

**Quiz! ..... 6**

Welcome to the final Flanders Today of 2009. Speaking of 2009, how much do you remember of it? Would you rather forget it? No such luck: inside is a year-end quiz to end all year-end quizzes. Winner gets a Bongo gift box worth €50. Wow!


**Delvaux deux ..... 8**

Brussels' Fine Arts Museums hosts a show of the more classical work of one of Belgium's most important figures of 20th-century art, Paul Delvaux. Visit that or go to the museum on the coast dedicated to the artist before it takes its winter break


**Winter fires ..... 11**

Where will you keep warm on New Year's? Besides Antwerp's marvellous Wintervuur, there are plenty of "Sylvester fires" to light up the night. We have a few other ideas that are off the beaten path



© Edouard Brie/Boga

All the Belgian papers put politics on hold for a few days this year to concentrate on the story that gripped the nation: the Dendermonde crèche killings. On 24 January, Kim De Gelder entered the crèche and stabbed a child care provider and two babies to death, injuring a further 10 children and two staff. The 20-year-old, now in Bruges prison, appears to have chosen the crèche at random

#110



# The year in Flanders

ALAN HOPE / NEWS EDITOR

**N**ews stories, in my experience, follow one of three arcs: either they're with us forever, without resolution (and usually without much significant development), or they're up and down in no time, a lion-escapes-zoo, lion-recaptured progress of events. The third case – a story breaks, develops and then reaches a natural conclusion – is the most satisfying. But also the most rare.

Here at *Flanders Today*, we were reminded of the first type of story last week when we received a press release about the Council of Europe on its mission to monitor regional democracy in Belgium. That's right: we're on the road to

more headlines in the foreign press about alleged Flemish oppression of the mayors of the facility communes around Brussels, and all the misunderstandings to which that subject is prey.

The subject of state reform in Belgium, and the endless push-me/pull-you between French-speaking and Flemish sides, is the story that never goes away. It went quiet for a time, while Herman Van Rompuy was prime minister from the start of 2009, but, like a volcano, you knew it was only a matter of time before it erupted once more. Now that Jean-Luc Dehaene has taken over, the problem will bubble away under the surface, but it will still be there.

Dehaene will try to keep a lid on leaks from his negotiations, but it can't be long before something comes to the surface.

An example of the second kind of story was the bizarre case of a pharmacist in Middelkerke who tried to kill her husband and children with poisoned cheese. She was arrested and committed to a psychiatric institution in Ostend. When at home on leave, she apparently couldn't face returning to the institution, and took her own life as only a pharmacist knows how. End of story – although for those involved, of course, it's anything but. That was a story of the utmost tragedy.

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## We'll see you in January

*Flanders Today* is taking a little break this month, but we'll be back in your letter box on 6 January with stories on what Flanders is doing in the wake of the Climate Change Conference, a new exhibition in Bruges on foundlings and a short history of the Sportpaleis.

Tot dan! (Until then!)



## FLANDERS TODAY

## Independent Newsweekly



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## News in brief

The closure of a water purification plant in Brussels has led to **untreated waste water** from the city's 1.1 million inhabitants flowing directly into the Zenne, Rupel and Scheldt rivers, leading to "untold environmental damage", according to the Better Environment Union (BBL). The Brussels North plant is the biggest in the country. The reason for the stoppage on 8 December is not clear, but the damage was immediate, with oxygen levels in the Zenne dropping from 54% to only 11%. "With so little oxygen, life become impossible," said BBL. "It's a catastrophe."



## Slimste mens opens season with ER drama

The new series of *De slimste mens ter wereld* couldn't have had a more exciting start. Not only were all three contestants women, but, immediately after the show was over, one of them was rushed to hospital.

It turned out to be a false alarm. Actress Maaike Cafmeyer (pictured) is eight months pregnant, and, perhaps because of the stress of the quiz, or perhaps because of the dashing good looks of show host Erik Van Looy, she succumbed to an attack of false contractions.

The weekend supplements devoted many column inches to the show, and Monday saw the start of a new daily series in *De Standaard*, introducing each new contestant (three people play each evening, with two coming back the next day) through the eyes of a close friend or loved one. If these people weren't BVs (Famous Flemings) before *De slimste mens*, they will be soon.

On Tuesday, weather forecaster Sabine Hagedoren fell out, leaving starter Ann De Bie and Bruno Tobback. On Wednesday, actor Chokri Ben Chikha joined the show. He apparently lets idea ripen in his head for months at a time, according to his girlfriend – a dubious talent for a quiz contestant. He lasted one evening, though (and with his departure went the only non-white face we'll be seeing this season).

Thursday's edition produced a first: the appearance on the same show of father and son: Louis Tobback, former minister and now mayor of Leuven sits on the show's jury, and his son Bruno, also a former minister and a socialist member of parliament, was in the contestant's chair. The show provided the quote of the week: Erik Van Looy to Bruno Tobback: "Who's the cleverest at home?" Tobback: "I don't live at home any more. So that would be him."

*De slimste mens ter wereld* is on four nights a week on Channel één at around 22.00. For exact times check → [www.een.be](http://www.een.be)

→ [www.deslimstemens.be](http://www.deslimstemens.be)

raided a beauty clinic in Mechelen and seized computers, documents and equipment. The clinic's owner claimed that the VVT is motivated by economic considerations.

Flemish public transport authority **De Lijn** manages to cover only 15% of its own running costs, according to a study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. The rest of the €1 billion annual bill is financed by the Flemish government, which carries a larger share of the cost than governments in similar regions elsewhere in Europe. The Flemish government is now determined that De Lijn should slim down to reduce the subsidy burden. De Lijn, whose former CEO is now a minister in the Flemish government, accounts for only 11% of all journeys in the region.

After a final concert, the bells of the **clock tower in Bruges** fall silent today (16 December) for six months to allow a full restoration costing €400,000. The carillon will get a new keyboard and drum, which allows the hammers to strike the bells. In addition, 21 of the bells will be replaced. The museum in the tower, which attracts 200,000 visitors a year, will remain open during works.



## Half of all rail journeys run late

Six out of 10 train commuters travelling at peak morning times arrive late because of delays, according to the passengers' association TreinTramBus (TTB). In Brussels alone, the figure is closer to two in three. And at other times of the day, half of all trips run late. "Belgium is mediocre compared to other countries," said spokesman Jan Vanseveren. "The Netherlands and Switzerland are a bit better, but France and Germany score worse."

The rail network manager Infrabel issues periodic statistics on time-keeping, but they measure the lateness of trains, not passengers. That tends to sway the results if, for example, a passenger misses a connection and has to take a later train which is perfectly punctual. Thus the rail

authorities can claim figures as high as 90% punctuality, whereas, according to TTB, a lot of passengers were disastrously late.

TTB asked 903 volunteers to keep a rail diary for a total of 7,500 trips in October, including multiple train connections. One in five passengers has to change trains at least once. Late arrivals as a percentage of all trips across the day:

• On time	49%
• 5 to 10 min late	23.1
• 10 to 15 min	10.8
• 15 to 20 min	6.0
• 20 to 25 min	2.5
• more than 25 min	5.1
• Too early	3.4



©Shutterstock

## Pain treatments are not euthanasia, says court

### An Ostend doctor is acquitted of murder

An Ostend doctor accused of murdering five patients by administering illegal euthanasia has been acquitted by a court in Bruges. The doctor, who has not been named, was reported in 2005 by the St Monica non-profit organisation, which runs two care homes for the elderly in Ostend. According to the complaint, the doctor had administered fatal doses of morphine to five elderly and senile patients between 2000 and 2005.

The doctor argued that the doses of morphine were too low to cause death and had been intended only to alleviate pain. The deaths, though they followed shortly after the treatments, were a result of the patients' conditions and not the

pain medication, the defence said.

In Belgium, euthanasia is legal provided the subject has a serious or incurable condition which leads to intolerable physical or psychological suffering. Most importantly, the patient needs to express the clear desire to bring an end to his or her life. In the case of patients suffering from dementia, that condition is impossible to fulfil.

The families of the patients supported the doctor and argued that their relatives were approaching death in any case, and that the doctor was doing a minimum necessary to prevent further suffering, even if the effect of pain control might be to shorten the time before death.

The case is being seen as an important precedent and a sign that doctors may continue to use pain control on terminal patients even if the treatments may shorten the lives of the patients. According to some estimates, one in four deaths in Flanders is accompanied by pain treatment that can shorten life. Wim Distelmans, professor of palliative care at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and chair of the federal euthanasia commission, called for the government to provide a clear legal framework for terminal care, such as now exists for euthanasia proper, including a commission which could act "as a buffer between the doctor and the prosecutor".

## Griepcommissaris battles Twitterazzo for word of the year

By the time this issue of *Flanders Today* publishes, there will be one day left to vote for the "Word of the Year", as determined by Van Dale dictionaries of the Dutch language. Van Dale has drawn up a short list of words from both the Netherlands and Flanders that they consider to be new usages, as well as being typical of some aspect of 2009.

**hypotekleed** – mortgage troubles

**Mexicaanse griep** – Mexican flu (a misnomer but still a contender)

**oeps-gebied** – the anterior cingulate cortex area of the brain, associated with errors

**ontvrienden** – de-friending on social networks like Facebook

**recessionista** – someone who spends their way out of a recession

**spuugkit** – a kit issued to civil servants to take a DNA sample if spat upon by a member of the public

**tomtomburger** – someone who takes a fatalistic attitude to life and allows it to be determined by the state

**Twitterazzo** – a fanatical tweeter

**zeilmeisje** – an adventurous young woman with a taste for solo voyages

**griepcommissaris** – a popular newspaper term referring to the commissioner for influenza pandemic preparations, Marc Van Ranst

While several of the options have already become familiar in common use, others appear to have been selected for their exoticism. Whether or not they are actually used by real people (who but the hippest clique of neurologists would ever have occasion to talk about the anterior cingulate cortex?), even a declaration as Word of the Year isn't always enough to ensure a word's survival. Last year's winner, *swaffelen*, has mercifully disappeared from the lexicographical landscape. Its definition is not fit to be published in a family newspaper.♦

→ [www.woordvanhetjaar.nl](http://www.woordvanhetjaar.nl)

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### The stress bunny

The federal government is constantly sailing through heavy weather. The reason is simple: this is where two cultures meet. This manifest itself not just in institutional discussions (about the state reform Flanders wants and the French speakers don't), but in many other areas, too.

An example: 10 years ago, the french-speaking socialist Laurette Onkelinx, then minister for work, decided to tackle youth unemployment with the so-called Rosetta Plan. She met with fierce Flemish opposition as there was hardly any youth unemployment in Flanders, which actually faced a shortage of workers.

Another example: Onkelinx' successor, Frank Vandenbroucke, tried to get small domestic services, such as cleaning, out of the black economy by introducing a system of *dienstencheques* (service cheques). This was applauded in Flanders, but the French speakers reviled him for encouraging low-paying, low status jobs (or McJobs, as they were called).

A similar conflict seemed in the making, as the new minister for work, Joëlle Milquet, had yet another plan to tackle youth unemployment that would have been counter-productive for Flanders. The Flemish government has threatened to call for an official "conflict of interest", which led Milquet to warn of a federal government crisis, but things cooled down after an agreement was reached.

By contrast, the Flemish government has seemed like a beacon of peace and quiet for years. Ideological conflicts are largely absent and, until the economic crisis hit, there was no lack of money to keep everyone happy. As a result, the Flemish government, personified by its minister-president, has always prided itself on its "good governance".

But things have changed. While the federal government Leterme II still enjoys an (undoubtedly short-lived) honeymoon period, the Flemish government is going through some rough times. The newspaper *De Standaard* last week summed up all the present and potential conflicts in a large diagram, full of flashing red arrows. Teachers' wages, replacing the head of the public broadcaster VRT, the Oosterweel link, the concessions Flanders will have to make in the yet-to-start institutional talks... It's quite an impressive list.

No wonder the newspaper called minister-president Kris Peeters (CD&V), faced with all of that and an economic crisis, a "stress bunny". Peeters prefers to compare himself to a magician who has no problem keeping 20 or 30 plates up in the air. He has officially denied being a stress bunny. Well, it's a start, isn't it?

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



5,000

additional deaths as a result of the delay in implementing a smoking ban in cafes, according to the Belgian Cardiological League

46.73%

of Flemings use a car every day, according to figures from the Institute for Mobility at the University of Hasselt.

€507

average cost of a one-night admission to hospital in 2008, only €1 more than 2007, according to the Christian Mutuality. Four out of five patients opt for a two-person room

7/10

Belgians in favour of a zero limit on alcohol when driving, according to a poll for insurer Axa. But one in three admitted to driving after drinking two or more glasses of alcohol, the second-highest rate in Europe

5,483

students in Antwerp secondary schools – out of a total of more than 36,000 – had a truancy record of more than 10 half-days of unauthorised absence in the last school year, said the city's information point for youths at risk (CMP)

Bruss**E**ls • Prag**U**e • Copenhagen •  
Be**R**lin • R**O**me • Amsterdam •  
Madrid • **P**aris • Lux**E**mbourg • Valetta  
• Vienna • W**A**rsaw • **N**icosia •  
Riga • Dublin • Budapest • Tallin •  
Lisbon • **V**ilnius • L**O**ndon • Ljubljana  
• Athens • Brat**I**slava • Sto**C**holm •  
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# The year in Flanders

→ *continued from page 1*

**O**f similar short duration and long-lasting effect was the strange death of cycling's *enfant terrible* Frank Vandenbroucke, who died in a seedy hotel in Senegal. The conclusion of the coroner, who admitted he didn't have the resources to carry out a toxicological analysis, was that the cause of death was a pulmonary embolism, an unusual cause in one so young and so fit. A prostitute and two men were arrested, having apparently fleeced Vandenbroucke either before or after his death. His body was brought home and given a proper funeral. The family has said there will be no further investigation. End of story, with all loose ends still hanging.

