

REVIEW

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositza Dimitrova Becheva**,
 New Bulgarian University,
 of the dissertation of **Berten D'Hollander**,

professional orientation 8.3 Music and Dance Arts,
 Doctoral student at New Bulgarian University,

on the topic

**INNOVATION AND OPTIMIZATION IN THE WORK OF THE FLUTIST-PERFORMER,
 LEADING TO ERGONOMICS, MORE INTENSE AND FREE INTERPRETATION
 IN WORKS OF DIFFERENT STYLES**

for awarding the educational and scientific degree Doctor

Ph.D. advisor: *Prof. Dr. Desislava Shereva*

Biographical data

Berten D'Hollander - Principal Flutist in „*Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles*“ and Professor at *Musikhochschule* in Köln.

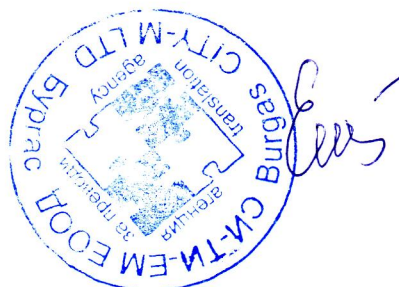
Education and training: Berten D'Hollander started learning flute in the local band *Sint Caecilia*, composed of woodwind and brass instruments, which needed new members.

He finished his higher music studies with 'cum laude'. He studied flute with prominent flutists such as Jan Van Reeth - Professor at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp and soloist - flutist at the Belgian radio orchestra.

His professional and creative activity is related to his work at various orchestras: flute - piccolo at the opera orchestra in Antwerp, he worked at the National Orchestra and the National Opera (better known as 'La Monnaie - DeMunt'), as well as with teaching activity - teaching children at music schools.

At the age of 25 he was appointed Professor of flute at the LUCA School of Arts.

Berten D'Hollander's activities throughout the years include participations in numerous concert appearances and masterclasses and joint work with prominent musicians from all over the world.



During the last fifteen years the instrumental and technical demands of the present-day music world towards him as the principal flutist at Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles and the high level of education that is required in Musikhochschule Köln contributed to Berten D'Hollander's greater evolution as an artist with a highly personal style and unique view on music and the world in general.

He is a Ph.D. Student at New Bulgarian University, Sofia.

Content of the dissertation

The dissertation's volume is 80 pages and its structure covers: Abstract, Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, Achievements, Bibliography (articles, books, web resources - a total number of 52 in Latin), List of Figures.

The abstract makes an introduction into the thematic area, current for the study.

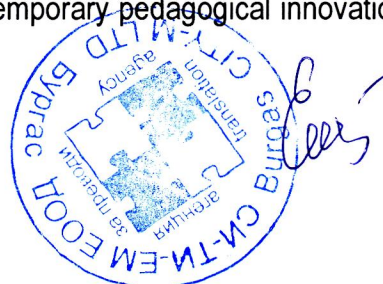
The main *purpose of the study* is outlined in the Introduction: "rethinking flute pedagogy through the prism of modernity", innovation and optimization in the work of the flutist-performer, leading to ergonomics, more intense and free interpretation in works of different styles.

The following tasks are formulated:

- "Demystifying flute playing: integrated study of the technique, pedagogy and practice", consideration of the complex interaction between the physical aspect, musical expression and pedagogic methodology.
- Discovering common principles that can revolutionize flute practice by thorough examination of the methods of playing the violin of Flesch and Galamian.
- Research on the intersection point between flute technique and the famous French Flute School, with an aspiration towards harmonization of the principles of Teobald Boehm with the modern scientific understanding of the mechanics of the body.
- Unravelling the secrets of flute playing and paving new ways to musical perfection, developing a holistic approach that promotes both technical mastery and artistic freedom for flute practitioners through analysis and rethinking of the traditional flute pedagogy.
- Creating a deeper connection with the eternal musical art through the integration of information from different sources and disciplines.

The actuality of the work ensues also from the analysis of the state of the problem, presented by the doctoral student in the Abstract and the Introduction of the dissertation.

