

## TERÉNYI EDE: *OLD TRANSYLVANIAN PSALMS* FOR MIXED CHOIR. HARMONIC COLOUR EFFECTS PERMEATING THE STRUCTURE. 1. *PSALM-SONGS*

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**SUMMARY.** Ede Terényi (1935-2020) was a composer of deeply religious sentiments. In his works of various genres, he often drew inspiration from religious themes, religious texts, or church hymns, regardless of the type of religion to which they were the lyrics or songs. This is also the case with his works for mixed choir, where almost half the volume has a religious theme. In it, the *Old Transylvanian Psalms* appear at the very top. It contains two choral works: 1. *Psalm-songs* and 2. *Old Supplication*. My present study focuses on the analysis of the first choral work, from a tonal and harmonic point of view, following the formal structure. For dramaturgical reasons, the text of the chorus is also set in parallel with the musical material.

**Keywords:** Terényi Ede, mixed choirs, Old Transylvanian Psalms, Psalm-songs, harmony, tonality, formal structure, dramaturgy

In 1990, Ede Terényi composed Psalm 1 for mixed choir and tam-tam percussion.

The structure of the work is strophic, rounded, in the form of a garland. The phrasing is flexible, with 3-7 bars, adapting to the text. The size of the form sections is also flexible, with single, double, or tripodic (3-phase) musical stanzas in 16, 11, 10, 11, 12 beat units. At the end of each stanza, there is a shorter extension, 2-4 bars, in which the composer either repeats the text of the last phrase, or a part of it, or uses new text. The final form part (**Av1**) brings back the original text of the praise as a rounding off, but with different musical material.

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The choral work unfolds in the following formal scheme:

**Table 1**

Adagio $\text{♩} = 60$				Più mosso $\text{♩} = 84$
<b>A</b>	<b>extension</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>extension</b>	<b>C</b>
1-16. measures	17-19. m.	20-30.	31-34.	35-44.
4+4+5+3 m.	3 m.	4+7 m.	4 m.	6+4 m.
<b>16 m.</b>	<b>3 m.</b>	<b>11 m.</b>	<b>4 m.</b>	<b>10 m.</b>

				Tempo I.	
<b>extension</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>extension</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Av1</b>	<b>Codetta</b>
44-46.	46-56.	57-59.	60.	61-72.	73-74.
2 m.	4+4+3 m.	3 m.	1 m.	4+3+5 m.	2 m.
<b>2 m.</b>	<b>11 m.</b>	<b>3 m.</b>	<b>1 m.</b>	<b>12 m.</b>	<b>2 m.</b>

1 m. overlaps 1 m.

The melody of the work is taken from the praises of the 1744 *Book of Songs of Cluj* – praise 280 on page 436.

In form A, the composer takes over the melody and the text of the melody in its entirety:

„Why are you grieving, O my heart!  
You're breaking yourself like that, yes,  
Here, for the 'physical good?  
Just trust in the Lord God,  
Who reigns in Heaven”<sup>2</sup>

Extension: „Who reigns in Heaven”.

<sup>2</sup> The Original Text: „Mire bánkodom óh, te én szívem! / Töröd magadat ilyen igen, / Im a'testi jókért? / Bizzál tsak az Úr Istenben, / Ki uralkodik Mennyégben / Ki uralkodik Mennyégben”.

E.g. 1.

280. M A S.

**M**ire bánkodom, óh te én szívem!  
Töröd magadat ilyen igen,  
Im' a' testi jókért?  
Bízzál csak az Úr Istenben,  
Ki uralkodik Mennyégben.

2

1744 *Book of Songs of Cluj* – praise 280 on page 436.

It is characterized by harmonically unison passages, as well as fourths and fifths of perfect tones (chords without thirds) and a succession of two functions, often S – D, then S – T; there are also symmetrical harmonic structures, see for example bars 11-13 – the composer builds the G-As-Bb-C around a sustained note in D – and Bb-As-G backwards, then concludes on a clear F-C-F.

E.g. 2

11

Biz - zál tsak az Úr Is - ten - ben,  
jó - - - kért?  
Biz - zál tsak az Úr Is - ten - ben,

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This C-centred series is described in degrees as follows:

natural F-minor: II VI<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> IV VI<sub>2</sub> | IV VI<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> II | I  
S T S T S T S T

Bars 14-16 bring the alternation of S-D features in unison, ending on a Tonic. The Extension continues the melody in unison in soprano and tenor. Here he starts from Tonic and describes an authentic functional circle: T-S-D-T (I-IV-V-VI), and from there, emphasizing all three faces of the Dominant Function (degrees VII, V, III), he returns to Tonic via Subdominant. This is already a plagal functional series: T – D – D – D – D – S – T.

The entire **A** form is in piano and the tempo is a steady *Adagio*.

The 280th Praise has 13 verses in total. However, the composer does not set the other verses to music. He notes at the beginning of the work, „*Thinking of Psalm 42...*”. In form parts B-C-D he sets to music verses 6, 3 and 4 of Psalm 42 from the Bible. The composer takes the text from the Reformed Bible published by the publisher János Kálvin, which is available in the Arcanum database.

