

Abstract of the DLA Thesis

Gyórfi Laura Ditta

**“Piano Playing” – Playing with the Piano.
Ede Terényi’s piano series**

Supervisor: Sándor Balassa

The Liszt Academy of Music

Doctoral School of Arts and Cultural History no. 28

Budapest

2009

I. Preliminaries

Ede Terényi, composer and musicologist, was born in Târgu-Mureș (Romania) in 1935. His compositions are quite popular in his native country, while his creative work is rather little-known in Hungary, although the first performance of several of his pieces took place here.

The subject of my thesis is the “Piano Playing” (1973-2006) series, which contains piano pieces of pedagogical purpose. There has been written only one single publication on these series till now. It is Terényi’s article entitled “Piano Playing – Playing with the Piano” (“Zongorajáték – játék a zongorával. (Gondolatok a VII. és VIII. füzet darabjairól.)” In: Benkő András (edit.): *Zenetudományi írások*. (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1986)), in which the composer himself presents the two completed books of the twelve planned. These are the equivalent of the V-VI books of the composer’s complete edition of his own works. In spite of discussing only the earliest pieces written between 1973 and 1975, the composer’s concept regarding the piano teaching turns out clearly: the attainment of the technical and interpretative means should come along simultaneously with the development of creativity.

Gabriela Coca, musicologist at the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca (Romania) is an authority on Terényi’s works. Her two articles published in the “Muzica” journal (“Ede Terényi. Retrospectiva a cinci decenii de creație (I)”. *Revista Muzica*. 1997/3, “Ede Terényi. Retrospectiva a cinci decenii de creație (II)”. *Revista Muzica*. 1997/4) offer a survey on the composer’s 50 years of activity. We can find here some essential information regarding the “Piano Playing” series, especially in the quotations of the composer’s words. Within the narrow bounds there was no possibility to analyse the single pieces.

At first I got to know Ede Terényi’s essays on music gathered in his book “Does the Music Stay Music?” (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1978),

which aroused my interest towards his music. It seemed to me obvious to study the piano pieces as a pianist. That is why I chose the “Piano Music” volume, containing solo pieces for the instrument and one two-piano work, from the complete edition as the subject of my thesis.

For reasons of length and because the “Piano Playing” series constitute a unit in itself I limited the project of my thesis on this subject to give an introduction to Ede Terényi’s compositional world and to present also the possibilities of pedagogical application of the pieces as well.

II. Sources

The primary source I relied on was the “Piano Music” volume of the composer’s complete edition of his own works published in 2006 (Cluj-Napoca: Grafycolor, 2006). Besides, Ede Terényi made available to me an earlier version of volume VI, the handwritten version of volume IV, and his remarks on the pieces of the volumes V and VI. These latter were intended to help to interpret the notational signs used by the newer 20th century music notation (not widely-known in the 70-80s in Romania). In addition, they summarize the compositional ideas from which the pieces have arisen in one single, striking phrase.

Beside the scores, other sources can hardly be found. The most important is the composer’s essay, mentioned before. For outlining the creative periods of Ede Terényi I leant on Gabriela Coca’s mentioned two articles.

In case of several 20th century composers, writing or talking about music is as important way of self expression as their compositional and interpretative activity. Ede Terényi’s essays gathered in books like *Paramuzikológia* (Cluj-Napoca: private edition, 2001), *Zene – tegnap, ma, holnap* (Cluj-Napoca: Stúdió Könyvkiadó, 2004), *Zene – költői világ* (Cluj-Napoca: Grafycolor, 2008) dealing especially with contemporaries and fine arts, indirectly let us know his self-definition as a creator.

Regarding the scarce number of sources, it is especially important that I had the opportunity to meet and to consult with the composer on several times between 2005 and 2007. I make reference to these conversations several times in the thesis.

III. Methods of Analysis

Considering that Ede Terényi's name is not widely-known in Hungary, it seemed to be necessary to present the composer's biography and his creative periods after the Introduction.

Regarding the title of the series the thesis uses the English version of the complete edition. The titles of the single pieces are given in the issued form as well, always indicating the number of the book with Roman numeral and the number of the piece within the book with Arabic numeral (e. g. I/2). The complete list of titles can be found in the Appendix.

In the first chapter of the dissertation I made an attempt to systematize the stylistic models which were used as starting-points in the pieces. The next chapter presents the most representative pedagogical and compositional devices of the "Piano Playing". Many pieces have got more than one variant: the first is the *model* followed by one or more *resolutions*, which are the developed forms of the roughly outlined model.

The analyses were illustrated with musical examples. The short, few-bar quotations can be found in the main text, the one-page examples in the Appendix. Regarding the examples in the main text the bar numbers mean musical units, separated by bar lines, several times.

IV. Results

The very significance of the “Piano Playing” series is that it gives an introduction for students in basic composing simultaneously with acquiring technical skills. Stimulating a creative attitude and the analysing study style are most important innovations of the work. Naturally enough instrumental pedagogy usually refers only to the compositional problems behind the music and has free scope for the playing on the instrument. The six volumes of the „Piano Playing” strike a balance between playing the instrument and playing at composition. Every piece is a riddle and we must find a key to each of them. The composer comes to our aid offering us several solutions. I think that the suggested compositional tasks attainable for pupils can considerably widen the perspective of studying the instrument.

Terényi draws on numerous sources. He is keen on the music of distant periods, but in the meantime, he remains up-to-date carefully following with attention the contemporary tendencies. The first chapter offers a panoramic view of the style models, by discussing the genres and compositional techniques of those musical ages that mainly shaped the composer’s *ars poetica*. The second chapter reveals the most characteristic technical and interpretative devices put into practice by the “Piano Playing”. The role of the models and solutions are also presented. At that I tried to throw light on the way the creative goal determines the rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and formal characteristics of the pieces.

There are many compositions of variable form in the “Piano Playing” series. Following the composer’s intentions, they change form and the other parameters on every performance becoming living processes.

One of the peculiarities of the series is that the one-page score is the representation of the title – thus the music turns into drawing and the drawing into music. The *models* and the *resolutions* are sometimes surprising, but reflecting on the innovations of the great masters, they urge

the musician to play, to improvise, to create. Composer and performer are co-authors of the pieces – that is the main idea emphasized by Terényi's series.

V. Notes on the author's professional connection to the subject matter of the dissertation

I use those pieces of the “Piano Playing” series in my pedagogical work, which are attainable at the music school level. My pupils Gergely Sárady (3rd class) learnt the “Gisz-gesz-g minuetto” (I/7) and the “Stalagmite” (I/11), Dávid Simor (6th class) the “À la Haydn” (I/1), “Népdalos” (I/2), “Sirálytánc” (I/9), “Scherzo interrotto” (V/3). They performed the pieces on concerts as well (e.g. Dávid Simor played the “Sirálytánc” and the “Scherzo interrotto” on 4th October, 2008 at the “Pianists’ Meetings” in Gödöllő. The concert was recorded on DVD.)

The author of the thesis had the opportunity on several occasions to perform some of Ede Terényi's piano works in Hungary (“Sonata aforistica” on 14th March, 2008 in Szentendre) and Romania (“Un poco alla Bartók”, “Scarlattiana” on 10th April, 2006 in Baia Mare).