

## EDE TERÉNYI IS 80 YEARS OLD. A LIFE SERVING ART, TEACHING AND THE MUSICAL SCIENCES

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**SUMMARY.** Author of several hundred musical works, Ede Terényi (b. 1935) is a weighty and original personality within the cultural life of Transylvania. Composing did not mean to him merely a process of artistic creation based on incidental mathematical formulas. His entire being is continuously living within and through music. Music is the meaning of his life, his motivation for existence. He is a man with great sensitivity who lets himself be inspired by a word, an image, a gesture, a verse or a wonderful piece of music he has just heard. His works have been created by spontaneous inspiration, on the one hand and by a steady, conscious work on fine tuning his music, everything that belongs to the so called craftsmanship in composing, on the other.

**Keywords:** Ede Terényi 80, mono operas, art, teaching, musicology.

Ede Terényi's<sup>2</sup> compositions form a wide range as far as genre is concerned, from solo pieces to instrumental concerts, from songs to operas, from pieces of chamber music to ample symphonies.

The titles of his works usually suggest the main idea of the piece; they are not abstract and mysterious. They express and synthesize the expressive content of the piece, they are relevant and they guide the reception process of the listener.

*Here is a title for example: "Aranyág" ("Golden Spring") and I quote the author: NOMEN EST OMEN goes the Latin saying and its meaning is valid also for musical pieces. I will express myself in this*



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<sup>2</sup> Foto source: <http://ede-terenyi.blogspot.ro/>

matter applying a loose translation: the title of a musical piece is also its **destiny**. Through the decades it became a conviction of mine the idea that the title is not a mere combination of words meant to guide the listener, not just a direct reference to a possible programme of the musical process, but far more than that. The title is a kernel of energy, a blessed source of power emanating to the musical atmosphere of the entire piece. Therefore I avoided using abstract titles so fashionable in the '60s and '70s of the last century. "Aranyág" is such a title. The piece bearing this title is the musical version of a tree called Maggiociondolo (and in Hungarian "golden rain" or "golden branch"), the first of the wonderful spring flowers. I was born when spring was settling in (on March 12th) so it was easy for me to identify with rejuvenation - or in other words - with renewal of nature and man."

E.g. 1

I. INTRODUZIONE  
 I. Adagio molto ♩ = 60

Cemb.  
 Perc. II 15\*  
 Jazz improv.  
 Ch.

Tam-tam Trgl. *sf* Piatto *sf* Tam-tam *sf*

*mf* feroce

arp. sempre simile  
*p* *rit.*

Cemb.  
 VII.  
 VIa.  
 VIc.  
 Perc. II

*p* *espr.* *legato* *sf* *sf*

*p* *espr.* *legato* *p* *espr.* *legato* *p* *espr.* *legato* *mp* *mf*

Ede Terényi: *Golden Spring*, Introduzione, p. 1

Submerging in the atmosphere of some of the composer predecessors he used to dedicate many of his works to the inspiring composer as a *Homage* to the masters of musical arts. So he works with subtitles such as "*Haendel Rhapsody*", "*Purcell Epitaph*", "*Vivaldiana*", "*Bernstein Variations*", "*Parade - Hommage à Eric Satie*", "*Gershwin Serenade*". The *Blues*-like introduction of the latter almost teleports us into Gershwin's bitter-exotic world.

As the author puts it:

*"In the course of my life I encountered many musical works that evoked my unreserved admiration for the piece and its author. I was always greatly enthusiastic about paying my respects to these pieces and their authors, these wonderful creations that managed to deeply fascinate me to honour with a musical work that I composed. This is an encounter in the world of music, the most proximate artistic reception, some kind of a mirror of the musical works my psyche considers important. Gershwin has a special place within this process of musical admiration. I am especially fascinated by his ease and elegance of expression and the creativity of his music."*

When I asked the author which is his favourite musical genre, Ede Terényi replied without a moment's hesitation: **the opera**. Being in fact a dramatic spirit, the composer has created a solid complex of works in this genre by composing an entire series of **mono operas** in the 1980s: „*Mephistofaust*“, „*Mahabharata*“, „*Les fêtes d'Ulysse*“, „*La Divina Commedia*“, „*Amor Sanctus*“, „*Kalevala*“, „*New Adam*“, „*Nomad Songs*“, „*Japan's flowers*“, „*Behind of Silence*“, and other pieces.

