

# Feria IV - Franco Donatoni's concept as a catalyst for the creative process

## Feria IV - O conceito de Franco Donatoni como catalisador do processo criativo



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**Abstract:** Feria IV (1997), an original work written for accordion by Franco Donatoni, reflects the singularity of a composer who marked his time for his unique genius and creativity, innovating musical writing with deep influences from Webern, Boulez and Stockhausen. Based on the idea that the previously presented material could be reformulated in such a way that it would never run out, Donatoni developed a Bricolage concept in his music, directing rhythms, causing rapid changes in texture and reusing the materials from one piece to another. A frequent participant in Darmstad summer courses composition, his music is characterized by constant expressiveness, lyricism, enthusiasm and exaltation of spirit. The article is presented in three sections: general notions about the composer and work, interpretive analysis and the interpreter's point of view conclusions about Donatoni's concept as a catalyst for the creative process.

**Keywords:** Feria IV; Franco Donatoni; free bass accordion; contemporary music; bricolage.

**Resumo:** Feria IV (1997, obra original escrita para acordeão por Franco Donatoni, reflete a singularidade de um compositor que marcou a sua época por uma genialidade e criatividade ímpares, inovando a escrita musical com profundas influências de Webern,

Boulez e Stockhausen. Partindo da ideia de que o material apresentado anteriormente poderia ser de tal forma reformulado que nunca se esgotaria, Donatoni desenvolveu um conceito de Bricolage em sua música, direcionando ritmos, provocando mudanças rápidas na textura, reutilizando e recontextualizando os materiais de uma peça a outra. Participante frequente dos Cursos de Verão de Darmstad, sua música é caracterizada por uma constante expressividade, lirismo, entusiasmo e exaltação de espírito. O presente artigo encontra-se dividido em três secções e procura comprovar a existência do conceito de Bricolage como catalisador do processo criativo.

**Palavras-chave:** Feria IV; Franco Donatoni; free bass accordion; contemporary music; bricolage.

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*I can affirm that the composition process varies considerably depending on the musical substance used, and that it is nearly impossible to repeat.*

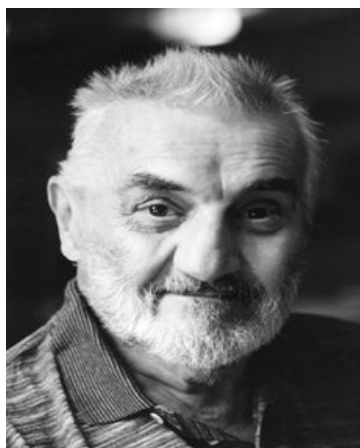
*Franco Donatoni*

## **Feria IV (1997) – Franco Donatoni (1927-2000)**

### **1. General notions about the composer and the work**

Donatoni's composition techniques (fig. 1) question Number in its abstraction and fascination, considered as a reservoir of potentiality, as powerful as it is immaterial (Ircam-Centre Pompidou, 2012). When a backtracking operation should take place, development somehow manages to create artificial branches (Delaney, 2002).

**Fig. 1: Franco Donatoni**



*Source: Charlotte Oswald*

His works often contain numerological support and he uses numbers (interval distances, rhythmic lengths, pause times) as part of his method of composition (Levine, n.d.).

*I always start from something that needs to grow and be transformed. Today I realize that I can't just start out with an abstract idea and use my instincts to seek out the basic "material" necessary. (Ricordi news)*

Donatoni's 'radically different approach' it was a kind of bricolage. Bricolage, by definition, is something made or put together using whatever materials happen to be available. According to Wright (2000), the composer embraced the idea that the detailed material could be reformulated in such a way that it would never run out.

Feria IV is a work that is divided into two pieces, the first in a moderate and unalterable tempo (always quarter note = 63), the second in a slower tempo but progressively accelerating towards the end (quarter note = 49/60). Dedicated to the accordionist Claudio Jacomucci, the work has a total duration of approximately 11' and, in the 1997 edition of Universal Music Publishing Ricordi, is developed in 120 music systems (20 pages). Part I is made up of 66 music systems (11 pages) and part II contains 54 music systems (9 pages).

Franco Donatoni's work is clearly rewritten in sections. In piece I, the second section is based on the first: the last chord on the first page is the same as the first; the second page begins with arpeggios that derive from the chords of the first page (starting with the second), completing the total-chromatic with the remaining notes of the chromatic scale (Bochmann, personal communication, 2010)<sup>1</sup>.

Observing the texture and articulation, it appears that piece I is made up of three sections, some with variants, which are interspersed. The block chords in section A appear repeatedly and represent the highest point of the piece (page 7), with isolated use of accentuation and the master register<sup>2</sup>.(footnote: what's master register?)

