

The Metaphor of Flight in the Romanian Compositional Landscape

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Abstract: *The work focuses on the creations of Romanian composers who show an affinity for promoting an aesthetics of essentialization and of the ultimate form. At the center of these concerns lies the motif of the bird, understood as a symbol of ascensional flight toward the celestial infinite and of a spiritualized atmosphere. The bird becomes the image of a journey toward spaces untouched by humanity, forming the nucleus of a symbolic field of transcendence. Within this framework, concepts such as wing, light, air, ether, and flight function as metaphorical extensions of the same phenomenon of ascension and of the overcoming of the material condition. Flight functions as a catalytic and expansive element, symbolizing the process of individuation, as defined in Jungian psychoanalysis and its subsequent developments.*

Keywords: *flight; bird; light; air; aether; ascension; transcendence;*

Introduction

The flight has attracted the human mind over time, flying being possible in the conscience and understood as ascension to sky, transcendence of the human condition and immortality(flying to heaven/paradies). Air, soul, spirit, light and states as immateriality or imponderability are associated with flight. Flying has a central place in many myths, religions and arts, where birds, dragons or different flying objects with symbolic significance are present.

All these aspects are described by Ioan Petru Culianu referring to the Chinese Taoism. The masters of Taoism could become imponderable², rise to heaven becoming light or cloud. Immortality is accompanied by imponderability³.

The way to heaven is often a scale with steps. In the Zoroastrianism, the souls of the virtuous rise three steps toward the heaven (level of stars, of month and sun), after having seen the purgatory. The fourth step is an endless light⁴. In *La Divina Commedia* by Dante Alighieri, the Paradise has seven levels, the soul visits it after having the experience of the hell and purgatory. Mircea Eliade wrote about the role of the scale and escalation in rites and myths that symbolizes the „way to the absolute reality”, the „abolition of the human profane condition”⁵.

Gaston Bachelard dedicated a chapter in his book, *The Air and the Dreams*, to the dream of flight, dream that, in his opinion, is very relevant and repetitive. The dreamer has the impression he/she takes a leap into him/-herself⁶. The dream of flight would be a part of the ascensional psychology⁷.

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² Culianu, Ioan Petru. 1996. *Călătorii în lumea de dincolo* [Out of this World]. Bucureşti: Editura Nemira, p. 96.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

⁵ Eliade, Mircea. 2013. *Imagini şi simboluri* [Images and Symbols]. Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, p. 55.

⁶ Bachelard, Gaston. 1999. *Aerul şi visele* [The Air and the Dreams]. Bucureşti: Editura Univers, p. 31.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

Corneliu Dan Georgescu wrote about the air that can be mobile or immobile and is associated with emptiness, wind and sky⁸. Air is musically suggested by rest, acute register, glissando, solo, monody⁹. Interesting is that C.D. Georgescu associates the four substances with the four musical syntaxes: air-monody, earth-homophony, water-heterophony, fire-polyphony¹⁰. We will refer to this point of view in our analyses.

Regarding Romanian composers, many of them were inspired by the birdssculpted in marble or bronze (*Pasărea măiastră/The Master Bird*) by Constantin Brâncuși, which are so essentialized that simbolize the flight. *Măiastrais* primary a legend in the Romanian folklore. Another work of Brâncuși, *The Endless Column*, which symbolizes the infinite, inspired many composers. The compositional works inspired by Brâncuși will be grouped in a chapter.

The idea of transcendence itself has represented a constant concern for humanity since ancient times. Certainly, the Jungian psychological conception of the individuation process and, implicitly, of the act of transcendence remains the principal reference and the fundamental benchmark in understanding and becoming aware of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, it reflects the perspective of modern man and of a society oriented toward evolution and self-awareness, characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century. Looking retrospectively, several important landmarks can be identified that highlight the manner in which this phenomenon was perceived by the great thinkers of the past.

Undoubtedly, the architectonic structure of a philosophy, as well as its durability, are indispensably connected to and grounded in a sense of certainty that a thinker possessed and associated with access to transcendence, with the idea that he succeeded in adequately expressing the Absolute.

Within a given philosophical system, specific faculties/predispositions of consciousness acquire a transcendental accent, thus becoming „capable of the act of transcending”¹¹.

Thus, the transcendental accent represented an interest for Plato – he discusses the endowment of the human spirit with the particularity of ideational vision, through which it can perceive/access ideas¹². Likewise, the idea also appears in the philosophy of Plotinus – the accent falls on ecstasy, a state in which individual consciousness is annulled and merged with the Absolute One or the supracategorical existence of God, but also in Christian doctrine – with reference to the predisposition and openness of the human spirit to embrace revelation of a divine nature.

Later, René Descartes (1596-1650) placed the transcendental accent on thinking through clear and distinct concepts, while Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) placed it on concrete or dialectical thinking, which renders „the very rhythmic process of the universal spirit, realized in an infinity of increasingly complex moments, on the logical, natural, and spiritual plane”¹³. Another point of view is offered by Novalis (1772-1801) – in his conception, poetic imagination is the bearer of the transcendental accent.

In the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), this accent is connected with inner intuition, which has freed itself from the constraints of intellectual categories and followed

⁸ Georgescu, Corneliu Dan. 2018. *Atemporal Music. Archetypes. Ethnomusicology. Romanian Composers*. București: Editura Muzicală, p. 233.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Blaga, Lucian. 2019. *Trilogia cunoașterii [The Trilogy of Knowledge]*. București: Editura Humanitas, p. 90–92.

