

# FLAMES ON TREASURES: *FILM MUSIC BY* *CORNEL ȚĂRANU\**

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## ABSTRACT

Our research is an overview of the film music of Cornel Țăranu as a whole, connected to his creation, taking a very brief look at other film music compositions, created by composers like Ștefan Niculescu, Aurel Stroe, Anatol Vieru, Tiberiu Olah, pertaining to the same generation. Considering his film music as an extension of his own life and creation, which keeps the same stylistic coordinates (it. *stilema*), and also the same melodic or texture coordinates, compositional procedures, timbre-instrumental components – sometimes accompanied by self-quotes, we managed to reveal some sound characteristics of one of the most personal, modern and impactful contemporary composers.

**Keywords:** sound effects, jazz, variations, musical dynamism, melodic archetypes, musical style, polystyrene, temporality, musical spatialization, cluster, sound curtain, temporality.

*The time of my journey is long;  
the path I have to take is endless.*

**Rabindranath Tagore**

This research represents only the schematization of a chapter from a book in progress, devoted to the music of Cornel Țăranu, being somewhat a sketch of

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\* Translated from Romanian by the author, proofreading by Anda Ionescu

ideas for what the chapter will be. The limited space that an article has in a volume, forced me to compress as much as possible the ideation and the results of the research after watching the films and listening the C.D. *Cornel Țăranu. Film Music*, with sound restorations by Ovidiu Barbu. Because of this, the connections between music and image, atmosphere, direction, are only touched upon. I thank Prof. Țăranu for his ongoing support and a special thanks to director Nicolae Mărgineanu for the unconditional help I had from him; I owe him the fact that I managed to see films like *The Cardinal* and especially *Above All*, a film that was not broadcast in Romania.<sup>1</sup>

### **General coordinates of Cornel Țăranu's creation**

Cornel Țăranu's film music, (with the exception of the film *Cardinalul*, which subtly differentiates itself from the others), integrates naturally into the composer's chamber and symphonic creation, like a chess piece on a multicoloured board in a unique game in which the sounds make certain predetermined movements – some of them anyway, and others move as in a game of dice (with burlesque tints), seemingly random but converging towards a unique musical direction, depending on the present situation, connected to the whole. We refer to the overall amount represented by a work, always related to the whole of a unitary creation, from which it is clear that it was detached. Let's not forget that Mr. Țăranu is a good chess player. For the game of chess, as well as for the development of the musical process, we need time.

Before talking about the temporality of Țăranu's music, I will try to draw some coordinates the music of this composer moves on.

As I can observe, the music of Cornel Țăranu generally denotes a composer of the Chameleon Sepia type, from the family of cephalopods (along with the octopus and the squid) that stretches its tentacles in various directions (covering multiple genres ranging from chamber music to choral and film, to symphonic music or concert genre), permanently preserving its identity.

Even if the comparison seems a bit forced, it is the only one (without being rude, far from me, on the contrary) that can help me express what I feel about my master's music as a whole. Even if sometimes only one tentacle is visible, the others being adjacently implied, one feels its belonging to the whole, regardless of timbre changes (colors) or melodic (feelings) or composition techniques, so that regardless of the ensemble or usefulness of music, the role and the purpose of each

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<sup>1</sup> I still count on his support as he was kind enough to give me an e-mail interview about the beginnings of the collaboration with composer Țăranu and about his work as a director and man of culture.

piece/fragment, structure, remains fed by the basic body, which waves its tentacles with maximum efficiency depending on the context.

## Composition techniques

If you want, we are dealing with a music of duplications (as he explained to us in the Composition and Stylistics courses regarding duplications in Debussy's works), but compared to Debussy, Țăranu's procedure and process of duplication, sometimes *ectoplasmic*, belongs to other areas of the horizon and is applied from and to other perspectives: always alive and moving constantly, always surprising, inquisitive, sometimes ominous.

