

A hermeneutic perspective on two songs by Felicia Donceanu: *Cu penetul* and *La mijloc de codru des*

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Abstract: In Romanian musical culture, Felicia Donceanu remains a reference name for having composed songs in which she realised an original synthesis between Romanian folkloric elements and modern intonational systems. The present paper is focused on the compared analysis of two songs composed by F. Donceanu – *Cu penetul ca sideful* [With plumage as nacre] and *La mijloc de codru des* [Midst the dense old forest stout], included in the cycle entitled *Imagini* [Images] based on Mihai Eminescu’s poetry. The detailed analysis of musical language elements represents the basis of the musicological investigation, while the hermeneutic commentary, focused on the symbiotic aspects between sonorous parameters and M. Eminescu’s lyrics is formulated in order to grasp as deeply and widely as possible the semantic substrate of the musical-poetic discourse.

Keywords: Felicia Donceanu, Romanian music, songs, comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Musical hermeneutics represents one of the oldest forms of analysis and interpretation of musical discourse, leading to modern commentaries about musical works in which analysis of musical parameters is combined with stylistic, aesthetic observations and also with semiotic or psychological aspects. Therefore, in contemporary musicology, one can notice a particular tendency towards investigating a work from many analytical angles, combining different methods, in order to obtain a complex discourse about music, in a multidimensional perspective and holistic vision.

Our purpose is to realise a hermeneutical analysis of two songs composed by Felicia Donceanu, who combined in a fascinating way the musical tradition from the first half of the 20th century with modern elements that were gradually and selectively assimilated so as to keep a well-balanced proportion in her musical works. From the stylistic point of view, F. Donceanu gained particular features in the context of Romanian composers in the previous century: melodies with archaic sonorities (folkloric and byzantine), used in a modern perspective, modal harmony with highly chromatic density, based on the foundation inherited from her predecessors.

2. General perspective on the cycle *Imagini* on poems by Mihai Eminescu

The two songs, entitled *La mijloc de codru des* [Midst the dense old forest stout] and *Cu penetul ca sideful* [With plumage as nacre] are included in the cycle *Imagini* [Images] based on M. Eminescu's poetry, which was composed between 1963 and 1965. These pieces represent two examples of reevaluating in different ways the modal sources of the Romanian musical tradition. If the first song – *La mijloc de codru des* – is a vocal miniature with Romanian folkloric sonorities, the second song *Cu penetul* is written in the impressionistic manner of French melodies at the end of 19th century.

The cycle *Imagini* is composed in a close stylistic area to Nicolae Coman and Pascal Bentoiu, whose songs can be included in the direction of continuing George Enescu's final creative stage, using polimodalism and rhythmic asymmetry in a particular perspective. The music composed by the two mentioned musicians is focused on melody, expressivity, also having great qualities on harmonic level by using modal-chromatic structures. Doru Popovici wrote that F. Donceanu's songs are "closer to post-impressionistic way of pianistic writing, without missing that specific 'Romanian touch' which her former teacher Mihail Jora used to mention with such great fervency" (Popovici, 2000, p. 5).

2.1. Analysis of the song *Cu penetul*

The first song of the cycle is composed on M. Eminescu's poem *Cu penetul ca sideful*, having an obvious impressionistic colour suggested from the very beginning by the accompanying arpeggios in *piano*, evoking the sounds of a harp. The poetic content of the poem is emphasized by the descriptive music, which has a great imagistic potential, suggesting the nocturnal landscape, the brightness of the stars, the subtle song of the birds, the silence of the forest, the sound of water flowing over the pebble stones. The idyllic scenery described in M. Eminescu's poem appears very simple, generating the impression of describing a relaxing moment in the middle of nature, which was later transposed in musical version. The great challenge for any reader is to discover the substrate of the poetic description by connecting its meaning with other poems written by M. Eminescu on nature theme, while for a composer, the challenge is to find the most efficient ways to integrate the poetic meanings in a musical piece which should be as simple and delicate as the initial content. The art of vocal miniatures consists in creating sonorous images as powerful as those generated by words, adding even more beauty inside the poetic universe and amplifying its metaphors.

