

Birdman strikes 3

Benjamin Verdonck gained notoriety some years ago when he spent time living in a giant nest attached to a Brussels' skyscraper. Now he's at work in Antwerp creating one-off art installations that are designed to make people stop and think.



The good life 6

Thinking about moving to Flanders, but not sure where to put down roots? A new survey ranks the cities in terms of culture, shops and fine dining. It seems you can't go far wrong if you decide to settle in Leuven, Hasselt or Bruges.



Literary leanings .. 8

Literature is booming in spite of the current global recession, as people turn to books to get them through the crisis. You can meet some of the world's brightest writers this month at the Passa Porta Festival in Brussels.



The quay to the future

Antwerp unveils its ambitious plan to transform its waterfront

MARC MAES

"I think it's important to foster the unique aspects of what we have today on the Scheldekaaien," says Philippe Teughels. "Take a walk alongside the river, feel the wind, step out of hectic city life. That's more important than development."

Teughels is talking about the seven-kilometre stretch of quays along the Scheldt River next to the centre of Antwerp. He's the project manager of the "Masterplan Scheldekaaien", or Scheldt Quays Master Plan, the port city's hugely ambitious 20-year plan to reinvent its harbour side.

It was Napoleon Bonaparte who initiated the idea of straightening the river quays and the expansion of port activities along Scheldt. By 1880, the quays had become an essential element of

Antwerp's economic prosperity, with constantly growing cargo and passenger traffic. Millions of emigrants embarked on ocean steamers heading for the Americas; the walkways attracted crowds to watch the ships moor and follow port operations.

But as a result of the ongoing northbound expansion of the harbour area behind the newly built locks, port activities on the river quays were drastically reduced – sheds were replaced by parking lots catering for visitors of Antwerp's burgeoning downtown. From 2003, the city has been investing in infrastructure, like the building of a cruise terminal and the renovation of the Steenplein boat landing area.

→ Continued on page 5



© Coudemont Garmendia

Army aircraft sabotaged

Disgruntled employee suspected

ALAN HOPE

Police are investigating the apparent sabotage of two aircraft that were being maintained at Brussels Airport by Sabena Technics, the Zaventem-based company that once formed part of the national airline. One of the aircraft was confirmed as a military C-130 transport plane, while the other belonged to Brussels Airlines.

Last week, federal secretary of state for mobility Etienne Schouppe informed police and the public prosecutor about the incident, which was first brought to light by inspectors at the company itself. According to a statement issued

by Schouppe, two aircraft had shown faults "which could not be attributed to carelessness or error. Everything points to deliberate human intervention". He also claimed the anomalies found could have endangered passengers and crew.

Unions and management at Sabena Technics later expressed dismay at Schouppe's statement. The company had discovered the damage the week before and reported the circumstances to Schouppe's department, but

→ Continued on page 3

Motorway madness "irresponsible"

YouTube videos enrage ministers



Road safety advocates and federal transport secretary Etienne Schouppe were last week reported to be shocked at two videos, both appearing on YouTube, showing examples of "insane" road behaviour.

In the first, a Romanian truck driver was shown dancing around in his

cab while driving down a Belgian motorway. The man could be seen jumping up and down on his seat, letting go of the steering wheel and driving with his feet. The clip, filmed by his brother and uploaded to the video-sharing site YouTube, soon reached the Romanian airwaves, where the driver, Iulian Breazu, became a sensation. But Schouppe described the behaviour as "irresponsible" and said he would call on the police to investigate.

Later in the week, another motorway madness clip made an appearance, showing a cyclist riding along in the slipstream of a truck at speeds of

around 100 km/h, this time on the E42 motorway in the direction of Liège. The cyclist was Jeremy Honorez, 22, but it emerged later that the practice is fairly common among top cyclists. They use this technique as part of their training, according to competition cyclist Johan Museeuw in an interview with *Het Nieuwsblad*. Asked what might happen if the lorry should suddenly hit the brakes, Museeuw replied: "You're better off not thinking about that".

Schouppe described Honorez's training system as "simply insane" and demanded that police intervene "quick and hard". ♦

CONTENTS

News	2 - 3
♦ News in brief	
♦ The week in figures	
♦ Fifth Column	
Feature	5
♦ Working on the waterfront	
Special report	6
♦ Stadsmonitor looks at Flanders	
Business	7
♦ Country heads for recession	
Arts	8
♦ Passaporta festival	
♦ De Versie Claus back in theatres	
Active	10
♦ Weird Museums: FAS Expo	
♦ Tyre tracks – Touring the Trappist monasteries	
Living	11
♦ Night of Darkness	
♦ Fashionista	
Agenda	13-15
♦ Three pages of arts and events	
Back page	16
♦ Face of Flanders: Marco Antonio Mazzini	
♦ Talking Dutch: <i>roetfilter</i> – our language expert goes green	
♦ The Last Word: what they're saying in Flanders	

News in brief

Antwerp is the world's second-best city to live in, along with Brussels, according to a survey carried out by human resources consultancy ECA International. Top of the list was Copenhagen, which also came first last year. All of the cities in the top 20 are European, while Kabul and Baghdad came last.

Children in all Flemish secondary schools will this week receive a lesson pack aimed at raising awareness of the need for road safety. The pack contains a DVD with the testimony of victims of road traffic accidents explaining how their lives have been changed forever. Research has shown that road accidents are the leading cause of death in Flanders for young people aged 15 to 29.

Parents wishing to enrol their children in the few places available in Dutch-speaking secondary schools in Brussels will in future not be forced to camp out at the school gates weeks in advance of registration. From next year, enrolments will take place via a website or call centre. This year's record was set by a man in central Brussels who set up camp in a motor home outside the doors of the Sint-Jan Berchmans College 20 days before the rolls opened to be sure of a place for his child. A similar change for primary schools is expected to follow eventually.

Two top Flemish researchers have been omitted from an international list of the top 100 experts on Alzheimer's Disease. The Flemish Institute for Biotechnology describes this as "an error in calculation". The list ranks researchers according to the number of papers published since 1985, which works to the disadvantage of younger researchers such as Christine Van Broeckhoven of the University of Antwerp, who is only 55, and Bart De Strooper of Leuven University, who is 49. "Nearly everyone on the list is over 65," De Strooper said. It also ranks only those papers with the words "Alzheimer's Disease" in the title.

The Flemish government is to back the construction of two new tram lines serving Brussels Airport, employment minister Frank Vandenbroucke announced. The two lines – one from Vilvoorde, Machelen and Zaventem town and the other running from Evere and Nato – are intended to make it easier for people to take jobs in the airport and surrounding area.

Police chief trapped by his own phone

Ghent police chief Peter De Wolf, who was suspended earlier this month after he allegedly drove drunk and lied during an investigation, was caught by his own mobile phone. De Wolf's car was involved in an accident after he drove away from a celebration for a retired colleague. He passed the keys to a junior officer, who pretended that she had been driving.

De Wolf, meanwhile, was driven home and his part in the incident covered up. It only came to light after an anonymous letter was sent to the Ghent prosecutor's office. But officers investigating the case revealed that De Wolf's mobile phone records showed that he could not have been home in bed at the time he claimed.

The officer who took over the car from De Wolf, the head of the force's internal affairs division and De Wolf himself have been suspended pending investigation. A member of Ghent municipal council and personal friend of the police chief, who claimed to have driven him home earlier in the evening, has already resigned from her position.

"I am sorry for the organisation, for my colleagues and for myself. I could have been smarter," De Wolf told *De Standaard* last week in an interview. "However, repentance is for Jesuits. The reputation of the corps is in part formed by the media. And the anonymous letter-writer is as much responsible for the damage to the force's image as I am."

♦ In a case of art imitating life, an episode last week of the popular TV series *Flikken*, set within the Ghent police corps, featured a plot that involved mobile phone location analysis. ♦

Students at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) have become less left-wing over the past 20 years, according to research revealed last week. New students to the social sciences faculty have been polled over the last two decades, revealing a trend away from the left towards the centre parties – mainly the CD&V of former prime minister Yves Leterme.

The province of East Flanders will hand out free seeds in April to encourage the growing of wild flowers in an effort to save the bee population. The seeds will include yellow mustard, radish, coriander and cornflowers, all of which produce flowers attractive to bees, whose population has been suffering recently from a mysterious colony collapse.

Some 42 magistrates have signed a complaint against Glenn Audenaert, head of the federal judicial police, following what were described as sexist remarks he made two weeks ago on the subject of female magistrates (see *Flanders Today*, 11 March). Audenaert is alleged to have said he would prefer there to be no women magistrates – remarks he later qualified to mean that he supported reforms allowing women to combine job and family more easily.

The tax authorities in Belgium could bring in an extra €10 billion a year if they were as efficient as those in neighbouring countries, according to a professor at Antwerp University. Michel Maus, an expert in tax law, blames the problem on the prevalence of the black economy in Belgium. Recent research showed that 6% of all workers had worked in the black, and 56% know someone else who does. That form of fraud, Maus said, is 5-7% higher in Belgium than elsewhere.



FLANDERS TODAY

Independent Newsweekly



Editor: Derek Blyth
Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw
News editor: Alan Hope
Agenda: Sarah Crew, Robyn Boyle
Picture research: Esther Bourrée
Prepress: Nancy Temmerman
Contributors: Dustin Benner, Marie Dumont, Stéphanie Duval, Sharon Light, Alistair MacLean, Marc Maes, Dave Meyer, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Monique Philips, Saffina Rana, Leander Schaerlaeckens, Denzil Walton
Project manager: Pascale Zoetaert
Publisher: VUM

NV Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij
Gossetlaan 28, 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden
Editorial address: Gossetlaan 30
1702 Groot-Bijgaarden
Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22
E-mail: editorial@flandertoday.eu
Subscriptions: France Lycops
Tel: 02.373.83.59
E-mail: subscriptions@flandertoday.eu
Advertising: Evelyne Fregonese
Tel: 02.373.83.57
E-mail: advertising@flandertoday.eu
Verantwoordelijke uitgever:
Derek Blyth

News • Politics • Europe •
Interviews • Music •
Art • Fashion • Food • Nightlife



Subscription
Tel. 02.373.83.59.

the Bulletin

The Brussels magazine
for global citizens

Mechelen mayor Bart Somers
cancels literary event after Cardinal Godfried
Danneels (pictured) objects to one writer.
Pressure was "unacceptable," he says.



Sabena Technics alert was "panic-mongering"

→ Continued from page 1

thought the matter would be dealt with discreetly. The issue is a sensitive one, as the company is planning more than 370 job cuts from a workforce of 1,090, and unions have taken industrial action.

"It's not true that a disaster was averted at the last minute," said Sabena Technics director Willy Buysse. "Schouppe is panic-mongering." He pointed out that the company had implemented additional security measures as soon as the case came to light, with access to the maintenance hangars strictly controlled and CCTVs installed. Airlines with planes serviced by Sabena Technics in the recent past were notified to allow them to carry out emergency checks. None of the nine planes serviced since early January were found to be at fault.

The difficult industrial relations situation at the company could be the key to the mystery of the sabotage. The prosecutor's office has begun interviewing employees, but, according to a spokesman, this could take months



Who's to blame? Sabotage at Sabena

because of the large number of workers who came in contact with the aircraft. Both management and investigators are working on the hypothesis that the sabotage was a gesture by a disgruntled worker or workers. None of the three cables cut was critical, Buysse said, and the damage was clearly visible to inspectors, so that the planes were never in any danger.

