

# Gwyneth Walker

## Let America Be America Again

*for Narrator and Orchestra*

Based on the Poem by Langston Hughes

## Program Notes

*Let America Be America Again* is a powerful poem by African-American poet/playwright, Langston Hughes (1902-1967). The strength of the message and language are well-suited to presentation by narrator and orchestra.

This is a dramatic and varied text, ranging from peaceful (dreamlike) passages to angry explosions. The author begins by speaking of the dream of America, a land where pioneers sought their freedom. [Hughes then acknowledges that, as a black American, “America never was America to me.”] There is the hope for liberty and equality. Yet for black Americans, and the downtrodden of all races, the American experience has all too often been one of persecution.

Speaking now in the first person, the author identifies with all struggling Americans. “I am the farmer... the worker...the Negro...I am the people.” “Yet I’m the one who dreamt the basic dream...to build a homeland of the free.” Despite their labors, these Americans have nothing except “the dream that’s almost dead today.”

With the strength of enduring hope, the author exhorts “We, the people, must reclaim the land...and make America again!”

The musical expression, which has thus far essentially provided a background and commentary to the reading, now comes forth with a closing hymn titled “Let America Be America Again!” The theme, which enters after a 12-measure introduction, is stated in low octaves, with a rhythm aligned with the words “Let America be America.” The theme returns several times, including in the closing section, where the pitches ascend throughout the entire orchestra. This encompassing of many notes is intended to express a “land for all!”

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Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. Degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. She has now returned to her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 “Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities” from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum.

Walker’s catalog includes over 200 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus and solo voice. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

Further information concerning Gwyneth Walker and her works is available at [www.gwynethwalker.com](http://www.gwynethwalker.com)

# Let America Be America Again

for Narrator and Orchestra

Based on the poem by  
Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

Gwyneth Walker

At a stately tempo  $\text{♩} = 66$

Piccolo

Flutes 1 2

Oboes 1 2

B♭ Clarinets 1 2

Bassoons 1 2

Horns in F 1 2 3 4

Trumpets in C 1 2 3

Trombones 1 2

Trombone 3  
Tuba

Percussion  
(Timpani, Glockenspiel,  
Suspended Cymbal,  
High and Low Bongos,  
Medium and Low Tom-Toms,  
Maracas, Snare Drum,  
Triangle, Crash Cymbals)

Violins 1 2

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

*a2, as if in the distance*  
*p legato*  
*a2, as if in the distance*  
*p legato*  
*a2, as if in the distance*  
*p legato*  
*a2, as if in the distance*  
*p legato*  
*a2, as if in the distance*  
*p*  
*as if in the distance*  
*p*  
*pizz.*  
*p*  
*arco*  
*arco*  
*p*

*powerfully, emphatically*

7

Picc. *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Fls. 1 *mf* *p* *f* *p*  
2

Obs. 1 *mf* *p* *f* *p*  
2

Cls. 1 *mf* *p* *f*  
2 *a2*

Bsns. 1 *mf* *p* *f*  
2 *a2*

Hns. 1 *mf* *p* *f*  
2 *a2*  
3 *mf* *p* *f*  
4

Tpts. 1 *mf* *p* *f* *p*  
2 *mf* *p* *f* *p*  
3

Tbns. 1 *mf* *p* *f* *p*  
2

Tbn. 3 *mf* *p* *f* *p*  
Tuba

(Timp.) *mf* *mp* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

Perc. *mf* *f*

Susp. Cym.

Vlns. 1 *p*  
2

Vla. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vlc. *mf* *mp* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

Cb. *mf* *mp* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

13

Picc.

Fls. 1  
2

Obs. 1  
2

Cls. 1  
2

Bsns. 1  
2

Hns. 1  
2  
3  
4

Tpts. 1  
2  
3

Tbns. 1  
2

Tbn. 3  
Tuba

Perc.

Vlins. 1  
2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

NARRATOR comes to the front of stage

19 *rit.*

Picc.  
Fls. 1 2  
Obs. 1 2  
Cls. 1 2  
Bsns. 1 2  
Hns. 1 2 3 4  
Tpts. 1 2 3  
Tbns. 1 2  
Tbn. 3  
Tuba  
(Timp.)  
Perc. (Susp. Cym.)  
Vlns. 1 2  
Vla.  
Vlc.  
Cb.

