



FLANDERS TODAY



Sarah Bettens, p.16

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Muziektheater Transparant

Blue summer nights

Antwerp chills out during a festival that surfaces in the most unexpected of places

Stéphanie Duval

Expect the unexpected this summer in Antwerp. For the next two months, the city stages a summer festival in some of the city's most unusual locations.

The idea is to keep the city buzzing during the summer months and to encourage locals and tourists to discover the hidden corners and quiet squares of the metropolis.

There are activities for everyone, from parents with restless kids to romantic

couples looking for a spot to watch the sun go down. So if you haven't managed to book a holiday this year, don't fret: just grab a Zomer van Antwerpen programme to find out everything that's happening.

But I have my own ideas about how most

to enjoy my hometown this summer. Follow this advice, and the best of Antwerp is yours for the taking.

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News

Some politicians are calling for a separate Flemish football squad. What would the consequences be for Belgium's chances internationally – not to mention locally?

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Arts

A folk festival in the wilds of Flanders. It sounds like hairy men in hemp sandals singing about sheep driving, but it's a lot more interesting than that, says music critic Paul Stump.

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Active

A kid-friendly destination, Blankenberge still manages to be beautiful. Follow us down to the end of the pier in the second of our summer series on Flemish beach towns.

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Fortis management under fire

Both the chairman and the CEO are under attack after share prices plummet

The share price of banking-insurance group Fortis may have rallied slightly in the past week since a disastrous slump of almost 20% the week before, but the shockwaves of the crash continue to be felt. This week came news that a group of investors in the Netherlands is considering a damages claim against CEO Jean-Paul Votron to compensate them for their losses. Dutch lawyer Hendrik-Jan Bos claims that Votron knew Fortis had a "deficit of millions of euros," he told the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*, yet the Fortis boss

led shareholders to believe all was well.

The share-price slump came after Fortis had announced a series of measures to strengthen its capital by €8 billion, including suspension of payment of an interim dividend, a promise to pay the annual dividend in equity only and a rights issue worth €1.5 billion, which diluted share values further.

The scrapping of the cash dividend is a blow to investors who took part in a previ-

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FREE WEEKLY

EDITOR'S NOTES

Parking 58

The name says it all. Parking 58 is a concrete car park put up in the centre of Brussels during the building boom that swept the city during Expo '58. It is, like all 1958 structures, somewhat quirky and just a little shabby, with a strange bar on the ground floor that has a sloping roof to accommodate the access ramp above.

In these days of rampant fuel costs, it might seem a bit extravagant to drive all the way to the top floor on the spiral ramp when there are ample parking spaces on the lower levels. But it's worth doing so just to appreciate the stunning views of downtown Brussels.

You finally arrive at level 10, a virtually empty and sometimes windswept space high above the town, with an inspiring vista of spires and domes mingled with less inspiring views of 1960s office blocks.

This used to be one of the best-kept secrets in Brussels, but it probably isn't going to be after 11 July, because Broodje Brussel, that busy organisation that fills

Brussels lunch hours with inspiring concerts and talks, has decided to hold a picnic on the 10th floor of the car park.

That's right, a picnic in a car park. It's part of a string of events in Brussels to mark Flanders Day, 11 July, the anniversary of the Battle of the Golden Spurs, when a disorganised militia from Ghent and Bruges routed an elite army of French knights.

The 11 July picnic might not be the last time you take the lift up to level 10. An action group called Project 58 wants to create a public park on the disused rooftop. It's a brilliant, batty idea, almost certainly doomed to failure, you might think. But, then again, that ragged army from Bruges and Ghent might have been told the same thing when they set off to tackle the elite of the French aristocracy in 1302.

Derek Blyth

online
www.park58.be



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FACE OF FLANDERS



Karel Vinck

If Karel Vinck was leader of the country, he once confessed to a student interviewer from the Leuven University newspaper, he would bring in "a system whereby it wasn't inevitable that people would get bogged down in coalitions, with bad compromises as a result". He would also, he said, "strive toward better communication with the citizen".

He's about to get his chance. Vinck, approaching his 70th birthday in September, has just been given the job by the Flemish government of selling the people of Antwerp a bridge. It's a bridge that almost nobody wants, it's costing five times more than they said it would, and it has just about the worst public image imaginable.

Last week, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters decided it was time to cut the Gordian knot of the project known as the Oosterweel Link (see *Flanders Today*, issues 35 and 36). The plan as it currently stands would bring traffic under the Scheldt by tunnel, then onto a double-decker viaduct running through the centre of the city. Residents are up in arms, to the point where a poll in *Humo* magazine recently showed that 60% of the people of Antwerp were against the viaduct.

Peeters has now promised to examine alternatives to the viaduct, specifically two plans using other routes. The government also took the opportunity to shake up the company that is overseeing the project, the Mobile Antwerp Management Company (BAM). They are blamed for the PR disaster the project has become, which reached its nadir when a group of mentally and physically handicapped children from the Sint-Jozef Institute gathered to protest at the bridge, which would sweep past their school less than 50 metres away, foreign trucks dropping diesel pollution as they passed overhead.

Vinck was installed as the new chairman of the board, with the hands-on job of running the BAM from day-to-day. His business credentials are not in question. What's more, he looks like a Rottweiler, and he has stepped in to dig the government out of a hole before.

Vinck studied engineering at Leuven and later went on to do an MBA at Cornell, after, as he tells it, he wasted 40 minutes of a boss' time explaining the technical detail of a project before finally getting to the money question. "I learned from him that decisions in business life are taken on the basis of economic facts," he told the *Campuskrant* interviewer. "I am still grateful to him for that insight."

His new approach took him to the top of Bekaert, the BEL-20 company that specialises in metal wire and advanced materials. In 1995, he was brought in to head up the restructuring of metals group Union Minière, now known as Umicore, as the company moved away from mining and more into precious and specialist metals. He continues to chair the board of both Umicore and Cumerio, a copper subsidiary.

In 2002, the federal government brought him in to set the national railway authority back on track, carrying out a fundamental restructuring. He left in 2005 after "differences of opinion" with the then-minister Johan Vande Lanotte.

So his reputation is one of a troubleshooter, and there is little doubt that he's being relied upon to sell the Oosterweel Link to the public as it now stands. While being open to alternatives, the Flemish government has consistently argued that, after studying the alternatives, the project as it now stands is the best option available. To change the plans now would not only throw the whole project into chaos, it would be a "bad compromise" and a severe loss of face for Peeters and his ministers. Vinck's job will be to make sure that doesn't happen.

Alan Hope

TALKING DUTCH
notes on language

noorderburen

Flanders Today has been in the news recently, or at least it has been a topic of debate in the Flemish press. One of the reasons is that our young publication gives a view of Flanders through the eyes of mostly non-Flemings to be read by non-Flemings. And when Flemings read the *FT* (I know, a bit pretentious) they may be surprised or even taken aback by the contents. But as an independent newspaper, we who contribute feel free to describe Flanders as we see it. Looking back over the 30-odd issues so far, I would say that *FT* has painted a vibrant, positive picture of one of the most fascinating corners of Europe.

It is always interesting and sometimes salutary to have a mirror held up so we can see our beauty spots and warts and all. As the great Scottish poet Robert Burns wished: *O wad some power the giftie gie us to see oursels as ithers see us*. Well, allowing Flanders to see itself as others see it is a job perhaps best left to their *noorderburen* – northern neighbours, the Dutch.

You could liken Flanders and the Netherlands to the UK and the US, both as to their population sizes and how, to a certain extent, they regard each other. A recent extensive study was conducted by the *De Standaard* newspaper to get behind the clichés held in Flanders about their *noorderburen*: noisy, tight-fisted caravanners with a Bible by their bed. Certainly, the study reveals that the Flemish see the Dutch as *luidruchtig* and *arrogant* – noisy and arrogant – but also as *koningsgezind* and *tolerant* – royalist and tolerant. The survey also revealed how the Dutch see the Flemish: *zwijzaam* and *bescheiden* – reserved and modest but also as *levensgenieters* – *bon viveurs*. One explanation for the *arrogant/bescheiden* difference is that for centuries Dutch merchants opened up world trading routes, whereas Flanders was under occupation, a place where it was best to keep your head down.

One remarkable finding is that one-fifth of the Dutch would rather live in Flanders, whereas only one in 20 would like to move the other way. And when they do, they may find themselves changing: As one immigrant from the north noted: *Sinds ik in Vlaanderen woon, ben ik zachter gaan praten* – a quietly spoken Dutchman!

The reason for this desire to move south was recently illustrated by Zaza, the acerbic cartoonist in *De Standaard*, in a drawing showing a huge orange-hatted man standing outside a row of tiny terraced houses saying *In Nederland zijn alleen de huizen bescheiden* – In the Netherlands only the houses are modest (which they are in comparison with Flemish houses). As one Dutchman remarked: *Nederlanders wonen zo krap* – they live so cramped. *Zij hebben veel natuur maar weinig tuin* – they have lots of countryside but few gardens; *in Vlaanderen is het net omgekeerd* – in Flanders it's the other way round. *Dat vrijheidsgevoel, zo weinig regeltjes, heerlijk!* – That feeling of freedom, so few petty rules, wonderful!

Alistair MacLean

online
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FEATURE



In This World



Stéphane Bisseret



Theater Froe Froe

Continued from page 1

Beach life on the Scheldt

Plenty of people know that the Sint-Anneke beach is the place to enjoy soft sand between your toes and a quick dip in the water. But there are other beaches as well, like Strantwerpen on Cockerillkaai, which offers a mock beach experience along the Scheldt quays. Head down here to sit on a small patch of white sand, lounge in a beach chair or sit on a bar stool eating trendy tapas and sipping curvy cocktails.

Maybe you want something a bit more like Saint-Tropez. In that case, take a seat on the deck of the Diamond Princess, a former cruise ship now moored permanently on the Sint-Laureiskaai. With olive trees on deck and sushi and champagne on the menu, you can pretend you're holidaying on the Riviera.

And when it gets too hot, head across the river to the left bank to cool off in the private pool of Club Cabane (Jachthavenweg 1), then book a table for dinner in the club's beautiful restaurant.

Circus without suffering

You thought Cirque du Soleil was the only decent circus around? Not so – there are two magical circuses performing this summer on Antwerp's Ledeganckkaai. The Théâtre d'un Jour puts up a small blue tent where performers put on a show involving an opera singer, an acrobat and a puppet master, while the Canadian urban street-style circus Les 7 Doigts de la Main promises to bring a wild mix of live graffiti, break dance and skating. Less glamorous, but equally compelling, Australian Acrobat stages a hilariously minimalist production at the Ledeganckkaai, where costumes consist of old underwear, if even that.

Fashion looks to the future

Keep in touch with Antwerp fashion this summer at the MoMu gallery, which has a free exhibition until October (Nationaalstraat 28), plus work by Andrea Camma-

rosano, who graduated from the city's fine arts academy this year. He is showcasing his collections in the exhibition Crazyssimo.com. Colourful and eccentric, it offers an insight into the future of couture.

For a different view on fashion, take a look at the mannequins placed in store windows along the main shopping street Meir. The figures might be inanimate, but they change every day.

Free music in secret squares

Summer in Antwerp wouldn't be summer without the free concerts in city squares. Each day, a different square is the setting for a performance. The line-up includes the Italian ensemble Acquaragia Drom, the Russian group Iva Nova, Korean percussion group Dulsori and South-African reggae band Tidal Waves.