One can assist to a process of merging two means of artistic expression, which makes the initial moment, surprised by the poet, to be perceived as a stopping point of time, a suspension of physical laws. It is a state of complete inertia and ecstatic contemplation. In only two quatrains, M. Eminescu depicted telluric and celestial images, inserting a tiny element, apparently

insignificant – a sleeping dove with its head under the wing, as a symbol of connection between the two poetic levels – in a monumental, infinite picture, which lies under the blue sky (where the air and stars were illuminating). Similarly, F. Donceanu divided the musical discourse in two parts, separating the terrestrial world from the cosmic universe by using melodic, harmonic elements or particular figures in the accompanying piano line. These aspects will be presented in detail during the analysis, but it is important to emphasize from this point the integration of microuniverse in the macrocosmic space at both artistic levels, poetical and musical.

The melody of the two songs is modal, having a pentatonic substrate and unstable sonorous centres. The harmonic structure configured on the accompaniment level does not play a functional part, because it rather has a colourful effect. From this reason, one may observe the absence of cadential formulas which might suggest polarizing tendencies around new centres. The melodic line has a fragmentary aspect given by asymmetrical phrases, irregular structure of musical units and also by the frequent harmonic mutations which are modifying the foundation-chord. Nevertheless, there is a rigorously organized structure inside the discourse, as one can see in the following example, where the initial motive is consequently developed and led towards the climax of the phrase, followed by descendent movement in the second phrase. These elements outline an autonomous musical idea, despite the inner discontinuity.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Cu penetul' by F. Donceanu, measures 8-15. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are in Romanian. The first staff contains the first two measures, with 'phrase a' and 'motive a' (circled in red) in the first measure, and 'motive a'' (circled in red) in the second measure. The lyrics are 'Cu - pe - ne - tul cã - si - de - ful'. The second staff contains measures 3-4, with 'phrase a1' above the second measure. The lyrics are 'ste - lu - ces - re - o po - rum - bi - țã, cu - cã - pã - so - rui'. The third staff contains measures 5-6, with the tempo marking 'dolce, molto p' above the first measure. The lyrics are 'sub a - ri - pã A - dor - mi - țã sub o vi - țã'. The key signature changes to one sharp (D minor) in the third staff.

Fig. 1 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 8-15

The harmony is generated by pentatonic structures, appearing as a sequence of chords without tonal-functional connection, also containing structures of overlapped fourths and fifths, parallel chords in the bass register of the piano and inside the middle level of accompaniment. The harmonic instability is emphasized by the changing key signatures, because the

beginning of the piece indicates **F#** and **C#**, suggesting a major scale on **D**, but in bar no. 11, the signature is completely removed.

Annotations in the score:

- pentatonic structure** (green box)
- modal instability** (blue box)
- parallel chords** (green box)
- parallel chords, plagal relations** (red box)
- 4p** and **4+** (red boxes)
- 3** (red box)

Performance markings: *rit.*, *pup ben legato*, *poco cresc.*

Fig. 2 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 8-15

The rhythmic aspect combines simple structures, normally divided, with exceptional formulas that give an apparent independence of movement. Moreover, rhythm has an important function in realising musical ornaments (*arpeggiato*, *appoggiatura*, *mordent*).

Time signatures circled in red: **4/4** and **2/4**

Fig. 3 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 1-4

Another aspect is the strictness of the composer on realising the effect of *rubato*, which is not indicated in the score, but can be felt intuitively during the performance of the song, as a consequence of different rhythmic formulas, agglomeration or rarefaction of durations, alternating time signatures. F.

Donceanu creates the emergence of a free evolution by generating the implied idea of *rubato* of the rhythmic-metric level, which leads to the fluency of poetic verses in music. Therefore, the *tempo*, indicated at the beginning as *Andante tranquillo*, is influenced by the evolution of other musical elements and by the expressivity of poetic content.

