

## **PIANO GAMES BY EDUARD TERÉNYI, A LANDMARK AMONG THE SEMEIOGRAPHIC INNOVATIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>**

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**SUMMARY.** The piano creation of the composer Eduard Terényi sums up the composing experiences that are derived from successive conceptual accumulations that are enlisted in the complex process of the transformations and makings of the artistic language of the twentieth century music. The novelty of his musical works comes in this way through a total reviewing of the way of organizing of the sonorous substance where frequently the sonorous parameters seems to be freed by the rigours of the traditional conventions. The innovative attitude both in a semi graphic area and also into the depths of the sonorous view prove that the author prefigures a composing trajectory from the modernism and not from the tradition that explains why the tools that he uses to operate on are, in many respects a surprise.

**Keywords:** piano, semeiography, sonorous parameters, effects, improvisation

Eduárd Terényi's compositions for piano represent a landmark among the compositions in Transylvania, the originality of the solutions configuring a new road for the 20th century local piano education. The work *Piano games* stand out because of the author's innovative attitude with respect to the sound, the timbre, as well as from the semeiographic point of view. Comprising a number of twenty works which can also be performed individually, the cycle contains the following piano miniatures: *Koppantások; Dallam Elő-És Utójátékkal; Scherzo Közjátékkal; Czerny-Etűd; Rondo Balkézre; Fehér- Fekete; À la Stravinski; Kontraszt; Improvvisazione; Cluster-Melódia; Capriccio Jobbkézre, Népdal; Kétszólamú Invenió; Hommage á Chopin; Staccato e tenuto; ... Et très expressif; Replika; Lasciar vibrare... and Clocks; Choral.*

The novelty of his musical works comes through a total reviewing of the way of organizing of the sonorous substance where frequently the sonorous parameters seem to be freed by the rigours of the traditional conventions. The innovative attitude both in a semi graphic area and also into the depths of the

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sonorous view prove that the author prefigures a composing trajectory from the modernism and not from the tradition that explains why the tools that he uses to operate on are, in many respects a surprise. If we analyze the semeiographic procedures that can be found in the creation *Piano Plays* of Eduárd Terényi, we realize that their diversity was determined greatly, by the complexity of the composing language that was marked by the intervention of certain techniques as:

- The enlargement of the sonorous domain;
- The liberty of improvising that is given to the player;
- The inclusion of some visual notions inside the music field.

Starting with the twentieth century, the assembly of the expressive means of expressing will meet an obvious diversification through the approach of some original solutions that are frequently individualized. The composer will try some differentiations of the basic sonorities relying on the type of the emission of the sound by using (apart the details that regards the techniques of using of the instrument), varied indications that directly regard the instrumental colour: *metallic piano sonority* (Eduard Terényi – *Capriccio for the Left Hand*). In a short time, the dynamic differentiations, the agogic fluctuations, the enriched timbre events, all the technical procedures that are practiced before did not satisfy the necessities of renewal of the musical language.

The keypad represents the central development area of the musical discourse although *the touché* stops representing the same notion as it meant the preceding epochs (when the worry of obtaining some agreeable sonorities was most important). The toughness and the roughness of the attack correspond sometimes entirely to the new aesthetic category where the composers pretend the player to play a large range of touché, which vary some of the extreme nuances. In the *Piano Plays* the composer Eduard Terényi, require some indications that propose varied procedures in the way of attack of the keypad. Some sounds that are pressed silent, in such a way as the little hammers do not touch the chords, to be played as a percussion with the fingers highly risen; some rows of the chords with a clenched position of the fingers (*À la Stravinski*) and so on.

The operation of the piano on all its composing parts both on the keyboard and in the interior and its exterior, constituted a step in the diversification of the musical timbre. It is not by chance that, from the point of view of the twentieth century composers, the piano represents an entirely sonorous concept. The piano is capable, through its total exploitation, to make multiple sonorities and some similar effects to the surrounding sonorous area.

Original solutions in the piano actions can be contemplated to be executed in both the interior and the exterior of the instrument in the *Piano Plays* creation. For example, *martellato* (regarded as an indication to accentuate the staccato) is gained at the piano through a wanted jerky detachment of the

sounds that were attacked in forte. In *A la Stravinsky*, the composer pretends “a martellato without the pressing of the sound” or he delimits the sonorities of the effect through different ways of attack.