Why **mono operas**?, I asked the author:

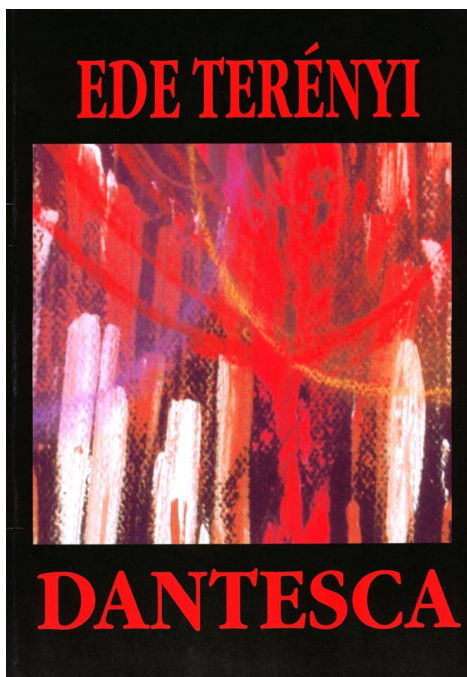
*"I compose mono operas, since there are already enough stereo operas. And by stereo I mean that the dramatic plot is expressed by several characters, sometimes by too many characters. In the 20th century the evolution of the opera shows a tendency to lessen the number of characters. Yet the role and importance of the narrator is increasing through the content and through the structure of the pluralistic artistic role. In the case of the characters the decreasing tendency goes to the point where only one character remains. See: Schönberg – 'Erwartung', Poulenc – 'The human voice' and other works. At the moment mono operas are very fashionable. Many pieces belonging to this genre can be found on the Internet. I consider theatrical representation of several characters by one narrator a sensational accomplishment considering that each of these characters has different traits, a specific voice, movement and mimic of their own and in the meantime the narrator needs to keep the integrity of his own artistic personality as well."*



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*„But already my desire and my will  
were being turned like a wheel, all at one speed,  
by the Love which moves the sun and the other stars.”<sup>3</sup>*

E.g. 3



Ede Terényi: *Dantesca*, Ed. Echinox, Cluj, 2004.

I continue with my questions: Master, as an eternal lover of arts do you believe love for the arts can "move the sun and the other stars."?

Mr. Terényi smiles as he answers:

*"The kind of love Dante expressed has long started to fade out of modern music. Music should be given back its true meaning, namely to embrace humanity within the joy and happiness of love. This is the idea I wished to express in the "Vivaldiana", this cathartic work of mine. I composed it in 1983 and it is most meaningful, since it meant a change of direction for me as an artist, I could say it is the golden section of my evolution as a composer. This piece is a transition from a rational understanding of the world to loving everything that moves the sun and the other stars."*

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<sup>3</sup> Dante, *Divine Comedy* Translation by C.H. Sisson.

Ede Terényi worked as a **teacher** from 1958 to 2012 at the „Gheorghe Dima” Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca teaching in the course of the years several subjects of musical technique such as: counterpoint, harmony, composing, musicology, choral transcription, musical dramaturgy. He initiated in the 1990s the establishment of the musical dramaturgy department. I myself studied musicology with him as the specialist teacher and besides musical studies he was also my teacher in harmony. I also earned my bachelors degree, my master’s degree and my PhD and wrote my dissertation under his guidance. Later I worked under his supervision as a young assistant teacher in the distance learning classes of the Music Academy, teaching counterpoint, choral transcription and musical dramaturgy. In all we have worked together for 17 years (from 1990 to 2007). Ede Terényi was a complexly trained teacher. He aimed to develop specialized knowledge of his students through practice. He familiarized students with the matter of his subjects in such a manner that one could hardly notice that he was teaching. It was only at the end of the semester when one reread one’s course that one noticed that he/she already know this. Whatever Kahlil Gibran wrote on teaching in his poem, *“The Prophet”* is perfectly true for Ede Terényi. I quote:

*“The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom, but rather of his faith and his lovingness.*

*If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.”<sup>4</sup>*

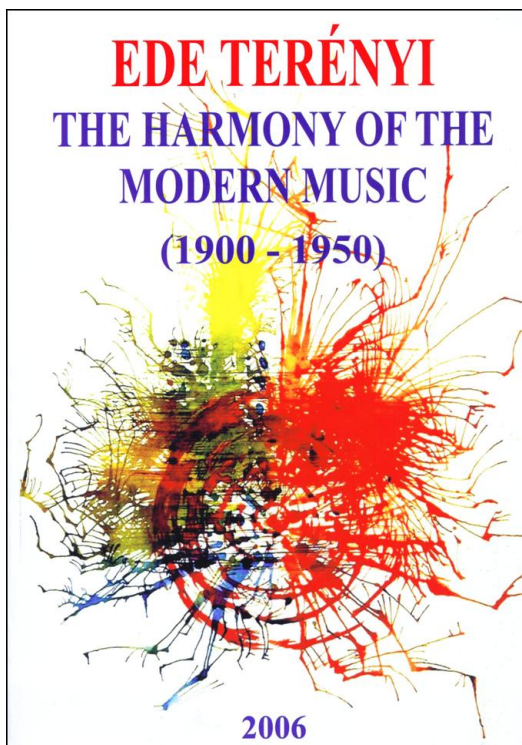
One could discuss with Ede Terényi about all kinds of musical and other topics, for he did not teach his students only to be musicians, but also humans. He found out and knew the character and weakness of all his students. He gave me several of his books as a gift and in the dedication of one of them he wrote to me: *“To Gabi as a Christmas and New Year gift with thanks and love. I wish you a wonderful life, a successful career and a disciplined self-management. Then you will succeed! Love, Ede Terényi, 2001 Cluj-Napoca, 29th November - in a snowy November.”* I often take off his book from the bookshelf, for I am since more or less working on the disciplined self-management (as a Lion and a Fire horse). I am sure that in the same manner he gave all his other students their personalized dedication. As a teacher he had a calm and pleasant character, he always had time to listen to his students and to share with them his experienced view on their problems. There are many who think of him often and with love and who did not forget him until this very day. As a person he was always polite and patient with his colleagues, I always saw him to be a true *gentleman*.