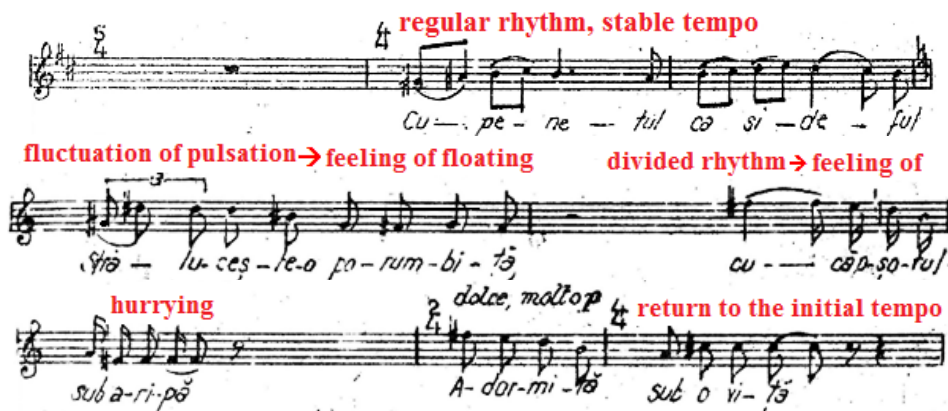


Fig. 4 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 8-15

The form of the song is bistrophic, according to the structure of M. Eminescu’s poem, in two quatrains. In addition to that, there are three other sections with dramaturgical function: introduction, interlude and a short ending (conclusion). The difference of musical conception between the two strophes is realised by using prolonged resonance of harmonic structures in the bass register of piano (in the first part) and by leading the accompaniment towards the medium and high register of piano, without any other elements of harmonic grounding (in the second part). In this way, one can observe the two poetic levels (terrestrial and celestial) depicted in the poem, separated by distinct musical features.

Segments of form	Introduction	Strophe I (A)	Interlude	Strophe II (B)	Conclusion
Interior delimitation	i + i'	a + a ₁	i ₁ + i _v	b + b _v	
Number of measures	3 + 5	3 + 4	3 + 5	4 (+1) + 4	2
Elements of musical language and writing	Arpeggios on pentatonic structures, starting on D , with permutations	Accompaniment in chords, with modal relations	Fourths and fifths structures, return of arpeggios from the beginning	Long or divided durations, in the middle register	Structures of parallel chords, ending with harmonic suspension
Sonorous centres	D . . . F#	C# . . . Eb B		

Table 1 Synthetic table of the first song, *Cu penetul*

The post-impressionistic style, specific to this song, is determined by pentatonic modalism, by structures of parallel chords, modal harmonic chains, colourful effects of accompaniment (*arpeggiato*, resonance of pedal), ornamental elements (mordent, *appoggiatura*), the duplication technique, the descriptive aspect and the suggestive potential of musical images. **Duplication** – a well-known technique used by impressionists – can be found in the song *Cu penetul* from the very beginning, by repeating the first segment (mm. 1-3) in a varied and expanded hypostasis (between mm. 4-8, as one may see in the previous examples and also in the following ones):



Fig. 5 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 16-17



Fig. 6 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 19-20

The relation between music and poetry is accomplished by permanent connection of the poetic content with the evolution of the musical discourse. Therefore, one may relate the mystery, the magic of the nocturnal scenery to the ineffable feeling given by pentatonic structures, which can be compared to musical works composed by Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. The musical Impressionism created an “antecedent” that has been kept in the memory of posterity, generating reflex gestures of some composers or listeners when using or recognizing specific intonation. In the case of poetic images (like those encountered in this song), the pentatonic and hexatonic scales can be associated with ambiguity, indefinite, mystery. At the same time, the brilliant plumage of the dove and the magnificence of the stars on the night sky have as musical correspondent the technical effects, the subtleties of pianistic touch, the gentle glide of the soloist on different sounds of the modal scales.

The next example is focused on the particular manner of reproducing the silence by harmonic stagnation, followed by a fast rising movement towards the high register, accomplished by the pianist, corresponding to the poetic line “Are shining air and stars!” The absence of the bass register is essential in the second section and the figuration in chords (first, by using inverted chords, then chords of fourths) generates, at the same, the poetic and sonorous image of the starry sky, of the ascension, suspension and contemplation.



Fig. 7 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 24-27 (the marked words mean “silence” – in red, “are shining”, “stars” – in green).

Another aspect of the symbiosis between poetry and music is the ending manner of this song. The last three measures represent a musical suggestion of the river which “bustles in the pebble stones”. This image is created by using triplets with the indication *egale* (= equal), followed by the imitation of piano which brings a new rhythmic version. The *finale* is open, leaving the effect of resonance generated by the strong dissonance of the augmented chord with major seventh, in *piano*. The harmonic suspension has a plastic effect, prolonging the musical image of aquatic flowing.