Film on the waterfront

Don't worry if you're stuck in Belgium this summer. There's an entire season of movies on travel showing in Hangar 19A on the Scheldt. For four whole weeks, you can go along to watch a different movie for free every night. The programme ranges from the epic violence of *No Country for Old Men* to the affectionate road movie *Little Miss Sunshine*. Just be sure to bring along a blanket because the nights can get chilly, although you can warm up during the breaks with a hot cup of coffee or soup.

Charred meat in the sunset

Watch the sun setting on the Scheldt while munching some barbecue. Take along a bag of charcoal, a bottle of wine and slabs of meat to host your own little open-air dinner party at the Zeeuwsekoornmarkt. Fish lovers should make a detour to see the Fiskebar Project at the Park Spoor Noord. One of Antwerp's coolest restaurants, Fiskebar, provides coffee, cocktails, pizza and *flammkuchen* to the backdrop of music and performances, every day from noon to midnight.

Dance in the dark

Don't forget to visit the green edition of The Summer Bar this year on the Ledeganckkaai, where all the circuses are assembled (see photo below). Insiders will tell you that this is the best spot to enjoy a little nature in the middle of the city, sitting on a terrace with hundreds of coloured lights creating a magical atmosphere.

Dream boat

Several theatre groups have put together this programme for the summer, including the acclaimed Transparant. This is an experience not to miss: visitors pack their sleeping bags and toothbrushes and climb on board the theatre boat. They then snuggle up in bed and watch a love story being enacted as they doze off to sleep. The next morning, they wake to breakfast while the boat takes them back to the pier.

Life is a cabaret

Be sure to check out the monster cabaret by the brothers Forman, sons of movie director Milos Forman. The Czech puppeteers have created their own poetic cabaret called Obludarium, with strange creatures and horrible monsters performing while gypsy music plays in the background (Ledeganckkaai). At the Kattendijkdok, the all-girl theatre group Norfolk is working alongside Theatre Artemis to put on a performance on the globalisation of the food industry. Sitting on a stage, the audience learns about the food kilometres incurred by shrimps and Turkish broccoli.

Ghost story

Fans of Latino soap should make a point of visiting the show by Chilean theatre group Gran Reyneta at Gabriel Vervoortstraat 8. This musical comedy presents the surreal story of Toni Travolta's nightmares: a true spectacle set to the rousing melody of a live cumbia orchestra. Much more subdued, and even a little spooky, *All the people I*

didn't meet is a performance by Judith Nab and Théâtre Espace in the Red Star Line shed on Montevideostraat. The audience wanders through an interior filled with mist and darkness, almost ghostlike.

Sailor's yarns

Kids are likely to get bored as the summer wears on, but you can always take them to the Leopold Dewaelplaats to ride the amazing merry-go-round. Forget about plastic horses and metal cars. The idea here is to create a magical ride with bizarre constructions, including a rocket which rises five metres into the sky.

There's also a carousel for small children built by the theatre group Froe Froe at Ledeganckkaai. It features fairy tale characters in soft materials that come to life when the carousel starts turning. For those looking for pirates and sea captains, the Captain Pedalo Parlando on the Scheldt (Bonapartedok, Nassaubrug) is as scary as it gets. Paddling through the Bonapartedok, the captain on board tells children some old seaman's yarns in Dutch, English or French.

Soon to be gone

The sailing club De Zeevonturier at the Noordkasteel may have to move to make way for the controversial Oosterweel Link (see *Flanders Today*, 25 June). Before it goes forever, Sally's Projects is bidding farewell to this idyllic spot with a performance that is musical, poetic and romantic. Meanwhile, over on Galgenweellaan, Theatre Froe Froe is staging its own version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* featuring a blend of dance, theatre, music and puppetry. It's yet another beautiful experience under a starlit sky in Antwerp's long summer.

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Philippe Goffree



Couchtendance Commentaire



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Forces gather against Fortis board

Continued from page 1

ous capital increase last year of €13.2 billion. And even the most faithful shareholders are finding it hard to accept that Votron and Fortis chairman Maurice Lippens were both denying that the dividend would be affected up until about two weeks before they admitted it would.

Lippens later claimed the problem was rooted in the US credit crisis, which is hardly a new phenomenon. Lippens was quick to step up to express his continued faith in Votron, but since then he has come under fire himself. The same credit crisis, analysts and shareholders now claim, ought to have made the Fortis board think twice before joining a bid (by Royal Bank of Scotland and Santander of Spain) to acquire ABN Amro. One report at the weekend argued that Lippens had joined the takeover bid while motivated by feelings of revenge at ABN Amro's attempt to kill off Fortis' takeover of Generale Bank in 1998.

Fortis is still trying to digest ABN Amro, for which it paid €24 billion – a sum most analysts think was too much. Last week it sold off some corporate banking interests to Deutsche Bank, and this time the

price was probably too low. Meanwhile, the takeover of ABN Amro is at least partly behind the share-price slump.

The ill-feeling towards Votron, meanwhile, has not been assuaged by the fact that he picked up a bonus this year of no less than €2.5 million, as a reward for steering the company through the difficult takeover process, the Fortis board said at the time. There was some talk that he might give the money back, but an apparent technicality made that impossible.

Hendrik-Jan Bos now aims to hit Votron in the pocket, by bringing suit against him personally instead of against the Fortis board. The Dutch lawyer is no stranger to suing big banks and, in fact, sued ABN Amro only last year over what he claimed were losses due to risky investments. "By going after Votron personally, in his wallet," Bos said, "no managers will ever again think they can take shareholders for a ride in such a way."

And Bos is not alone. The consumer organisation Test-Aankoop, together with the law office Deminor, is gathering complaints from shareholders and has called for an extraordinary general meeting to hold a vote of confidence in the board.

FIFTH COLUMN



A man with a mission (and a goat)

By the time this is published, we will know if prime minister Yves Leterme has pulled off his greatest stunt yet. Can he reach an agreement between the two language groups about institutional reform and Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV), the mishap constituency that has plunged this country into a deep crisis? Can he do it? This question always pops up about Leterme.

It wouldn't be his first spectacular act. Leterme has already accomplished more than one mission impossible. For one, he has revived his party, CD&V, which seemed just about near-dead at the beginning of this century but is now the major political force in Flanders.

Another great feat is his personal transformation. As the leader of the opposition, he was considered reliable, thorough, but very, very dull. The liberal vice-prime minister Patrick Dewael slightlyingly called Leterme, who is a man of numbers, a "bookkeeper".

But Leterme was more than just a bookkeeper. In a morning talk show he mentioned that his goat had given birth the night before. Soon Leterme became "the politician with the goat". The goat accompanies him to this day as his alter ego in a popular political cartoon.

Leterme turned out to have more folksy traits. A son who aspired to be a racing cyclist. A penchant for things agricultural. Even his curt way of speaking touched the right cord. Thousands of Flemings recognized themselves in Yves Leterme. The day after one newspaper commentator wrote he could never vote for Leterme because he was a politician with no interest in the arts, 800,000 people did vote for the man. It was the highest score since the legendary one million vote of Leo Tindemans in the 1970s.

One group, though, has never trusted Leterme: the French speakers have always seen him as a Trojan horse, preparing the end game for Belgium. They have never forgiven him the fact that he mockingly said that they were "intellectually not capable of learning Dutch" (while in fact he was only airing his annoyance at their refusal to do so). He blundered again when he mistook the French national anthem for the Belgian one.

This mistrust is why it has taken the Leterme so long to become prime minister after the elections. It also contributes to the already fundamental disagreement about the future of this country.

Over the last year, Leterme has turned out to be anything but dull, but he has paid a high price. His health has suffered. His popularity is still high, although a recent opinion poll showed what may be the first dents. The big question now is: can he solve this crisis without losing his credibility – his most valuable political asset that, in the eyes of his electorate, sets him apart from his predecessor. Can he do it?

Park and housing planned for Tour & Taxis site



The canal area of Brussels is to get a new park covering 20 hectares and cutting through the centre of the Tour & Taxis complex, the capital's minister-president Charles Picqué announced last week. The new 40-hectare development comes between the

existing Sheds and the Brussels International Logistics Centre and comprises not only the park – the biggest new park in the city since the 19th century – but also a mixed housing-offices complex.

The development will be in the hands of Project T&T, which currently owns the Tour & Taxis site proper, including the Maritime Station, which is first in line for renovation. Between 2009 and 2020, Project T&T will invest €600-700 million. The site will also feature a new tramline.

But urban environmental activists Arau and Inter-Environment have raised objections to the planned logistics centre. A system which will take in freight traffic by boat and then send out 1,000 trucks a day along the Havenlaan belongs to the past, they told a meeting of Brussels City council. The centre can never operate without subsidy, they said, and may not be environmentally sound.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€1, 26, 23

The number of euros it will now cost young people under the age of 26 to get into 23 major museums nationwide. Full list at www.leuromuseum.be.

3

Number of extra seconds an Opel Antwerp worker will now have to work on each car on the assembly line. Unions called for an increase from 123 to 128 seconds and accepted a management compromise of 126.

3.7

The number of supermarkets used by the average Belgian. Favourite at 29% was Colruyt, followed by Delhaize (26%) and Carrefour/GB (23%).

15

The new position of Brussels Airport on the list of best-performing European airports. At the end of last year, Zaventem stood at the top of the list for

punctual departures. That spot has been taken over by Munich, followed by Vienna and Larnaca.

7.7 kg

The weight of electrical appliances recycled last year by the average Belgian. The figure is 7% up on 2006.

120

Number of time tobacco companies breached the laws on advertising in the last three years. Legal action was taken in 70 cases. More than half were in Flanders.

1,000 litres

The daily amount of liquids still being confiscated by security personnel at Brussels Airport. Confusion still surrounds the whole measure, which may shortly be scrapped.

€2,450

The number of euros the average car owner pays to the treasury every year in connection with his

or her vehicle. The total includes excise duty, VAT on fuel and maintenance and traffic fines. The state takes a total of €12.285 billion a year.

€60,000

Damages awarded to a printing business in Zwijndrecht after software manufacturers Microsoft, Adobe and Symantec wrongly accused them of using pirated software, Antwerp appeal court ruled.

€400,000

Monthly rent paid by a government agency for the hire of two large holes in the ground at Zwijndrecht and Kruibeke, intended to be the receptacle for dredging waste from the Scheldt. Since September 2006, €8.3 million has been paid out, but not an ounce of waste has been dumped in the holes – because the Flemish region has not issued the necessary permits.

Ghent masters graduate in new togas



New master's graduates in dentistry at the University of Ghent accepted their degrees last week clad for the first time in academic gowns, courtesy of the university authorities. The gowns were the idea of rector Paul Van Cauwenberghe. This year's dentistry graduates are the first to have gone through the entire course since it was reformed under the Bologna agreements. Other graduates have since taken their turns with the gowns, 1,000 of which were bought from the US.

Bourgeois plans quotas for Flemish songs on radio

Flanders' media minister Geert Bourgeois has asked three public VRT radio stations – Radio 1, Radio 2 and Donna – to consider quotas to raise the proportion of Dutch-language music broadcast. The quotas would in the first instance be voluntary, before being enshrined in the management charter to be agreed with the region by 2011.

