

Dear Mr. Tal:

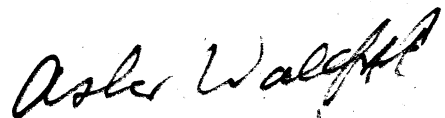
24.8.79

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS WHICH THE BBC MUSIC EDITOR SENT ME TO ASK YOU

1. For an English listener, unfamiliar with any of your music, can you say broadly what sort of tradition it belongs to ?
2. How important is it for a listener, new to your music, to know something about the technical processes behind it ?
3. Do your compositions make any kind of statement, other than musical ones ?
4. Do you think of yourself as a specifically Israeli composer ?
5. If so, does it affect the way you write - the shape of your melodies ? Do you think people can hear, that you are an Israeli composer ?
6. Are you particularly drawn to any one aspect of music - say opera, or chamber music ?
7. Turning to the Third Symphony, which is to be performed at the Proms, can you tell us something about the circumstances of its composition ?
8. Is the word symphony still a meaningful one for a composer today ?
9. Did you write it with a particular orchestra and with particular techniques in mind ? Is there any element of virtuosity involved ?
10. You have occasionally spoken of the need, for a conservative revolution in music. To what extent does the Third Symphony aspire to such an aim ?

Looking forward to seeing you Monday seven pm

Yours



asher Wallfish

1. If I understand correctly your question, you would like to know if I am writing ~~in~~ in traditional tonal idioms, or <sup>rather</sup> atonal or twelve tone - music or lets say just avant garde - music with all his experimental connotations. Well, I ~~can't~~ don't want to escape this question, but I can't give a clear cut textbook - answer. I believe that my discipline in dealing with a musical idea is an integral part of the compositional process and not something imposed on it from the outside, that means by learning methods or anti-methods. I am in so far a traditionalist as I seek good advice from the wisdom of great examples in art of all epochs, without imitating them out of the context of my days.

2. In general, the listener is always confronted with two sides of the musical coin. One are the different levels of emotional behaviour <sup>in a composition</sup> which immediately conquers the surface of perception. This appeal is immediate. ~~and~~ The other side is the intellectual planning and working-out of all details. <sup>These technical</sup> ~~They~~ details are the midwives while the composer is in birth-pains. They know ~~consciously~~ consciously what to do, they identify themselves with the emotions of the composer but always keeping a cool head. When I have been asked to write program notes about my 3. symphony, I evaded all technical explanations, simply asking <sup>ing</sup> the listener to let the music sink into him, helping with a few directions and hoping that later on he might be interested to learn more about the musical - intellectual processes in the work. Then of course, his listening enjoyment will be much greater. I do not say that it is impossible to write out technical program notes. I just didn't dare to bother the thousand of concert-goers with my intellectual labours, but would love to sit with my students in reproducing verbal - analytically the whole work.

3. ~~To this I can answer very short: no.~~ In case of my 3. symphony ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> answer ~~very short~~; no. In case of compositions with words, an extra-musical statement is not only unavoidable but also intended.
4. I regard this question as perfectly legitimate in ~~our~~ our time, when the concepts of "national" and "international" are fighting each other for "predominance". A true artist can never divide his soul between those two concepts. He ~~is~~ <sup>is always</sup> "national" as keeper of the traditions of his forefathers, as keeper of the ethic values of the society he lives with, more earthly spoken, as part of the landscape of ~~his~~ his homeland. He is "international" as bearer of messages to mankind generally, free of boundaries drawn by vested interests. As an example: the "Dobran" by Smetana is much more than the limited geography of this ~~river~~ river.
5. ~~Because of political developments, the picture of Israel is very blurred nowadays.~~ Would I have used Israel as folk song-melodies in my composition, the national label could easily be recognized. As this is not the case, I wonder how many listeners are able to find the Israel content in my symphony, which, no doubt, is present.
6. I regard any of my compositions as an opera in itself. Either ~~to~~ completely abstracted from dramatic action with words, from stage and all his symptoms, so to say purely instrumental music, or anything in between, songs, cantatas, etc. <sup>up to</sup> ~~and~~ a fullfledged opera on stage. Shure enough, the chosen frame creates his own conditions, but common to all of them is the musical-dramatic content.

7. The conductor Zubin Mehta asked me to write a new orchestral work for the Europe-Festival tour 1979 of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, which I did with the greatest pleasure - at least to myself.
8. It has been ~~often~~ forgotten, that Bart already wrote "Symfonies", meaning by this title, the amalgamation between melodic lines and harmonic progressions. Later on the term "Symphony" became the household-word for classical architecture, identical with the sonata-form. Today, by using the term "Symphony" we restore the original meaning, that means the equal participation of all musical elements in the evolution of a composition. I prefer this neutral term from many of the phony terms, mostly borrowed from either science or super-romantic poetry.
9. There is quite a lot of virtuosity involved, because I knew the degree of <sup>potential ability</sup> ~~power~~ of our orchestra and ~~the~~ <sup>its</sup> conductor. I took it as a challenge for firing my imagination.
10. With this question we come around the circle to your first question. The nihilistic approach of many ~~the~~ trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century music was based on the principle of disconnecting the composer from any near or far past. ~~Disconnection~~ Conscious disconnection is the result of fear, of uncertainty. It was meant to push the composer towards originality by *tour de force*. More and more this path seems to be abandoned today. Reviving traditions ~~is~~ needs first of all to clean it from all petrified layers, to come to the essentials and then again connecting the life-line to our days.

This then will be a conservative revolution, which  
somehow must exist already in my work.