In this sense, Țăranu's music operates with archetypal melodic formulas, of oligochordic origin, often chromatinized with refinement, heterophoned, polyphoned by imitations and strettos, harmonized with its own sounds, mirrored in refined sound curtains of the cluster type, imbued with prismatic colours, delirious, in which just like the light passes through the prism, the sound is filtered in polychrome sound tones, as a result of the unique twinning of timbres with sound effects that are specific to the new music (high or low indeterminate sounds, sounds *battuta corda*, *sul* or *doppo ponticello*, string operation piano with fingers, metal rod or nails, percussion sound effects, from membranophones to cowbells, woodblocks, glass rods, bamboo or metal and others).

These melodic formulas are varied with such artistic mastery and elegance that every time the speech seems something new, original, with a fresh air, like a snake that eats its tail and sheds its skin and identity continuously, remaining permanently the same.

This multiple, floating identity is continuously preserved in the film music that remains a reflection of itself, chameleon-changing color and shape, penetrating the gaps of the image, completing or supporting it, iridescent and irrigating the ideational and emotional support.

## About temporality

I subscribe to Ghenadie Ciobanu's idea that in Cornel Țăranu's music, metaphorically speaking, time is reversible, so that certain works or parts of works from the present or even the future, (re)influence the past at the sound level. From this point of view, the work *Oreste & Oedipe* returns, to the music of the films *Pădureanca* (The woman from the forest) and *Undeva în est* (Somewhere in the East), *Cântecele nomade* (Nomadic Songs) dialogues even in the form of a quote with *Întoarcerea din iad* (The Return from Hell) to name but a few. This music circulates

not only in time but also in space, sometimes at the confluence of time and space, passing through a temporal loop to parallel universes imagined as energetic movements towards an interruption, stillness, temporal quantum, which makes the connection between alternative realities.

“When trying to unify gravity with quantum mechanics, the idea of «imaginary» time must be introduced. Imaginary time is indistinguishable from the directions of space. If one can go North, he can turn and go South; equally, in imaginary time, if one can go forward, then one can turn and go back.”<sup>1</sup>

We can conclude that thanks to the continuous melodic, harmonic, timbre mobility, Cornel Țăranu’s music, including here his film music which occupies a privileged place, is placed in timelessness, and from the point of view of space, we remember the comparison with a Rubik cube that constantly changes its faces, and we can look at this simultaneously from the outside and from the inside, as an overall rotation of meaning towards archetypal origins, and as a bending of these origins towards value and essentialization.

## Testimonies

Some time ago I was talking with percussionist Mircea Ardeleanu who shared with me the fact that thanks to *Ars Nova* and its instrumentalists, Cornel Țăranu managed to unpack the time in and through his music. We can talk about the deformation and disarticulation of time through fascicular melodic-rhythmic gestures, sudden, short, overlaps of random and controlled acts, i.e. the unfolding of time in temporal-sound beams.

The distinguished trombonist and good friend Mircea Neamț, professor of trombone at the “Gheorghe Dima” National Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca, spoke about such an experience as a testimony; he had the chance, as a student, to participate, together with the ensemble *Ars Nova* and its conductor, at the music recordings for the film *Pădureanca* (1986), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu. He gave me the opportunity to get behind the scenes of the registration process and the way Cornel Țăranu managed things in such situations:

The rehearsals were mostly done in Bucharest (probably at the studios in Buftea), the instrumentalists (Aurel Marc – oboe, Gavril Costea – flute, Ioan Goilă – clarinet, Ion Olteanu – horn, Gheorghe Mușat – trumpet, Grigore Pop – percussion, Grigore Botar – violin, Adrian Filipescu – double bass, to name but a few) having experience in modern music and being very familiar with the conductor’s music and work methods. His work strategy was optimal: efficiency, speed, but not to the

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen W. Hawking, *Scurtă istorie a timpului. De la Big Bang la găurile negre*, Humanitas Publishing, Bucharest, 2005, p. 166.

