if he wanted to close the work with the very opposite of its commencement.

Rhythmic Components

Since the nature of the interval cell motive has been presented earlier, we can look at how the rhythm of that motive functions throughout the first movement in the viola part. Comparing the original motive to the following one in bar 4 shows that the idea is now elongated. The last two notes in this three-note figure are eighth notes instead of two sixteenth notes, as seen in Figure 12. In the first three bars of the viola, the motive appears rhythmically varied four different ways. At the metric modulation in bar 16, we get a sudden increase in rhythmic brevity. This section focuses until measure 52 much more on 32nd note figures. This continues until bar 31 where the rhythmic activity once again shows sign of regression in both parts. The intensity of the rhythm builds up until bar 45 and then starts to wane. When we reach measure 53, the original motive returns in its original rhythm bringing the movement full circle in its conclusion.

The first movement has a rhythmic feature worth noting. The pitch ostinato from the art song, *A Red, Red Rose*, makes a return. When it appears in bars 40-41 and 46-47, it is during a heightened portion of the movement. However, in contrast to the song, both parts mimic one another in rhythm, even if not completely. The parallel nature gives the ostinato in the sonata a more pointed effect.

In the second movement, the note values are much the same. However, there is much more fluctuation in where and how the rhythms are used. To start, Walker uses a simple 4/4 time signature to establish the playful and symmetrical gesture. With the exception of a 7/8 in bar 4, the rest of the opening phrase is rhythmically fairly simple, as compared to the opening of the first movement. The viola follows in similar fashion. From bars 15-26, the rhythm becomes

much less dense, allowing for what feels like a flowing counterpoint between the viola and piano. Even with several 5/8 meter changes, the slow tempo aids the music to feel relatively even. Approaching measure 27, there is a dramatic shift in rhythmic content. The subdivision drops from the quarter note to an eighth and sixteenth notes. 32nd notes now constitute the majority of the melodic material. With several rests juxtaposed as interruptions between the two instruments, the rhythmic syncopation becomes the foreground. For a brief time in measures 60-89, the rhythmic intensity shifts back to the calmer episode seen in bars 15-26. Again, it returns to the smaller metric values that are omnipresent in both movements. As the work closes, thematic lines from bar 116 until the end are given the most metric space in the entire piece.

One observation that remains constant for both movements is the rhythmic pace of long phrases. In longer phrases, the rhythms have a tendency towards slower rhythmic values initially in a phrase, and then move to the more quickly paced values. (Bear in mind that tempo alterations were not considered. This is based purely on the note values.) As an example, the opening phrase from the viola in movement 1, starts with a very slow subject and increases in rhythmic intensity by the end of bar 9. For the first movement, bars 24-27, 31-36, etc., all have this same pattern, as seen in Figure 18. This is also true of bars 4-10, 28-31, 55-56, etc., in the second. The phrases end with shorter note values. This also helps the movement to flow and for the player to keep time. The second movement has one exception during measures 15-27. This small section is a play of the ending material from the first movement in both interval layout and rhythm. It is almost as if it were an echo. It does not adhere to the rhythmic acceleration previously described. Even in the rhythmic layout, Walker is able to give enough change

between the movements, despite using the same rhythmic values, to achieve great contrasts in character.

Figure 18. Rhythmic “quicken” in long phrase, Mvt. II

The tempi indications throughout the work are meticulously laid out for both players. Walker uses the eighth note as the beat for the majority of his tempo markings. There are two exceptions in the second movement. Because of the meters where the denominators are 16, 8 and 4, the eighth note is a great balance. Because the second movement picks up in character and whimsy, the quarter note is chosen. The players should not be pedantic, but the tempo of measure 66 also suggests an unaggressive and non-accelerated feel.

Walker makes liberal use of mixed meters. The meters range from as small as 3/16 to as large as 7/4. Mixed meter is very common of many composers from the early 20th century, including Stravinsky. With the many displaced accents and stark contrasts in rhythms, the piece can feel a bit ametric, but not amorphic, however. The constant battle between 5 and 4, or rather uneven and even, is well achieved in this work. When metric modulations happen, Walker sets up both players by use of differing strategies. When a direct metric shift happens, such as in bar 16 of the first movement, the piano plays unobstructed by the value on a dotted eighth note. In a 5/16 bar, this allows both players to gather their thoughts, enough space for the music to clear, and then to allow the violist to continue in the new tempo without the impediment of possibly not lining up with the pianist. Another way he achieves metric transition smoothly is by use of a ritard. This occurs in several places, including bars 30 to 31, in the first movement, and 74 to 75 in the second. It is clear that Walker has thought of all the variables for the best possible outcome for both players to be able to achieve a successful performance.