*f* *p* *pp*

*rit.* *div.*

**A** **A.1** (same tempo  $\text{♩} = 66$ ) **A.2**

**Narr:** Let America be America again. Let it be the dream it used to be. Let it be the pioneer on the plain seeking a home where he himself is free. (America never was America to me.)

25

Vlns. 1  
Vlns. 2  
Vla.

*Solo, con sord. (change bow slowly)*  
*add Tutti (con sord.)*  
*pp barely audible*

**B** **B.1**

*Solo, con sord. (change bow slowly)*  
*add Tutti (con sord.)*

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed – \*great strong land of love  
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme  
That any man be crushed by one above.

27

Vlns. 1  
Vlns. 2  
Vla.

*p gently, dream-like*  
*Solo, con sord. (change bow slowly)*  
*add Tutti (con sord.)*  
*p gently, dream-like*

**O, let my land** be a land where Liberty Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,

28

Fls. 1  
Fls. 2  
Obs. 1  
Obs. 2  
Cls. 1  
Cls. 2  
Vlns. 1  
Vlns. 2  
Vla.  
Vlc.  
Cb.

*p legato*  
*p legato*  
*p legato*  
*p*  
*rolled pizz.*  
*p*  
*rolled pizz.*  
*p*  
*pizz.*  
*p*

\*Underlined words indicate new musical patterns  
Walker / Let America Be America Again

But opportunity is real, and life is free,

Equality is in  
the air we breathe.

32 (1.)

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

C

"breathing free air" motive

1. *p*

35 (1.)

Cls. 1 2

Vlns. 1 2

*rit.*

*p*

*(con sord.)*

*rit.*

*f*

*div.*

*p*

*p*

*p*

D

(There's never been  
equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this  
"homeland of the free.")

(same tempo  $\text{♩} = 66$ )

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?  
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

**I am the poor white,** fooled and pushed apart,

39 **High Bongo**  
*unobtrusively, as a pulse of drama*

Perc.

*p*

Vlc.

*arco,*  
*senza sord. div.*

*p unobtrusively, as a pulse of drama*

*arco,*  
*senza sord.*

Cb.

*p unobtrusively, as a pulse of drama*



**I am the Negro** bearing slavery's scars. **I am the red man** driven from the land,

41

Perc.

Vlns. 1   
2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*senza sord* *div. div. a3 div. a4*  
*arco, senza sord. div.*  
*p unobtrusively, as a pulse of drama*  
*(p)*

**I am the immigrant** clutching the hope I seek –  
And finding only the same old stupid plan  
of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

**I am the young man**, full of strength and hope,  
Tangled in that ancient endless chain  
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!

rise and crescendo  
after reading stops

43

Fls. 1   
2

Obs. 1   
2

Cls. 1   
2

Bsns. 1   
2

Perc.

Vlns. 1   
2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*a2* *p* *f*  
*a2* *p* *f*  
*p* *f*  
*a2* *p* *f*  
*senza sord* *div. div. a3 div. a4*  
*p unobtrusively, as a pulse of drama*  
*(p)*

Of grab the gold!      Of grab the ways of satisfying need!      Of work the men!      Of take the pay!

**E**      **E.1**      **E.2**      **E.3**      **E.4**

45

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Perc. High & Low Bongos *ff* Med. & Low Tom-Toms *ff*

Vlns. 1 2

Vla. *unis.* *ff*

Vlc. *unis.* *ff*

Cb. *ff*

\*grace notes on the beat

Of owning everything for one's own greed!