The dynamics rises through all degrees from pp to ff, then gradually descends to a pianissimo sonority. This ascending and

<sup>1</sup> As per email dated november 4, 2010

<sup>2</sup> Mechanism that allows you to play with four voices simultaneously and reach a certain sonority

descending path of dynamics is accompanied, respectively, by the use of more and less acute registers and also by more and less sonorous registers (adding or subtracting voices).

## 2. Interpretive Work Analysis

Below is schematically presented the general structure of part I (fig. 2). Each section presentation represents the appearance of new material or a different combination of already presented material, in a 'bricolage' of texture, dynamics, articulation and registers.

Fig. 2: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, part I (schematic table)

Section	Duration	Texture	Dynamics	Articulation	Registers
A	6 systems; 1 page	Block Chords	pp	staccato	Right Hand: Clarinet; Left Hand: 1 voice
B	16 systems; 2,5 pages	Ascending Arpeggios	p	legato	Medium (clarinet); bass 1 voice
B'	5 systems; 0,5 pages	Counterpoint (melody and accompaniment)	mp	Legato right hand, tenuto left hand	Medium (violin); bass 2 voices
A	5 systems; 1 page	Chords Block	mf	tenuto	Medium/acute (oboe); bass 3 voices
B	6 systems; 1 page	(almost) homorhythm in parallel and downward movement	f	legato	Medium/acute (oboe); bass 3 voices
A	6 systems; 1 page	Block Chords	ff	accent	Master; bass 3 voices
C	15 systems; 2,5 pages	Dialogue; trills and appoggiatures/quick figurations	f	legato	Medium (violin); bass 3 voices
C'	4 systems; 0,5 pages	Counterpoint (appoggiatures); block chords	mp Block Chords p	staccato	Medium (clarinet); bass 1 voice
B	5 systems; 1 page	Right hand descending monody	pp	legato	Bass (bassoon)

The duration component is of great importance in piece I, in such a way that a numerical relationship can be found in the

duration of the music systems that present the sections. The difference in the number of systems between the 1st and 2nd exposures corresponds right after the sum of the systems from the 3rd and 4th exposures. After a stop of six systems in the middle of the piece, this relationship is repeated later on (fig. 3).

**Fig. 3: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV**  
 (duration of music systems and numerical relationship)

section:	A	B	B'	A	B	A	C	C'	B
systems n.:	6	16	5	5	6	6	15	4	5
	(≠10)		(Σ10)			(≠9)		(Σ9)	

On the other hand, if we take into account the duration component but from the perspective of the number of pages that expose the sections, we find a numerical relationship that reveals the mirror shape between numbers 1 and 3, with the turning point being the middle of the piece on page 6, in a total of 11 pages (fig. 4).

**Fig. 4: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV**  
 (length of pages and numerical ratio in mirror form)

1(A)	3(B) (2,5B+0,5B')	1(A)	1(B)	1(A)	3(C) (2,5C+0,5C')	1(B)
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In piece II, Franco Donatoni reformulates material presented in piece I and also uses the technique of material detail, thus creating new motifs. Dynamics are in a prominent place, cyclically alternating between *ff* and *pp*. The articulation presents the form of relay, in which each exposition of a section sets the tone for the articulation of the next section (*legato+tenuto* > *tenuto*; *legato+staccato* > *staccato*; *staccato+legato* > *legato*). Below is schematically presented the general structure of part II (fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, part II (schematic table)

Section	Duration / Movement	Texture	Dynamics	Articulation	Registers
A	12 systems; 2 pages; crotchet = 49	Arpeggios in undulating motion plus long note	ff	Legato right hand, tenuto left hand	high/low (organ); bass 3 voices
B	9 systems; 1,5 pages; quarter note = 49	Harmonic Texture left hand; trills right hand	pp	tenuto	Acute (piccolo); bass 2 voices
C	15 systems; 2,5 pages; quarter note = 58	Descending arpeggios; small interludes	ff Interludes pp	Legato Interlude staccato	mid/high (Oboe); bass 3 voices Middle Interludes (clarinet)
D	6 systems; 1 page; quarter note = 58	Block chords (rhythmic game)	ff	Staccato, accentuation	Master; bass 3 voices
E	6 systems; 1 page; faster possible	Right hand appoggiaturas; left hand clusters	pp Clusters ff	Staccato, legato at the end	Acute (piccolo); bass 1 voice
B	6 systems; 1 page; quarter note = 60	Homophony; trills right hand	ff	legato	master; bass 3 voices

The duration and tempo components are of great importance in piece II. Observing the number of music systems in each different tempo, one can find a numerical relationship with the numbers 1 and 2, either in the order '21' or in the order '12'. After two sets of 21 systems in ascending tempo, the last 12 systems show a fast tempo without reference followed by the beat base quarter note = 60 (fig. 6).