By the time you read this, there will still be two weeks left in 2009 in which the story that represents the third of our arcs might resolve itself. In our issue of 4 February, we ran a front-page article with

the headline: "General Motors has been in Antwerp for the past 80 years and has survived worse times than these".

Three weeks later, the news in *Flanders Today* was of another tenor altogether: "Flanders region this week sent a top-level delegation to Detroit, Michigan, in the United States, for talks with the management of both General Motors and Ford following the announcement of plans for major closures that could affect Opel Antwerp".

If you've been reading *Flanders Today* in the meantime, you'll know that Opel Antwerp turned out to be the sort of roller-coaster that Plopsaland can only dream of. Here's a selection of our headlines throughout the year which, like the dialogue cards in an old silent movie, tell the whole tale in a minimum of words:



The story that never ends: Opel workers from around Europe protested the possible closure of Opel last September

25 February • Ministers fly to Motor City  
3 March • Opel reveals plan for €3.3 billion bailout  
5 May • The Flemish Region has offered some €200 million to Opel Antwerp  
12 May • Fiat has "no intention" of closing Opel  
26 May • Opel Antwerp future in the balance in Bonn  
28 July • Government gives up on Opel Antwerp  
25 August • Decision on Opel postponed  
16 September • EU is last chance for Opel Antwerp  
11 November • GM pulls out of Opel sale

There'll be more to come on that story, and of course you'll read about it here. We'll be back in print on 6 January. A Happy New Year to all our readers. ♦



## They said this year ...

*"I'm in regular contact with him by phone and by email. He's not that far away after all"*

Tom De Winne, son of Flemish astronaut Frank De Winne, who recently returned from the International Space Station

*"There are regulations for milk, bread and fruit, but not for financial products. People don't understand that"*

Former prime minister Guy Verhofstadt, now head of the liberal party in the European Parliament

*"I've done more training than ever before. I scared myself. I've never had the chance to train for seven months at a stretch"*

Kim Clijsters prepares for her comeback match, before going on to win the US Open

*"We are on our way into the unknown. Greetings, and see you soon"*

A letter written by Antwerp tailor Izak Altenhaus as he was transported to Auschwitz, which just arrived in 2009 after 65 years

*"Princess Mathilde has an unbelievably good figure. It's really hard for all these young princesses to be trendy, but in an appropriate way. She's succeeded perfectly"*

British fashion guru Trinny Woodall of Trinny & Susannah

## Best festival

Arts festivals are always a bit of a risk. Faced with a programme spread over days or even weeks, the choice can become overwhelming. Often the works are relatively unknown, and you wonder guiltily if it might not be better to go for a safer option elsewhere. But no risk, no revelation, and so this year I threw myself into the festival scene. Without a doubt the **Kunstenfestivaldesarts** in Brussels came up trumps. The most powerful stage performance I saw in 2009 was part of this festival: Young Jean Lee's *The Shipment* (pictured), which tackled head on the subject of black American identity politics. Fast-paced and funny, it started out by subjecting the audience to a bombardment of stereotypical black images. The all-black cast then quickly changed pace with a haunting *a capella*, leading into a starkly different setting – a middle-class dinner party. The thought-provoking work made me laugh at times, feel uncomfortable at others. Brilliant.

The most effective venue also premiered during Kunstenfestivaldesarts: a large, brightly coloured tent on the Nieuwe Graanmarkt, in the shape of an onion dome and specially designed for the documentary film *Moscow*. Inside, the audience followed the high-tech screens around the tent as they listened to Muscovites talk about the status of money, Gay Russia and the Russian soul. Anna Jenkinson

## Biggest surprise

Although they'd been around several years and produced two albums, it was the third, *Here We Go Again*, that made **Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven** a household name this year in Flanders. This is no doubt a huge compliment to Lien De Greef, aka Lady Linn, considering that this is the first record with her own material – a blend of retro jazz and bouncing swing. Ironically, it was the album's one cover, "I Don't Wanna Dance", that has driven the fans wild.

Still, it's hard to imagine this is bothering De Greef too much. *Here We Go Again* made it to number 2 on the Belgian album charts, has stayed in the charts for 94 straight weeks and gone gold. She and her seven-piece orchestra were booked all year long – there was hardly a summer festival in Flanders that didn't put

them on the bill, including the grand-daddy of them all: Rock Werchter. She told a *Flanders Today* correspondent last month that playing it was "one of the most beautiful days of my life".

Enjoy the album – Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven won't be playing live again until next autumn. Lisa Bradshaw

→ [www.ladylinn.be](http://www.ladylinn.be)

## Record breaking

This year saw the Flemish film *Loft* become the biggest-grossing Belgian film of all time. Those who love the film noir feel and the cast of cute men are not asking why. Others, who are more fond of the social realism of typical Belgian cinema, are. But it's not really difficult to see how *Loft* claimed the top spot.

*Loft* is a sleek crime-drama that can appeal to anyone: those who view cinema as an art form do not abstain from cinema-as-mindless-entertainment, certainly not on a rainy Sunday afternoon. And then those who, shall we say, prefer mindless entertainment are joining them in the queue. *Loft* is also the kind of film that reveals its big twist at the end – the kind of twist that makes you want to go back and see the beginning again. Guess what? People did.

And *Loft* is not a bad film, after all. The photography is excellent, the cast of Flemish stars convivial and the story – cheating husbands get themselves into a mess of trouble – satisfying.

But the year had a few other films to recommend it. Flemish director Fien Troch released her second feature, *Unspoken*, the sensitive story of a couple's struggle to deal with the disappearance of their daughter. *Brendan and the Secret of Kells*, meanwhile, is an animated film co-produced in Flanders, with astonishing detail and a misty Gothic atmosphere.

More recently, *My Queen Karo*, another second film – this time by Dorothée Van Den Berghe – is an insightful peek inside the lives of a counter-culture family of squatters in 1970s Amsterdam. And, of course, there's *De helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunes*), Felix Van Groeningen's new movie, adapted from the best-selling autobiographical novel by Flemish author Dimitri Verhulst. Still in cinemas and highly recommended. LB

# The year in arts

# Yes, it's a year-end

# Quiz!

**It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.  
How much of it do you remember?**

Check one answer per question, then mail this page back to us at:

Flanders Today Quiz, Gossetlaan 30, 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden.

Every entry received by 30 December with all correct answers will have a chance to win our big prize: a **Bongo gift box worth €50**

**1** The year in Flanders started with the introduction of a ban on the sale of what?

- chewing tobacco
- flick-knives
- cats and dogs
- weekly newspapers
- ?

**2** Early this year, Flanders Today gave away a book of aerial views of Flanders. What was the name of that book?

- Aerial Views of Flanders
- Flanders from the Air
- A View from the Sky
- I Can See My House from Here

?

**3** Unesco declared something in Limburg "not safe". What was it?

- the dialect
- former coal mines
- drivers from Maastricht
- cows

?

**4** Which Flemish actress lives in Hollywood and is friends with *Benicio del Toro*?

- Veerle Baetens
- Anna Franziska Jaeger
- Line Van Wambeke
- Barbara Sarafian



?

**5** The very existence of the Catholic Church in Flanders was threatened. By what?

- lack of priests
- too many priests
- sin
- Protestantism

**6** Which Flemish city hosts the biggest Mardi Gras celebration of the year?

- Ghent
- Tielt
- Brussels (is this a Flemish city?)
- Aalst

?

**7** Who asked for more accurate weather forecasts?

- anglers
- school kids on holiday
- restaurants at the coast
- surfers at the coast



?

**8** Which museum in Flanders has a figure of Cleopatra sponging milk over her naked breasts?

- Gallo-Roman Museum
- National Museum of Milk
- National Museum of Breasts
- De Oude Kaasmakerij and how do I get there?

?

**9** A survey by the Free University of Brussels (VUB) found that only 8% of them wash their hands after going to the bathroom. Who are they?

- doctors
- men
- pre-school children
- restaurant cooks

?

**10** Which of these famous Flemish people was born in Ostend?

- Arno
- Erik Van Looy
- James Ensor
- Both A & C

?

**11** Three out of four of them think Belgians are good drivers. Who are they?

- lunatics
- Belgians themselves
- road safety experts
- the French

?

**12** Which museum in Flanders won the Museum Prize in 2009?

- Fine Arts Museum (MSK), Ghent
- Design Museum, Ghent
- Fine Arts Museum (KMSKA), Antwerp
- Fashion Museum (MoMu), Antwerp

?

**13** The EU and NATO employ 44,000 people in the Brussels region. How many lobbyists are there in the Brussels region?

- 10,000
- 15,000
- 20,000
- 30,000

?

**14** What is the name of the opera by Kris Defoort and Guy Cassiers that premiered in 2009?

- The Woman Who Walked Into Doors
- Daens!
- House of the Sleeping Beauties
- Bekende Vlamingen

?

**15** Researchers found that one group of people had become less left-wing over the last 20 years. They are:

- Socialist politicians
- students
- journalists
- celebrity chefs

?

**16** Which is Flanders' biggest music festival?

- Pukkelpop
- Rock Werchter
- Dranouter Folk Festival
- Ghent Jazz Festival

**17** Bio-engineering researchers at Ghent University developed a technique to produce small quantities of which prized substance?

- uranium
- chocolate
- the Higgs boson
- mercury

?

**18** Which Flemish photographer published a book on volkscafes?

- Stephan Vanfleteren
- Lieve Blancquaert
- Jimmy Kets
- Kris Dewitte



?

**19** Which of the following are you not allowed to keep as a pet in Flanders?

- Bennet's wallaby
- Roborovski dwarf hamster
- African pygmy mouse
- sugar glider

?

**20** Which Flemish architect designed the jaunty Rubens Square in Knokke?

- Robbrecht & Daem
- Vincent Van Duysen
- JDS Architects
- Renaat Braem



## Suicide leaves questions unanswered

CEO of Lano Carpets lost €9.3 million last year

ALAN HOPE

More than 2,000 people, among them leading politicians, attended the funeral of Pierre Lano, chief executive of Lano Carpets in Harelbeke, West Flanders, last weekend. Lano committed suicide last week at the age of 65.

A prominent and well-liked local businessman, Lano (*pictured*) was politically active as a member of his local municipal council. He was formerly mayor of Harelbeke but had to resign after switching allegiance from the CVP (now CD&V) to VLD. He was later elected to the federal parliament.

Lano, whose name was originally spelled Lanneau, threw himself under a train in Harelbeke, after sending an email to apologise for his absence from a planned lunch with Fedustria, the textile industry federation. Initial reports suggested that his suicide was in response to his company's failing fortunes. The carpet industry, like most other sectors, has been hard-hit by the economic and financial crisis.

But the carpet sector has suffered a drastic fall in revenue due to the weakness of the pound (which makes exports to Britain more expensive) and a general trend away from fitted carpets, which made the UK the most important market for manufacturers like Lano. As a result, Lano ended 2008 with a turnover of €89 million (down from €101m in 2007) and a loss of €9.3m.

Lano's response was to implement a thorough restructuring plan, which he hoped would turn the company around in 2009. Costs were cut and 60 of the company's 500 workers laid off. The company's range was slimmed down to concentrate on niche products such as



© Belga

artificial grass coverings for sports fields. "The crisis gave him a wake-up call," a friend commented. "But the worst seemed to be behind him."

Justice minister Stefaan De Clerck, who is also mayor of Kortrijk, said that Lano was "dynamic and talented and always good-humoured". Innovation minister Vincent Van Quickenborne said he was "devastated". He continued: "He brought me up in politics; he could have been my father." Both men were present at the funeral, together

with parliament speaker Patrick Dewael and former justice minister Marc Verwilghen.

Earlier this year, Lano had stepped back from the day-to-day running of the company, but his influence was still enormous. "Pierre was still the public face of the firm," said personnel director Karel Lagast. "He was really a man of the shop-floor. The employees of Lano Carpets... a lot of them have worked here their whole lives, and that has a lot to do with the figure of Pierre Lano." ♦

## KB Lux charges dropped after 13 years

The Brussels prosecutor's office last week said it would appeal a decision by the correctional tribunal of Brussels to drop charges against 14 people accused of tax evasion in the KB Lux case. According to the tribunal, the information that set investigators on the trail of the 11 bankers and three major clients was illegally obtained.

The case, which has been described as the "biggest fiscal hold-up of the century," began in 1996 when investigating magistrate Jean-Claude Leys came into possession of the names and account details of 8,000 Belgians who held accounts with KB Lux, the Luxembourg-based arm of the Kredietbank, now KBC. He also obtained documents that explained the mechanisms by which the bank advised its major clients on how to avoid Belgian taxation. It was estimated that some €400 million in tax was evaded using the system. Since the case came to light, some €191m has been recovered from account-holders, the finance ministry said last week.

The documents had been taken from KB Lux two years earlier by disgruntled former employees. But before handing them over to the authorities, the employees had tried to use the details to black-

mail some of the bank's clients, without success.