¹² Perceived as absolute existences.

¹³ Blaga, Lucian. 2019. *Trilogia cunoașterii [The Trilogy of Knowledge]*. București: Editura Humanitas, p. 95.

the meditative path toward the deep substratum of being, a substratum that would represent the universal will.

In the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), intuition – which encompasses the absolute of life, and intelligence – „with its mathematical procedures in relation to the absolute of matter”, are endowed with a transcendental accent.

Likewise, in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), intuition is that which apprehends the being and essence of things.

1. On Transcendence in the Jungian Conception

Jung brings attention to the so-called transcendent function, which is achieved through a fusion of conscious and unconscious factors. It refers to the individual's confrontation with his own unconscious. A few considerations regarding these concepts are necessary.

The conscious ego represents the individual dimension of the psyche, oriented toward the present and organized in a rational and systematic manner. In contrast, the unconscious functions across much broader durations, preserving the traces of ancestral experience and profoundly influencing the destiny of the individual¹⁴. Thus, every human being carries within himself, in a latent form, the entire psychic heritage accumulated by humanity throughout its evolution.

Consciousness tends to perceive itself as autonomous and unique, ignoring its connection with the unconscious structures that precede and condition it. However, what the individual considers personally new often represents the repetition of archaic patterns already inscribed within the collective psyche. While conscious life is limited and ephemeral (it always has a new beginning and an early end), the unconscious possesses an inestimable antiquity, as well as a continuous and timeless character.

The reality of the unconscious remains latent until it is activated by certain external factors acting as triggering mechanisms. Emotions and affects, manifested as instinctive and involuntary reactions, represent such factors, because they undermine rational thought structured by consciousness.

The manifestations of the unconscious become visible through dreams, emotions, affects, or visions, often triggered by external factors. These reactions arise spontaneously and may destabilize the order imposed by reason; however, their role is compensatory: they attempt to restore the balance between the conscious and the unconscious.

The relationship between these two psychic dimensions involves both conflict and collaboration. Their harmonization takes place through the process of individuation, in which symbols play an essential role, since they facilitate the union of opposites. This reconciliation bears the name of the transcendent function and represents the bridge between the rational and the irrational, between the real and the imaginary, between the conscious and the unconscious¹⁵.

Among the expressions and metaphors most frequently associated with the concept of individuation, we may mention: differentiation, the realization of potential, the becoming conscious of one's personal myth, and reconciliation with oneself¹⁶. The associative images that express the core of this process include the following concepts: the journey, death, rebirth,

¹⁴ Jung, Carl Gustav. 2014. *Arhetipurile și inconștientul colectiv* [*Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*], *Opere Complete* 9/1. București: Editura TREI, p. 314.

¹⁵ Samules, Andrew. Shorter, Bani. Plaut, Fred. 2014. *Dicționar critic al psihologiei analitice jungiene* [*Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analytical Psychology*]. București: Editura Herald, p. 88.

¹⁶ Samuels, Andrew. 2013. *Jung și post-jungienii* [*Jung and the Post-Jungians*]. București: Editura Herald, p. 175.

symbols of initiation, as well as ascension, the spiral, the column, the gate, the pillar, the ladder, the sky, air, the bird, the wing, flight, light, the Cosmos.

2. The Metaphor of Flight

2.1. The Metaphor of Brâncuși's Flight – an aesthetic model for composers

Archetypal forms, myths, and legends become the focus of certain artists' preoccupations, among whom the name of the sculptor Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957) stands out.

The artist's sculptural thinking is a philosophy of naturalness – his main interest was not models or objects in themselves, but the capturing of their essential nature and purity through continuous simplification and stylization, until achieving a symbolic form that transcends representation.

The main themes¹⁷ he addressed find their correspondence in ancient myths and legends: the origin of the World, the myth of the bird, of ascension, the myth of death and sleep, the myth of the center of the World, the theme of love and fertility – themes belonging to mythology or Romanian folk beliefs.

Birds (1909–1941) illustrate Brâncuși's concern with expressing the essence and universal dimension of flight, through the stylization of form and the elimination of distinctive details. The emphasis falls on the wing as an expression of dynamism and on the aerodynamic form, defined as „an elongated ellipse, directed upward, with a sharp extremity, from the entire sculpture emanating the sense of movement”¹⁸. Over more than 30 years of evolution, this search for essence crystallizes in *Bird in Space*, a symbol of vertical impulse¹⁹.

Romanian composers have been interested in the symbolic representation of Brâncuși's bird, extrapolating what the sculptor proposed through his monumental creation: Iancu Dumitrescu creates *Bird in Space – Homage to Brâncuși for chamber ensemble* (1978), Tiberiu Olah develops the *Brâncuși Cycle* (see further, 3.1.1.), Ana Szilagyi approaches the theme in the work *Flights* for tape (2008), and Diana Iulia Simon proposes *Evocation – Prelude for solo violin* (2025).

2.1.1. Tiberiu Olah (1928-2002): *Sonata for solo clarinet* (1962), inspired by *Măiastra* by Constantin Brâncuși

The composer created the „Cicle Brâncuși” with five pieces: *The Endless Column* (1962), *Sonata for solo clarinet* (1962), *Space and Rhythm* (1964), *The Gate of the Kiss* ((1965), *The Table of Silence* (1967) that prove compositional originality, treating the parameters in a personal way. His modality has common aspects with the row thinking, through dividing the mode in mimimodes. The starting point is a cell or a motif, which grows through variational technique. Olguța Lupu writes about a „quasi-continuous transformation of the sound matter”²⁰ (Olah 613). The same author discusses the economy of means by T. Olah, which could be equivalent with the simplicity of C. Brâncuși's forms.