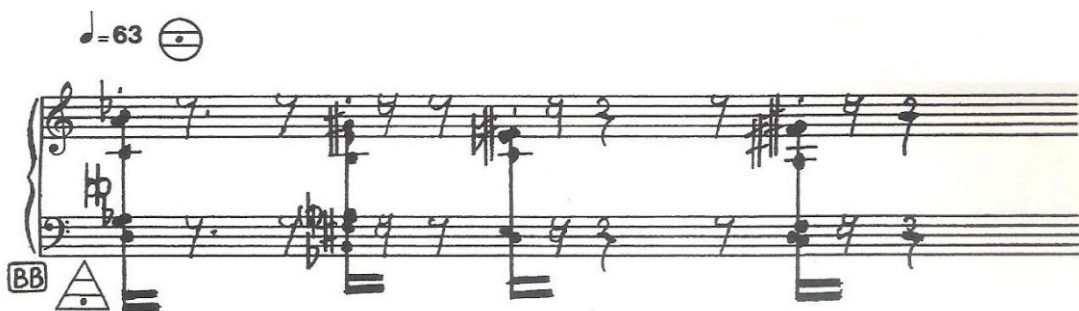
Fig. 6: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV  
(duration of music systems and numerical relationship)

section:	(A+B)(G=49)	(C+D)(G=58)	(E+B)(faster possible;G=60)
systems n.:	21	21	12

Next, the structure of each piece of the Feria IV work is presented in more detail and the resources used with the accordion with converter system are highlighted.

Piece I begin with blocks of pianissimo and staccato chords that alternate with moments of silence, resembling the painting technique known as pointillism (fig. 7). In this **section A**, the initial chord will lead to itself, exhausting all the possible notes of the chromatic scale in the middle. The quarter note = 63 defines a slow tempo and the registers (medium / one voice in the bass) are equivalent to a clear and clean sound. The times of silence are organized into different durations, generating some suspense in the unfolding of the musical text (characteristic of pointillism).

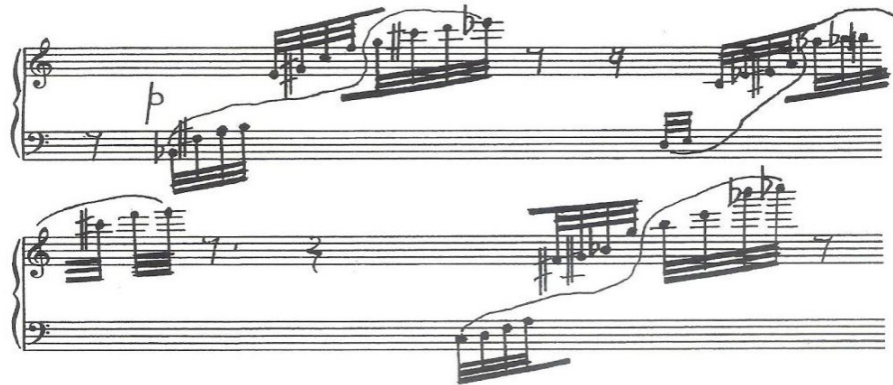
Fig. 7: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (initial exhibition – section A)



Page 2 starts a new section completely different from the previous one in terms of execution (**section B**). Branches of the previously presented chords now appear, in a kind of ascending arpeggios presented through fuses with a total of twelve chromatic notes (fig. 8). From the performer's point of view, for a virtuous, clear and convincing performance, perfect articulation between the two hands is necessary, avoiding cutting in the middle of the text and portraying a continuous line. The silence that exists between each presentation of the dodecaponic series is essential for exposing the following information.

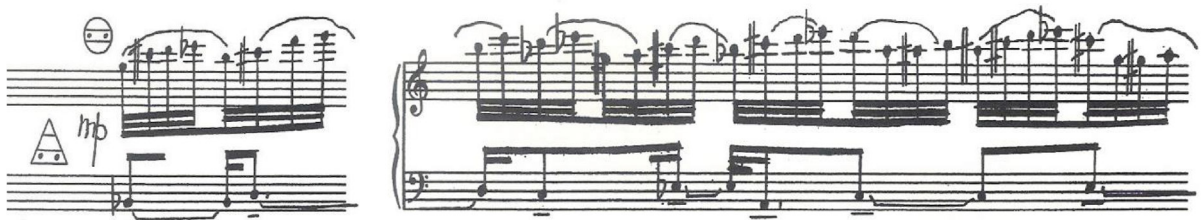


Fig. 8: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section B)