"The aircraft would never have left the ground," Ivan Becuwe, an expert in aircraft technology, told *De Standaard*. "The damage is serious enough, but there are so many checks these days that it would certainly have been spotted." According to the company, the damage on one of the two aircraft was limited to cables connecting the cockpit with the intercom, the landing gear and fuel temperature sensors.

"We can't rule out that a worker may have wanted to take revenge," said a union representative. "It goes without saying that a reaction like that is unacceptable. But it is also unacceptable that Schouppe blames more than 1,000 workers over one bad apple."

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Tommelein, wat doe je nu?

When Tom Boonen became cycling world champion in 2005, a sports commentator shouted out: "Tommeke, Tommeke, Tommeke, wat doe je nu?" (Little Tom, what are you doing now?). It has since become an expression in Flanders. Now, political journalists are asking: "Tommelein, Tommelein, Tommelein, wat du je nu?"

Bart Tommelein (a member of the liberal Open VLD party) chairs the Fortis commission, which is now drawing to a close. He knew from the start that he was not in for an easy ride, but he cannot have imagined how much of an ordeal it would turn out to be.

The parliamentary inquiry into the allegation that government ministers breached the separation of powers in the Fortis affair has turned into something of a spectacle, with former prime minister Yves Leterme and finance minister Didier Reynders issuing conflicting declarations and magistrates fighting bitterly in public.

Like so many Flemish politicians, Tommelein has roots in the small nationalist Volksunie, which was disbanded at the turn of the century. His nickname, "the Kennedy of Ostend" (a pub owner coined it because of his looks at the time), has now become a bit of a burden to the liberal and is now mostly used by his adversaries.

Tommelein began his career as a bank director. He was lured into politics by Patrick Dewael of the Open VLD, who made him his spokesman during his time as Flemish minister-president. After that, no Flemish journalist could truly say that he had never heard of Tommelein, who was a very active, if slightly vain, communicator. Tommelein has subsequently remained extremely loyal to Dewael – so much so that Jean-Marie Dedecker called him "the man who took skiing lessons so he could carry Dewael's skis up the slope".

As a fellow Ostend politician, Tommelein tried for a long time to keep Dedecker on board Open VLD. Tommelein was rewarded with the job of Open VLD's floor leader in the House – a function that demands a lot of...party loyalty.

So now the Fortis commission has become stranded in a legal muddle. On Monday, Tommelein asked for a second chance – for the commission, not for himself, as he is set to transfer to the Flemish Parliament after the elections in July.

He would have preferred to stay in the federal parliament longer, but when his party, Open VLD, asked him to head the West Flanders list, Tommelein just could not refuse. Will he be rewarded again and become minister in the next Flemish government?

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€15,000

fine for the Belgian state from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, after a Turkish man had brought a case for torture and racial abuse following his arrest in Schaarbeek, Brussels. The man claimed he spent 10 days in hospital as a result of being beaten by police.



7 in 10

number of Belgians who don't mind commuting more than an hour each way to get to work, according to a survey by job recruitment agency Stepstone. Some 28% of Belgians would even be prepared to travel more than two hours to work at their ideal job.

53,513

households dropped by their electricity supplier for failure to pay, according to Flemish energy minister Hilde Crevits. Another 36,618 families lost their gas connection for the same reason. In all, about one in 40 families cannot pay their utility bills.

6 in 10

abandoned houses in Antwerp that have already become dangerous, according to the Krotspotteam (Slum Spotting Team), which counted a total of 600 homes in the north of the city.

300

activists who staged a sit-down protest outside a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels to call for action against climate change.

492kg

waste produced per year by every man, woman and child in Belgium. Of that, some 39% is recycled, making Belgium the second-best recycler in the EU after Germany.

60,000

signatures gathered by the organisation Ademloos on a petition to force a referendum on the proposed Lange Wapper viaduct (see *Flanders Today*, 11 March), which would pass over part of central Antwerp.

3,500

number of staff taken on this year by supermarket chain Colruyt, which has bucked the international trend towards layoffs and redundancies. The jobs include butchers, shop workers, transport workers and IT specialists.



A giant sparrow crashed and died in a pool of blood on the Meir shopping street in Antwerp last Friday, 13 March – the latest installation by guerrilla artist Benjamin Verdonck (see *Flanders Today*, 21 January). The sparrow, complete with crime-scene tape, shroud and a huge pool of birdshit, caused some consternation among shoppers and passers-by – something of which Verdonck approves. As he told *Flanders Today* in January, "These people on the street did not come to watch art, so they have no preconceived ideas. It's a totally different way of looking at art."

→ www.benjamin-verdonck.be

AWARD • The Royal Ballet of Flanders has won an Olivier Award in London for Outstanding Achievement in Dance for its production *Impressing the Czar*, presented at Sadler's Wells in London last year. The company said it was "delighted and honoured" with the award, which was accepted by Artistic Director Kathryn Bennetts and Executive Director Chantal Pauwels.



All you need to know about banking services on arriving in Belgium

***Take advantage of our ING Expat Convenience Services
+ 32 2 464 66 64 - expat@ing.be - www.ing.be***

Many banking services are available to expatriates living in Belgium but there is nothing you need to know about making such arrangements. That's a task for the ING Convenience Services experts. Your bank accounts and cards can be ready for you the moment you arrive in Belgium. ING's Expat Services have 40 years of experience to help make your stay in Belgium as financially smooth as possible.





© Niko Van Horenbeek

"The stage for the city's parade": Antwerp's waterfront is overflowing with potential

Quay to the future

Antwerp needs to make its waterfront more than a parking lot

→ Continued from page 1

The "Sigma-plan" – aiming at safeguarding the city and river perimeter from inundation during storms and spring tides – was preceded, in 1977, by the construction of a concrete dam over the full length of the quays. "It's the combination of the Sigma-plan, which recommends a 'safe' altitude of 2.25 metres above sea level, and the idea of completely rethinking the public domain alongside the river that resulted in the launch of the Master Plan," explains Teughels. "One of the challenges is not to use a simple concrete wall, but to integrate the required 2.25 metres in a qualitative public space and restore the link between the city and the river, bringing people closer to the water."

Teughels is deeply concerned about the future of his city's quays and their current under-utilised function as a great big parking lot. "Hence the importance of participation," he says. With a preliminary plan on the table, "we invited the population to give their input, discuss the ideas and comment on the future of the quays."

Community dialogue is encouraged via projects like information sessions and guided walks. The recent "Quays on the Table" public session has resulted in a full inventory of comments and suggestions that will be handed over to architects and designer later this month. All of this will be moulded into a more definitive Master Plan by the end of the year.

One of the essential elements surrounding the €135 million investment is communication, the city having learned a lesson from the controversial Oosterweel Link bridge plan, which officially fell apart earlier this month under the weight of public protest (see *Flanders Today*, 11 March.)

The non-profit organisation Antwerpen Open was assigned to take on a number of elements within the communication plan. Their organisational background with events like the Summer of Antwerp and Winter Fire make the team a natural partner in the whole process.

The most ambitious plan on Antwerp Open's dialogue and outreach agenda is KAAiLAND, a major programme of cultural and arts events that begins this week and continues until 21 June: exhibitions, theatre, movies, guided tours, trips on the Scheldt River. A strategic vantage point near the Cockerill Quay combines a unique view of the river quays with concerts, food and drinks.

"We're happy that we were asked to take this on," says Michel Uytterhoeven, coordinator of Antwerpen Open. "We think it's important that the Scheldt quays get more and better use. There's more to the quays than parking."

Uytterhoeven cites the ongoing Zonsondergang (watching the sundown from a tribune near the water) or the weekly tango sessions near the old Kattendijk dock to illustrate the wealth of light and space that creates what he calls "bi-functions" of the port landscape.

"When people spontaneously decide to watch the sundown – enjoy the view with a glass of wine or an impromptu barbecue – this brings the quays closer to the community," he says. "One of the events in KAAiLAND is a boat trip – I had forgotten how beautiful the quays are from the river. It's like the quays make up the stage for the city's parade."

→ www.onzekaaaien.be

Take it from the master

In 2010, the Scheldt Quays Master Plan will indicate the running order in which each of the seven parts of the quays will be restructured over a 15- to 20-year period. According to Teughels, the zone between the Zuiderterras and the Mexico Natie warehouses is most likely the first on the list. "It's a zone with symbolic value within the total concept – this particular site allows the public to experience the river with some open space and has a less complex archaeological underground than the more central part."

Let the party begin

The city of Antwerp coaxes its people to the quays

LISA BRADSHAW

Antwerp city planners appear to have learned their lesson. Due to a lack of public input, their big Oosterweel viaduct plan that would have joined the left bank of the Scheldt with the Antwerp Ring is imploding. In order to avoid unexpected (and highly successful) public protest this time around, the city hired a communications strategy team for its Scheldt Quays project.

The team has so far been exemplary in holding events and information sessions to not only let the people know what the city wants to do, but to get the community's input as well.

And now Antwerp is pulling out its big guns: KAAiLAND, a three-month long arts and culture festival that will bring the citizens *en masse* to the city's waterfront. You can hear the wheels turning in the minds of city planners: Once you give the population a taste of what you can do, they will want more.



© Maria Wilsens

In this case, what's good for the city is good for the people. And, in true Flemish fashion, the events of KAAiLAND run the gamut from the traditional to the folksy to the beautifully absurd. It all starts this weekend and goes clear through until 21 June.

Opening party

KAAiLAND opens with a bang, combining food, fire and big band jazz. Dinner is cooked up by top Dutch chef Jan Van der Heyden, and you're served at tables in a theatre setting, while pyrotechnics and video projections by artist Boris Van der Avoort provide the lighting. The Brussels Jazz Orchestra takes the stage, featuring South African jazz singer Tutu Puoane.

Exhibition

The KAAiLAND Expo is part art, part information. You'll learn all you need to know about the Scheldt Quays Master Plan, which is mingled with photographs of the ghosts of Port of Antwerp past. But rather than just images of old boats and docks, there are wonderfully expressive portraits of 19th-century workers, standing in front of barrels, arms surly crossed, and the women who found homes and jobs along the harbour.

Theatre

Among the smattering of theatre at KAAiLAND, is *Braakland (Wasteland)* by the Dutch theatre group Dakar. Directed by Lotte van den Berg, who is now with Antwerp's Het Toneelhuis, it's an outdoor performance with nine characters wandering about on a forgotten piece of earth. The Antwerp quays, perhaps? (Don't worry, it has been performed many times before and was not commissioned by city planners.)

The other highlight is *How Do You Like My Landscape?* by Flemish theatre maker Manah Depauw and artist Bernard Van Eeghem. Their little, pristine landscape model peppered with plastic animals is an idyllic setting – until the beast from within comes to the surface. A darkly hilarious series of imaginative vignettes re-telling the story of Genesis and the history of mankind. Highly recommended.

KAAiLAND South

Where are we all going to live once the polar ice caps melt, and our cities are all flooded is the question proposed by "Tent Village", an architecture/art project, the result of a collaboration between Belgium and several other western European countries. Big bubble living spaces on stilts will be put to multiple use during the festival, including exhibition space for ideas for temporary housing for refugees and victims of natural disasters. This area on the Cockerill Quay also hosts free concerts every Saturday night and is home to De Lekkermakerij, an eatery/theatre concept by the inventive art collective Time Circus.