¹⁷ Deac, Mircea. 1982. *Brâncuși – surse arhetipale* [Brâncuși – Archetypal Sources]. Iași: Junimea, p. 6.

¹⁸ Zanini, Walter. 1977. *Tendințele sculpturii moderne* [Trends in Modern Sculpture]. București: Editura Meridiane, p. 85.

¹⁹ Ghițescu, Gheorghe. 1976. *Permanențele artei* [The Permanences of Art]. București: Editura Meridiane, p. 12.

²⁰ Lupu, Olguța. 2008. „Tiberiu Olah și Timpul memoriei”. In *Tiberiu Olah – Restituiri*, ed. by Olguța Lupu. București: Editura Muzicală, p. 613.

The initial motif in the *Sonata for solo clarinet* is a rising one, which stops on a long tone. The last one is not static, because of the crescendo from *piano* to *forte* (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Tiberiu Olah: *Sonata for solo clarinet* (bars 1-6)

The short and long tones illustrates well the flight and the rest of the bird. The long notes are in *piano*, the expression of the floating in the air. The *pianissimo* could be a sign for the imponderability. The crescendo until *fortissimo possibile* and the conquest of the space through the high register fits with the bird flight. As Brâncuși, Olah inspired himself from the folklore, using the modal technique, aksak rhythm in asymmetrical measures, contrasts between short and long rhythmic values and articulation, as well as grace notes. The fugato has two voices – the subject and the countersubject. They are dynamically differentiated. This can be a dialogue between two birds. The zigzag lines after the fugato in *cantabile* designs the flight of the master bird, while *frullato* gives the impression of wings flapping. The final is an ascension to the sky with *ostinato* and a triller in the high register. The triller appears only once in the piece and regards the bird trillers. The slow glissando at the end of the sonata reflects the last *ascensio*.

Regarding Corneliu Dan Georgescu's opinion, the solo pieces are specific to the element of air. In this sense, the follow piece is also a solo piece, inspired by the Master Bird.

2.1.2. Diana Iulia Simon (*1981): *Evocare – Prelude for solo violin* (2025), inspired by the poem *Pasărea sfântă* [The Holly Bird] by Lucian Blaga and master birds by Constantin Brâncuși

There are features with Olah's *Clarinet Sonata*: it is a solo piece, based on modes. The tendency is to go gradually to the highest register. There is a melody accompanied by ison (on D open string) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Diana Iulia Simon: *Evocation* for solo violin (bars 1-16)

The ison could be the centre in the meaning of Mircea Eliade, i.e. a sacred space (Eliade 59). In the byzantine music the ison reflects the eternity. In D.I. Simon's piece the ison emancipates creating two voices. This bivocality is maintained until the end of the work and it is unusual for the violin. The monody is diatonic, the phrases are asymmetrical and build on variation of melodic-rhythmic formulas, which gives extended melodies. This type of construction is similar with Enescu's way of building melodies. The simplicity of the sculpted bird is present in this music piece. The composer wrote in the text, which she sent us about the image of the bird. The piece reflects „the archaic, archetypal aura of this creature with symbol value”. The culmination (the highest point in *fortissimo possibile*) is reached through a crescendo in scales. Similar to T. Olah, there is an arising glissando in *pianissimo possibile* in the final, giving the impression of the disappearance of the bird in the sky (heaven). Afterwards a recitator reads the first verse from Blaga's poem („In the wind stirred by no one”), while the violinist improvises on harmonics, with drawing from the scene. Not only the bird disappears, but the interpreter too, letting the impression of flight and wind.

2.2. The Bird Motif

The *bird motif* has broad applicability in the work of composers, without having a direct affinity with Brâncuși's aesthetics, but preserving certain particularities that define a proximity to the idea of transcendence, of height, of ascension, and of the embracing of the celestial. The composers' interest in this theme demonstrates their concern with exploring it in various stylistic and expressive forms: Dan Buciuc – *Restlessness* for two concert flutes, Carmen Maria Cârnelci – *Origami I* for solo clarinet (2012), *Origami II* for solo oboe (2013), *Origami III* for solo flute (2014), Theodor Grigoriu – *Canto e soffio* for two alto flutes, *Beyond Silence – Path with Birds – 7 Haiku*, miniatures for voice and piano (2001), *Letter to the Birds*, lied on texts by St. Francis of Assisi (2004), Myriam Marbe (1931–1997) – *Les oiseaux artificiels* (The Artificial Birds, 1979), *Pavane Pastorale aux oiseaux I* (1981), *Pavane Pastorale aux oiseaux II* (2023), Violeta Dinescu – *Krendel* (1999) for two piccolo flutes, *Flight Images and Silhouettes of Birds in Duet I* (2006) and II (2009), Sabina Ulubeanu – *Bird in Time* for soprano and prepared piano (2026), Felicia Donceanu – *Legend of a Flight* (2002), and Carmen Petra-Basacopol – *Birds in Flight* for solo flute, op. 115, no. 1.

