The Piano Sonatas of George Walker: An Analysis of Performance Aspects with Emphasis on the Fifth Sonata

Redi Llupa

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THE PIANO SONATAS OF GEORGE WALKER: AN ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE ASPECTS WITH EMPHASIS ON THE FIFTH SONATA

By

Redi Llupa

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2016
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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THE PIANO SONATAS OF GEORGE WALKER: AN ANALYSIS OF
PERFORMANCE ASPECTS WITH EMPHASIS ON THE FIFTH SONATA

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George Walker, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1996, composed a total of five sonatas for piano. Each of them have a distinctive sound and approach to the sonata form due to Walker’s processes of manipulating musical elements. These processes are crucial in understanding the composer’s approach to sonata form, and also they are highly important as means to interpreting his sonatas. Therefore, the observations here represent important performance aspects that serve as a guide for performers. The five piano sonatas were written in 1953, 1956, 1975, 1984, and 2003. There have been academic dissertations written about the first four piano sonatas, but none for Sonata No. 5 for Piano. This study will emphasize the analysis of Sonata No. 5 for Piano. In order to do so, the study will initially analyze compositional processes found in Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Piano Sonata No. 3, and relate those to Sonata No. 5 for Piano. Based on the development of Walker’s compositional language, the analysis of these three sonatas can be a valuable reference for all five sonatas.

The essay is comprised of four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction and general background of the five piano sonatas, and the statement of the reason for this study. The
second chapter is a brief biography of the composer in relation to his piano sonatas. The third chapter introduces the manipulative processes of musical elements in Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Piano Sonata No. 3. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Sonata No. 5 for Piano. Lastly, the conclusion encompasses all the aspects discussed in this study.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty of the University of Miami Frost School of Music. This essay would not have been possible without the help, suggestions, and support of my committee members Dr. Dorothy Hindman, Professor Tian Ying, Professor Robynne Redmon, and especially of my adviser, and committee chair, Professor Santiago Rodriguez.

I am especially grateful to Mr. George Walker for granting me permission to interview him, and giving me a significant amount of time to ask questions in the hopes of getting to know him and his music in more depth. His contribution to the solidification of my analysis, particularly of Sonata No. 5 for Piano, has been invaluable.
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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

George Walker (b. 1922) is a distinctive figure in the pantheon of American composers. He is the first African-American composer and pianist to achieve major triumphs in the classical music world, and win the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1996.

Walker is a versatile composer who has used a variety of mediums in his creative output. His compositions include choral, chamber, large orchestral works, and concerti. However, none of these compositions better represent the musical journey of the composer like his five piano sonatas do, which were written in 1953, 1956, 1975, 1984, and 2003 respectively. Walker’s contribution to the American piano literature is undeniable, and his piano sonatas particularly illustrate an ongoing compositional evolution of traditional sonata form. Each of them display different manipulations within the construction of this traditional archetype.

The purpose of this doctoral essay is to provide an analytical observation of the manipulation processes, which constitute Walker’s aesthetic, with reference to its pianistic idiomatic application in the piano sonatas. The works that have been selected for the purpose of this essay are Sonata No. 2 for Piano, Piano Sonata No. 3, and Sonata No. 5 for Piano. An important aspect of this study is to bring forth an analysis of Sonata No. 5 for Piano of which there are no academic writings to date.

Walker utilizes elements such as intervallic relations, harmonic combinations, rhythmic figurations, sound projections, and transitional manipulations in order to unify
the overall structure. Such final synthesis of the structure is accomplished through various altering processes which eventually become key factors in connecting all the manipulations of musical elements.

The analysis will provide a detailed observation of how various altering techniques are utilized within the traditional sonata form. Moreover, these observations will inform the intellectual understanding of the works by the pianist who wishes to perform them, thus facilitating the learning process. This analysis, referring to both theoretical and pianistic aspects, is useful in understanding Walker’s ideas in approaching sonata form and his craftsmanship in manipulating its structure within the traditional context.

Furthermore, this study will aid in giving deserved attention and recognition to Walker’s piano sonatas in the realm of American piano literature and of the entire piano repertoire of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. More specifically, performers and other musicians will be able to recognize the aesthetic and pianistic value of Sonata No. 2 for Piano, Piano Sonata No. 3, and Sonata No. 5 for Piano, of which the following chapters will provide a detailed analysis.

**General Background about the Five Piano Sonatas**

Walker’s five piano sonatas exemplify a transition spanning fifty years of compositional evolution and cultural development. These works are highly refined compositions which differ in their use of sonata form. Unlike most of his contemporaries who based their sonata structures mainly on traditional forms, Walker used his
compositional knowledge to inform his own style by continuously changing and elaborating the musical elements present in sonata form.

The mystery of creation is imbedded in every good composition. I find satisfaction in manipulating materials, in hewing to formal concepts and making allusions to other music that may appear irrelevant in the context of the score. When these references are successfully incorporated, they are seamlessly inclusive.¹

In the context of using traditional sonata form in an inventive way, Walker presents an innovative treatment of the structure that has existed within the scope of classical music since the 1700s. When examining all five piano sonatas, one can discern that the manipulation processes affect their lengths, densities, harmonic language, textural explorations, and idiomatic applications of the instrument.

An example of these manipulations is the composer’s concept of utilizing only the essential musical materials or ideas needed to evolve the composition. It could be simply the sound quality and the tension of an interval, which Walker describes as an atom,² through which a line, a harmony, or a figuration is constructed. The composer discovers various means in transitioning to other intervals, leading to shifts in colors and timbres, or influencing other musical materials such as rhythm, melody, dynamics, and motives. Ultimately, it all leads to a greater series of events combining all musical materials and affecting the overall form of each sonata.

¹ George Walker, Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist: Ruminations (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 81-82.

² Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
Sonata No. 1 for Piano is closest to the traditionally established sonata form. The sonata is in three movements in which the first movement is in traditional sonata-allegro form, the second in a theme and variation form based on a folk song “O Bury me Beneath the Willow,” and the third movement is a rondo.\(^3\)\(^4\) Even though it inhabits a traditional realm, Walker finds means to expand and manipulate different musical materials within the confines of the structure. The sonata has particular alterations leading to intervallic combinations and juxtapositions that eventually vary the length of sections. For instance in the first movement, Walker avoids the use of traditional melodic lines and phrases.\(^5\) He uses basic motives and manipulates them by different methods. Despite the manipulations, these motives remain recognizable throughout the movement.\(^6\) The development section further develops the motivic materials introduced at the exposition. It is divided in three different sections which reflect Walker’s ability to extend musical materials by his skill of manipulations. Overall, the first sonata makes use of quartal melodic and harmonic constructions.\(^7\)

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\(^3\) Walker, 81-82.


\(^6\) Ibid.

Sonata No. 2 for Piano is an excellent example of Walker’s economical use of musical materials. The sonata is in four movements and is very short compared to the first sonata. The first movement is in variation form with an original theme reflected in the ground bass, and six variations. The second movement is a brief scherzo and it is followed by a monothematic movement. The last movement is in sonatina form, which at the end recalls the theme of the first movement. The second sonata was Walker’s dissertation for his Doctorate of Musical Arts degree at Eastman School of Music and his intention was to demonstrate the harmonic consistency in its use of thirds. The intervallic relationship concept is tightly connected to the altering aspect of the sonata form. This particular idea leads Walker to compose a successfully unified work, regardless of its distancing from the traditional sonata form. The sonata also uses cyclic ideas where different aspects of all movement are interconnected. In comparison to Sonata No. 1 for Piano, the second sonata is quite compressed and moves further away from the traditional sonata-allegro form. Although the way in which Walker uses the manipulations and ternary forms give an impression of traditional sonata form, it is the essence of his craftsmanship in manipulating ideas within the frame of this structure that creates cohesiveness.

Piano Sonata No. 3 continues to further elaborate on the manipulating processes of musical materials. It consists of three movements, each given a title by Walker. The first movement is called “Fantoms,” the second “Bell,” and the third “Choral and

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9 Walker, 91.
Fughetta.” He described the three movements as a set of fantasies in which each movement has a characteristic atmosphere and texture.\textsuperscript{10} In general the sonata is characterized by a drastically different sonority in comparison to the previous two. Walker starts to experiment with his use of harmonic language and moves away from tonal centers. He uses intervallic and register displacements in combination with rhythmic alterations of note values within phrases. The sonata introduces other technical challenges for the performer that were not present in the previous two. Sound, affected by the placement of pedal markings among many other techniques, becomes a crucial aspect for the unity of the sonata. Even though the sonata seems to be through composed, it has adherence to formal structures, especially in the third movement. The third movement, titled “Choral and Fughetta,” evokes baroque techniques. Walker finds ways in expressing freedom within this structural context, accomplishing a sense of fluidity.

Sonata No. 4 for Piano is a very demanding work. This sonata reflects Walker’s fascination with the possibilities that sonata form can provide. Interestingly enough, Walker describes the first movement as a “modified sonata form.”\textsuperscript{11} Walker aimed to unify this sonata by articulating it in two movements tightly connected to one another due to the way in which the thematic material is used. The opening material of the first movement is related to the opening of the second by reiteration in inversion, and the closing material of the second movement acts as a retrospective look to the opening of the first, thus creating a connection among the two movements. In the development

\textsuperscript{10} Newson, 74.

section of the first movement, Walker inserts a new material, along with fragments of the first theme that appear in diminution. When describing this composition, he states: “how to give two movements a sense of unity instead of three or four movements. There had to be a balance between continuity and variety.” Such concept is always present in Walker’s compositional style, and it becomes a crucial one in manipulating sonata form.

Sonata No. 5 for Piano is Walker’s last attempt to compose in sonata form. Sonata No. 5 for Piano is in a single movement and is Walker’s ultimate example of compression of musical materials. This last sonata comprises all compositional approaches encountered in the previous ones, but with the utmost economical use. The sonata does not dwell in the traditional form since aspects such as development and recapitulation are not present in the same manner that they would be found in a sonata-allegro form. In this sonata, Walker reflects his philosophy in using the right amount of repetition and variety for the musical materials to develop without being redundant. The introductory figure repeats numerous times, but he varies it effectively by using alternative techniques and by creating distinguishable timbres. The epicenter of this work are the restatements of musical ideas, which Walker utilizes in a highly-refined variation approach. Alterations of intervallic relations are done in a particularly careful way in order to create differentiation between episodes varying in texture, register placement, and sonority.

Sonata No. 5 for Piano is an exceptional example of distillation of musical materials,

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where Walker has found the means to compress the sonata form to a unity within a single movement.

**Academic Writings about Walker’s Piano Sonatas**

Over the past sixty years, since the publishing of Sonata No. 1 for Piano (1953) there have been a few academic writings on Walker’s piano sonatas. Some of them are published as dissertations or articles in journals, and various scholar online websites. In the literature currently available there is a lack of comprehensive research and analysis of Sonata No. 5 for Piano.

Wilfred Jerome Delphin wrote “A Comparative Analysis of Two Sonata by George Walker: Sonata No. 1 and Sonata No. 2”\(^{14}\) This thesis was written in 1976. It has detailed analysis and comparative observation of the use of sonata form in both sonatas. This thesis is structured in two sections where the first one is a transcription of the lecture recital written and performed by the author, and the second one is a detailed theoretical analysis.

Roosevelt Jr. Newson’s “A Style Analysis of the Three Piano Sonatas (1953, 1957, 1976) of George Theophilus Walker”\(^{15}\) was published in 1977. The dissertation analyses in detail the first three sonatas according to Jan LaRue’s *Guidelines for Style*

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\(^{15}\) Newson, 8.
Analysis. In accordance with LaRue’s system, Newson analyses each movement of the sonatas in terms of rhythm, harmony, melody, sound, and growth.


Everett N. Jones III wrote yet another analysis of Walker’s first four piano sonatas in 2005. His dissertation “Intervallic Coherence in Four Piano Sonatas by George Walker: An Analysis”\textsuperscript{17} focuses particularly on the intervallic construction of the sonatas. Jones describes that there is a particular use of intervals in each of the sonatas in order to construct their motives, chords, clusters, and key relationships within and between movements.

\textsuperscript{16} Boe, i.