It remains unclear how the documents passed from the hands of the KB Lux into the possession of the judicial police. Military veteran and police informant Jean-Pierre Leurquin acted as intermediary between police and thieves, but Leurquin was blacklisted as an informant, meaning his role had to be hidden. According to the defence, investigators invented the chance discovery of the documents to keep Leurquin's role a secret.

During the trial in Brussels, which started in October, judge Pierre Hendrickx tried to get a clear picture of the circumstances surrounding the papers' discovery, but without success. In his ruling, he described investigators' behaviour as "dishonest, partial and manipulative". The lack of a clear answer indicated the prosecution had something to hide, which tended to support the defence view of events.

Hendrickx also criticised magistrate Leys for covering up the machinations. "The manner in which the investigation was carried out is an insult to what justice ought to be. A complete absence of professionalism. A tendentious and biased investigation." ♦

## Nuns cleaned out by fraudster

An order of nuns in Antwerp has become the latest in a series of religious victims of fraudsters, after losing €440,000 to a lawyer and his partner. The Congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, based in Berchem, say they have been left with nothing after Fredien Maes emptied their account. The money, they said, was from donations. Maes was originally held on remand, but later released to await trial.

The revelations follow the discovery last month that the monks of the Achelse Kluis had been the victims of fraud over

the course of two years, costing over €100,000. The alleged fraudster in that case is awaiting a verdict. A year ago, an unidentified order was one of the victims of a bank manager who plundered his customers' accounts in West Flanders. "I don't think the naivety that's being talked about is particular to the cloisters," said Paul Daemen, secretary of the Religious Union of Flanders (URV). "I know a lot of sharp nuns, monks and priests." His organisation, he said, receives three to 10 reports of cases like these every year. ♦

## Lower bonuses for Belgian bosses

Belgium's top managers saw their incomes reduced by about one-third in 2008 compared to the year before, according to research carried out by the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. The research looked at the salaries of top executives at 99 quoted companies.

The results showed basic salaries shrinking only slightly – from €790,000 in 2007 to €770,000 last year for a Bel20 executive – but bonuses being slashed. The researchers blame the falls on the economic crisis and companies' reactions to it. The average bonus of a Bel20 executive went down from €870,000 to €353,000. "Not all companies followed the same policy," said Professor Xavier Baeten, who led the research. "In some companies the reduction of the bonus was limited to 10%, while in others it disappeared completely."

CEOs, in addition, earn twice as much as other directors and an average of 16 times the pay of an ordinary worker for the company. CEOs also enjoy a package on their departure worth an average of 12 to 18 months pay, though exact details are not always made available. For medium-sized companies, salaries fell from €506,000 to €430,000, while bonuses went up slightly, from €181,000 to €202,000. Small companies, on the other hand, saw executive pay rise from €315,000 to €320,000, and bonuses down slightly from €88,000 to €75,000. ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Banking • Dexia

Dexia, the Belgo-French bank specialised in the financing of local authorities, has finalised the sale of its French Epargne Pension affiliate to BNP Paribas.

### Cars • European Motor Show

The European Motor Show of Brussels, to be held from 14 to 22 January, is expected to attract up to 600,000 visitors, according to Febiac, the car industry federation. The event will seek to promote "technical revolution" as a mean to cut costs, consumption and greenhouse gases.

### Education • Vlerick

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School has made it into the top 10 of the best business schools in Europe for the second year in a row, according to the influential annual *Financial Times* survey. Vlerick holds its 10th place spot, which it was first awarded in 2008, which was up six spots from the year before.

### Energy • NL Energie

Dutch energy group NL Energie is seeking to develop its activities in Flanders and Brussels from next year. The Rotterdam-based company hopes to attract up to 150,000 customers.

### Investment • GIMV

Flanders-based investment fund GIMV is to subscribe to the tune of €2.5 million to the last ditch capital increase of Leuven-based mobile technology company, Option. The Limburgse Reconversie Maatschappij (Limburg Reconstruction Company) is also said to be considering acquiring new shares.

### Retail • Peak Performance

Peak Performance, the trendy sport apparel distributor, will open a store in the ProWinko development on Louizalaan in Brussels. The company has already outlets in Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent.

### Supermarkets • Delhaize

Brussels-based Delhaize is the country's largest company with total sales of some €19 billion, according to the recent survey by *Trends* magazine of the Top 30,000 Companies in Belgium. Leuven-based beer group AB-Inbev is second, while Frère Bourgeois, the Wallonia-based holding company of financier Albert Frère, is third.

### Transport • Thalys

Thalys, the high-speed train service, inaugurated its connections from Brussels to Amsterdam and Köln on 13 December. Travel time to Amsterdam is reduced by 49 minutes to less than two hours and down 29 minutes on the Brussels-Köln route to one hour, 47 minutes.

# Poetry of the void

While the capital hosts a special exhibition, we take a trip to the Paul Delvaux Museum on the coast

IAN MUNDELL

There's just enough old-fashioned railway architecture on the train ride to De Panne to give you an idea of what fired the imagination of artist Paul Delvaux in the 1920s and 1930s. The ornate ironwork of stations, the webs of overhead cables and the perspective of the tracks are all recurring themes in his paintings. Make the return journey after dark, and the effect is doubled, as the lights of stations and other trains burst out of the night. Delvaux is rarely a daylight painter.

The reason you would be going to De Panne with Paul Delvaux on your mind is that this is the closest stop for a visit to Belgium's only museum dedicated to the artist's work. To complete the journey, you need to take the coastal tram for half a dozen stops to Sint-Idesbald, an out-of-the-way place that was a favourite summer haunt of the artist. He came here on holiday to paint and eventually bought a cottage in the dunes, becoming part of a community of Belgian artists who worked and relaxed at the coast, including René Magritte, Constant Permeke and George Grard.

The Paul Delvaux Museum is tucked away in a maze of quiet streets lined with expensive-looking villas. The building started life as a fisherman's cottage, before becoming the home and studio of Dutch artist John Bakker, a pub, a holiday cottage and, finally, a hotel and restaurant. Delvaux and friends bought it in the late 1970s and converted it into the present museum, which opened in 1982. The restaurant is still part of the building.

The museum has the largest collection of Delvaux's work anywhere and is an excellent place to get an overview of his career and his working methods.

## Who is Paul Delvaux?

Delvaux was born in 1897 near Huy in Wallonia, but grew up in Brussels. His father was a lawyer and expected his eldest son to have a similarly professional career rather than follow his early creative impulses. As a compromise between art and commerce, the young Delvaux was enrolled to study architecture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, before finally getting his way and transferring to art classes.

Delvaux's early work was impressionistic, mostly landscapes or industrial scenes, including numerous studies of railways stations in and around Brussels. In the late 1920s, he fell under the influence of the Flemish expressionists, such as Gustave De Smet, Frits Van Den Berghe and Constant Permeke, and the museum has some suitably brown studies of figures in that style.

A decisive influence was seeing the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico at an exhibition in Paris in 1927. These combined figures and objects in idealised, classical cityscapes. "I realised that de Chirico painted with colours as if it were only about colours, but with a profound feeling of poetry, or silence, of the void," Delvaux recalled later in life. "I started asking myself if painting was not only a question of colour but also of poetry and depth of emotion." The irrational juxtaposition of figures and objects in Delvaux's work and the sense of theatrical staging both seem to come from de Chirico.

Equally important was a visit to the Spitzner Museum, a cabinet of curiosities that visited Brussels in the early 1930s. There he saw a piece called "The Sleeping Venus", a model of a woman that moved as if breathing gently in her sleep. In the close, bustling atmosphere of the fair, this had a strong impact on Delvaux's imagination. Reclining, sleeping or perhaps even comatose nudes would become an important part of his mature style, which began to emerge in the mid-1930s.

Exhibiting with artists such as Magritte and Salvador Dalí pulled Delvaux into the sphere of Surrealism, which is where public opinion still tends to place him. Delvaux did not see himself as part of this movement, however. He had no taste for André Breton's theorising, was not particularly interested in the subconscious and did not want to follow artists such as Max Ernst into extreme distortions of reality.

His own view was that the recurring images in his art all came from his childhood, or later experiences that he could identify precisely. "The Sleeping Venus" of the Spitzner Museum is one example. Another is the figure of the Savant, a kind of distracted scientist, who appears in many Delvaux canvases, and who was lifted directly from an engraving in a copy of Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

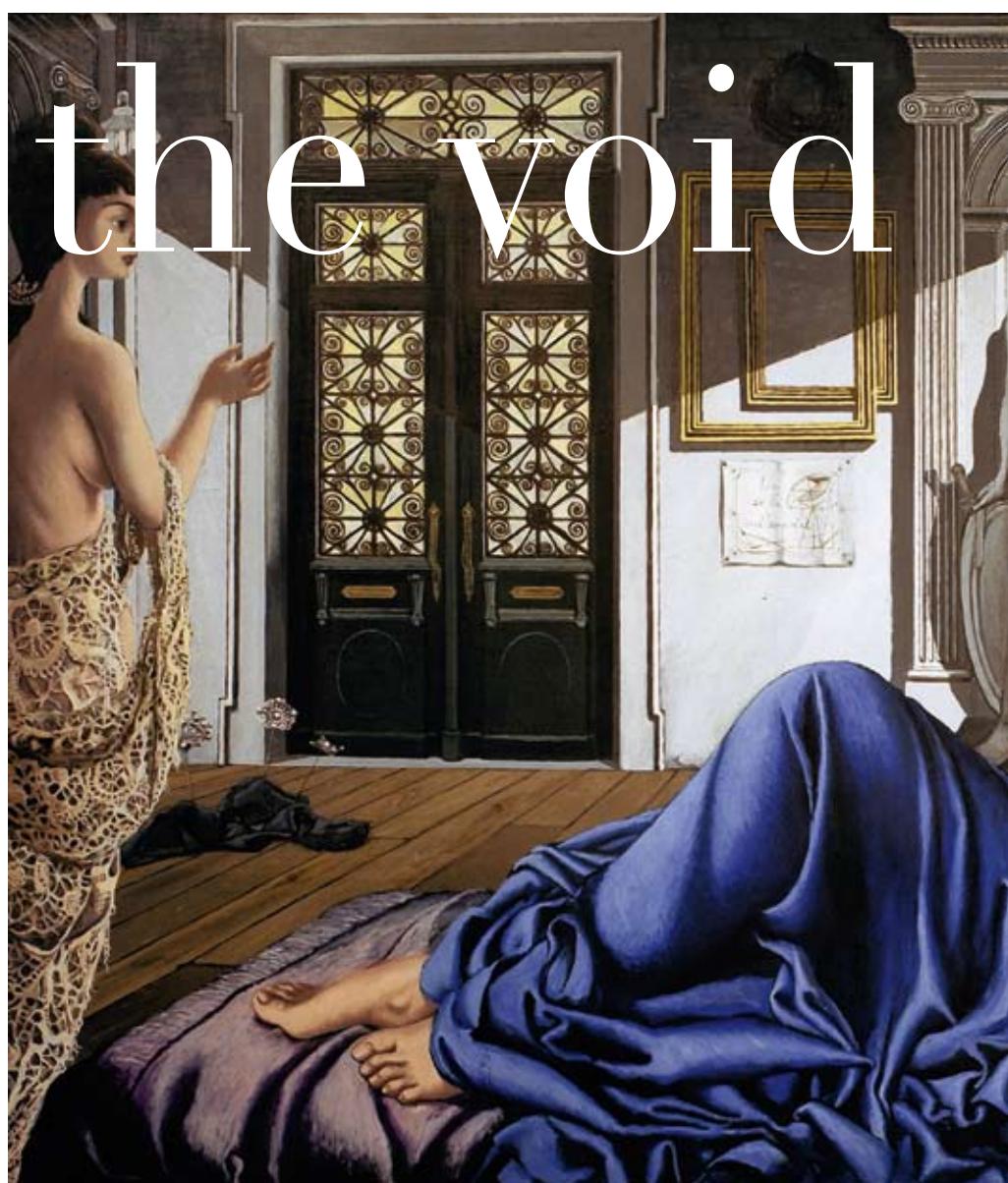


The Delvaux Museum is found unexpectedly in a quiet suburb of Sint-Idesbald, near Koksijde

## Museum on the sea

From the late 1930s onward, Delvaux's style and subject matter varied little. He worked hard at perfecting certain themes and images and, while iconic canvases such as "The Sleeping Venus" (1944) and "The Public Way" (1948) are in major museums, there is no sense that you are getting second-best at Sint-Idesbald.

The highlight of the collection is the large "Contemplation of Melancholy" (1948), which places a statuesque nude on a couch in what looks like a railway waiting room (pictured above). Equally striking



are "Chrysis" and "The Blue Couch", both from 1967, which also place nudes in railway settings. The quality of the painting in these two canvases is positively hypnotising. For those ambivalent about his obsessive painting of naked women, there is the haunting "The Illuminations" (1962), in which two figures pass on a lane strewn with oil lamps, and the dark foliage of "The Forest Station" (1960). The figure of a small girl watching trains is another recurring figure in the Delvaux universe.

A final phase in Delvaux's work is perhaps the most touching of the collection. As he began to go blind in his late 80s, he was forced to return to a more impressionistic style, using strong colours and finally painting almost from memory. The figures become indistinct and merge with the background colours. He is said to have given up painting and drawing altogether when his wife Tam died in 1989, although he lived until 1994.

