

EDE TERÉNYI AND *THE 4 SEASONS*

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*Omnis ars imitatio est naturae*²
Seneca

SUMMARY. A post-modernist projection on a Vivaldian theme seems surprising at the beginning of the 21st century; this phenomenon coincides with composer Ede Terényi's artistic creed: "the art of the new century will pursue the ideal of a tri-dimensional portrait, comprising the visual, the auditory, and the spiritual and sentimental significance of the word. The 21st-century artists will be defined by the ease of movement in these three temporal dimensions: the past, the present of their life, and their provisions for the future will probably be anchored in the past."

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The cycle of life and nature has been, in the history of music, a theme, which has been musically transfigured in all the periods of creation. Haydn's vocal-symphonic variant is closet o the notoriety of Vivaldi's *Seasons* (1725). Tchaikovsky's twelve pianist months are a mosaic replica, in the manner of the instrumental miniatures. The 20th century music does not avoid this theme, either. The composer Ede Terényi has created four concerts dedicated to seasons *Golden spring*, a concert for harpsichord solo, string orchestra and percussion (1996), "*La puerta del sol*", for violin, solo cello and string orchestra (1987), *The flames of autumn*, for two violins, string orchestra and percussion (1988), and the *Silver Forest* for solo percussion, string orchestra and percussion (1987).

The first remark is connected to the diversity of genre, which renders the theme of seasons: concert for solo violin (Vivaldi), oratory (Haydn), piano miniatures (Tchaikovsky) and concert for various instrumental formations (Terényi).

In addition, we would like to point out the poetic sources, which have been the bases of these paradigms: the paintings of the epoch and the poems of Metastasio (dedicated to spring) in Vivaldi's case, James Thomson's poem for Haydn, the 19th century Russian poetry (Pushkin and others) for Tchaikovsky, and his own visual arts creations for Terényi.

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² "All art is an imitation of nature".

We were astounded by the persistence of the theme, which occurs as often as myths; in our approach, we are interested in the means of expression, of rendering profound sense that the above-mentioned creations generate.

Thus, Monteverdi (1567-1643) illustrates the dramatic *ethos* with specific timbres, trumpets with cymbals for the monumental and flute for the pastoral. The picturesque of the onomatopoeias had been inaugurated by Clément Jannequin (1485-1559) in the madrigals *Le chant des oyseaux* and by Adriano Banchieri (1568-1634) in *Contraponto bestiale alla mente*. The Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel the Old (1525/1530-1569), in the series *Months of the Year* (1565) represents the peasants' everyday life in a natural setting, in the *Hunter in the Winter* (Vienna), *The Storm* (id.), *Mowing* (Prague), *Harvest* (New York) and *Return of the herds* (Vienna). Brueghel integrates the cycle of seasons even in religious topics such as *Saint Paul's Conversion* (1567, id.) or *Adoration of the Magi in Winter* (1567, Winterthur, private collection).³ J.J. Rousseau (1712-1778) in his novel *Julia or the New Eloise* (1761) eulogises pure life in the middle of nature. *Modulation and harmony imitate in the most appropriate manner what words want to express!* – says Gioseffo Zarlino.⁴

The *Seasons* of Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), which belong to the cycle *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* op.8, were published in 1725. It was not for the first time when the composer names his opera in an unusual way: op. 4 contained 12 concerts entitled *La stravaganza*, which impressed through the novelty of the harmonies, the ingenious modulations in the slower parts and the non-harmonic tones, which outdid the theorisation thus far. Again, the composer meets his Venetian audiences with something new. Each season is expressed in a sonnet composed by him and applied not only before each concert, but also throughout the work to illustrate spring with the breeze of zephyrs, the chirping of birds, the rest of the shepherd. The lightning and thunder, which foretell rain, interrupt for a short while, but do not upset the balance of the idyllic tableau.

The interest for the phenomena of nature dated back to Renaissance, when after the ancient model, space and time as dimensions of the cosmos, were rediscovered. "Jupiter ended old spring, and through winters, summers, unequal autumns, and brief springs he divided the year in four seasons. Then for the first time the air heated by brought and ice built a bridge secured by winds".⁵ Michelangelo imagines *The Night and Aurora* as female characters, and the *Day and Crepuscule*, as male characters, when he creates the tomb of Julian and Lorenzo the Medici.