2.2.1. Sabina Ulubeanu (*1979): *Bird in Time* (2026) for soprano and prepared piano

Sabina Ulubeanu is interested in time and memory. She wrote a PhD thesis about „The Function of the Memory in the Construction of the Musical Time”. She studied composition by Tiberiu Olah. The above mentioned piece is a homage to her master. She took the first eight notes from T. Olah's *Sonata for solo clarinet* that represent the germ of his piece and symbolizes the flight through the ascendent line of seven tones and one long tone (Fig. 3). Sabina Ulubeanu used these eight tones in transpositions and in the higher register of the voice, outlining their importance in Olah's work. She used at the beginning prepared piano and ucelli. The last are used by the singer, then the soprano sings the incipit from Olah's sonata in septolet of quarter or eighth notes, at the beginning with rests between the transpositions, towards the end without rests. In this time, the piano has short different motifs, which imitate several birds, in a manner similar

with Olivier Messiaen. The motifs are formed of changing notes, repeated notes with graces, a combination between changing notes and graces in polyrhythmia and repeated notes motif.

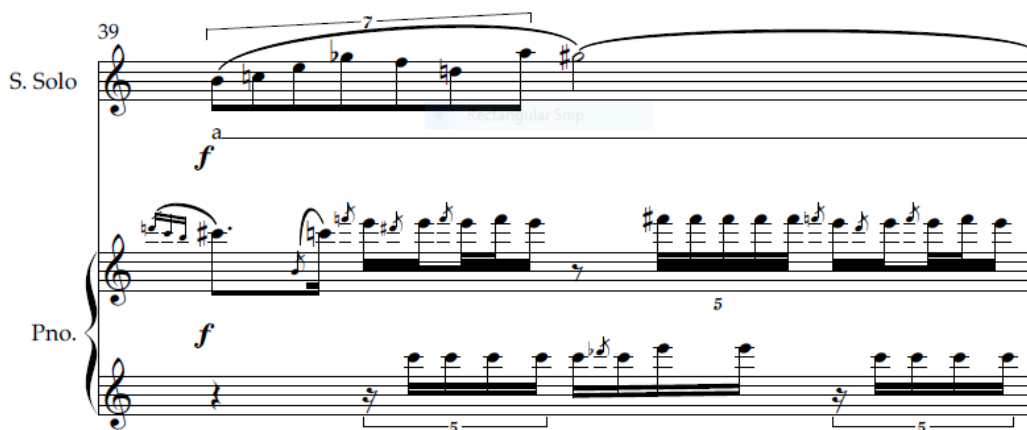


Fig. 3. Sabina Ulubeanu: *Bird in Time* for soprano and prepared piano (bar 39)

All these motifs are repeated with minimal changes. One of the change consists on playing them one octave higher. The order they appear also imperceptibly changes. Sometimes the voice takes a motif of piano and sings them between the septolet. The voice sing the septolets higher and higher. The piano ends in the higher register too. It piano gives the impression of many birds. The piece behaves like a recorded moment of birds' chirp that could be equivalent with photos, which Sabina Ulubeanu, as a photographer (her second profession), takes from the daily life.

2.2.2. Felicia Donceanu (1931-2022): *Parlando-rubato* – Concert piece for solo harp. *The Legend of a Flight* [Legenda unui zbor] (2002)

Felicia Donceanu was attired by the syncretism of the arts. She was also a poet and an art designer. Her works were imagined as pictures or theater. This came from the desire to communicate with the audience and to tell something. The voice has an important place in her work, the instruments being often treated as voices, as in *Parlando-rubato* – Concert piece for solo harp, *The Legend of a Flight*. The title indicates that the harp „speaks” freely, it tells something. The piece flows, it is not framed in a fixed form. Agogics is important and the recitativo tells about a legend, which includes facts from the past and mistery: the public does not know about the hero of the flight: what kind of being was he/she/it? The flight could also be symbolic. The topic of flight was also reflected in a previous work, *Măiastra* (1973), inspired by Constantin Brâncuși.

The past had a fascination for F. Donceanu, as it comes out from the titles of her works: *Odinioară* [In the Old Days] (1959) for seven songs after George Bacovia, *Invocatio* (1999) on biblical texts and poems of Ovid, *Cântând cu Ienăchiță Văcărescu* [Singing with Ienăchiță Văcărescu] (1984). The last work has historic instruments as viola da gamba and harpsichord, beside the soprano voice, flute and percussion. The text belongs to Ienăchiță Văcărescu, a Romanian poet, philologist and historian of the 18th century.

Parlando-rubato is a concert piece for solo harp, what means that it is virtuosically conceived for a soloist and an imaginary orchestra. The orchestra could be the bass line and the ostinato; the soloist – the ascending broken chords. The bass imagines the earth and the ascending broken chords the flight. There are dynamic, agogic and tempo contrasts (*Larghetto (rubato)*, *Mosso*, *Andante*, *Poco più mosso*, *Allegretto*, *Grave*). The isons, the tetrachordal thinking and the pentatonic in the melodic lines derive from the popular music. The eolian tones, similar to the flageolets of the strings, give the impression of lightness, imponderability. There is a connection between these tones and the Aeolian harp, played by the wind and which produced only harmonics with an ethereal sonority. The name of the Aeolian harp comes from god Aeolus, who controls the winds. In this sense, the Aeolian tones fit with the flight in the aether. At the end of the piece, the audience seems to have a more concrete image of the piece, especially of the subtitle, *The Legend of a Flight*, through the tempo indication *Grave* and the „Epilogue”, notated by the composer with *brisé* [broken]. In this point the pure instrumental music is transformed into theater, the public having an imaginary scene. It can think of a bird who was broken and became a star, because the final brings a quotation of a star song in chords, *Steaua sus răsare* [The Star is rising above]. This song is sung by Romanians at Christmas.