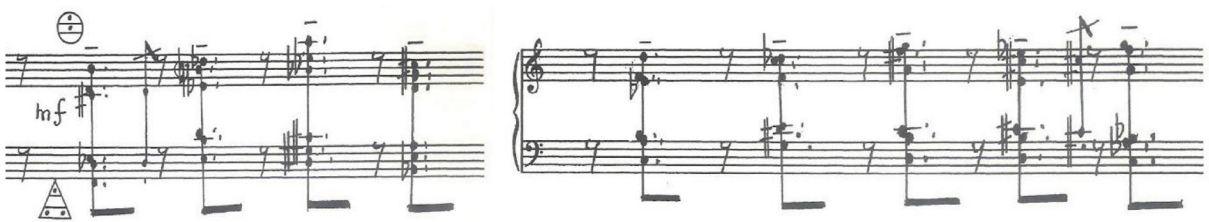
On page 4 there is a different presentation, although continuing with the rhythmic movement shown above (fuses). In this **section B'**, the bass line is the guiding thread, performing a melodic course in counterpoint with the upper voice (fig. 9).

Fig. 9: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section B')



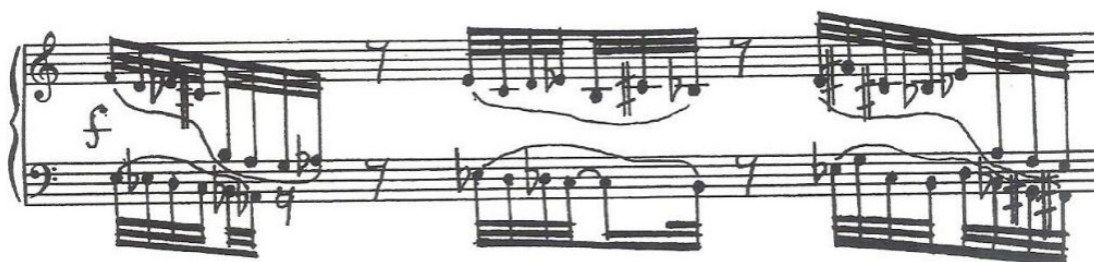
On page 5, we witness the re-exposure of blocks of chords, in a path that is rhythmically similar, irregularly interspersed by small brief appoggiaturas, avoiding a routine path (fig. 10). This is **section A** again, albeit with changes in form and musical content.

Fig. 10: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section A)



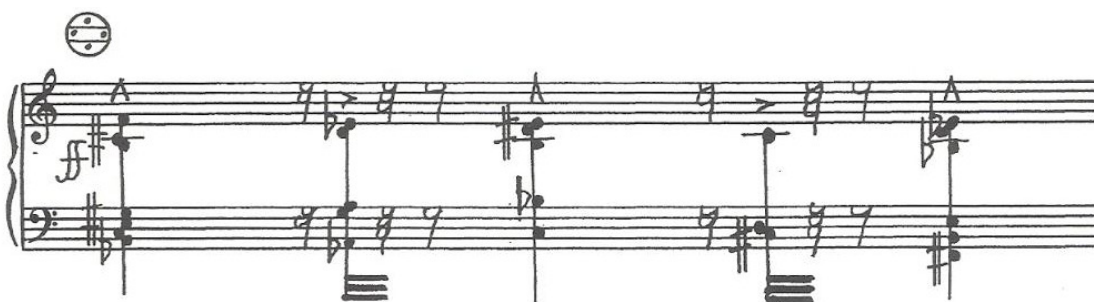
On page 6, **section B** appears again, with a rhythmically similar presentation to page 2 but in a downward movement. The melodic line is backed up in parallel counterpoint by a bass line and the entire section is (almost) homorhythmic and performed in strong dynamics (fig.11).

Fig. 11: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section B)



Then **section A** is resumed, now in a fusion between the initial material and the material on page 5. In master register and *ff* sound, on page 7 sustained chords and short duration chords are presented that disappear into the void (silence), integrating an increasingly dense and loaded structure (fig. 12). This moment corresponds to the climax of the play.