detriment of quality, condensation, not wasting any time. Thanks to the professionalism of the performers, the recordings lasted only a day and a half. To complete the atmosphere of the recordings, as an anecdote, Mircea told me that at one point, the second director, asked the master to compose a strain of music of 39 seconds for a scene (at the death of horse one or two). On stage, Mr. Țăranu showed the instrumentalists a landmark of the music already written, from where they could play for 39 seconds, the conductor being with the clock in his hand. Everyone understood, only the horn player, Ion Olteanu, did not. He had lost his way in the score, looking for a new moment, when in fact it was something they had played before. "Where from?" the horn player asked. "Gicule, you tell him", Țăranu asks the trumpeter. "It's useless if I tell him, he does not believe me, only you", replied the trumpeter to Mr. Cornel. Also regarding the horn player, because he played with a vibrato that did not suit the moment, Cornel Țăranu replied: "Come on, Ioane, please don't play like in Auschwitz!" If we add to all of the above the fact that the violist (predestined character) forgot his viola on the train (fortunately Mircea found it), we have almost an overview of the atmosphere of those times in *Ars Nova*. The music for the movie *Pădureanca* (The woman from the forest) was quite difficult; as Mircea shared with me: "There were melodic-rhythmic cells like a signal, moments of improvisation, many sound effects, with which I quickly adjusted. I wrote down some landmarks on the score, you had to be always on stage, to realize things on the go and after all this, things become easier."

## Movie music

Most of the film music written by Cornel Țăranu is for films directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu. Due the latter's goodwill, I received some memories sent by mail from Mărgineanu, featuring the beginning of the collaboration between director and composer, a collaboration that would turn so beneficial both for the films that were made and for the Romanian film culture of the second half of the twentieth century.

"When I was a student major in movie image operator, enrolled in the second year, I made my first short film about the wanderings around town of a young man who had just found out he had cancer. I asked Cornel Țăranu to record some musical noises obtained directly on the strings inside the piano. I didn't want music and to my joy, Cornel easily played along, improvising and recording these noises, in a much more expressive way than I expected and which in my opinion suggested my hero's condition in the movie quite well. The film came out very well and largely due to the improvised musical illustration by Cornel. Maybe this success gave me the confidence to debut as a film director in ten years' time. The

films I worked on with Cornel Țăranu are largely inspired by the Transylvanian universe: *Întoarcerea din iad* (The Return From Hell) from the short story *Jandarmul* (Bobby) by Ion Agârbiceanu, *Pădureanca* from the short story with the same title by Ioan Slavici, *Flăcări pe comori* (Flames on Treasures), after the novel *Arhanghelii, Undeva în Est* (Somewhere in the East), it is inspired by the novel *Fețele tăcerii* (Faces of Silence) by Augustin Buzura. It was a universe that both Cornel Țăranu and I knew very well and our collaboration was pleasant and went as naturally as possible.”<sup>1</sup>

1. *Sentința* (The Verdict, 1970), Romanian-Hungarian co-production, directed by Ferenc Kósa

The film critic, Ioan-Pavel Azap, characterizes this film as a sober evocation of a well-tempered drama, without melodramatic stridencies, of Gheorghe Doja’s uprising.<sup>2</sup>

From the point of view of the music, it is more illustrative as well as modern, starting from the beginning of the film with a chromatic modal music, with recognizable roots in folklore (you can see some valences of closeness with the music of Tiberiu Olah, *Mihai Viteazul*), so that during the film, sparingly, there appear, in the important moments of the action, percussion inserts (eardrums), pedals with sounds between whistle and electronic music, stringy, tension and restlessness, over which often overlap sounds of brass especially in the serious register. Arbitrarily speaking, we find traces of light resonances from Ligeti (*Atmosphères*), if we think about the shrill pedal in clusters and Xenakis, about percussion instruments.

2. *Mere roșii* (Red Apples, 1976), directed by Alexandru Tatos

“Alexandru Tatos’ first feature film, a current film that does not sweeten reality, remarkable for the sincerity of the director’s approach and the characterological veracity of the characters.”<sup>3</sup>

In the excellent book *Cornel Țăranu. Mosaic Confessions, Studies and Essays*, signed by Ștefan Angi<sup>4</sup>, we find a chapter dedicated to the film music written by the master. Among others, reference is made to the doctoral thesis of Anamaria Stamp<sup>5</sup>, defended in the USA, which speaks in an informed way about the film