Motivation for the Study

George Walker’s piano music reflects a variety of creative skills of the composer throughout his compositional output. In particular, an autobiography of the composer is depicted through the musical scores of his piano sonatas. The performer and the listener can trace the development of his style, and understand the composer through his craft. The piano sonatas show the composer’s fascination with manipulating the concept and structure of the traditional sonata form. The manner in which Walker visually presents the music is a powerful tool in discovering and understanding the intricacies of his discoveries of possible alterations within the structure of this form. Through his inventive aspirations of continuously challenging this form, Walker achieves a simultaneous sense of freedom and cohesion.

Since there is a lack of academic analysis of Sonata No. 5 for Piano, the author of this essay aspires to provide an indispensable analytical contribution to the existing literature. The essay will provide an observation of Walker’s aesthetic and pianistic trajectory of the development of sonata form seen through Sonata No. 2 for Piano, Piano Sonata No. 3, and Sonata No. 5 for Piano. The author is also in the process of studying and performing these sonatas. Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Piano Sonata No. 3 are distinctive examples of Walker’s manipulations of musical materials. The two sonatas are analyzed in this essay in order to provide the reader with a concise and comprehensive background, creating associations of the development of structure and compositional language until the most recent one, Sonata No. 5 for Piano. Sonata No. 2 for Piano economically uses the musical materials and builds the movements according to minimal alterations of intervals, harmony, and rhythm. Such concepts are present in Piano Sonata
No. 5 as well, in which Walker compresses elements of rhythms, harmony, and intervallic relations providing a dense one-movement work. Piano Sonata No. 3 is an example of the composer’s elaboration of materials through sound. All musical elements that are utilized produce distinctive timbres in each movement. Walker succeeds in giving a balance of different materials that are contrastive, yet connected with one another. Such effect is what the composer refers to as disjunct and conjunct motion.\(^{18}\) Even though the sonata sounds through-composed, there is still an overall feel of a solid structure. Similar aspects are present in the fifth sonata where Walker elaborates materials and sections in order to give variety and similarity. This is important in his use of repetition of the musical materials in each section of the sonata.

Walker was a contemporary of other great American composers such as Samuel Barber, and Aaron Copland whose music is widely known and performed in the United States. Walker’s works are rarely performed and tackled by pianists around the world or, even, in the United States. What inclined this scarcity in performance practice is also the fact that Walker lived in a period when racial prejudice was still apparent. Being an African-American, he felt that racial discrimination had an impact in his music being neglected even though he was the first African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1996. In *The Black Perspective in Music*, Dorothy Maxine Sims published an essay titled “An Analysis and Comparison of Piano Sonatas by George Walker and Howard Swanson”\(^{19}\) in which two sonatas by two African-American composers were

\(^{18}\) Boe, 64.

compared. These were Sonata No. 1 for Piano by Howard Swanson and Sonata No. 2 for Piano by George Walker. Despite the musical analysis and comparison of the two compositions the essay also implies the importance of African-American music in twentieth-century literature, and shows their unique craftsmanship in the use of traditional sonata form. The essay, written in 1976, stresses the negligence of African-American music in performances in concerts.

“To say that the classical music of black composers does not always fall into the category of great masterworks is begging the question. The same could be said of most classical music, for few composers can compete with the Mozarts, Beethovens, and Stravinskys of the world. And yet the music halls ring with the sound of the ‘less-than-masterworks’ season after season, exposing the public to this music, and at the same time, instilling in the public an appreciation for it. The same kind of appreciation could be developed for the classical music of black composers if it were featured on programs along with the music of other composers.”

This aspect apparently did not change much, based on what Walker himself states in his interview with Mickey Thomas Terry published nearly twenty-five years later, in 2000. In the interview his reply to the question “Why is the music of black classical composers not better known?” George Walker responded:

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' works by musicologists and music critics. Textbooks written by Gilbert Chases and Wiley Hitchcock do not even mention black composers. The fourth edition of Grout's *A History of Western Music* lists only William Grant Still and Ulysses Kay. The only black persons mentioned in Glenn Watkins's *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* are Josephine Baker, the nightclub dancer, and Ornette Coleman, the jazz saxophonist. Paul Griffiths's *Modern Music: The Avant-Garde since 1945*, published in 1981, is already outdated. A more recent article by Griffiths,
"Nothing but Newer Works: A Fantasy Season," that appeared in the *New York Times* [9 August 1998] confirms his racial preferences and exclusionary viewpoint. There is not a single reference to a black composer." In the 1970s, this would be considered benign neglect. But, today, it is better described as arrogant disdain. When Edward Rothstein wrote in a 1993 *New York Times* article that there were fewer black composers than black instrumentalists, he displayed an abysmal ignorance of the facts. The white press promotes John Adams, Steve Reich, Aaron Kernis, John Harbison, and others while ignoring Hale Smith, T. J. Anderson, Olly Wilson, Adolphus Hailstork, David Baker, Wendell Logan, and other black artists who are more interesting and equally competent. For instance, there are extraordinary moments in Ulysses Kay's *Markings*.21

As winner of the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Music, it is surprising that George Walker has not received his due attention as a prominent American composer. In an interview done on February 27th, 2016 with the author of this essay, when asked about his commissions and performances after having won the Pulitzer Prize in 1996, Walker states:

I did not get any commissions. I did not get any performances. Well, after I received the Pulitzer Prize there was no major orchestra that contacted either me or my publisher. There was a woman conductor in Orange County California who said she wanted to do the West Coast premiere of *Lilacs*. She had two orchestras. This particular orchestra was essentially a tiny community orchestra. She did it and she did quite a good job with this community orchestra. And the Atlantic Symphony wanted to do a work of mine in one of their Martin Luther King concerts… And then last year, *Lilacs* was done by Detroit. That is 1996 until 2010, only one orchestra did *Lilacs*.22

In hope that this essay will serve as a platform of acknowledgement for the artistry and value of the composer, the author will attempt to make Sonata No.2 for Piano, Piano Sonata No. 3, and Sonata No. 5 for Piano more prominent in the piano

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22 Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
literature. For this purpose, the ideas will be introduced not as mere theoretical aspects, but as strong base for interpreting Walker’s piano sonatas. The details that are going to be discussed are crucial in the interpretation of the works and introduce the performer to the compositional and pianistic language of the composer.
Chapter II

GEORGE WALKER, A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY IN RELATION TO THE PIANO SONATAS

George Walker was born June 27, 1922 in Washington D.C. His first piano lessons were supervised by his mother, Rosa King Walker. At the age of five he began piano lessons under Miss Mary L. Henry. In the junior department of Howard University, he studied with Mrs. Lillian Mitchell Allen.23

George Walker gave his first public performance at age 14 at Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel. In 1937, Walker received a full scholarship from Oberlin College, he became the first African-American pianist to graduate this institution. His mentor was David Moyer. He was also a student of Arthur Poister for organ and became the organist for the Graduate School of Theology at Oberlin College.24 At age 18, Walker completed his Bachelor Degree with the highest honors in 1941. He was admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music to pursue his Artist Diploma with Rudolf Serkin, chamber music with William Primrose and Gregor Piatigorsky, and composition with Rosario Scalero. This period until his graduation was crucial in Walker’s development as a pianist and composer. Walker describes his lessons with Serkin as performances:

My lessons were like concert performances. Every work was played in its entirety without any interruption from Serkin. There were no conversational exchanges during the lessons.25


24 Ibid.

25 Walker, 45.
Walker’s aptitude for counterpoint was noted by Scalero. In a conversation with his brother-in-law, Clermont Pepin, Walker says:

> Scalero told Pepin that I had written “the best damn canons of any of his students.”

Walker completed his Artist Diploma in piano and composition in 1945, and he became the first African-American to graduate from the prestigious Curtis Institute.

As a concert pianist, his career bloomed after performing his Town Hall debut, in New York, was presented by Mr. and Mrs. Efrem Zimbalist. Two weeks afterward, Walker performed the Piano Concerto No. 3 by Rachmaninoff with the Philadelphia Orchestra with Eugene Ormandy after winning the Philadelphia Youth Auditions, becoming the first African-American to perform with this orchestra. The following years would be intensive and successful for Walker in both performing and studying. He performed many subsequent concerts including concerto performances with Reginald Stewart and Dean Dixon. In the summer of 1947, he studied with Robert Casadesus at the American School at Fontainebleau. In 1954, Walker also made a European tour performing concerts in seven different countries arranged by the National Concert Artists. After his return from Europe, Walker composed his Sonata No.1 for Piano, his first large-scale work for the instrument. The sonata clearly reflects Walker’s virtuosity as a pianist, and also his intention to compose an American sonata.

After writing these short works, I felt compelled to compose a large-scale work. I decided to find material that would define the work as an American sonata. It

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26 Walker, 47.

27 Ibid.
occurred to me that the use of quartal harmony would also add some distinction to it.\textsuperscript{28}

In 1955, Walker began the Doctor of Musical Arts degree program at Eastman School of Music. His mentor was Jose Echaniz.\textsuperscript{29} In December of 1956, he completed all the requirements, becoming the first African-American to achieve the Doctor of Musical Arts in piano from the institution. The requirements included three full length piano recitals in which one was the Piano Concerto No. 2 of Brahms with the Eastman Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Howard Hanson.\textsuperscript{30} Walker composed his Sonata No. 2 for Piano during his studies at Eastman for his dissertation. The work was also arranged by him for two pianos.

In 1957, Walker continued his studies at The American Academy at Fontainebleau in Paris. During that time he also took composition lessons from Mlle. Nadia Boulanger. Walker describes that she was the first to acknowledge his talent as a composer, and after seeing his compositions she never subjected him to counterpoint or harmony lessons. Two of the works that Walker showed Mlle. Boulanger were Sonata No. 1 for Piano and Sonata No. 2 for Piano, and as Walker describes, they were composed without any tutorial assistance.\textsuperscript{31}

Unlike many of Mlle. Boulanger’s students – Copland, Piston, Thompson, Carter, Harris, and others – I was never subjected to counterpoint or harmony lessons. Boulanger obviously sensed that the skill exhibited in the works that I showed her indicated a very strong technical background.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Walker, 81.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 87.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 89.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 94-97.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Before returning to the United States, Walker gave a last tour of recitals in The Hague, Amsterdam, and Italy.

The 1970s and 1980s were crucial for Walker in composing, performing and teaching. Many events occurred in his musical career which made him an important composer in the United States. Numerous works were composed and recorded during this period. His Concerto for Piano and Orchestra was performed by Natalie Hinderas – a strong advocate for African-American classical music – at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center.\(^\text{33}\) As a composer, he received numerous commissions among which were Piano Sonata No. 3 and Sonata No. 4 for Piano. Piano Sonata No. 3 was the first of his sonatas to be commissioned. The Washington Performing Arts Society commissioned it in 1976, and the premiere was given by pianist Leon Bates, who also recorded the work.\(^\text{34}\) Sonata No. 4 for Piano was commissioned and recorded by pianist Frederic Moyer. The Pew Charitable Fund in Philadelphia funded this commission.\(^\text{35}\) The premiere was given in Merkin Hall, New York. During this period, Walker became interested in exploring other techniques of composition. His harmonic language became more dissonant and particularly dense in various musical aspects. The notation became stricter and more detailed. These two sonatas show a distinctive approach to the sonata form, and incorporate complex characteristics of Walker’s compositional techniques. These two works show unequivocally his skills as a pianist and composer.

\(^{33}\) Walker, 123-124.

\(^{34}\) Ibid, 123-124.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, 141-142.
During the 1990s, Walker did not compose a large scale piano composition. His works consisted mostly of large orchestral works or chamber music. In 1995, Walker was commissioned by The Boston Symphony Orchestra to compose *Lilacs*. The premiere was given on February 1, 1996, conducted by Seiji Ozawa with soprano Faye Robinson. *Lilacs* was also Walker’s greatest triumph, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Music that year.\(^{36}\)

In 2003, Walker composed his Sonata No. 5 for Piano, which was not commissioned. It was his last attempt to compose a large scale work for piano. The sonata represents Walker’s mature compositional language and his way of manipulating sonata form.