Big bubble living spaces on stilts will be put to multiple use during the festival, including exhibition space for ideas for temporary housing for refugees and victims of natural disasters. This area on the Cockerill Quay also hosts free concerts every Saturday night and is home to De Lekkermakerij, an eatery/theatre concept by the inventive art collective Time Circus.

→ www.kaailand.be



© Drie Wapenraat

Living it up

A new report tells you just about everything you need to know about life in Flemish cities

ALAN HOPE



Shopping in Antwerp: 45% of people are very satisfied

Leuven, Bruges and Hasselt are the best Flemish cities for quality of life, according to a wide-ranging survey of the region published last week. The *Stadsmonitor* (City Monitor) is a 300-page document analysing the finest details of life in Flanders' cities, ranging from everything from amateur dramatics to truancy, from bag-snatching to parking policies.

The survey looked at the quality of living standards in the 13 largest Flemish cities: Antwerp, Ghent, Aalst, Bruges, Genk, Hasselt, Kortrijk, Leuven, Mechelen, Ostend, Roeselare, Sint-Niklaas and Turnhout. It follows the same approach as previous editions in 2004 and 2006, but adds two new themes: Care in the City and Enterprise in the City.

Research into key indicators in the field of care was carried out by the Centre for Sustainable Development at Ghent University, a department that has been closely associated with the creation of the *Stadsmonitor* since its launch. Research into enterprise was carried out by Idea-Consult.

In addition to research, 8,000 Flemish people over the age of 15 were interviewed by telephone on the subject of life in their cities, their neighbourhoods and their streets.

In general, taking the full panoply of 129 variables into account, Bruges, Hasselt and Leuven turned out to be the most congenial cities in which to live, with Aalst and Turnhout bringing up the rear. People in the three leading cities were happiest with

conditions in their own neighbourhoods (all three cities rated above 80%) and in the city as a whole (87% for both Bruges and Hasselt and a whopping 90% for Leuven).

Leuven mayor Louis Tobback reacted by calling for city administrations to be given more power. "We need a kind of internal Flemish state reform in which cities and municipalities can take more decisions themselves and get the money they need for specific purposes," he said. "Cities could score even better if they could decide in a really autonomous way. I can't even move a bus shelter without first getting permission from De Lijn or the province."

Nearly 47% of the people of Hasselt were "very proud" of their city, compared to only 18% in Sint-Niklaas. ♦

Performances per 10,000 inhabitants

	Dance	Music	Theatre
Antwerp	15.9	104.1	95.8
Bruges	9.7	158.4	66.0
Ghent	12.1	172.1	115.9
Hasselt	11.8	137.1	98.0
Kortrijk	10.7	181.4	64.2
Leuven	20.3	139.9	152.6
Mechelen	7.5	66.4	129.7
Ostend	10.0	78.0	55.6

Satisfaction with restaurants, cafés and other nightlife

	Restaurants/ cafés	Nightlife
Antwerp	79.1%	63.5%
Bruges	89.2%	67.4%
Gent	85.9%	71.1%
Hasselt	92.5%	79.9%
Kortrijk	81.2%	60.9%
Leuven	89.8%	76.8%
Mechelen	82.4%	55.7%
Ostend	87.6%	66.3%

Satisfaction with shopping

	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Antwerp	38.1%	45.2%
Bruges	39.5%	49.8%
Gent	43.4%	43.4%
Hasselt	33.7%	61.1%
Kortrijk	47.0%	24.8%
Leuven	42.4%	47.2%
Mechelen	53.0%	26.2%
Ostend	42.1%	49.8%

THE REPORT IN BRIEF

Culture

- Leuven, Turnhout and Kortrijk have the largest number of amateur organisations involved in dance, theatre and music – a useful indicator of artistic expression and participation.
- Leuven, Mechelen and Aalst lead the field for theatre productions (amateur and professional). Kortrijk, Ghent and Bruges lead on music performances, and Genk, Hasselt and Ostend for dance.
- Bruges and Ghent have more exhibitions per year than any other city. Most cities, with the exception of Antwerp and Ostend, saw a growth in the number of exhibitions.
- Hasselt, Turnhout and Kortrijk saw the largest number of cinema tickets per person – 13, 10 and 9 in 2007. Aalst trailed the field with only 1.7 per person.
- Genkenars go to sporting events more often than anyone: 60% at least once a year and 14% more than once a month.
- Leuven and Hasselt have the most library visitors, with nearly 15% of people in Leuven visiting a library at least once a month.

Tourism

- At least 71% of all people in all cities visited a museum or historic site at least once in a year. In Ghent, the figure was 84% and in Bruges and Leuven 82%.
- Nearly 47% of the people of Hasselt were "very proud of their city", compared to 46% in Ghent but only 18% in Sint-Niklaas and 18% in Turnhout.

Amenities

- The people of Ostend and Bruges were the most satisfied with the provision of playgrounds for children under 12: 58% and 57% respectively. But only 32% in Sint-Niklaas and Aalst were happy.
- For children older than 12, Bruges and Ostend were best-served, according to inhabitants. Aalst and Mechelen were least satisfied with amenities for the over-12s, registering just 30%.
- Ostend was by far the most satisfied with amenities for older people, at 76%, while Aalst lagged way behind at 33%.
- Hasselt experienced the best conditions for contact with neighbours, with 78% of people satisfied. No city was very far behind, with Antwerp trailing at 65%.
- Nearly three-quarter of people in Hasselt were happy with the provision of sports facilities, compared to only 52% in Antwerp. Hasselt and Genk both topped 80% for recreational facilities in general. Again, Antwerp lagged behind at under 50%.

www.thuisindestad.be

Country heading for recession

“A lost decade for Belgium” says monetary fund division chief

The Belgian economy will shrink this year by 2.5%, according to forecasts by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which warns that the country is heading for a “deep recession”. The federal budget deficit will go up to 4%, where it will remain until 2014. At the same time, unemployment will grow to almost 10%.

The IMF's latest forecasts, presented last week by Luc Everaert, the Belgian chief of the regional studies division at the European department of the IMF, are significantly gloomier than interim forecasts released three months ago. Those showed negative growth of only 0.7% and a budget deficit of between 2 and 2.5%.

Government debt, meanwhile, is expected to rise to 91.8% of GDP – a much higher figure than in neighbouring countries, but not so high as the 94.8% figure predicted by the National Bank last month. Because of the anticipated slow pace of economic recovery, the debt as a share of GDP will go up to 95.9% over the period to 2014.

At that point the IMF's crystal ball goes cloudy. “It is



Luc Everaert of the International Monetary Fund

already clear that the period 2004-2014 is a lost decade for Belgium,” said Everaert.

Part of the cause of the sudden increase in the federal debt burden, which began last year, was the support given to financial institutions like Dexia and Fortis banks. That alone was responsible for an increase of six percentage points. And the damage may not be over, the IMF concludes. Further help could be needed by the institutions already affected as outside factors come into play – such as the vulnerability of the banking sector in Eastern Europe, to which most Belgian institutions are exposed to a greater or lesser extent. “The financial situation is extremely fragile,” commented Jeffrey Franks, IMF delegation leader.

The Belgian government's reaction to the crisis was “coherent and clear,” Franks said, but more needs to be done. “Plans will now have to be set up for problems which might appear in the months to come. That demands better and more structural cooperation between the different regulatory bodies.”

Pressure to resist English in the workplace

Politicians and unions are joining together in a campaign to resist the growing presence of English in the workplace. Christian trade union ACV argues that Belgian employees are being given important instructions in a foreign language, with possible risks to safety in the workplace, while parties like the Flemish nationalist NV-A warn that the fight for Dutch rights in the face of French encroachment could be compromised if English is allowed to dominate by the back door.

The editor of the language magazine *Onze Taal*, meanwhile, is philosophical: “Words are taken over, weighed and examined, and some are accepted and others not.”

The militant organisation Taalverdediging (Language Defence) have issued a list of good Dutch alternatives for common English terms used in business. Some examples:

baseline	achterlijn
cash cow	omzetdrijver
customer	service klantendienst
database	gegevensbank
e-mail	e-post
feasibility study	haalbaarheidsonderzoek
hard disk	vaste schijf
homepage	thuispagina
input	inbreng
interface	raakvlak
junk mail	plaaagpost
screensaver	schermbewailer
spreadsheet	rekenblad
trademark	handelsmerk

New harbour terminal will keep trucks off the road



A new rail freight terminal being built at the port of Antwerp will take 600 trucks off the roads when it becomes operational in 2010, the consortium running it has claimed.

The new terminal in the northern part of the port is being built by chemical company BASF, the Swiss-based transport operator Hupac, and IFB, a division of the national rail authority NMBS. The companies have joined forces as the consortium Combinant.

The terminal is due to come into operation in early 2010, when it will be able to handle five trains at one time. That means that at full capacity it would be handling the equivalent of 150,000 container trucks a year, or 600 a day – trucks which would have had to transport the freight by road if the terminal did not exist.

Though the difference may seem substantial, every day some 19,000 trucks carry freight into and out of the port of Antwerp. Combinant points out that the reduction

will have an effect both on traffic congestion in and around Antwerp and on CO₂ emissions. If 600 trucks were lined up end-to-end – as they very well might be on the Antwerp Ring – the resulting tail-back would measure 10 kilometres.

Part of the deal between the consortium partners – a condition insisted upon by BASF – is that all train operators are free to use the terminal. That's in contrast to existing rail terminals within the port, of which there are four: three run by IFB and one by Hupac. BASF hopes to stimulate competition by allowing other operators access, which would ideally push prices down.

If BASF were to transfer its entire current use of rail freight to the new terminal, this alone would account for 20% of the terminal's capacity. According to BASF chairman Wouter De Geest, the company's use of rail will also grow, from about 4% of all freight at the moment to 10%.

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airlines • Jet Airways

The Indian airline Jet Airways carried some 867,000 passengers in 2008 from its European hub in Brussels. Almost half flew to the company's destinations in the US, while the rest went to India.

Banking • Degroof

One of the country's leading private and investment bankers, Degroof, has opened a branch in Kortrijk as part of its expansion across Flanders. The bank hopes to attract customers from the significant number of French tax exiles living in the area.

Brewing • AB InBev

AB InBev, the world's largest brewer, has shelved plans to sell its South Korean Oriental Brewery because the bids it received were considered too low. The move was part of the company's plans to finance last year's acquisition of US-based Anheuser-Busch, but the recent drop in interest rates has made the search for cash more challenging than expected.

Construction • Bekaert

Bekaert, the Zwevegem-based steel wire and building products group, plans to invest €5 million in the US-based Sage Electrochromics. The company aims to develop “smart windows” that change colour at the touch of a switch. The system is said to reduce heating and air conditioning costs by up to 20%.

Fashion • Delvaux

Delvaux, the Brussels-based leatherware company, has hired Flemish designer Veronique Branquinho as its art director.

Finance • De Post

De Post is poised to distribute up to €1 billion to its shareholders – the Belgian state and the British investment fund CVC. The move – part of an operation to distribute unused reserves – may be linked to the rumour that De Post is thinking of acquiring a stake in the British Royal Mail. The decision is expected to upset trade unions, which recently went on a three-day strike over working conditions. Meanwhile, De Post has confirmed its interest in acquiring the courier and logistics operations of its Greek counterpart Tachimetaforos Elta.

