

Translation from Bulgarian

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Velislav Zaimov,

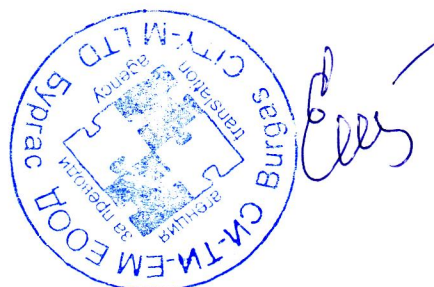
Adjunct Professor, Doctor in Composition and Score Reading
at the Department of Conducting and Composition
at the Faculty of Theory, Composition and Conducting
of the National Academy of Music Prof. Pancho Vladigerov,
member of the scientific jury, appointed by Order of the Rector
of New Bulgarian University No. 3 - PK - 210 of 13.05.2024

for defence of the dissertation work of

Berten D'Hollander on the topic

**“Innovation and optimisation in the work of the flutist-performer,
leading to ergonomics, more intense and free interpretation in works of
different styles”**

Berten D'Hollander is a musician with long-standing, rich and versatile, I would even say, universal activity, both as a performer (orchestra player, soloist and participant in chamber ensembles) and a pedagogue with more than forty years of experience. He was the Principal flutist at Ensemble for Contemporary Music, Brussels; at the Opera in Aachen, Germany; at the Limburg Symphony Orchestra, Maastricht, the Netherlands; at the National Orchestra Brussels, Belgium; at the National Opera of Belgium; at the Antwerp Philharmonic Orchestra in Belgium; at the Flemish Opera in Antwerp, Belgium. He was a soloist of orchestras in Sofia, Shumen, Brussels, Joensuu (Finland). He has released seven CDs. As a chamber ensemble performer, he has participated in many ensembles with different instruments in different countries.



D'Hollander's pedagogical activity includes teaching and conducting masterclasses and workshops at Akdeniz University, Turkey; at LUCA, Leuven, Belgium; at Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Köln, Germany; Master course "Summer with Berten" from 2016 until now in Bulgaria; at Francis Freno, Italy from 2020; at the University of Liège, Belgium; at Stockton University, New Jersey, USA; at Ferenc Liszt Music Academy, Budapest, Hungary, 2022; at Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey; at Accademia della Musica Francesco Geminiani, Venice, Italy, 2019; at Malaga Musical Summer, Spain; in Lisbon, Portugal.

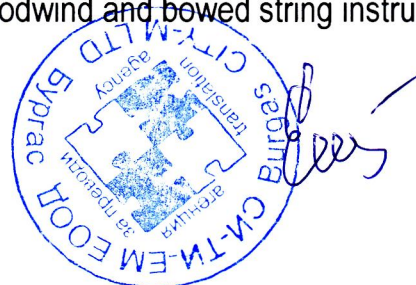
And this is far from the complete list of his pedagogical activity.

The proposed dissertation consists of three chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion, a list of contributions and a list of fifty-two titles of used bibliography in English.

In the **Introduction**, the author explains the reason for creating this work. This is the lack of sufficient pedagogical literature for flute training. He made a comparison with the rich and diverse literature on violin training and found a significant gap in flute training. Here's how Berten D'Hollander determined the starting point of his research: *"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."*

It is just the physiology and ergonomics of flute playing that are the main topics of this dissertation.

The **first chapter "Violin Methodology"** examines the systems of violin training of two prominent violinists and pedagogues Carl Flesch and Ivan Galamian and makes a comparison of the two systems. The author is convinced that despite the principal differences between the sound extraction of woodwind and bowed string instruments, the



trained flutists could **“draw inspiration”** to achieve a nuanced approach to sound extraction. In other words, he considers that modern flute training could be based on the already developed methodology and approach of violin pedagogy.

The second chapter **“Physical Elements of Flute Playing”** is dedicated to the application of methodologies in violin training when playing the flute. The author proceeds from the idea that the position of the body, breathing and resonance are in the basis of producing quality sound. He examines the main physical elements separately:

- posture
- embouchure
- breathing
- muscles used in breathing
- resonance

and determines the importance of each of them. His conclusions refer to the understandings of famous flutists, pedagogues, and researchers such as J. Galway, Valeri Fluh, Isabelle Cossette.