*quickly*

E.5

E.6

E.7

E.8

E.9



[approximately coordinate reading with music.  
Words in bold print fall at the start of measures]

**G** Same tempo (♩ = 66)

**Glock.**  
*gentle, high gliss. ad lib.*

Yet **I'm** the one who dreamt

our basic **dream**

In the

50

Perc. *p* (to suggest dreaming)

Vlns. 1 *rolled pizz. unis. p* gently (to suggest dreaming)

Vlns. 2 *rolled pizz. unis. p* gently (to suggest dreaming)

Vla. *(arco) unis. p*



**Old** World while still a serf of **kings,**

who **dreamt** a dream so strong,

That even

so brave, so **true,**

54

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vla. *unis. p*

Vlc. *unis. p*

Cb. *p pizz.*



yet its mighty daring **sings**

In every **brick** and stone,

That's made

in every furrow **turned**

58

Vlns. 1 *arco, on the string*

Vlns. 2 *arco, on the string*

Vla. *arco, on the string*

Vlc. *div. unis, on the string*

Cb. *arco, on the string*

**H**

America the land it has become. O, I'm the man who sailed those

62 *div.* *unis.* *div.* *mf* *unis.* *p*

Vlns. 1 *mf* *p*

Vlns. 2 *mf* *p*

Vla. *div.* *mf* *unis.* *p*

Vlc. *div.* *mf* *unis.* *p*

Cb. *mf* *p*

67 **early seas** In search of what I meant to be my home – For I'm the one who left dark

Fls. 1 *p* *p*

Fls. 2 *p* *p*

Obs. 1 *p* *p*

Obs. 2 *p* *p*

Cls. 1 *p* *p*

Cls. 2 *p* *p*

Bsns. 1 *p* *p*

Bsns. 2 *p* *p*

Perc. **Maracas** *p* *p*

Vlns. 1 *p* *p*

Vlns. 2 *p* *p*

Vla. *p* *p*

Vlc. *p* *p*

Cb. *p* *p*



strand I came To build a "homeland of the free."

*poco rit.*

75 2. 1. *cresc.* *f*

Obs. 1. 2. *cresc.* *f*

Cls. 1. 2. *cresc.* *f*

Bsns. (1.) a2 *cresc.* *f*

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Perc. (Mar.) *p* *f*

Vlns. 1 2 *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *cresc.* *f*

Cb. *cresc.* *f*



The free?  
 Who said the free? Not me?  
 Surely not me?  
 The millions on relief today?

The millions shot down  
 when we strike?

The millions who have  
 nothing for our pay?

**I** 78

Fls. 1 2 *ff* with anger

Obs. 1 2 *ff* with anger

Cls. 1 2 *ff* with anger

Bsns. 1 2 *ff* with anger

Hns. 1 2 3 4 *ff* with anger

Perc. Med. & Low Tom-Toms *ff* with anger

Vlns. 1 2 *ff* with anger

Vla. *ff* with anger

Vlc. *ff* with anger

Cb. *ff* with anger

**I.1** **I.2** **I.3**

**I**

div.

For all the dreams we've dreamed  
 And all the songs we've sung  
 And all the hopes we've held  
 And all the flags we've hung,

The millions who have  
 nothing for our pay—

I.4

Except the dream  
 that's almost dead today.

J Moderate tempo ♩ = 96

(78)

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Perc. (Tom-Toms)

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*mf cantabile*

*a2*  
*mf cantabile*

*p a gentle background*

*p a gentle background as a dream rising*

*mf cantabile*

*pizz.*  
*p*

*poco accel.*

O, let America be **America** again – The

80

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2

Vlns. 1 2

Vla. 1 2

Vlc. 1 2

Cb. 1 2

*(1.)*

*mf*

*poco accel.*

*p a gentle background*

*mf*

*arco*

*mf*



**Slightly faster** ♩ = 108

land that never has been yet – And yet must be – the **land** where every **man** is free. The

85

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2

Vlns. 1 2

Vla. 1 2

Vlc. 1 2

Cb. 1 2

*mf*

*1.*

*mf*

**Slightly faster** ♩ = 108

land that's mine— The poor man's,

Indian's, Negro's,

ME —

Who made

**K** ♩ = 96

89

Fls. 1 2 *mf*

Obs. 1 2 1. +2.

Cls. 1 2 (1.)

Bsns. 1 2 (1.)

Hns. 1 2 3 4 *a2*

Perc.