Fig. 8 F. Donceanu, *Cu penetul*, mm. 32-34

2.2. Analysis of the song *La mijloc de codru des*

In the second song of the cycle *Images* on Mihai Eminescu's poetry, the general atmosphere has the same impressionistic aspect, but much closer to Romanian traditional space, by reevaluating folkloric modal scales in a chromatic approach. It is an example of vocal miniature, composed in traditional manner, similar to so-called Romanian Impressionism specific to the musical culture from the beginning of the 20th century, as Romanian musicologist Clemansa Liliana Firca stated in her research (Firca, 1974, pp. 58-68)

Unlike the previous song, in which the pentatonic substrate and the impressionistic sonority specific to the French culture from the end of the XIXth century prevail, the second song – *La mijloc de codru des* – proves a different technique by adjoining folkloric modalism – with archaic origin – to chromatic neo-modalism – developed in the 20th century. The musical discourse in this song is more fluent, because of the cursive, flowing melody (which is interrupted only between the two sections) and the ternary rhythm, which generates the impression of temporal wave.

Musical language is differently conceived than the previous song, *Cu penetul*, but it has a similar logic of composition, meaning that both songs are composed in a strong relation to traditional principles of melodic, rhythmic, structural configuration, having a deep connection between music and poetic content.

Melody is expressive, always unpredictable, conceived as a succession of sonorous “waves” that are permanently bustling inside the river flow. The melodic instability is caused by chromatic slides, from the first measures, where the vocal line is obviously pentatonic, until more complex moments, where it reaches a fascinating ambiguity.

The image shows a musical score for the song "La mijloc de codru des" in G major, 3/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff has a red box around the first two notes (G4 and A4) labeled "cell x". The second staff has a red label "anhemitonic pentatonic scale" above the notes. The third staff has a red label "chromatic evolution" above the notes. The lyrics are: "La mij-loc de co-dru-des Toa-te pâ-să-ri-le ies, Din hu-ceag de o-lu-niș, La-vo-lo sul lu-mi-niș".

Fig. 9 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 6-12

At the microstructural level, one can observe the presence of rhythmic-melodic cell which is essential for setting the configuration of the musical

material during the entire song. It is based on a descending second and a trochaic rhythmic formula, which lead to a continuous evolution with the same rhythmic pulsation, with different intervallic variations (inversion of the melodic direction, division and subdivision of the two rhythmic durations, intervallic augmentation).

Fig. 10 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 13-17

The melodic line is accompanied by unexpected harmonic structures, which lead the musical discourse towards highly chromatic areas and remote relations compared to the initial harmonic context. This piece begins by exposing and repeating the rhythmic-melodic cell, starting with the first sound – central C – in a very ambiguous context, which becomes distinct by adding the other degrees of the modal scale in the next measures. Thus, the configuration of the scale indicates the Aeolian mode on F, beginning with the Vth degree and a few chords that might also be perceived as tonal structures (because the VIIth degree of the scale is avoided in m. 3, leading to an intuitive expectation of the leading tone for F as centre). In measure 5, it comes an Eb, completing the previous modal scale.

Vth degree, with its 7th, 9th and elliptic of 3rd

dissonant effect

eolian mode on F

superposition of fourths

appearance of VIIIth degree

Fig. 11 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 1-5

As concerns the harmonic level, there are many modal chains of chords, elliptic chords, unconventional inversions of chords, vertical structures which generate parallel fourths, fifths and octaves. Moreover, there are interesting modulations and modal relations. In measures 8-10, for example, after stopping on the third degree of Aeolian of **F** (generating a possible evolution towards a major mode on **A_b**), one can observe a chromatic “slide” through **A** natural, **F#** and other accidentals, which lead to an unexpected culmination on a chord composed on **F#**. The delay of the third by using the trochee cell generates the oscillation between **B#** and **A#** and leads to the emergence of the augmented fourth in measure 12. At this point, we can assume it is a modulation towards Acoustic mode no. 1 on **F#**.

chromatic modulation

A flat (major chord)

diminished chord with diminished 7th

Acoustic mode no. 1 on F#

avoiding the 3rd of the chord

parallel fourths fifths and octaves

augmented 4th

Fig. 12 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 8-12

The return on the modal centre **F** is accomplished through an enharmonic modulation (which can be observed at the right hand level of the pianistic accompaniment) and a descending chromatic slide (at the left hand level). Moreover, there is a certain ambiguity of the modal context caused by the absence of the third and the sixth of the chord structure in measure 13. The solution appears in the next measure, by bringing new elements: **D** (in the vocal line) and **A \flat** (at the left hand, piano), which generate another minor mode, Dorian on **F** (the initial centre of the piece). In the same context, one may also notice the parallel fifths and chords of fourths.