2.2.3. Carmen Petra-Basacopol (1926-2023): *Birds in flight* for solo flute, op. 115, no. 1 [Păsări în zbor]

Flying Birds is composed of five contrasting movements: *I. Allegro con brio*, *II. Parlando rubato*, *III. Moderato con fluidità*, *IV. Andante rubato malinconico*, and *V. Allegro giocoso*. The ensemble proposes a wide variety of tableaux and emotional states.

The first movement features a pronounced dynamism, evoking a turbulent flight in which action unfolds against the direction of the wind. *Parlando rubato* similarly describes a demanding flight, in which the bird confronts resistance and the dynamics of the air.

The third movement, *Moderato con fluidità*, symbolizes the bird's capacity to adapt to the suppleness and resistance of the air, in a controlled and continuous flight. For this purpose, extended techniques are used on the instrument – frullato, suggesting the beating of wings, and air sound techniques (aeolian sounds). From a practical perspective, the audibility of the performer's breath transports the listener into the imaginary space of bird flight. The musical motif represented in Fig. 4 is recurrent and contributes to the construction of the image of a smooth flight.



Fig. 4. Carmen Petra-Basacopol: *Birds in flight* for solo flute, Part III (bars 1-3)

Andante rubato malinconico is a symbol of the aerodynamics of flight – with moments of graceful flight and interferences caused by air currents that interrupt this linearity and calmness and force the bird to adapt to new flight conditions – suggestions of abrupt changes are the ascending sonic patterns which can be interpreted as unexpected, uncontrolled impulses, as well

as the presence of appoggiaturas that dynamize the entire process (Fig. 5). The unpredictable cadence of flight is also suggested by the presence of alternating measures, the use of equal and unequal rhythmic patterns, as well as exceptional subdivisions.



Fig. 5. Carmen Petra-Basacopol: *Birds in flight* for solo flute, Part IV (bars 7-10)

The fourth movement of the work appears to anticipate the final movement, *Allegro giocoso*, which describes an even more pronounced dynamics of flight oscillations.

2.2.4. Violeta Dinescu (*1953): *Krendel* (1999) for recorder and piccolo flute

The composer Violeta Dinescu is near to Gaston Bachelard's flight in the dream, when she ended her cycle of 10 mini-compositions, *The Key of Dreams* (2013) for flute, percussion and piano/synthesizer, with the following words: "Now I dream of flying at night"²¹. The flight and the birds are present in other piano pieces for children, grouped in the volumes: *Märchen* [Fairytales], respectively *Flugbilder und Silhouetten der Vögel im Duett* [Flight Images and Figures in Duet]. The impression of flight could also be given by an object, which is spinning. Thus, the composer was surprised by a spinning kitchen wardrobe for plates, glasses and cups, which she saw in a museum in Austria. The movement of the object is musically realized through the turning motives, which have a rhythmicity. However, they turn with variations. As Ana Szilágyi noticed in other works, V. Dinescu used motifs and sonorities of folk instruments from different geographical areas, transposed in a contemporary musical language²². So, the ornaments as graces, trills, glissandi, microtones, the modality, the stepwise going and repeated notes, heterophony are combined with contemporary effects as *molto vibrato*, *marcatissimo*, a wide palette of nuances and articulations (Fig. 6).

²¹ Szilágyi, Ana. 2013. „<<Cheia visurilor>> – CD cu lucrări ale Violetei Dinescu” [„The Key of Dreams – CD with works of Violeta Dinescu”]. *Muzica* 4, p. 13.

²² *Ibidem*.

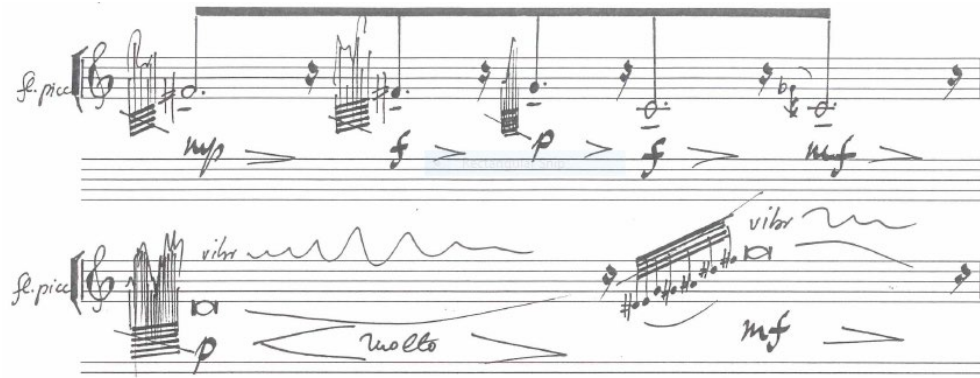


Fig. 6. Violeta Dinescu: *Krendel* for recorder and piccolo flute (bars 21-22)

There are also aleatoric moments, notated through a drawing. The expression indications (rabbioso, maestoso, con disinvoltura, etc.) transfer human features to the object.

2.3. Flight Disintegration

2.3.1. Elena Apostol (*1980): *Flight MH 17* (2016) for oboe, clarinet, bassoon, percussion (timpani, 3 Tomtoms, 2 Bongos, wood blocks, side drum, cowbells, tubular bells, xylophone), piano, violin and violoncello

The flight refers not only to birds, angels, mythic beings. It is not only a metaphor. It can also refer to flying objects, as airplanes. The piece above is the concretisation of the impression that the crash with 298 victims of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, on 17 July 2014, left to the composer. The airplane had to fly from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. The crash took place in the Ukraine, the air being shot down.