The doctoral student points out: "My study began with a critical analysis of flute methodology from 18th century to the present day. Regardless of the abundance of literature, from the founding works of J. J. Kuanz to the contemporary pedagogical innovations of Marcel



Moyse, a blatant omission is noticed. The traditional flute pedagogy, although rich in exercises and etudes, often does not fully cover the latest achievements in the understanding of human physiology and ergonomics. A striking gap is noticed in the field of flute pedagogy in comparison, for example, with the rich tradition of violin literature... As a flutist and professor, I took up the task to overcome this discrepancy, armed with both historical context and a contemporary view of the way the human body functions.” (Author’s abstract, p. 3)

In this regard, the study analyses the elements that are essential for playing the flute, “by using the most up-to-date knowledge of how the body can function in the most ergonomic way” (Dissertation, Abstract, p. 6), dissection of the technical elements in order to optimise sound production, “finding a modern connection with the famous French Flute School.” (Dissertation, Abstract, p. 6)

In **Chapter 1 “Violin methodology”**, the researcher’s attention is focused on the methodology of Carl Flesch and Ivan Galamian – luminaries of violin pedagogy. A comparison between the work approaches of the two pedagogues is made that concerns the physical and musical aspects of violin playing.

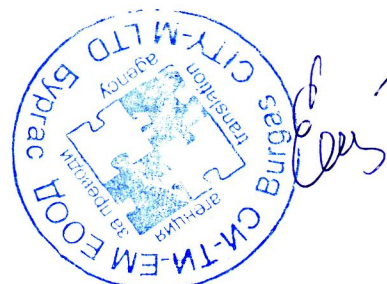
The doctoral student explains: “Flesch’s insights into playing and teaching violin affect various dimensions of sound extraction, technique, and symbiotic relationship between mechanics and aesthetics... Flesch emphasises the emotional connection with sound extraction, arguing that sound has the power to influence deeply the artist’s emotions... In essence, Flesch’s teaching provides an overall framework for understanding the technical and artistic subtleties of the violin art.”

With regard to Galamian’s approach to violin playing and teaching, it is pointed out that: this approach “is characterized by a set of basic principles that emphasize adaptability, individuality and integration of technique with artistic expression... The psychic control over physical movements is of paramount importance in Galamian’s methodology.”

The similarities between the approaches of the two pedagogues conclude in the fact that “they emphasise technique, individuality and effective practical methods.”

The author of the work stresses that during the analysis a finding was made that: *“the teachings of Flesch and Galamian offer valuable ideas for the flutists who want to perfect their art. The emphasis on technique, individuality and musical interpretation can be adapted to the unique characteristics of the flute.”*

I would like to highlight the following as contributions: **Chapter 2: “Physical Elements of Flute Playing”** and **Chapter 3 “Applied Techniques”**, which have a strong theoretical and practical orientation.



Chapter 2 presents the correlation physical aspects of flute playing - sound extraction - musical expression. The physical elements of flute playing are analysed, based on the understanding of body position, breathing and resonance as the main elements for creating quality sound. A summary is presented, concentrated on the importance of the proper posture and body alignment for the flutists, based on the analyses of famous flutists and experts in the field such as Galway, Pearson, Porter, Fluh, Robert Win, etc.

The doctoral student emphasises that “the study of the physical aspects of flute playing provides invaluable information about the basic elements that contribute to sound extraction and musical expression.”

Chapter 3 “Applied Techniques” focuses on the evolution and use of techniques in the field of flute practice, needed for a skilful performance. The historical appearance and lasting influence of the French Flute School is at the centre of the study.

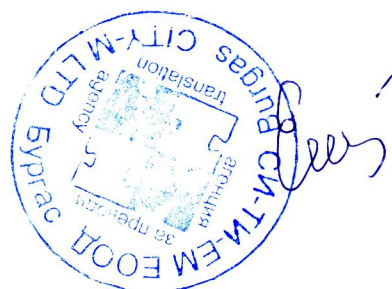
The doctoral student points out: “Having originated in the 19th century, this pedagogical approach revolutionised flute training by prioritising sound extraction, articulation and expressive interpretation. By studying the principles and methods, advanced by the French Flute School, we find valuable ideas for the development of the modern flute technique.”