Form **B** is a unit of 11 bars (4+7 bars) – see bars 20-30. Lyrics: ‘*Why are you discouraged, my soul, why are you troubled in me? Trust in God, for I will yet give thanks to him for his salvation.*’<sup>3</sup>

**E.g. 3**

<sup>3</sup> Original Text: „*Miért csüggedsz el, lelkem, miért háborogsz bennem? Bizzál Istenben, mert még hálát adok neki az ő szabadításáért!*”

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poco rit. *p*

mert még há - lát a - dok ne - ki az ő sza - ba - dí - tá - sá - ért!  
há - lát a - dok az ő sza - ba - dí - tá - sá - ért!  
há - lát a - dok az ő sza - ba - dí - tá - sá - ért!  
há - lát a - dok az ő sza - ba - dí - tá - sá - ért!

**Terényi Ede: 1. Psalm-songs, measures 16-30., Adagio  $\text{♩} = 60$**

Its structure is entirely homophonic. The composer composes the opening two bars of the formal part in *D flat major*, where he holds out the root chord of degree I as a pedal, in the lower three voices, until the last whole tone (in bar 21). It does all this in fifths doubling, with a major chord in root position, *piano* dynamics, and *poco ritenuto* tempo.

From bar 22 onwards, the composer composes the words “why are you bothering me?” in *B-flat* pedal, in forte. Bifunctionality is created here, with the D T D S T functions played in sequence on a *B* I.-st degree tonic pedal. Then, in bars 24-25, it opens through degree IV to an independent degree VI 6/4 chord, then stops on a degree V dominant chord. Then, in bar 26, the composer re-establishes a bifunctionality on pedal B, and from here he expands the chords of the final bars of the form. The B form ends with a Picardy third in B minor I. degree.

After the B form *subito ff*, then *pp* and *ff* again, in four-bar augmentations, the composer continues to borrow the major third of the I.-st degree chord, the D note, from the homonymous B flat major. There is a continuous T – S alternation in these few beats.

The text for Form C is Psalm 42:2, which reads, „My soul thirtieth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”<sup>4</sup> – see bars 35-46.

<sup>4</sup> King James Version (KJV) - 1611 - GetFreeBibles.com

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E.g. 4

31 *a tempo* *ff* *pp* *ff* *molto* *p* *Più mosso*  $\text{♩} = 84$

Biz - zál Is - ten - ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban! Is - ten u - tán

Biz - zál Is - ten - ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban! Is - ten

Biz - zál Is - ten - ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban!

Biz - zál Is - ten - ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban!

36 *f* *f* *p cresc.* *f*

szom-ja - zik lel - kem, az é - lő Is - ten u - tán:

u - tán szom-ja - zik lel - kem, az é - lő Is - ten u - tán:

Is - ten u - tán szom-ja - zik lel - kem, az é - lő Is - ten u - tán:

41 *f* *f* *f* *f*

Mi - kor me - he - tek el, hogy meg - je - len - jek Is - ten e - lött, Is -

Mi - kor me - he - tek el, hogy meg - je - len - jek Is - ten e - lött, Is -

Mi - kor me - he - tek el, hogy meg - je - len - jek Is - ten e -

Mi - kor me - he - tek el, hogy meg - je - len - jek Is - ten e -

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ten e - lótt? Köny-nyemlett

ten e - lótt?

lótt? Is - ten e - lótt?

lótt? Is - ten e - lótt?

*p*

**Terényi Ede: 1. Psalm-songs, measures 31-46.**

In the opening 6-bar phrase, or bars 35-40, the composer writes the melody in natural *C minor*, which is a polyphonic upward sweep. The soprano sings first, then after half a bar the alto, and after another half bar the tenor. The bass is only heard in the second phrase, bar 41, with the second imitated melody. Returning to the beginning of Form C, the text “*My soul thirsteth for God*”, the author asks for a faster tempo, *Piú mosso* ♩ = 84. The ascending melody reaches its climax here, in the soprano, at bar 36, on the F5 note. Likewise, while in the opening one and a half bars of the form (first half of bars 35-36) he alternates subdominant and dominant, from the second half of bar 36, for 4.5 bars, until the end of the phrase he alternates only tonic (T) and dominant (D). In fact, at the end of the phrase, in bars 39-40, he brings the harmonic minor, making the sound distinctly tonal. In a work that is almost entirely modal in tone (see, he’s only used natural minor keys so far), these few bars sound like they’re saying, “*Tonality is Lord!*”

In the second phrase of the formal section, between bars 41-44, the natural minor returns, but with a raised VI, and at the same time there are a striking number of seventh and ninth chords. In fact, there is a symmetrical model chord in the second beat of measure 43: F – A – E flat – G (4 + 6 + 4 minor second), or 4-6-4 model. The sound here oscillates between Dominant and Subdominant, but on one occasion, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of bar 42, the tonic appears. This phrase is also polyphonic, with 2+2 soprano alto and tenor bass pairs grouping the voices.