The percussion has an incisive rhythm and the piano clusters, both reflecting the violence of the crash. The wind instruments play dissonances in blocks. The long extreme high tone in the violin suggests a cry, while the piano has descending lines in both hands, which could be the falling down airplane. After the general pause every instrument plays heterophonically a line; they meet sometimes on the same tone. It is like an individual story of everyone's life – heard in the same time –, which suddenly ended. The alternance between solo instruments (cadence of timpani, vibraphone and bassoon) and *tutti* articulates the form; it is the individual versus collectivity (in the airplane and catastrophe people being together). The last section becomes more diatonic and has long tones, comparing with the intensive chromaticism and the broken melodies before, that suggests the tragedy. A texture is built in a soft dynamic, the instruments playing in its highest register, as the ascension of the souls.

3. Extensions of the Flight Metaphor – Wings, Air, Sky, Cosmos, Aether, Breath, Light

Associated with the *bird motif* are also the elements *wings, flight, air, sky, breath, light, cosmos, and aether*. These symbols have meanings deeply rooted in humanity's past and relate to that primordial layer of the collective imagination, in which forms are not simple representations, but condensations of essences, of permanences, of *archetypes* that transcend temporality and

individuality, configuring a stable relationship between humans and the fundamental elements of existence.

Aeris is associated with notions such as the immaterial, emptiness, wind, sky, and the breath of life. In Greek philosophy, air acquires special meanings – it is both the substance of the soul (*psyche*) and of the intellect (*nous*). At the same time, reference is made to the airy nature of the soul and to impersonal immortality²³.

Air can be mobile or immobile. In its mobile form, regardless of the intensity of its movement, it is endowed with positive attributes – as an anthropogenic element, it participates in the infusion of life or is recognized as the divine energetic center of the universe²⁴. Musically, it suggests pause, the high register, glissando, solo, monody, and especially subtlety, the imperceptible, the subliminal.

In myths, the *ether* is associated with the air of the upper heavens. The latter was described by Greek philosophers as astral light or primordial cosmic fire, the purest form of air, the fifth element (*quinta essentia*)²⁵; in the Pythagorean conception, it is described as an imponderable element, of a subtler nature than fire, akin to the universal soul. Musically, it can be suggested through sound textures that create a sense of floating, spatiality, slow movement, fluidity, airiness – a symbol of infinity and transcendence.

Ignis is associated with notions such as ascending, dynamic, evolutionary, unstable, destructive, but also sun, explosion, flame, light, brightness, warmth, volcano, or lightning. Musically, it suggests rapid ascending motion, polyphony, texture, crescendo, accelerando, or agitation, change, and ephemerality.

The concept of *aeris* is symbolically associated with the *sky*. The latter is understood as the Cosmos, the Universe, the space of celestial bodies; it is the expression of perfect order and is closely linked to belief in divinity as well as to the role of the philosopher, namely *to contemplate eternal truths in the heights*. The vision of celestial order may acquire slightly varied nuances: „God created the heavens in such a way that man, by contemplating their *harmony*, is *drawn upward* toward the study of philosophy” or „contemplation of the heavens is meant to lead to the restoration of harmony in the soul”²⁶.

Representative works include: Doina Rotaru – *Balance of Light/Cumpăna Luminii* (1982), *Lights from a Rainbow* (1993) for chamber orchestra, *Wings of Light* (2000) for flute orchestra, *Dragonfly/Libellule* (2000), *L'Ange avec une seule aile* (2010), Concerto No. 5 for flute and orchestra, *Jyotis* for solo flute (2017; in Indian philosophy, *Jyotis* means Light), *Light* for wind quintet, Ana Szilagyí – *Jonathan Seagull* (1996–1997), ballet based on the short story *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach, *Aether* (2024) for flute and piano, *Flatus* (2015).

3.1. Doina Rotaru (*1951): *L'Ange avec une seule aile* (2010), Concerto no. 5 for flute and orchestra

The flute is a favorite instrument in the work of Doina Rotaru. Its sonority is archaic, it recalls of the sonority of ancient instruments as shepherd's flute, but also Panflute or ocarina. Doina Rotaru used the flute because of its soft sound. She composed Concerto no. 1 for flute and 13 strings and percussion (1986), *Spiralis II* – Concerto no. 2 for flute and orchestra, *Magic*

²³ When the body dissolves, *psyche* is reabsorbed into the purest part of air, into ether or into the celestial stars (with the note that, at that time, there was no differentiation or reference to a fifth element).

²⁴ Kernbach, Victor. 1978. *Miturile esențiale [Essential Myths]*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, p. 150.

²⁵ Peters, Francis E. 1993. *Termenii filozofiei grecești [Terms of Greek Philosophy]*. București: Editura Humanitas, p. 34.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

circles (1993) for three flutes and orchestra, *Florilegium* (1996) – Concerto for 4 flutes and flute orchestra, *Wind of Light* (2000) – piece for 24 flutists, 5 *Vitrals* for 24 flutes and tape (2002).

Regarding the title above (*L'Ange avec une seule aile*), both, angel and wing refer to the flight in the air. The air also has a direct connection with the wind instruments, which work with concrete air. The soloist plays flute, piccolo and alto flute. In the compartment of percussion they are Asian instruments as Japanese rin or Thai gongs. The celesta with a „celestial” sound was well chosen, because it suits with the heaven of the angels.