Bourgeois' move comes after the Flemish media regulator issued a report that showed that Radio 1 takes up only 6% of its broadcast time with Dutch-language music, and half of that is during the night. The problem has also been expressed by the music producers themselves and by the public. Bourgeois now wants to install a system for calculating the output of all three stations.

His office has refused to get into exact figures, but the minister has pointed out that the RTBF stations are obliged by the French Community authorities to broadcast 40% French-language music. Commercial stations, meanwhile, stick to a 30% quota. "I'm looking to the VRT to make a clear commitment to a strengthened Dutch-language profile for Radio 2," Bourgeois said. "The VRT is there for six million Flemish people. If they see that the demand for Dutch-language music is growing, then they have to make sure that the music gets played often enough."



Clouseau – under-represented?

Boy buried in beach accident

A youth of 17 was in critical condition this week after being buried in the sand in the dunes at Middelkerke. Thomas Gosset, from Neder-Over-Heembeek near Brussels, was digging holes with two friends and connecting them via a tunnel. They had reached a depth of 2.5 m when the friends left briefly. When they returned, he was nowhere to be seen, but his clothes still lay on the beach, and the tunnel had collapsed.

The fire service was called and managed to bring Gosset to the surface, where he was rushed to the Sint-Jozef hospital in Ostend. As *Flanders Today* went to press, he was still on a respirator.

Doctors have recently given more attention to accidental sand-burials, after a report last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine* detailed the frequency with which such accidents happen. Father and son researchers, Drs Barry and Bradley Maron, found 52 incidents in the medical literature in the US, UK and New Zealand, which had resulted in 31 deaths. But the true figure is certainly higher, they said.

"We're trying to increase awareness of something that's generally not associated with a life-threatening event," said Bradley Maron. When people are on the beach, "their concern for safety is directed toward the water," he told *Forbes* magazine. The danger of collapsing sand-holes is also present in other places, such as construction sites and even, in one fatal case, a children's playground. Experts advise parents to be aware of the risk and never let children dig a hole deeper than their knees. Digging in dunes is not only dangerous because of the state of the sand, but may also be illegal.

New service will speed up visas

The granting of work and business visas will be "days to weeks faster" from now on, ministers promised last week, following the opening of a Service for Economic Migration.

The new service, which falls under the migration department of the foreign affairs ministry, will make it easier for people who intend to come and work in Belgium to obtain the proper legal papers – business visas for trips of up to three months and work visas for longer periods. It will also coordinate the work of embassies in home countries, communal authorities and work and economy ministries here. One innovation will be a complete electronic dossier on each successful applicant which can be re-used whenever he or she decides to return.

The service will also provide information to companies who want to employ foreign workers, which many are now forced to do as the country is experiencing a shortage of home-grown skilled workers. Other countries are also facing the same shortages in workforce, migration minister Annemie Turtelboom pointed out: "We are heading for a battle of the brains, and the best-organised country on the question of handling visas is going to win that battle," she said.

Russian workers topped the table of those obtaining short-term business visas last year, according to the latest figures. A total of more than 18,000 of the visas – intended to allow business people to visit and make contacts in the hope of setting up commercial relationships – were given out, 7,400 of them in the embassy in Moscow. India was next with 3,200 in Mumbai and 1,100 in Delhi.

At the same time, 2,218 work visas were issued to non-EU citizens. Mumbai gave out most (825), followed by Tokyo (352), Delhi (253) and New York (218). India is a major provider of skilled ICT workers, who are in short supply in Europe as a whole.

NEWS FLASH



The Antwerp action group Ademloos (Breathless) is to bring a complaint to the EU Commission against the Mobile Antwerp Management Company (BAM), the agency set up to oversee construction of the controversial Oosterweel Link (see Face of Flanders, p 2). The group alleges that the company is ignoring a study demanded last week by the Flemish government of possible alternatives to the current plan. But BAM, Ademloos says, is going ahead anyway with an application to build the current project.

The federal police last week launched the latest campaign to recruit more officers: an advertisement on a tram that will carry passengers along the coastal stretch from De Panne to Knokke this summer. The tram, decorated with slogans like "From Arlon to Zeebrugge" and "From coast-tram to patrol-car", is part of an effort to recruit 1,350 new police by the end of the year to make up for losses due to retirements.

A Belgian woman has given birth to a baby born by *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) after the embryo was tested for the genetic factor which predisposes to breast cancer, *Het Laatste Nieuws* reports.

Another five women are pregnant with babies after undergoing the same process. The women all carry a gene which increases the chance of developing breast cancer and underwent a process of IVF in which their fertilised eggs were tested to see if the gene had been passed on. One embryo without the gene was then implanted and allowed to come to term. The head of the centre for biomedical ethics at Leuven University, Professor Pascal Borry, has raised questions about the technique and its possible use in other illnesses.

A man who had built a shack to live in on ground adjoining the Royal palaces in Laken was found dead last week. Elhassan Ougfa, aged 34, was apparently in the country illegally but said that he had never had trouble from the police. A palace spokesman earlier in the year said Prince Philippe was aware of his neighbour, who lived in a handmade hut complete with brick oven and shower. The body was discovered when a resident of the area passed by to drop off some bread with Ougfa and found that he had hanged himself.

Researchers in Australia have identified another Australian soldier whose body was found in 2006 in Zonnebeke north of Ieper. The man was one of five casualties of World War One, who were all found together. Two were identified last year, when all five were laid to rest at the Buttes New British Cemetery in Zonnebeke in the presence of the governor-general of Australia and the New Zealand prime minister. The name of the latest man to be identified will only be released after relatives are informed, said the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 last week. Of the 2,103 soldiers buried in the Buttes New British Cemetery, 1,675 are still unidentified.

Belgians are staying away from campsites in coastal areas, according to a survey by *De Standaard* newspaper as the holiday season started last week. Most sites have taken bookings from British, Dutch and French holidaymakers, but Belgians are thinner on the ground than expected. Belgians have already booked a record number of holidays this year in sunnier climes, especially Turkey.



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Staff and visitors at the National Botanical Gardens in Meise were celebrating last week as one of their plants flowered – for the first time in its 29-year life. The *Alcantarea regina* comes from the Brazilian rainforest and is one of the group of funnel-plants whose leaves form a rosette which can trap and hold water. The Meise plant has grown to a height of over three metres. The original plant, from which the current specimen is a cutting, came to Meise in 1958 and bloomed 30 years later but died soon after. The plant has pink-edged leaves and when flowering sends out shoots, each of which carries about 10 bell-shaped flowers which attract hummingbirds.

FEATURE

A league of its own

Calls for a separate Flemish football team to enter World Cup and European Cup qualifiers are growing



Go, Flanders. A Flemish World Cup squad is not an impossible dream

Leander Schaerlaeckens
The Rode Duivels/Diables Rouges is an anachronism of an artificial country, argue some Flemish people, who advocate separating the national squad along regional lines. As far as they're concerned, the affectionate nickname of the national football team will officially become a thing of the past and be replaced by the "Vlaamse Leeuwen", an all-Flemish team.
In a recent letter to *Het Laatste Nieuws*, Flemish MP Gino de Craemer (N-VA) once again called for the disbanding of the national team. "Wales, England and Scotland aren't independent states but still have a national team," he said, wondering why Flanders shouldn't be entitled to the same.
De Craemer went on to say that the Catalan and Basque provinces in Spain were fighting for their own football squads, too, and have already played several games in that configuration. (He failed to add that those occasional games were merely symbolic and weren't officially recognised by any football organisation.)
The idea of a Flemish team is hardly new. Back in 2002, just a few days after the World Cup in Japan and South Korea ended, the

Vlaams Belang (then Vlaams Blok) Flemish separatist party advocated breaking up the national squad.
The Blok claimed that several Walloon players had been fielded during the World Cup solely on the basis of their native region, not their skill, to ensure that the team wasn't too Flemish. Several Flemish players who were the best in their position, like then-Belgian top-scorer Wesley Sonck, had been left out simply because the coach, Robert Waseige, was Walloon, the Blok claimed.
In March of last year Vlaams Belang followed up with a petition in support of an all-Flemish squad (still available at www.vlaamse-leeuwen.com). Vlaams Belang founder Filip Dewinter capitalised on a crushing 4-0 loss to Portugal in a Euro 2008 qualifier to further his agenda. He blamed the "lack of unity within the team" for the loss, refusing to acknowledge that the Belgian lineup that day was one of the worst the country had produced in decades and that it had faced one of the world's best teams in Portugal. The score, therefore, was entirely natural and would have no doubt been similar in any other team that the country could have mustered.
Murmurs also rose about the need to split up the football feder-

ation, leaving one to wonder what would happen with the already bumbling professional football leagues.
Granted, most of the fictitious Flemish team we've drawn up (see box) are also regulars on the real national team, implying that, at the moment, Flanders would trump Wallonia in a football match. But in the past, the opposite has often been the case, with the national team relying heavily on its Walloon delegation. Chances are that a similar scenario will occur in the future, making it all the more beneficial for both parties to stay together.
Since the Belgian side hasn't been strong enough to qualify for any tournament since the 2002 World Cup, it would be highly risky to further dilute an already unimpressive talent pool.
Furthermore, it is unclear who would get custody of players born in Brussels, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the German region or naturalized players. The first two of those categories represent a very sizable portion of the best talent.
One thing is indisputable, an all-Flemish side would be significantly weaker than an all-Belgian team. The absence of two pivotal players, Vincent Kompany and

Anthony vanden Borre, who were both born in Brussels of Congolese descent, would deteriorate a good defence with a tremendous future into one that wouldn't stand a chance internationally.
Regional relations and cohesion are arguably never better than when the Belgian national team is performing well. Splitting up one

of the last things that the country has in common might have consequences that would reverberate far beyond sport.
Flemish separatists blame the current lull in support of the national side on regional disinterest. They argue that since nobody feels Belgian, but rather Flemish or Walloon, they don't bother to support the Rode Duivels. But they fail to appreciate the recent string of poor performances, which has never won anybody any fans.
The Flemish dream of a World Cup squad may lie in the distant future, but a separate Flemish league could be created next year, according to Flemish sports minister Bert Anciaux. The national first and second divisions would survive, but there would be new Flemish and Francophone leagues below them, he says. Once again, Brussels would be caught in the middle; its clubs would have to decide which side to join.

