

Sex and the Orchestra 8

deFilharmonie explains the passion of music to teens, plus stages concerts for children with the ever-marvellous Baron von Münchhausen. Could we suggest that concert-shy parents might just enjoy this, too?



Outside the Lines 9

Art&Marges opens a new museum in Brussels' Marollen district dedicated to outsider art – work by artists who are handicapped or in mental institutions. The first exhibition pairs the works with pieces from Belgium's fine arts museums



The Diversity Game 11

Believed to be shut out of their expected internships because of their ethnicity, three Leuven students created a board game instead – to encourage immigrant youth to pursue higher education



Over and out

GM shuts down Opel Antwerp

- Area job losses could total 10,000
- Production of Astra goes to Germany
- Peeters promises support for alternatives



"We have to take a plant out, and unfortunately it is Antwerp. It is the tough reality of the current business environment."

Opel CEO Nick Reilly

ALAN HOPE

After a year of speculation and rumour, it was announced last week that the Opel Antwerp car factory will close, with the loss of 2,600 jobs. Parent company General Motors (GM) intends to close down production by June or July and then sell the land. But Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters said he was not prepared to accept the closure. The workers at Opel had demonstrated "that they are prepared to keep on fighting for a worthy alternative," he said. "The Flemish government will support them completely. It is simply my duty to put my back into it."

Opel chief executive Nick Reilly said that the decision had "not been taken lightly". But it was, he said, "the unfortunate result of the current economic and business reality". The decision had to be taken now in order to secure the future for other Opel and Vauxhall plants.

Antwerp is the only Opel facility earmarked for closure, although plants in Germany will see the loss of about 4,000 jobs. Across Europe, GM intends to cut 8,300 jobs. The European Works Council said the closure was "one-sided and economically unreasonable".

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FLANDERS TODAY

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Derek Blyth

News in brief

Toothpaste made especially for children is useless in children older than seven, according to Luc Martens, professor of paediatric dentistry at the University Hospital in Ghent. Children under six require only 1,000 micrograms of fluoride per millimetre (mpm) to protect their teeth. By the age of seven, however, they need 1,500 mpm a day, which children's toothpaste does not provide. A deficiency in fluoride leads to discoloration of the enamel of the teeth.

Belgians clipped a record **153 million coupons** last year as the economic crisis made people more price conscious, according to figures from HighCo Data, the company that registers coupon use. Households used coupons to save themselves a total of €123.8 million, an increase of 22% over the previous year. The biggest group were for fresh food (31%) followed by dry food (10%) and hot drinks (9%).

King Albert II **gave a royal grace** to 100 applicants in 2009, down from 173 in 2008. The law allows the sovereign to grant a reduction or removal of the sentence of anyone found guilty by a court – without overturning the conviction itself. Most cases concern relatively minor offences dealt with by police courts and involving fines and suspended licences.

The new **archbishop of Mechelen and Brussels**, André Léonard, has changed his name again to mark his new appointment. In 1981, when he was made bishop of Namur, he added the name Mutien to his forename, in honour of a canonised Walloon monk. Last week, he announced he was changing his name to André-Joseph, taking on the name of the national patron saint.

The royal family has a responsibility to ensure important **Flemish artworks** remain in the country, according to N-VA deputy Ben Weyts. The statement follows controversy over four works by the Flemish Baroque painter Jan Breughel II (1601-1678), grandson of Pieter Bruegel, each depicting one of the four elements. The paintings, valued at around €2 million, go on sale at Christie's in New York next month. The royal family considers the matter a private one, as the paintings come from the collection of King Leopold III and his wife, Princess Lilian.

One of the skinheads sentenced earlier this month in Bruges for an attack on a Togolese man commit-



New blood donation questionnaire digs deep

Most people would agree it's permissible for the blood donation service of the Red Cross to stick a needle in your veins to drain out your precious life's fluid (nearly an armful, as comedian Tony Hancock once accurately estimated), but does that give them the right to poke their noses into your private business?

That's the question being asked following the introduction of a new questionnaire to be filled in before giving blood. The aim, the Red Cross says, is to ensure the safety of the blood and avoid the risk of transfer of HIV and other transmittable infections.

However, the frankness of the questions are reported to have surprised some potential donors. Are you a man who has ever had sex with another man? asks one. If so, you are not eligible to donate. (Belgian blood banks, like those in some other countries, don't accept any blood at all from gay men, which has already caused a great deal of controversy.)

