

A portrait of George Walker, an elderly man with glasses, wearing a light-colored suit jacket over a sweater and a collared shirt. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The entire image has a red overlay.

# GEORGE WALKER

**Sinfonia No. 4**  
**(Strands)**



**National  
Symphony  
Orchestra**

The  
Kennedy  
Center

**Gianandrea Noseda**



# National Symphony Orchestra

## Gianandrea Noseda conductor

**George Walker (1922–2018)**

Sinfonia No. 4, “Strands” (2012)

9:41

*Co-commissioned by the New Jersey Symphony, National Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras*

Recorded live on January 27, 28, and 29, 2022 in the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

**Recording producer** Blanton Alspaugh, *Soundmirror*

**Recording engineer** Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*. **Mastering engineer** Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*

**Executive Producers** Nigel Boon and Genevieve Twomey, *National Symphony Orchestra*

**Cover photo and George Walker photos** Frank Schramm. **Cover design** Scott Bushnell, *The Kennedy Center*

**Orchestra photo** Scott Suchman. **Conductor photo** Stefano Pasqualetti

**Kennedy Center photo** Richard Barnes

# Sinfonia No. 4, “Strands” (2012)

George Walker

In January 2022, the National Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Gianandrea Noseda began performing and recording the complete cycle of George Walker’s five sinfonias, in celebration of the composer’s 100th birthday. Remembering and honoring the music of George Walker is particularly special for the National Symphony Orchestra given the mutual connection to Washington, D.C., and the orchestra’s unique history of collaboration and commissions.

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George Walker celebrated the year of his ninetieth birthday with the premiere of a brand new work, Sinfonia No. 4 (“Strands”). The commission came from a consortium of orchestras, including the National, Cincinnati, New Jersey and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, with a grant from Meet the Composer, and was

premiered by the New Jersey Symphony in March 2012 under the direction of Jacques Lacombe.

The subtitle refers to the “strands” from two spirituals, “There is a Balm in Gilead” and “Roll, Jordan, Roll” that the composer wove into the fabric of his composition. Walker’s use of these quotes is rather subtle and somewhat reminiscent of the way Charles Ives worked with church hymns in many of his works: the melodies are fragmented, transformed, and hinted at more than presented in full. Their “strands” are integrated into a rhythmically vibrant and colorfully orchestrated one-movement work, projecting high energy and constant excitement.

Commenting on his piece, Walker offered the following pointers:

*The Sinfonia begins with an introduction that consists of several sections before the principal theme is stated. This theme recurs several times. The quotation of the first spiritual provides a pensive relief from the proclamatory nature of the theme that precedes it.*

*The briefer snippet of the second spiritual is affirmative. The following section consists of a melodic bass line over which fragmented interjections are superimposed. A similar section recurs, combining with the opening phrase of the second spiritual played by the piano during the course of the work. The bass material appears briefly in the coda.*

Notes by Peter Laki



## George Walker (1922-2018)

A native of Washington, D.C., George Walker (b. 1922) was a child prodigy. He enrolled in Oberlin Conservatory at age 14 and received his Bachelor of Music degree with highest honors at the age of 18. He subsequently studied piano with Rudolf Serkin and composition with Rosario Scalerò at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he became the first Black student to receive the Artist Diploma (in both piano and composition, 1945). This accomplishment marked the beginning of a steady procession of “firsts” that followed Walker throughout his career. That same year, Walker’s New York debut in Town Hall, sponsored by Efrem Zimbalist and his wife, made him the first Black instrumentalist to play a recital in that hall. As the winner of the Philadelphia Youth Auditions, Walker also became the first Black soloist to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. In 1950, under the aegis of National Concert Artists, he became the first Black instrumentalist to obtain major

concert management. And in 1956, he became the first Black student to receive the Doctor of Musical Arts degree (in piano) from the Eastman School of Music.

Walker was the recipient of several fellowships and awards, among them a Fulbright in 1957 that enabled him to study at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, where he was a student of Nadia Boulanger and Robert Casadesus. Other fellowships include the John Hay Whitney Fellowship (1958), two Guggenheim Fellowships (1969 and 1987), three Rockefeller Fellowships (1971, 1972, and 1975), and two Koussevitsky Fellowships (1988 and 1998). He was also the recipient of the Harvey Gaul Prize (1963) and the Rhea Sosland Chamber Music Award (1967). Perhaps most significantly, Walker holds the distinction of being the first Black composer to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music (April 1996), for his composition *Lilacs for Voice and Orchestra*.