The Flanders team: a possible lineup

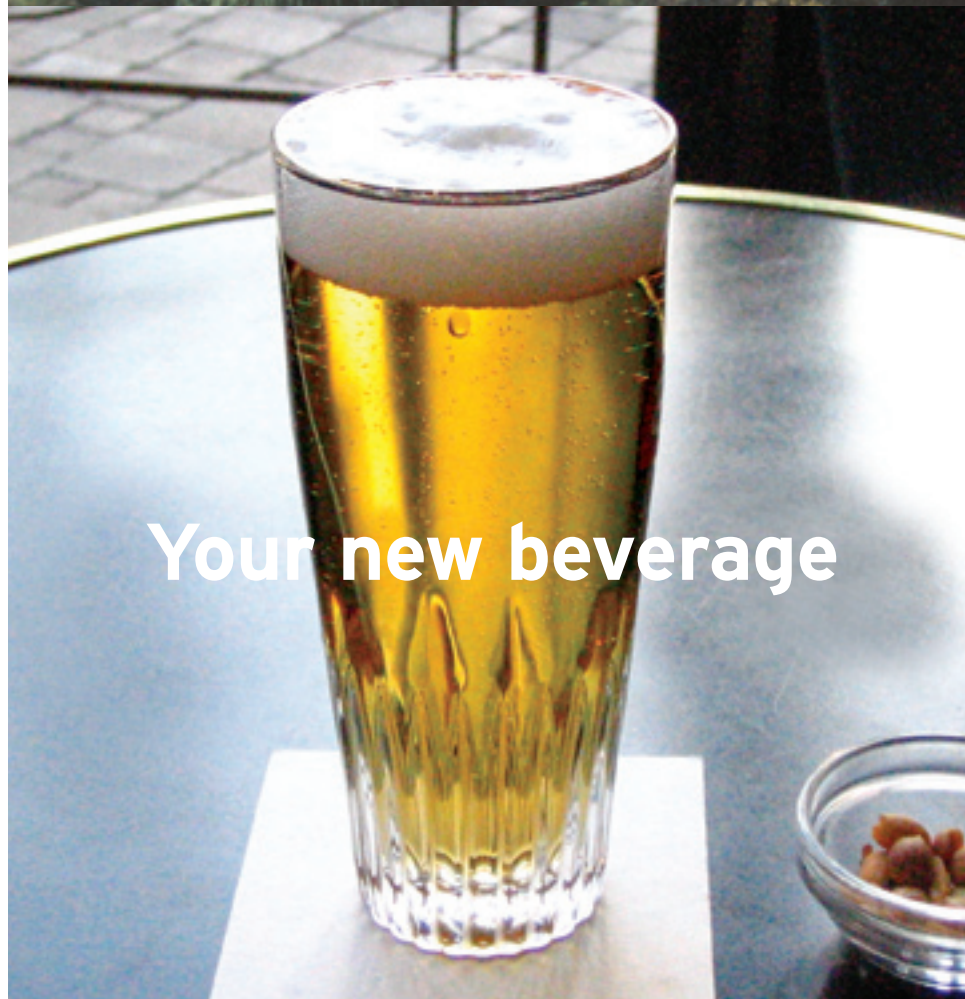
Position	Name	Place of birth
Goalkeeper	Stijn Stijnen	Hasselt
Defender - Right	Gill Swerts	Brasschaat
Defender - Central	Nicolas Lombaerts	West Flanders
Defender - Central	Thomas Vermaelen	Kapellen
Defender - Left	Jan Vertonghen	Sint-Niklaas
Midfielder - Right	Tom de Mul	Kapellen
Midfielder - Central	Steven Defour	Mechelen
Midfielder - Central	Timmy Simmons	Diest
Midfielder - Left	Thomas Buffel	Bruges
Attacker - Central	Wesley Sonck	Ninove
Attacker - Central	Stein Huysegems	Herselt



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Harbour companies should pay their way, says minister-president

Harbour companies should be prepared to foot the bill for infrastructure works themselves, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters warned last week. "I have no plans to increase the annual investment fund of €350 million," he said. "Quite the reverse; if I can, I'll bring it down."

Peeters pointed to a recent development in Montevideo, where Antwerp-based shipping company Katoen Natie built a new container terminal, paying itself for dock works and dredging. "What can be done in Uruguay can also be done in Flanders," Peeters said.

Flanders pays €350 million a year for harbour works, half of it for dredging simply to keep channels open. At the end of this year, a budget will have to be worked out for the construction of a second lock on the Deurganckdok to make the left bank more accessible, at a cost capped at €625 million. Peeters will be looking to the harbour authorities to pay a portion of the price. "The question is whether the Flemish government should pay the full price," he said.

Elsewhere, 625,000 people took part in the first-ever Havendag at the four seaports in Flanders – Antwerp, Zeebrugge, Ghent and Ostend. Activities included a visit to facilities, a jobs fair and boat trips. Peeters himself took part in a cycle-trip over a newly-laid cycle-path in Ghent harbour intended to improve bicycle access for workers.



Kris Peeters attends the first Flemish Harbour Day

Low-cost terminal hits snag

Plans for a new terminal at Brussels Airport for low-cost airlines were put on hold last week after it emerged that the airport's operator, the Brussels Airport Company (BAC), is prevented by law from applying a lower tariff.

Tariffs for the airport – the amount of money an airline has to pay for its spots – are set by law until 2011. Until then there is nothing the company can do to bring in lower tariffs aimed at attracting low-cost airlines, such as EasyJet. That is precisely what BAC planned to do as a means of competing with Charleroi, which last week reported a 22% increase in the number of passengers carried in the first half of the year – well on target for the 2.8 million passengers planned for the whole year.

Works on the new terminal should have begun during the summer, and a BAC spokesperson said preliminary works could start as planned. The company is still waiting on a permit for major works.

Meanwhile, the organisations representing Belgian and foreign airlines, who are the major clients of the airport and feel they are being pushed aside, addressed a question to the air-traffic ombudsman regarding the legality of new tariffs. BAC said they would apply the single tariff to all, including the low-cost airlines, until 2011. But the chance of them being attracted to Zaventem must be reckoned to be lower. And there is no certainty that a double-tariff will be acceptable when the question comes up again in 2011.

"Handful" of Belgian accounts in tax fraud probe

German tax authorities investigating tax fraud at the Liechtenstein bank LGT have passed 20 dossiers to their counterparts in Belgium, *De Tijd* reported at the weekend. In all, some 1,400 accounts are being investigated. The news that so few Belgians are concerned comes as a relief after speculation that there could be many more involved in the case, which came to light in February this year.

According to finance minister Didier Reynders, who received the files from his German counterpart, the "handful" of Belgian cases will not necessarily be the subject of legal action. "The [Belgian tax inspectorate] will now have to study whether the information is relevant, and what the timeline is," he said in a parliamentary reply. "Only then will they be able to move on to an appraisal". The persons concerned can expect to be audited, however.

Reynders also took care to point out that the information on LGT account holders was passed to the tax authorities here in conformity with European guidelines. So saying, he pre-empted the question of whether the information was obtained legally in the first place. The LGT employee who compiled the list of names then sold them to German investigators for a reported €5 million. He is now the subject of an international arrest warrant issued in Liechtenstein.

Last month a US Senate committee issued subpoenas to an undisclosed number of American account holders. The investigation has also reached the ears of tax inspectors in the UK, Australia, Finland and Spain.

BUSINESS FLASH

CMB

Antwerp-based shipping group CMB has lost its latest appeal against a €3.4 million fine first imposed by the EU in 1992. The company was one of four found guilty of abuse of a dominant position in shipping routes between Europe and Congo, with offences taking place in 1986 and 1987. CMB appealed the fine, originally €9.6 million, and won, but the EU re-imposed a smaller fine in 2004. Last week a court rejected CMB's appeal against that fine. "We will see what action we can still take," a CMB spokesman said.

Fortis

Troubled bank-insurer Fortis has offloaded part of the business banking activities of ABN Amro in an agreement with Deutsche Bank, for the sum of €709 million. The sale was required under EU competition rules after Fortis' takeover of ABN. The "corporate client units" had been estimated at a price €300 million higher than Deutsche Bank paid.

BASE/TomTom

Mobile phone operator BASE has agreed to provide real-time traffic information from its users to GPS operator TomTom. Information from BASE users will be gathered anonymously and combined with data from conventional traffic information sources and feedback from TomTom users with devices that can "phone home" their own position.

Delhaize

A network of building contractors working in collusion with a Delhaize executive cost the supermarket chain an estimated €750,000 over the course of seven years. Fraud investigators last year revealed that the executive took money and gifts to give preferential building work to the contractors. The man was arrested but has since been released.

Mobistar/iPhone

The long-awaited launch of the new 3G Apple iPhone in Belgium looked in danger last week when the press conference for the event was cancelled at the last minute. Company sources said there had been problems with the commercial arrangement for the sale of the gadget but declined to go into details.

Think-Media

Think-Media, publishers of magazines Che and Menzo, are to appeal a court ruling against them on money-laundering charges. The company was fined €185,000 in total by the Antwerp court. Chief executive Maurice De Velder has also decided to appeal a personal conviction of three years jail plus a fine of €375,000, which he described as "out of all proportion".

Outsourcing

Belgian companies make more use of outsourcing than their neighbours, according to a study of 600 businesses by consultants Ernst & Young. Overall, 70% of the companies polled outsourced at least one function, while the figure in Belgium was 81%. Companies in Belgium outsource an average of five functions like maintenance, logistics and ICT.



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MUSIC

It's folk, Jim, but not as we know it

You don't have to lose all fashion sense to enjoy Dranouter

Paul Stump

The back end of nowhere is the sort of place one would expect to find a folk festival. Dranouter, far out in wilds of West Flanders, nestled amidst the wooded hollows of what the locals call Heuvelland (hilly land), is such a place. The only public transport is in the form of De Lijn's miniscule, ambling Belbus. It's rustic. It's pastoral. It's the place one would expect hairy men in hairier jumpers to stick their fingers in their ears and sing of obscure canal-boat disasters.

But when Dranouter does folk, it does it with a difference. At the start of every August, the place is thronged with music lovers – not all of them hairy.

Dranouter started small in 1975, when just 300 people turned up at the local De Zon pub to check out the Albion Morris Men from Britain and a dozen or so traditional outfits from both Belgian communities parping and plucking. Earnest was the word: real ale freaks, ethnic instrument wallahs, novelty hemp cuckoo-clock collectives, craft stalls.

It's come a long way – this year Dranouter hosts Tori Amos, Martha Wainwright and Billy Bragg, who's returning 20 years after his debut.

The change began after a few years: in 1980 the celebrated British blues shouter Alexis Korner was a notable guest, and so the focus of the fest began to morph from traditional music to all forms of roots. By the mid-1980s, musicians from Africa and

Asia were negotiating the cobbled roads around the Heuvelland to play to an ever-larger, ever more diverse public, which got younger with the years.

If any one festival made plain the increasing heterogeneity of musical styles in the last two decades, it's Dranouter. The Waterson family were early guests; the Dubliners have showed up. Afrika Soli, Buena Vista Social Club, Hooverphonic, Daan, Kadriil, Marianne Faithfull and all manner of people who listeners might remember being interesting many moons ago, like the unclassifiable British collective Suns of Arqa.

This year the bill is bigger than ever before at Dranouter and includes Dutch political folk singer Boudewijn De Groot and the oddball American cult figure Dave Eugene Edwards, conceivably the only man on the planet who can successfully marry sneering punk and fundamentalist Christian lyrics, which has been enthusiastically received by Southern Baptists and Chicago hipsters alike.

The worthiness is still there (bagpipes, woolly jumpers), but as befits one of Belgium's biggest outdoor bashes. It is organised with typical Flemish efficiency and attention to detail. This year the campsites – scrupulously well-appointed, with mobile homes segregated from the car-free site – are enhanced by temporary wooden hutlets, complete with mattress and bed.

It's worth a bet that the local authorities have probably phoned



In the middle of West Flanders' farmland lies the Dranouter festival. Above, Dutch folk hero Boudewijn De Groot brings his political banter while, left, Dave Eugene Edwards draws a bizarre Christian/punk fusion

the weather gods to keep the rain away. Some of Flanders' quaintest and best little inns are dotted around the lush Heuvelland like tiny dolls' houses, and if Mr Edwards gets hungry he can always nip over to Wally's Farm at Abeele, the hilarious country-themed

tavern on the French frontier a few kilometres away to set his Stetson in place.