³ Fride-Carrasat, Patricia, *Maeștrii picturii (The Masters of the Pictures)*, Enciclopedia RAO 2004.

⁴ Zarlino, *Cantici carnascialeschi del Rinascimento*, Bari, 1936, p.184, cit. in: Ion Ianegic, *Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 115, Editura Muzicală a U.C., București, 1965.

⁵ Ovidius, *Metamorfoze (Metamorphoses)*, Editura Științifică, București, 1972, p. 50.

Vivaldi's predecessors in annexing a program to an instrumental work are Johann Kuhnau, who in the year 1700 composes 6 sonatas for harpsichord, each of them preceded by a Biblical story; and after four years, J.S. Bach, in *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello diletissimo*.

Haydn will have a classicising vision on the presentation of *Seasons*, despite his librettist's, van Swieten's, annoying insistence, who was asking him for excessive onomatopoeia. Such imitations in the preceding oratory, *Creation*, attracted him the label "king of animal imitator" from the critics. In this dispute, Haydn would have the last word accomplishing the lightning in his five-decade style, through the melodic zigzag of the flutes and not the pizzicato of the strings. The success of the 24 April 1801 premiere led to the repetition of the concert on May 1, and on May 24, it was played in front of 4,000 spectators. Haydn would receive the gold medal "Saviour" of Vienna for three concerts of the *Seasons*, performed for charitable purposes. The starting point of the oratory was the poem *Seasons* of the English enlightenment poet James Thomson (1700-1748). The poem reflected the spirit of the late Renaissance and the early humanism. Thomson eulogized the beauty of nature and "nature's influence on man's life in the countryside" and the "healthy, moral reflex nature has on human's psychic". As for a literary piece, the poem was a small encyclopaedia including historical, geographical and biological data connected to the climate. Haydn's *Seasons* are a lay oratory, a stage opera structured in recitatives of lyric opera, choruses and orchestral pages. The entire work gives off a jovial optimism based on wisdom and spiritual balance.

A more personal, interiorised *Season* is that of the twelve miniatures for piano by Tchaikovsky. Composed in the period December 1875 - November 1876, each month bears a suggestive title and they are preceded by verses of contemporary Russian poets, the list headed by Pushkin. Continuing the Schumann-style of miniatures of the *Scenes for Children* and of the *Album for Youth*, Tchaikovsky combines typically Russian images, such as *Maşleniça*, a winter festival celebrated in February, *The White Nights* of May and the *Troika* of November with the Venetian cityscape, and the swinging style of the *Barcarola* in June. Ten years before (1886), the Russian seasons had inspired the young Tchaikovsky, a fresh graduate of the Sankt Petersburg Music Conservatory to compose his first symphony, *Winter Dreams*. His last symphony, which he called "Program Symphony", entitled *Patetica* after the premiere in 28 October 1893, according to the plan he had made a note of in 1892, would have reflected the following idea: the first movement, *Life*, and the final one, *Death*. Parts 2 and 3 evoked loved, and disappointment, respectively. The plan of the symphony would be altered preserving, however, the deeply pessimistic tone.

The second half of the 19th century marked the evolution of music toward modernism, following the same track of “dissolution and reconstitution”⁶ as the other arts. It started with the complex structures of chromatic harmonies in the creations of Wagner, Bruckner and Mahler, the creation of obsessive leitmotifs and of hyperbolising sonorities. The 20th century will bring on a national-inspired music organised around percussion and rhythm, such as in the works of Stravinsky and Bartók. Scriabin, Berg, Schönberg and Webern break free from the traditions of western harmonies, building atonal systems, while the Italian Luigi Russolo, composer but also a futuristic painter and inventor, created an “art of noises”.

Modernism aimed to “de-sanctify musical matter through the emergence of the non-formal, the non-instituted and the non-representative”.⁷ Once with the dissolution of musical conformism, once with giving up the traditional language, there emerged the composer-inventor profile.