In *Pocnituri (Cracking Noises)* of the cycle *Piano Games*, it is noted: “*martellato through the hitting of the keys with the tip of the fingers, sf had to be dozed in such a way as through a faint hit of the chords by the little hammer, the chords should resonate, so that, with the help of the pedal it is formed from the noise that is made by the chords*” or “*martellato through the hitting of the keys with the four knuckles (2-5)*”

The parts from the exterior of the piano are tackled in this execution in those moments when there has to be a creation of some close sonority to the noise or the making of some effects of the same type (meanwhile, they were replaced by electro-acoustic devices). In this way, there can be hit (from left to right or from up to down and the other way round), slammed down, closed, or opened (by parts of the human body or intermediate tools) the following exterior parts of the instrument:

The wood of the end of the keyboard:

- An action of the gum, felt on the wood of the end of the keyboard: - *Capriccio for the Left Hand*;
- Some noises that have to be made by the wood at the end of the keyboard: - *Capriccio for the Left Hand*;

The lid of the keyboard:

- Accompaniment on the lid of the piano, with a thin rod: - *Capriccio for the Left Hand*;

The great lid of the piano:

- *Gliss.* on the chords that are stopped on the wooden lid of the piano: - *Lasciar vibrare*;

The lateral parts of the piano (straight or undulated)

Near the piano: *Rondo for the Left Hand*.

There are fragments or even entire musical works that are conceived on these parts, without using the keyboard, in these situations it is demonstrated that there is a tendency for the composer to treat his piano as a percussion instrument. For example, in *Scherzo with Intermezzo*, Eduard Terényi, makes a note under the title of “*indications for the actions during the intermezzo*” the following operations of usage of the lid that comes on the keyboard:

By using a sudden movement, the lid that covers the keyboard must be slammed down;

- The player must lean on his elbows on the lid that covers the keyboard;
- By making a slow, cautious, and uncertain movement, the player must open the lid.

Regarding the fixation of the **sonorous parameters** (heights, duration, intensity), from a semeiographic point of view, we can notice some intentions of approximation in the positioning of the signs or even by the constitution of some *ad libitum* lines of these parameters. There are stipulated the following distinctive signs for:

**Ex. 1**



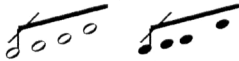
- The sounds with a determined height, which can also be replaced by another one as you please: *À la Stravinsky;*

**Ex. 2**



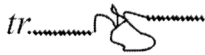
- Approximate pitched on white and black keys: *Alb negru (White black);*

**Ex. 3**



- Ad libitum pitches on white and black keys: *A Contrast;*

**Ex. 4**



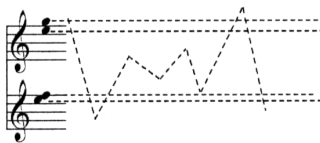
- A trill made of the ad libitum sounds: *Two inventions;*

**Ex. 5**



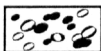
- Some pitches that can be chosen among some limits: *A Contrast;*

**Ex. 6**



- The sounds that are suggested by using some lines, bands, points, circles, some perch of the musical note without ends or through the ascendant or descendant sense of some graphic contours: ... *And Clocks;*

**Ex. 7**



- Some pitches that can be chosen, that is made by using little stones or some glass shards: *A Melody of Clusters.*

In the modality sphere of the acting, close to the usual legato or non-legato we came across some symbols of the complex ways of representation of the sounds. These sounds are often found in some combination with the pedal

whereas their making needs a real work of fore elaboration and it will generate the effects of the timbre that do not exist in the traditional music. Among these, we can remind of:

### Ex. 8



- Martellato that is obtained by hitting of the keys with the tip of the fingers or with the four knuckles (2-5): *Pocnituri* (*Cracking Noises*).

There can be remarked the combination that is announced by the author in ***Staccato e tenuto***, where, for the pitches and the *ad libitum* durations there are used different cassettes of different shapes with many trajectories where there are noted precise limits of the tempo and of the intensity: ***veloce*** ← → ***lento: ff*** ← → ***pp***.