It is usually rare to see such rhythmic similarity in a sonata form. However, Walker makes it work by uses of meter changes, metric shifts, and specificity in the articulations. The changes are subtle enough for the relations to be apparent but not transparent to both the listeners and the players. It helps give the work as one writer put it, an “unexpected cohesion.”⁶²

Counterpoint

Since George Walker himself is a proficient pianist, it is probably not a coincidence that the piano part is equal in value to the viola part. The piano, generally, does a fair amount of counterpoint and emulation against the viola part. A definition of counterpoint is two or more

⁶² Sills, 764.

parts that are harmonically interdependent, but independent in contour and rhythm. Walker's focus appears to be more based on linear counterpoint.

First used by neoclassical composers, linear counterpoint is a “purely horizontal technique, in which the integrity of the melodic lines is not sacrificed for harmonic considerations.”⁶³ When specific thematic material or motives return, often the previous counterpoint does as well. As an example, Figure 19 demonstrates bar 3 with the viola holding a single note while the piano plays its small three-note motive. This occurs again in bar 13, and similarly in bars 33 and 53.

The image displays two musical excerpts from the Viola Sonata, Mvt. I. The left excerpt, labeled '33', shows a piano part in 6/8 time with a staccatissimo three-note motive in the right hand and a single note in the left hand. The right excerpt, labeled '55', shows a viola part in 6/8 time with a single note in the right hand and a three-note motive in the left hand. The piano part is marked *mf staccatissimo* and the viola part is marked *mp espr.* and *p secco*.

Figure 19. Counterpoint and thematic relation mm. 33 and 55, Viola Sonata, Mvt. I

Each time there is a slight variation either in dynamic or in articulation. Because of the atonal nature of this work, it may be difficult for the listener to seize on to a melodic subject. However, the counterpoint is structured in such a way that it gives the sonata grounding and structure.

The counterpoint at times is both note against note against note and florid. However the idea of a true species counterpoint should not be taken literally. It simply means that notes are moving together independently but not by means of consonant intervals. In fact, they are often dissonant. This does not imply that Walker should be considered what theorists call a

⁶³ Katz, 340.

“dissonance counterpoint” composer. Dissonant counterpoint, first written out by Charles Seeger, takes the original rules of counterpoint and spins them around. The thrust is not towards consonance, but rather towards dissonance.⁶⁴ But, Seeger’s take is a calculated method for intended dissonance. For Walker, the dissonance is a resulting byproduct of his writing style. Therefore, he is truly not a dissonant counterpoint composer.

Form

The number of movements in the Viola Sonata was “an intentional choice.”⁶⁵ Walker based the form on Beethoven’s Opus 78, and, specifically, Opus 90.⁶⁶ Opus 90 of Beethoven is quite unique. It is only a two-movement sonata, and each movement is given very specific titles. Each of the movements titles are translated from German to the following:

Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck : With liveliness and with feeling and expression throughout

Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen: Not too swiftly and conveyed in a singing manner

Walker uses these titles as a template and switches the movement order for the Viola Sonata. The tempi in Walker’s sonata are similar to the “understood” tempi for the movements in Beethoven’s sonata. The sections for each movement were decided based on both motivic and rhythmic components. Devices such as *ritards* and tempo changes help to further outline the structure for the players.

⁶⁴ For more information on dissonant counterpoint, see Seeger article.

⁶⁵ Walker, 161.

⁶⁶ This is based on Walker’s memoir, as well as what Walker said during the interview.