If this sounds a little too, well, correct to belong in the vanguard of the festival spirit (and the traditionalists may furrow their brows at exactly what Ms Amos has to

do with roots music), it's worth remembering that Dranouter is, effectively, a beacon for what festivals should be: an experience to be enjoyed, not endured. And the diversity and growing youthfulness of the tens of thousands that crowd into the boondocks for one weekend a year is a refreshing corrective to the misplaced whiff of xenophobia Flanders sometimes suffers from. It should be better known beyond these borders.

Online
www.folkdranouter.be

Going outside to play

For outdoor music away from the festivals, there's no better bet than Rivierenhof



kd Lang plays at Rivierenhof on 20 July

Lisa Bradshaw

Let's be honest: one only gets a chance to enjoy open-air activities in Belgium for the delectable few short weeks summer allows. And even then, you'd better bring along your raincoat. The one with the hood.

There are a number of performances in both the cities and the countryside throughout August, but Rivierenhof allows you to stretch out the open-air concert you've gone to see into a whole day of great outdoor – and indoor – stuff. The 130-hectare park in Deurne, a short bus ride from the centre of Antwerp, is home to a forest and lakes, walkers and bikers and pétanque players. You'll even find a few fisherman casting their lines.

Rivierenhof is in fact an abundance of riches: there are sports fields and mini golf,

plus a children's farm and an outstanding rose garden with 300 varieties. Keep wandering, and you'll discover a "fairy tale garden" complete with a witch's house. The focal point, though, is the 16th-century Sterckshof castle, home to Antwerp's Silver Museum.

As for the summer concerts, they are no small potatoes, either. In July, the stylish open-air theatre welcomes the queen of inventive ballads kd Lang, rhythm & blues legend Al Jarreau and cult rockabilly three-piece The Reverend Horton Heat.

Next month features Ghent-based Puerto Rican popster Gabriel Rios, who takes the stage with Flemish modern jazz piano master Jef Neve and percussionist Kobe Proesmans. Also in August, Flemish alt rock goddess Sarah Bettens performs, in Flanders from her home base in the

United States for two shows this month (see our interview with the singer on page 16).

Because Rivierenhof as a performance space is not on the radar screen of most people outside of Antwerp, there are still tickets left to all of these shows. And in addition to music, the open-air venue welcomes comedy and theatre troupes into September.

You and your raincoat will have a blast.

online
www.openluchtheater.be

Eating the exhibits

Kalmthout is not like other arboretums – visitors are encouraged to touch, smell and even taste the plants



Denzil Walton

One of the reasons for Kalmthout Arboretum's current success is its Conservator and Director Abraham Rammeloo. In the post since 1999, he describes the arboretum's trees with infectious enthusiasm. Listen to him talk about the Chinese Emmenopterys, for example, a sub-tropical tree which recently bloomed: "It is only the fourth time that this type of tree has ever flowered anywhere in Europe. It was a beautiful sight. We erected special scaffolding to allow visitors to get close-up to its flowers."

He also reveals that the Snow-drop Tree (*Halesia diptera*) in the garden is the biggest in Europe and is delighted it is thriving because in its native North America, it is virtually extinct. He is equally proud of the rare Florida Torreya

(*Torreya taxifolia argentea*), which was planted in 1910 and is still growing vigorously. And he laughs when he recalls the moment two years ago when a visiting botanist discovered a single specimen of a type of Hardy Ghent Azalea (*Van*

in the growing visitor numbers and the range of events guaranteeing that there is always something new to see and experience.

For example, visitors are encouraged to visit the Arboretum even in the depths of winter. In mid-

"The centre of garden design and arboriculture that I aim to create in Kalmthout will be an ornament for the community. Over time, it will have significant advantages for the people of your district, from the working people who will be needed to work on it, the people from outside who will come to visit it, the tests that will be made on foreign species of pine tree and finally the dissemination of useful knowledge concerning the cultivation of fruit trees."

– Charles Van Geert, 1856

Houtte Flora Pleno) in the arboretum that hadn't been seen for 15 years.

That a plant should get "lost" in the arboretum can be explained by Kalmthout's design, which is different from most other botanic gardens, where plants from the same family or geographical region are grouped together. In Kalmthout, plants are positioned more for their ornamental significance. "We are happy to have a North American tree providing shade to a New Zealand shrub, which prefers the ground cover of an Asiatic species," explains Rammeloo. "We mix plants together to create an attractive yet harmonious whole."

But Rammeloo is no dry academic who only has eyes for plants. He is very much a people-person, stimulated by the challenge of communicating the Arboretum's splendours to its 35,000 visitors a year. His success is seen

January the garden opens briefly for its annual Hamamelis Festival, which celebrates the spectacular winter flowering of 150 different types of Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis*). The arboretum has the largest publicly accessible collection of Witch Hazel on the continent and supplies cuttings of its new varieties to gardens throughout the world.

Throughout the main season (from mid-March to mid-November) the place is buzzing with activities. This year, three special events tie in with the Beijing Olympics, while the August programme includes a 90-minute "wellness experience".

Yet another event will encourage visitors to eat certain plants. This is the "World of the Capucine" exhibition which runs until 15 October. Capucines (*Nasturtium*) are annuals that are normally seen in gardens in their common orange-flowered form. Yet Rammeloo is

keen to show off their more exotic colours: "We have Capucines in yellow, red, cream and purple, with all sorts of striped and variegated leaves," he enthuses. And that's not all. Capucines are edible; not just the leaves, but the seeds and even the flowers. "We are encouraging visitors to look at them, touch them, smell them...and then eat them. Children always love our eating activities."

The notion of children eating Capucines was probably a long way from the thoughts of Antwerp dendrologist Charles Van Geert in 1857, when he started a plant nursery in the heart of Antwerp, at the location now occupied by the Zoo and the Central Station. In Kalmthout he found space to extend his activities and test newly-discovered plants – mainly conifers from China and Japan – for their winter hardiness. He also introduced the first Belgian examples of Witch Hazel, Hydrangea, Hosta and many other plants.

After Van Geert's death in 1896, his business was taken over by Antoine Kort, who increased the size of the nursery and planted a number of rare trees, most of which are still visible. However, between the two World Wars the garden was left to grow wild.

Luckily, in 1952, two Antwerp diamond dealers and passionate amateur botanists, the brothers Georges and Robert de Belder, purchased the deserted garden. Under their leadership and the skills of Robert's wife Jelena – a qualified horticulturist – Kalmthout Arboretum grew into one of the world's most prestigious botanic collections.

In 1986 the Antwerp Provincial Authority bought the site, with the independent organisation Kalmthout Arboretum vzw retaining full responsibility for management, upkeep and operation. In 1995, a new visitor centre was built.

Some 20 staff work at the arboretum, with up to 50 volunteers, many of them guides. Tours are mostly given in Dutch, but French,

The Olympics in Kalmthout

Belgian Champions

Scattered around the Arboretum are no fewer than 80 champion trees – the biggest, tallest or rarest in Belgium. A walk leads you to every one of them. Until 15 September.

Botanical Records

A poster exhibition of 15 botanical record-breakers, including the smelliest, the most poisonous, the heaviest and the fastest growing. A special booklet is available for children. Until the end of August.

Chinese Walk

A walk through the Arboretum pointing out 25 trees native to China, including the spectacular Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia*). Until the end of August.

German and English are also possible with advance reservation. On Sunday afternoons and public holidays, guided tours are free.

Rammeloo likes to run the occasional tour himself, which of course he does with his customary enthusiasm. "I love talking to visitors and explaining the delights of the arboretum. On a hot summer's day it's a perfect place to relax and enjoy the cool and shade of the trees. Some people come to identify new plants, others to enjoy the wonderful colours. Speaking of colours, did I tell you about our gorgeous *Amelanchier*, and our stunning *Hortensias*? And you must see our beautiful *Magnolia hypoleuca* ..."

online

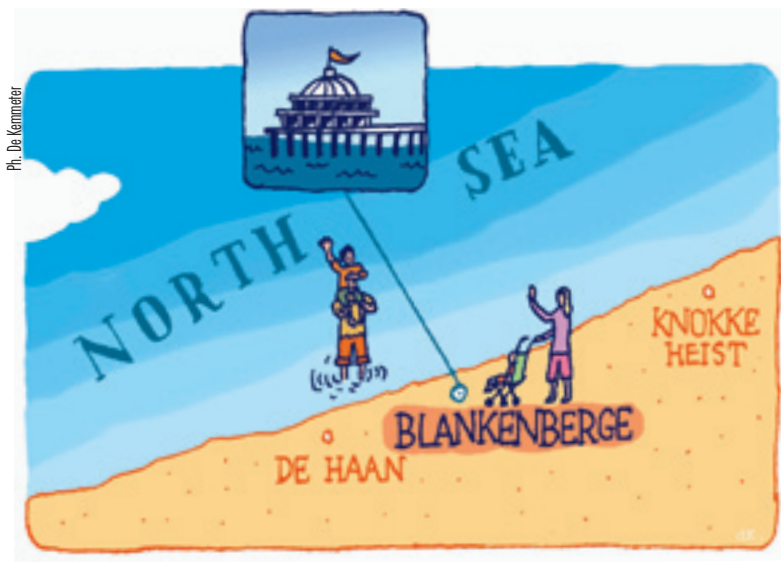
www.arboretumkalmthout.be



Talking trees: Abraham Rammeloo's enthusiasm is infectious

Naturally relaxing

After being pitched recently in Antwerp's city centre, the Time Circus wellness tent comes to Kalmthout Arboretum from 15 to 29 August. Lit by candles and heated by solar energy, you leave your valuables in a locker, strip off your clothes, put on a loose gown and simply relax. Actors from Time Circus will supply you with a drink and locally-grown fruit and tell you stories while you bathe in rainwater and enjoy a sauna. Every 10 minutes a group of eight people enter the wellness tent for a 90-minute experience. It costs €12 per person, and reservations are necessary on 03.666.67.41.



The sands of

In the second of our summer series on the Flemish coast, its noise and arcades actually has a rich history as a fishing town. Welcome to Blankenberge. Époque architecture. Welcome to Blankenberge.

Steven Tate

There are 150 jumpy kids on the train, and you won't find anyone's best dress among the baggage. You must be on your way to Blankenberge.

This mid-size town, between Knokke-Heist and De Haan, is well known as the loudest, the brightest, the most casual – in essence, the *beachiest* beach town on the Flemish coast. And the Belgians like it that way – every weekend it's packed to the gills with families from all over the country.

But this popular coastal destination has managed to maintain its human scale without becoming a parody of itself – which is why Blankenberge is a decades-old tradition for summer vacations.

Though natives are well aware of the kid-friendly charms of Blankenberge, Ostend and Bruges have greater name recognition amongst foreign tourists. Still, you'll find Dutch and British visitors at the coastal resort, according to Ann Hooft of the city's tourist office.

With a population of 18,000, Blankenberge was not always the tourist destination it is today. For centuries, it had actually been a humble fishing village. In fact, a lighthouse and two old fishermen's houses still remain, showing how *Blankenbergers* past earned their daily bread. It was in 1863 that the town's profile rose due to the creation of a train connection between it and Bruges.