Hotels • La Reserve

Knokke-based luxury hotel La Reserve, the Belgian coast choice for the rich and famous, will re-open in 2011 following extensive renovations. Founded in 1948, the new €20 million complex will have 110 rooms with a spa and meeting facilities.

Port • Antwerp

The Port of Antwerp is to develop its links with the New York and New Jersey port authorities following an agreement signed recently in New York.

Tales of the city

Passa Porta Festival brings literature to life in Brussels

ANNA JENKINSON

Passa Porta, Brussels' international house of literature, is tucked down a little passageway off Antoine Dansaertstraat in the city centre. Up above the bookshop, with its shelves crammed with Dutch, French, German and English language books, is the open-plan office where Sigrid Bousset and her colleagues are putting the finishing touches to the second edition of the Passa Porta Festival.

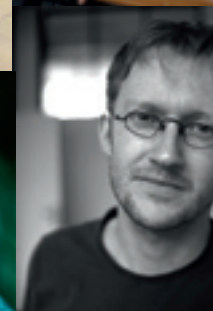
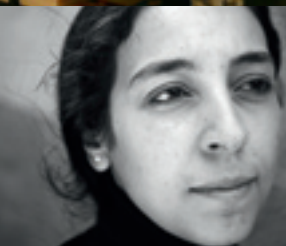
The literary extravaganza during the last week of March will see museums, cultural centres and hotels across the city welcoming Belgian and international writers for a host of events ranging from breakfast discussions to evening readings. Passa Porta aims to bring the literary side of the city to life.

In town for the four-day event will be Turkey's Elif Shafak, who was prosecuted by her government for the opinions expressed by her characters in *The Bastard of Istanbul*; Hungary's Péter Nádas, whose *Book of Memories* has invited comparison with Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust; and the UK's Alan Hollinghurst, whose *The Line of Beauty* won the Booker prize in 2004.

Along with authors, you'll find talks and performances by philosophers, musicians and even Belgium's former prime minister Guy Verhofstadt.

Shop windows along Dansaertstraat will become venues for literary discussions, the opera house will host a lecture on key themes in György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* and the Arenberg cinema will be the setting for a talk on film and literature. Flemish writers Bart Moeyaert and David van Reybrouck will present their favourite pieces at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in a programme exploring intersections between art and literature.

"It's an opportunity to discover writers and places," says Sigrid Bousset, co-director of Passa Porta's management committee. Bousset has worked with the group since its origins as Het



Sigrid Bousset (left), co-director of Passa Porta, welcomes dozens of Belgian and international authors to Brussels this month

Beschrijf just over a decade ago. At that time, "Brussels didn't have a literary face," she explains. "It was a city of dance and theatre."

That started to change when Paul Buekenhout founded Het Beschrijf in 1998. It organised a festival of literature in Brussels and promoted Dutch-language literature at home and abroad – for example, the group markets translated work of Flemish authors at international book fairs. Gradually the idea developed of establishing a House of Literature, along the lines of those found in German cities.

"We were nomads," explains Bousset. "We wanted to have an identity, a place where the literary scene comes together, somewhere to meet writers from all over the world." And so in 2004 Het Beschrijf moved into the Dansaertstraat, and the Francophone community was brought on board with the foundation of a French-

language counterpart, Entrez Lire. Together, they opened the bookshop, along with a small gallery and living quarters for writers and translators in residence. In short, Passa Porta was born.

The name alludes to the idea of open doors and is a play on the word passport. "We give writers a passport to cross borders and come to Brussels," says Bousset. Het Beschrijf hosts 15 writers every year, both in its Brussels apartment and in Vollezele in the Flemish countryside. One of the current writers-in-residence is Czech poet Petr Borkovec, whose stay coincides with the Czech Republic holding the European Union presidency.

Het Beschrijf also seeks to expand this international network through exchange programmes. For 2009, they are organising an exchange with Morocco, partly to help introduce Moroccan literature to Belgium. The idea is to

make it an annual event, focussing on a different country each year.

Passa Porta makes a point of finding new talents and providing them the means to develop through master classes, such as was the case for Flemish-Moroccan writer Rachida Lamrabet, who has since gone on to publish two books.

The festival, which is held every two years, brings together these different strands – local and international aspects, well-known authors, new discoveries and a look at literature from different perspectives.

The theme this year is "The World is a Workplace" – a place where things are built and created and are always changing. Posters are being put up on construction sites around the city with quotes from participating authors underneath the words "Te lezen/A lire", in the same style as "Te huur/A louer" signs to rent an apartment.

The biggest day of the festival is the final one, 29 March, when 5,000 people are expected to

attend the numerous events. The programme is divided into one-hour sessions so you can easily select one event from each slot to suit your tastes. A pass costing €7 gives you access to the entire day's activities. Approximately one-third of the programme is Dutch, one-third French and the remainder in other languages, including English.

The littlest of readers haven't been forgotten: Flemish illustrator Tom Schamp will give a creative tour at the TKunstenhuis based around the illustrations for his children's books *Otto rijdt heen en weer* (*Otto drives there and back*) and *Otto in de Stad* (*Otto in the city*), which are full of allusions to Brussels.

Bousset calls the evening programmes "the most adventurous part". Friday night's "The European Constitution in Verse" is the culmination of a project in which the Brussels Poetry Collective worked with other European poets to create a long poem combining European enthusiasm and criticism (see sidebar).

The following evening, 10 writers from across the globe offer their views on how changes in the world order have impacted identity, language and literature. Speakers include Ingo Schulze on Germany since reunification, Zoé Valdés on her native Cuba, Joseph O'Neill on post-9/11 America and Nawal El Saadawi, who gives a literary voice to women in the Arab world.

One of the joys of literature for Bousset is that it "takes you out of your own world and puts you in another context," she says. "When you read, you see how characters deal with emotions and make choices. They act as examples of how life can be lived. You discover another vision of the world." ♦

→ www.passaporta.be

Creative constitution

ALAN HOPE

If the politicians can't agree on a European constitution, then the poets will be forced to write one for them. That's the basis of "The European constitution in verse", which, on 27 March at Flagey, will be presented in 17 languages to an audience – and to Europe.

The idea came from the Brussels Poets' Collective, the capital's version of a city poet. They're represented by one French speaker and one Dutch speaker, as well as a Moroccan-Belgian and a Brussels-Galician. They, in turn, joined forces with 52 poets from across the conti-

nent – at least one from every member state of the EU – and a phalanx of 70 translators.

The result is "a long poem in which European enthusiasm is tempered with a critical sense, where *la grande geste* collides with poetic intimacy, and where an essential gravity is lightened by satire," according to the organisers at Passa Porta.

"It follows the structure of a constitution, with preamble and articles and so on," explains Paul Buekenhout of the Passa Porta Festival committee. "But it's nonetheless a poets' mani-

fest. Some articles are recognisably political, others less so. It's not like it could be picked up and implemented, but it would be interesting for politicians to read."

A book containing the text in Dutch, English and French will be published on the day of the presentation, available from Passa Porta and other book shops. The original version in about 30 languages will be published on the Passa Porta website.

→ www.flagey.be



Plundering Claus

Josse De Pauw brings his monologue of the famed Flemish writer back to the stage

LISA BRADSHAW

On 19 March, 2008, the great writer Hugo Claus chose to die through euthanasia in an Antwerp Hospital. All of Flanders stood still, while newspapers and television dedicated pages to the life and death of an author who could almost effortlessly put his finger on very heart of the failures, hopes and complexities of the Flemish people.

Two weeks after his coffin sat on the stage of the Bourla theatre, Josse De Pauw got up on the same stage and performed *De Versie Claus* (*The Claus Version*).

De Pauw is an actor well known at home and abroad for his long stage career and award-winning roles in Flemish movies like *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*, *Iedereen Beroemd* (*Everybody Famous!*) and *Een Ander Zijn Geluk* (*Someone Else's Happiness*). He had been working with scriptwriter Mark Schaevers for more than a year on adapting Schaevers' own book *Groepsportret* (*Group Portrait*) – extracts from interviews Claus has given over a 50-year career – to the stage.

Claus was famous for lying to journalists – changing stories about his life with each new interview. It maddened some, delighted others. And eventually made a brilliant monologue, which De Pauw is now premiering in French, before going on tour in Flanders with the original Dutch version.

Claus gave permission for *De Versie Claus*, but he never saw the final work. "He would have been sitting in the front row," says De Pauw today. "But he wasn't. He decided to go away."

Flanders Today: What did you see in the book *Groepsportret* that you thought would make good theatre?

Josse De Pauw: Mark Schaevers is a journalist, and he followed Hugo Claus for a long time. He finally asked him if he could write a book based on the interviews Claus had given from the 1960s to the present day. Because Claus did not always tell the truth. He didn't like the truth very much. He like stories, and even lies. It was like a game to him.

Mark's book dated all Claus' answers. So you can see how Claus changed his answers through the years. Marc told me that he thought there was a monologue in there that could give a certain version of Hugo Claus. We asked Claus if he would give his blessing to the project, and he did – to my surprise.

Why were you surprised? After all, he was your friend.

Claus likes a particular kind of theatre, and it's not really the kind of theatre that I do. His theatre is Baroque, with costumes and big gestures and a lot of people on stage. Monologue is not his kind of theatre. When we approached him, he said: "So, you want to plunder me? Okay, plunder me."

Claus used to lie to people who interviewed him. As a journalist, I might be very frustrated if my subject is lying to me.

The best interviews with Claus were done by the people who weren't bothered by it, by those who played the game. Some didn't like it; they said it was too much of a mystery. But he did so many interviews, and he became such a good *poseur* that he became like an open book. By telling stories and not telling the truth, by telling it in his way, he told you something maybe more truthful about himself. And besides, what he says is always interesting. He was generous in answering questions because he talked a lot. It's not like he was a difficult interview. No, he was giving it all and in beautiful language. Journalists only had to copy his words, and they were done. He did it all for them.

I have the same sympathy for lies as a technique of survival. That's what Claus said: the world can be saved by lies

The only other character in this play is the interviewer of Claus, who is played by a dwarf. Why?

Claus was known for criticising journalists. He was playing a role; he wasn't mean. But it was part of his game. On stage, Claus can tower over the interviewer, really look down on him. But when he takes a distance and he's talking more to the audience, then the other actor is still there and watching him, and he becomes more like an audience judging Claus, like how people could look at him.

I remember when I was 16 and started to read Claus. My father was a great reader, but Claus scared him. To my father, that was not the image of a writer – a writer had a neat beard and a pipe and was serious and talked in a low voice. And Claus was a kind of Mick Jagger. With this afghan thing and with sunglasses and laying around in his chair. Very arrogant. At

that time in Flanders, it was shocking. But for us, 16 or 17 years old, it was great, of course.

You don't really imitate Claus in the performance so much as just use his words.

I'm not that kind of actor. I don't transform physically or in attitude. I felt that the most special thing was that it's his words, it's his sentences, it's the way he said it, and I take it in my mouth now. I'm speaking him. That is very special.

I put sunglasses on, that's all. For the rest, I'm very much Josse De Pauw onstage. I can do that because I agree with almost everything he says. I have the same sympathy for lies as a technique of survival. That's what he said: the world can be saved by lies, but the lies cannot be believed or otherwise they're not worth anything. But if it's a way of taking lies and making a life out of them, then yes. I'm an actor, I do theatre, it's the same system. You have an agreement with the audience. We're going to lie up

here about something, and, in that way, we're going to find the truth.