As well as completed canvases, the museum has a lot of Delvaux's drawings, preparatory sketches and other work, which offer a unique window onto his methods. Particularly pleasing are a set of watercolours painted around Sint-Idesbald in the 1940s. Very controlled, with a precision that easily recalls that he was once an architecture student, they evoke the hot summer streets, the flat country behind the dunes and, in one canvas, the view from his hotel window on a rainy August day.

The museum has also inherited a lot of the artist's bric-a-brac and working materials. There are model trains, railway lamps, racks of ceramic insulators from telegraph poles and a collection of skulls. There is even a complete skeleton, which faces a series of sketches and paintings of skeletons re-enacting scenes from the gospels.

A final evocative touch is that the museum benches have been recovered from old railway carriages, in some small way taking you even further into Delvaux's world. ♦

→ [www.delvauxmuseum.com](http://www.delvauxmuseum.com)



Paul Delvaux in his studio in 1967

Exhibition





## Classical Delvaux

See the artist's work in Brussels through January

Delvaux's relationship with the classical world is explored in a compact but rewarding exhibition running at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels until the end of January. For those without a day to spare for the round-trip to Sint-Idesbald, it is also a good introduction to his work.

The young artist was thoroughly educated in the classics, reading Homer at school and doubtless drawing a fair share of columns and capitals as an architecture student, before switching to art and sketching classically-inspired statues in museums such as this one.

But perhaps the decisive influence was the work of proto-Surrealist Giorgio de Chirico, whose use of classical settings inspired Delvaux in the late 1920s. Delvaux adopted this approach to staging, and many of his mysterious dramas play out on temple steps or public spaces that could be the forum in Rome, Pompeii or Herculaneum.

The exhibition is particularly good at bringing together canvases from different public and private collections, such as "Temple" (1942), "Young Girl in Front of a Temple" (1949) and "Aphrodite" (1969), essentially variations on a theme that are now scattered across Europe.

Perhaps more interesting than these purely classical landscapes are those where Delvaux mixes classical and more modern elements. "The Siren" (1949) is my favourite, with a mermaid reclining in a broad street that leads to the sea, one side of the street lined with classical columns, the other with a 19th-century industrial appearance. There is also "The Man in the Street" (1940), in which a pedestrian reads his newspaper unaware of the women around him who are changing into trees (pictured). The classical world is always with us, Delvaux seems to be saying.

The panels analysing the paintings are annoyingly Freudian and have little to say on more grounded questions such as what might have been going through the artist's mind as he painted these classical scenes in a Belgium under German occupation. But seeing Delvaux's preparatory sketches and the water colours he made on trips to Greece provide a fascinating insight into his methods. [www.expo-delvaux.be](http://www.expo-delvaux.be)



# "Light" is subjective

The Vlaamse Opera stages Bernstein's most perplexing masterpiece

MARIE DUMONT

Christmastime: the season of good cheer, champagne – and operettas. Most opera houses let their hair down during the festive season and programme light-hearted shows; the Vlaamse Opera makes no exception by presenting Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*.

The production will be stamped with a triple seal of novelty: it will be a Flanders debut for Yannis Poussourikas, the opera house's visiting conductor. It will also be a first for Nigel Lowery, the British director (pictured below) whose staging of the show has been announced as a cross "between Brecht and Monty Python". But, above all, it will be the first time that Bernstein's extravaganza is shown in Flanders.

At once tough, witty and risqué, *Candide* is an ambiguous crowd-pleaser. It has always posed a problem: to Bernstein, who took more than 40 years to compose it, revising it until his death and enlisting the help of half a dozen American playwrights and songwriters; to opera house managers, who practically never stage it (although its overture and a few arias have become concert fixtures); and to the rest of us, who're not quite sure what to make of it: is it serious or light? An opera or a musical? American or European? Sublime or kitsch?

For Bernstein, there was no doubt about it: *Candide* was an operetta in the purest European tradition. A musical chameleon, he excelled at whatever genre he chose to embrace, from Mahlerian symphony to jazz and from Renaissance church music to Broadway musical. *Candide*, he said, was "an American's Valentine to Europe", and he composed it as a pastiche of Old World music, with echoes of Offenbach, Gilbert and Sullivan, Bellini, Gounod and a few Viennese waltzes thrown in.

Yet underneath its glittery appeal, *Candide* is no escapist romp. Far from offering a refuge from the world, it makes us look at it without flinching. And what a world it is: a general bloodbath created by incessant wars, natural disasters and fanatics of all persuasions. The six protagonists are not spared: they are raped, robbed, spanked, shipwrecked, butchered by foreign armies and hanged by the Holy Inquisition, each time rising back from the dead like cartoon characters.

This scouring satire was penned in the 18th century by the French writer Voltaire as a critique of optimism, a theory made popular by the German philosopher Leibniz, which

claimed that every event, good and bad, was part of some grand, hidden design and therefore for the best.

In 1755, a massive earthquake ravaged Lisbon and confirmed Voltaire in his opinion that the world was a brutal, senseless place and optimism a ridiculous notion. He reacted by producing a novella that went to town on that theory. Its hero, Candide, is a fresh-faced young German who has been brainwashed into thinking that he is living in "the best of all possible worlds". He doggedly clings to this precept until, at long last, he gives up philosophising and concentrates on "cultivating his garden".

Fast forward 200 years: the Massachusetts-born Bernstein dominated the American music scene. The child of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants, he was also, in many ways, Voltaire's spiritual son: prodigiously gifted and versatile, a high-society icon and a political figure whose liberal sympathies earned him as many enemies as friends.

When the playwright Lillian Hellman suggested they write a musical revisiting the story of *Candide*, he accepted immediately. Both had been the targets of Senator McCarthy's attacks and the parallels with the Inquisition's auto-da-fé scene were self-evident.

*Candide*'s message, if we had to summarise it, would be something like this: work hard, engage with the world and stay away from slick, ready-made theories. These offer no valid short cut to first-hand experience and can only lead to complacency and fanaticism.

Voltaire and Bernstein basically agreed on this, but each says it in his own way. Voltaire's final maxim "we must cultivate our garden" makes no promises – it is the disillusioned statement of a man who's done with the world. Bernstein translates it to: "We'll make our garden grow" and sets it to soaring fourths and fifths. There's an uplifting "Yes We Can" tone to it, a clear belief that the world can be changed for the better. Optimism dies hard – but hey, it's Christmas after all. ♦

## Candide

Until 31 December  
*Vlaamse Opera Antwerp*  
9-17 January  
*Vlaamse Opera Ghent*

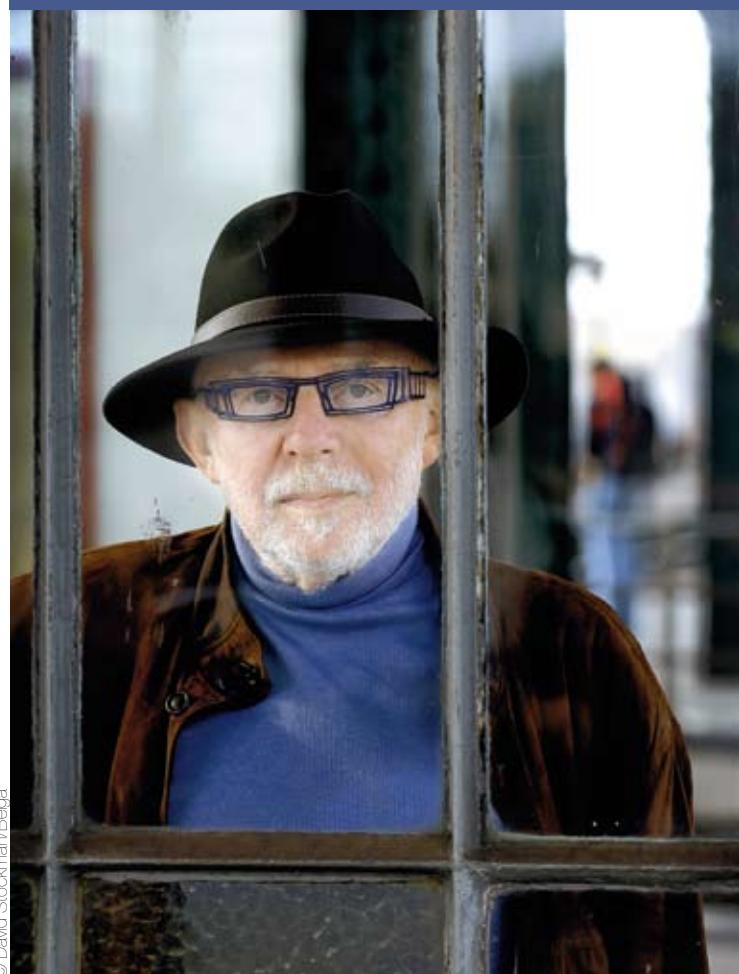
→ [www.vlaamseopera.be](http://www.vlaamseopera.be)



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# THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

Jef Geeraerts



© David Stockman/Degega

LISA BRADSHAW

“They call me an author, but I actually I’m a journalist first,” So wrote Jef Geeraerts in his 1992 book *On Adventure with Jef Geeraerts*, a blend of fiction and fact published as a novel. There lies the blurry distinction: Geeraerts (*pictured*) worked as a journalist and writes fiction about what he knows.

This began in the early 1960s not long after the Antwerp-born Geeraerts returned home from an administrative post in the Congo. Greatly affected by his years in Africa, he changed professional course, studying Germanic languages in Brussels and writing his first book, *Ik ben maar een neger* (*I’m just a Negro*).

As the title might imply, Geeraerts faced controversy right from the beginning with his criticism of Belgian colonisation. Controversy grew into accusations of racism and pornography when he published his legendary *Gangreen* series in the late 1960s and early ’70s. Next to descriptions of Belgium’s military activities, the four tales recount the experiences of one administrator’s unbridled sexual exploits in the Belgian Congo. He didn’t even try to hide the autobiographical nature of the books: the main character’s name is Jef Geeraerts.

Geeraerts eventually turned his attention to crime fiction. His *De zaak Alzheimer* was made into a

film in 2003 and was so successful that his book *Dossier K*, with the same police investigator duo, has also been made into a film, playing now across Flanders.

The *Gangreen* series has been translated into English, but no other Geeraerts novel has – until now. *The Public Prosecutor* is a translation of Geeraerts’ 1998 novel *De PG*. (In fact, the story is a follow up to the Albanian crime network plot in *Dossier K*.)

Albert Savelkoul is the aging, casually corrupt Antwerp public prosecutor, who must juggle his job, mistress and extravagant home life. As his radically religious wife works behind his back to hand over their personal fortune to Opus Dei, his mistress is cheating and blackmailers are making his professional life hell. Sounds like a good time to start an affair with his Polish maid, which he does with great relish.

Defying reason, Geeraerts manages to make Albert a sympathetic character; his descriptions of physical ailments and psychological naivety leave you rooting for the prosecutor when he finally decides to chuck it all and flee his complicated life.

*The Public Prosecutor* is a book that reads easily, includes much timely 1990s references to an inept justice system and is masterful at describing men who are desperate to keep hold of power, despite ever dwindling self confidence. ♦

## CULTURE NEWS

**Music for Life** is once again this year setting up shop in Ghent Zuid – the square in front of the city’s public library. A project of Studio Brussel, Music for Life finds three DJs – Siska Schoeters, Sofie Lemaire and newcomer Sam De Bruyn – living in a glass house for a week, playing requests from callers for a small fee. The money goes to the Red Cross’ Stop Malaria campaign. The event, which begins at 19.00 on 18 December, often turns into an outdoor dance party, either because of the pop music or so crowds gathering to peer in at the DJs can keep warm.

**More good news for Flemish film:** Johan Grimonprez’s innovative feature *Double Take*, which mixes footage of Alfred Hitchcock films, a Hitchcock double and American newsreels of the Cold War, has been selected to screen at the Sundance Film Festival, the most prestigious festival in the United States. In addition, four Flemish films have been selected to screen at the Palm Springs Film Festival: *Altiplano*, *My Queen Karo*, *Meisjes* (*The Over the Hill Band*) and *De helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*). Both festivals take place next month. Last year’s *Aanrijding in Moscou* (*Moscow, Belgium*), meanwhile, was just selected by the *LA Times* as one of the Top 10 Foreign Language Films of 2009 (the year it released in the US).

A Brussels-based American is behind the new book *Above Ground: an Anthology of Living Fiction*, a unique idea in the world of publishing. The compilation is made up of both published and unpublished short stories and excerpts from novels, and contact information is given so readers can provide feedback to the authors. Book editor JL Morin took the idea from Writers and Publishers, a listserv on the Harvard alumni website, of which she is a member. Morin, who came to Brussels six years ago as a diplomatic spouse, previously published the novel *Sazzae*.

## RADIO READING

deBuren’s unique literary brainchild is now available in English

ALAN HOPE

Once upon a time there was a storyteller, and the desire to have someone tell us a story has never really gone away. Each generation gets a chance to relive the experience by reading to its children, and the popularity of talking books suggests that adults still yearn to be taken back to the magic of the bedtime hour, even if it’s now a question of being read to by the CD player as you sit in morning traffic.

So the Flemish-Dutch cultural house deBuren was tapping into a rich seam when it launched its *Radioboeken* (Radio Books) in 2006: stories written by Dutch and Flemish authors especially for the series, read aloud by the author and then published on CD and posted to their website. The readings were often recorded before a live audience. The series was the brainchild of deBuren’s director, Dorian van der Brempt.