Wealthy Belgians started building holiday homes in the town in the Belle Époque style, and many of them still stand in areas such as the square around the Sint-Rochus church, which was completed in the late 19th century. The former town hall dates back to 1680, which makes it the oldest building on the Belgian coast, constructed of bricks from a former Spanish fort.

In the more modest 19th century, beach cabins on wheels would be situated right at the shore so that swimmers wouldn't have to walk too far to get into the water, lest onlookers catch sight of their bloomers. Mind you, bathing suits of the era covered more skin than a nun's habit does today – but the times were a bit more prudish.

Today, the cabins are a bit further away from the shoreline, boasting first names like Anick, Koen and Joyce to be easier to remember if you get lost. Parasols and chaise lounges are avail-

able to rent for those who want to lay about comfortably, while various cafés and restaurants line the nearby promenade welcoming the parched and the famished.

"Blankenberge is a family resort,"

says Hooft. "Many of the people now bringing their children to the town came here when they were children." Although there's a casino overlooking the beach, even its exterior attests to the child-friendly

ly ambiance of the city: huge, surreal statues of babies adorn the building, the work of Czech sculpture David Cerny, retained after the art coast walk Beaufort 2006 came to a close.

I laan 116), which promotes conservation of sea creatures. Part of a European-wide network, the centre features sharks, starfish, seahorses and other aquatic life. Most impressive: the tunnel



Pier into the future

A few years ago, it looked like Blankenberge's pier might sink below the waves, its concrete supports eaten away by the briny water. But engineers were rushed in to halt the rot, and the entire building was revamped over several years. It now has a stylish end-of-the-pier bar where you can watch the sun go down and a state-of-the-art cinema screening 3D movies. To add to the experience, there's a world pier exhibition that tells the story of these fragile maritime structures that line the world's coasts.

A short walk from casino, the Serpentarium (Zeedijk 147) attracts reptile lovers – and everybody else – with 115 terrariums containing various snakes, crocodiles, frogs and other reptiles along a 100-metre path. If the weather doesn't behave, there is always the Goolfy (Zeedijk 120) indoor miniature golf course or the Bowling Stones bowling alley (Koning Albert I laan 114). Outdoor fun includes go-karting at Autodroom near the Pier and Kid Karting & Play in Leopoldpark.

Nearby the Bowling Stones, families should not miss the Sea Life Marine Park (Koning Albert

aquarium, which visitors can walk through and see animals up close as they swim behind glass. A sand sculpture festival will also take place on the beach this summer, as well as street theatre and other activities for children.

Blankenberge does, however, have some delights for those beyond puberty. If you want to splash out, the town boasts a one-starred Michelin restaurant, Philippe Nuyens (Jules de Troozelaan 78), renowned for its stellar French and Mediterranean cuisine. But if you're going to travel to a coastal town, why not take

time

ast, we find that the town known for
hing village and is dotted with Belle



Photos: D de Kieff / De Personeel Vlaanderen

A mix of architectural styles and periods sets Blankenberge's boardwalk apart



a retired local psychologist. "Prices are going up everywhere, but here it seems as though it's become much more expensive."

Van Damme laments the change. But rather than accept it passively, he is working to preserve the local character of Blankenberge. He is president of De Scute, an organisation preserving the maritime heritage of the town. Founded in 1992, the group has built replicas of traditional fishing boats and has restored many vessels from Blankenberge's fishing past. From September to June, members meet in a shipyard on weekends to work on their projects.

Now a grandfather, Van Damme still has one adult child living in Blankenberge – another lives in Ostend and another in Zeebrugge. Why haven't they moved to Brussels or Ghent or Antwerp? Explains Van Damme: "Once you have the sea in your blood, it's there forever." Muir agrees. Half Scottish and half Flemish, she considers herself 100% *Blankenberger*. "Whenever I travel, I always have to be near the sea," she admits. "And even then, I always miss *my* promenade along my beach in *my* town."

online

www.blankenberge.be

advantage of the fabulous seafood – the best of which in Blankenberge is served at Oesterput (Oude Wenduise Steenweg 16), a down-to-earth eatery where locals (and knowing tourists) go to chow down on the freshest shellfish and other seafood.

Blankenberge is a summer series of Friday evening concerts, each week at a different location and with music from a different genre: jazz, folk, boogie-woogie, pop and more. Fishing excursions are also available, the surfing is passable, and there is always something cultural going on – such as the current exhibit in the light-

house by Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren of marvellous black and white portraits of local fishermen.

Tour guide Margot Muir keeps visitors up on activities and sites that they might otherwise miss – such as the new Town Hall, which houses an impressive selection of Belle Époque paintings. "That era was so important to Blankenberge that a new Belle Époque cultural centre is scheduled to open here end of this year," she says.

High season lasts from Easter to autumn, but Blankenberge's appeal is now close to a

year-round affair. Part of this is due to activities, such as the annual grand ball in the casino. But it's also due to the changing nature of taking holidays. "People used to come here and rent a guesthouse or apartment for a week," says Hooft. "Now they might come for a long weekend."

New apartment construction has pushed out much of the older architecture – and affluent Belgians buying holiday apartments in Blankenberge has pushed out some of the locals. "Some young people who grew up here can't afford to stay once they leave their family home," says Antoon Van Damme,



A child Mecca: Sea Life Marine Park, the Serpentarium and plenty of go-karting keep kids happy in Blankenberge

Classical & new Music

Brussels

Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral
Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45
JULY 15 20.00 Maurice Clerc, organ

Bruges

Sint-Salvatorskathedraal
Hoek Steenstraat; www.sintsalvator.be
JULY 11 20.30 Ignacio Ribas Taléns (Andorra), organ and piano: Bach, Brahms, Alain and Spanish composers

Ghent

Sint-Niklaaskerk
Cataloniëstraat; www.stniklaas.com
JULY 12 17.00 Els Ruymen en Kristien Heirman, organ

Leuven

30CC-Wagehuys
Brusselsestraat 63, www.30CC.be
JULY 10 12.15 Het Collectief: Schönberg's Verklärte Nacht op 4

Sint-Pieterskerk

Grote Markt
JULY 9 12.15 De Caelis Ensemble: La Messe de Tournai

Opera

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until JULY 9 Götterdämmerung, the final opera of Wagner's Ring cycle, conducted by Ivan Törzs, staged by Ivo van Hove

Jazz & blues

Brussels

Bizon
Karperbrug 7; 02-502.46.99, www.cafebizon.com
JULY 14 21.30 Bizon Blues Jam Session hosted by Geezer Young

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Until JULY 12 20.30 The Swing Dealers
JULY 15-19 20.30 Alexandre Tripodi Gypsy Quartet

Get your tickets now for...



Cirque du Soleil in Quidam

31 October – 30 November, *Brussels Kart Expo, A Gossetlaan 11. Tickets from 02.200.64.76 or www.cirquedusoleil.com*

It doesn't start until the last day of October, but Cirque sells, so buy now for the best seats on the night of your choice. This time the big top is in Groot-Bijgaarden, and the show is Quidam, a Latin word for "anonymous passer-by". In this case, the passer-by is a little girl who think she has seen everything. Through the usual phenomenal acrobatics, aerial feats, contortionists and something called the "Spanish web", she will be shown there is always something new under the sun. Characters tend to the darker side of a Cirque show, including Boum-Boum (above), "aggressive, yet lifeless, as though his body lives on only because his soul refuses to leave it."

Antwerp

Cafe Mambo
Vlasmarkt 3
Wednesdays until AUG 27 21.00 Marcelo Moncada Quartet

Deurne

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof
Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192, www.openluchttheater.be
JULY 9 20.30 Branford Marsalis Quartet

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Brussels

Fuse
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
JULY 12 23.00 Extrawelt. Lessizmore #20: Konrad Black, Matt John

L'Alphabet

Waversesteenweg 1387; 02.662.23.00
JULY 12 20.30 Peter Welch & Claude Dussart

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
JULY 11 20.00 Les Soldes + Duflan
Duflan + Oxbow + Harvey Milk + Yolz in the Sky + This is Pop + DJ Albanie

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
JULY 15 20.30 Paul Simon

Antwerp

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
JULY 11 22.00 Bram Dewit
JULY 12 22.00 Flynn

Kelly's Irish Pub

Keyserlei 27; www.kellys.be
JULY 10 22.00 New Zealand born singer/songwriter Moakley
JULY 11 22.00 Jailhouse Chili

Scheld'apen

D'Herbouvillekaai 36; 03.238.23.32, www.scheldapen.be
JULY 14 20.30 The Heads + Wooden Ships

Deurne

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof
Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192, www.openluchttheater.be
JULY 10 20.30 Riders on the Storm
JULY 12 20.30 Sven Van Hees + Marla y La Sonora Cubana
JULY 14 20.30 Jill Scott

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44
JULY 12 20.30 New Cool Collective Big Band + Nicole Willis & The Soul Investigators (free concert)

Lier

CC Colibrant
Deensestraat 6-7; 03.480.11.96
JULY 11 20.00 Gezelle Gezongen in Lier

Turnhout

Grote Markt;
www.turnhoutsevvrijdagen.be
JULY 11 20.30 Monza + Zita Swoon (free open-air concert)

World, folk

Antwerp

Het Oude Badhuis
Stuivenbergplein 38, 03.272.31.40, www.hetoudebadhuis.be
JULY 9 18.00 Bournemouth University Big Band

Ghent

Muziek & Theatercafé Trefpunt
Bij Sint-Jacobs 18, www.trefpuntvzw.be
JULY 10 20.00 Aardvark. 21.30 Djamelike, "Ze kwamen van het zuiden" (They came from the South)

Dance

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein; 0900.69.900,

www.musichall.be
JULY 11 20.30 Brasil Tropical, musical cabaret
JULY 14 20.00 Moscow City Ballet in Giselle

Theatre

Antwerp

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 077.37.38.39
Until JULY 13 Fame, dance musical (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Brussels

Arts en Marge
Hoogstraat 312; 02.511.04.11
Until JULY 26 Overvloed (Abundance), outsider art show with work by Carol Bailly, Anacleto Borgui and Marcel Hecquet

Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, www.atomium.be
Until OCT 19 Expo 58: Between Utopia and Reality, documents, plans, objects, films, photographs and scale models of Expo 58
Until OCT 19 Lucien De Roeck's Star, design of the famous symbol of Expo 58
Until OCT 19 The Pavilion of Temporary Happiness, built from 33,000 drink crates to house screenings and exhibitions about World Fairs (near the Atomium on Louis Steensplein)

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be
Until NOV 16 Smurf for All, All for Smurf, original drawings and documents celebrating the famous characters created 50 years ago by Belgian comic strip artist Pierre Culliford, known as Peyo

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until AUG 8 Sony World Photography Awards, a selection from 70,000 photographs from 178 countries (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until AUG 24 Architecture in the Pictures/Flanders Architectural Yearbook, photographs of 37 projects offering an overview of architectural developments in Flanders in 2006 and 2007
Until SEP 14 It's Not Only Rock 'n' Roll, Baby!, art works by musicians, including Alan Vega, Brian Eno, Laurie Anderson, Patti Smith, Pete Doherty and Yoko Ono
Until SEP 21 Sioux in Paradise, sculptures, installations, video, models and drawings by Johan Muyle
Until SEP 21 Mapas abiertos/Opening maps, overview of contemporary Caribbean, Central and South-American photography (part of the Summer of Photography)

CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71, www.civa.be
Until SEP 19 Documents on the gardens designed by René Pechère and Jacques Boulanger-Français for Expo 58