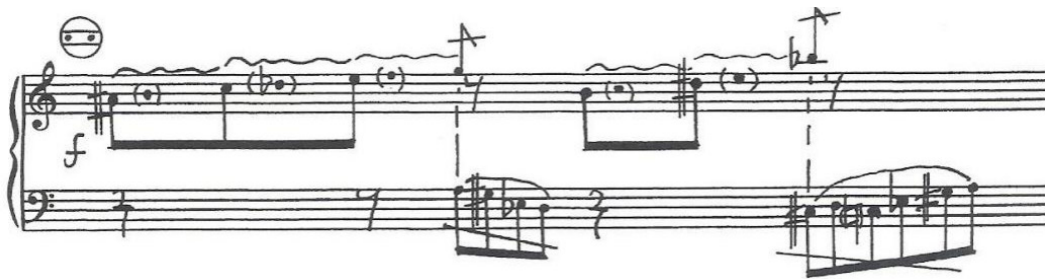
Fig. 12: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section A)



**Section C** appears on page 8. It is characterized by trills that run upwards and culminate in appoggiaturas (fig. 13). In this dialogue between the two keyboards, quick figurations with the 12 chromatic tones are sometimes presented. On the top line, the melody Sol, Bb, E-F#, Sol stands out at various times. Halfway

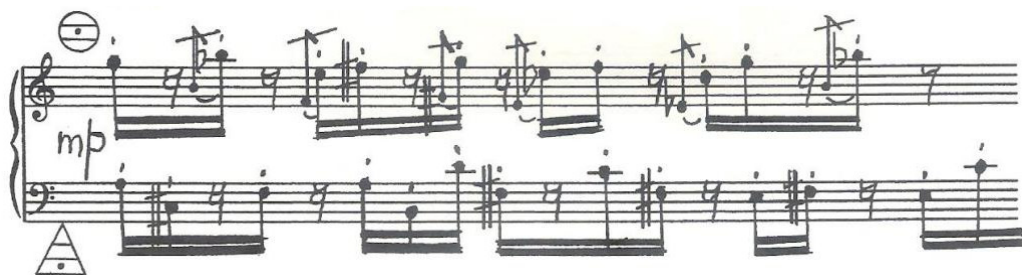
through page 9, the composer seems to reinvent the exposition on page 8, adding notes to the fast figurations, eliminating the trills and consolidating the melody in the top line already presented by the appoggiaturas.

Fig. 13: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section C)



The confrontation between the two voices follows on page 10. This is **section C'**, with similarities with the previous section C. The upper melody G, Bb, E, F#, G is recombined, first in a rhythmic play and then in blocks of chords (Fig. 14). Despite the similarities of the latter with section A, the thematic material belongs to section C.

Fig. 14: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (section C')



The final section appears on page 11, in a kind of fast-moving improvisation, in a melodic and fluid speech, from high to low range (fig. 15). This **B section** recombines previously presented material and now performs a descending monody, always on the right-hand keyboard. This final impulse will lead to and rest on a low F# that will be suspended for a duration of approximately 5 seconds in decreasing dynamics, in a *fade out* (fig. 16).

Fig. 15: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (final exhibition - section B)

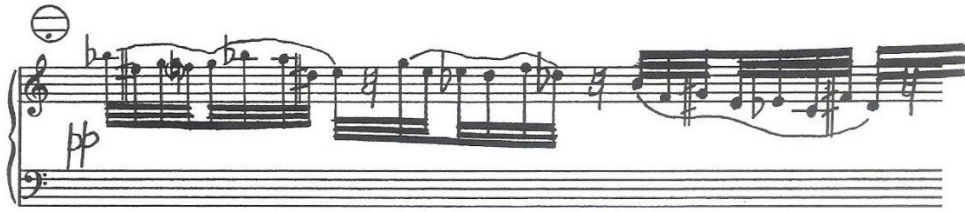
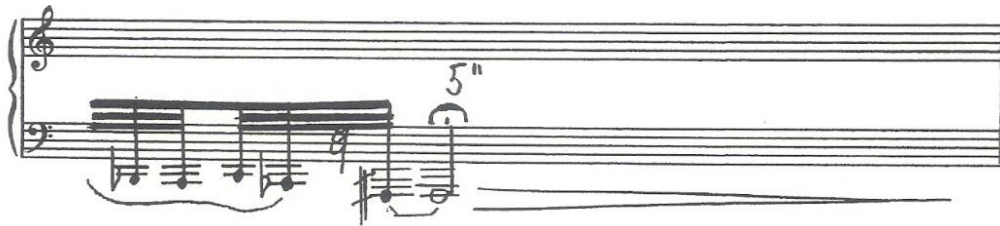
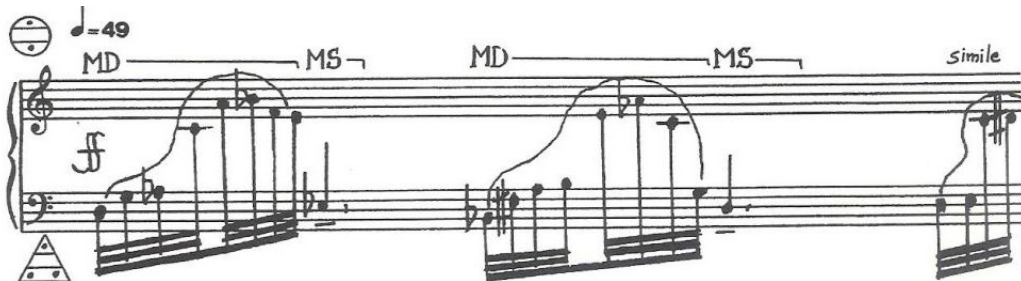