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from the interview I did by email with the director Nicolae Mărgineanu, on May 18, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ioan-Pavel Azap, *Short Characterization of the Eleven Films for which Cornel Țăranu Wrote the Music*, a text conveyed by email, November 29, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ioan-Pavel Azap, *Short Characterization of the Eleven Films for which Cornel Țăranu Wrote the Music*, a text conveyed by email, November 29, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Ștefan Angi, *Cornel Țăranu. Mărturisiri mozaicate, studii și eseuri*, Eikon Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> Anamaria Stamp, *Romanian Music in the compositional Style made by Cornel Țăranu. How could Țăranu’s Film music become Part of a Concert Program to promote Țăranu that could be Played in a Concert Hall Setting*

music of Cornel Țăranu from which (we refer to the doctoral thesis) we will quote in our turn:

“The first important film whose music was composed by Țăranu is *Mere roșii* (Red Apples). In this film, the composer uses a leitmotif theme that often appears with the main character, thus wrapping him in that mood in which we should see him: dedicated to his work, kind and always looking for the right side of things. It is interesting to see how the music, together with its appearance on the screen, creates this positive aura, caused by the arrangement of the song in major key.”<sup>1</sup>

In order not to expand too much, we will refer only to the fragment recorded on the cd (no. 3), which represents a fragment of symphonic jazz music, with all its characteristics, based both melodically and harmonically on seventh and ninth chords, an engaging music that gives us the feeling of floating over the lonely plains. (Țăranu used the theme from this film in a later work *Siciliana Blues*, for large orchestra and piano, with obvious improvisational accents.)

3. *Mai presus de orice* (Above All, 1978), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu and Dan Pița

This film is a documentary about the 1974 earthquake that first shows the testimonies of people caught and then rescued from the rubble or people who were in disastrous situations, and then we have images with the attempt to save people from very difficult situations that arose after the earthquake.

The beginning of the music brings to the stage sound effects made by string instruments, supported by piano clusters, as well as pointillistic elements, like raindrops made on vibraphone, completed later by *battuta corda* sounds on bass piano sounds, all this mirroring a nightmare atmosphere through non-traditional timbre colors.

A first musical intervention will bring to the stage the string orchestra with the melodic predominance of the second great descendant (*F sharp - E*) as an element of narration, so that later, the scale is extended to the ground sound (thus completing the trichord (*E - F sharp - G*), over which the vibraphone will be superimposed with trills and sound beams intoned by strings *sul ponticello*.

The second musical intervention is a replica of the previous one, but elliptical of the large second interval.

Musical structure number three is constituted as a variation of the previous ones bringing, as a novelty, improvisational elements that will create a sound curtain like a plume of smoke coming out from under the rubble. The

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*with or without visual Imagery?* doctoral tutor Huib Ramer ArtEZ Institute of the Arts, Zwolle, Olanda, 2013.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*.

clarinet enters the scene with *A – B flat – A – F – E* sounds, which twins x-cells of Enescian origin.

A fourth musical moment brings on stage an oboe solo, with the sounds *A-G-A-C-B-G-A*, superimposed over the existing elements (the ostinato of the second great descendant and the cluster pedal on the strings), in dialogue at distance with the clarinet, whose melody is also built on the chain of cells x, *D sharp – E – D sharp – B – A sharp*.

A fifth moment (minute 59) presents in the discant, with the role of totalization, a cantilena of the strings with modal-serial inserts, which leaves the place of the sonority of the string curtain, pierced by vibraphone sounds.

The next moment, of tonal-functional origin, is an illustration from the musical literature that brings a welcome change of atmosphere, with openness to optimism. We can consider it as a variation on an A chord (A major). It will be followed by a very short string intervention that makes the transition to the next structure, the eighth, which is based on vibraphone, piano and glockenspiel sounds, over which indeterminate loud sounds are heard on the strings and sound oscillations (large and small seconds) at the flute, with adjacent returns of the great second, as an embodiment of fatality, but also as a glimpse of hope.

The ending is also a musical illustration: a chromatic music with Bachian accents, from which the transition is made to an atmosphere reminiscent of the Enescian *Prelude in unison*.