Walker is a traditionalist when it comes to form.⁶⁷ His rationale is that without organization there is a danger of imbalance and a loss of a framework. The form for this movement has been simplified in the following table :

Table 1. Viola Sonata Form, Movement I

Section	Measures	Section Description
Introduction	1-2	Introduction
Exposition	3-30	A
Development	31-52	B
Recapitulation	53-59	1/2 A

Walker states that the movement is a loose “sonata allegro” but it could also be perceived as a rounded binary. Two reasons for this are the relative brevity of the work, and the fact that the return of the A material is only half as long. This analysis maintains the perspective of a sonata allegro. Since there are no true versions of a primary and secondary theme, one must, therefore, extrapolate from the motive and rhythmic ideas. The exposition starts at bar 1 and ends at bar 31. Bars 1 and 2 are an introduction. They aid in highlighting some of the key rhythms in both the first and second movements, almost as a foreshadowing of things to come. Bars 3-10 are, loosely, a primary theme. The sonata is not a “by the book” sonata allegro form. There are still, however, some basic structures that hold the form intact and make it perceptible. In bar 3, we could call the entire figure in the viola part an antecedent. The rest of the figure can be seen as a consequent from the middle of bar 4 through bar 6 and the rest of the phrase an extension. The reason bars 4-6 are a consequent is that they retain much of the intervallic and rhythmic content

⁶⁷ Baker, 366.

of measure 3, thus making these bars related. Bar 7 is at the lowest point in the phrase and acts as an interlude to the extension connecting the two ideas together. Bars 8-10 have much less in common with the beginning than do the bars of the consequent.

The piano comes back with a transition until the viola entrance again in bar 13. Several of the stacked thirds, as well as contrapuntal activity in this short three-bar phrase, preview the upcoming viola line. Typically in sonata form, the secondary theme presents new material but may or may not have structures in common with the primary theme. In this case, the secondary theme presents the same antecedent that was seen in bar 3. What follows it is a truncated antecedent that moves both in note-by-note counterpoint as well as florid counterpoint. Again, the piano follows the brief viola monologue, playing segments of the viola's primary antecedent before concluding. The viola enters with a new motive idea featuring mostly 32nd notes. Until this point, 32nd notes have not been used. A transition that uses interplay between the two instruments helps to conclude the exposition. The banter back and forth uses small subjects in an effort to preserve much of the original material but to use it in a new way. These small gestures are a key feature in the development.

The "development" in this case would be a misnomer. It is rather a collection of "reiterations" that are striated throughout the middle section.⁶⁸ Traditional developments use segments of a primary theme (sometimes a secondary as well) in a new key area, but never in their entirety. The point is to present it enough so it is recognizable, but not enough so that is tedious. Walker uses the antecedent from bar 3 once again, and this time the consequent is extended. The extension shows similarities to the two previous consequents by using the

⁶⁸ Walker, 161.

flowing sixteenth notes and the stacked thirds, which have now been inverted to create sixths. This section is mostly comprised of the three-note motive and octatonic subjects that were discussed earlier. The piano helps to renew tension by having interpolated closings, such as measures 37-40, that never quite finish. By using cadential elisions, the short subjects have time to rest and feel renewed upon each entrance. These small chunks are divided amongst the viola and piano part equally, giving the “development” cohesion. As it comes to a close, there is a *molto ritard* that helps to blend the development into the recap without interruption.

The final section, or the recapitulation, restates the original antecedent on C# in the viola, while using the three-note motive in the piano. The viola uses the exact intervals in the same direction from the first antecedent. The others have either different or inverted intervals. To show a difference in the closing, the piano has a dotted eighth note, unlike the previous antecedents. The piece closes with the “second theme” beginning on F. The last measure shows a play on the three-note figures in the piano with rests to bring closure to the movement. The viola finishes with a half step to octave gesture further indicating the importance of the semitone to the entire work.

A hidden gem in the first movement comes with the climax at the end of the reiteration section. The apex of the movement, not only in dynamic but also in pitch class as well, occurs between bars 33-36. Dividing the total number of bars in the movement by 35, the bar with the highest point, gives the number 1.686. This is very close to the golden ratio number in the Fibonacci sequence, 1.618. In other words, Walker has created a “golden section.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ A golden section is where the climax of a work occurs near the Fibonacci golden ratio. For more information see Kramer, Jonathan, “The Fibonacci Series in Twentieth-Century Music,” *Journal of Music Theory* 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1973):114.