Did the piece change for you after Claus died?

All of a sudden, the play was very worthwhile – to let people hear what he said, how he thought about his life. I wanted him in the front row, I wanted to do this performance for him. But still, there was something very right about it. The emphasis of certain lines changed, of course, like what he says about dying. But it fit the situation very much. He always said he would decide when he died. And he did. Which we all know must take some courage.



Why are you doing a French version? Why not just surtitles?

I was born in Belgium; I've lived all my life in both languages. I like the idea of doing a play in both languages. Also, there are other kinds of plays that are easier to subtitle because there are other things happening on stage. Here it would be hard. You'd have to read the whole time.

If you had to describe Hugo Claus in a few words, what would you say?

Great poet. Very charming. Stubborn in a good way. Very un-Flemish.

What does "un-Flemish" mean?

Flemish people like very much when you are *that* or *that*. Claus didn't fit into any category. And if he felt that he was fitting in something, he would fight to get out of it. He made his own life, his own decisions. ♦

De Versie Claus runs in Dutch at Kaaitheater in Brussels from 27 to 29 March, then plays in French at Flagey from 3 to 5 April before heading on tour across Flanders

→ www.toneelhuis.be

© Koen Broos

Josse De Pauw channels Hugo Claus onstage across Flanders until 15 May

From the air to the earth

LISA BRADSHAW

A museum of flight is hidden away in an old German bunker in West Flanders

It's not really fair to include the FAS Expo in a series of "weird museums" such as we are running this month. But it made the cut for two reasons. One: it is, shall we say, "quirky". Two: it is *impossible* to find, and, once you do get there, you have to beg to be let in.

The FAS, which stands for Flanders Aviation Society, is not particularly interested in money or fame. It simply wants to educate groups of Flemish school children and other locals about the strategic use of Wevelgem International Airport during the World Wars and about the history of air travel in Belgium.

Wevelgem, just west of Kortrijk in West Flanders, seems like an unlikely spot for an airport, but the Germans found it a strategic location and built the airfield in 1916. This led to a number of air battalion war heroes being based in the area, and the museum leads the tour with an installation dedicated to Manfred von Richthofen, better known as the Red Baron, whose squadron was based at Wevelgem during the First World War. You'll find newspaper articles, photos and several models of his world-famous all-red fighter triplane.

The museum goes on to introduce the history of flight in Belgium, from the country's first balloon flight by Prince Charles de Ligne in 1783 clear through to recent articles on Frank de Winne, the Flemish astronaut set to command the next expedition to the International Space Station.

However, the museum's best pieces – and the 20 or so Flemish school kids who were there with me would agree – are the cockpits and ejector seats out of combat planes from the Second World War and later decades. The ejection seat is especially effective, with photos nearby showing how the pilot remained seated in it while parachuting onto enemy ground – a rather terrifying prospect brought to life.

The museum also has seating from a modern passenger airplane, which looks like it has been sliced right out of the plane and plopped down here – another big crowd pleaser, especially for kids who have never been in a plane.

First-class airplane seats also await in the museum's excellent little cinema, where they show a 20-minute film on the history of the airfield at the beginning of the tour. After the First World War, the airfield was home to a military flying school until 1940, when it was again occupied by the Germans during the Second World War. After that, the UK's Royal Air Force controlled operations, until the Belgian military took it over in 1946. Finally, in 1970, it became

the civilian airfield it remains today, with about 100,000 passengers coming through every year – mostly business travellers. There is also a flight academy on site.

Though it helps to have an interest in air travel or Belgium's part in the World Wars to enjoy the FAS Expo, there are other aspects that make a trip worth it. The museum is housed in the airfield's former medical bunker, a creative use of



historical space that, until the founding of the museum, was still being used as storage by the Royal Air Force. "Anything they didn't need, they dropped in here," says Etienne Vanackere, who, together with other local members of the Flanders Aviation Society (FAS), opened the museum about 10 years ago.

Vanackere is the other reason to visit FAS Expo. Together with another volunteer, he spins tales of the wars and the museum's collection – all pieces culled from his own



Etienne Vanackere (above) is happy to lead you through the FAS Expo at the Wevelgem Airport

and other FAS members' private belongings. Vanackere was 16 when the Second World War broke out and used to watch the planes come and go at this airport in his hometown. He later learned to pilot gliders at the same spot. He has penned two books about the airfield and its pilots and every year leads a memorial service for British airmen who are buried in the local veterans' cemetery. "Because I know about every single pilot who was shot down," he says.

But how can I visit this place? you might reasonably ask. You have two options: Find at least 19 other people and arrange a group tour or call and join an already booked group. Visits come with a tour in Dutch (and a smattering of English if you please). To find FAS Expo, park at the Wevelgem Airport and ask one of the police officers stationed inside the terminal to point the way. ♦

➔ www.wevelgem.be/node/641

Tyre tracks

DAVE MEYER



Touring the Trappist monasteries

Achel

Of all Flanders' Trappist breweries, none is more remote than the Saint Benedictus Abbey of Achel, tucked away along the Belgian/Dutch border in Limburg province. The monastery owes its existence to this location, having been

built in the 17th century in what was then the Bishopric of Liege when the Catholic mass was prohibited in the Netherlands. Today, cyclists benefit from its location: its remoteness makes for both quiet visits and beautiful riding.

Begin at the Neerpelt train station and follow signs for bike path 241, a paved way which rises gently, train tracks on one side, houses and gardens of downtown Neerpelt on the other. The path crosses the Kempen canal; while descending from the bridge on the opposite side, note the tall tree to the left with four separate birds' nests crowding its branches. This section of the ride is bustling with life now that spring has returned and is an excellent destination for this time of year.

From here, follow signs for bike route 220 and then 218. The way remains paved and flat, leading past tall stands of oak, with a shallow gully on the right in place of the train tracks. Exiting from the forest, a road

of rather opulent gated homes appears on the left and then the path soon returns to another stretch of woods, lined here by tall conifers bent by the persistent push of the wind.

The Witteberg Nature Preserve opens out to the left. Horse trails cross the bike path; soon you pass several horse farms and jumping rings; a long white building to the right is a harness manufacturer. This is horse country, though with one notable exception: a single pasture shared among goats, geese and roosters, which makes for a rather dissonant stretch of riding as they all rush to the fence to extend their greetings.

Pass the buildings of Achel; signs along the way indicate nearby cafes that cater to cyclists. Leaving town, the path returns to the road at a roundabout. Cross here and follow signs for path 217 along more farms and then to the left past the Café De Zarem.

Across the field that opens out next to the café, the abbey appears suddenly in the distance, its gray stone walls hiding it until the last minute.

The road leads right up to the side entrance and the café, renovated recently with EU support. There is a map here to help guide visitors. The abbey itself is ahead, but be sure before leaving to pass along the whole driveway, where the Belgian/Dutch border is marked in white paint, to say you biked to the Netherlands. ♦

Distance:

18 kilometres return trip

Difficulty:

Easy. Flat, well-marked bike paths

Time:

75 minutes



Welcoming the darkness

DENZIL WALTON

Flanders switches off for one night as part of a worldwide action to curb light pollution

When was the last time you simply stared up at the night sky and marvelled at the stars? On that remote Greek island a few years back? Probably not recently in Flanders, due to the problem of light pollution.

Light pollution is the adverse effect of excessive and inappropriate artificial light. It takes various forms, such as sky glow, glare, light trespass and light clutter. At a basic level, it brightens the night sky so that stars are invisible. It's no wonder that city children who have grown up under a hazy orange night sky now struggle to name celestial bodies other than the sun and the moon.

Light pollution also affects the work of astronomers and scientists and disrupts the global ecological balance. It has been linked to negative consequences in human health and is a considerable waste of energy.

Once a year, you get the chance to do something about light pollution on the Nacht van de Duisternis, or Night of Darkness. Last year, 23,000 people participated in local activities across 109 municipalities. "We're hoping for an even larger turnout this year, although of course it depends heavily on the weather on that night," says Friedel Pas, European Liaison Officer of the International Dark Sky Association and President of

Preventie Lichthinder (Society for the Prevention of Light Pollution).

Participating municipalities contribute by reducing their street lighting and switching off spotlights on monuments and buildings. Many also organise a range of fun activities that encourage people to experience the night sky.

The Night of Darkness is definitely having a long-term effect in Flanders. "Many of the big, illuminated advertisements are now switched off at night, and municipalities are increasingly taking light pollution seriously and asking for advice on how to reduce it," says Pas. "There is also now a policy on light pollution in Flanders that we are working hard to convert into legislation."

If a night-time walk isn't your thing, you still have a role to play during the Night of Darkness on Saturday, 28 March. You can help dim the lights of planet earth by participating in Earth Hour. At 20.30 local time, the World Wildlife Fund is hoping that one billion people around the world will switch off their lights for one hour. The organisation wants to send a strong signal to world leaders at the Global Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December that light pollution must be reduced for the benefit of the planet.

Earth Hour began in Sydney in 2007, when 2.2 million homes and businesses switched off their lights for one hour. In 2008, the message had grown, with 50 million people switching off. Global landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Rome's Colosseum, the Sydney Opera House and the Coca Cola billboard in Times Square all disappeared into the darkness. Let's hope that this year Flanders sees the light by switching it off. ♦

➔ nachtvandeduisternis.be



© B&A

When the lights go out, so should you

Aalter A presentation on astronomical photography by local enthusiasts is followed by the opportunity to take some of your own pictures of the stars. www.natuurpunt.be/aalter

Beveren-Maas In the grounds of Cortewalle Castle, you can bring your torch and go on a family treasure hunt, look through the telescopes of local astronomers and watch a play with a fire spectacle. www.beveren.be

Bruges Experience the city in the darkness with guided walks every half-hour. Register at leefmilieu@brugge.be

Denderleeuw An evening concert

in the candlelit town square is given by the ladies choir Arabesk. www.denderleeuw.be

Genk In the Europlanetarium, you can explore the solar system through powerful telescopes. At Domein Kattevennen, park rangers lead families on walks. www.europlanetarium.com

Ghent The Armand Pien Astronomical Observatory is open all evening. Activities include a tour of the facility, a 3D exhibition, children's workshops and a walk in the dark. www.rug-a-pien.be

Grimbergen A lecture on light pollution in Flanders is followed by the

opportunity to try out some of the telescopes at the MIRA astronomy. www.mira.be

Kortrijk Follow guides to discover the city on foot or bike, stopping occasionally to enjoy the view of the night sky and ending with a warm drink. Register at toerisme@kortrijk.be

Rumst A talk on local bats and owls is followed by a country walk to put your knowledge into practice. www.natuurpunt.be/rupestreek

Westerlo Guided walks in the dark, plus poetry readings and telescopic observations of the night sky. www.westerlo.be

fashionista

STÉPHANIE DUVAL



The healing power of shopping: Hospital

Hospital

Last year was an exciting one for Antwerp shoppers, with the opening of Sien – the only boutique in Belgium that sells Proenza Schouler (next to designers like Emanuel Ungaro and Hussein Chalayan) – and the luxury fashion boutique LXP, where you can rent *haute couture* dresses for a night

or a week.

The first few months of 2009 have already proven that the rise of exclusive shop concepts wasn't a temporary phenomenon.