The using of the semeiographic procedures that necessitate previous explanations and referrals to the table of contents of the musical work, this will lead to the alienation of the classic (traditional) symbols. The notations that use this type of means present touches with the musical graphics even if they are comprised in other musical works that are presented in a traditional way. This type of score invites the player to moments of spontaneous interpretative decisions, by choosing, as he likes.

With the visualisation of the musical message, the composers of the twentieth century have initiated a multitude of procedures and also in the spheres of other arts (as the picture and the poems) have conceived representations that were most diverse, between these forms of artistic manifestation there are convergences and also parallelisms. The scheme draft of some notation elements lead to the shaping of a new semeiographic system where there were stipulated the symbols that were disposed in the space that were particularly treated from one composer to the other. The representation of the elements that were tied of the spatiality was made through the adding of some terms as up and down (for the indication of the heights) or close remote (for the intensity).

Another dimension that was surprised in the music of the twentieth century aims to **the form** area as the creation of a structure beyond time constituted a desideratum of many of the musical works. In this field, there are born a few ideas, which will generate diverse orientations. Starting from the necessity of an equilibrated and symmetrical disposal of the sonorous object as opposed to an (imaginary) axis, the musical language will converge towards distinct delimitations in time and space of the sonorous events. The music of the twentieth century initially started from a re-discovery of the old principles, for example, the symmetry principle, where the composer are interested in this idea in many directions as the architectonical construction, the language, the dynamics, and so on. However, the series constructions (in the serial music)

rely on the symmetrical sections that allow recurrences or related inversions. The consequence of this phenomenon is in the great number of the musical works which are written in a form of an arc or which has inner sections that have an arc shape where the symmetry constituted a basic principle that is necessary for the equilibrium.

The composer Eduard Terényi in *Study of Czerny* can be enlisted in this tendency of viewing that conceives the sonorous “patterns” (which can be put under multiple repetitions, they can be executed in tempo or a dynamics that is opposed to the one that has already been noted). These patters are connected through a dotted line that corresponds to the necessity of execution in the chronological order that has already been indicated (eventually it has a single intervention of the refrain). We can mention that in the construction of the musical work there are allowed some *ad libitum* approaches of the composing sections.

Ex. 9

Study of Czerny

„ CZERNY ” - ETŪD

The image displays a musical score for "CZERNY" - ETŪD, illustrating a circular structure of sections. The score is enclosed in a large dashed circle. A central section labeled "REFRAIN" is connected to various other sections by lines radiating from a central point. The sections are as follows:

- tranquilla**: marked *p*.
- sonora**: marked *f*.
- pp rapido**: marked *pp*.
- risoluto**: marked *f*.
- pp rapido misterioso**: marked *ppp*.
- REFRAIN**: marked *p con calore*.
- frivido**: marked *f*.
- leggiere**: marked *pp*.
- marcato**: marked *f*.
- secco**: marked *mf*.
- feroce**: marked *ff*.

The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

Having a wish to find new ways of expression, the composers often approached **the open forms** while making their musical works. Through the visual elements or by using the help of the text, they (the composers) will suggest to the players some possibilities of formal articulation of the musical works. We can highlight a few of the constituting solutions of the architectonical structures that imply the improvisatory element.

In *Staccato e tenuto* different geometrical forms are approached (the triangle, the trapeze) whose intersection results in numerous possibilities of combination of the elements that are stipulated in the cassettes that are made in this way. Their form is an open one that is similarly to the other parameters (the pitch, the tempo, and the dynamics) which are unreelied in the limited frames. *Staccato e tenuto* offers a manner of attack between the staccato and the tenuto, between the limits that are stipulated by the tempo (from the *veloce* to *lento*) and by the nuances (*ff-pp*).

Ex. 10

**Staccato e tenuto**

12  
**3.** Fantasia - Model b) *Veloce* ↔ *lento* | as lib.  
*ff* ↔ *pp*  
 senza misura

The image displays a musical score for piano, titled 'Staccato e tenuto'. The score is presented in a complex, multi-staff format with various time signatures and dynamic markings. Overlaid on the musical notation are several large, dashed-line geometric shapes, including triangles and trapezoids, which appear to define specific sections or relationships within the piece. The score includes markings such as 'ff', 'pp', 'veloce', 'lento', and 'senza misura'. The overall layout is intricate, reflecting the 'open form' and 'architectonical structures' mentioned in the text.