The second movement steps away from a sonata allegro into a more of a hybrid format. It has some elements similar to the first movement but overall has much more variation in the form. A tabular version of the structure is seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Viola Sonata Form, Movement II

Section	Measures	Section Description
Exposition	1-27	Opening theme x 2/ Slower theme from Mvt. I
“Reiterations”/Development	27-65	Brief statements of exposition material throughout
Recapitulation	66-115	Opening theme/ slower theme from mvt. I/ opening theme played by piano
Coda	116-122	<i>L’Homme armé</i>

One element is the restatement of motives and the banter between the viola and piano. The opening of the second movement starts with a motive (right hand of the piano in the first bar) repeated by the viola when it enters in bar 7, as in Figure 19. This “cat and mouse” is what drives the movement. The bar 12 interlude sets up the next motive idea. As in the first movement, the phrase antecedents are similar enough in nature to recognize the relations.

♩ = 66

4 ritard. - - - -

7 a tempo
p leggiero

9

p leggiero

mp *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

mp *p* *mf*

Figure 20. Highlighted antecedent repetitions, Viola Sonata Mvt. II

In bar 15, there is a new antecedent that remotely emulates the first antecedent from the first movement with the tied note value into 16th notes. The piano follows in measure 19 with the same intervals as the viola antecedent but the rhythmic values are much more syncopated. The viola interrupts the piano thought in bar 23 with a variation of what was presented in bar 15. As the viola ends this phrase in bar 27, it begins a new one in bar 28. Again like the first movement, there is a move to smaller note values (i.e., 32nd notes). Bar 28 in the viola and bar 32 in the piano balance one another. These antecedents are almost identical with the exception of the pitch qualities, and the interval after the tie is an inverse of the first (minor 2nd to a major 7th). As the movement progresses toward greater tension, the rhythmic complexity and activity increase simultaneously. The interjections also decrease between one another. For example, the piano plays bars 33-35 without a viola line. In measure 38, the piano plays 2/3rd of the 9/16 bar before the viola entrance. The space between each entrance is significantly tighter than it was previously in the movement. The small reiterations are reminiscent of the first movement's development section. As a general rule, the longer 32nd note reiteration passages are moving toward larger intervals between notes than previously seen. In bar 37, the intervals between two note groupings are perfect 4th, augmented 5th tritone and minor 3rd. These are some of the largest spacings the movement has seen thus far. The congruent note groupings continue to come back incessantly in bars 37, 52, 57 and 67, along with the large intervals make the development feel more destabilized. In bar 76, we see a return to stability by use of a ritard and diminuendo. Measure 76 reminisces of material heard in piano from halfway through measures 16 and 17. In fact, the each part has what the other had before. The piano plays in bar 76 what the violist had in bar 15. Again, it is "cat and mouse." Bar 83 shows the material from measure

24 at a new pitch level. Just as it seems the piece is beginning to close, one last section of the development starts softly and grows immensely. Several of the small motives and antecedents return. Measure 95 shows congruency toward measure 37, as does measure 102 to measure 54. Abruptly, a coda appears in bar 116. The extremes in dynamic and thin texture further enhance the disjointed feeling of a *cantus firmus* at the end of a very progressive work.

As one can see, the sonata is a clever melange of reordered notes, rhythms, and figures. As the smaller details are examined more carefully it becomes easier to see exactly how the parts intertwine.

Chapter 5

A Performance Guide and Thoughts on Approach

General Remarks

Dr. Walker is not overwhelming in stature; nor is he overbearing in conversation. But, ask him “how should one approach music,” his, or any other composer’s, and his tone becomes more emphatic. This is a man with clear tastes, judiciously mulled for 85 years. This chapter will present his account from interviews as to how the Sonata should be played.⁷⁰ It also looks at some issues concerning the violist. When asked “what would be an ‘ideal’ performance of the piece?” he had this to say: “I think if the performers do everything that is on the page, that would constitute a good performance.”⁷¹

As simple as this statement is, it makes sense when looking at the score. The meticulous nature of the music requires the utmost precision from the performer and great attention to what may be perceived as the most mundane of aspects.

Walker recounts that he had quite a bit of difficulty in getting a violist to play his work. Walker tried contacting several prominent violists, without any luck. Eventually, Paul Neubauer agreed to play the work. Neubauer gave the Viola Sonata its premiere in 1989 at Weill Recital Hall in New York (The recital was also Neubauer’s New York City debut). The piece is dedicated to his father, Dr. George Walker Sr. who passed away in 1955. Written some 34 years after his death, it pays homage to the man that had the greatest impact on his life. In a way, the piece could be considered an elegy.