\(^{36}\) Walker, 147-150.
Chapter III

WALKER’S MANIPULATIONS IN THE PIANO SONATAS

Each sonata by George Walker has its own distinctive compositional characteristics. One of the most obvious is the unique sonorities employed in each work’s harmonic language. Walker always seeks creative innovations in each sonata. When he is done resolving one compositional puzzle, he moves on to a new one. Each of his piano sonatas reflect this kind of methodology. In searching for new ways of connecting ideas, harmonies, rhythms, and other musical elements within the works, Walker ultimately finds an approach which influences the entirety of a composition. The formal structure, linearity of phrasing, and overall sonority of each sonata take on a whole new character.

Along with these individual features, there is still a common approach that can be found within the collection of these five works. Walker continuously develops his musical ideas in the sonatas, guided by exploration of the motives via their manipulation. His approach is to choose the “essential” materials of a certain musical idea, which may be motivic, harmonic, rhythmic, an intervallic relation, a chordal resonance, etc., which offer an unlimited array of possibilities. The essential materials are then elaborated and manipulated with Walker’s compositional techniques in order to create the overall continuity and structure of the work. In a more conventional scheme, manipulation would probably mean variation or development; however, Walker uses every minute detail to build larger structures. He does not only rely on phrases or sections when varying material, but he focuses on small particles such as distance between two notes. This ability to microscopically develop a character, which then grows into a large-scale work, is very important in the composer’s view of his musical manipulations.
The manipulations executed throughout the work conclusively achieve a unified entity, a particular characteristic of George Walker’s compositional approach. His compositions are very well defined within their form, yet never repetitious of one another. They also reflect his awareness of the long tradition of developing and manipulating sonata form.

This chapter will focus on illustrations from Walker’s Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Piano Sonata No. 3 that best demonstrate these manipulations of essential musical materials. There will not be a detailed theoretical analysis of these two works. Thorough analyses of the piano sonatas written prior to Sonata No. 5 for Piano are discussed in the academic writings mentioned in Chapter I. However, these analyses will inform the ideas and illustrations in this chapter. They play a paramount role in outlining the key points further discussed in the detailed analysis of Sonata No. 5 for Piano in Chapter IV. The musical examples in the analysis of the sonatas are used by permission of Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, which holds the copyright to the music.
Sonata No. 2 for Piano

Walker composed the second sonata during his doctoral studies at Eastman in the fall semester of 1956 as part of his dissertation project. In his autobiographical book *Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist* (2009), Walker explicitly states that in Sonata No. 2 for Piano, his “intention was to demonstrate that the sonata could be harmonically consistent in its use of thirds.”37 The sonata is in four movements which are all quite brief. The first movement is in variation form consisting of a theme followed by ten variations. The second and third movements are both in ternary form. The fourth movement is described by the composer as a sonatina form, and it is here where the initial motive from the theme of the first movement reappears, thus creating a cyclic effect.38

The first essential idea that is present in the second sonata is the projection of the interval of the third, which is utilized throughout all four movements. The term projection is being used to describe Walker’s approach of drawing emphasis to the sonic properties of the interval, which regardless of its many alterations, never loses the auditory recognition factor. The interval of the third plays an important part in the numerous manipulations of motivic ideas, harmonic relationships, contrapuntal juxtapositions, and rhythmic evolutions. Rhythmic manipulations in Walker’s sonatas are also crucial for creating metric ambiguity via expansion or diminution of phrases, possibilities for displacement, and juxtaposition of musical ideas. Also of importance in the sonatas are

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37 Walker, 91

38 Ibid.
the balance between conjunct and disjunct motion. In the interview with Boe, Walker says:

“Something I've never been able to get away from my teacher Scalero taught me, that is, disjunct motion and conjunct motion. If there is a lot of consistently disjunct motion, you lose the effect of what you are trying to do; and it surprisingly becomes quite annoying…”

This balance is aesthetically consistent in Walker’s compositions. In his piano sonatas it manifests itself in development of both the free and controlled aspects of the form. This motion is seen in different elements such as rhythm, melody, harmony, timbres, motives, and overall form.

Lastly, the second sonata is tied together by cyclic effects such as the quotation of melodic fragments, rhythmic, motivic, or intervallic materials from the previous movements. This manipulation of musical elements achieves astounding coherence within the work.

**Movement I**

In the first movement of the sonata, the main melodic and rhythmic ideas are introduced in the Theme. The melody and the bass line are constructed in relationships of thirds. The bass line, a mirror of the lower voice of the melody, is the first element derived through manipulation of the initial incipient motif.

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39 Boe, 106.
Example 3.1. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, first movement, mm. 1-4.

Walker notes that soon after writing the melodic material, he realized that he could mirror it in the bass line, stating:

“I always speak of the first movement as having a ground bass, but the way it started, it started out with the first measure of melodic material. I suddenly realized that I could mirror it. So that the bass actually came after having discovered the melodic content. That's when I decided I could write variations on the bass.”

This simple alteration of the melodic material becomes the ground bass of all succeeding variations. Walker continuously develops linear motions in the succeeding variations by utilizing the interval of the third, projecting it in other registers with rhythmic alternations. As a consequence, the variations gain a continuous flow and leave open opportunities for exploring other possible manipulations. As the work unfolds, it becomes apparent that Walker utilizes other intervals, such as seconds, fourths and fifths in order to construct harmonic relationships.
It was my intent to write music that had a linear aspect, because I thought that composers had pretty much exhausted all harmonic possibilities.\footnote{Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.}

In variations one through three, there are alterations of the melodic material in different registers. The interval of the third is also found in the running sixteenth-note arpeggios. The fluidity of such figuration create a rhythmic blend between the variations. The example below shows how the pitches of the melody and the ground bass are manipulated in different registers rapidly. In the second variation the melody is transferred in the bass, and eventually both the melody and the bass are pulled into the lower register in variation three. This manipulation is highly effective pianistically due to combining the harmonic and linear aspect together. The overall result is a compression and a fusion of these three variations in one.
Example 3.2. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, first movement, mm. 5-6 and 10-15.

Another variation that exploits the third and its resonance within a rhythmic material is the fifth variation. Here, the ground bass is transferred to the middle alto voice, while the rhythmic material that fills the spaces in between is constructed of intervals in thirds. Based on its intervallic content, the rhythmic material recalls the
melodic material of the opening theme. In the first two measures of variation five, the main melodic lines can be discerned, also using enharmonic spelling.

Example 3.3. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, first movement, mm. 24-25.

Between variations seven and eight, there is a rhythmic shift. These variations do not display any difference in terms of character, and they are almost identical in terms of sonority. The only difference between the two is the displacement of the rhythmic figuration in relationship to its place within the six-eight meter. This manipulation alters the perception of pulse, eventually making these variations indistinguishable in terms of how they sound. In variation eight, the G-natural and the D-natural, the last notes of the ground bass, land on the downbeat as they do in the main theme, thus giving the impression that this variation is a correction of the seventh one.

Example 3.4. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, first movement, mm. 32-38.

[Example 3.4 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 2 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1956.]
Movement II

In the later movements, the projection of the interval of the third is done in various creative ways, where the thirds are combined more elaborately with other intervals. In this scherzo movement, the thirds appear briefly and are stated in short articulations. Walker emphasizes them both in motivic importance and harmonic presence simultaneously.

Example 3.5. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, second movement, mm. 1-13.

In the A section we can see that the interval of the third is constantly present in the ascending scalar motion of the upper voice. The resonance of this interval becomes a key feature in shifting the perception of the actual downbeat, and also becomes a means to manipulate the rhythmic and contrapuntal continuity of the movement.
Example 3.6. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, second movement, mm. 7-19.

Toward the end of the A section, the resonance of the interval becomes present at brief moments when combined in two voices and linearly. This part morphs into a nearly pointillist texture.

Example 3.7. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, second movement, mm. 38-49.

[Example 3.7 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 2 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1956]

In the brief B section, the interval of the third gains more of a motivic feature. When compared with the introduction of the scherzo, there is sonic resemblance between them (Example 3.8). The short phrases are repeated similarly to the introduction and there is no essential difference in the rhythmic material. Measures 57-60 bear a resemblance to the A section, where the brief ascending line, combined with the thirds, gives the impression that another contrapuntal motion will reappear.
Example 3.8. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, second movement, mm. 50-73.

[Example 3.8 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 2 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1956]

In this movement, the rhythmic manipulation is explored differently than in the first movement. Even though the scherzo is quite compact and repetitive in its ideas, it still has an inner moving element that modifies the placement of the beats. By adding an upward additive scalar passage in the top voice, Walker manipulates the pulse and creates ambiguity within the two-four meter. This is an elaborative cross-rhythmic manipulation. In reality, there is no meter change in this movement; however, the presence of metric modification is so apparent that it creates the illusion of change. Performance-wise, the movement requires attention in executing the articulations, such as staccatos, accents, and the legato in the middle voice. In his analysis, Newson describes the unsettling character of the movement as being shaped by a combination of three elements – the melody, the continuous rhythmic element, and the internal pulse – operating simultaneously and independently throughout the movement.\footnote{Newson, 139.} A seemingly simple manipulation of these essential elements enables Walker to juxtapose the materials and develop contrapuntal effects that cause continuously varied interaction that is very linear.
Movement III

The third movement is in three part form, and through simple and minor manipulations of the essential materials, seems quasi-improvisatory. Additions of smaller note values to what appears to be initially an ornamental figure create rhythmic alterations. An example of this addition is the ornamental figure that appears after the main theme in the third measure.

Example 3.10. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, third movement, m. 3.

Over the entire movement, this ornament is expanded by the addition of notes and ultimately becomes a key factor in building to the climax of the movement in measures 14-18. This strongly emphasizes the high A-natural, simultaneously amplifying
the volume of the note itself. This simple, minimal alteration of only the essential ideas is quite effective.

Table 3.1. Table of ornamental figure in mm. 14-18 in the third movement of Sonata No. 2 for Piano.

Another aspect, which suggests continuous improvisation in the third movement, is Walker’s use of juxtaposed ideas. There are three main ideas that Walker works with. The first idea is the main melody, introduced in the first two measures with a strong projection of the interval of the third. The second idea is an ornamental figure at measures 2 and 3. The third idea consists of a phrase that has a more improvisatory character, at measures 5 and 6.
Example 3.11. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, third movement, mm. 1-6.

Two examples of juxtapositions of these ideas are seen in measures 9-10, and 20-21. The first example explores the third idea in a nearly complete presentation in the middle voice, while the first idea appears on the top line. (Example 3.12). The connection between the two ideas creates a kind of symbiotic relationship, where the third idea gains metric stability due to the first idea, and the latter gains freedom of motion due to the presence of the improvisatory ideas (Example 3.13).43

43 Delphin, 84-85.
In the second appearance of this juxtaposition, the first thematic idea occurs initially in the middle voice while accompanied by a triplet figuration of thirds and sixths (Example 3.13). It evolves further by appearing on the top line while accompanied by the third idea. Walker extends the phrase by adding rests to the now-fragmented sixteenth-note triplet figuration, thus highlighting the melodic content of the first idea. Therefore, the third idea’s improvisatory material offers elasticity to the phrasing of the melody, by contributing to its expansion, while the first melodic material provides rhythmic coherence. It becomes a rich musical interaction, in which juxtaposition of the ideas with their rhythmic element create their own harmonic projection. Once again, as seen in the second movement above, Walker makes use of essential ideas by juxtaposing them in order to perpetuate variety in the music.

A cyclic effect also occurs in the third movement. As in the first movement, the third movement can seem as a continuous variation of certain materials. In this case, it is
a melodic one. The melody is essentially two measures long and does not change when it is merged or manipulated with other materials. This recalls the same variation technique used in the first movement where the ground bass is stable and nearly similar in all the variations. The third movement finishes with the intervallic projection consisting of a fifth and sixth, similarly to the first movement where it ends on a fifth and third. In this case, a final alteration has been made in the inversion of the interval of the third.

Example 3.14. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, first movement, mm. 54-61.

Example 3.15. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, third movement, mm. 25-27.

Movement IV

Sonically, much of the fourth movement resembles all the other movements. It begins with constant motion of mostly thirds and fifths, reestablishing the color of the thirds heard in most of the sonata, and especially in the melody of the theme of the first movement.
Example 3.16. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, fourth movement, mm. 1-6.