The begin has the indication „transparente” as the being of an angel. The strings have flageolets in *crescendo* and *decrescendo* within piano dynamics. The imperceptible movement through glissando in the strings and solo piccolo gives the impression of calm. The vibrato of the soloist can regard the fluttering of angel's wing, as well as the triller in glissando. Remarcable are the few tones used by the flute doubled in heterophony by the orchestra, as well as the piano dynamics in the orchestra. The fast glissandi further in piano can suggest the height. In *Molto lento*, the ison in the strings can represent the earth with people, a contrast to the heaven. This is obvious in the section with the indication „Poco grotesco, primitivo”, where the simple rhythm of the percussion is dominant. This wildness goes on in the section „Gioco demente”. However, the concerto ends, as the other pieces, with an ascending glissando in the high register.

3.2. Ana Szilagyi (*1971): *Aether* (2024) for flute and prepared piano

The work *Aether* was inspired by the electronic piece *Les Ailes* (1973) by Włodzimierz Kotonski (1925–2014), which suggests an organic sense of floating and the dynamics of flight, as well as the movement of air.

The title of the work is highly suggestive and places the entire sonic universe within a cosmogonic aesthetics of becoming. Ether, the fifth element, represents the purest form of air and a symbol of the space of celestial bodies, of infinite space, of universality, and of transcendence.

Almost naturally, the composer chose the alto flute in order to create a celestial, light, breathable atmosphere, in which air becomes the expression of ether – the invisible medium of presence and cosmic movement. The piano amplifies the expressivity of the wind instrument and outlines a sonic space with cosmic resonances.

The musical language integrates unprocessed acoustic sonorities and extended techniques specific to contemporary performance: for the flute, A. Szilagyi uses jet whistles, white noise, aeolian sounds, harmonics, flutter tongue, pizzicato/tongue slap, while for the piano various instructions are given: fast gliss. on highest strings, placing a 1-euro coin on the strings of Ab and d or a similar pitch object, pencils between the strings, muting strings with fingers, muted tremolo.

The musical discourse alternates between precipitated passages (Fig. 7), associated with the idea of chaos and mobility, and suspended, static sections (Fig. 8), characterized by a sensation of floating and spatial expansion. This alternation configures a fluid sonic dimension that can be interpreted as a symbol of spatial ordering, infinity, and transcendence.

Symbolically, the work expresses fundamental oppositions: static-dynamic, mobile-immobile, material-immaterial, void (absence of life)-air (breath of life), chaos-order.

blow fast
A. Fl. 28
f 3
Aether 3
flutter tongue
mf 5
Pno 28
mf 5
pencils between the strings

Fig. 7. Ana Szilagyi: *Aether* for flute and prepared piano (bars 28-29)

blow into the piano
A. Fl. 54
harm. p
Pno 54
simile mf
harm. p
3/4
Ad. *

Fig. 8. Ana Szilagyi: *Aether* for flute and prepared piano (bars 54-60)

4. Steps to Infinity

The *ascending* and *descending scale* is an ancient symbolic representation of the will of *transcendence*. The intended meaning can be interpreted as follows: ascension points toward exteriority and toward a transcendence of the corporeal, while descent is configured as a movement of interiority. In a complementary perspective, attention shifts to the ascending steps, which plastically express the break of level that allows the passage from one mode of existence to another.

Another representation of ascension, of height, is captured by Constantin Brâncuși and his *Column of Infinity*. Through its form, the sculptor succeeds in conquering space by uniting earth with sky²⁷; the form open toward infinity, seems to symbolize the integration of man into the big Cosmos.

Musical representations of the theme were proposed by Corneliu Dan Georgescu. He develops the *Brâncuși Cycle*, which includes three pieces: *Study for the Endless Column* (2008), String Quartet No. 11 (2011), and *Prelude to the Endless Column* (2011). However, the interest and admiration for Brâncuși's sculptural aesthetics are also felt in the organ works written after 1992 – *Ascendo*, *Spatium*, or the *Orbis* cycle (the ascending movement, respectively the circular movement).

²⁷ The hourglasses of the *Infinite Column* symbolize air.

The composer Aurel Stroe was also interested in reduction to the essential, in the idea of continuous simplification of an initial idea, to its ultimate expression. The composer cultivated the *archetype of the ladder (transcendence)*, the *cultural archetype – the arcade, ascensio-descensio, anabasis-katabasis* – see the works *Arcade* (1962) and the composition class *Canto I* (1970) and II (1971).

The composer Octavian Nemescu was preoccupied with the artistic shaping of the „Total Archetype”. He applied the idea of *archetype* to all musical parameters, as follows: on the melodic level, O. Nemescu cultivated the *archetypes Ascensio* and *Descensio* – the climbing and descending of the ladder, *Beginning and End (Incipit and Finalis)*²⁸ – see *Four Dimensions in Time IV – Illuminations for Large Orchestra and Male Choir* (1967), the cycle *Music of the Hours*²⁹, *Music of the Minutes of a Fatal Hour* (2012–2018)³⁰.

He also resorts to cyclical, spiral forms – see *Concentric* (1969) and *Metabizantinirikon* (1984); see also Doina Rotaru – *Spyralis I* (1989) for harp, *Spyralis II* (1991), Concerto No. 2 for flute and orchestra, *Spyralis III* (1992) for alto flute and guitar, String Quartet No. 4, *Seven Steps Toward Heaven*.