⁷⁰ All indented quotes in this chapter are from the author’s interview with George Walker.

⁷¹ Walker Interview.

In discussion of various recordings and live performances of the sonata, Walker has shown dissatisfaction with several of the tempi taken by players who always seemed to play the piece too fast. The tempi indicated in the score are not merely suggested, they are required. If anything, from conversations with Walker, a slightly slower tempo would be a better choice and the tempi should never be rushed. All long values should be held to the fullest accord. Few liberties in regard to the tempi and rhythm should be taken, even when passagework is difficult. Constant ritards (as many players naturally do) would stagnate the already indicated ebb and flow of the work. The intentional omission of bar lines during Walker's composition process further confirms the previous statement.⁷²

In terms of phrasing, there are a few things that the performer must bear in mind. This piece tends to "evade cadences."⁷³ One review stated that it was difficult to determine where the phrases ended and met due to the careful structure and organization of the music.⁷⁴ It is important that the long phrase structures not sound broken and that the short ones do. This dichotomy is what gives the piece its unique character as well as structure. Walker spoke very specifically about one of the articulations in the sonata:

I really didn't really want to make a distinction of the way he [Neubauer] played it and how the pianist played it. The staccato notes in the piano part, for one thing, I always wanted them very short... like, pizzicati... there are not many pianists who can play very short.

⁷² It is only after he has completed a work that he places bar lines as a guide for where the impulses should be felt in the music. Walker Interview.

⁷³ Sills, 764.

⁷⁴ Sims, Maxine D., "An Analysis and Comparison of Piano Sonatas by George Walker and Howard Swanson," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1976): 73.

The piano in bar 3 should be as short and dry as possible with the articulations over emphasized. For either player, anything with a dot should be very *secco*, tight, and crisp.

No parts of the sonata have been rewritten.⁷⁵ Walker laid out everything meticulously from the beginning. Walker paid special attention to dynamics. He said, “When I write a dynamic, I cannot ever imagine changing it....outside of an orchestra, I never change the dynamics.”

Many of the dynamics are written with an articulation or mood indicator further emphasizing Walker’s specifics. The dynamics play an equal role in how the piece comes across to the listener. The dynamics are written for the violist’s benefit. One common problem with the viola, when playing with piano, is that its sound tends to be swallowed up in the sonority of the piano. Walker wisely staggered the dynamics between the two instruments. The piano dynamic is consistently under or at the same level as the viola. Therefore, when the piece is played correctly, the violist should not have to force, even at a fortissimo level. Walker states that the timbre of the instrument should never sound ugly or harsh.

Viola Performance Specifics

The solemn, almost empty, entrance of the viola has a nice color, especially when played on the G string. Starting on an up bow could potentially ease any semblance of an abrupt start.

The second movement should have a “whimsical” quality and the staccati should be light, so as to produce a “playful” sound. This movement should never sound as if it is “digging.”

76

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Walker Interview.

There are several harmonics in the sonata that require illumination.⁷⁷ The first is in bar 8, which has a fingered D \flat attached to it. The harmonic is located on the C string over F in first position. The player should be in third position to extend for the D \flat , be able to quickly put his or her first finger down on the C string, and cross to play the harmonic. The artificial harmonics are to be played on the C string with the first finger down on the indicated bottom pitch and the fourth finger lightly touching a 4th above to create the pitch above the hollow note. The next harmonics in bar 32 of the second movement, while not indicated, need to be played as fingered artificial harmonics so that the actual pitch in the music is what is heard. The harmonics should start in first position on the G string with A \sharp , move down a whole step for G \sharp , the either cross or shift up for the D \sharp . There is a short artificial harmonic in measures 89 and 91.⁷⁸ The final harmonics occur during the *L'Homme armé*. The player should consider using the third finger instead of the fourth. This harmonic is located where the string equally divided in half (where ninth position would occur if there were such a thing). The E and A are located directly across from one another on the A and D strings. Using the third finger allows the player to easily access the F double stop in bar 119 and pluck it with the free fourth finger. Also the player can stay in position and play the A and D double stop (note that the A is no longer a harmonic) on the D and G strings since the fingers are readily positioned.

⁷⁷ Sills points out the inconsistencies of the harmonics could 'confuse performers.' Sills, 764.