Fig. 16: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece I (final exhibition - section B)



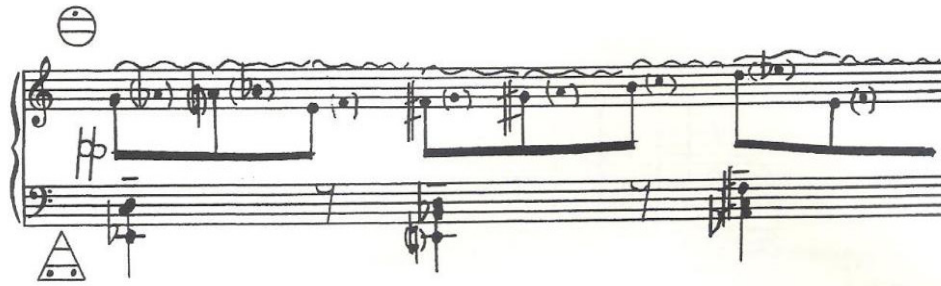
Piece II of the work Feria IV begins in fortissimo, as opposed to the beginning of piece I. In a quarter note = 49, **section A** presents a speech with similarities to the one previously presented. The six notes of the 23 block chords of the A section of piece I are now announced in 23 melodic lines performed on the right-hand keyboard (fig. 17). The phrases start in the ascending direction in a fast movement, but they descend again and rest on a long note, in a continuous thread in terms of the sound spectrum. The notes D, G, Lab, C, A, Sib start the exposition.

Fig. 17: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (initial exhibition - section A)



Contrasting in dynamics and in the registers used, on page 14 there are trills supported in counterpoint by long chords and in tenuto on the keyboard of the left hand (fig. 18). This section B has similarities with section C of part I.

Fig. 18: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section B)



A change in tempo to quarter note = 58 on page 15 introduces section C, which recombines material presented in section B of piece I. is essential (fig. 19). Sometimes, the speech is interrupted by small presentations of repeated notes that prophesy a new section to come (fig. 20).

Fig. 19: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section C)

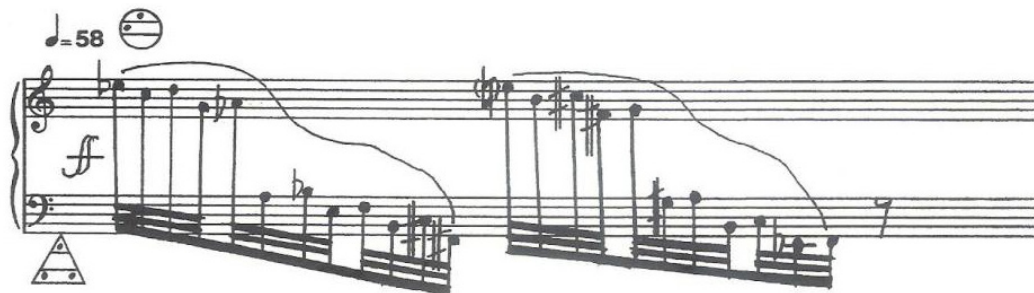
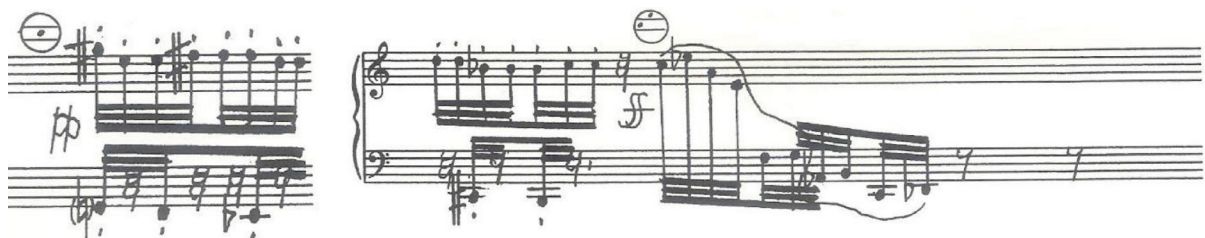