In order to make Dutch-language writers better known to their neighbours, the stories were then translated, with the support of the Dutch Wereld Omroep (the equivalent of the BBC World Service), into English and French. Most of those are now also available to download.

The first was by poet and novelist Stefan Hertmans. He was followed by Flanders most famous writers, including Krisztien Hemmerechts, Erwin Mortier, Peter Verhelst, Josse De Pauw, Herman Brusselmans, Saskia De Coster, Anne Provoost and Dimitri Verhulst. The series ran until No 100, which featured the Dutch literary TV presenter Adriaan van Dis.

And that’s where it ends, explains deBuren’s Xander Stroo, who runs the series. “We’ll continue with City Books and with a sort of derivative of the Radio Books, like stories for children and the Radio Books from South Africa,” he explains. The South Africa Radio Books, which were made possible with the support of the Flemish depart-

ment for foreign affairs, were recorded last summer during the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and are available on CD and to download. Read by the authors in English, there are also Dutch translations available.

“In the meantime, most of the 100 Radio Books are available in English and Spanish, and the French translations are catching up,” notes Stroo.

The stories for children were launched on 6 December as part of the children’s day at Flagey and featured stories in French, Dutch and Berber by Rachida Lamrabet, a Flemish writer with Moroccan roots; Thomas Ginzig, writing in French; and two-time Golden Owl winner Floortje Zwijgtman. “The turnout was reasonably good considering that it was Sinterklaas, and most children probably wanted to be home with their presents,” says Stroo.

City Books, meanwhile, concentrates on one city per season, starting with Ostend. Three authors – Antwerpener Jeroen Olyslaegers, Austrian writer Alselm Glück (who will be staying in Ostend for three months to paint and write) and Amsterdamer Christiaan Weijts – each wrote a story intended as a portrait of the city. Their work will be published in book form – in French, Dutch and English – and recordings will also be available.

In the spring, the turn falls to Utrecht. “We wanted to pick interesting cities rather than the obvious big ones,” Stroo says. Plans are also afoot to take the programme to Trieste and Chartres. “We’d like to see this become a real European project,” Stroo says. “We’re aiming for one city for each member state, but we need to find as many partners as possible to take care of the residency of the authors.” ♦

→ [www.radioboeken.eu](http://www.radioboeken.eu)



Jeroen Olyslaegers pens his impressions of Ostend in the first of the City Books series

## Win Radio Books!

*Flanders Today* has 10 sets of *Radio Books in South Africa* to give away, courtesy of deBuren. Each set contains five CDs of stories by South African writers in both English and Dutch. Enter to win by sending an email to [editorial@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:editorial@flanderstoday.eu) with “Radio Books” in the subject line by Tuesday, 22 December. Winners will be notified via email.



If you have a rock & roller on your gift list this year, you might consider buying him or her tickets to July’s **Rock Werchter**, which went on sale last week. The popular four-day pass has gone up to €188 compared to last year’s €169, but you save €8 if you buy before 4 January. One of Europe’s top rock festivals, next summer’s Werchter already looks to be a stellar edition, with P!nk, Pearl Jam, Muse, Rammstein and Green Day already signed on.

→ [www.rockwerchter.be](http://www.rockwerchter.be)

# Fire it up

## Antwerp's spectacular winter festival returns

REBECCA BENOOT

Festivals have always been associated with summer: long hot days, cold beers, music and some friends. And, sure, the weather is better. But that hasn't stopped the lovely people of Antwerpen Open from staging Wintervuur, a cool winter festival that will knock your (wool) socks off. The first edition of this biennial festival in January of 2006 was an instant success. Wintervuur is staged in a different part of Antwerp, bringing the crowds together in a new place each time for dozens of cultural excursions (many free), walks and gastronomic delicacies. Besides attending performances in nooks and crannies of the neighbourhood – both hidden and popular – festival goers get the chance to mingle and savour seasonal festivities.

This year's host is Linkeroever, famously cut off from the centre of Antwerp by the Scheldt River. (It's Antwerp's "left bank", if you will.) Linkeroever will be the heart and soul of this nomadic operation that intertwines the history of the neighbourhood with that of the larger city.

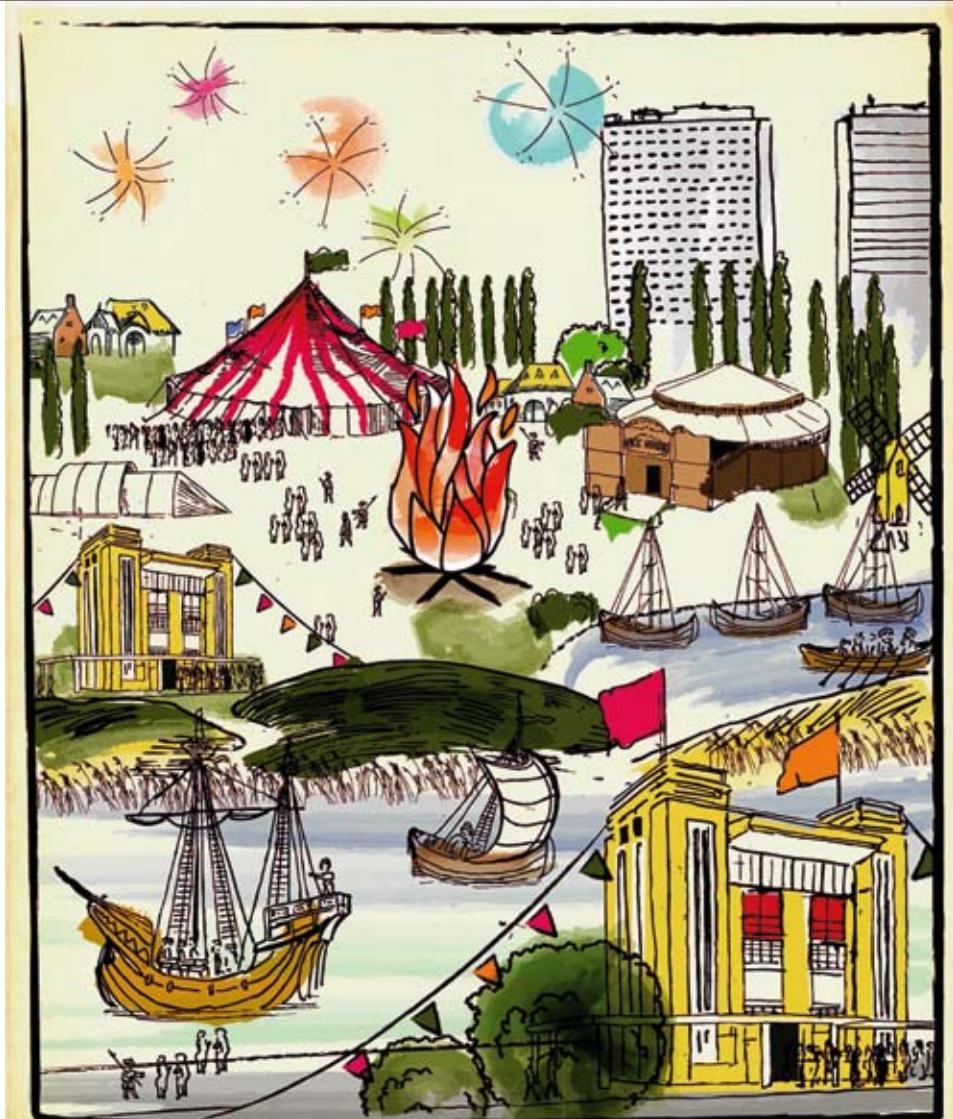
The festivities kick off on 28 December with some art, music, and a giant bonfire spectacle on the Fredrik van Eedenplein (renamed the Wintervuurplein for the duration of the festival). Wintervuur is host to theatre, circus,

concerts and organised walks, plus the opportunity to visit complete strangers in their own homes for some good old-fashioned storytelling (the Vertelfestival) or to watch 35mm slapstick movies and historic footage, courtesy of the travelling cinema Crazy Cinématographe.

A *spiegeltent* – a temporary pavilion with dance floor, cosy booths and mirrors all the way around – will serve up traditional Flemish winter meals throughout the festival and is home to the Winter Ball on New Year's Eve, which is free.

A final, unique touch this year is the Sint-Annekes Boat. Linkeroever, the left bank, can normally be reached via an underground tunnel, but for Wintervuur the shipping company Flandria (who handled the crossing before the tunnel was built) will give visitors the chance to reach their destination by ferry – just like the good old days. Back on shore, a horse-drawn carriage will bring you to the Wintervuurplein.

Wintervuur is fun but also strategic: it begins after Christmas when the weather is often freezing and when some people experience post-Christmas blues. It carries you through the New Year and on into January when you most need a bit of a lift. The recipe is working – most of the ticketed events are already sold out. ♦



Many of the performances of Wintervuur are free; some require tickets. Almost all of them are staged more than once. You can still get tickets for:

**Compagnie Ieto-Ieto:** Two acrobats grapple with the laws of gravity in this short family show

**Circo Ripopolo:** Everyone needs a ticket to this show, but, alas, performer Giancarlo is not very good at organising events. His partner tries to find a solution in this interactive show where the audience is encouraged to reveal a few secrets

**Benjamin Verdonck:** This eccentric Antwerp performance artist draws to a close his year-long *Kalendar* project with a theatrical presentation of every oddball stunt he's pulled in the last year in his beloved city

**'t Aresenaal & Brussels Jazz Orchestra:** Girls turn into trees, and everything you touch turns to gold in this imaginative performance of storytelling and animations, backed up by the BJO. This is one not to miss

## Howdy, 2010

A few suggestions for where to be when the clock strikes

### Roping in the New Year

*Some Like It Hot, Borat, The Party:* Brussels' Cinematek has a tradition of ending the year with roars of laughter. But this year it's whistling another tune, choosing Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *Rope* as the final screening of 2009. In a career full of devilish suspense, *Rope* is one of Hitch's most venomous films. Two students plan and execute a murder, for no other than philosophical reasons. They hide the body in a chest that, later that night, during a party with friends and relatives of the victim, is used as a buffet. With the body inside, the party guests discuss the concept of...the perfect murder. A film that appears to be done in one long take without apparent cuts – quite an experiment for a mainstream director in 1948 – *Rope* plays over the course of 80 minutes in an apartment with a view on Manhattan. Hitchcock makes the oppressive atmosphere palpable and the suspense heats up to nail biting heights. Granted, no laughs this year at the Cinematek. But *Rope* beats glühwein, fireworks or eating till you feel like a stuffed turkey. *Christophe Verbiest*

### Beach bonfire

It was 30 December, and my first time spending New Year's on the Belgian coast. It started around 16.30 with a procession: children – some of them as young as three – carried flaming torches. After a short walk down the promenade, they collectively set fire to a huge mound of Christmas trees that citizens had brought from their homes and piled on the beach. Whoosh! There goes Christmas. Out with the old, quite literally. In the meantime, the little kids were still swinging around those torches of fire in the ever-growing crowd. My partner and I stepped back a little to avoid our hair being set alight. Yet another surreal experience in small-town Flanders, and one I return to year after year. This happened to be Oostduinkerke, but these activities take place up and down the entire coastline. Rent a hotel room or apartment right on the beach, and you will have a free fireworks show on New Year's Eve itself, courtesy of average citizens, from the comfort of your room. There are official fireworks, too, on 1 January in Koksijde and De Panne. *Lisa Bradshaw*

→ [www.dekust.org](http://www.dekust.org)

### City carnage

I try to avoid the centre of Brussels as much as possible on New Year's Eve, but I always head downtown on the first day of the New Year. Everything looks apocalyptic: empty bottles and broken glass on the streets, remains of fireworks everywhere, bins belching the strangest objects, the last party people on their way home. While Brussels is slowly recovering from its hangover, I cure mine with hot fries and a pita in one of the snack bars behind the Grote Markt. At the same time, a team of brave cleaners do their best to make the city shine again. Little by little, both the city and I start feeling alive, ready to face the New Year. *Katrien Lindemans*