In his *Seasons*, composer Eduard Terényi accomplishes a juxtaposition of new images: themes built in the modal Renaissance system of baroque writing and modern orchestration. The architecture of the four concerts, each bearing a title, *Golden Spring*, concert for solo harpsichord, string orchestra and percussion (1996), *La puerta del Sol*, for violin, solo cello and string orchestra (1987), *The Flames of Autumn* for two violins, string orchestra and percussion (1988) and *The Silver Forest* for solo percussion, string orchestra and percussion (1987), leads to the Vivaldian tripartite vision. The suggestive combination of the twelve engravings representing the months of the year, accomplished by the composer himself, set him close to the Tchaikovskian vision of *Seasons*.

The choice of the third season, *The Autumn*, of composer Eduard Terényi's concerts to be presented in the symposium is justified by the importance this concert holds in the composer's life. This is the season, which reminds him of the first encounter with Cluj, which he loves profoundly and to which he is connected by over forty-five years of creation. *Autumn* in Terényian vision is a season of purifying fires, which are burnt in the gardens to remove the dead leaves. The dance of flames is woven into the thematic lines of the solo violins like garlands, and the flames of fire reach the sky in the super acute register of the violin. Although he uses minor modes, the work is profoundly optimistic, “there is no melancholy here, only ardour”. In fact, the work was presented also under the title *Autumnal ardour*. The various parts of the concert, following the composer's painting, envisage for Part 1, *September – autumnal bunches*, for Part 2, *October – Colourful leaves* and Part 3, *November – Frosty landscape*.

⁶ Connor, Steven, *Cultura postmodernă (The postmodern Culture)*, in: “Hrestomație pentru disciplinele *Teorii moderne asupra artei și retorica muzicală*” (*Modern Theories about the Arts and the Musical Rhetoric*), p. 211.

⁷ *Idem*, p. 213.

Part 1, *Allegro* of *Flames of Autumn* starts with an improvised tympana solo followed by a firm entry in *fortissimo* of the string orchestra, as if announcing the beginning of a ritual. The main theme, built of successions of small thirds and large seconds, with intonations of an Aeolic G in pointed, *saltarello* rhythm, will dominate the evolution of part 1 through its multiple appearances, in various aspects: direct, transposed, imitated, refined of the asperities of the pointed rhythm, counter-pointed or augmented. A similarity to the previous *Seasons* could be the closeness of the generating Terényian motif to the beginning of Haydn's *The Autumn*.

Ex. 1

Terényi, *The Flames of Autumn*, part I, motif one:

Ex. 2

Haydn, *Autumn*, motif one:

The theme 1 in Terényi's work will be encountered again only once in part 3, section A, superimposed on the major theme.

Ex. 3

part 3, p. 32, beat 45-46:

Returning to part 1, there appears a lyrical version of the first theme, with the role of rhythmic contrast, in section A, beat 40. The tonality remains minor, an Aeolic C. The élan of theme 1, which is still present alternately in the two violins, will be ended by spectacular “downfalls”. The effect will be augmented by *passus duriusculus* in trill positioned in double counterpoint with the theme.

Ex. 4

part 1, p. 6 beats 51-55:

The rhythm of the discourse gets more rapid in section B, with the appearance of a playful melody imitated in *stretto*, the Doric sixth lightening up the so far melancholic spectre. The metamorphosis of the game in a Mix Lydian G, amplified by a *tutti* in fortissimo and marked by the rhythm of the tom-tom will usher in the brighter part of the concert.

Ex. 5

part 1, p. 8, beats 68-69:

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After 25 beats of brightness, the landscape will again put on a mantle of melancholy in a theme of Aeolic E, maintaining however the previous rhythmic élan which gives way to the dynamics in a *pianissimo possibile*. It is now the time for reference to Antonio Vivaldi's Seasons, though not to the exuberant *The Autumn*, as one might expect, but to the suave *The Spring*.⁸

Ex. 6

Terényi, part I, p.12, beats 99-102:

Ex. 7

Vivaldi, *Spring*, part 1, beats 39-44:

Canto d'Ucelli
("Indi, tacendo questi, gli Augelletti")

The repetitive motif will be preserved in the accompaniment in the following, the soloists executing an incisive, isorhythmic, binary-ternary motif in direct three-sound harmonies.

⁸ *Canto d'Uccelli* ("Indi, tacendo questi, gli Augelletti") – Song of the Birds ("From far away the silent winged").