Vlns. 1 2 *rolled pizz.* *rit.* *arco, div.* *unis.* *p*

Vla. *rolled pizz.* *arco, div.* *unis.* *p*

Vlc. *rolled pizz.* *arco* *p*

Cb. *pizz.* *arco* *p*

America, Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain, Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain, Must

94

*lightly tongued*

*p*

*lightly tongued*

*p*

*(mf)*

*(mf)*

*mf*

*mf*

High Bongo

Low Tom

*mf*

*div.*

*unis.*

*div.*

*div.*

*div.*

*mf*

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Perc.

Vlins. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

bring back our mighty dream again.

*rit.*

99

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Perc.

Glock.  
gentle, high gliss. ad lib.

Vlins. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

*p*

*rit.*  
unis.  
non div. rolled pizz.

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*pizz.*

*p*







We, the people, must redeem  
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.

The mountains and the endless plain –  
All, all the stretch of these great green states –  
And make America again!

107

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Perc.

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc. *div. a3*

Cb.

*sfz* *sfp* *f*

*high*

# Closing Hymn

“Let America Be America Again!”

**O** **Grandly, slowly** *accel.* *a tempo* (♩ = 80) *energetically, triumphantly*

109

Picc. 1 2

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Tpts. 1 2 3

Tbns. 1 2

Tbn. 3 Tuba

(Timp.) Perc. *p* *f* High Bongo

**O** **Grandly, slowly** *accel.* *a tempo* (♩ = 80) *energetically, triumphantly*

Vlns. 1 *unis.* *f* *div.* *unis.*

Vlns. 2 *f* *div.* *unis.*

Vla. *unis.* *f* *div.* *unis.*

Vlc. *f* *unis.*

Cb. *f*

115

Picc.   
 Fls. 1 2   
 Obs. 1 2   
 Cls. 1 2   
 Bsns. 1 2   
 Hns. 1 2 3 4   
 Tpts. 1 2 3   
 Tbns. 1 2   
 Tbn. 3 Tuba   
 Perc.   
 Vlns. 1 2   
 Vla.   
 Vlc.   
 Cb.

*div.*   
*unis.*   
*pizz. unis.*   
*pizz.*   
*pizz. unis.*   
*pizz.*   
*pizz.*

121 **P**

**Instrumentation and Dynamics:**

- Picc.**: Piccolo
- Fls.**: Flutes (1, 2)
- Obs.**: Oboes (1, 2)
- Cls.**: Clarinets (1, 2)
- Bsns.**: Bassoons (1, 2) with *a2* marking
- Hns.**: Horns (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Tpts.**: Trumpets (1, 2, 3)
- Tbns.**: Trombones (1, 2)
- Tbn. 3**: Tuba
- Perc.**: (High Bongo), S. D. (Snare Drum) with *p* and *f* dynamics
- Vlns.**: Violins (1, 2) with *arco* marking
- Vla.**: Viola with *arco* marking
- Vlc.**: Violoncello with *arco* marking and *(f) boldly*
- Cb.**: Contrabass with *arco* marking and *(f) boldly*

**Performance Instructions:**

- (f) boldly**: Fortissimo, bold playing
- arco*: Arco (bowed)
- a2*: Second octave
- p*: Piano
- f*: Fortissimo
- (S. D.)**: Snare Drum

127 Q

Picc.

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Tpts. 1 2 3

Tbns. 1 2

Tbn. 3 Tuba

Perc.

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*a2*

*(f)*

Q

This musical score is for the piece "Let America Be America Again" by William Walker. It is arranged for a full orchestra and includes a percussion section. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The instrumentation includes Piccolo, Flutes (1 and 2), Oboes (1 and 2), Clarinets (1 and 2), Bassoons (1 and 2), Horns (1, 2, 3, and 4), Trumpets (1, 2, and 3), Trombones (1 and 2), Tuba (3), Percussion (S.D.), Violins (1 and 2), Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is marked with a rehearsal sign "R" at the beginning of the page and another "R" at the end of the section. The percussion part includes a "Low Tom" drum. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with various dynamics and articulation marks.

139

Picc. *(f)* *loco*  
 Fls. 1 2 *8va*  
 Obs. 1 2 *a2*  
 Cls. 1 2 *a2*  
 Bsns. 1 2  
 Hns. 1 2 3 4  
 Tpts. 1 2 3 *a2*  
 Tbns. 1 2  
 Tbn. 3 Tuba  
 Perc. *Susp. Cym.* *p* *f* *p*  
 (Low Tom) *(f)*  
 Vlins. 1 2  
 Vla.  
 Vlc.  
 Cb.