Last month, Guy Thiron opened his shoe boutique in the Drukkerijstraat, right behind the fashion museum and

Yohji Yamamoto's flagship store. He brought a few exclusive brands and designers to Antwerp, such as Michel Vivien and Jerome Dreyfuss, who are not yet well known in Belgium but have stellar reputations abroad.

Then Jeroen Smeekens announced his new grand plan for the Burburestraat, where his "denimandstuffsupermarket" Clinic is already located. When Clinic opened, concept stores were all the rage in the United States, but there were no real contenders in Antwerp. Clinic brought a new, exciting experience to the fashionable shopping crowds, who couldn't wait to pick out their denim while flipping through photo books and bopping to the tunes of a live DJ set.

But because Clinic is focused on young hipsters, Smeekens felt there was still room for another concept store: Hospital. It's located in the giant space where the Antwerp Hippodrome used to be, so the term "boutique" sells it a bit short. Yet the interior and atmosphere of Hospital are as luxurious as the brands and designers represented

on the racks. Tim Van Steenberghe, Viktor & Rolf, Alexander McQueen, Marc Jacobs and Sonia Rykiel are just a few.

It's not hard to understand, then, that Hospital is already attracting international attention. In fact, the well-prepared Smeekens has designed packages for foreign visitors, who can celebrate their purchases with dinner in the adjacent Italian restaurant and even spend the night amidst all of this fashionable luxury, in one of the three bed & breakfast suites.

Antwerp is so enthralled with this luxury movement, even outlet stores are starting to resemble posh boutiques. High-end shop Verso and antique store Hot & Cold joined forces to open Galerie Trouvailles in the Nationalestraat: a small but warm space with antique chandeliers and leather Chesterfield sofas for clients to relax in. On the racks? Dolce & Gabbana, See by Chloe, Costume National...all for less than half the original price. Because even in times of crisis, Antwerp knows just how to lux it up.

ortel MOBILE

NEW PROMOTION!

Every **2nd** minute*
of international calls
FREE!!!



UP TO **50%**
DISCOUNT

FREE!!
Mutual calls from
Ortel to Ortel*



*ONE-OFF STARTING RATE FOR MUTUAL CALLS IS € 0.15 * THE MAXIMUM CALL DURATION FOR
FREE MUTUAL CALLS IS 10 MINUTES * FREE MUTUAL CALLS ARE OFFERED EXCLUSIVELY WITHIN
BELGIUM * FOR A SUMMARY OF ALL RATES AND FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE GO TO:
WWW.ORTELMOBILE.BE



www.ortelmobile.be **connecting the world**

AVAILABLE AT:



BELCOMPANY



Carrefour

Express

GB



LUKOIL



Kruidvat

Press Shop RELAY



Moneytrans



© Chris Van der Burcht

Ashes

After a well-received performances in Zürich and Paris, choreographer Koen Augustijnen returns to Flemish soil with *Ashes*, his latest production for the Ghent-based Les Ballets C. de la B. The subtitle reads “Nothing lasts forever”, which eloquently sums up the central theme of mortality.

The much in-demand Flemish alto Steve Dugardin sings a contemporary adaptation of Händel’s beautifully expressive love duets together with a soprano (either Amaryllis Dieltiens or Irene Carpentier), while eight acrobats and dancers provide the visual feast illustrating how far people will go to maintain what they have achieved. For the storytellers, the outcome is sadly inevitable. Holding on is easy; letting go is an art. *Ashes* illustrates the intricate relationship between these dual forces.

Founded in 1984 by Alain Platel, whose role fluctuates between performer, choreographer and

artistic director, Les Ballets C. de la B. is the Belgian leader in theatre/dance fusion. They were in part responsible for “the Flemish Wave” – a turning point in the late 1970s and 1980s when Flemish performing arts took off internationally, thanks to the groundbreaking work of choreographers like Platel, Wim Vandekeybus and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.

The company’s full name is Les Ballets Contemporains de la Belgique, which served as a commentary on both Belgium’s infamous language divide (which hasn’t change much in 25 years) and ironic recognition that modern dance was outshining and outselling ballet, which had become characterised as being stuck in tradition and unable to re-invent itself for a modern audience.

Les Ballets soon became famous for its eclectic and often surreal mix of dance, theatre and music. It is an artistic platform that reaps

the benefits of not only the collaboration between various choreographers (which is unique in Flanders) but also of a wide variety of talented young artists with diverse backgrounds.

Far from a vanity project for Platel or anyone else, dancers’ personal contributions make each performance a vital entity with a distinct social conscience. These constant and blossoming influences result in a unique contemporary mix that might be summed up by the company’s motto: “This dance is of the world, and the world belongs to everyone”. ◆

REBECCA BENOOT

KVS

Lakensestraat 146, Brussels

26-28 March, 20.00

Leuven: 2-3 April

Bruges: 23 April

MORE DANCE THIS WEEK

Merlin Spie → Kaaistudio’s, Brussels

Needcompany → deSingel, Antwerp →

Compagnie Membros → Hallen van Schaarbeek



Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28

MAR 22 11.00 Roel Dieltiens, cello:

Bach cello suites, part 1

MAR 25 21.00 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Ludo Claesen, with Jan Michiels, piano; Koen Broucke, visual artist: Liszt’s religious meditations

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,

www.desingel.be

MAR 19 20.00 Arditti Quartet & Alban Berg Quartet: Brahms, Schoenberg, Rihm

MAR 25 20.00 Asko & Schönberg Ensemble conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw, with Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin; Susan Narucki, soprano: Veress, Vivier, Nancarrow, Ligeti

MAR 26 20.00 Intercontemporain Ensemble conducted by Pierre Boulez, with Hideki Nagano, piano; Jérôme Comte, clarinet: Boulez’ Incises and Sur Incises, Elliott Carter’s Clarinet Concerto

Bruges

Concertgebouw

’t Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,

www.concertgebouw.be

Concerts at 20.00:

MAR 18 LOD in Judaspassie, world première written by Pieter De Buysser, staged by Inne Goris, with music by Dominique Pauwels performed by B’Rock, conducted by Frank Agsteribbe

MAR 20 Poing with Maja Ratkje, voice; Frode Haltli, accordion: music by Kurt Weill, texts by Bertolt Brecht

MAR 21 Concerto Italiano with Rinaldo Alessandrini, harpsichord and conductor; Monica Piccinini and Anna Simboli, sopranos; Furio Zanasi, baritone: Handel MAR 27 La Risonanza conducted by Fabio Bonizzoni: Handel’s first oratorium Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten) Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

MAR 18 20.00 Le Concert des Nations conducted by Jordi Savall: Bach’s Brandenburg concertos, Purcell’s suites

MAR 19 12.30 Belgian National Orchestra soloists: Beethoven, Mozart. 20.00 Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin: Verbey, Brahms, Bartók

MAR 23 20.30 Film concert: La Chute de la maison Usher by Jean Epstein (1928) with the Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Dirk Brossé

MAR 24 20.00 Grigory Sokolov, piano: Beethoven and Schubert piano sonatas

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,

www.demunt.be

MAR 20 12.30 Z Kowalski and Femke Sonnen, violin; Yves Cortvint and Tony Nys, viola; C Lardin and K Lievens, cello: Korngold, Zemlinsky

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,

www.flagey.be

MAR 22 11.30 Brunch piano concert: Enescu, Schubert, Wieniawsky, Ravel, Sarasate

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0475.76.23.32,

www.astoria-concerts.be

MAR 22 11.00 Daniel Rubenstein, cello; Muhiddin Dürrüoğlu, piano: Schubert, Swinnen, Ravel, Szymanowski

Royal Conservatory of Brussels

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

Concerts at 20.00:

MAR 19 Historical Instrument Orchestra conducted by Philippe Pierlot, with Brussels Chamber Choir: Bach, Charpentier MAR 21 Mosaïques Quartet with Raphaël Pidoux, cello: Mozart, Boccherini, Haydn MAR 23 Julia Fischer, violin; Milana Chernyavska, piano: Mozart, Prokofiev, Beethoven, Martinu MAR 24-27 The European Union Choir and Ensemble Orchestral de Bruxelles conducted by Jacques Vanherenthals: Bach’s St John Passion, BWV 245 MAR 26 Les Folies Françaises conducted by Patrick Cohën-Akenine, with Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, countertenor: Couperin’s Concerts Royaux, Clérambault cantatas

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,

www.handelsbeurs.be

MAR 27 20.00 Gent Hogeschool Conservatory Chamber Orchestra conducted by Dirk Brossé, with Judith Ermert, cello; Eddy Vanoosthuysse, clarinet: The Circle of Nature, a musical evocation of the four seasons (charity concert)



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02,

www.vlaamseopera.be

Until MAR 26 15.00/19.30 Così fan tutte by Mozart with the Flemish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Attilio Cremonesi, directed by Guy Joosten

Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,

www.demunt.be

MAR 24-APR 5 15.00/20.00 Le Grand Macabre by Ligeti with De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Hussain and Choirs conducted by Piers Maxim, staged by Alex Ollé and Valentina Carrasco



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,

www.desingel.be

MAR 18 20.00 Mahanthappa-Dresser-Hemingway

Ardoos

Cultuurkapel De Schadu

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,

www.deschadu.net

MAR 21 20.00 The Dusk Swing Collective

Bruges

De Werf

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29

MAR 19 20.30 Hamster Axis of the one-click Panther

Brussels

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52,

www.archiduc.net

MAR 22 17.00 Paul Dunmall’s Belgian Quartet

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,

www.art-base.be

MAR 20 21.00 Sevdas, Takis Mendis and Stergios Papadopoulos

Charliermuseum
Kunstlaan 16; 02.218.53.82,
www.charliermuseum.be
MAR 24 12.30 Fabrice Alleman/Jean-Philippe Collard Duo

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
MAR 21 20.00 Henri Greindl - Stéphane Mercier. 22.00 Antoine Prawerman - Joe Higham

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;
02.733.13.78
MAR 18 20.30 Steven Delannoy Trio
MAR 19 20.30 Jazz Now: MDM Band
MAR 21 18.00 Eric Fusilier Quartet
MAR 25 20.30 Al Orkesta

Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org
MAR 18 20.30 Ruben Intégral with Richard Ruben and the Ivan Paduart Band, comedy/jazz

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be
MAR 18 22.00 Chamaquiando, salsa
MAR 19 22.00 Ruoco-Sintaine-Rassinfosse Trio MAR 20 22.00 Fred Becker Quartet MAR 21 22.00 Piero Delle Monache Quartet MAR 23 22.00 Master Session MAR 24 22.00 Laurent Doumont Soul Band MAR 25 22.00 Chamaquiando, salsa MAR 26 21.00 The Singers Night

The Cotton Club - Grand Casino
Duquesnoystraat 14; 02.289.68.66
MAR 21 22.00 Fily

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
MAR 18 Lieven Laureys Quartet MAR 20 Nicolas Simion Group (Romania) MAR 21 Roby Lakatos/Michael Blass Quartet MAR 25 Misstrioiso MAR 26 Adam Rafferty (US)



Antwerp
Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
MAR 23 20.00 Antony & The Johnsons

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
Until MAR 28 20.30 Marco Borsato

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Prometheus Ensemble

1 April, Antwerp
9 April, Bruges

The Belgian Prometheus Ensemble presents Hungarian music as part of the 20th anniversary edition of the Ars Musica festival. *Homage to Ligeti* features five works by György Ligeti, including his concerto for piano, considered his most complex work. There's also a selection of violin duos by Bartók and a piece by Conlon Nancarrow, best remembered for his compositions for player-piano.