Walker was a distinguished member of several faculties, including that of the Dalcroze School of Music, the New School for Social Sciences, Smith College, the University of Colorado, and the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. In 1969, he was appointed Professor of Music at Rutgers University, where he served as Chairman of the Music Department. In 1975, he was appointed the first Distinguished Minority Chair at the University of Delaware. Walker retired from Rutgers in 1992 as Professor Emeritus. He was awarded honorary doctorates from Lafayette College (1981), Oberlin College (1983), the Curtis Institute of Music (1996), Montclair State University (1996), and Bloomfield College (1996).

In 1998, Walker received a Letter of Distinction from the American Music Center for his significant contributions to the field of contemporary American music, and in 1999 he was elected to the Academy of Arts and Letters. Walker published over 80 works, which comprise music for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, piano, string quartet, voice, and organ. His music has been performed by virtually every major American orchestra.

George Walker died on August 23, 2018, in Montclair, New Jersey at the age of 96.

Biography by Ingrid Monson



# Gianandrea Noseda

## Conductor

Gianandrea Noseda is one of the world's most sought-after conductors, equally recognized for his artistry in both the concert hall and opera house. Noseda's artistic leadership has inspired the NSO and in 2019, he and the National Symphony Orchestra earned rave reviews for their first concerts together at New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. The 2019–2020 season saw their artistic partnership continue to flourish with the launch of a new NSO recording label distributed by LSO Live for which Noseda also records as principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

The 2021–2022 season saw Noseda begin his tenure as General Music Director of the Zurich Opera house where the centerpiece of his time there will be a new production of Wagner's "Ring" Cycle.

Noseda has conducted the most important orchestras and at the leading opera houses and festivals including

the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Edinburgh Festival, La Scala, Munich Philharmonic, Met Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Royal Opera House (UK), Salzburg Festival, Verbier Festival, Vienna Philharmonic, Vienna State Opera, and Vienna Symphony.

From 2007 until 2018, Noseda served as Music Director of Italy's Teatro Regio Torino where he ushered in a transformative era for the company matched with international acclaim for its productions, tours, recordings, and film projects. His leadership resulted in a golden era for this opera house. Other institutions where he has had significant roles include the BBC Philharmonic which he led from 2002





to 2011; Principal Guest Conductor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra from 2011 to 2020; the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, where the Victor de Sabata Chair was created for him as principal guest conductor from 2010 to 2014; and the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, which appointed him its first-ever foreign principal guest conductor in 1997, a position he held for a decade. He served as Artistic Director of the Stresa Festival from 2000 to 2020. He was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 1999 to 2003; Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI from 2003 to 2006; and Principal Conductor of the Cadaqués Orchestra from 1994 to 2020.

Nosedà's intense recording activity counts more than 60 CDs, many of which have been celebrated by critics and have received awards.

Gianandrea Nosedà's cherished relationship with the Metropolitan Opera dates back to 2002. At the Met he has conducted 13 operas and nearly 100 performances of mainly new productions, most recently *Adriana Lecouvreur* featuring Anna Netrebko. Many of his critically acclaimed performances have been broadcast on radio, Met Live in HD, and released as DVDs.

A native of Milan, Nosedà is Commendatore al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, marking his contribution to the artistic life of Italy. He has been honored as Musical America's Conductor of the Year (2015) and International Opera Awards Conductor of the Year (2016). In December 2016, he was privileged to conduct the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm.

*The NSO Music Director Chair is generously endowed by **The Sant Family**.*

*Funding for NSO recordings is provided by generous Nosedà Era Fund supporters.*

# National Symphony Orchestra

In 2021, the National Symphony Orchestra celebrated its 90th anniversary and Gianandrea Noseda's fourth season as its music director. The Italian conductor serves as the Orchestra's seventh music director, joining the NSO's legacy of such distinguished leaders as

Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Antal Doráti, Howard Mitchell, and Hans Kindler. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds.



Since assuming the leadership of the NSO, Gianandrea Noseda has brought a renewed sense of energy and focus to the orchestra, which has resulted in wide-ranging recognition from local, national, and international publications, increases in subscription and single ticket sales, and the expansion of the Orchestra's reach through live streamed concerts and recordings. The *New York Times* called the NSO and Noseda's 2019 Carnegie Hall appearance "spectacular," while the *Washington Post* wrote that "There's a certain flair going on at the National Symphony Orchestra," consistently reinforcing that this artistic partnership continues to gain momentum. 2019 also marked Gianandrea Noseda's first recording with the NSO of Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 and Copland's *Billy the Kid*, released in 2019 on the NSO's new label, distributed by LSO Live.