The material at the end of the scalar figures recalls characteristics heard in the second movement (mm. 21-27). The rhythmic elements start to resemble certain patterns that appear in the second movement. The difference is that they are varied harmonically, mainly with thirds. The motoric motion is brief and is combined with an ascending line of thirds as in the A section of the second movement. Also in measures 27 and 28 there is a compressed motion of the displaced thirds and octaves (Example 3.17).

Example 3.17. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, fourth movement, mm. 21-27.

[Example 3.17 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 2 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1956.]

In the B section, starting at measure 12, there is a drastic difference in dynamic and articulation - an introduction of a new scalar figure, and contrasting rhythmic motion. The passages are momentarily altered in speed which creates a disjointed effect.
Example 3.18. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, fourth movement, mm. 12-17.

[Example 3.18 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 2 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1956]

However, Walker is careful to maintain a balance. Even though the material in the B second section is quite different, there are other ideas that recall the previous material. The upper accented line that plays with the scale relates to the same rhythmic texture and melodic character as in the A section. Walker reintroduces the rhythmic idea by altering a fragment of the melodic material of the previous section, thus creating a link between the two. These overall balance in the sonata is also a result of Walker’s style in composing a work.

The strongest cyclic effect is reached at the end of the fourth movement. Newson mentions that the last movement represents the combination of “all of the factorial elements wrapped into one.”[44] Here Walker recalls the thematic material of the first movement with a restatement of the G-minor key of the sonata that ultimately unifies the entire composition.

Example 3.19. George Walker, Sonata No. 2 for Piano, fourth movement, mm. 12-17.

[Example 3.19 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 2 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1956]

[44] Newson, 142.
Piano Sonata No. 3

The third sonata differs in many aspects from the second sonata, it is devoid of metrical writing, and any particular tonal centers. The sonata consists of three movements, thus one fewer than the preceding sonata. Each of the movements has an individual sonic characteristic and specific structural concept. Interestingly, in Piano Sonata No. 3 Walker provides descriptive titles for each movement. The first movement is entitled “Fantoms,” the second “Bell,” and the third “Choral and Fughetta.” In his analysis, Newson quotes a Walker’s description of this sonata:

The third sonata is more a set of three fantasies than a conventional sonata: each movement has a characteristic atmosphere and texture. The first, entitled “Fantoms,” is mercurial. The second, “Bell,” consisting of the reiteration of a single chord, suggests Ravel’s “Le Gibet”—but with a vengeance. The third movement incorporates both a chorale and fugue: first the chorale melody, quite unlike German seventeenth century examples, is presented, incorporated in vertical sonorities of lesser duration than the melody itself. The fugal section follows, dissolving eventually into a more improvisatory texture and final return to the chorale melody.45

As opposed to Sonata No. 2 for Piano, Walker did not compose the third sonata with the explicit intention of having underlying consistent intervallic relationships. Nevertheless, the work generally displays a strong projection of major and minor seconds. When he begins to manipulate these intervallic relations through octave displacements and inversions, they also produce major and minor sevenths, creating more opportunities for harmonic coloration. Chords constructed from these intervallic relationships between seconds and sevenths provide climactic emphasis in phrase structures. They strongly state their presence in strategic registers and rhythmic figurations, and contribute to the dynamic intensity of sections. From these chordal

45 Newson, 74-75.
resonances, clusters are derived in order to provide a richer sonority throughout the sonata. Walker incorporates the major and minor seconds in motivic, accompanying, harmonic, and embellishing musical material.

Rhythmically, the third sonata is more dense and complex in comparison to the second sonata. Due to its lack of meter, the third sonata inhabits a rhythmic no-man’s land which opens up a wide variety of possible interpretations for performance. The rhythmic manipulations here are continuous and at times, drastically dissimilar. The character of these changes depends heavily on the purpose that Walker has devised for each one. Walker’s rhythmic manipulations provide the backbone of linear directional trajectories of phrases, emphasize the overall sonority of the movements, recall musical ideas, and support the prominence of intervallic displacements. In his analysis, Newson states that rhythm is always under the control of another element.46

Movement I, “Fantoms”

As a connective stylistic trait of Walker’s compositional process, the manipulations of all musical materials are executed in unique ways in all movements. The first movement, “Fantoms,” evokes an improvisatory character, resembling a through-composed work. It is difficult to note a relationship to any previously established sonata form. The first four measures of the first movement already display a great variety in utilizing the second and seventh intervals. In the example below, in the first two measures, the embellishing gestures that fill the spaces between the primary notes of the 

46 Newson, 159.
melodic material incorporate the use of the major and minor second in their inversions and enharmonic spellings. In the third measure, a harmonic and contrapuntal compression is created again by Walker’s use of the seconds, while in the fourth measure both linear and harmonic writing are combined. Already in these opening measures, the composer displaces the intervals and swiftly introduces a wide range variety of timbre and textures.


In “Fantoms,” the incorporation of intervals of seconds and their manipulations enables the music to continuously morph in sonority and texture. Walker utilizes altered intervallic combinations resulting in rich cluster-like chords, creating a wide spectrum of sonority. The example below illustrates how the diminished ninth is used as a pedal
sonority in the low register. Notice also how in the upper register, superimposed intervals of sevenths and seconds build a strong resonance by sustaining their sonority.


This technique of sustained sonorities is also present in measures 21, 22, and 23. The embellishing materials that are written above the continuous sonorities sound more resonant due to the rich intervallic spectrum of the pedal chords.


Even though the first movement resembles a through-composed work, there are elements which reappear, recalled specifically through rhythmic features. These rhythmic materials are altered in numerous ways: manipulated by augmentation, fragmentation, embellishment, or juxtaposition with other rhythmic ideas. Therefore, the composer varies these materials continuously, allowing them to evolve differently with each
manipulation. Due to its numerous temperamental changes, “Fantoms” is colored by a “mercurial” personality, as described by Walker.47

As mentioned previously, rhythm seems to be under the control of other musical elements. For instance, the repeated note material that is introduced at the end of the fourth measure is varied four times throughout the movement.


With each new repetition, this repeated note idea is given a distinctive character colored by the intervallic makeup or the register it appears in. These aspects, coupled with the rhythmic underpinning of the repeated note material, creates a sonority similar in effect, yet varied in content with each reiteration. In measure 12, the intervallic contour of the resonant sustained notes is split into two minor sevenths: E and F-sharp in the middle register, and C and D in the lower register.

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47 Newson, 159.
The second half of the repeated note material has now morphed into a measured short tremolo. The material uses the same sustained notes, B and D, as in the first time it appears in measure 4, but now they are displaced in terms of register. The B resonates clearly through its placement in the higher register, and the D is repeated and sonically sustained in the lower register. These alterations help the material to become diverse in timbre.

In measures 14 and 15, the repeated pattern is inserted within the phrase. (Example 3.25) This resembles measures 5 and 6 in phrase construction. The accented minor ninth in the left hand, an expanded minor second, placed against the ascending sextuplets recalls the same rhythmic gesture used in the first phrase of the movement in measures 5 and 6. Similarly, the accented thirty-second notes in measure 15 resemble the ending of the initial phrase in measures 5 and 6. The repeated material is inserted in order to expand and support its dramatic expression of the phrase.
Moving forward to another instance of this, measure 23, the quick repeated note material is used again before the reappearance of the thematic material in measure 24. In this case, the *ritenuto* is not an expression mark written on the score, but instead is carefully notated and built into the rhythmic structure in order to support the fading of the chordal resonance that is sustained in the lower register.

Fragmentation is a musical aspect that is present in various ways in this composition. It provides the sonata with rapid contrasts of characters and sounds. This becomes an important aspect in defining the disjunct and conjunct motion that Walker
explores in this sonata. Depending on what character they are portraying, motivic fragmentations directly influence rhythmic figurations. For instance, in measure 18 of the first movement, part of the initial thematic material C-sharp, C, B, and E-flat (for D-sharp enharmonically spelled) reappears. This time, Walker recalls this part of the material in the middle register in a piano dynamic and cantabile. The mood is calm and controlled, and as a result the rhythm is influenced by the same mood of the fragmented motivic material. The rhythmic figures complete and support the brief melodic line until it is contrasted in measure 19.


[Example 3.27 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Piano Sonata No. 3. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1975.]

Beginning in measure 24 until the end of the movement, fragments of the first materials recur. Specifically, in measures 24 until 27 the pitches that can be interpreted as part of the thematic material are reintroduced in the same register. The material is expanded due to rhythmic embellishments and fragments between the main pitches. The rhythmic fragments create a variation drawn from the beginning of “Fantoms.” Their expansion in the thematic material creates the illusion of a slower tempo. In measure 28 and in the beginning of 29 there is a reinstatement of the same fragment initially presented at the opening of the movement (end of measure 2 and beginning of 3). Here, the rhythmic material is varied again and it is further juxtaposed with the characteristics
of the sustained chords encountered in measures 21 to 23. Walker referred to this return as a type of “recapitulation.”


In the quasi-through-composed “Fantoms,” the aspect of disjunct motion is more prominent, since the character of the movement is continuously changing. This movement introduces linear phrases, contrapuntal episodes, pedaling techniques, and juxtapositions of fragments that interchange and fluctuate in various episodes. The

48 Newson, 98.
elements that unify the movement are found in aspects of sound projection, as well as in few fragmental episodes as discussed before. In the first, the interval of the second plays a paramount role, whereas in the latter thematic materials and phrases are reinstated. As mentioned above, the strongest return of the thematic material starts in measure 24 with the rhythmic manipulations (Example 3.28). Based on its sonic properties, this section greatly resembles the first three measures of the movement. The main pitches C-sharp, C, B, D, F, and G are reintroduced in the same register. Part of measure 3 is recalled as well, but due to its textural duality the phrase is varied and expanded into a longer idea compared to the initial one. In the sound context there is similarity, particularly with the first two measures of the movement. In general this section (measures 24 until 33) keeps the linear exchange of the materials. The counterpoint does not necessarily become denser, but is instead expanded and altered into the new ‘sonic atmosphere,’ with minor variations of the embellishments leading to the main pitches. They are elaborated with the concept of the interval of the second, thus further projecting the interval’s importance. Measure 28 begins similarly to the end of the measure 2 and beginning of measure 3, but it is soon placed at a higher register and pulled into the sonority of the sustained chord F-B-E (refer to Example 3.28)

Even though Walker does not create an explicit reference to it, this aspect hints at a nearly cyclic effect, which in Sonata No. 2 for Piano is clearly utilized in bringing back harmonies and motivic materials.
Movement II, “Bell”

“Bell” is undoubtedly a contrast from “Fantoms” and “Choral and Fughetta.” In this movement Walker introduces a drastically different character in comparison to the outer movements. There is no thematic material, improvisatory character, or any other complex manipulation. Such contrast gives the whole sonata an intense disjunct effect, creating a seemingly independent movement which initially appears to be hardly related to the outer ones. This movement is focused on the repetition of a single chord in an obsessive manner, exploring its resonance and sonorous properties.


![Example 3.29](image)

The rhythm is marginally, yet effectively manipulated. Walker determines the durations of the chords based on their dynamic levels. This is yet another example of the rhythm being under the rule of another musical parameter. The chord repeats seventeen times without any alterations of pitch or register. The only variations are dynamic and rhythmic. The durations diminish when reaching the crescendo towards the climax of fortississimo.

[Example 3.30 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Piano Sonata No. 3 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: MMB, Inc, 1975.]

Through these rhythmic manipulations Walker creates the illusion of a longer phrase throughout the movement, thus giving life to the spectrum of the chord. When simply observing the score, “Bell” gives the impression of a stagnant, repetitive, and eventless movement. However, the adjustment of the rhythm melding into the timbre of the chords gives this movement flow. The composition reaches a quasi-spectral effect by using the essential musical elements of rhythm and dynamics to explore the properties of a single chord.