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until SEP 30 Profil, textile creations by Isabelle Marquet
Until DEC 30 Van New Look tot Expo 58, women's fashion from the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair, with evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, suits, coats and accessories

De Elektriciteitscentrale European

Centre for Contemporary Art
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31
Until SEP 28 Fables, photographs by Karen Knorr

De Loge Architectuurmuseum

Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65
Until SEP 28 Belgie/Belgique 58, architectural and decorative forms at

the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair, with drawings, photographs, models, posters and furniture

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
Until JULY 11 Lucas Jodogne and Eric Aupol, photographs

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60
Until AUG 17 De Nieuwe Oogst (The New Harvest), contemporary Flemish design

Erasmus House

Kapittelstraat 31; 02.521.13.83
Until JULY 13 Anatomie van de Ijdelheden (Anatomy of the Vanities), the museum's 75th anniversary show, with works by Hieronymus Bosch, Jan Fabre, Hans Holbein, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, Aïda Kazarian and Quinten Metsys

Espace Photographique Contretype

Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until SEP 21 Voyage Out, photographs by Chantal Maes

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.fondationpouirlarchitecture.be
Until AUG 17 Gevers Design: Inventaris van een uitvinder (Inventory of an inventor), retrospective of work by Belgian designer Christophe Gevers (1928-2007)

Goethe Institute

Belliardstraat 54; 02.230.77.25
Until SEP 12 (closed JULY 21-AUG 15) Works by German photographers Kathrin Ahlt and Felix Dobbert (part of the Summer of Photography)

ING Cultural Centre

Koningsplein 6; 02.547.22.92
Until AUG 8 21st Century Portraiture and Landscape, recent work by 15 contemporary French photographers

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until AUG 16 N'oubliez pas (Do Not Forget), drawings by Virginie de Limbourg
Until AUG 16 Ceramics by Pilar Zurimendi

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre

Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
Until AUG 24 Mer: agitée à peu agitée, photographs by Jacques Debacker (part of the Summer of Photography)

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until OCT 5 One Family, photographs by Vardi Kahana

La Maison de la Bande Dessinée

Keizerinlaan 1; 02.502.94.68
Until SEP 7 Over 150 original drawings published in the Belgian weekly Spirou (founded in 1938), by Jijé, Franquin, Morris, Will, Tillieux, Peyo and Roba, among others

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
JULY 10-AUG 24 Les enfants d'Abraham (Abraham's children), photographs on Christians, Muslims and Jews by Magnum photographer Abbas (part of the Summer of Photography)

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
Until AUG 31 The Belle Epoque, sculpture by Alexandre Charpentier and the museum's collection of posters by Toulouse-Lautrec, among other fin-de-siècle works

Rodolphe Janssen Gallery

Livornostraat 35; 02.538.08.18
Until JULY 19 Famous Aliens of Filmland, American folk furniture originals by Justin Lieberman

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until NOV 30 A Paintbrush in the

Barrel, World War One paintings, drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Library

Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73
Until AUG 23 Eugène Ysaÿe, exhibition on the Belgian violinist and composer, with photographs, letters and instruments
Until AUG 24 In de ban van boeken (Under the Spell of Books), Belgian book collectors, 1750 to 1850

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
Until SEP 30 België op opticaprenten, some 400 views of Belgian cities dating from the 17th and 18th centuries
Until SEP 14 Jeanne d'Arc, the Myth and the Image, visual representation of Joan of Arc in France from the early days of photography (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 14 Vudoptik, young photographers' views of their favourite Brussels' monument (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 21 Expo '58 through the lens of Gérard Castello-Lopes, photographs of the World's Fair (part of the Summer of Photography)

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11, www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until AUG 31 Plecnik Project, life and professional achievements of Slovene architect Jozse Plecnik (1872-1957)
Until SEP 21 The British Royal Collection: From Bruegel to Rubens, more than 50 paintings from the Queen Elizabeth II's collection, with major works by Hans Memling, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Peter Paul Rubens and others, shown alongside masterpieces from the museum's collection
Until SEP 21 Expo '58: Contemporary Art at the World Fair, revisiting the 1958 exhibition 50 Years of Modern Art

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
Until AUG 31 Knock on Wood! Forest and Wood in Africa, thematic exhibition on African trees and forests and their need for sustainable management
Until SEP 28 Naabas Traditional Chiefs of Burkina Faso, outdoor exhibition of large-scale photographs by Jean-Dominique Burton (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until OCT 19 Expo 58, films and photographs, ethnographic objects, plants, artwork and animals that were displayed in the seven pavilions dedicated to the Belgian Congo at Brussels' World's Fair in 1958

Stadhuis

Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until SEP 28 Oriental Fascination, Japanese etchings from the Feliks Jasienski collection in Kracow, shown alongside works by 19th and 20th-century Belgian artists influenced by Japanese graphic art, including Fernand Khnopff, Théo Van Rysselberghe, Rik Wouters, Leon Spilliaert and Henry Van de Velde

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33
Until JULY 27 Mike Kelley Educational Complex Onwards: 1995-2008, retrospective with large-scale installations, sculptures, paintings and photographs by the American artist

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until AUG 17 Die Lucky Bush, contemporary art show curated by Imogen Stidworthy, questioning the physical and social impact of language, with works by John Cage, Jimmie Durham, Gary Hill, Aglaia Konrad and Michelangelo Pistoletto, among others
Until AUG 31 Visual art and sound installations by British artist and composer Cornelius Cardew
Until SEP 9 Fantasy, intervention by Koen van den Broeck

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until JULY 27 Blow Job, site-specific installation by Berlin-based Peter Friedl

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until SEP 14 Focus on sports, a selection of the best sports photographs from the Belga agency (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 14 Guy Bourdin, retrospective of work by the French photographer (1928-1991), famous for his contributions to fashion and advertising (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 14 Summertime, photographs by Verne

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34
Until AUG 17 Open-air installations by Leo Copers

MoMu

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70
Until AUG 17 Moi, Véronique. Branquinho TOuTe NUe, retrospective of the Belgian designer marking the 10th anniversary of her fashion label

Bruges

Arentshuis
Dijver 16
Until AUG 3 Three Bruges Artists: Legillon, Verbrugge and Ledoulx, 18th and 19th-century drawings

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43
Until DEC 31 Leuven loans, 15th- and 16th-century paintings and woodcarvings from Leuven's Van der Kelen-Mertens museum

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
Until SEP 21 The Joy of Looking, painting biennale with works by Philip Akkerman, Georg Baselitz, Jean Brusselmans, Francis Picabia and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Roger Raveel Museum in Machelen-Zulte)

Ghent

Caermersklooster
Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
JULY 11-SEP 14 Disappearing Worlds, photographs of indigenous peoples in Australia, New Guinea and South Africa by Danish anthropologist Jens Bjerre
JULY 11-SEP 14 Eighty-four, in pek op papier, large format drawings by Richard Simoens

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
JULY 11-OCT 12 Design from the 1950s and 1960s
JULY 11-OCT 12 Design with a smile, designs with a surrealist touch
JULY 11-OCT 12 Hommage to Hans Wegner, exhibition in recognition of the contributions of the famous Danish designer
JULY 11-OCT 12 Helena Schepens: Perpetuum Mobile, designs by the Flemish silver- and goldsmith

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until SEP 7 Circus or Science: The Roca Collection, anatomical wax models from the late 19th and early 20th centuries
Until SEP 7 Jean Rustin, retrospective of work by the French painter
Until SEP 7 I live in the painting, work by the late Flemish artist Marc Maet

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until JULY 27 Hors de soi (Outside oneself), installations by Benoît Félix

Hasselt

Modemuseum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
Until AUG 31 Looks: Mode 1750-1958,

Two-hundred years of fashion history

National Jenever Museum

Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60
Until AUG 31 The Orange Bulb Alambfleurics, olfactory installation by Flemish artist Peter De Cupere

Z33

Zuivelmarkt (Beguinage) 33; 011.29.59.60
Until AUG 17 Bridge, installation by Michael Cross
Until SEP 29 1% Water, art and design relating to global water issues

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation, Westakker
Hulsterstraat Noord; www.verbekefoundation.com
Until NOV 16 Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision, new exhibition of moving art

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
Until SEP 21 The Joy of Looking, painting biennale with works by Georg Baselitz, Jean Dubuffet, Asger Jorn, Constant Permeke, Robert Rauschenberg and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum in Deurle)

Mechelen

Congres en Erfgoedcentrum Lamot
Van Beethovenstraat 8-10; 015.29.49.00
Until SEP 14 Van Pijl tot paviljoen, 20 models of the pavilions at Brussels' 1958 World's Fair

Cultuurcentrum

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00, www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
Until SEP 14 Happy Days, collector's items and music of the 1950s recreating the atmosphere of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair

Ostend

Modern Art Museum
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18
Until AUG 31 Georges Vantongerloo: Pionier van de moderne beeldhouwkunst (Pioneer of Modern Sculpture), retrospective of work by the Flemish artist (1886-1965)

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum
Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75
Until SEP 7 Man, Culture, War: Multicultural Aspects of the First World War, a panorama of the diverse origins of those who fought in Belgium during WWI
Until NOV 12 Off the record, work by artist-in-residence Wendy Morris

Festivals & special events

Belgium Roller Parade

Until SEP 29 Weekly rollerskating parades in Brussels and other towns
www.belgiumrollers.com

Summer of Photography:

Contemporary photography festival
Until SEP 14 in venues across Belgium
02.507.82.00, www.summerofphotography.be

Vlaanderen Feest!: Hundreds of special events across Flanders – mostly free – in celebration of the National Day, including kids' theatre in Aalst, music concerts across Brussels, a folk reception and performance in Eeklo, comedy and theatre in Antwerp and a fair and feast in Lede
Until 12 July across Flanders
www.vlaanderenfeest.be

Brussels

Brosella Folk & Jazz 2008: Free annual music festival, this year along the theme of Expo58. Includes a concert by the Flat Earth Society
JULY 12-13 at the outdoor Green Theatre, Atomium
www.brosella.be

Ça rebondit sur cour Festival: Festival of string and Baroque ranging from

world and jazz to French chanson, classical and traditional, all on the theme of water
Until AUG 30 at Domaine de Rouge-Cloître, Auderghem
02.223.46.75, www.atelierdolcevita.be

De Gulden Ontsporing Celebration:

Flemish National Day celebrations with a free music sponsored by Ancienne Belgique, including Raymond van het Groenewoud, Sarah Bettens, Tom Helsen, Luc Devos, Frank Vander Linden, Lady Linn, Born Crain and Brahim, among others
JULY 11 across Brussels
www.deguldenontsporing.be

Ecran Total Festival:

Film festival showing a wide variety of films, including classics, reprises, documentaries, Japanese Nouvelle Vague and animation
Until SEP 9 at Cinema Arenberg, Koninginnegalerij 26
02.512.80.63, www.arenberg.be

Flageyplein Opening Festival:

Week of festivities to mark the opening of Flageyplein with concerts, street theatre and outdoor film screenings
Until JULY 12 on Flageyplein, Heilig Kruisplein
www.placeflageyplein.be

Jetsummer Danceweeks:

Dance workshop festival with international artists
Until JULY 11 at Dans Centrum Jette, Edmond van Cauwenberghstraat 55
02.427.36.56, www.danscentrumjette.be