Ex. 8

part 1, p. 13, beats 105-106:

Section D stands for a thematic development, which the major theme undergoes, starting with a surprising modulation at the upper small second, an Aeolic on G #.

Ex. 9

part 1, p. 14, beats 126-132:

We encounter a similar modulation, in D major and in Eb major in Haydn's *seasons, The Autumn*, to suggest the hunters' emotions that pursue the hidden stag in the thicket. The sounds of the horns in Eb replace the horns in D and pursue the animal until the hunters triumph. We should mark the presence of the hunting scene in the last part of Vivaldi's concert *The Autumn*, where the solo violin sounds out the call of the horns immediately after the orchestral *tutti*. In Tchaikovsky's *September*, prefaced by Pushkin's verse, the piano will invoke all through section A the characteristic motif of the hunters' horns.

Ex. 10

Vivaldi, *The Autumn*,⁹ p. 3, beats 30-41:

⁹ Vivaldi, Antonio, *The Autumn*: "The hunters have been at work since dawn, / With horns, shotguns and hounds. / Stalking the fleeing beast. "

Ex. 13

part 2, p 21, beats 1-4:

II. Andante
Instr. ad lib.

VI. solo 2.

p vibr. molto

Theme 2, (A-beat 31), passionate, in harmonies of sevenths will bring back the nostalgic tonality in G-Aeolian of part 1.

Ex. 14

part 2, p.22, beat 31:

Doppio piu mosso, appassionato ♩ = 96

VI. solo 2.

f

Theme 3 (A-beat 39), in E-Dorian will get additional colour, with *Glockenspiel*, while the fourth (B-beat 55), in the same tonality, will be doubled in the reiteration by the marimba and the vibraphone *col legno*. Theme 5, in G minor (C- beat 74), in harmonies of sixth chords amplifies through tempo and doubling the drama of part 2. Transposing the theme in a superior second (C-beat 85), encountered in part 1 of the work, will mark a culmination here, too.

Ex. 15

part 2, p. 26, beats 80-81 and 85-86:

VI. solo 1.

VI. solo 2.

Div.

Vln. 1.

Vln. 2.

ff

ff

ff

ff

It is time for a fire / a new theme, the composer seems to say, but not before, we look back at the theme of part 1, overlapping a march (A-beat 44).

Ex. 19

part 3, p. 32, beats 45-46:

The new theme, the third (B-beat 55), of an oriental fragrance, clad in polymetry, brings in an exotic note speeding up the tempo of the work.

A more temperate state of spirit follows in *Calmo, doppio meno mosso* (B-beat 67), a brief one followed by the frenzy of the oriental theme (B-beat 91).

Ex. 20

part 3, p.33, beats 55-58:

Unlike the first two parts, in which seven and six themes and their variants are presented, respectively, the composer uses only three themes in part 3, but he subjects them to the most ingenious work. We have the modulation on the superior second (F-beat 189), rhythmic variations of the theme (B-beat 94), descending rhythm (G-beat 214), use of double counterpoint (D-beat 130), imitation in *stretto* at the third (D-beat 139) and harmonic structures (from F-beat 174). Add the polyphony, the thematic and improvisational involvement of the percussion instruments to all these.

The surprise element in the final part, after a minute elaboration, is the *unison* on G, the governing tonality of the entire work, a tacit dedication to the baroque (see the end of Bach's *Ciaccona*).

A post-modernist projection on a Vivaldian theme seems surprising at the beginning of the 21st century; this phenomenon coincides with composer Ede Terényi's artistic creed: "the art of the new century will pursue the ideal of a tri-dimensional portrait, comprising the visual, the auditory, and the spiritual and sentimental significance of the word. The 21st-century artists will be defined by the ease of movement in these three temporal dimensions: the past, the present of their life, and their previsions for the future will probably be anchored in the past." Aesthetician Ștefan Anghi would add: "reminiscing is not for the past. It always points to the future. The artist amplifies the present facing the promising future or the memorable past."

This could be the sense of invoking Vivaldi's *Spring* in Terényi's *The Autumn*, the promise of regeneration of life, in full maturity, a look back, which is a hope for the future.

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