The aspects of sound and dynamic manipulation also become crucial in creating an effective connection between this and the other two movements. The performer has to be very concentrated in the sound connection between the end of the first movement and the beginning of the second, as well as the end of the second and the beginning of the third movement. Walker is a composer who hints at his interpretative intentions quite unequivocally in the music. Notice the last measure of the first movement is in a four-four meter with a \textit{staccato} articulation of the last chord. The silence that continues with the written rests generates a connecting thread to the beginning of the second movement. In this transition the dynamic stays the same, \textit{pianissimo}. Walker’s pedal indication is quite specific, since the entire movement is under one pedal until the end of the double bar. The sustained chord fades into the silence, and as a consequence the third movement starts with a one-beat rest. On the second beat of the first measure, the choral begins as
the un-sustained chords are juxtaposed with a sustained melody, which is the only material that is sonically similar to the second movement. In relation to this Walker himself describes:

The third of course is called “Choral” [Choral and Fughetta] - the bell is coming from a church, so the connection is that this bell sounding from a church going into a choral which it is my own choral fashion …49

Once more, Walker makes use of essential materials, in this case the quality of sound, in order to bring continuity and unity to the movements.

Example 3.31. George Walker, Piano Sonata No. 3, end of “Fantoms,” m. 33 connecting to beginning of “Bell,” m. 1, ending of “Bell,” m. 20 connecting to beginning of “Choral and Fughetta,” m. 1.

49 Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
Movement III, “Choral and Fughetta”

The third movement, “Choral and Fughetta” is the only movement which is associated with a common ternary form. This movement solidifies its structure by recalling motivic materials, timbres, intervallic projections, and fragments which are recognizable from other movements. This is the movement that unifies the composition in all its elements. The major and minor seconds are combined with other intervals in order to produce distinctive chordal resonances and new harmonic relations. For instance, the melody at the opening of the “Choral,” which is the sustained voice, is enhanced and juxtaposed with chords that are crisply articulated due to the staccato marking. The open and pure quality of the intervals of fourths, fifths, and octaves are complemented by the more jarring and dissonant inclusion of the seconds. Walker chooses a widely-spaced voicing of the chords, which brings to the forefront the coloristic and textural distinctions between melody and harmony.


Similar concepts of rhythmic manipulations used in the first and second movements are further implemented in the third movement. However, this time they seem to be more organized since the third movement’s structure is closer to traditional ternary form. Both the “Choral and Fughetta” have their own rhythmical characteristics.
The “Choral” tends to be more vertical in sonority, while the “Fughetta” displays a more continuous and linear shape. The rhythmic features clearly support the character of each episode. The insertion of rhythmically fragmented ideas is evident in this movement as it is seen in measure 16, where the rhythmic materials are juxtaposed with the accented staccato chords that are characteristic of the “Choral.” This material acts as a preparation to connect the “Choral and Fughetta.” Boe’s analysis explains this occurrence and refers to it as a brief allusion to the contrapuntal “Fughetta” theme which begins in measure 17.\textsuperscript{50}


This manipulation is also used before the recapitulation of the “Choral” material.

In measures 37 and 38, the rapid linear rhythmic materials start blending with the abrupt

\textsuperscript{50} Boe, 49-50.
vertical chordal sonorities and rhythmic ideas that recall the “Choral,” creating a duality of texture.


Also, the pedal tone technique is employed similarly to the first movement. In the recapitulation of the theme of the “Choral,” in measure 42, there is an extension of the embellishing materials which are placed above the sustained chord and held for six measures (mm. 42-47). This sustained chord creates a sonic consistency throughout the sonata. In this recapitulation of the “Choral,” the altered rhythmic materials expand the melodic line and create a sense of rhythmic ambiguity. In measures 42 to 47, the writing introduces a rhythmic idea that was encountered in “Fantoms.” It is basically a variation of the middle section of the chorale as encountered at the A section. Walker uses register displacement of the rhythmic material, from low to high, and keeps the chord suspended for about six measures. The material in the high register is expanded and split into two
voices. This displacement starts to resemble an episode encountered in “Fantoms” (mm. 21-22 at Example 3.22). The phrasing of the grace note figures and the short arpeggiated gestures recall the rhythmic ideas from the first movement, and together with the sustained chord they project the previously mentioned pedal effect.


In “Choral and Fughetta,” the disjunct motions are more conspicuous within each section. The movement is essentially in ternary form, but also each one of the sections is constructed in a miniature ABA form. Each one of the B parts of each section introduces different material. An illustration of this aspect is the middle part of the “Fughetta” which has a purely improvisatory character compared to other sections of the movement. Starting at measure 30, musical elements pertaining to the first movement are brought back. The rhythmic figures start to resemble characteristics of the first movement due to the duality of fragmented gestures in conjunction with linear motion. The vertical texture of the “Choral” and the imitative character of the “Fughetta” are no longer clearly defined. These elements are now merged with the improvisatory character of “Fantoms,” creating a morphed body of sound.

51 Newson, 103-104.
This amalgam of motivic materials from two different movements is soon used to return back to the elements of the present movement, “Choral and Fughetta.” Walker uses the rhythmic fragmentations in augmentation as a bridge in order to come back to the realm of the third movement, at measure 35. Alongside this augmentation, the composer imposes the slower tempo of the “Choral” (quarter-note = 46) on the “Fughetta” elements, thus creating a large-scale allargando into the return of the “Choral.” Articulations are crucial in this moment since they are a key feature in timbrally linking this passage to the characters of the “Choral and Fughetta.”
Walker uses a strategy where the careful application of manipulations of the musical materials enables him to create a free-sounding, yet structurally solid sonata. The third movement brings back more of the essential elements that reside in the core of the composition. Furthermore, in the recapitulation of the “Choral” in the third movement, Walker merges fragments from the musical elements utilized in the entire sonata. In terms of sonic characteristics, the intervallic projection and the sustained sonorities that evoke the character of “Bell” are all reiterated. The rhythmic elements recurring suggest applications from both first and second movements. Ultimately, towards the end of the entire sonata, Walker takes on the role of a sculptor. He chisels away all the unnecessary material, letting it recede into the background, and ultimately disappear, while allowing the essence of the sonata to take prominence. Once again, Walker plays with his concept of unification, and our perception of what sonata form represents.

The only basic objectives that I try to follow are simple—I like to feel that, for the most part, there are some works which are formally obscure, but most of them probably have a strong formal undergirding.52

This obscurity that Walker speaks of, at least on the surface, is partially due to his many experimentations between 1956 (Sonata No. 2 for Piano) and 1975 (Piano Sonata No. 3). During this two decade period, Walker composed works which gradually move away from tonality towards a more atonally tinged harmonic language, and at times serial writing.

52 Newson, 103-104.
Chapter IV

Sonata No. 5 for Piano

Sonata No. 5 for Piano, composed in 2003, differs from the previous four sonatas, in that it is comprised of a single movement. The previously discussed analysis in Chapter III traced how Walker utilized and manipulated essential musical ideas in order to construct and unify the piano sonatas. This concept is taken further in the fifth sonata in order to bring a concrete unity to the form. Walker utilizes and alters every musical element introduced at the beginning of the work to develop each episode of the sonata. The economical use of ideas and their careful manipulation makes this work highly compressed, and an exceptional example of synthesis within the sonata form.

The principal idea consists essentially of the interval of the third. The harmonic colors that accompany it are mainly supported by the projection of seconds, fourths, sevenths, and octaves. In Sonata No. 5 for Piano, the numerous intervallic projections are incessantly merged with manipulations of other compositional aspects such as rhythm, harmony, and contrapunctal fragments. Ultimately, Walker’s utilization of his selected intervals aids in producing various and distinctive sonic timbres throughout the sonata. Specific intervals and rhythmic manipulations are inserted at crucial moments. Rhythmic manipulations are used to bring forth and support variations of musical ideas within the sections, supporting the climaxes of phrases and intervallic projections. Within his rhythmic manipulations, Walker maintains a degree of resemblance to earlier motivic materials as a means of recalling these previous elements. In a few episodes, they are
used to release musical tension, and to drastically change the character and timbre of the phrases. Lastly, it is important to note that Walker utilizes these essential musical features in a very economical manner.

The most evident rhythmic material, which is always present and manipulated is the introductory gesture for each section of the sonata. It is initially presented at the very opening of the main principal idea in measure 1.

Example 4.1. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 1-2.

This rhythmic figure is composed of intervallic relationships of seconds, or sevenths when inverted. The sonority initiates the principal theme, which essentially consists of a melodic line derived from the interval of third (mm. 2-5). In his brief description of Sonata No. 5 for Piano in the liner notes of the only recording, performed by Robert Pollock, Walker states:

The principal theme is comprised mostly of thirds that are supported by other intervals- octaves, sevenths, seconds and fourths. It reappears with preparatory ascending seconds in various guises between figurative connections.53

The alteration of this rhythmic figure is also a guidepost for tracing the episodes within the sonata’s structure. The rhythmic material is minimally manipulated by the dynamic level of each entry, without losing its upward directional motion and timbral properties due to the accumulation of sound. The example below shows a table of the times this material is introduced in different rhythmic gestures in order to prepare and support the character of each motivic idea or restatement of the principal idea.
Table 4.1. Table of Introductory Gesture at the beginning of Sonata No. 5 for Piano.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Gesture</th>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
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Introducing Principal idea
Introducing episodes
Progression episodes or development of principal idea
Dynamic in

\[ \text{dynamic in} \]

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\[ \text{dynamic in} \]

\[ \text{dynamic in} \]
The remaining intervals of seconds, fourths, sevenths, and octaves, and their projections take on a supporting and accompanying role to the melodic line of the main principal idea.

Example 4.2. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 1-6.

The timbre derived from the intervallic sonorities begins to enhance the resonance of the succeeding musical materials. From measure 6 until the beginning of measure 10, the main motivic material is doubled in octaves. The open and resonant quality of the octave doubling is coupled by a resultant increase in the dynamic level, and ultimately leads toward the climax of each phrase. Measures 6 and 7 demonstrate this increase in the timbral evolution of the intervallic manipulations. These additions of open sonorities of fourths, fifths, and octaves become quite evident throughout the development of thematic musical elements across the phrase. For instance, the introductory figuration that consists
of seconds and sevenths in measures 6 and 7 is now supported by the resonance of the bass in octaves.

Example 4.3. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 6-10.

[Example 4.3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 5 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 2003.]

The next example illustrates how this material is fused together with the melodic motif consisting of thirds. Starting from measure 6, the direction of this motif is upwards, outlining F-sharp, A, and C-sharp. This continues into measures 8-10 where G-sharp leads to B, D, F, descending to the lower octave D, and B.

Example 4.4. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 6-10.


Walker accomplishes alterations to his melodic trajectories through intervallic inversions. In this section, instead of continuing the upward direction with each entry of the principal idea, Walker makes a sudden downward shift. In measure 9, for instance, instead of moving in an upward third motion, Walker inverts this interval downward a sixth and a thirteenth (see Example 4.4). This directional diversion inhibits the development of the phrase.
The phrase reaches simultaneous closure and climax at the beginning of measure 10 where the resonance of interval juxtapositions creates a sonorous quasi-cadence constructed of seconds, fourths, fifths, and octaves (see Example 4.4).

Beginning in measure 11, at the second repeat of the principal idea, the rhythm emphasizes the intervals of seconds, fourths, sevenths, and octaves found in the accompanying figuration. Concurrently in this section, a major difference occurs in the use of dynamics. With the shift of dynamics from *forte* to *piano*, the intervals are varied in terms of rhythm, texture, and register providing a sparser sonority in order to support the softer dynamic in measures 12-13. With each intensification of the dynamics, intervallic relationships and their rhythmic placements begin to heighten the sonority by thickening the texture, especially in moments when the composer asks for *espressivo*. (See Example 4.4).

The rhythm is also varied in measures 13-15 through the introduction of imitation. These ideas are intertwined with one another through rapid canonic-like entrances of the voices. In this manner, Walker creates an illusion of phrase expansion. This shift in rhythm and the resulting expansion of the phrase brings forth a different character in measures 11-17. This change of character is demarcated by a more complex resonance due to the more frequent entrances of the accompanying material. In this section it is important for the interpreter to notice the continuous contrapuntal manipulation due to the presence of sustained voices. This is Walker’s unique way of writing polyphonically for the piano, yet without losing a constant linear lyrical fluidity.
Example 4.5. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 11-17.

[Example 4.5 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 5 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 2003.]

Measures 17-18 resemble the sonorities of measures 8-9, due to the intervallic content and motivic aspects. At the beginning of measure 8, the melodic line of the middle voice consists mostly of major and minor seconds. This line, D-sharp, D, E, and F, is seen after the accented G-sharp at the beginning of the measure. The inner voice is also doubled in the bass by an octave.