4.1. Octavian Nemescu (1940-2020): *Escalinner (Inner Ladder)* [Scara lăuntrică] for string orchestra, 2 percussionists and tape (2017)

The work was written for Gala Braşov 1987, an event organized by the Braşov County Museum of History in partnership with UCIMR, and represents a sonic monument dedicated to those who had the courage to oppose the communist dictatorship, evoking the turmoil that preceded the 1989 Revolution.

The sound discourse follows the evolution of the timbre qualities of the participating instruments, with a particular focus on string instruments, featuring accentuations and superpositions of sound conglomerates together with the sonorities of percussion instruments, to which an electronic tape is added, which underpins and amplifies moments of sonic density. This deep layer structures an active, agitated, information-dense music, which often ends abruptly, followed by silence.

The pause, as a symbol of the archetype zero (the void), can be interpreted as expressive tension – a form of inner „cry”; however, at the same time, it represents a space of reflection, awareness, and invites meditation, offering spatiality through the suspension of the sonic discourse. In this context, a particular affinity emerges with the work of Marin Gherasim, where „full” and „empty” correspond to coagulation and rarefaction, as well as to concentrations and pauses with profound meanings. Both creators aspire toward transcendence and the capture of cosmic balance.

²⁸ See the following works *Alpha-Omega* (1988), *Finalis-Septima* (1989), *Finalis* (1991), *Nonsimfonia V-a, a Sfârşiturilor* [*The Fifth Nonsymphony, of Endings*] (1992) or *Presimfonia VI-a, a Începuturilor* [*The Sixth Presymphony, of Beginnings*] (2000), etc.

²⁹ See *Cvartetul de coarde pentru miezul nopţii* [String Quartet for Midnight] (1993), *Quindecimortuorum pentru ora 1 noaptea* [Quindecimortuorum for 1 a.m.] (1994), *NegAntiDiaDua pentru ora 2 noaptea* [NegAntiDiaDua for 2 a.m.] (1995), *PhosisTriPercMetaMor pentru ora 3 dimineaţa* [PhosisTriPercMetaMor for 3 a.m.] (1996), *SeptuOr pentru ora 4 dimineaţa* [SeptuOr for 4 a.m.] (1997), etc. The works circumscribed to it are composed for each of the 24 hours and are performed on different levels (storeys) – revealing the composer’s concern for *altitude-based music*.

³⁰ *Muzica primelor 17 minute ale unei ore Fatale* [Music of the First 17 Minutes of a Fatal Hour] (2014), *Muzica minutelor 17-30 ale unei ore Fatale* [Music of Minutes 17–30 of a Fatal Hour] (2015), *Muzica minutelor 30-35 ale unei ore fatale* [Music of Minutes 30–35 of a Fatal Hour] (2015), etc. The composer once again uses a seven-tier pyramid, however it is a pyramid with its apex pointing upward; it is a music of ascension, toward the higher levels of understanding.

A constant intention can be observed in using sound material *in ascensio* – from the first octave to the third octave. Likewise, a characteristic preference of Nemescu can be noted in the interweaving of static and dynamic moments.

Another approach concerns the use of the same sound material, in the same nuance, based on the principle of timbre addition, without the dynamic accentuation of accumulation, suggesting a collectivity united by the same belief.

The work comprises two moments *in ascensio*: the first, more extensive (starting at bar 45), and a second, toward the end (from bar 171), in which the glissandi and the indication *poco a poco cresc.* trace a dynamic trajectory from *p* to *fff*. The *descensio*-type intentions are shorter, highlighting, by contrast, the two dominant *ascensio* moments.

The *inner scale* describes a phenomenon intensely promoted by the artist. It is connected to *imaginary music*, an active form of art that facilitates inner transformation, an original concept that represents an extension of his concerns related to archetypes. Such a creation employs a set of musical and extra-musical notation systems, graphic elements and text, accompanied by a detailed guide of the work made by the composer. As an *inner ritual*, by excellence individual, *imaginary performance* belongs to a *non-spectacular aesthetic* – the performer-transmitter is also the receiver of the message³¹.

The work, as well as the entire compositional universe of the author, describes a personal, artistic and human trajectory. This is because Nemescu built his entire existence around a constant aspiration toward evolution and spiritual transformation. At the same time, it serves as an excellent guide for leading the individual along the path of spirituality, with the intention of achieving balance.

5. Conclusions

Among the expressions and metaphors most frequently associated with the concept of individuation, we may mention: differentiation, the realization of potential, the becoming conscious of one's personal myth, and reconciliation with oneself. As associative images expressing the core of this process are terms such as ascension, the spiral, the column, the sky, air, the bird, the wing, flight, light, breath, aether, the Cosmos.

Archetypal forms, myths, and legends become the focus of certain artists' interests, among whom the name of the sculptor Constantin Brâncuși stands out. His *Bird* sculptures illustrate his concern with expressing the essence and universal dimension of flight, through the stylization of form and the elimination of distinctive details. Romanian composers have extrapolated the ideas promoted by the sculptor into the musical medium, offering musical images of bird flight, translating its essential gesture of ascension, lightness, and transcendence into sound.

The symbols associated with the bird motif form a constellation of meanings rooted in the archetypal structures of the human imagination, where flight emerges as a central image of transcendence, expressing elevation beyond material limits and the aspiration toward the infinite.

³¹ Nemescu, Octavian. 2015. „Muzica imaginară” [„Imaginary Music”]. *Muzica* 3–4, p. 5.

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