Founded in 1931, the Orchestra has always been committed to artistic excellence and

music education. In 1986, the National Symphony became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed a full season of subscription concerts since the Center opened in 1971. The 96-member NSO regularly participates in events of national and international importance, including official holiday celebrations through its regularly televised appearances on PBS on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol for Capital Concerts, livestreamed performances from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on medici.tv, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9FM, making the NSO one of the most-heard orchestras in the country.

Additionally, the NSO's community engagement projects are nationally recognized, including NSO *In Your Neighborhood*, an annual week of approximately 50 performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other unexpected venues; *Notes of*

*Honor*, which offers free performances for active, veteran, prior service, and retired members of the military and their families; and *Sound Health*, a collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its affiliated organizations. Career development opportunities for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its acclaimed, tuition-free Summer Music Institute.

For more information, visit **[nationalsymphony.org](http://nationalsymphony.org)**

# National Symphony Orchestra

## **Violins**

Nurit Bar-Josef  
*Concertmaster*  
Ying Fu  
*Associate Concertmaster, The  
Jeanne Weaver Ruesch Chair*  
Ricardo Cyncynates  
*Assistant Concertmaster*  
Jane Bowyer Stewart  
Teri Hopkins Lee  
Pavel Pekarsky  
Heather LeDoux Green  
Joel Fuller  
Lisa-Beth Lambert  
Wanzhen Li  
Jing Qiao  
  
Marissa Regni *Principal*  
Dayna Hepler  
*Assistant Principal*  
Desimont Alston  
Cynthia R. Finks  
Deanna Lee Bien  
Glenn Donnellan  
Natasha Bogachek  
Carole Tafoya Evans

Jae-Yeon Kim

Hanna Lee  
Benjamin Scott  
Malorie Blake Shin  
Marina Aikawa  
Peiming Lin  
Angelia Cho  
Derek Powell

## **Violas**

Daniel Foster *Principal*  
Abigail Evans Kreuzer  
*Assistant Principal*  
Lynne Edelson Levine  
Denise Wilkinson  
James Francis Deighan  
Eric deWaardt  
Nancy Thomas  
Jennifer Mondie  
Tsunasakamoto  
Ruth Wicker  
Mahoko Eguchi

## **Cellos**

David Hardy *Principal*  
Glenn Garlick  
*Assistant Principal*  
Steven Honigberg  
David Teie  
James Lee  
Rachel Young  
Mark Evans  
Eugena Chang  
Loewi Lin  
Britton Riley

## **Basses**

Robert Oppelt *Principal*  
Richard Barber  
*Assistant Principal*  
Jeffrey Weisner  
Ira Gold  
Paul DeNola  
Charles Nilles  
Alexander Jacobsen  
Michael Marks

## **Harp**

Adriana Horne *Principal*

**Flutes**

Aaron Goldman *Principal*  
Leah Arsenault Barrick  
*Assistant Principal*  
Alice Kogan Weinreb  
Carole Bean *Piccolo*

**Oboes**

Nicholas Stovall *Principal*  
Jamie Roberts  
*Assistant Principal*  
Harrison Linsey  
Kathryn Meany Wilson  
*English Horn*

**Clarinets**

Lin Ma *Principal*  
Eugene Mondie  
*Assistant Principal*  
Paul Cigan  
Peter Cain *Bass Clarinet*

**Bassoons**

Sue Heineman *Principal*  
Steven Wilson  
*Acting Assistant Principal*  
Lewis Lipnick *Contrabassoon*

**Horns**

Abel Pereira *Principal*  
Laurel Bennert Ohlson  
*Associate Principal*  
Markus Osterlund  
James Nickel  
Scott Fearing  
Robert Rearden

**Trumpets**

William Gerlach *Principal*  
Tom Cupples  
Keith Jones

**Trombones**

Craig Mulcahy *Principal*  
Kevin Carlson  
*Assistant Principal*  
David Murray  
Matthew Guilford  
*Bass Trombone*

**Tuba**

Stephen Dumaine *Principal*

**Timpani**

Jauvon Gilliam *Principal*  
Scott Christian  
*Assistant Principal*

**Percussion**

Eric Shin *Principal*  
Scott Christian  
Joseph Connell \*

**Keyboards**

Lambert Orkis *Principal*  
Lisa Emenheiser \*

**Organ**

William Neil \*

**Librarians**

Elizabeth Cusato Schnobrick  
*Principal*  
Susan Stokdyk *Associate*  
Karen Lee *Assistant*

\* Regularly engaged extra



CELEBRATING  
GEORGE  
WALKER  
@ 100