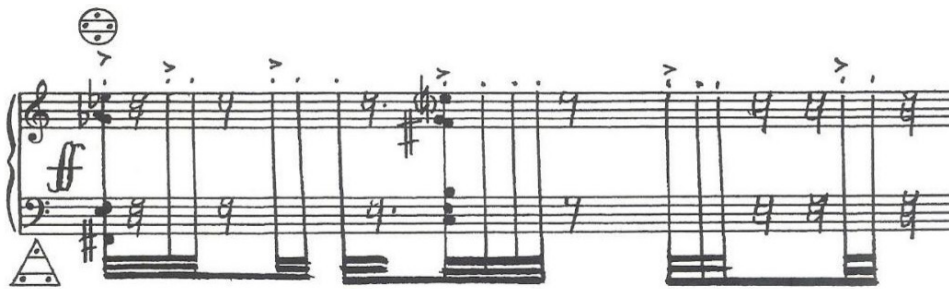
Fig. 20: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section C - interludes with repeated notes)



On page 18, there is a return to block chords (fig. 21), somewhat reminiscent of the initial exposition of piece I. This section D is now played in a rhythmic game. Although it is not indicated in the 1997 edition of Universal Music Publishing Ricordi, the possibilities of the accordion with converter allow this section to be performed in

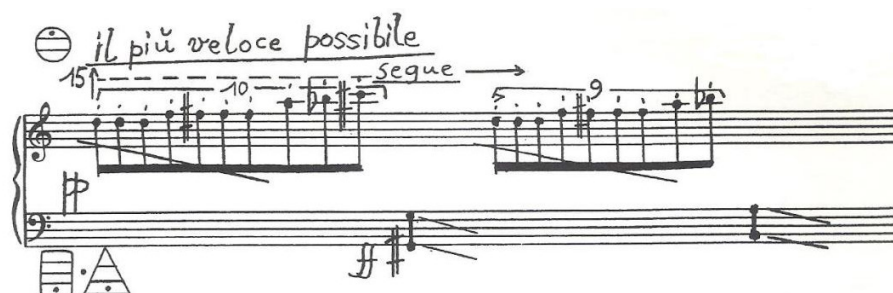
bellow shake<sup>3</sup>, as confirmed in the interpretation of the accordionist Claudio Jacomucci, to whom the work was dedicated. In a very strong sonority and master register, in this moment of climax of the piece, the chords are punctually interspersed by glissandos that culminate in emptiness (silence).

Fig. 21: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II  
(section D – performance in bellow shake)



Page 19 makes room for the performer's virtuosity. The E section corresponds to the detail of the interludes of the previous C section, now creating new motifs from the repeated notes. In the fastest tempo possible to play, it develops in pp dynamics and in a high register, requiring the performer to be careful with regard to the applied fingering. In this section, the quick movements are alternated by clusters in descending glissando performed on the keyboard of the left hand (fig. 22).

Fig. 22: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section E)



A time change to quarter note = 60 marks a moment of transition to a new section. The two hands start performing clusters

<sup>3</sup> Technique to designate the rapid in and out movement of the bellows

in glissando alternately in a sudden fortissimo dynamic (fig. 23). In contrast, at the end of page 19, a melodic phrase is presented in pianissimo tone, in a low register in the left hand (fig. 24).

Fig. 23: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section E - alternating clusters)

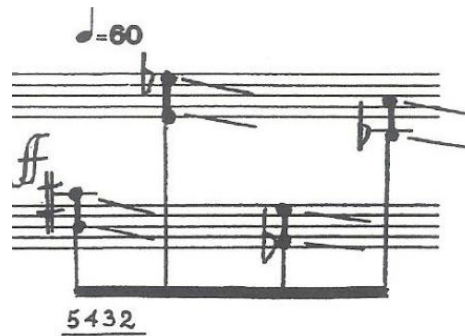
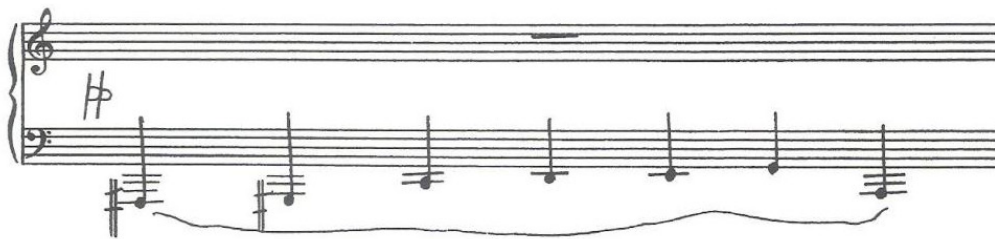
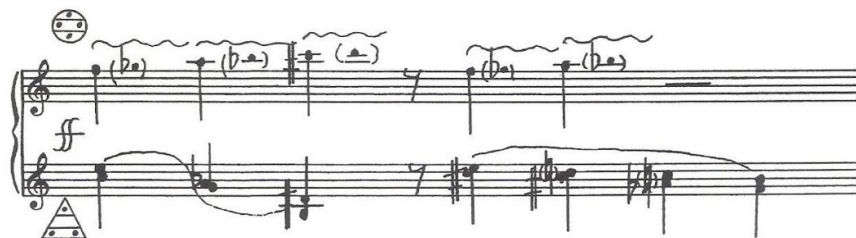