Midis/Minimes 08:

Series of weekday lunchtime concerts, exploring classical and new music rarely performed and new Belgian and international artists
Until AUG 29 12.15 at Kapel van de Miniemen, Miniemenstraat 62, and the Royal Music Conservatory, Regentschapsstraat 30
02.512.30.79, www.midis-minimes.be

Antwerp

Antwerp on Wheels: Roller parade through the streets of Antwerp. Warm-up, skating lessons and entertainment from 18.30
Monthly until SEP 6 20.00 starting from Dageraadplaats in Zurenborg
0498.44.11.81, info@antwerponwheels.be

Zomer van Antwerpen (Summer of Antwerp):

arts festival including avant-garde theatre, concerts in neighbourhood squares, circus performances, outdoor film screenings and a live "sunset show" every night
JULY-AUG in venues and public spaces across the city
03.224.85.28, www.zomervanantwerpen.be

Bruges

Cactus Festival: Music festival, with performances by Gabriel Rios with Jef Neve and Kobe Proesmans, Youssou N'Dour, Tinariwen, The B-52s, Arno, Arsenal and The Kills, among others
JULY 11-13 at Minnewaterpark, Bargeplein
www.cactusfestival.be

Intermezzo Opera Festival 2008:

Festival and competition with young artists from several countries performing in gala performances and concerts
Until AUG 2 in the Concertgebouw and the Magdalenazaal Theater
www.intermezzofoundation.org

Deurne

A World of Comedy: Stand-up with Philippe Geubels, Bert Gabriëls and Michael Van Peel (in Dutch)
JULY 17 20.30 at Openluchttheater Rivierenhof, Turnhoutsebaan 232
070.222.192, www.openluchttheater.be

Ename

Museum Night: Cultural event organised by the Provincial Archaeological Museum (PAM), this year with a Spanish theme, including

Don't miss this week



Gent Jazz Festival

10-20 July, De Bijloke, Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, Ghent.
Tickets from 09.269.92.92 or www.gentjazz.com

Formerly the Blue Note Records festival, this annual event in Ghent normally runs parallel to the huge Gentse Feesten music and theatre festival, but this year it starts early, meaning you don't have to choose between its many stellar performances and the bigger Ghent festival. As always, the highlights are numerous: the big-haired man who dominates the American jazz scene, Pat Metheny, with trio in tow; Canadian vocalist and pianist Diana Krall (with any luck, you might spot hubby Elvis Costello in the room); Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club, which features the musicians who illustrate the history and backbone of Cuba's music scene. You'll also find Erykah Badu, Flat Earth Society and the Neville Brothers. But perhaps the most anticipated is the 10 July performance of Herbie Hancock (photo), who, after 50 years in the business, continues to be an innovator, taking on acoustic and electro-jazz when the mood – or the decade – strikes him. Hancock marries the smoky pure jazz club of the past with the experimental jazz rock of the present and covers everything in between. He is a history of the genre in one evening.

tango and Flamenco dancing

JULY 10 20.00 at Pam Ename, Lijnwaadmarkt 20
055.30.90.40, www.pam-ename.be

Ghent

Gent Jazz Festival: annual festival (formerly Blue Note Record Festival), featuring Diana Krall, Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny Trio, Erykah Badu, CocoRosie, Gabriel Rios, Jef Neve and Kobe Proesmans, among others
JULY 10-20 at De Bijloke, Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2
09.269.92.92, www.gentjazz.com

Tokyo Drums:

Japanese music show
JULY 15-NOV 5 at Capitole, Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5
0900.69.00

Gistel

Parkival 08: International Folklore Festival organised by the group De Hovelingen-Viking, including art, music and culture from Mexico, Lithuania and Flanders
JULY 10 at Stadspark van Gistel, Kerkstraat
www.parkival.be

Leuven

Zomer van Sint-Pieter (Summer of Saint Peter): Weekday lunchtime classical and new music concerts
Until AUG 29 12.15 at Sint-Pieterskerk, Grote Markt and 30CC-Wagehuys, Brusselsestraat 63
016.23.84.27, www.midis-minimes.be

Molenveld Boechout

Sfinks Mixed Festival: World music festival including Balkan Beatz celebrations, circus, street theatre and film
JULY 17-20 across Molenveld Boechout
www.sfinks.be

Peer

BluesFestivalPeer: Rhythm & Blues festival, with performances by Alvin Lee, Little Feat, Solomon Burke, Jools Holland and others
JULY 11-13 at Festivalweide Peer
011.61.07.20, www.brbf.be

Rumbeke

Parsipop: One-day music festival featuring tribute act Gunz n' Rozes, One Fine Cast, Morda, Open Sesame, Revenge 88 and Scellus, among others
JULY 12 13.15 at Scoutsterreinen Rumbeke, Koestraat
0475.51.29.75, www.parsipop.be

Watou

Poëziezomer (Poetry summer): Festival of contemporary art, architecture and poetry
Until SEP 7 in indoor and outdoor venues across Watou
www.poeziezomerswatou.be

Werchter

Werchter Boutique: One-day rock festival with James Blunt, Doe Maar, Santana, Crowded House, Tokio Hotel, Mick Hucknall, Zornik, Milow and a tribute to Bobby Blue Bland
JULY 13 from 13.00 at the Rock Werchter site
www.werchterboutique.be

Vorst

Flemish Community Celebration: Els Witte, former professor at the Free University of Brussels, offers her vision on the future of Brussels, followed by an exclusive concert by Frank Vander Linden of the pop group De Mens
JULY 12 11.00 at Gemeentehuis van Vorst, Pastoorstraat 2
02.333.75.00, www.vorst.irisnet.be

INTERVIEW

Sarah Bettens

Flanders lost Sarah Bettens to the charms of the southern United States, but the alt-pop singer plays here twice this summer. She tells us about her ongoing quest for identity and – could it be? – a possible reunion of K's Choice

As many a *De Morgen* reader can tell you, last autumn Sarah Bettens released the album *Shine*. It was distributed free with the Flemish daily, which saw its circulation figures soar for the occasion (leading to a lively debate about this kind of distribution).

It's been about 15 years now since Bettens and her brother Gert joined forces to create the Antwerp-based duo The Choice. They later renamed themselves K's Choice and made it big all over the world, earning gold and platinum status in Europe. Bettens' husky voice and tomboy attitude together with the band's vintage harmonies and often wry lyrics made hits out of songs like "Not An Addict", "Believe" and "Almost Happy", which still resound in the collective Flemish memory.

Five years ago, they split the team and went solo. Bettens released her first album *Scream* in 2005, for which she was awarded the European Border Breakers Award. Despite the split, Bettens held on to her fan base with classic pop songs built from emotional and introverted lyrics.

The 35-year-old singer now lives in a small town in Tennessee with her partner and two children. But she hops over to Europe almost every month. This week you can catch her performing at the Gulden Ontsporing in Brussels Grote Markt for the Flemish national holiday, and later in the summer, she'll be in Antwerp at the Rivierenhof theatre, in the open air.

Last year's album *Shine* is considered a bit more optimistic than your first album. Do you agree?

There's always a kind of optimism in my records, but *Shine* is definitely more light-hearted. There's a

lot of hope in the record, but at the same time there are songs that are more political than before. I tried to find a balance between leading the life of an optimist and not being blind to what's happening in the world. Of course you have different world views at 35 than at 25. At my age, I feel a lot more part of what's happening in the world, and it touches me in a different way than it used to.

If you could describe your artistic style, how would you?

Hmm...I would use the words pop, rock, acoustic. I guess in the end it's pop music, but that's such a wide definition. I like to think that most people who buy my records listen to the lyrics, that they care about them. For me it has to be 50/50 lyrics and music. There has to be an osmosis that triggers a certain emotion. But still: it's just pop music. I feel like I'm starting to know myself; I'm becoming a better musician, my songs are getting better. By growing older, you get closer to what you really want to say. I don't want to be ultra-innovative musically, because I know that's not my kind of music. But I do need the feeling that I'm constantly getting better. Whether I am actually getting better is for other people to decide [laughs].

You went solo a couple of years ago. Does sole creative responsibility weigh on you?

No, there's no real weight, but I do feel like making a new K's Choice album. When Gert and I went solo, we both needed the adventure, the challenge. At this point, the challenge is to make a new K's Choice album. I'm really longing to be part of that band again. Each one of us will be back from a totally different world, laden with new experiences. It's really exciting to think



they're gay. I want to be part of the solution.

You live in Tennessee with your girlfriend and children. Isn't that a conservative area?

Yes, but surprisingly it seems to work out fine. Our little town turns out to have one of the biggest concentrations of lesbians in the US. Most of them are still in the closet. You would think it would be difficult to live here, but it isn't. Most of the people are conservative, but they are the sweetest people, and they are surprisingly open-minded and into new things. So we consider ourselves on a mission to change at least a few minds about gays and lesbians over here [laughs].

This week you're in Brussels to perform on the Flemish national holiday. Is that something special to you?

I really like being part of that! Belgium is still my place of birth, my country, a place where I love to come. All my friends and family are here; it's still the best place in the world to play a concert.

What do you miss the most when you're in the US – or in Belgium?

When I'm in Belgium, I miss the sun. And my girlfriend and the children, of course. I also miss the sheer size of America, the variety of states and people. There so much of everything, so many opportunities, there's a feeling you can do anything you like. When I'm home in the US, I just miss people – friends and family.

Interview by An Gydé

Sarah Bettens performs at the Gulden Ontsporing, 11 July, 20.00, Grote Markt, Brussels and at Rivierenhof, 7 August, 20.30, Deurne (near Antwerp). She will also tour the country in November

online
www.sarahbettens.com

about what might happen if we get together again. So, I'm still very happy with my solo career, but I really miss the feeling of being in a band. And I miss my brother, full stop.

So what I'm hearing is: K's Choice is definitely going to be reunited?

If nothing goes wrong, it will happen. Gert and I are very busy, but sometime in 2009, we will start writing songs.

There was a lot of fuss about *Shine* being distributed for free with a newspaper. Would you do it again?

Oh, absolutely [laughs]. Artists all have to find new ways of getting our music to the audience. Album sales have plummeted; people just

keep copying CDs. We have to find different media. I understand it's a burden for the record shops, but it's a trend that's unstoppable.

You have featured on the covers of national gay and lesbian magazines in the US. Are you comfortable with being a lesbian role model?

The first months of my relationship with a woman, I didn't like talking about it. It was all very new to me, and I didn't want to be coined the "expert" or defined as "the lesbian singer". But all of that changed very quickly. I found out that to be totally "out" was the only option. My lyrics are about it, it's a big part of my life. There are still a lot of youngsters that grow up unhappy or even commit suicide because they are afraid to tell their parents

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

"We're not sitting here with our buttocks clenched whenever Ryanair calls. Far from it. We have a customer relationship with Ryanair, and sometimes there's indeed banging on the table."

Charleroi airport director Marcel Beulens on his biggest customer

"People want something other than just sand and maybe a deck chair."

De Haan official Wilfried Vandaele, whose commune will be offering a free library and WiFi internet

"I am not pessimistic. There's a 50-50 chance we could succeed."

Government negotiating partner Joelle Milquet, not exactly optimistic either

GentseFeesten Planckendael Fragile DeHaan It'sNotOnlyRock'n'Roll, Baby 1EuroMuseum
next week in Flanders Today