→ www.arsmusica.be



Ardoioe
Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,
www.deschaduwnet
MAR 20 20.30 De Wilfrieds

Borgerhout
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be
MAR 19 20.30 Marijke Boon

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 18 Pantha du Prince + Animal Collective MAR 19 Yevgueni. HT Roberts. Yoko Sound + the DIPLOMAT + Pornorama MAR 20 Howlin' Bill. MAR 21 Iamx. N9@AB: Ziggi & The Renaissance Band MAR 22 Lyle Lovett MAR 24 Krystle Warren, Zahra Hindi MAR 25 Julien Doré

Fuse
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
MAR 20 23.00 Infekted presents: D'Julz, Jelly Babies, Pipo Witch, Nem10

Le Bar du Matin
Alsebergsesteenweg 172;
02.537.71.59
MAR 19 21.00 Dan Miller
MAR 26 21.00 Pc30

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
MAR 18 20.00 Pascale Picard MAR 20 Bob and Lisa MAR 21 aMute MAR 22 CirKus MAR 24 Girl Talk MAR 25 James Yuil + Peter Bjorn and John

Maison des Musiques
Lebeustraet 39; 02.550.13.20,
www.vkconcerts.be
MAR 24 21.30 Bowerbirds

Piola Libri
Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91,
www.piolalibri.be
MAR 20 18.00 2nd Anniversary Party: Gazebo

Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34,
www.recyclart.be
MAR 20 22.30 In Your Bass

Théâtre de la Balsamine
Félix Marchallaan 1; 02.735.64.68,
www.balsamine.be
MAR 21 9.30 Back to Normal - Orchestre d'un jour conducted by Baudouin de Jaer: invitation to musicians to join an orchestra for one day with final concert at 20.00

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07,
www.vkconcerts.be
MAR 18 20.30 Romano Nervoso + Electric Six

Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
MAR 22 19.00 Judas Priest with Megadeth & Testament

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 19 20.00 The Presidents of the United States of America
MAR 26 20.00 Danko Jones

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
MAR 27 19.00 El Guapa Stuntteam, Peter Pan Speedrock, Bearwolf, We'rewolves, DJ Lowdown (benefit concert)

Kortrijk

Concertstudio
Conservatoriumplein 1,
www.dekreun.be
MAR 25 20.00 Vic Chesnutt with Elf Power

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44,
www.dekreun.be
MAR 20 20.00 The Roncs + The Hickey Underworld

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
MAR 18 20.00 The Heptones
MAR 26 20.00 Experimental Tropic Blues Band + Hulkk + Bob Log III + DJ Ruben Block
MAR 27 20.00 A Stylish Swing Soirée with Radio Modern



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 19 20.30 Toumast, Touareg rock music
MAR 20 20.30 José Franco & Raices del Folclor (Venezuela)
MAR 26 20.30 Pascual de Lorca &

Patricia Ibanez, flamenco music and dance

Borgerhout

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
MAR 21 20.30 Kawada

Brussels

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,
www.senghor.be
MAR 19 23.00 Yamandu Costa, guitar (Brazil)

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
MAR 19 20.15 Kamilya Jubran (Middle Eastern)
MAR 25 15.00 Tatake, traditional Japanese percussion

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,
www.stekerlapatte.be
MAR 19 21.30 Film concert: Modern Times by Charlie Chaplin (1936) with music performed by Quentin Manfroy and Eric Bribosia

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,
www.muziekpublieke.be
MAR 21 20.00 Don Bandoneon: Luis Di Matteo (Uruguay)
MAR 25 20.00 Broodje Brussel: Aurélie Dorzée (Bel)
MAR 27 20.00 Nu:trad: Iva Bittova (Czech)

Leuven

Institute for Ireland in Europe
Jansenijsstraat 1,
reception@leuveninstitute.eu
MAR 18 20.00 Liam Ó Maonlaí (free concert, reservation required)



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
MAR 26-27 20.00 Needcompany in The Porcelain Project, choreographed by Grace Ellen Barkey

Brussels

KVS Bol
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00,
www.kvs.be
MAR 26-28 20.00 Les Ballets C de la B in Ashes, new work by Koen Augustijnen, with music by Handel

Théâtre les Tanneurs

Huidevettersstraat 75; 02.512.17.84
Until MAR 21 20.30 Cie La Dame de Pic and Karine Ponties in Humus vertebra, choreographed by Karine Ponties

Theatre National

Emile Jacqumainlaan 115; 02.203.41.55,
www.theatrenational.be
MAR 24-28 19.30/20.15 Demain, choreographed by Michèle Noiret, music by Todor Todoroff & Stevie Wishart



Antwerp

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900,
www.sherpa.be
MAR 20-APR 19 Elisabeth, musical (in Dutch)

GET FLANDERS TODAY IN YOUR LETTERBOX EACH WEEK



Want to keep in touch with Flanders?
Simply fill in the subscription form below and send it to:

Flanders Today
Subscription Department

Gossetlaan 30 – 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden – Belgium

Fax: 00.32.2.375.98.22

Email: subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu

The newspaper version will be mailed to subscribers living in any of the 27 countries of the European Union. Residents of other countries will receive a weekly ezine.

Name:

Street:

Postcode:

City:

Country:

e-mail:

Privacy policy: We fully respect Belgian legislation on the protection of personal information. The data we collect will only be used for distribution of publications and will not be disclosed to any third parties without express consent.



Ardooië

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,
www.deschaduwnet
MAR 27 20.30 Turbulentie
(Turbulence) by Koalatheaterbende (in Dutch)

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
MAR 24 12.40 Twee oude vrouwtjes
(Two Little Old Ladies) by Toon
Tellegen with An De Donder and Sien
Eggers (in Dutch)

Bronkstheater

Varkensmarkt 15-17; 02.218.20.15,
www.bronks.be
MAR 21-22 Opening party for new
Dutch-language theatre for children
and teenagers

International School of Brussels

Kattenberg 19; 02.661.43.33,
www.isb.be/secondcity
Until MAR 19 19.30 Chicago's
legendary comedy troupe The Second
City performs the best sketches, songs,
and improvisations from its illustrious
45-year history (in English)

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59,
www.kaaitheater.be
MAR 19-21 20.30 tg Stan in Stukken
(in Dutch)
MAR 27-29 15.00/20.30 De Versie
Claus by Mark Schaevers, staged
and performed by Josse De Pauw (in
Dutch)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60,
www.muhka.be
Until MAR 27 Le[s] moi[s] de Lizène,
works by Liège artist Jacques Lizène
Until MAR 29 Lonely at the Top:
Klankeffecten # 5, works by Juan Pérez
Agirregoikoa
Until MAR 29 Insert the Passing of a
Perfect Day (Revisited), installations by
Katleen Vermeir

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JUNE 7 Erwin Olaf: EyeCandy
1984-2009, retrospective
Until JUNE 7 Yang Fudong: East of
Que Village, video installation
Until SEP 13 Photography in Belgium
during the Interbellum

Modemuseum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70,
www.momu.be
Until AUG 16 Paper Fashion, the
use of paper and related materials in
modern and contemporary fashion and
1960s paper dresses from the Atopos
collection

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until MAY 10 Camiel Van Breedam:
Collages 2002-2008, recent works on
paper by the contemporary Belgian
artist
Until JUNE 14 Goya, Redon, Ensor:
Grotesque paintings and drawings

Bruges

Arentshuis
Dijver 16; 050.44.87.11
Until SEP 27 The Museum of Museums
2009, installation by contemporary
Flemish artist Johan van Geluwe

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03,
www.argosarts.org
Until APR 11 Language Works: Video,
Audio and Poetry, works by Vito
Acconci
Until APR 11 I'm With You in
Rockland, video work by Karl
Holmqvist

DON'T MISS

Le Grand Macabre

24 March to 5 April
De Munt, Brussels

Even though Michel de
Ghelderode was a native of
Brussels, the brilliant opera
of his 1934 play *La Balade
du Grand Macabre* has never
been performed at De Munt
– until now. Absurd peas-
ants, obscene monsters and
poetic language bring imag-
inary worlds inspired by
Pieter Brueghel to morbid
and hilarious life.

→ www.demunt.be



Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72,
www.atomium.be
Until MAY 24 Bi-Polar. From South to
North, scientific exhibition on current
research and expeditions in the Arctic
and Antarctic

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80,
www.stripmuseum.be
Until MAY 17 Czechriculum Vitae,
Czech history and legends in comic
strips by contemporary Czech artists
Until JUNE 7 20 years of Manga in
Europe, Japanese comic strips

Belvue Museum

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25,
www.belvue.be
Until MAY 31 Boy or Girl...Destiny
for a Lifetime? Belgium 1830-2000, the
evolution of perceptions of masculinity
and femininity in Belgium over the
past two centuries

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
Until APR 19 Robbrecht & Daem:
Pacing through Architecture, works by
the Ghent-based architects
Until MAY 17 Monumental
installation by contemporary Italian
artist Maurizio Cattelan (part of Turin
Festival)
Until MAY 24 From Van Dyck to
Bellotto: Splendor at the Court of
Savoy, paintings from Turin's Galleria
Sabauda, with works by Flemish
masters, including Brueghel, Rubens
and Van Dyck (part of Turin Festival)
Until JUNE 30 N.i.c.h.e. 360
architekten, scale models by Jan

Mannaers and Stephane Beel

**De Elektriciteitscentrale European
Centre for Contemporary Art**
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.35
Until MAR 29 Moet elke wreedheid
wel gezegd? (Should Every Cruelty
Be Said?), work by 102 artists on the
theme of Belgium today

Fondation pour l'Architecture
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80,
www.fondationpouirlarchitecture.be
Until OCT 18 De tijd van de boetiek
(The Time of the Boutique), window
shopping from 1800 to today

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until APR 19 Robert Capa,
retrospective of the work of the Jewish-
Hungarian photo reporter (1913-1954)
and founder of the Magnum agency

Royal Army Museum
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until MAY 3 Tribute to Pierre de
Caters, first Belgian aviator, who flew
over Belgium 100 years ago

Sint-Gorikshallen
Sint-Goriksplein 1; 02.502.44.24
Until APR 5 Archeologie om de hoek
(Archeology around the corner), 20
years of archaeological finds in Brussels

Stadhuis
Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until MAY 10 DeKadence: The
Bohemian Lands 1880-1914, paintings,
drawings, sculptures and photographs

Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until MAR 31 That's Opera: 200 Years
of Italian Music, a look behind the
scenes at the making of an opera
Until APR 26 It's our Earth!, interactive
exhibition on sustainable development,
with interventions by Belgian and
international artists

Ghent

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
MAR 21-JUNE 1 Connections, a
selection of 100 textile objects from the
15th century to the present day
MAR 21-JUNE 1 Cool Dozen+, 13
chairs and 13 textile objects by Finnish
designers
MAR 21-JUNE 1 Henry van de Velde,
book designs by the Belgian architect
(1863-1957)

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95,
www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 12 The Game of Madness:
On Lunacy in Film and Theatre,
representations of madness in films,
plays, paintings and contemporary art

Kunsthall Sint-Pietersabdij
Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30,
www.gent.be/spa
Until MAR 29 Flemish wall tapestries
from the 15th and 16th centuries