New Year's food at its finest

See page 15 for best bets in New Year's parties

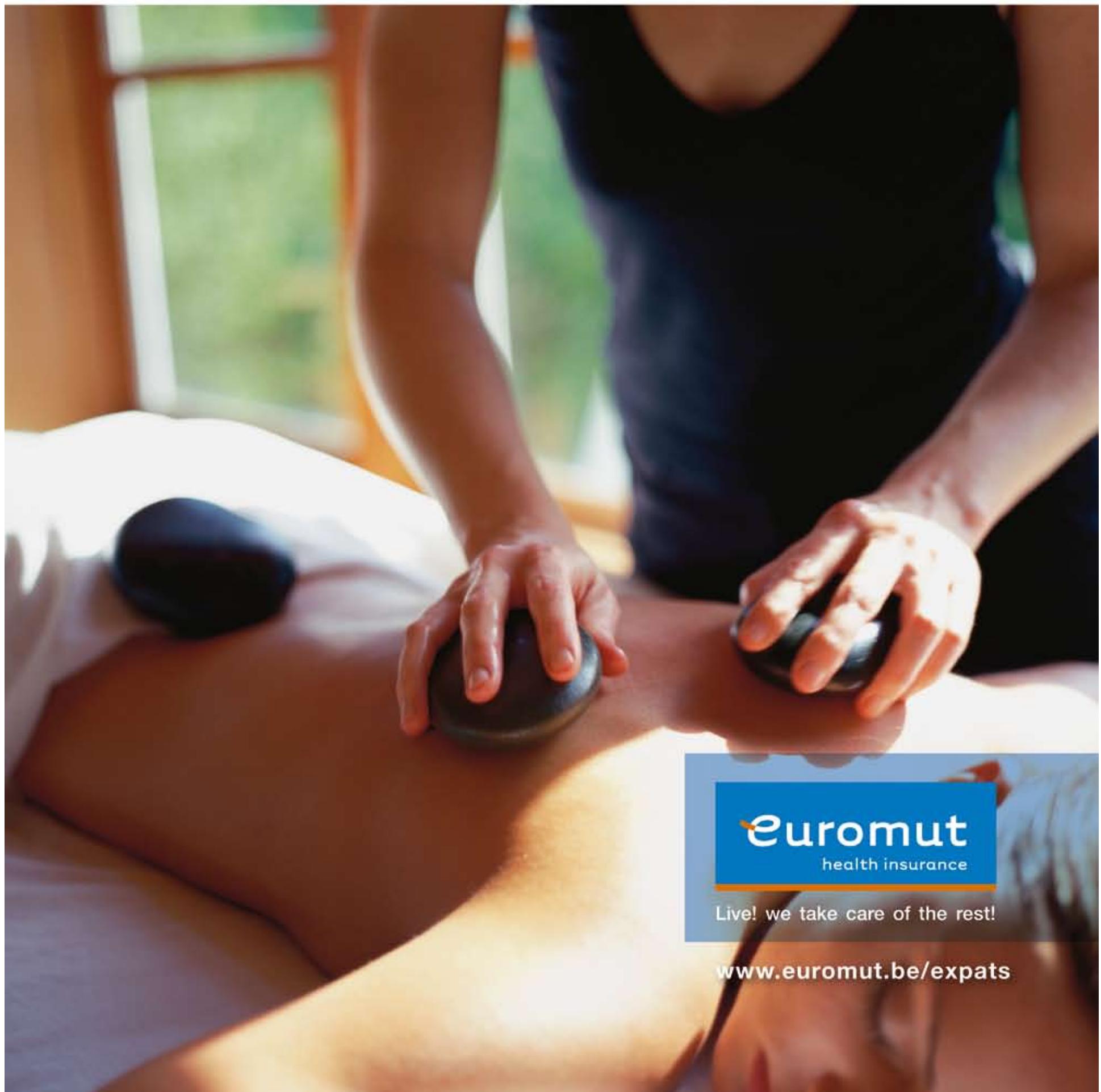
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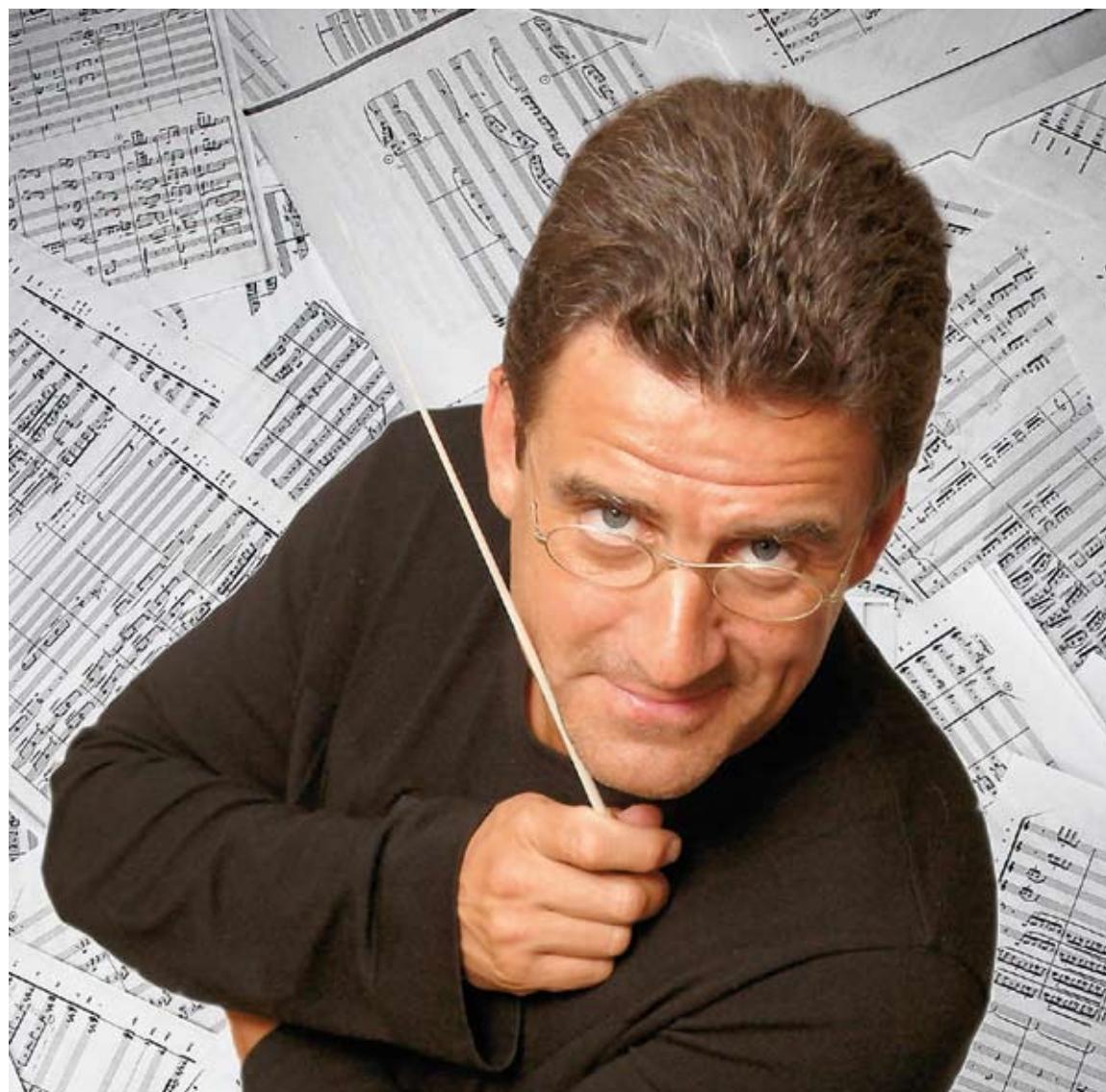
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## Holiday concerts

MARIE DUMONT

My two-and-a-half-year-old daughter starts singing Christmas carols around Halloween; her elder sister sings them all year round. So come mid-December, I've pretty much had my fill. Luckily, several venues around Flanders are offering seasonal concerts with a difference: programmes that are festive and celebratory but don't sound remotely like "Silent Night".

One of them is this Friday, 18 December, at deSingel in Antwerp. The British-Italian singer Marco Beasley, his ensemble Accordone and conductor Guido Morini present nativities from 17th- and 18th-century Italy, by composers Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti, Handel in his Italian period and the wonderfully fresh and inventive Stradella.

Beasley is one of my favourite performers these days, not only because of the discernment and passion with which he champions neglected scores from the past, but also because of the way he sings them: with a warm,

luminous voice modelled on the baroque ideal of expressiveness and purity of tone over sheer power. The effect is intimate, timeless and utterly enchanting, like listening to someone tell you a story.

In Brussels on Sunday, 20 December, the Belgian National Orchestra will turn on the decibels for their last concert of the year, under conductor Dirk Brossé (pictured). The theme is celebration, and the programme wanders from the "Hallelujah" in Handel's *Messiah* to Holst's *Planets*, taking in the exquisite "Pie Jesu" in Fauré's *Requiem* and the delicate "Humming Chorus" from *Madame Butterfly*. Joining the celebrated phalanx are two up-and-coming singers: Hungarian tenor Szabolcs Brickner, the winner of last year's Queen Elisabeth Competition, and Fleming Hendrickje van Kerckhove, a soprano with an iron technique dressed in a velvet timbre.

In Antwerp and Ghent throughout the month and into January,

Leonard Bernstein's giddy operetta *Candide* will be performed for the first time ever in Flanders by the Vlaamse Opera. In Antwerp on New Year's Eve, the audience will be treated to a drink in the foyer, a buffet dinner in the wings and a New Year toast backstage. (See page 9 for more on *Candide*.)

Finally, for those who still think Christmas wouldn't be quite right without Silent Night (and who's to blame them), note that it will be sung next Tuesday, 22 December, along with other Christmas standards and classical compositions, by Les Pastoureaux boys' choir from Waterloo. These 80 or so young singers look like angels, and their fine, fragile trebles come as close as voices will ever get to evoking flickering candlelight. Happy Christmas.

→ [www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)  
 → [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
 → [www.vlaamseopera.be](http://www.vlaamseopera.be)

## MORE CLASSICAL CONCERTS THIS WEEK

**Madiha Figuigui** → *Concertgebouw, Bruges*

**Cappella Concinite** → *Jesuit College, Leuven*

**Margoda and Children's Choir** → *St Lambertus, Hasselt*



## DON'T MISS

### BE Film Festival

17-20 December  
 Pathé Palace, Brussels

This terrific festival brings together Belgian movies from both the north and south of the country from the last year. A good time to check out what you missed, including Brussels-based director Joachim Lafosse's acutely perceptive and strangely empowering *Elève Libre*, which finds a teenager receiving more attention than is altogether healthy from his adult tutors. Catch also Pieter Van Hees' satirical *Dirty Mind* and the multi-award winning 2003 trilogy by Lucas Belvaux, the festival's blast from the past.



→ [www.befilmfestival.be](http://www.befilmfestival.be)

Shurik'n (IAM), Saïd, Chiens de Paille, Samm (Coloquinte) + The Belgian Hip Hop Scene

**Le Bar du Matin**  
 Alsembergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59,  
<http://bardumatin.blogspot.com>  
**DEC 26** 21.00 Par ici la sortie! Les Chevaux

**Le Botanique**  
 Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57  
**DEC 17** 20.00 Depotax + Cupp Cave + Ucture + Bishop Dust  
**DEC 18** 20.00 Tribute to Mohamed Abdel Wahab with Zirieb Orchestra  
**DEC 20** 20.00 MC Battle with Youssoupha

**Maison du Peuple**  
 Sint-Gillisvoorplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00,  
[www.maison-du-peuple.be](http://www.maison-du-peuple.be)  
**DEC 18** 20.00 Queimada: The White Russians + Shillelagh + Rudy Velghe solo

**Recyclart**  
 Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34,  
[www.recycleart.be](http://www.recycleart.be)  
**DEC 18** 22.00-5.00 Therapy Sessions, drum & bass party

**Stekerlapatte**  
 Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,  
[www.stekerlapatte.be](http://www.stekerlapatte.be)  
**DEC 17** 20.00 Zongora  
**DEC 31** 20.00 Come and see

**Théâtre Molière**  
 Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,  
[www.muuziekpublique.be](http://www.muuziekpublique.be)  
**DEC 18** 20.00 The White Russians + Shillelagh + Rudy Velghe solo

**Théâtre National**  
 Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.41.55,  
[www.theatrenational.be](http://www.theatrenational.be)  
**DEC 18** 22.00 Soirée Rewind, New York music with Tony Rohr, Rewind The Brixon's, Shred & Mash, Kopernikko and Romforlove

**Ghent**  
**Cafe Boom Boom**  
 Overpoortstraat 50; 09.223.22.27,  
[www.democrazy.be](http://www.democrazy.be)  
**DEC 18** 22.00 Intergalactic Lovers (free)  
**Charlatan**  
 Vlaamse Markt 6; 09.224.24.57,  
[www.charlatan.be](http://www.charlatan.be)  
**DEC 17** 22.00 Superlijm  
**DEC 25** 22.00 Nick Fransen  
**DEC 27** 22.00 Maximus + The

Experimental Tropic Blues Band +  
Senne Guns & Billie Bentein

**De Centrale**  
Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28,  
www.decentrale.be  
**DEC 31** 22.00 Soirée Bourrée: Gala  
Boombal + DJs

**Handelsbeurs**  
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,  
www.handelsbeurs.be  
**DEC 19** 19.30 Best of the Best,  
provincial rock contest

**Kinky Star**  
Vlasmarkt 9; 09.223.48.45,  
www.kinkystar.com  
**DEC 17** 21.00 Bear Bones, Lay Low  
**DEC 27** 21.00 Le Cotton Club

**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,  
www.vooruit.be  
**DEC 18** 23.00 The Glimmers +  
Friends for Life

**Hasselt**  
**Muziekodroom**  
Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be  
**DEC 19** 19.00 Campus + Marinette +  
Bury Tomorrow + Bless the Fall

**Kortrijk**  
**De Kreun**  
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44,  
www.dekreun.be  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**DEC 16** DLGZ rock 5tet + Apse +  
DJ Logul DEC 18 Roadside Scenes +  
Adyssa **DEC 19** Red Bull Revenge  
party: Laston & Geo vs Freres  
Deluxe, Raz, Hector & Nate **DEC 31**  
23.59 Go Ten - New Year's Eve party

**Sint-Niklaas**  
**OJC Kompas**  
Driekoningenstraat 48; 03.776.72.70,  
www.ojckompas.be  
**DEC 18** 20.00 The Doors Night, film  
and music (free)