4. *Un om în loden* (*A Man Dressed in a Loden*, 1979), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu

“Adapted from Haralamb Zincă’s detective novel, *Death comes on tape*, on a screenplay by the writer, it is first and foremost a demonstration of stylistic virtuosity, but also one of the very few successful Romanian genre films.”<sup>1</sup>

The same is true of music, its polystyle, the wide range of means used, the exuberance and lyrical thrill that characterizes it. The style and style elements of Țăranu’s music are recognizable from the first seconds by the melodic but also timbre elements (a whistle at flute, superimposed over a cluster mobile pedal, its mobility being given mainly by the interior *glissandi*), which continuously dynamize the sound and give a feeling of continuous fibrillation.

The jazz moments are well highlighted, the composer creating in the spirit of symphonic jazz, with breadth and tenderness, inspired pages of very high quality. In general, the music of this film is based on the alternation between jazz and elements specific to Țăranu’s ordinary music (a beginning of clarinet lamentation, elements of repetitive and improvisational music, *sul ponticello* effects, *doppo ponticello*, indeterminate high sounds, *pizzicato*).

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<sup>1</sup> Ioan-Pavel Azap, *Short Characterization of the Eleven Films... op. cit.*

“The music composed by Țăranu for the film *Un om în loden* includes a variety of styles, and was performed in so many ways that it would be almost impossible to present it on stage, moreover, in a concert hall. Even if the music was considered good film music, it does not mean that the music could fit elsewhere than in that particular film, in that particular scene.”<sup>1</sup>

From my point of view, this music can stand as concert music, like most Țăranu’s film music, provided that their author builds bridges between certain fragments.

5. *Întoarcerea din iad* (Return from Hell, 1983), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu.

“Screening after the short story *Jandarmul*, by Ion Agârbiceanu, of a deep drama, remarkable especially in the war sequences.”<sup>2</sup> For simplification and space saving, I will refer only to the moments recorded on the aforementioned CD (*Cornel Țăranu. Film Music*).

1. (no. 13 on the CD) Pastoral moment (approximately four minutes) based on improvisational elements (sticks, bongos, wooden blocks, sticks of various materials, whistle effects) over which a horn signal is superimposed, which imitates the horn, interrupted by incisions of eight-eighths of the strings, alternating with others of seven-eighths, which interrupt the sound curtain with new effects, which they also (string instruments) make. In this context, we can talk about historical restitutions in terms of Nicolae Mărgineanu’s films and sound restitutions, in terms of Cornel Țăranu’s music.

2. (14) Contortion of *glissandi* involving the whole orchestra, perceptible indeterminate high sounds of the strings, very acute sounds of the piccolo, percussion background that dynamizes in the subsidiary, to which block interventions of the brass are added. Thus a heart breaking, nightmarish atmosphere is born – again we can compare it with the work *Orestes & Oedipus*, as an atmosphere, everything decanting into a general *glissando*, descending, in the end, like a lethargic collapse into nothingness. Through this fragment, and not only, the composer demonstrates mastery in handling sound masses, in the ability of bonding instruments and groups of instruments, resulting in sound masses with different intensities and timbres, in constant motion, like galaxies in the universe.

3. (15) Sound beams, on strings and brass, as a beneficial energetic influx, over which the percussion (vibraphone, glockenspiel) and the piano drip bunches of metaphysical sounds.

4. (16) Effects on the piano strings (*glissando* with the nail), atmospheric sounds, acting bamboo sticks, glass, metal, among them vibraphone sounds, twinned with

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<sup>1</sup> Anamaria Stamp, *Romanian Music in the Compositional Style... op.cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Ioan-Pavel Azap, *Short Characterization of the Eleven Films... op. cit.*

repetitive flute elements, reminiscent of sections from *Cântecele nomade* (Nomadic Songs). In this way, a music of waiting, of telluric sound mixtures, in continuous change and expansion, is born.

5. (17) Quote on flute from *Nomadic Songs*, the moment Good lady good night, supported by high sounds and *sul ponticello* on strings, all energized by bongos and drums, with improvisational moments, in a gradual increase, towards a cut climax.

6. (18) The obsession of the small second, which passes from the flute to the clarinet and then to the violins (also like a memory from Nomads), supported by the cluster pedals of the strings, over which the brass with sound beams intervenes. Impact music, force, tension, penetration.