Fig. 13 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 13-14

The final measures bring an unexpected solving of the harmonic evolution, because the general instability leads the musical discourse towards a new modulation, focused on **F#**. In the penultimate measure, where the vocal melody stops on **F#**, whereas the pianistic accompaniment brings again elements from the introduction in a modal harmonic context which can be approached in two ways: 1. In the first situation, there are some notes that could be integrated in minor mode on **F#** (in this case, IInd and VIth degrees are missing, but they are present in the previous measures); 2. The other situation refers to a pentatonic scale without semitones (**F#-A-B-C#-E**), due the omission of the previously mentioned degrees. The final cadence cancels suddenly any previous expectation of solving the last dissonance on **F#**; instead, it slides on chromatic elements towards a major chord on **F** natural. The explanation for this fact consists in keeping the key signature (**B \flat**) during the entire piece, which has no direct connection with any of the modes that appear in the harmonic evolution of the musical discourse. F. Donceanu deceives the auditory expectations of the listeners, but keeps the initial direction from the modal scale on **F** towards the chromatic oscillation on **F#**. Therefore, the end of the piece does not offer the previously expected stability, even though the last chord is major, built on the same centre as the beginning had suggested. On the psychological level, this fact leaves the impression of a harmonical suspension, because of the final unexpected cadenza.

molto rall. molto rit.

me - le

tendency for cadenza on F sharp scale

Major chord built on F

Fig. 14 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 13-14

The rhythm is *giusto*, with ternary pulsation, based on the rhythmic formula of trochee. No matter the other aspects of the trochee (with divided elements), the musical cell which can be observed from the very beginning maintains its pulsation, providing fluency and unity to the entire discourse. On a secondary level, one may find another rhythmic formula, the iambus, exposed in bar no. 2 at the right hand in the accompaniment, at the same time with the trochee from the left hand. This aspect has two functions: in order to obtain complementarity between the two levels and to generate tension inside the musical discourse. Furthermore, rhythm has a strong potential on the poetical level, suggesting the swinging movement of nature under the blowing wind. This musical effect is also emphasized by the changing measures, which appear from the very beginning in the pianistic accompaniment.

Allegretto

Allegretto

6 6 6 12 9

Fig. 15 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 1-5

The tempo of the song is marked as *Allegretto*, indicating a stable movement, but during the piece many fluctuations appear, according to the agogic indications in the score (*poco rit.*, *meno mosso*, *poco accel. e cresc.*, *rit. subito*, *molto rall.*) or following the dynamic, melodic, rhythmic evolution and the meaning of the poetry. The freedom of performance is limited, because the score contains strict indications imposed by the composer herself. Another issue is the traditional style of composition in which this song can be included, leading to a necessary manner of performance, adjusted to the context, where tempo is an essential guide mark in following the stylistic norm.

From the structural point of view, the song *La mijloc de codru des* is organized similarly to the previous piece – a bistrophic form, with pianistic introduction, a short interlude and a final cadenza as conclusion. The two strophes of the musical form can be identified according to the grammatical organization of the text, because M. Eminescu’s poem is not written in stanzas, quatrains or other poetic structures. There are thirteen verses, which have two main ideas, two grammatical sentences. On the musical level, the two strophes correspond to these sentences, having a disproportionate structure – four and nine verses. F. Donceanu tried to bring the musical form to a structural balance by creating two musical strophes with a close number of measures – the first strophe has seven bars, while the second has ten bars. Therefore, the composer extended the musical ideas in the first strophe and chose a denser writing manner in the second one, where each verse corresponds to a measure. The last two measures have a bivalent function: to end the second strophe and to lead to the final cadenza.