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<sup>4</sup> Gibran, Kahlil, *A Próféta. The Prophet*, Édesvíz Kiadó, Budapest, 1998, p. 154.

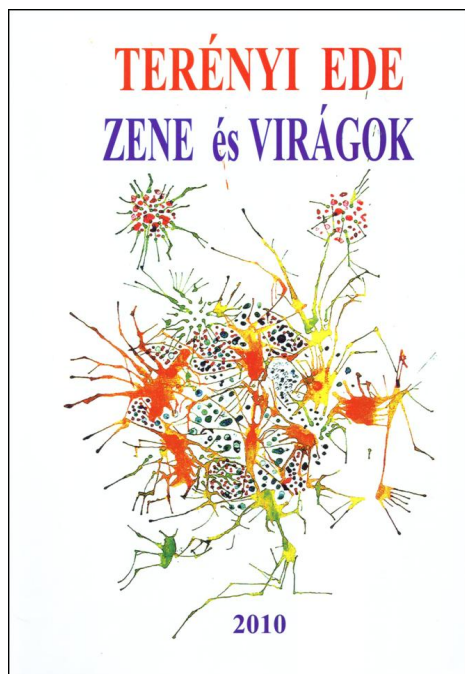
Ede Terényi, the **musicologist** was researching the system of modern harmony and he summed up his work of more than 25 years in the musicology book entitled "*The Harmony of Modern Music*".

E.g. 4

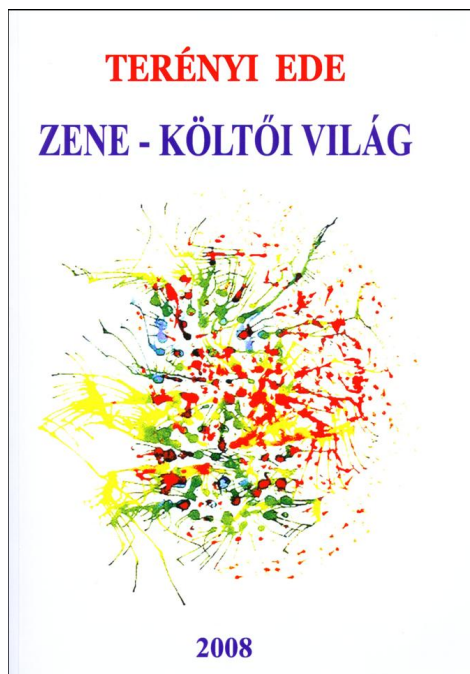


**Ede Terényi: *The Harmony of the Modern Music (1900-1950)*,  
Ed. Grafycolor, Cluj, 2006.**

His musical studies published along the years deal with this topic as well. His biographical volumes on Hungarian composers of the 20th century (Sándor Veress, László Lajtha, Sándor Balassa) are also important ones. Another thing worthy of mentioning is his publicistic work, his musical column first in the *Utunk* weekly paper, then in the *Helikon* paper. His articles are available also in the archives of the websites of these papers, but they have been summoned also in volumes such as "*Will Music Remain Music?*", "*Paramusicology*", "*Music of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*", "*Music and Poetic World*" and "*Music and Flowers*" - the latter being the volume in which his articles have been published illustrated with his own graphical paintings.



**Ede Terényi: Zene és Virágok,**  
Ed. Grafycolor, 2010.



**Ede Terényi: Zene – Költői világ,**  
Ed. Grafycolor, 2008.

**His graphics and paintings** are unique, the spontaneity of the author appears in them coloured ingeniously and in an original manner by his phantasy, all this in rich colour combinations and suggestive, balanced spatial organization. The theme of the paintings is expressive also on a spiritual level and their meditative and attention capturing capacity is quite remarkable. View for the graphics:  
(<http://ede-terenyi.blogspot.ro/p/graphics.html>).

*Translated from Hungarian by: Borbély Bartalis Zsuzsa*



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