Fig. 24: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section E - melodic phrase in the lower register)



Page 20 begins by making a return to material already exposed in the previous **section B**. In this **section B**, the trills are now confronted in counterpoint with notepads that appear moving in the opposite direction to their direction (fig. 25).

Fig. 25: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section B - trills)

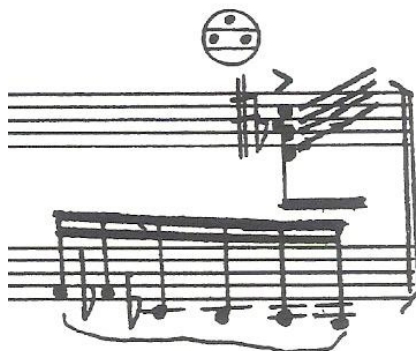


This last exposure descends in register, becoming more and more serious and ending in a confrontation between the two lines, that is, the right hand with a chord performed in glissando

in the ascending direction and the left hand with a melodic phrase in the descending sense, in sound *ff*.

The final chord resumes the four initial notes (D, G, Ab, C#) of part I and part II, with the last note altered (fig. 26). Bearing in mind that the composer considers his works as part of a larger work and that in his transformation methodology he often reuses material from one work to another, that changed final note may constitute the connecting link to a new motif in another composition of Franco Donatoni (Oron, 2011).

Fig. 26: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (section B – final exhibition)



Forward, an analysis is presented of some aspects that stand out in Feria IV in terms of the use of various resources available in the accordion with converter system.

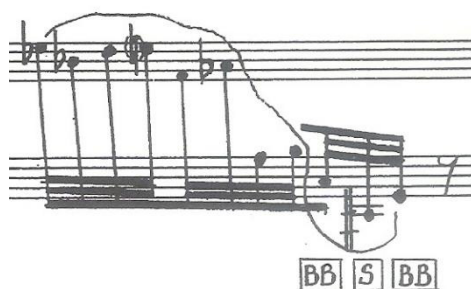
## Conclusions - The Interpreter's point of view

From the point of view of the performer and the use of the accordion with converter, Franco Donatoni is unique in the manipulation of intervals and rhythms, always looking for new instrumental colors. In his accordion literature, he uses only the writing for *bassetti*<sup>4</sup> basses. However, in piece II, he sometimes resorts to the two fixed rows of basses (with the notation S), considering the proximity of the notes available here in relation to the free basses performed at those times (fig. 27).

<sup>4</sup> Left hand system with free basses



Fig. 27: Franco Donatoni, Feria IV, piece II (using the two fixed bass rows)



The effects used in this work are clusters and glissandos, and it should be noted that the fingering to be applied is specifically indicated for the latter.

Clear and precise writing requires the interpreter to have a perfect balance in terms of execution between the keyboards, especially in the confrontational sections, dialogue between the voices. In this field, the choice of records is carefully indicated, in order to also seek that balance.

In this work, the keyboard of the right hand and the keyboard of the left hand complement each other (melodic motifs begin on one keyboard and are concluded on the other) and all questions of coordination, dynamics, force and registers are rigorously defined.

In terms of keyboard extension, Donatoni covers almost all possibilities, sometimes also through a selected use of the piccolo (high octave) and bassoon (low octave) registers.

Finally, the development and inclusion of new musical writing concepts and the inexhaustible ability to take a motif and reuse it, even in new and different pieces (Musical Bricolage), reveal Franco Donatoni as one of the most creative and sensational composers of second half of the twentieth century.

*The invention of the process can therefore be nothing other than a result of focusing on a substance that must be transformed, which is an integral part not of the form, but of the work.*

*Franco Donatoni*

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