Segments of form	Introduction	Strophe I (A)	Interlude	Strophe II (B)	Conclusion
Interior delimitation	i	a + a _v		b b ₁ b ₂	(b ₂ + 1ms)
Number of measures	5	3 + 4	1	4 + 4 + 2	(2+) 1
Elements of musical language and writing	Regular rhythm at the left hand, based on cell x	Melodical line extended compared to the lyrics	Maintaining the pulsation of the trochee (cell x)	Crowded texture compared to strophe I, with a high chromatic density	From m. 23, the final cadenza is prepared
Sonorous centres	Aeolian mode on F	Aeolian on F ~ chromatic modulation → Acoustic 1 on F#	Enharmonic modulation	Dorian mode on F with mobile degrees → chromatic slides	Unexpected ending → major chord on F

Table 2 Synthetic table of the song *La mijloc de codru des*

Connection between music and poetry is accomplished with a deep intuition of poetical meanings, by synchronizing the evolution of the song with the musicality of the words. The modal chromatic melody is an expression of the beauty of nature, of the colourful richness and great variety of feelings. The combination of rhythms is a subtly materialized form of the cosmic vision suggested by M. Eminescu's poem, because the moment he described is located in an unprecise place, situated "midst the dense old forest stout", referring to a moment of ecstasy, in which many poetical meanings are intertwined: the feeling of nature, the perception of the cosmic movement and the nostalgia of a solitary love.

The natural elements from the original poem are brought in a suggestive order in order to create two dimensions of the existential space – telluric and celest, earthly and heavenly. Transition between these two levels is gradually accomplished, by rising the eyes from the terrestrial elements (forest, hazel wood, lake, reed) towards the cosmic universe (represented by moon, sun, stars). There is a connecting element between the two levels: migratory birds, swallows, which are mentioned both in the two special zones of the poem (verses no. 2, 10 and 12). In a literary perspective, every element is considered symbol of philosophical concepts (for example, the world is the space of solitude of the poet, the forest has the meaning of eternity, the sky symbolizes the infinit, the moon appears as a witness of the human fate and its phases are connected to the existential cycle of life-death-rebirth); from the musical point of view, there are specific sonorous units, but without the same symbolic force. This is a vocal miniature in which composer F. Donceanu chose another type of sonorous suggestion of the poetical "objects", by leading the musical discourse in certain registers and by using certain chromatic slides which create the signification she aimed to. Therefore, in the following example, one may observe:

- the forest depicted musically by alternating sounds **C** and **Bb** in a swinging rhythm given by the trochee formula:



Fig. 16 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, m. 6

- the hazel wood, which refers to a small group of small bushes in the forest deepness, is suggested by the chromatic descendent movement of the vocal part, in a modulating harmonic context:



Fig. 17 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 9-10

- the lake (or rather the marsh) appears as a descendent melody which goes towards the thickest sound used in the piece (C from octave no. 1), followed by the movement in the opposite direction, including the chromatic fluctuation between **E^b** (octave no. 1) and **E** natural (octave no. 2). This oscillation corresponds to another natural element, “the tall reed”:

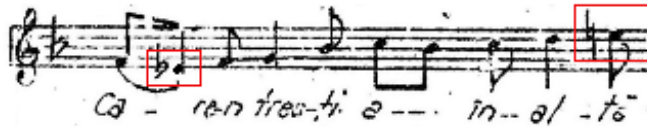


Fig. 18 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 14-15

- the birds are musically represented by the ascending melodic line which goes towards the high register of the soloist, suggesting the flight, the take-off and the oscillation between the terrestrial and celestial levels (mm. 7-8 – verse no. 2, m. 20 – verse no. 10, m. 22 – verse no. 12):