Eduard Terényi in his *Improvvisazione* draws the graphic contour of the previous musical play of the cycle *Piano Plays, Cluster-Melody*, where, in the limits of the hourly duration of the portative, they invite the player to recreate the previous page in his own sonorous vision. We can see the graphitisation tendency of the two scores even if the first musical work contains inside the cassettes, some precise execution elements in the filed of the movement (the tempo), and also, it contains some sonorous densities, of the ways of execution and also to the way the pedal is used.

Ex. 11

Cluster-melody

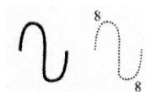
Improvvisation

In the music of the twentieth century, the initiation of some sonorous steps that are complex from the point of view of the execution represented a consequence of the many searches of the timbre diversification. However, they were materialized in different **sonorous effects**, some of them were validated in time, the others were perfected and many of them were given up, these are constituted as individual solutions that result from the preoccupation of the composers to renew the sonorous substance. Since these searches and trials constituted some connection points towards the effects that were complexly formulated in the last decades of the century, we try to reveal some of the reference points in the creation of the composer Eduard Terényi, even if the sonorous experiments were semeiographically fixed through the procedures that have already been consecrated.



- **Some tendencies of exploitation of the extreme sounds** of the keyboard. We can notice this type of aspect in the following musical works: *Rondo for the Left Hand (Piano Plays)*

**Ex. 12**



- The superior and the inferior limit of the registers.

- **Some effects that create metallic sonorities**, that are sharp and they have dense harmonics. These can be obtained by hitting the metallic parts of the piano with the fingers (or different parts of the human body) or by using rods that were made of different materials:

- Dressed in felt or rubber (they produce velvety tones );
- By using pure wood (they produce sharp sonorities);
- That are covered in leather (they produce less sharp tones);
- That are dressed in sponge (they produce an ugly and dry tone).

We can materialize the above-mentioned examples by using some other examples and also by adding the graphical symbols or the corresponding indications as follows:

**Ex. 13**

*Capriccio for the Left Hand*



- hitting with the fist on the chords;

**Ex. 14**



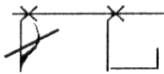
- to rub the metal parts with a percussion brush

-**Some effects produce dry, wooden sonorities** and they send out the tones through their own vibrations of the wooden part of the piano. These effects are made through the action of the player (the direct or the indirect action) on the following parts of the piano: the lid above the piano, the large lid of the piano, the stand, the wood of the end of the keyboard and so on.

From semeiographic point of view, we can see the following graphical enunciations and contours:

**Ex. 15**

*Capriccio for the Left Hand:*



- An accompaniment that can be made by using the fingers or some other objects (the felt, the gum) on the wood at the end of the keyboard;

By gaining of a new space of sonorous exploitation in the musical works for the piano – on the inner chords – this offered the authors an opportunity to create some effects that were specific to the chord instruments as the following: *pizzicato*, *vibrato*, *glissando*, and *flageolet*.

**The vibrato** is the effect that results from the steady fluctuation of the sound in the pitch, in its intensity and its timbre. due to the fact that it is specific to the chords instruments, the effect is translated into the piano field by using some ingenious solutions as follows: through a slow movement of the finger on the chord (an action that is simulated with the emission of the key), an operation where both the hand and the wrist are involved.

As the vibrato is used in the area of the chords, it can also be stimulated through the pinching of the chords.

Eduard Terényi: *Lasciar vibrare*

**Ex. 16**



- A chord vibrated in its own length that is operated with a short pinch.

**The flageolet** is an effect that can be found both to the chord instruments and in the wind instruments technique. This effect consists in the stimulation of the production of the harmonics of a tone and the technical doing differs from one instrument to the other.

Eduard Terényi tried the transposition of this effect in his creation for the piano, too, by adopting different technical solutions. We can remind of some graphical and theoretical enunciations that were consecrated to this effect.

**Ex. 17**

*Rondo for the Left Hand:*



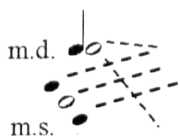
- A flageolet that results from the pressing of the keys without the little hammers touch the chords.