⁷⁸ These are to be approached the same way as the previous artificial harmonics, as in Figure 21.



Figure 21. Different forms of writing artificial harmonics, Mvt. II

The viola part has several quite precarious moments. This has been noted by violists and critics alike. In particular are several pinnacle moments when the viola has notation that this is in its very upper registers. Bar 34 in the first movement is the one of these areas. The D octaves coming from a seventh may prove more difficult for a violist whose instrument has a large upper bout on it. A fingered octave, while not the most comfortable, could be the best option for assured intonation. Since it is rather high on the A string, the extension to the top D is not nearly as extreme since the string is now considerably shorter.

Another spot is bar 39. The violist needs to get up to a high G quickly and cleanly by means of an awkward chromatic pattern. A suggestion would be to start bar 39 in third position. Shift to fifth position on the C \sharp and shift to a 1st finger on the A \sharp . Lastly, shift to a 1st finger again on the high D. From there, cross and use 2 for the G \sharp and 3 for the E. The player should then be able to extend very slightly to the G. If the player's fingers are left down, the player's 2nd finger should still be in place for the G \sharp . The move would be to reach back with the 1st finger to play the lower E. Walker is never apologetic for the level of difficulty in his compositions. If it is within the range of the instrument, it is playable.⁷⁹ By the same token, he is not oblivious to it either. The player should be able to get past the technical issues so as to be able to achieve a more personal relationship with the piece.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Walker Interview. See also Duffie.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

L'Homme armé is the quoted piece at the end of the second movement. The title of this work translates to “The Armed Man” The complete poem is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *L'Homme armé*, Original French and Translated English

Original French	English
L'homme, l'homme, l'homme armé,	The man, the man, the armed man,
L'homme armé	The armed man
L'homme armé doibt on doubter, doibt on doubter.	The armed man should be feared, should be feared.
On a fait partout crier,	Everywhere it has been proclaimed
Que chascun se viengne armer	That each man shall arm himself
D'un haubregon de fer.	With a coat of iron mail.

The poem references a tragic incident in Walker’s life. After visiting his daughter in New York, George Walker Sr. returned to his home and office to find that they had both been vandalized.

The episode devastated his father. The use of *L'Homme armé* is hauntingly appropriate. The end should be played with great care and sensitivity. Even while discussing the ebbing moments of the piece, Walker begins to choke on his words, reminiscing over some of the final memories of his father.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

George Walker's unique family, ethnic and education background provided his inspiration. This contemporary mix would produce a most unique composition aesthetic. The analysis establishes further that George Walker's Sonata for Viola and Piano is a great contribution to the viola repertoire and is deserving of study. For the violist, the style of the sonata should come as no surprise in light of the viola repertoire written in the twentieth century. With qualities that rival other great viola works of the first half of the twentieth century, Walker stakes his own claim on the growing collection of viola masterworks. Perhaps like the viola, Walker's music will bloom long after its creation.

As he continues to write today, one can only wonder if his music will ever truly get the credit it deserves. His Pulitzer seems perhaps not to be enough. Many classical musicians have never heard of Walker. Even though he has written more than 90 works, most have performed only by a select few orchestras and ensembles. Could it be racial prejudice in an art form where blacks are rarely seen? According to Walker,

Racism is alive and well in classical music.... Its legacy, which has affected society in general, has left its imprint on performers [and] academics, as well as marketing moguls. There appears to be a systematic and exclusionary view of the importance and value of black composers....In the 1970's this would be considered benign neglect. But, today, it is better described as arrogant disdain.

Walker's comment touches on a subject that is still taboo in American culture and certainly in classical music. Could it be that he is still too contemporary? That, in Walker's view, has nothing to do with it.⁸¹

The previous statements were not used to incite ill feelings, but rather to provoke thought. This man is not just a great African American composer, but a great *American* composer. His contribution, not only to the viola repertoire, but to the American compositional fabric, is a testament to his amazing gifts and will not soon be forgotten.

⁸¹ In the Terry-Monson article "Interview with George Walker," and in the interview conducted by the author, Walker is emphatic that music critics often ignore black contemporary composers while promoting Philip Glass, John Adams, Steve Reich and other white *avant-garde* composers. He asserts that he, Hale Smith, and David Baker, etc., are "equally competent" and "more interesting."

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