The extension at bars 44-45 T-S-T establishes a simple plagal cadence, but with a Picardy third.

Form D sets to music the 4th verse of Psalm 42. Its text is: *"My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me. Where is thy God?"*<sup>5</sup> (Where is thy God? - text repeated in the extension).

E.g. 5

45

ten e - lőit? Köny-nyemlett ke - nye - rem éj - jel és nap - pal,  
 ten e - lőit? éj - jel és nap - pal,  
 löit? Is - ten e - lőit? Köny-nyem lett ke - nye - rem nap - pal  
 löit? Is - ten e - lőit? Köny-nyem lett ke - nye - rem nap - pal,

50

mert e - gész nap ezt mon-do - gat - ják ne - kem: Hol van a  
 ezt mon-do - gat - ják: Hol van a  
 ezt mon-do - gat - ják: Hol van a  
 mert e - gész nap ezt mon-do - gat - ják: Hol - van a

55

te Is - te - ned? Hol van a te Is - te - ned?  
 te Is - te - ned? Hol van a te Is - te - ned?  
 te Is - te - ned? Hol van a te Is - te - ned?  
 te Is - te - ned? Hol van a te Is - te - ned?

**Terényi Ede: 1. Psalm-songs, measures 45-59.**

<sup>5</sup> The Holy Bible, King James Version, in: King James Version (KJV) - 1611 - GetFreeBibles.com



The two four-beat phrases are polyphonic, while the 3rd, final phrase is homophonic. In the first phrase (bars 46-49) there are S - TB - A solo entrances, while in the second phrase the order of entry is S - B - A - T. Except for the alto, the remaining voices sing the same melody in fourths, fifths or even octaves.

The dynamics increase gradually. The first phrase (bars 46-49) is in *piano*, the second (bars 50-53) in *mezzoforte*, and the third, homophonic phrase, with the text "Where is thy God?", in *forte*. The composer writes the first two phrases in natural *F minor*. In the third phrase, it raises the VI degree of this, lowers the II degree, and thus modulates into melodic *E-flat minor*. While in the opening two phrases both the T-S and D functions were present, in the closing phrase and the extension, in *E-flat minor*, only the D and T alternate. In the extension, the dynamics return to *subito piano*, and the question "Where is thy God?" is repeated after the *forte*.

The final **Av1** form introduces the tam-tam as a new feature, and in a footnote to the one-bar introduction (see bar 60), the composer notes: „The tam-tam sounds like a bell chime with low music”. In the **Av1** form, where the composer returns to the original text (see parallel **A** form), the tam-tam reinforces the one bar of introduction and the final whole notes of the phrases. All four voices are sung in *F major*, in *unison*, in continuous *pianissimo*, the varied melody of the first form part, in *tempo primo*. Only in the two bars of the *codetta* at the end of the choral work does Ede Terényi color the *F major* sound with a lowered VII-th degree, *E-flat*, which in turn ends with an *F major* 1st degree chord and a *tam-tam* conga in *ppp* dynamics, sustained by a *fermata* (see example 6).

### E.g. 6

Tempo I  
*pp*

60

Mi - re bán - kó - dol óh te én szí - vem,  
*pp*

Mi - re bán - kó - dol óh te én szí - vem,  
*pp*

Mi - re bán - kó - dol óh te én szí - vem,  
*pp*

Tam-tam \*)  
*p*

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Tö - rőd ma - ga - dat i - lyen i - gen, Bíz - zál tsak az Úr Is - ten -  
 Tö - rőd ma - ga - dat i - lyen i - gen, Bíz - zál tsak az Úr Is - ten -  
 Tö - rőd ma - ga - dat i - lyen i - gen, Bíz - zál tsak az Úr Is - ten -  
 Tö - rőd ma - ga - dat i - lyen i - gen, Bíz - zál tsak az Úr Is - ten -

70

ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban. A - - men.  
 ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban. A - - men.  
 ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban. A - - men.  
 ben, sza - ba - dí - tónk - ban. A - - men.

<sup>\*)</sup>A Tam-tam hangjai mélyzengésű harangszót idéznek. (4'30'' - 5'10'')

**Terényi Ede: 1. Psalm-songs, measures 60-74.**

Ede Terényi once expressed his thoughts on the religious mixed choral works he had composed in a conversation. I quote these few sentences at the end:

*"Emphasising the drama and structure of the works was important. I have tried to build cathedrals in the footsteps of the old masters, in a new world where going to church is more of a tourist experience than a place of spiritual contemplation, a place of self-reflection. I would like these cathedrals of sound to be heard and performed as if they were being played in a church, in the soul-cleansing silence of devotion".<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> Coca Gabriela. „Terényi Ede kórusművészete (The Choral Art of Ede Terényi)”, in: *Parlando, zenepedagógiai folyóirat (Parlando, Music Education Journal)*, 2018/4. TERÉNYI EDE KÓRUSMŰVÉSZETE

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