At first glance, Bertin D'Hollander's comprehension of standing barefoot and the slight wobbling when playing in an upright position seem strange. In fact, in this pose, the contact of the body with the floor can find its most proper and comfortable position. And since it is not accepted to play barefoot on the stage, the question about the use of suitable shoes for this purpose arises. This is especially true of female flutists.

This chapter deals with the issue of individuality of embouchure of each flutist, which is related to the personal anatomy of each performer.

The issue of the mechanics of breathing as the main element in wind instruments, with the participation of its three main components lungs, chest and diaphragm, has been thoroughly examined. Special attention is paid to the diaphragm and its specific participation in sound extraction.



Based on the advice of famous flutists and experts, the importance of the correct position of the body, the involvement of the relevant muscles, as well as the individual approaches for finding a good performance are explained.

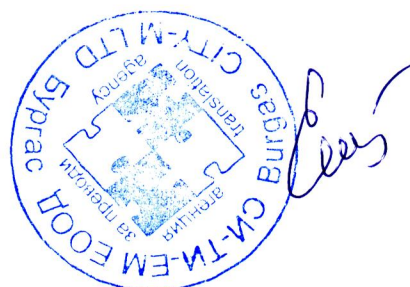
In **Chapter three “Applied Techniques”**, the author shows his practical system of methods and techniques in his understanding of flute training based mostly on the French school. This chapter has the most essential importance and would be especially useful for beginners and young performers.

The main characteristics of the French Flute School, with Claude-Paul Taffanel, Professor at the Paris Conservatory at the head, are pointed here. Taffanel's students, while working in various orchestras and teaching at various conservatories, had a significant influence on flute playing in Europe and America in the early twentieth century. They used metal instruments, made however on the basis of the system of Teobald Boehm and created by masters of instruments, whose chief representative was Louis Lot. This led to a significant change in the sound of the flute, which became lighter, with a bigger number of nuances of the vibrato. For these conclusions of his, D'Hollander makes references mainly to the work “The French Flute School” in the book by Ardal Powell “The Flute”.

In the section “Practical Method”, the dissertation writer refers to or *“draws inspiration”*, as he himself admits, from Alfred Cortot's approach to piano technique, *“which emphasises the simplification of difficulties to elementary principles, the aim is to organise parameters in the right order in order to achieve a healthy, open and harmoniously rich flute sound.”* Again, a connection is made with the training in another instrument.

And here is what the basic principle of D'Hollander's flute training consists of, the guiding elements of which are posture, breathing and resonance. This is what he calls **“big triangle”**, which becomes the starting point to mastering the technique of playing and where he determines several stages, namely:

- *production of tones*



- *applied technique*
- *exercises for fingers.*

The big triangle includes all the elements of playing: the sound extraction itself, finding the measure in the use of vibrato depending not only on the style but on the personal preferences of the performer too, as well as technique of the fingers. The author proposes a new, his system for mastering the use of the tongue, which plays a key role in articulation: *“The chapter (a chapter of a text is meant, or rather a sub-chapter - the note is mine) deviates from traditional methods that combine consonants with vowels. Instead, a more natural approach is recommended, in which the tongue intervenes at the end of a note rather than at the beginning of the next, which provides optimal sound extraction and resonance. “*

In the conclusion of his work, the author draws his own understanding of flute training and even in music performance in general. Referring to Marcel Moyse’s doctrine of the teaching process *“Play music, don’t play the flute”*, he responds: *“We, mortals, are actually able to learn to play the flute. And from there we can start studying music as well.”*

As it becomes evident, Berten D’Hollander’s work *„Innovation and optimisation in the work of the flutist-performer, leading to ergonomics, more intense and free interpretation in works of different styles”* is too unusual and non- standard. It offers brand-new approaches that differ from the generally accepted ones but at the same time these approaches are practically aimed at finding a convenient way to master good instrumental habits. All this is predetermined by the rich stage and pedagogical experience of the author. He shares his views, which he has reached after a long and complex journey, both as an instrumentalist and as a professor.

I consider that his work makes a significant contribution to the pedagogy of flute training, to the flute performing art itself, and why not to other instruments as well; at least to the other woodwind and brass instruments, where some of the ideas, drawn in the study,



would be applicable.

After all of the above, I think that the dissertation work undoubtedly has a significance and would attract a well-deserved interest among flute professors, as well as among students, regardless of whether they study according the same or another system. That is why I strongly suggest that the esteemed scientific jury awarded the educational and scientific degree Doctor to Berten D'Hollander.

Sofia, 16 June 2024

Prof. Dr. Velislav Zaimov

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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