**Ternat**  
**CC De Ploter**  
Kerkstraat 4; 02.582.44.33  
www.ccdeploter.be  
**DEC 19** 20.30 Stash (benefit concert)



## Antwerp

**Buster**  
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53, www.  
busterpodium.be  
**DEC 18** 22.00 Sullivan Street Group

**De Hopper**  
Leopold De Waelstraat 2;  
03.248.49.33, www.cafehopper.be  
**DEC 20** 16.00 Harry Happel & guests  
**DEC 21** 21.00 Lab Trio  
**DEC 22** 21.00 Jam Sessie

**De Muze**  
Melkmarkt 15; 03.226.01.26,  
www.demuze-jazz.be  
**DEC 17** 22.00 Thomas Champagne  
Trio

## Bruges

**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29,  
www.dewerf.be  
**DEC 19** 20.30 Rêve d'Eléphant  
Orchestra

## Brussels

**Beursschouwburg**  
August Ortsstraat 20-28;  
02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.  
be  
**DEC 17** 20.30 Rêve d'Eléphant

**Jazz Station**  
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;  
02.733.13.78  
**DEC 19** 20.30 Bender Banjax  
**DEC 22** 20.30 Aka Moon

**L'Axess**  
Havenlaan 86c; 02.420.44.21  
**DEC 17** 21.00 Barbara Wiernik,  
voice; Fabian Fiorini, piano

**Le Bar du Matin**  
Alsembergsesteenweg 172;  
02.537.71.59, http://bardumatin.  
blogspot.com  
**DEC 19** 21.00 Kahil El'Zabar with  
Hamiett Bluiett

**Maison des Arts**  
Haachtsesteenweg 147; 02.240.34.99,  
www.culture1030ecoles.be  
**DEC 18** 20.00 Cécile Broché Duo

**Sazz'n Jazz**  
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,  
www.sazznjazz.be  
**DEC 16** 20.30 Mrs Okkido + Sayma  
**DEC 19** 20.30 Karim Gharbi. 22.30  
Sazz'n Jazz Quartet **DEC 26** 20.30  
Sazz'n Jazz Quartet **DEC 31** 20.30  
New Year's Eve concert

**Sounds Jazz Club**  
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,  
www.soundsjazzclub.be  
Concerts at 22.00:  
**DEC 16** Caribe con K : Los Soneros  
des barrio **DEC 17** Julien Tassan  
Quartet **DEC 18** Gino Lattuca  
Quartet **DEC 19** 21.00 Brussels  
Rhythm'n Blues **DEC 21** Master  
Session **DEC 22** Laurent Doumont  
Soul Band **DEC 23** Chamaquiando,  
salsa

**The Cotton Club - Grand Casino**  
Duquesnoystraat 14; 02.289.68.66,  
www.gcb.be  
**DEC 19** 21.30 Banjy's Afro  
**DEC 26** 21.30 Pierre Mottet Quartet

**The Music Village**  
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,  
www.themusicvillage.com  
Concerts at 21.00:  
**DEC 18** André Donni All Stars  
Quintet **DEC 19** Jo Scinta Quintet -  
A Tribute to Louis Armstrong **DEC**  
**22** Fanny Bériaux Quartet **DEC 23** Al  
Caid Jazz **DEC 25** Charles Loos

**Wolubilis**  
Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,  
www.cookandbook.com  
**DEC 17** 20.30 Fanny Bériaux Quartet

## Ghent

**Kinky Star**  
Vlasmarkt 9; 09.223.48.45,  
www.kinkystar.com  
**DEC 19** 21.00 The Error Team  
**DEC 20** 21.00 Root

**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,  
www.vooruit.be  
**DEC 16** 20.00 Rêve d'Eléphant  
Orchestra



## Brussels

**Maison des Cultures**  
Belgradostraat 120;  
www.stgillesculture.irisnet.be  
**DEC 18** 20.00 Utz, Brazilian folk

**Sazz'n Jazz**  
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,  
www.sazznjazz.be  
**Until DEC 25** 20.30 Cemre Group,  
Turkish folk

**Stekerlapatte**  
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,  
www.stekerlapatte.be  
**Until DEC 17** 20.00 Zongora

**Théâtre Molière**  
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,  
www.muziekpubliek.be  
**DEC 16** 12.30 Luc Pilartz & Arnaud  
Degimbe

**Vlaamse Opera**  
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02,  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**DEC 17-31** Candide, operetta in  
two acts, by Leonard Bernstein,  
directed by Nigel Lowery, with the  
Flemish Opera Symphony Orchestra,  
conducted by Yannis Pouspourikas  
(in the original English with Dutch  
surtitles)

**Brussels**  
**De Munt**  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.  
demunt.be  
**Until DEC 22** Christoph Willibald  
Gluck's Iphigénie en Aulide and  
Iphigénie en Tauride, conducted by  
Christophe Rousset, directed by  
Pierre Audi (in the original French,  
with Dutch and French surtitles)

**Wolubilis**  
Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,  
www.wolubilis.be  
**DEC 17-19** 20.30 Le Ballet National  
de Marseille in Metropolis II,  
choreographed by Frédéric Flamand



## DON'T MISS



## Brussels Choral Society

19 December, 20.00  
Bozar, Brussels

The Brussels Choral Society started life in 1979 as the Society for Suppressed Songsters, but there's nothing holding them back these days. They celebrate their 30th anniversary with this concert of Bach's B minor *Mass*, one of the most difficult works in the repertoire, and one you won't often hear these days performed by a full symphonic choir. Bartholomeus Henri Van de Velde conducts his Charlemagne Orchestra for Europe, with soloists Iwona Sobotka, Julie Nesrallah (pictured), Kerem Kurk and Tom Sol.

► [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

## Brussels

**Indigo Studios**  
Van Vlakmelaan 388; 02.534.75.72,  
www.indigostudios.be  
**DEC 18** 20.30 In Vino: Josué & Shara,  
choreographed by Jennifer Robert

## Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat  
81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaiitheater.be  
**DEC 17-19** 20.30 Cheap Lecture +  
A Not Very Subtle Representation  
of Resilience through Dance, dance/  
performance by Jonathan Burrows  
and Matteo Fargion

## Kaaiitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59,  
www.kaaiitheater.be  
**DEC 16-19** 19.00/20.30 Rosas in  
Zeitung, choreographed by Anne  
Teresa De Keersmaeker, with music  
performed by Alain Franco, piano

## Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,  
www.wolubilis.be  
**DEC 17-19** 20.30 Le Ballet National  
de Marseille in Metropolis II,  
choreographed by Frédéric Flamand



## Antwerp

**CC Berchem**  
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20,  
www.ccberchem.be  
**DEC 18** 20.30 Compagnie Lodewijk  
in Camping Vaucluse (in Dutch)



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## deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,  
[www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)  
**DEC 20** 16.00-22.30 Needcompany in Sad Face/Happy Face trilogy, directed by Jan Lauwers (in English and French, surtitles in Dutch)

## Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900,  
[www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be](http://www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be)  
**DEC 26-JAN 3** In the Wings in Peter and the Wolf, an introduction to classical music for children

## Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**DEC 23-31** 15.00/19.00/20.30 Ffortissimo in Mozart vs Mozart with Bernard Vancaeynest and Christophe Gillis, musical show

## KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00,  
[www.kvs.be](http://www.kvs.be)  
**DEC 17** 20.00 NTGent in Underground adapted from Elfriede Jelinek's The Merchant's Contracts, directed by Johan Simons (in Dutch)  
**DEC 23** 20.00 Toneelhuis and LOD in Adams Appels, music theatre (in Dutch)

## Leuven

**Stuk**  
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,  
[www.stuk.be](http://www.stuk.be)  
**DEC 16** 20.30 LOD and Zeven in Naar Medea, part 2, music theatre by Inne Goris and Pieter De Buysser, music by Eavesdropper (in Dutch)

## Vilvoorde

**CC Het Bolwerk**  
Bolwerkstraat 17; 02.255.46.90  
[www.cultuurcentrum.vilvoorde.be](http://www.cultuurcentrum.vilvoorde.be)  
**DEC 17** 20.30 't Arsenaal in Belga by Rachida Lamrabet, directed by Michael De Cock (in Dutch)



## Aalst

**Stedelijk Museum 't Gasthuis**  
Oude Vismarkt 13; 053.73.23.40,  
[www.aalst.be/museum](http://www.aalst.be/museum)  
**Until DEC 23** Leerlooierij Schotte: Heden versus Verleden (Present versus Past), photos of an abandoned tannery before its conversion, by Henk van Rensbergen

## Antwerp

**Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)**  
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60,  
[www.muhka.be](http://www.muhka.be)  
**Until JAN 3** Textiles: Art and the Social Fabric, installations, sculptures, film, flags and banners

## Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.828.13.50,  
[www.middelheimmuseum.be](http://www.middelheimmuseum.be)  
**Until DEC 19** Camiel Van Breedam, assemblages by the Belgian artist

## Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09,  
[www.kmska.be](http://www.kmska.be)  
**Until JAN 17** In the Footsteps of Bartók: Lajos Vajda and Hungarian Surrealism

## Sfinks Caf 

Heuvelstraat 63a, Boechout; 03.455.69.44, [www.sfinks.be](http://www.sfinks.be)  
**Until MAR 11** Arbeiders onder druk (Workers Under Pressure), photographs by Tineke D'haese and Eric de Mildt, in cooperation with Oxfam-Solidariteit

## Zilvermuseum Sterckshof

Hooftvunderlei 160; 03.360.52.52,  
[www.zilvermuseum.be](http://www.zilvermuseum.be)  
**Until JAN 10** Coral and Bells: A

Collection of Rattles, silver and gold rattles and jingle bells decorated with precious stones, shown alongside miniatures and children's portraits

## Bruges

**Stadshallen**  
Markt 7; 050.44.82.82, [www.brugge.be](http://www.brugge.be)  
**Until JAN 17** That's all Folks! The endless clash between Reason and Destiny, group show that raises questions about the human condition and the ability of individuals to control their destinies

## Brussels

**Argos - Centre for Art and Media**  
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03,  
[www.argosarts.org](http://www.argosarts.org)  
**Until DEC 19** Actors & Extras, contemporary artists explore the contrast between the work of actors and extras in cinema, plus historic propaganda footage

## art)&(marges

Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20  
[www.artthis.org](http://www.artthis.org)  
**Until FEB 21** Surprising Dialogues, selection of outsider art from the new museum, shown alongside works from fine arts museums in Belgium

## Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72,  
[www.atomium.be](http://www.atomium.be)  
**DEC 23-APR 25** Ludic Modernism in Belgium (1955-1963), photographs, posters, models, films and furniture recall the popular architectural style, also known as Spirou or the '58 style

## Autoworld

Jubelpark 1, [www.autoworld.be](http://www.autoworld.be)  
**DEC 18-JAN 17** Bugatti 100 Expo, classic cars from private collections, shown alongside posters, paintings, catalogues, models, sculptures and other works on the Bugatti theme

## Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, [www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be)  
**Until DEC 19** Out of Bounds, group video art show

## Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**Until JAN 3** Portraits of Artists: 80 Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in Pictures  
**Until JAN 3** Sexties, comic-strip illustrations and texts by Guido Crepax, Paul Cuvelier, Jean-Claude Forest and Guy Peelaert

## Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50  
**Until DEC 29** Grada: Mystery Writing by Women, Croatian women's ancestral art of embroidery applied to contemporary fashion and utensils

## Dexia Gallery

Kruidtuinlaan 44; 02.222.57.37,  
[www.dexia.be](http://www.dexia.be)  
**DEC 19, JAN 16 & FEB 20** James Ensor, a selection of works rarely shown to the public

## KVS

Arduinkaa 9; 02.210.11.12, [www.kvs.be](http://www.kvs.be)  
**Until DEC 17** Nuit Am  ricaine, photographs of the American west by Flemish photographer Peter De Bruyne

## Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57,  
[www.botanique.be](http://www.botanique.be)  
**Until JAN 3** Controversies, notoriously controversial photographs

## Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22,  
[www.museumvanelsene.be](http://www.museumvanelsene.be)  
**Until JAN 10** La Photographie n  t pas l'art (Photography is Not Art), avant-garde photographs from the collection of Sylvio Perlstein

## Natural Science Museum

Vautierstraat 29; 02.627.42.38,  
[www.naturalsciences.be](http://www.naturalsciences.be)  
**Until AUG 29** Whales and Dolphins, discover how mammals gradually adapted to living in water and why whales and dolphins are now endangered species

## Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11,  
[www.kmkg-mrah.be](http://www.kmkg-mrah.be)  
**Until APR 18** Isabelle de Borchgrave's I Medici: a Renaissance in Paper, life-size paper replicas of historic costumes  
**Until DEC 27** World Press Photo

## Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11,  
[www.fine-arts-museum.be](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be)  
**Until JAN 31** Delvaux and the Ancient World, some 60 paintings and drawings by the Belgian artist  
**Until JAN 31** The Art of Gaming, works from the collection of the National Lottery on the occasion of its 75th anniversary

## Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33,  
[www.legermuseum.be](http://www.legermuseum.be)  
**Until FEB 28** Aanvalleuh!, works by Belgian comic strip artists  
**Until APR 11** Dieren in de oorlog (Animals in the War), archive photos and films of animals affected by the First World War

## Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49,  
[www.tour-taxis.com](http://www.tour-taxis.com)  
**Until MAR 28** It's Our Earth 2! From Kyoto to Copenhagen, interactive exhibition exploring the effects of climate change on the natural world  
**Until MAR 28** John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The American Dream, photographs, audio-visual documents and objects relating to the assassinated US president ([www.jfk-expo.be](http://www.jfk-expo.be))

## Geel

**Gasthuismuseum**  
Gasthuisstraat 1; 014.59.14.43,  
[www.gasthuismuseumgeel.net](http://www.gasthuismuseumgeel.net)  
**Until MAR 31** God of Doctor?, collection illustrating the history of healing in Geel

## Ghent

**Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)**  
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, [www.smak.be](http://www.smak.be)  
**Until JAN 10** Michel Fran  ois, Plans d'  vasion, retrospective  
**Until JAN 31** Faux Jumeaux (False Twins), changing exhibition curated by Michel Fran  ois

**Until FEB 7** Ben Benaouissse - Jan Fabre revisited, performance art

**Until MAR 14** GAGARIN The Artists in their Own Words, a collection of texts by participating artists

## Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribedreef 1 - Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, [www.mskgent.be](http://www.mskgent.be)  
**Until FEB 7** Max Beckmann, prints and paintings from the collection of the Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal

**Until FEB 7** Fernand L  ger's Le Grand D  jeuner, masterpiece painting on loan from the Museum of Modern Art in New York

## Groot-Bijgaarden

**Kasteel**  
Is Van Beverenstraat 5; 02.427.03.33  
**Until JAN 17** De wonderlijke Kerst van Tsaar Nicolas II (The Wonderful Christmas of Tsar Nicolas II), documents, photos, films, a dress collection and religious statues from around 1900 Tsarist Russia

## Hasselt

**Cultuurcentrum**  
Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.33, [www.ccha.be](http://www.ccha.be)  
**Until JAN 10** Helikon: Intens en divers (Intense and Diverse), works by the 1960s artist group

## Kortrijk

**Broelmuseum**  
Broelkaai 6; 09.269.60.04,  
[www.broelmuseum.be](http://www.broelmuseum.be)  
**Until FEB 14** Fantastic Illusions, how Belgian and Chinese artists build illusory spaces

## Leuven

**STUK**  
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,  
[www.stuk.be](http://www.stuk.be)  
**Until JAN 24** Matt Mullican, drawings, sculpture, architectural constructions and performances

## Machelen-Zulte

**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**  
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00,  
[www.rogerraveelmuseum.be](http://www.rogerraveelmuseum.be)  
**Until FEB 21** Espace: Raveel en Nederland, paintings

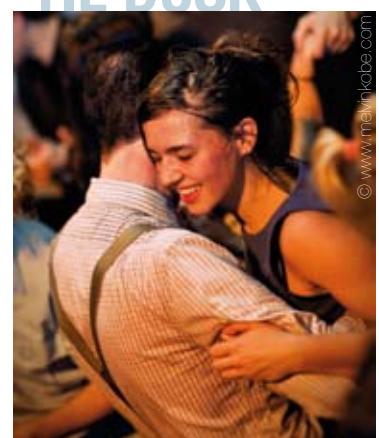
## Tervuren

**Royal Museum for Central Africa**  
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11,  
[www.africamuseum.be](http://www.africamuseum.be)  
**Until JAN 3** Persona: Ritual masks and Contemporary Art, 100 masks shown alongside works by contemporary African artists  
**Until JAN 3** Omo: People & Design, more than 1,000 objects from the Omo valley, south west Ethiopia



## DAWN 'TIL DUSK

SAFFINA RANA



## Countdown 2010

It's only right that the last column of the year is devoted to having it large on the last night of the year. Whatever your taste or budget, it's going to be a great night.

Head to What's Cookin? at the ICC in Ghent for a rare session from New York's godfather of soulful house Kerri Chandler, who will be topping the bill with Belgian duo DJ Red and Lady Linn. End the year to dubstep in Ghent at D  cadance, while Beats of Love at Vooruit will be hosting three rooms of electro, featuring the uplifting sounds of Duke Dumont, Ed & Kim and Compuphonic as well as a champagne bar to lounge in. Belgian duo Mugwump will raise the roof with their disco electro at Caf   Capital in Antwerp, along with fat house from Micanik and Onda Sonara. Get in for free at Silo in Leuven while it's still 2009 for a mad 12-hour session of hot techno from 23.00 to 11.00 with the Silenced and Down Under crew.

Bring in the New Year with the jazz-infused techno of Agoria at Fuse in Brussels, or sing along to dance hits and old favourites at Bazaar, where entry is free before midnight. It's free all night at Dal's bar in Brussels for a night of uplifting house and high-energy techno with Steph X, Murvin Jay and Tim Berner until midday on 1 January.

For something a little different in the capital, swing the night away with Radio Modern at a 1950s-era ball in the deco surrounds at Concert Noble, once the private ballroom of the Belgian royal family. The Swing and Lindy Hop lesson at 23.00 will stand you in good stead for eight hours of DJs playing everything from the 1920s to the 1960s, and bands including The Piccadilly Bullfrogs and Black Elvis.

What's Cookin? €25

→ [www.what'scookin.be](http://www.what'scookin.be)

Beats of Love €25

→ [www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)

Caf   Capital, €10

→ <a href="http

## FACE OF FLANDERS

### Harry Braeckmans

Despite a distinct lack of snow in these parts, an Antwerp man has, for the second consecutive year, won the European championships for sled dogs, held in Grolloo, the Netherlands, last month. It makes a bit more sense when you discover it is a cart race, as opposed to a sledge run. Harry Braeckmans left some 120 carts behind to win the competition. His wife, Nadine, placed third in the women's division.

Braeckmans can be found practicing in the urban forests of Antwerp with his sled dogs, who pull him along while he stands on his cart – a bit like a mini-chariot. "We don't have much snow in winter here, which is an advantage," he explains. "We train our dogs pulling wheeled rigs – the resistance in sand or mud is much heavier than in snow, and our dogs develop stronger muscles."

Braeckmans and his dogs also take part in pulka (sledge) competitions in the snowier parts of Europe. He and his wife discovered dog sled racing a few years ago while skiing in the French Alps. They decided to get some dogs and become "mushers".

"I started doing research on sled dogs because each breed has its own character and qualities," says Braeckmans. They opted for the Alaskan Malamute, known for its ability to sprint well over short distances and its fondness for people. The couple now has seven pure-bred Alaskan Malamutes. Belgium counts about 150 mushers, who are grouped in six sled dog clubs – three in Wallonia, three in Flanders. Despite the modest public profile of sled dog sports and the lack of professional sponsorships, mushing is qualified as a top sport with regional, national and international competitions.

Sled dog races are held in two main breed categories: the Siberian Husky has its own division,



MARC MAES

while Alaskan Malamutes, Greenland dogs and Samoyeds compete in combined races. In addition to short distances (five to 12 kilometres), races are held in middle distance (20 to 40 km) and long distance (up to 150 kilometres) runs. Braeckmans' record is impressive after only three years of competing, with three Flemish, two Belgian and two European championships, and a ninth position in the global ranking list. He trains five days a week, and he and the dogs do about 90 days of "snow camp" per year.

"But the love for the dogs is crucial," concludes Braeckmans, a father of three. "The animals are part of our family. I'm convinced that a positive interaction between man and animal is essential to achieve good results. Feeling what the dogs feel, helping them on a steep uphill track...they appreciate it, believe me."

→ [www.icewolf.be](http://www.icewolf.be)

# bite

SHARON LIGHT

### New Year's luck

During the winter holidays, Christmas often steals the culinary spotlight, as families come together to enjoy a hearty meal that generally revolves around a celebratory roast. In the US, the meals sometimes feature the "turdcken" – a turkey, stuffed with a deboned duck, which is itself stuffed with a deboned chicken. (The always-more-refined British may refer to this as a Royal Roast.)

New Year's somehow gets the short end of the stick, as it has become more of a drinking holiday. Yet you will find Belgians stuffing the refrigerator with expensive treats like lobster and oysters to go with their Champagne. Other cultures around the world have incorporated foods with more symbolic purposes into their New Year's celebrations. Consider using some of these traditional items to add some character to your New Year's menu.

**Leafy greens.** Cabbage, kale, chard and other green leafies stand in for another green item – money. The Danes make it sweet with sugar and cinnamon; Germans take theirs in sauerkraut form – the long strands in sauerkraut also indicate a long life.

**Legumes.** Their round shape is thought to symbolise coins and, therefore, prosperity. Lentils are prepared in Brazil and Germany; in Italy, *cotechino con lenticchie*, combin-



One noodle in one slurp, and you're set for the year

© Shutterstock

ing lentils and sausage, is a traditional dish, since pork is also considered a lucky New Year's food.

**Noodles.** Some Asian countries partake of long noodles on New Year's Day, again in a wish for long life. To ensure your longevity, slurp the whole noodle up without breaking it.

**Grapes.** In many Spanish-speaking countries, 12 grapes are eaten at the stroke of midnight, each one a prediction of the months to come. Sweet grapes indicate good months; sour grapes, beware. (Some traditions insist on eating all 12 before the final stroke of midnight.)

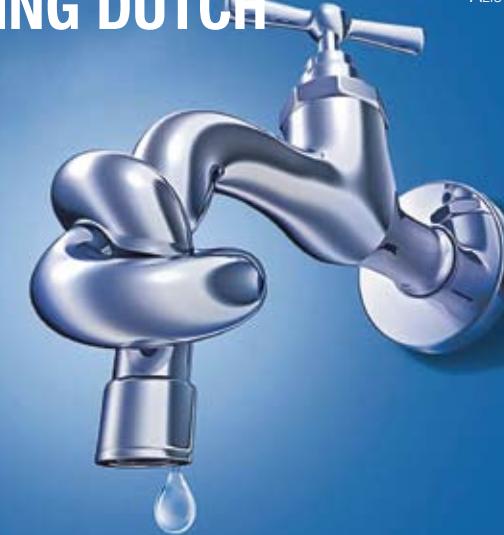
**Fish.** Maybe it's because the scales look like silver, or maybe simply because it's bountiful. Either way, fish is a popular choice in many countries, whether it's Denmark's boiled cod, Italy's *baccalà* (dried salt cod) or herring in Germany and Poland. Some Germans even put the fish scales in their wallets for good luck.

**Sweets.** In Turkey, New Year's celebrations include pomegranates; their many seeds indicate prosperity. In Greece, a coin or trinket is baked into a *vasilopita*, bringing good luck to the recipient.

Good luck – and good eating – in 2010!

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



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### klimaat →

There's nothing like being prepared, or forewarned. Now that global warming is apparently manmade, one newspaper is already inviting us to make our *goede klimaatvoornemens voor 2010* – good climate resolutions for 2010. You can even add your good intentions online and see how green you are. The list is quite long, but, at first glance, I already seem to be doing my bit.

Some suggestions you may never entertain: you may never wish to cross the Atlantic, so feel good as you tick *niet op vakantie naar New York* – no holidays in NY. Others might be equally easy to do: *de thermostaat op 18.5° zetten* – set the thermostat at 18.5°; well, ours is set at 19° unless our daughter is home alone. Some we have no choice with: *geen plastic zakken meer gebruiken* – no longer use plastic bags, since they've become as rare as hens' teeth. Or some you may have done so years ago, as in *dubbel glas plaatsen* – install double-glazing.

Some are asking for domestic strife: *de wasdroger wegdoen* – get rid of the tumble dryer. OK if you live alone and don't mind brushing past damp sheets hanging over a clothes horse. Likewise, *de auto wegdoen* – get rid of the car is fine if it's your other one.

With some ideas I think I am as close to perfection as you can get: *korter douchen* – take shorter

showers, and *een ecologische rijstijl aanhouden* – adapt an ecological driving style, which I reckon I do, apart from when I don't.

Some I don't need to do: *een boom planten* – plant a tree; our garden seems to have populated itself. We thought of this one last year: *de boiler vervangen door een zuiniger exemplaar* – replace the boiler with a more efficient one, only to discover that our old one is as efficient as they come.

So far so good, you may be thinking. However, in one aspect I've formed a one-man resistance group. Yes, I love my instant old-fashioned light bulbs. I started hoarding them some months ago before they finally disappeared from the shops and have enough squirrelled away to last years. So I'll not be ticking *gloeilampen vervangen door spaarlampen* – replace light bulbs with energy-saving bulbs.

Just to show how illogical humans can be, if I may generalise, I will wait with this one: *een zonnepaneel installeren* – install a solar panel, until they are more pleasing to the eye.

I have a final *voornemen* for you, dear readers: increase the number who read your copy of *Flanders Today*. Are there 10 or more? Then let us know. Happy reading to you all in the New Year!

→ [www.standaard.be/meningen/polls](http://www.standaard.be/meningen/polls)

### THE LAST

#### What crisis?

"Crisis or no crisis, the Belgian people obviously aren't yet ready to skimp on their end-of-year shopping, which is a good thing for our businesspeople."

Christine Mattheeuws of the Neutral Union of the Self-Employed, which represents shopkeepers

### WORD...

#### Zoo mourns

"It is an international catastrophe that we have lost three extremely valuable specimens, not only for Planckendael but for the breeding programme itself."

Ilse Segers of animal park Planckendael, where Asian lioness Koyla unexpectedly killed her three cubs

#### Nothing to Croo about

"Don't expect any miracles from me."

Alexander De Croo, son of veteran politician Herman De Croo, after being elected chairman of the Open VLD party