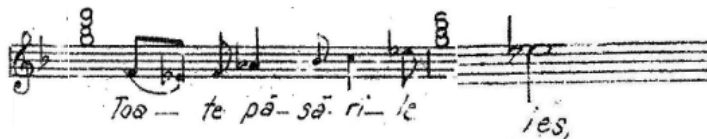


Fig. 19a F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 7-8



Fig. 19b F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, m. 20

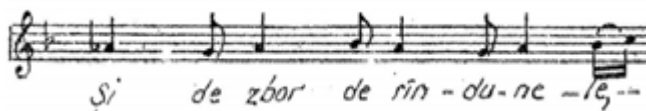


Fig. 19c F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, m. 22

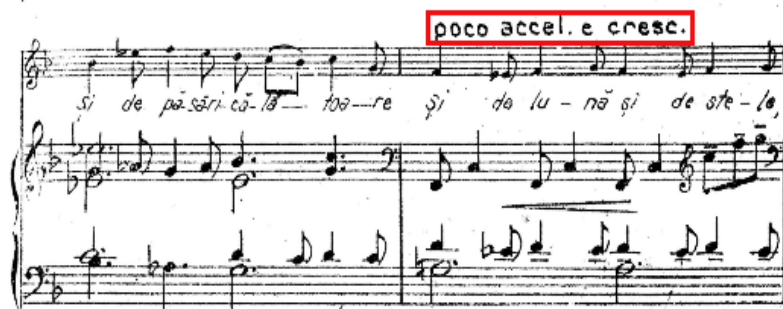
- the cosmic elements are mentioned by alternating the moon, the sun, the stars, the birds, having specific musical features such as: embowed melody,

different registers, suggesting, maybe, the reflection of the moon in the water, the regular rhythmic movement on the trochee pulsation, emphasizing the eternal existence of the stars and all celestial objects:



Fig. 20 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 18 and 20

The musical dramaturgy of the song is gradually built, in a calm movement, beginning with long rhythmic values (in the introduction and the first strophe), continuing with a progressive increase of the tension, at the same time with the verses “Round the pool grown high with sedge/ Fiy about the water’s edge/ Where, by little waves deflected,/ On its shining face reflected, (...)”¹. The culmination of the piece is reached in the second part, which is based on the enumeration of the cosmic elements and the migratory birds. The last five verses represent the utmost intensity of feeling, because they express an elevating enthusiasm, a strong impulse to enjoy life, nature, love, as the poem continues until the end. The succession of nouns, exposed by using the repeating conjunction “and”, suggests the impetuous mood of the poet: “Image of the moon is lying,/ And of birds of passage flying,/ And of stars and heavens blue,/ And of swallows not a few,/ And my darling's image too.” From the musical point of view, this segment of the song has the indication *meno mosso*, followed by two measures in *poco accel. e cresc.*, anticipating the culmination in measure 23 which corresponds to the last poetic line “And my darling’s image too”. The entire tension that has been stored during the song is released at the end by using a modal harmony, in *subito piano*.



¹ Version in English by Corneliu M. Popescu (1958-1977), retrieved from http://www.gabrielditu.com/eminescu/midst_dense_old_forest.asp, accessed on 20.11.2015)

Fig. 21 F. Donceanu, *La mijloc de codru des*, mm. 20-25 (culmination and final cadenza)

The vocal part contains large phrases, with extended breathing, despite the interior delimitation into many musical ideas. The singer should aim to a unitary construction of his/her performance, in order to transform the punctuation marks of the poetic sentences into signs of musical construction, as it happens in the case of the lines based on the repetition of the conjunction “and” associated with comma (grammatical sign used for enumeration).

3. Comparative analysis between songs *Cu penetul* and *La mijloc de codru des* from the cycle *Images* on M. Eminescu’s poems

After having analysed the two songs – *Cu penetul* and *La mijloc de codru des* – I discovered in each piece particular features at the level of musical language, structure, semantics, style, connection between text and music. In this section of the paper, I will present the **common elements** between them, in order to identify the aspects of musical homogeneity in F. Donceanu's compositional perspective:

1) From the melodic point of view, the vocal discourse is unfolding in both songs in a medium ambitus (not very largely extended in terms of sonorous register), where the highest sound is (in both pieces) **F#** in the second octave, while the lowest note is **D** (in *Cu penetul*) and **C** (in *La mijloc de codru*) in the first octave. Moreover, the melodic lines, although have an obvious tendency to be fragmented and discontinuous, they evolve gradually, generating an embowed dramaturgy at the level of the entire pieces. The

musical phrases are conceived as a tensional arch which has to be attentively emphasized during the performance of each song.

2) At the harmonic level, both songs are composed in a modal musical language, with different origins: Romanian folkloric modes, with chromatic elements (in the first piece) and modal sonorous systems used particularly during the musical Impressionism (in the second one). Pentatonic scales are a very important element, with the difference that in the case of the song *Cu penetul* they appear mostly with semitones, while in the other song *La mijloc de codru des*, pentatonic scales are less frequent, without semitones and combined with the heptatonic structure of the scale.