7. (19) This structure brings as timbre novelties, (along with the already existing elements) drumming sounds (this instrument having a prevalent role in the next film, *Pădureanca*) to which, at the next moment, 8. (20) which is constituted as a replica of the previous one, the kiss effect to the brass (which means the sound kiss of the mouthpiece, resulting in a burlesque sound with nuances) is added.

After a delirious moment, with a tendency towards the paradoxical facet – 9.(21) – illustrating in the figure moving tectonic plates (made by *glissando* at the ropes), vibraphone, which rests on hitting the glass, bamboo and metal rods, already mentioned, decanting moment sonorous third small C-A. The following appearances of the music, also bring hetero-phonizations on the section E – D sharp – F sharp – D sharp, dance elements with random comments of the wooden instruments, *tulnic* (Romanian alpenhorn) horn signal, F-G-A-F-G-C, moments of trills with surreal accents, bass sounds on all instruments and even sound echoes reminiscent of the music of *Above all*, through the echoes of Enescu with chromatic nuances of atonalism with modal sections, in a dialogue between strings and oboe that will be compressed later in a *stretto*.

6. *Întunecare* (Darkening, 1986), directed by Alexandru Tatos

“An ambitious attempt to screen Cezar Petrescu’s novel bearing the same name, partially successful; the film is retained by mosaicizing the action and reconstructing the facts in a long flashback.”<sup>1</sup>

We have in this film music that combines jazz moments, patriotic songs, *Pass the Carpathians, you Romanian Battalions*, a quote from Mozart’s *Alla Turca*, melodic projections built on quartet major chord, but from time to time, everything dissolves into the musical elements specific to the composer: oscillations, airy curtains of sounds, tensions that appear unexpectedly. We can therefore see a wide range of means that compete for a sound mosaic.

7. *Pădureanca* (1986-87), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*.

Film inspired by the short story by the same title by Ioan Slavici, on a screenplay by Augustin Buzura with references to the reality of the '80s (cholera epidemic that does not exist in prose, allusion to the communism "roller").<sup>1</sup>

The musical debut is made with sonorous stridencies, bass sounds on the double bass, loud sounds on strings, *glissando* on strings, sound beams, many of the elements that the Peasant uses in his music being present here, including the relief of the small second, supported by the dynamism brought by percussion. Unlike other films, here the soundtrack is generous, the music being based on elements of the compositional technique and timbre already present in the music of previous films, but adapted to the context, as I said, chameleonic arms that change their role and purpose according to the context, proving a rare mastery and an exceptional musical intelligence. We also notice in the film interventions of fiddle music, which are played at the pub: *And last night with a full moon / I walked near to you, my love / I heard your mother / How bad she was scolding you.*

8. *Flăcări pe comori* (Flames on Treasures, 1987), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu

"Screening of the novel *Arhanghelii* by Ion Agârbiceanu, on a screenplay by Ion Brad, a story about the universe of gold in the Apuseni Mountains – with mine owners, *holoangari*, with the world of the village, anchored in concrete, resulting in a rigorous film, without being rigid, showing a construction with well-proportioned relationships between characters and situations."<sup>2</sup>

The musical motif of debut, of a "temperate nostalgia", places us in a universe where nothing is what it seems. The tendency to capture specific to the desire is also reflected in the music, creating a fresco of the time, but also following the action and characterizing the characters.

9. *În sudul sufletului meu* (In the South of My Soul, 1988), directed by Frieder Schuller

"The film, shot in Bucharest, recounts the years spent here by the young Paul Celan and the creation of his most famous poem, *Todesfuge* (The Fugue of Death). The director was strongly influenced by contemporary witnesses and friends of Celan, who were still alive at the time."<sup>3</sup>

Having only the recording of the three musical moments on CD, I notice the poetic atmosphere, built through dialogues between the wooden wind instruments, both between them and with the string instruments. We know how close the soul of the composer is to Paul Celan. An air of romance at the confluence with other genres from the past reveals a nostalgic side that includes even the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

director, who had the opportunity, coming to Bucharest to meet the friends that Celan had here. There are moments of nothingness, combined with the effects of the strings, twinned with the oboe's microphones and the dialogue of wooden wind instruments, whose narration is combined with masked melodic outgrowths of folk origin, in an optimistic color.

