

The composer writes about his SYMPHONY NO. 2

"My second symphony is written in one part. Here, the term "Symphony" does not mean a piece, build up in the classical sonata-form, but means a "Symphony" as the word says: a combination of sounds, The law of the language is the 12th tone-row. This organisation gives the basic material for melodic sequences, time-sequences which we call rhythm and sound-combinations which fulfill the function of harmony. The piece starts with a gradual development of sound which finally reaches a combination of all 12 tones simultaneously. This part is repeated twice with variations in orchestration. Between these pillars of the building melodic and rhythmic episodes are interwoven, so that a simple and clear structure holds all parts together. "

Josef Tal's second symphony was composed in 1960 on commission from the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. It is characterized by great sweeping drive, strength and internal logic. It is not a symphony in the usual classical sense that refers to a defined form. It is a symphony in the original meaning of the word: a combination of sounds.

In a conversation with the composer, Josef Tal added the following explanatory remarks:

"A new approach demands a new conception in musical thought, which in this work has many elements in common with 12-tone technique.

"The work is written in one movement. In order to obtain the most pliable organization of events, the following formal structure is followed: there is a main group, which in the course of the work is twice

repeated in varied versions. Between these, there are different episodes, which are in contrast to what preceded, and they pave the way for what follows.

"There is no real theme in the beginning. Instead, minor motifs are gradually assembled until maximal density and strength are reached, when all twelve notes are represented. This is followed by a separation into different elements, containing a minimum of transparent figures. The episodes which follow are in the same vein, based either upon linear, melodic formulation or, as in the last episode, upon strong rhythmic patterns. The work comes to its climax in the last episode, in which all the previously heard elements participate. After this, there is a more subdued atmosphere and, towards the conclusion, the full 12-tone-row is heard in a melodic presentation."

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