Not that they're any gentler with anyone else...Have you in the last 12 months had various sex partners or had sex involving payment? the document asks. In the last four months, have you had a new sex partner and, if so, from what country? Have you ever had a sexually transmitted disease? asks another question, without going into detail.

A series of questions on diabetes, serious allergies and auto-immune diseases such as lupus make sense, but what about this: Have you ever [their stress] had a condition involving the lungs, the heart, the blood vessels, the kidneys, the digestive system, the skin, the thyroid gland, the nervous system, the bone marrow or the immune system? Few people anywhere are likely to be able to answer "No".

"The only aim is to increase safety," commented Karin Genoe of the Red Cross blood donation service. "It's not just the quantity that counts, it's also the safety of the blood. Most donors realise that. We haven't had any complaints."

→ www.bloedgevendootleven.be

ted suicide immediately after receiving notice of his two-year jail term. The 29-year-old man continued to maintain he had played no part in the attack on Raphaël Mensah in May of 2006. His lawyer claimed he had broken his ties with his former skinhead friends and planned to train as a teacher – something a jail sentence would make impossible.

US President Barack Obama could visit Belgium in 2011, according to the US ambassador, speaking last week on the VRT programme *Phara*. Howard Gutman said that he had spoken with Obama's top advisor and but was told it could not be scheduled this year. However, the situation in Iraq could force him to visit a Nato summit at some point.

The federal government last week approved the extension of the mission of **Belgium's B-Fast team in Haiti** until 4 February. The team has been involved in searching for survivors under the rubble, as well as setting up a field hospital to offer emergency medical treatment. Six military personnel are to be sent to Port-au-Prince to ensure the safety and security of the Belgian medical facilities. At the same time, the Flemish government has pledged an extra €300,000 for the Haiti aid mission.

Correction

In our issue of 6 January, we described the Chinese diplomat Lou Tseng-Tsiang as "a former prime minister of Taiwan". He was in fact prime minister of the Republic of China in the early 20th century.



Government now awaiting alternatives to closure of Opel But economists warn of more job losses to come

→ continued from page 1

The decision brings to an end a year of uncertainty for Opel Antwerp workers, whose future has been hanging in the balance since GM announced its restructuring plans, which involve a reduction of 20% in capacity in response to falling demand in the car industry. A glimmer of hope was offered by the planned purchase of 55% of Opel Europe by a consortium, including the Canadian parts maker Magna and the Russian bank Sberbank. That deal would have left GM holding 35% and the workforce 10%. But GM later decided Opel was part of its worldwide strategy after all, and the deal was off. Antwerp clung to the last to the possibility that it might take the production of a new small SUV planned by GM, which would replace the cut in Astra capacity at Antwerp. But the SUV will instead be produced in South Korea, GM said. Production of the three Astra models currently manufactured at Antwerp will be taken

over in Bochum, Germany.

Unions, as well as the Flemish government, still maintain that the plant can be saved if another investor can be found – albeit not as a car manufacturing plant. “The socialist union does not accept the closure of Opel Antwerp and remains open to all possible alternative ways of keeping the business alive,” said Rudi Kennes of the ABVV trade union. Bringing Reilly to his knees, Kennes said, was “the ultimate goal”.

What's next for workers?

“The closure of the Antwerp Opel factory is a drama for all employees and their families,” said Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens. Under Belgian law – the so-called Renault law, introduced after the French car maker closed a factory at Vilvoorde in 1997 – GM now has to sit down with unions to work out a social plan for the job losses. The company has promised it will do all it can to help laid-off workers find new jobs. However, the Renault law only covers the 2,600 workers at Opel itself. Another 2,500 to 7,500 people could find themselves out of work,

according to different estimates. Agoria, the federation for the technology industry, estimates a total of 5,000 job losses, including suppliers and parts manufacturers. And the total number of job losses will be a blow for the economy of the whole area, resulting in as many as 10,000 jobs in all, according to Voka, which represents small businesses.

At Johnson Controls in Geel, the Opel closure means the end of the line. The company, which employs 220 people, makes car seats, and Opel Antwerp is its sole remaining client. Other suppliers, such as Plastic Omnium in Herentals and Belpas in Genk, both of which make bumpers, have other clients in other countries, but some effects will be felt. One of the biggest losers will be the rail authority NMBS, whose freight division Railforce turned over €2.4 million last year in traffic to Opel Antwerp.