10. *Undeva în Est* (Somewhere in the East, 1991), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu

Tension and anxiety are the good sisters of this inspired music, one step ahead of the previous ones. Situations of great drama are polyphonically mirrored in moments of hightensioned music. There is no lack of arsenal, clusters, soundtracks, and one of the themes is imported (on the principle of communicating vessels) from the film *In the South of my Soul*, which proves cyclicity and continuity (unity) from the music of one film to another.

Adapted from Augustin Buzura's novel, *The Faces of Silence*. The first attempt in Romanian cinema to capture a dramatic moment in (relatively) recent history: the forced collectivization of the '50s. Balanced, without excessive revenge.<sup>1</sup>

11. *Cardinalul* (The Cardinal, 2019), directed by Nicolae Mărgineanu

"Based on a screenplay written by Bogdan Adrian Toma, *The Cardinal* rewrites the biography of an exemplary personality, of Romanian spirituality: Bishop Iuliu Hossu. The dosage of data that outlines and defines the historical background of the narrative is sparingly distributed throughout the film."<sup>2</sup>

The music of the film *The Cardinal*, subtle and barely perceptible, like the personality of the main hero, is anchored in meta-tonality, differing in clarity, style, even timbre from previous film music. Seeing the film, you can hardly believe that the music is signed by Cornel Țăranu. We are dealing with an atmosphere of austerity full of warmth, which seems to emanate from the very essence of the main character. One sees in the conception of this music, the sifting that time has done to the mastery of music in the composer's pen, in order to reach the essences through simplicity, candor, ineffability.

## Adjacent music

Ștefan Niculescu makes his debut in film music with the movie *Calea Victoriei sau Cheia visurilor* (1965), directed by Marius Teodorescu. It is actually a film adaptation based on Cezar Petrescu's novel and illustrates the attempts of a

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.*

magistrate determined to expose a corrupt oil tycoon. More than a million tickets were sold for this film. In a year, he will come back to the screen with music for a film by Ion Popescu Gopo, called *Faust XX* (SF comedy, 1966), a film based on a modern variation on the classic Faustian theme, in the sense that, adaptation to the modern times, an old doctor with an incurable disease, tempted by Mephistopheles, agrees to have his brain transferred to the body of a young nurse.

In both films the music creates an atmosphere that captivates the film fan, the songs alternating lyricism with drama in full accordance with the emotional states that were required to be suggested. The combination of light musical fragments with a speech imbued with quotes from Gounod's music (in *Faust XX*) or leitmotifs associated with intense psychological feelings (*Calea Victoriei*) created two remarkable soundtracks.<sup>1</sup>

*Felix and Otilia* (1972), directed by Iulian Mihu

It is said that the writer George Călinescu would have liked the film based on his novel *Enigma Otiliei* (Otilia's Enigma) to be made in the style of the film *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964). He would have hummed, according to the anecdote, a song to the screenwriter (was he good at music?), who, in his turn, passed it on to composer Anatol Vieru who turned it into the song *What is this life / Otilia tell me ...* The song was performed by pop singer Aurelian Andreescu. Unlikely however this anecdote, because, according to Ioana Popescu, Anatol Vieru would have used the same musical way also in works composed in the early 1960s, such as the *Cello Concerto*, *Chamber Symphony*, *Fight with Inertia*.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the action of the film, it takes place on two levels that aim at Felix's love for Otilia, while the other aims at the effort made by the Tulea family and the lawyer Stănică Rațiu to seize the fortune of the miser old man Costache.<sup>3</sup>

I did an experiment, watching in parallel fragments from *Felix and Otilia*, with an interesting music, a little baroque, but full of originality, written by Anatol Vieru and *Pădurea spânzuraților*, for which Teodor Grigoriu wrote an exceptional soundtrack, with wide, symphonic breaths, over large spaces, like a look from above, which encrypts and gives meaning to everything that takes place. I also added to my experiment the music from *Calea Victoriei*, with a well-matched music