144 S

**Picc.** *p*

**Fls.** 1 2 *a2* *p*

**Obs.** 1 2 *a2* *p*

**Cls.** 1 2 *a2* *p*

**Bsns.** 1 2 *p*

**Hns.** 1 2 3 4

**Tpts.** 1 2 3

**Tbns.** 1 2

**Tbn. 3**  
**Tuba**

**Perc.** (Susp. Cym.) *p* *f* *p*  
Triangle *p*

**Vlns.** 1 2 *p*

**Vla.** *p*

**Vlc.** *pizz.*

**Cb.** *pizz.* *p*



148

Picc. *(p) poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Fls. 1 *(p) poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Fls. 2 *(p) poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Obs. 1 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Obs. 2 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Cls. 1 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Cls. 2 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Bsns. 1 *a2* *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Bsns. 2 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Hns. 1 *a2* *mf* *f*

Hns. 2 *a2* *mf* *f*

Hns. 3 *a2* *mf* *f*

Hns. 4 *a2* *mf* *f*

Tpts. 1 *(f)*

Tpts. 2 *a2* *(f)*

Tpts. 3 *(f)*

Tbns. 1

Tbns. 2

Tbn. 3

Tuba

Perc. *Low Tom* *mf* *f*

Vlins. 1 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Vlins. 2 *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Vla. *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Vlc. *arco* *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

Cb. *arco* *poco cresc.* *mf* *f*

*div. unis.*

**T**  
154

The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes Piccolo, Flutes (1 and 2), Oboes (1 and 2), Clarinets (1 and 2), Bassoons (1 and 2), Horns (1, 2, 3, 4), Trumpets (1, 2, 3), Trombones (1 and 2), Tuba (3), and Percussion (Low Tom and High Bongo). The second system includes Violins (1 and 2), Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. Dynamics include *f* and *a2*. The percussion part features a rhythmic pattern on the High Bongo starting at measure 154.

160 U

Picc.

Fls. 1  
2

Obs. 1  
2

Cls. 1  
2

Bsns. 1  
2

Hns. 1  
2  
3  
4

Tpts. 1  
2  
3

Tbns. 1  
2

Tbn. 3  
Tuba

Perc.

Vlns. 1  
2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

*div.*

*div.*

165 *rit.*

Picc.

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Tpts. 1 2 3

Tbns. 1 2

Tbn. 3 Tuba

Perc. High Bongo Low Tom *f*

Vlns. 1 2 *unis.*

Vla. *unis.*

Vlc.

Cb.

V a tempo (♩ = 80)

rit.

170

Picc.

Fls. 1  
2

Obs. 1  
2

Cls. 1  
2

Bsns. 1  
2

Hns. 1  
2  
3  
4

Tpts. 1  
2  
3

Tbns. 1  
2

Tbn. 3  
Tuba

Perc.

Susp. Cym.

*p*

V a tempo (♩ = 80)

rit.

div.

Vlins. 1  
2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

**Slowly** Narr. spoken forcefully and dramatically  
Let America be! Let America be America! Let America be America... again!

176

Picc.

Fls. 1 2

Obs. 1 2

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Tpts. 1 2 3

Tbns. 1 2

Tbn. 3 Tuba

(Timp.)  
Perc. (Susp. Cym.)

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

**Slowly**

*div.* *unis.* *div.* *unis.* *div.* *unis.*

Vlns. 1 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

179 *a tempo* (♩ = 80) *rit.*

Picc.

Fls. 1 2 *a2*

Obs. 1 2 *a2*

Cls. 1 2

Bsns. 1 2 *a2*

Hns. 1 2 3 4

Tpts. 1 2 3

Tbns. 1 2

Tbn. 3 *a2*  
Tuba

Perc. *f* Cr. Cyms.

Vlins. 1 2 *div.*

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

10'30"

Orchestral Score completed: June 19, 2012  
New Canaan, Connecticut