Witte Zaal

Posteernestraat 64; 09.267.96.77,
www.francekunststart.be
Until APR 4 Juliaan Lampens:
architectural projects photographed by
Jan Kempenaers
Until APR 4 Pieter Vanden Broecke:
graphic works

Leuven

Tweebronnen library
Rijschoolstraat 4; 016.22.65.22
Until APR 19 Ceci n'est pas la BD
flamande (This is Not the Flemish
Comic Strip), installation by 20
contemporary Flemish comic
illustrators and writers

Maaseik

Maaseik Museum
Lekkerstraat 5; 089.81.92.99
Until MAR 31 The Terracotta Army of
Xi'an: Treasures of the First Emperors

of China, warrior sculptures from the
world-famous Terracotta Army shown
with 200 artefacts from the Qin and
Western Han dynasties

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75,
www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until MAR 31 Gils, Belgische saga van
de elektrische trein (Belgian Saga of the
Electric Train)
Until SEP 30 Cowboys and Indians

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11,
www.africamuseum.be
Until AUG 31 Omo: People &
Design, Hans Silvester's photographs
of southwestern Ethiopia's nomadic
tribes and objects from the museum's
collection

Waregem

Be Part
Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10
Until MAR 29 Steve Schepens: Horror
30, installations and videos



Ars Musica 2009: 20th edition of the
contemporary classical music festival
featuring emerging musicians and
composers, plus tributes to established
modernists Ligeti, Dufourt and
Pousseur
Until APR 10 at venues across the
country
02.641.10.20, www.arsmusica.be

Antwerp

Nocturne: Antwerp's contemporary art
galleries stay open late
MAR 19 18.00-21.00 across Antwerp
www.antwerpant.be

Brussels

Afrika! Afrika!: African circus
performance in the style of Cirque du
Soleil
Until MAR 29 at Tour & Taxis,
Havenlaan 86c
0900.69.001, www.afrika-afrika.com

Brussels Electronic Music Festival:
More than 30 DJs, musicians and VJs
MAR 20-22 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat
23
www.bozar.be

Eurantica: Fine art & antiques fair,
with traditional and vintage furniture,
art and collections. The international
show's theme is "Palaces"
MAR 20-29 at Brussels Expo,
Belgiëplein 1
02.474.89.81, www.eurantica.be

Migration Day Spain: Informational
event on immigrating to or owning a
second home in Spain. Includes
performance by the group Ana Ramón,
as well as Spanish wine, paëlla and
tapas
March 20 10.00-17.00 at the office of
Flemings in the World, Gaucheretstraat
90
www.viw.be to register online

Offscreen 2009: Second edition of this
international film festival featuring
works by independent filmmakers, cult
classics, documentaries and offbeat
genres
Until MAR 22 at venues across
Brussels
www.offscreen.be

Passaporta Festival: Second edition of
the international literary event
MAR 26-29 at Passaporta, A
Dansaertstraat 46, and Bozar,
Ravensteinstraat 23
www.passaporta.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

SIPS

Gillisplaats 8
Antwerp



It's the place where guys take
girls on a first date because it's
sure to make a lasting impres-
sion: it's got class, style and that
touch of exclusivity that makes
you feel privileged to be there.
Of course we're talking about
Sips, Antwerp's hottest cock-
tail bar.

Sips doesn't need grand spaces
and excited masses; in fact,
they would kill the atmosphere.
Only some 20 people can fit
into the tiny bar, where three
tables allow you to sit down for
a romantic rendezvous, and a
couple more bar tables gather
friends and colleagues around
them. Cigars on sale make SIPS
particularly popular for after-
work Fridays.

During summer, a terrace
slightly expands the premises,
but the idea is clear: this place
only has room for those in the
know (and those who remem-
ber to make reservations).

When Manuel Wouters was
21, he embarked on a trip that
would change his life. As a
bartender on the Queen Eliza-
beth II, the world's largest and
most prestigious cruise ship, he
served cocktails to the rich and
famous. Even Tom Cruise –
with all the experience he's had
himself – kept coming back for
Manuel's concoctions.

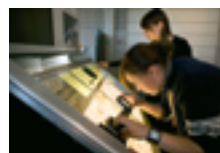
When he came back to
Antwerp, Manuel and his twin
brother, Olivier, decided to
make a dream come true: and
SIPS was born. It's still the only
place in Antwerp where people
gather for the love of the right
cigar/cocktail combination and
where classic recipes are only
modified if they really need to
be. It's a place where traditional
and trendy really do meet.

→ www.sips-cocktails.com

Salon parents: Fair for parents,
grandparents and education workers
MAR 20 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan
86c
02.420.60.69, www.salonparents.be

Ghent

Sfeer: Interior decoration, garden and
swimming pool fair
Until MAR 22 at Flanders Expo,
Maaltekouter 1
www.sfeer.be



FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



© Ron Abblas

Marco Antonio Mazzini

Gentenaar wins a place on the YouTube Symphony Orchestra and heads to Carnegie Hall next month

Flanders' new musical ambassador isn't Flemish, and he's not even Belgian, but he'll still be flying the flag in New York next month. Marco Antonio Mazzini is a Peruvian musician transplanted to Ghent, where he graduated from the conservatory and stayed on for, he says, "the great people and the musical developments."

Mazzini has been selected from among thousands of hopefuls to join the YouTube Symphony Orchestra (YTSO). The popular video-sharing site, now owned by Google, asked for applicants to send in videos of themselves performing. Thousands did but only about 90 were chosen.

"I first heard about this idea in November, and I knew right away it was something for me," Mazzini tells me. "The internet is the future, but up until now it hasn't done a lot for classical music. Now YouTube has become this huge patron. And the YTSO project includes a lot of modern music in the programme."

Applicants for the orchestra had to send in two video performances. "We had to play one obligatory piece by Tan Dun, who's this really amazing modern composer," says Mazzini. The second had to be a piece chosen from a list provided. "I chose the Adagio from the Mozart clarinet concerto."

The jury included members of

the New York Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Berlin Philharmonic and other prestigious institutions. The whole project is headed by composer and conductor Michael Tilson Thomas. So, contrary to what a YouTube sponsorship might imply, the selection process was a top-level audition for places most musicians would give their eye teeth to get.

Competition was indeed fierce (although, having spent hours combing through the many, many videos sent in, there were definitely two levels: very good and pretty dire).

There will be 90 musicians in the final orchestra, but only one bass clarinet. Mazzini's Mozart video is extraordinary compared to some of those he was up against for the single spot. His tone is pure and so ringingly clear you almost forget he's playing the music an octave lower than it's written.

Contrary to what a YouTube sponsorship might imply, the selection process was a top-level audition for places most musicians would give their eye teeth to get

But the bass clarinet isn't a regular member of the orchestra, so won't there be a lot of waiting around? "There's more music for the bass clarinet than people might think. 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy' from *The Nutcracker* is one of the most famous pieces," Mazzini explains. "Of course it's not as well known as a solo instrument as the clarinet or saxophone. But it's very popular in jazz music."

That's an ongoing love affair; he currently splits himself between the Thelema Trio playing contemporary music, and

the Kinsa Trio, which specialises in early 20th-century Peruvian compositions. Earlier this month in Ghent's Bijloke, Mazzini performed in the premiere of a concerto for bass clarinet, written specifically for him by the Peruvian composer Rafael Junchaya.

How did Ghent manage to exercise an influence all the way across the ocean to the Andes? "I got my diploma from the Peruvian National Conservatory in Lima," Mazzini explains. "I was very ambitious, and for two or three years before graduating I had the idea I wanted to go abroad." In 1999, he managed to get into a clarinet festival in Ostend and, while here, check out some music schools.

"Along the way I met Eddy Vanoosthuysen [of the Vlaams Radio Orkest and Ghent Conservatory]. And I was also influenced by Louis Sclavis [a French bass clarinetist] and the

great Harry Sparnaay [Dutch], who's like the godfather of the bass clarinet. Both of them have since become my teachers. I

came to Belgium, and to Ghent, for the music, but I stay because I'm very happy here."

Mazzini will fly both Belgian and Peruvian flags in the YTSO when he plays in their premier concert on 15 April in New York's famed Carnegie Hall. "We know there will be a new piece by Tan Dun, and a guest soloist, but we don't know yet who else or what else we'll be playing. All we know is it's going to be fantastic." ♦

➔ www.clariperu.org/mazzini

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



roetfilter ➔

Gone are the pea-soupers of yesteryear. Children never have to grope their way blindly along smog-filled streets to get to school these days. Yet our air is still a cause for concern and certainly if you live in Flanders.

Take one of the pollution hot spots, the Ghent Canal Zone. There you have chimneys and power stations belching fumes next to lorry-laden motorways and sea-going ships. With so many areas like this in such a small region, it should come as no surprise that Flanders has a firm position at the top of polluting regions in Europe.

The culprit is *fijn stof* – particulate matter or fine particles. These are caused by industry, diesel vehicles, heating of buildings, agriculture. And of these particles the real baddies are the smallest: *de gevaarlijkste fractie van het fijn stof is dieselloet* – the most dangerous contributor to fine particles is diesel soot.

Flanders has become the logistics centre for much of Europe, taking advantage of its ports and road network. The price is a costly one. Whereas the EU average life cost for pollution is eight months, Belgians pay 13.5 life months. But for the Flemish, a couple of extra months come on top of that. Of course, 15 months is nothing like the 10 years that smokers pay for the pleasure, but at least they have that. And even

if these particles don't send you to an early grave, they certainly set off asthma attacks and allergies.

With such levels of pollution, Flanders has no way of meeting the norms set by Europe. In fact, the Flemish government has asked for *een uitstel* – a postponement until 2011. In the meantime, there are plans to tax cars on a polluter-pays basis: *propere wagens betalen minder belastingen en vuile wagens meer* – clean cars pay less tax, dirty cars more.

If you feel strongly about this, you can fit a filter to your diesel car. You can even get a €400 grant to help pay for it, but, until it's compulsory for all cars, it's not going to make much difference to the air we breathe. Or you could go hybrid. Some would suggest jumping on your bike, but then you would just breathe in more *fijn stof*. Your best bet is a De Lijn bus: they nearly all have fitted *roetfilters* – soot filters.

Although fine particles are equally present everywhere, there is a clear difference between busy and quieter roads: the smallest particles are to be found along busy roads. So stick to the back streets, walk as far from the kerb as you can and take care when you're breathing because, though it may not be yellow, there's something funny in the air. ♦

➔ talkingdutch@gmail.com

The last word ➔➔➔

Party pooper

"I can only beg the voters: please, please don't vote for my party"

Former top Flemish civil servant Rudi Aernoudt, whose new party LiDé has told him that he is not needed

Degrees of danger

"If you ask parents which they find more dangerous, a revolver or a cigarette lighter, they all agree you shouldn't leave a revolver lying around on the coffee table. Well, a cigarette lighter is even worse."

Fire brigade representative Guy Van De Gaer, after three people died in a blaze in a Brussels apartment started by two small boys

Check, mate

"If I pay [in a restaurant] with my card, I get a VAT receipt right away. But if I pay cash, I have to beg for one. That's a bit suspect."

Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, who wants to make payment by credit card obligatory in restaurants

Last writes

"I bought the business with the aim of selling everything: the buildings, the printing works and three free-sheets. But I wanted to go on with *De Eecloonaar*."

Paul De Baets, newspaper owner, on the closure of Belgium's oldest weekly paper