Example 4.6. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, m. 8.

The same idea occurs at the beginning of measure 17, where an accented F-sharp has the same weight as the G-sharp in measure 8. The difference between the two is that here, in measure 17, the inner voice gains prominence by expanding the tension of the phrase with the projection of the seconds and sevenths. In this phrase, the octave doubling enriches the sonority of the phrase for a greater culmination, referencing the overall musical trajectory to the previously described phrase closure in measures 8-9.
The next episode, from measures 19 to 26, further emphasizes the sonic characteristics of the seconds and the sevenths. The interval of the third has now been relocated and is merged with the rest of the accompanying texture, temporarily losing its prominence as the signpost of the main principal idea (see Example 4.9. measure 23). The composer achieves a timbral change between these two sections by making use of a more contrapuntal texture due to rhythmic variations.\textsuperscript{54} In measure 19, Walker states the same musical idea which was initially introduced in measure 1. However, instead of continuing with the melodic line of the initial thematic material, he interrupts the course of this development by inserting the short melodic line encountered in the middle voice in measure 18. The line starts with an accented D-sharp followed by A-sharp, A, B, and C. This newly introduced motif (mm.19-20) has a syncopated character, and is repeatedly varied throughout the following section.

\textsuperscript{54} Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
This phrase recalls the rhythmic material of the inner voice in measure 8, and its alterations are dependent upon the dynamics of each phrase. When the interval of the minor third is emphasized, the figure is altered dynamically to *fortissimo*. This is more apparent in measure 23 with the pitches B, C, E-flat, and G-flat, and measure 25 with the pitches B, C and E-flat.

Example 4.9. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 23-25.

[Example 4.9 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original Source: Walker, George. Sonata No. 5 for Piano. Saint Louis, MO: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 2003.]

In measure 26, the rhythmic figure of the previous measure is echoed; however, in this case it is set in a polyphonic texture with a strong emphasis on the interval of the second. In this measure, a *ritardando* is marked with a reduction of dynamic to *piano*. 
Example 4.10. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, m. 26.

Walker reintroduces and further explores the phrase in measures 19-20 in the next section, in measures 26-27, where it is presented enharmonically together with the opening figure.

Example 4.11. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 26-27.

Starting at measure 27, Walker utilizes a greater variety of intervallic relations combined with rhythmic manipulations that create contrapuntal lines, thus varying the texture. Walker carefully writes the intervallic combinations by purposely sustaining notes in order to emphasize the continuity of the line via a specific sonority. This particular manipulation not only connects the notes melodically, but also provides counterpoint by assigning each interval to a specific line of polyphony. Walker describes
how he reaches a type of flexibility that does not necessarily erase completely the bar line.

…I am trying to achieve a kind of flexibility that is not completely erasing bar lines, but it is the kind of fluidity that in this piece is very important– it does not exists in any of the other sonatas.\textsuperscript{55}

This kind of contrapuntal writing is typical of the composer, who had used it in his previous piano sonatas. The example below, encountered in the “Fughetta” of the Piano Sonata No. 3, compares with measures 28-31 of Sonata No. 5 for Piano. The difference between the two sonatas is that in the latter, everything is manipulated in the most economical manner possible, hence musical materials are not expanded extensively.

Example 4.12. George Walker, Piano Sonata No. 3, mm. 19b-21, and Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 28-32.


Starting at measure 35, the rhythm becomes a key factor in tracing the sonority of each interval. Due to the more vertical writing, the juxtaposition and relation of each interval is more prominent as they move at the same pace. This change in rhythmic placement aids in gradually shifting the texture from contrapuntal to harmonic. Measures 35-38 show how the intervals coalesce to become more harmonic within the phrases. An interesting example is found in measures 36-37, where the line of each voice moves toward an octatonic scale in the high register. This technique is also seen in the

\textsuperscript{55} Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
“Fughetta” of Piano Sonata No. 3. Such changes occur rapidly, yet organically within the phrases of the sections. Overall the economical use of textural transformations brings necessary diversity to the music.

…I try to alternate between the linear aspect and at the same time creating these massive harmonic structures that are not found in most music. I am trying to do different things at different points within the piece. You are quite correct in that it is intended to be very economical.\footnote{Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.}


In measures 40-43, Walker modifies the sonority by reducing and highlighting the tension expressed by the intervals of minor and major seconds. The preceding phrase builds a robust sonority amplified by the projection of all the intervals. Ultimately, the tension induced by the intervals is driven towards the sustained chords at the beginning of measure 40. This tension is then upheld in measures 41-44 due to the use of fast linear scalar passages, which continue to accumulate resonance through an intensification of the rhythm. As Walker chisels out the sonority of the intervals by simplifying their continuous combination, the rhythmic complexity and assertiveness is affected as well. In measure 41, the tempo marking is reduced to quarter-note equals 50, instead of 69. Eventually all intervallic projections are reintroduced at the end of the development section in measures 44-45, thus attaining the overall initial sonority of the sonata.


Measures 40-43 display a more homophonic texture, where the octave doubling creates most of the resonance. In measures 44-45, the restatement of the thicker harmonic texture found previously in the sonata connects the principal idea, starting in measure 46, with the previous episodes. Although one could interpret this restatement as the beginning of a recapitulation, Walker describes it as a ‘ritornello’:

…I would not say it is a recapitulation per se. I use a term ‘ritornello’, which of course involves an entire section, but I use it here as a return of the motif only.\(^{57}\)

Example 4.15. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 46-48.

\(^{57}\) Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
The restatement brings back the principal theme fortissimo which in this case also appears as an intensification of the beginning of the sonata. Minimal rhythmic changes or additions are made, but not in intervallic conceptions and note spellings. The drastic change in this section occurs in measures 50-51. Here, Walker utilizes the rhythm to manipulate and change the texture. Instead of reintroducing materials encountered previously in the sonata, the composer basically repudiates everything that has happened so far by introducing this sudden episode. This creates a disruption to the entire sonata, since it drastically changes the texture and introduces a new character in the music, resembling almost free atonal improvisation. He describes such episodes as “figurations” that are necessary to balance the succeeding and preceding musical materials. Being a pianist himself Walker composes in an idiomatic fashion for the instrument. He considers these figurations to be essential in the connection between melodically important moments and the more transitory episodes.

Well, what I have done is that in measure 50 I introduce figurations. This is another aspect of form that composers do not understand at times. Basic things — that there is material that is significant as motif, but also important is material that is sort of figuration. Not important melodically, but it is a pianistic device. It is important that this aspect is brought to the sonata, combining material that has some dramatic substance, with something that is pianistic and acts as a kind of transition to something else that is more important.

Walker believes that during the compositional process the composer needs to understand when some musical ideas should not be repeated and constantly manipulated.

58 Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.

59 Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
This episode is a drastic transformation from the polyphonic and homophonic textures seen so far in the sonata.

When I repeat something I want to consider how long I want to repeat it. Repetition is necessary and that is what you do not find in some contemporary music, or you have someone like Philip Glass where everything is a repetition. [Laughs] These are all factors that I think a composer should consider, and to me, I grew up being aware of all these considerations.60

Example 4.16. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 50-51.

The music regains the established characteristics of the sonata at measure 53 with the triplet figure, encountered previously at measures 35-36 (compare with Example 4.13). This brings back the robust sonority projected by the homophonic texture due to the superimposed intervals which create cluster-like chords. There is a gradual addition of rhythm and a recall of materials encountered at the beginning of the sonata and the

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60 Redi Llua, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
other succeeding episodes lasting through measure 58. These aspects can be seen in measure 55 and 57 where the phrase first encountered at measure 19 is heard.

Example 4.17. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 54-58.


Starting at measure 58, Walker reintroduces the polyphonic writing seen in the previous contrapuntal section (mm. 20-31), this time in a slower tempo of quarter note equals 48. This tempo change is also effective in that it gradually brings back the character of the polyphonic texture heard earlier in the sonata. In the episodes before the restatement of the principal idea in measure 46, the rhythmic manipulations are used to transform the texture from polyphonic (mm. 19-33) to homophonic (mm. 34-39), and ultimately lead to a more monophonic writing (mm. 40-43). Leading up to measure 58 it seems that the exact reverse is being done. Beginning in measure 51 with the seemingly freely improvised monophonic episode, Walker starts to rebuild the harmonies and the rhythm becomes constant. Now, in mm. 54-56 the writing switches back to a more homophonic manner (see Example 4.17). After reintroducing motives from the previous sections (mm. 55 and 57) which recall the motif of measure 8 and rhythmical shape of measure 19, the writing eventually returns to the polyphonic texture. By manipulating the trajectory of the phrases in this way, Walker gains an overall conjunct effect that unifies all the musical materials heard so far.
Starting at measure 62, Walker again transforms the texture before restating the main principal idea. The writing becomes again more homophonic, and supports the resonance amplified by the octave doublings (Example 4.18).

In measures 62-67, the episode is musically compressed where musical materials such as intervallic projections and rhythmic figurations are merged together creating a cluster-like sonority. From measure 62, Walker additively inserts intervals of thirds, then fourths and seconds within the octaves, in order to enrich the texture. The result is a distortion and amplification of tension throughout the phrase by the addition of dissonances. Walker was becoming increasingly interested in filling the gaps of intervallic transitions by creating connections among them. In this case, such connections are achieved through a homophonic texture. After this grand episode that acts as a bridge of intervallic relations, the main principal theme is restated again similarly to the previous occurrence in measures 46-48. The introductory figure consists of the pitches E and D-sharp, which were introduced in previous episodes in measures 18-19, and were spelled enharmonically in measures 26-27 (D-flat and F-flat). Here, the principal theme is expressed predominantly with the open quality of the octave. Walker seemingly purifies the sound from the clusters into octaves together with a rhythmic simplification of the
principal idea (mm. 68-70). Walker mentions that this episode serves as an intensification toward the restatement of the principal idea.\textsuperscript{61}

Example 4.18. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 62-68.

Since the introductory figure in measures 67-68 is similar in pitches to measures 18-19 and measures 26-27, the expectation is that the phrases would develop similarly to the previous episodes (compare with Examples 4.8. and 4.11). However, Walker interrupts this expectation by reintroducing a figure that consists of a pedaled sonority with a cadential character in measures 71-74. This was also seen briefly in measure 40, but this time is expanded and used to transition into the next episode. The sustained chords are written with a long pedal marking, the longest in the whole sonata.

…this is essentially a figuration that is sort of embellishing this sustained harmony. It is very important, of course. The harmony underneath the figuration, which is really built from that harmony, is concerned with obtaining a certain kind of color.\textsuperscript{62}

The embellishing figuration consists of seconds, which is the predominant interval of the introductory figure. By using this device in two distinctive roles, Walker achieves a variety of sonorities, and characters with minimal addition of material. He lets his ear guide a compositional process that has initially started in an intellectual manner.

\textsuperscript{61} Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.

\textsuperscript{62} Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
…More and more, I may start out with the idea intellectually, but I really am almost determined to have my own ear analyzing things as I go along.\textsuperscript{63}

Example 4.19. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 71-74.


Walker has used this technique in his previous sonatas; an example can be seen in “Fantoms” from Piano Sonata No. 3, where sustained chordal sonorities are utilized extensively.

Before reaching the end of the fifth piano sonata, a final accumulation of tension is attempted starting in measure 75. Walker brings back fragments of different phrases that have been encountered, merging together polyphonic and homophonic writing. Here, the robust cluster-like sonority of the triplet figures is not present as in previous episodes. Instead, Walker presents the phrases even more lyrically by manipulating the polyphonic and homophonic textures, fitting them both into one linear motion. The accurate use of the pedal is essential in order to support the linearity of the sound.

Example 4.20. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 75-78.


\textsuperscript{63} Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
The principal idea and rhythmic fragments are restated again from measures 80 until the end, not in pitches per se, but mostly in intervallic relations, timbre, and rhythmic compressions. The interval of the octave is clearly used to support the projection of the main ideas. In measure 80, the introductory figure comprised of seconds is compressed into just a grace note, and it is also repeated four times in the lower register.

Example 4.21. George Walker, Sonata No. 5 for Piano, mm. 80-83.