Apart from historical analysis, the chapter also provides a practical vision on the application of techniques obtained from the French Flute School, complemented by influences from the violin, singing, and piano methodologies.

To me, the texts in which practical methods are thoroughly examined, which provide guidance for the professors, specific tools for increasing the technical mastery and musical expression of the flute, the pedagogical consequences of the integration of various traditions, in which the personal experience of the dissertation writer as a flutist - interpreter is reflected, are of particular importance.

The doctoral student emphasises: “although the dissertation does not aim at creating a final flute method, it focuses on organising parameters such as posture, breathing, sound extraction and resonance in a logical sequence.”

In summary, the doctoral student draws fulcrums, which he believes are of particular importance: “the study is a multifaceted journey in the field of applied technique in flute playing, including historical insights, practical exercises, pedagogical considerations and contemporary developments. By interweaving different perspectives and methodologies, the discussion aims to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the flute technique and its key role in musical expression.”



The **Conclusion** summarises the most essential conclusions and the recommendations.
The **Achievements** outline the moments of the dissertation that represent a contribution.

Significance of the studied problem in purely scientific and scientific and applied respect

- Personal experience of the author is shared, own methodology for teaching flute is presented.
- The work is up-to-date and practically applicable.

Degree of knowledge of the state of the problem and correspondence of the used bibliography

The doctoral student uses a sufficient number of information sources, the reference to which is accurate.

Contributions of the dissertation

I accept the contributions of the work, outlined by the PhD students, among which:

1) The author bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thus combining modern biological knowledge with the aesthetic principles of the famous French Flute School.

2) The author clearly shows that playing the flute is not just breathing and embouchure but a holistic approach to the whole body is needed, starting from the feet, knees, etc., as well as a thorough understanding of the acoustic and practical principles of the instrument.

3) Through an in-depth study and research of the methods of Ivan Galamian and Carl Flesch, the author managed to create a connecting link with flute pedagogy by translating, transposing and applying the pedagogical pillars of the violin training in flute training.

4) By discovering, revealing and exploring the medical and scientific aspects of body ergonomics, the author dispels misconceptions and enables each reader to understand and possibly apply a fact-based methodology for playing and teaching the flute.

Assessment of the correspondence of the author's abstract with the main points and contributions of the dissertation

The 25-page author's abstract conveys the spirit of the doctoral work.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation

The doctoral student has a sufficient number of publications and concerts on the doctoral thesis.

1. **D'Hollander**, Berten. *Demystifying flute playing*. Young Scientific Music and Dance



Forum: Conference with international participation, 18, NBU, 2024.

2. **D'Hollander, Berten.** *Innovation and optimization in the work of the flutist-performer, leading to leading to ergonomics, more intense and free interpretation in works of different styles.* **Young Scientific Music and Dance Forum: Conference with international participation, 18, NBU, 2024.**

Opinions, recommendations and comments

I would recommend that the work be published.

In conclusion:

I give my positive assessment for the dissertation work of **Berten D'Hollander: Innovation and optimisation in the work of the flutist-performer, leading to ergonomics, more intense and free interpretation in works of different styles** in relation to the contributions with the scientific and applied qualities that it brings. I consider that the doctoral dissertation fully meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree Doctor in professional orientation 8.3. "Music and Dance Arts" under the Law on the development of the academic staff of Republic of Bulgaria and I propose to the respected scientific jury that it be awarded to him.

12.08.2024, Sofia

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositza Becheva

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I, the undersigned Evelina Zheleva Sharapanova, holder of License № 01276-1 issued on 21.05.2018 by Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Consular Relations Directorate, do hereby certify that the foregoing translation from Bulgarian into English of the attached document – **Review**, is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. The translation consists of six (6) pages.

Translator:

Evelina Zheleva Sharapanova