- Martellato without pressing the chords.

**Ex. 18**

*Lasciar vibrare:*



- A flageolet that is made through the dumb pressing of the white and the black keys.

**Ex. 19**

*White-black:*



- A flageolet ad libitum, which results from the dumb pressing of the keys.

**Ex. 20**

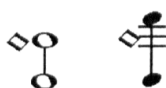
It was estimated that the flageolets generate crystalline, diaphanous sonorities and by their combination with other effects will mark the softening of the characteristic sonorities that are particular to them. In the creation for the piano, we came across the following combinations:

*Piano Plays:*



- A flageolet cluster;

**Ex. 21**



- Some flageolet clusters on white and black keys, in each case they are obtained by pressing the keys without the touching of the chords with the little hammers.

**Ex. 22**



- Press the chords slowly till they reach their end and they are left to resonate.

**Ex. 23**

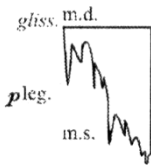
Once upon a time as they were considered in the *beautifying procedures* in the music of the twentieth century, the ornaments justify their existence just through the great reeling speed that was asked by the composers (no matter of the rhythmic-melodically contour that was used), in the detriment of the noblesse and the increased expressivity which their execution demanded in the previous epochs.

The unregulated, abrupt, broken steps that had tones, which were as dissonant as possible, or they were found in the sonorous complex that were comprised in the pedals and they were executed in a maximum possible speed, in fact, all these constitute the main features of the ornaments of the composer Eduard Terényi .

We come across some particular graphic contours in the following:

**Ex. 24**

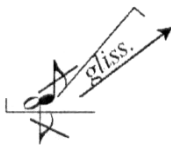
*Choral (Piano Plays)*



- The right hand keeps a tone than it makes a sudden glissando with the left hand that executes random glissandos in *pp legatissimo*.

**Ex. 25**

*Lasciar vibrare*



- Glissando on the white and back keys that are stopped on the wooden lid of the keyboard whereas the starting tone is prolonged.

In the creation of this composer, next to the glissando (that prefigures a type of tonalities that belong to the *crowded* area) we have **the cluster**, which is frequently used. In *Piano Plays*, Eduard Terényi conceives distinctive signs for this type of effect, every time he points the way in which these will be executed:

**Ex. 26**



- A great cluster on the white and black keys that was rapidly executed by using he arm (by the rapid passing from the white to the black keys);

**Ex. 27**



- Successive clusters that are executed in a rapid tempo;

**Ex. 28**

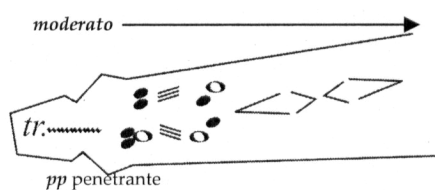


- Clusters on the white and black keys that are framed in special limits of time, a precise dynamics.

As it was considered a derivative of the glissando, more precisely, a reduced form brings the simultaneous execution of the tones (on the white and black keys). The cluster has extended the action field in the ornaments area. In this way, the composers conceive the clusters that are executed in glissando, a tremolo or a trill, or as clusters with appoggiaturas, and so on.

Eduard Terényi: *Cluster-melody*

Ex. 29



- A trill that is made through the tremolo of clusters that are made on the white and the black keys and it is indicated through the *ad libitum* limits of pitch that progress between the established dynamic limits.

Ex. 30



- A cluster with an acciaccatura.

The technique of forming the clusters by the pressing without a tone of the keys of the piano (without the little hammers touch the chords) will generate some effects that are similar to the flageolet, in the cluster that was named by the same notion, **the flageolet cluster** (that is obtained through the pressing of the keys without the little hammers touch the chords; for the intervals until the eighth it is recommended to use the palm of the hand and then, for the greater intervals it is advisable to use both the palm and also the arm together.)

In the last decades of the twentieth century, in the notation of the clusters we remark an action of giving up the symbols that were consecrated and their replacement by the indications or signs that specify the simultaneousness of some actions in the interior or the exterior of the piano. These actions create, overall, the sonorities that are specific to the cluster.

Ex. 31

Eduard Terényi: *Piano Plays*.



- A melody that is formed by the running movements of the clusters.