Even though Sonata No. 5 for Piano is not structured in such a way that can be reflected by conventions of the traditional sonata form, there are aspects in it which create the impression of this historically established form. It is very important to note that through the five piano sonatas Walker has created his own conception of this form. Based on the manipulations that were described in the analysis above, it can be seen how he intertwines musical elements as a function of their developments. In its core attributes as a form, the sonata aims to develop the initially stated materials. Walker creates music similarly, but in his own masterful skill as a composer he interlaces motivic materials throughout the composition. In his hands, the continuous alterations of musical materials enable the sonata form to build upon various episodes that interweave with one another. Variation techniques are also predominant in Walker’s compositional language. Within the structure of Sonata No. 5 for Piano, Walker manages to find connections not only through compositional techniques, but by pianistic figurations. These interrelations make
the sonata a unique work by presenting numerous variations in the texture. Walker simply needs one minimal alteration in order to change the trajectory of the phrases. When what he is looking for is intervallic relations, he interlaces the voices in a more polyphonic texture, thus finding a way to transition from the sonority of thirds to that of seconds. If what he is looking for in the music is a change in texture, then he finds ways to compress the musical materials through a creative use of registers on the piano. When aiming for a change of character between episodes, he gives equal importance to both pianistic figurations and motivic materials.

Based on an interpretative aspect, Sonata No. 5 for Piano carries a great deal of information for its execution. A performer needs to be conscientious in understanding the flow of the musical ideas. Walker works like a scientist, who through the use of essential elements creates the body of an object - the form, and its music.
CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that George Walker displays an individuality in his use and manipulation of the sonata form. Based on the aforementioned analysis and observations, it is very clear that he is an aesthetically refined and artistic composer. As a composer with a clear individuality, Walker has continuously found ways to develop his own compositional technique.

Although the content of the music in the second, third, and fifth sonatas varies, there are always aspects that tie Walker’s creativity together. This predominant aspect is the manipulation of musical material, which is as a key factor in the development of these three sonatas, written nearly fifty years apart. Particularly important is the economical manner in which Walker uses essential musical materials. Sonata No. 5 for Piano is an excellent creation by a careful and considerate composer. This sonata showcases a compressed synthesis of all previously-manipulated musical aspects. Through the exploration of various textures, interlacing of interval projections, and unification of the structure, the alterations of musical elements generate a balance between freedom and control. Walker patiently works towards crafting a perfect version of the composition he is creating.

I write extremely carefully. I do not write to revise, and come back to it. I will never move forward until I am satisfied with what I have. That means that sometimes things go quickly but without any kind of hesitation, and other times slowly.64

64 Redi Llupa, Skype interview by author with George Walker, Coral Gables, FL, February 27, 2016.
Walker is an accomplished pianist as well as a composer, therefore all of the compositional aspects that have been analyzed here are intertwined with his expressive abilities as a pianist. Many of Walker’s manipulations of texture and timbre are strongly influenced by his pianistic personality. From the perspective of a performer, this aspect is very important in his compositional language, especially in facilitating a profound understanding of his piano sonatas.

Walker’s five piano sonatas are not only additions to the piano repertoire, they play a redefining role for this genre in the contemporary music realm, and Walker is an avid advocate of this evolution.

Ultimately, the author hopes that this essay will not only be an addition to the literature of analytical writings on piano music, but also a significant recommendation for performers aspiring to tackle these works, which constitute an important part of American contemporary music literature.
PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF SKYPE INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE WALKER
ON FEBRUARY 27TH, 2016.

Transcribed sections are pertinent to the purpose of this study and have provided essential knowledge in the analysis process, and background information.

Redi Llupa (RL) – interviewer/author of this study
George Walker (GW) – interviewee/composer

**RL:** In Sonata No. 5 for Piano the opening figure that prepares the material, is almost always accompanied by tempo changes. Do you intend to start new episodes/sections with this gesture?

**GW:** Yes, I aim in providing contrast with lyric motion that is fluid. Not simply the fact that I do not use meter indications, I have done that before. I wanted to create something that was fluid, so that one does not get the sense of pulse...My music is not just shallow music in the usual sense, you have to understand that when I put in a rest it is meaningful, you cannot just ignore it. Like when putting accents. I surprise myself when I occasionally look over a score, and I say: “Oh, I wasn’t aware that I put in this accent!” But I know that this is exactly what I wanted. I would not change that detail any more than changing a note on the score.

**RL:** Regarding the revision of the third sonata: have you considered other pieces like this? Revised them?

**GW:** I very seldom rewrite anything. First and second sonatas have never been revised, nor fourth or fifth. It is very unusual for me to make any changes in the music. If something says revised, it is because there was probably a mistake in the printing. But not revisions, such as most composers do, like rewriting something.

**RL:** The way you introduce the material – you expose it and then you manipulate it – I want to know a bit more of your process.

**GW:** I have a more traditional way of approaching composition. I believe that the very first notes that one chooses to use are important. I have to be very careful about how I begin a piece. In the old days, in my first sonata, I knew I was going to write a sonata, and I knew I wanted to have a motif that began in fourths. Now, it is different. But choosing the notes that are essentially going to provide momentum and character of the piece is always very important. Sometimes I have an idea of how the following design will emerge, and sometimes I do not. With the second sonata, it was almost an epiphany to find that the ground bass is an imitation of what is happening in the right hand. It was my intent to write music that had a linear aspect, because I thought that composers had pretty much exhausted all harmonic possibilities. I am now convinced that I have created for myself, in some pieces, a distinctive melodic vocabulary. This might be more evident in other works, rather than in the piano sonatas. Once I start out with an
idea, I have this feel that what I write is going to be related, and it will be something that I do not want to change. So, I move very slowly as I write.

**RL:** Something that comes to mind when listening to and analyzing your music is the idea of Quantity vs. Quality.

**GW:** Yes, I write extremely carefully. I do not write to revise, and come back to it. I will never move forward until I am satisfied with what I have. That means that sometimes things go quickly but without any kind of hesitation, and other times slowly.

**RL:** Earlier you mentioned something about the story of fifth sonata being in one movement?

**GW:** I did think that I would not be able to write anymore piano music. However, I wanted to write something else for the piano. Since that time I haven’t been able to do it. I thought about writing some additional movements and calling it a sixth sonata, but have not gotten around to it since I am doing orchestral music.

**RL:** What is fascinating to me about you and the sonata form is the sense of unity that I find in few composers. The synthesis and all the materials that you use are compact. You started doing this already with the cyclic effect in the second sonata. My impression with the fifth sonata is that it is a compressed work. Did you mean for it to be in one movement? Was that enough for the sonata in reaching a sense of unity?

**GW:** Yes, I bring back the opening of the first movement [in Sonata No. 2 for Piano]. I feel that this is what is lacking with contemporary music composers. They are so wrapped up in trying to create new sounds, and they really do not have a background, or wittiness, or even any inclination to understand the importance of form as it relates to making music accessible. Quoting a phrase of “recognition factor”: if something has appeared in the music and it comes back that you can identify, even if it is not identifiable to the listener right away. As a composer, I feel the satisfaction of knowing that I put in something recognizable for the listener to be able to hear. For me, what has been the obsession with contemporary music is to try to get no sounds to the exclusion of things that are so fundamental in providing the sense of substance to a work. You cannot have something that rambles on in which there is no harmonic connection, no sense of shape. Which I have to say, that I have used a tactic were I am not repeating anything. I have written through-composed music, writing using different techniques. But if you have material that is substantial enough through the work, when the listeners come back to it, they will recognize it. The composer must think intellectually about what he is doing and what he wants to achieve, and how he can achieve it. Writing for piano is the most difficult. Anybody that has any ideas about piano music knows that. You have to have ideas. Anybody can write for orchestra, but writing for piano… – that is why there is a lack of good piano music in the 20th century.

**RL:** It seems at times that, within the piano repertoire, music that is lacking this sense of substance that you speak of is being performed quite often.

**GW:** I agree, because, you have to have an idea and express it in a way that shows that you are aware of what is already been written for the instrument. It takes some
consideration to write something and to put it in different registers for the piano, to get different qualities of the sound of the piano.

**RL:** In your music I find a balance between connection of materials and drastic changes. During an earlier interview, in the dissertation of Leonard Boe, you speak of conjunct and disjunct motion. Is this a musical aesthetic that has stayed with you always? For instance, in the fifth sonata – I would like to ask you a questions about specific measures, because when I hear it, it is fascinating how the texture abruptly changes. In measures 49-52, that is a material that was not seen generally, articulation that was not seen before within this sonata.

**GW:** There again, the idea of providing contrast. When I was teaching my son as a composer I was saying that what is missing from composers today is that they do not understand the necessity for offering contrast in material. This is important. To me, the sonata form is one of the great monumental achievements of history. When you have a contrasting second theme, there is a reason for that being so affective. And composers do not even understand that you have to have contrast to make things interesting. Otherwise, things do not seem to have any kind of connection, they start rambling.

**RL:** Your fascination with this monumental form – you are one of the few contemporary composers who has written five sonatas. There might be others, but 5 is not a small number nowadays for this form.

**GW:** They think that it is old fashioned; “We do not need to do it, we can do something better.” What can they do better than sonata form? It aids in writing a longer piece that has some substance. It is miraculous the whole conception. I have used it, and I know the advantages of using it. I do not want to be using it all the time. I use it only in the First Sonata. Oddly enough, the most recent use is in my Viola Sonata in the second movement which is in a sonata form.

**RL:** You generally tend to introduce the initial material right at the beginning where you have the contrapuntal material, the rhythmic material, the intervallic context, etc. Is that basically the material that you will constantly manipulate that makes the work conjunct?

**GW:** That is a very interesting question. I have been increasingly concerned, not anything recent, of how to be using different intervallic relationships in a way that do not seem to be contrary to what I have used in the past. Of course, when I look back at the first sonata, where already on the outset I use the fourths, you and I were talking of their use. But the sonata is more complex than that, there are fourths, there are thirds, and there are seconds in it. But now, with this orchestral piece that I am working on, I have become even more obsessed with the idea of how to make transitions from intervallic combinations that may consists of minor seconds to tritons, in a way that will not seem as if there is any kind of inconsistency there. As such, they will provide some additional interest, because I am not being that consistent throughout. More and more, I may start out with the idea intellectually, but I really am almost determined to have my own ear analyzing things as I go along.
RL: In the fifth sonata, please correct me if I am wrong in assuming so, the intervallic relations in the main melodic material are comprised by thirds while the other intervals accompany the sound projection of those. In measure 19, when you reintroduce the initial gesture again, it is a tempo = 56. Then we have a change of intervallic projections, the seconds and sevenths take more prominence in organically twisting the color of the material. Would that also be the initial part of a developmental section in this sonata?

GW: I would say that at the very beginning of the work, it is a minor second that is the dominant interval, the first measure. And, then of course on to measure 2, we have what could be a melodic material in thirds, but because of the dissonances you are not aware that they are thirds. You do not hear the melody per se separated by the chordal structures. So, in measure 19, you are correct in observing that the importance of the semitone is present there. There is a sense that the rhythm is adding more variety than what it had before. It all becomes more contrapuntal.

RL: That is one thing that I have noticed, that all the material you use, all these ideas are transformed. For example intervallic projections, you connect them with rhythm and something else takes over, and then it all aids the tension leading to a morphed sound.

GW: You are quite correct, because I am trying to achieve a kind of flexibility that is not completely erasing bar lines, but it is the kind of fluidity that in this piece is very important– it does not exists in any of the other sonatas.

RL: Yes, the fifth sonata appears like a solid metal structure on the outside, with restlessly moving molecules on the inside. I noticed the gradual change of texture starting from measure 27, where there is an a tempo again with the initial minor second and seventh introductory gesture and you move to a polyphonic texture, where the intervals are project this way too. You have a lot of ties, quite a particular way of writing it. You want the performer to hear that clearly. And then in measure 33 and on, the material that was more contrapuntal starts to become more vertical.

GW: Yes, I try to alternate between the linear aspect and at the same time creating these massive harmonic structures that are not found in most music. I am trying to do different things at different points within the piece. You are quite correct in that it is intended to be very economical.

RL: In measure 40, there is a pedal projection with the chords sustained and you move linearly from this almost clustery moment. The harmony has so much tension in the measures before that you really relax the sound afterwards in measures 40-41. The vertical sound of the chords becomes relaxed in linear writing with scale motions. The rhythm is the one aspect that I think keeps the tension on. It is how you connect, it is like a chain reaction. Is this something correct in interpretation?