3) Rhythm is characterized in each work by maintaining the basic pulsation, no matter the changing or alternative measures. Even though the first song is based on a binary beat, while the second has a ternary rhythmic cell, both pieces keep their temporal evolution, combining rhythmic stability with metric diversity.

4) As concerns their form, both songs are conceived as bi-strophic structures with introduction, interlude and pianistic conclusion. Certainly, their dimensions are different, because the introduction is larger in the song *Cu penetul*, the strophes have different number of verses, the interludes are short in both cases and the conclusions are not clearly delimited, but rather formed of many chords which generate the final cadenza.

5) In terms of poetic content, both songs have the same theme and ambience – nature, which has specific features and meaning in M. Eminescu's poetry, given by the permanent connection between the environmental elements and poetical feelings. One may feel that the musical discourse is conceived in a close relation to the verbal-poetical text, in order to balance what the listener perceives directly by words, objects or beings and what he discovers in each poem by reaching the artistic substrate and by decoding the poetical techniques. The musical versions of the two poems suggest what words can not express, having other ways of communicating the artistic message.

6) At the expressive level, both songs are characterized by a delicate lyricism, which may be felt by following the music in close relation to the poetical lines. Beyond the message conveyed through words, one may feel the artistic presence of the composer herself in the particular manner of conceiving the musical phrases, in the harmonic evolution of the discourse, in the choice of the most relevant rhythmic and metric structures in order to create the adequate atmosphere, in the details of pianistic type of writing in order to sustain the vocal line and to emphasize certain poetical meanings.

7) The endings have an interrogative meaning and a semantic function in both songs, due to the harmonic suspensions, the open final cadenzas which have a particular psychological impact. Whereas in the song *Cu penetul*, the harmonic suspension is prepared by anticipating the last notes through

chromatic oscillations in the previous measures, the other song contains an unexpected moment generated by the major chord which emerges after a long modal sequence that seemed to have another centre. Therefore, in *La mijloc de codru des*, the harmonic expectation which was induced previously remains unsolved in a virtual perspective, but receives a different solution in the listeners' conscience.

8) The pianistic accompaniment is simple and expressive, with certain subtleties which provide musical support for the poetical message. The "colourful" effects, the delicate or deep touch, the use of pedal, the resonance of the modal harmonies and the highlight of the chromatic elements contribute to the general stylistic aspect of the two songs that are similar to those composed in the first half of the 20th century. Piano plays an important role in F. Donceanu's songs, without passing beyond the sustaining function of the vocal melody in a proper, well-balanced manner.

4. Conclusions

In Mihai Eminescu's poetry, the theme of nature is impregnated with a form of "naïve" love, referring to that desire of embracing all surrounding elements, as a result of a deep, pure, unfeigned connection. Similarly, F. Donceanu demonstrates a great impetus of creation, a genuine innocence of emotion, succeeding to transpose Eminescu's poems in a musical form of expressing the same artistic feelings. When he admires nature, M. Eminescu transmits a particular liveliness generated by moments when other spectators would not be impressed by remarkable feelings in the middle of nature. But, for gifted, artistically sensitive people, all environmental objects – the mysterious sky, the ephemeral clouds, the pale moon, the shining stars, the sleeping birds – are sufficient reasons to perceive nature as a magnificent scene, just like sounds, rhythms, chords, dynamics, timbres and tone colours represent simple and "magic" means in the musical composition process. Each word and each sound become tools of the artist, the creator, leading to a recreation of the real world in a new dimension, by internalizing and transfiguring it on the artistic level. The idea suggested here is that the universe may be found inside each being, as microcosmic space.

If we approach M. Eminescu's poems and F. Donceanu's songs from a philosophical perspective, nature means to the poet what music means to the composer – a prolongation of the immediate reality, a transgression of the creative mind beyond the limits of perception, in the search of the eternal present. At this point of this research, we might conclude that nature has a bivalent value, at both musical and poetical levels, becoming at the same time means and purpose, pretext and finality of the artistic demarche, symbol of existential universe and expression of the infinite nostalgia.

If Mihai Eminescu remains a classical poet of the Romanian Romanticism, Felicia Donceanu proves to be a conservative composer, well-

intended in her will to preserve Romanian musical tradition, keeping the fundamental values of the national culture and trying to resize them on another level of creation.

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