Ex. 32



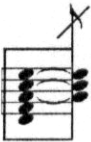
- Rows of chords that have to be comprised in a pedal in order to produce cluster effects.

In the literature for the piano, the prolongation of the vibrations of a sound constituted one means of sonorous diversification that attracted both the interpreters and also the composers. The prolonged persistency of the sounds (a little while after the stopping of the issuing source) was made through the following:

- The creation of the conditions of multiple reflection of the sound by the operation with the system of the pedals.
- By the pressed maintaining of the keys for a long time after the attack, this is an action where the little hammer does not come back in its break position but it stays in an intermediate position where the chord is left vibrating.

**Ex. 33**

Examples from the creation of Eduard Terényi: *Choral*



- Chords that are rapidly attacked and they are left to resonate.

*Cracking Noises: “sf must be dozed in such a way as by a soft hit of the little hammers the chords starts to resonate so that, by using the pedal, the noises that are produced by the chords are formed”*

In the creation of the twentieth century, the pedal system is given a special importance by using an adequate technique, the pedal can blur the sonorities in this way it will make an atmosphere full of fog and twilight, it will mark with glittering accents the rhythmic pulsation of a segment of the play or it will produce varied sonorous masses. For example, the extended parts of the chords that are connected in the pedal can form a cluster effect.

From a semeiographic point of view, in order to represent the important actions of using the pedals, (with or without pedals, the pressing and the rising of the pedal in an ad libitum way), the composers have often produced distinctive signs. We can remind of some of the solutions of the composer where new symbols are used even in the case of the normal use of the pedal.

**Ex. 34**

*Capriccio for the Left Hand:*



- An indication to use the pedal.

**Ex. 35**

*Rondo for the Left Hand:*



- The changing of the pedal by using a continuous motion;

**Ex. 36**



- Pedal *ad libitum* on the fragment that is comprised between the arrows.

In the musical work *The Cracking Noises*, the composer Eduard Terényi makes a new effect which will need a minute elaboration of the sound: in the obtaining of a martellato: "by hitting the keys with the tip of the fingers; the *sf* has to be dozed in such a way as through a smooth hit of the little hammers, with the help of the pedal, it will be formed by the noises that are produced by the chords."

In this way, we can interpret the appeal of the noises in the musical works of Eduard Terényi, which is an effect that is differently noted:

**Ex. 37**

*Capriccio for the Left Hand (Piano Plays):*

1,2,3,4,5

- a notation for the noises that have to be made on the wood from the end of the keyboard, with the fingers stated;

5,4,3,2,1

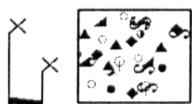
**Ex. 38**

*Capriccio for the Left Hand*



- the tangled lines of the score represents the production of a noise, a rustle of the paper, glissando on the chords, maracas,

**Ex. 39**



- some noises that have to be made on the wood from the end of the keyboard or a rustle of the paper, some noises that are made by using shards of glass or little stones: Eduard Terényi – *Piano Plays*.

In the created real complex from the XX century music, the role and the weight of the musical elements are variable. They have either a minimum presence or some possibilities of coordination and super-ordination of all the other components of this assembly. These productions constitute the so-called **instrumental theatre** and we can find there the music to represent not only the basic artistic material of the manifestation but also its structural basics. The player is carried away in the real tide through the multiple and the complex actions so that this ended in the creation of a relative demarking between the role of the player and that of the creator in making a musical work.

In the piano creation, the composer Eduard Terényi is involved in this conception of making a musical work and he notes in *Scherzo with Intermezzo*, a few *Indications for the Action during the Intermezzo*:

1. A general break measure;
2. By using a sudden movement, the lid that covers the keyboard must be slammed;
3. The player has to lean against the lid that covers the keyboard by using his elbows;
4. A long break;
5. By making a smooth, cautious and uncertain motion, the player has to open the lid;
6. Comodo: C major scale;
7. The scale is suddenly transformed into a glissando;
8. The coming back to the scherzo.

The piano creation of the composer Eduard Terényi sums up the composing experiences that are derived from successive conceptual accumulations that are enlisted in the complex process of the transformations and makings of the artistic language of the twentieth century music.

(Translated from Romanian by Maria Cozma)

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