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Leonard Mociulschi, *Ștefan Niculescu, Poetică, matematică și armonie muzicală*, Cartea veche Publishing, 2010, 2013, Bucharest, [https://books.google.ro/books?id=84eTDwAAOBAJ&pg=PT15&lpg=PT15&dq=muzica+de+film+de+stefan+niculescu&source=bl&ots=USiTRm5N4q&sig=ACfU3U2Rb0\\_vcMytnoltWq-P0e71eYWDJw&hl=ro&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjG\\_LS5-7HpAhWLwQIHHDWAHEQ6AEwCHoECAoQAO#v=onepage&q=muzica%20de%20film%20de%20stefan%20niculescu&f=false](https://books.google.ro/books?id=84eTDwAAOBAJ&pg=PT15&lpg=PT15&dq=muzica+de+film+de+stefan+niculescu&source=bl&ots=USiTRm5N4q&sig=ACfU3U2Rb0_vcMytnoltWq-P0e71eYWDJw&hl=ro&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjG_LS5-7HpAhWLwQIHHDWAHEQ6AEwCHoECAoQAO#v=onepage&q=muzica%20de%20film%20de%20stefan%20niculescu&f=false), access 14.05.2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ioana Popescu, *De vorbă cu Ioan Grigorescu*, Artprint Publishing, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 43-44, 47, [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix\\_%C8%99i\\_Otilia](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_%C8%99i_Otilia), access 15.05.2019.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

signed by Ștefan Niculescu; while listening to it, one could not guess the unique ways that this composer would enter, like Alice in the Land of Music full of originality. Stroe's music for the film<sup>1</sup> also has unsuspected valences. Of all, Țăranu's music seems to me the most personal, while the others adapt their pen according to the context. Furthermore generally speaking in Țăranu we often notice more parsimony, fearing as if not to waste useless sound plans.

### About the director Nicolae Mărgineanu

I had the chance to meet director Nicolae Mărgineanu in the house of Mr. Cornel Țăranu. I remembered the evening spent with him as one of the most emotional and valuable moments in my life.

He is a man of special refinement, full of warmth and kindness, who emanates an almost unnatural candor. His films are like the man Mărgineanu. Vertical, proud, leavened in the spirit of value and imbued with the struggle for justice and depth, for the preservation of inner freedom in the spirit of truth.

I present below a short quote from Călin Căliman's book, about *A Man Dressed in a Loden*:

"Nicolae Mărgineanu's directorial vocation was felt from the beginning: his film had rhythm, suspense, a modern cinematic language, an elegant plastic drawing, a music in tune with the atmosphere (Cornel Țăranu) and an elite cast: Victor Rebengiuc, Ovidiu Iuliu Moldovan, Constantin Diplan, George Constantin, Mircea Albulescu, Tănase Cazimir (the most exciting typological proposal), Sanda Toma, Draga Olteanu Matei, Andrei Finți, Florina Luican, Gheorghe Visu. *A man dressed in a loden* inaugurated a substantial filmography."<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusions

Following this quasi-musicological approach, we can imagine Cornel Țăranu as a great magician of colors who works with sounds alchemically, knowing how to transform melodic sections and rhythmic-melodic formulas, usually of archetypal origin, into metaphysical speech with openness to the universe of magic and essences. His musical gestures (starting from a common stylistic matrix), short but sometimes recognizable from a great distance, contortions and sound flashes, sent like beams of light into nothingness (in terms of the technique of elaboration the novel by Virginia Woolf, *Miss Dalloway*, comes to

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<sup>1</sup> Octavian Nemesu, *Aurel Stroe – Originalul*, in "Muzica" Review no. 6/2017, <http://www.ucmr.org.ro/Texte/RV-6-2017-2-ONemesu-ASTroe.pdf>, access 01.06.2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ioan-Pavel Azap, *Short Characterization of the Eleven Films...op. cit.*

mind where the speech is sprayed like the light of a lighthouse, in various directions) give the music of his reign a feeling of a continuous movement within a discontinuous environment, like light is beam but also wave. In this regard, you can see on the attached website, a premiere photo that shows this duality of light.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mediafax.ro/stiinta-sanatate/o-fotografie-care-prezinta-lumina-atat-ca-unda-cat-si-ca-particula-realizata-in-premiera-mondiala-foto-13941936>, access 01.06.2019.