GW: You are absolutely correct. One thing that I have found, what I have objections to, and it is partly because as much as I admire so much of Stravinsky’s music, the dry sound in which things are not sustained, is something that does not appeal to me. He has repetitions of things, this whole matter of to build up the tension to it, and build up the sonorities. I wanted to do just the opposite, sounds that are sustained that are superimposed in building up sonorities.
RL: In measure 45 and 46, the *a tempo* – to me that clearly sounds as a recapitulation. Is that the right idea?

GW: Well, yes, it is more clearly stated like the beginning. I would not say that it is a recapitulation, because all of the previous recurrences of the intervals begin on different pitches, but the material is similar. It actually becomes an intensification of the beginning since, this time, it does begin on the same notes.

RL: But you wouldn’t necessarily label it as recapitulation.

GW: No, I would not say it is a recapitulation per se. I use a term ‘ritornello’, which of course involves an entire section, but I use it here as a return of the motif only.

RL: I noticed something that lately as I have been studying the score and observing the texture changes. I do not know if you thought about this, but it fascinated me what when you do this strong restatement of the motif in measure 46, you go through various steps; the more polyphonic texture, shifts towards a more vertical one, then towards the linear seemingly one voice, and finally the strong motivic recall.

GW: Yes, it is an intensification of it.

RL: After that, I find it very interesting that from measure 49 and on, especially in measure 50, you change the texture with articulations in a single voice, pointing in a different direction, then more vertical, and then polyphonic. So it is a sort of vice-versa occurrence; reaching tension then relaxing it in a mirror perspective. I do not know if you thought about that, but to me it seems like a very interesting approach to the form of the sonata.

GW: Yes! Well, what I have done is that in measure 50 I introduce figurations. This is another aspect of form that composers do not understand at times. Basic things – that there is material that is significant as motif, but also important is material that is sort of figuration. Not important melodically, but it is a pianistic device. It is important that this aspect is brought to the sonata, combining material that has some dramatic substance, with something that is pianistic and acts as a kind of transition to something else that is more important.

RL: Generally speaking, I have noticed many transitional aspects in the fifth sonata. In measure 68, you recall the principal idea very interestingly. The motif is so compressed and vertical in octave projections. It appears to me that you distillate the material, you bring it back to the essential. It is my impression that you work like a sculptor. Is that a correct observation?

GW: I am glad you said that. I like to think that I am literally carving into a block of wood to make a picture of something. Working, literally chiseling away. This provides tension… even though it is more contrapuntal [Unclear].

RL: You seem to have an obsession with the phenomena of sound. There is a pedal technique in measure 71, where the chord is tied and superimposed to that is the accented figuration. The mere resonance of this technique, is that like a change of color, a motion that is transitory for you in measures 71-74?
GW: Yes, again, this is essentially a figuration that is sort of embellishing this sustained harmony. It is very important, of course. The harmony underneath the figuration, which is really built from that harmony, is concerned with obtaining a certain kind of color.

RL: I have another observation that this is just a gut feeling, which is quite fascinating to me. When you change the figuration, it is the right time to do it. When is the right time for you?

GW: I really have almost these voices in my mind trying to decide how long I want something to go on before I change it. And I am never quite certain, perhaps even until I hear it performed. And it is becoming increasingly worse with my orchestral piece, how long to keep something going before I modify it, stop it, or bring something new. To me, I never want to get the impression that a material is just filler.

RL: And you do it again economically, never exceeding in repetition.

GW: It is true. When I repeat something I want to consider how long I want to repeat it. Repetition is necessary and that is what you do not find in some contemporary, or you have someone like Philipp Glass where everything is a repetition. [Laughs] These are all factors that I think a composer should consider, and to me, I grew up being aware of all these considerations.

RL: Mr. Walker, what I found interesting is the second movement in the third sonata—that change of sonority. You composed this to reflect the bells when you were in Lake Como, right?

GW: Yes, that is right.

RL: I think you just hit on something quite special with that movement. It is fascinating that you thought of the dynamics and rhythms affecting durations. This chord is repeated 17 times. I would just like to ask you, why “Bell” in the middle of this work?

GW: I did not want to write a traditional second movement, something slow and melodic. Again, I use different forms since the first sonata moving forward, so to do something different. I had this studio and I had an upright piano, and when I was composing, this bell would go off every half hour. I thought maybe I can capture as closely as possible the sound of that bell. Of course, the chord cannot be broken, so it is good that I could try in on the piano. I thought: “I am only going to use this chord without anything else, and any other relationship, by repeating it with different dynamics.” Somethings might be almost autobiographical, but to me it was significant—I had to stop what I was doing because the bell was ringing, sounding across the lake.

RL: This is the only sonata that you put titles for each movement.

GW: Well, I had the idea of titling these three movements. The first is a kind of “Fantoms,” in that there is a sense of instability. And then what came out of this is the relationship between second and third movements. The third of course is called “Choral” [Choral and Fughetta] - the bell is coming from a church, so the connection is that this bell sounding from a church going into a choral which it is my own choral fashion, like a Bach choral, only with two phrases and the phrases are interrupted, in my case. One does
not think of phrases in a choral being interrupted, but they are because there is a fermata between each one. My interruption has little episodes in between the two. And of course, for me the most significant thing in the third movement is the way in which the melody is detached from the chords.

**RL:** That is very effective – in my analysis, as a performer – I sense this. After “Bell” you have a particular use of the pedal. You give the pedal marking from the beginning, and you put the interruption of the pedal at the double bar. This does not seem a coincidence to me.

**GW:** Yes, this sonata is so infrequently played, but now I have the chance to talk about it. That would be the first thing that I would mention, that there is this a connection and for me it is important.

**RL:** This fascination with sounds continues in the other sonatas. The pedal technique used in the third sonata come back in the Fifth Sonata too. I admire your ability to continue molding your language without changing the overall trajectory. When you start something, you keep going with it but in different guises.

**GW:** Yes, I am trying to find ways of making things sound new without necessarily changing a certain kind of technique or certain kind of approach. And like we spoke, there is a certain fluidity rhythmically that you find in the Fifth Sonata, although this is not nearly as dramatic.

**RL:** You have your own way of using the variation technique. You seem fascinated with the many opportunities that it gives.

**GW:** Yes, it has sort of intuitively affected my thinking and I realize that, like counterpoint, it came naturally to me to think in those terms. With counterpoint now, not to write counterpoint that is academic, but still to create the sense of line [lyrical]. I really feel what is missing so much contemporary music, is the importance of the lyrical line, which is contrapuntal. I really feel that what is lacking in so much music is not what …. it is not academic – you are trying to create, to optimize a line, to give it shape, it is not a matter of just doing something perfectly intervalically. This is what I always try to do.

**RL:** Another aspect that I have noticed in your compositions is the way that you treat the interval like a phrase. You create a line even between two notes going in the micro level.

**GW:** It is a very astute observation. That is exactly it. I gave a conventional address at Eastman about three years ago about the problem of the interval. The interval is like an atom. It is so important, the differences in tension between a second, and a third, and a fourth. It is unbelievable what one achieves with just a simple interval. And that, of course, is one of the unfortunate aspects of 12-tone music.

**RL:** You have composed *Spatials* in 12-tone, and that is about it I assume.

**GW:** That was the reason I wrote my *Spatials*. It is a 12-tone piece. Selecting the intervals will have some connection that one can probably hear although they jump around, but also combined with rhythms that give a certain elasticity to the music.
RL: I come from Europe, and especially from a country like Albania where growing up there was a lack of information until internet came about. When I was practicing your sonata, people would ask me about it, American pianists, which surprised me. Do you feel that nowadays?

GW: Well, I know that a lot of pianists have been and are playing, particularly recently, and they contact me, and some works of course have been in competitions. Several persons who want to record the works, and I am glad to know that the works are getting that exposure. It is long time, when first sonata was written in 1953 and only a few pianists including myself were playing them. To me, when I look back and I think that I have not changed a note in the first sonata, and there is nothing that I would do differently. I would hope that people, and there are people who of course … it is a very challenging piece in its own way. It is more challenging in a different way from the other sonatas, but you have, and I found this to be true over the years, that certain people prefer the first sonata over the second, and there is people who play the second, because it is easier than the first, but still like it. Nobody plays the third or the fourth.

RL: The third is my favorite actually, because I can see the change, your interest in so many other projections. It really speaks to me.

GW: That is gratifying to hear. Because I am always reminded that … I am having a performance in New York next month at the [Unclear], and …. I told them that I do not want anybody just playing movements. There are pianists who play the variations of the first sonata, but they do not play the whole sonata. So, do not play the variations, play the third sonata, or the fifth sonata.

RL: The first sonata seems like a great piece for competitions as well. I could easily picture it at the Van Cliburn, for the choice of American repertoire. There is so much more music than just the Barber Piano Sonata.

GW: It is true. They used the second sonata…well of course it is a choice, at the Cleveland Competition. It is a pianist’s choice. It really does not matter which sonata is played. My friend, Seymor Lipkin, who died recently had started to play the fifth sonata, and he played it several times. I never heard him play it, but he did.

RL: Was the fifth commissioned?

GW: No, it was not. Only third and fourth were commissioned.

RL: Did pianist Robert Pollock give the premiere of the fifth sonata?

GW: No, he did not. I heard form a pianist in California who told me that she had programed it. I do not even know where she had gotten the music. It never had an official premiere. He [Pollock] has known my piano music, but he had never played any of my sonatas, until I told him about the Fifth Sonata– he is in Hawaii, but it had been played before he played that.

RL: You won the Pulitzer Prize in 1996 I noticed while reading your book that you say that after Pulitzer Prize you did not get as many commissions or performances. Could you please expand further on that?
GW: I did not get any commissions. I did not get any performances. Well, after I received the Pulitzer Prize there was no major orchestra that contacted either me or my publisher. There was a woman conductor in Orange County California who said she wanted to do the West Coast premiere of *Lilacs*. She had two orchestras. This particular orchestra was essentially a tiny community orchestra. She did it and she did quite a good job with this community orchestra. And the Atlanta Symphony wanted to do a work of mine in one of their Martin Luther King concerts...So, Atlanta Symphony is the only major orchestra to do *Lilacs* until the Philadelphia Orchestra did it. And then last year, *Lilacs* was done by Detroit. This is 1996 until 2010, only one orchestra did *Lilacs*.

RL: You deserve so much more exposure. When I read that paragraph in your autobiography I became very curious...

GW: Not even New Jersey, the soprano who gave the premiere was engaged with the New Jersey Symphony... [Unclear] The New Jersey Symphony have never done *Lilacs*, they have done other works of mine, but not *Lilacs*.

RL: Composing something new now?

GW: Yes, an orchestral piece. It is not commissioned, but I am still working on it.

RL: Is it difficult?

GW: It is very difficult, this is the most difficult challenging piece that probably I have attempted. It is taking me longer to even get the first draft done.

RL: When and where is it going to be premiered?

GW: I am waiting, I do not think it will come about, but I have made a proposal to Nashville Symphony. I have not heard from them. I do not know, I have talked with someone who has a lot of experience, the conductor Simon Rattle, who had heard “Lilacs” and had liked it so much, but at the moment I don’t have anybody who says that they want to do the premiere. I still have probably another month until I can start the orchestration. It will probably take me another three months. It would still be nice to get to know where it will be performed. I still intend to try to get it recorded, even if I do not get it performed, because I think it is an important piece, for me at least.

RL: It has been a real pleasure to talk to you Mr. Walker. I intend to use my skills to perform your music and hopefully I will make an Albanian premiere of these sonatas.

GW: That is really all that I want, to have people hear this music and also to get the score. The main thing is just hearing the music, because that is my reason for writing. To me, it is a reason for giving me the opportunity for having the ideas, which I feel that I have come to grips with, exposed.
APPENDIX B

4/22/2016

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter grants permission to Redi Llupa to use examples of George Walker’s Piano Sonatas Nos. 2, 3, and 5 in the Doctoral Essay with Frost School of Music- University of Miami.

We request the essay hold to the following requests:

1. Do not include any movements in their entirety.
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