“We fully understand the effect this announcement has on the Antwerp employees and their families, and we sympathise with them,” said Reilly. “Many have been dedicated to the plant over generations and

have done an excellent job producing great quality cars.”

- Flanders region stands ready with €500 million to help support any alternative plan to keep Opel Antwerp open, according to Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters. Speaking on the VRT's Sunday morning political programme *De zevende dag*, Muyters made it clear the financing that Flanders had set aside to aid GM in keeping Opel Antwerp open could still be used. It also became clear over the weekend that Flanders is putting its hopes in the EU for a breakthrough in the case. Kris Peeters met last Friday with Commission president Jose-Manuel Barroso and obtained an assurance the Commission would give its full attention to the matter. Peeters maintains that aid given by the German government to GM, intended to protect its own Opel factories from closure, is against EU laws on state aid: the German government effectively paid for Opel Antwerp to be closed, the government maintains. ♦

→ www.opel.be

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



145,000

people regularly bet or play poker online, according to figures from the National Lottery, spending an average of €683 a year

€4.2 billion

the cost of the Antwerp Mobility Master Plan, according to the federal court of auditors. Most of the cost will go to the Oosterveel link, though no-one yet knows what form that will take

7%

of drivers are involved in an accident annually, according to the insurance industry federation Assuralia. In 2008, the industry took in €1.98 billion and paid out €1.23 billion

408

prisoners in Belgian jails are ready to be transferred to 500 places in Tilburg, the Netherlands, rented by the Belgian government

89.25%

of trains in 2009 were on time, according to the rail authority NMBS – the worst record for 25 years. “On time” means “less than six minutes delay”

Clijsters and Wickmayer out Down Under

LEO CENDROWICZ

Flemish tennis pros Kim Clijsters and Yanina Wickmayer both crashed out of the Australian Open in Melbourne in the early stages last week. Clijsters, who won the US Open last September, was handed a shock third round defeat by Russian veteran Nadia Petrova, 6-0, 6-1. It was a surprising blow for one of the game's top female competitors, who has not been beaten so badly since 2003. “I was completely off,”

Clijsters said. “I made all the mistakes. It sucks that it has to happen at this stage of this tournament. That's sport: it can happen.”

Wickmayer, US Open semi-finalist in September, was beaten by fellow Belgian Justine Henin in the fourth round 7-6, 1-6, 6-3. Wickmayer, 20, raced through the second set to take the match into a decider, but looked tired as Henin claimed the third set. Indeed, it seemed like the fallout from last No-

vember's ban from playing for failing to comply with anti-doping rules had caught up with her: although the penalty was later overturned, Wickmayer missed the entry date for the Australian Open and had to go through three qualifying games before starting the main tournament.

Earlier in the tournament, two other Flemish players were knocked out in the first round: Kirsten Flipkens, beaten by Henin, and Kristof Vliegen. ♦

Black money comes flooding back to Belgium

Three times as much “black money” came back into the country in 2009 as the year before, with the largest part of it coming in during the last quarter. In total, €224 million was repatriated into Belgium in 2009, according to the finance ministry. Only €88m came in during the nine months up to September, though this was already more than the €81m total for the whole of 2008. Then, in the last quarter, the annual total suddenly shot up by €136m.

One of the main reasons behind the sudden surge is investors' loss of confidence in banking secrecy on an international level. When earlier in 2009 the Swiss bank UBS handed over more than 4,000 names of account holders to the US Treasury Department, a shock went through the world of offshore investors. Other investors are happy to pay the tax in order to gain access to their savings in Belgium.

Belgium introduced “fiscal regularisation” (a tax amnesty whereby a one-off declaration of income could be made and the tax paid off with no penalties) in 2006, when there were 1,630 applications made, and a total of €335m repatriated. In mid-2006, a 5% penalty was added to the bill on top of the tax due, rising to 10% in 2007. Since the measure was first introduced, a total of €775m has been brought home. ♦



Walter Van Beirendonck, a veteran of the Antwerp Six and head of the city's fashion academy, presented his latest menswear collection in Paris last week, together with Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester, Raf Simons and Kris Van Assche. Van Beirendonck's collection featured outsized hats, head-sized headphones, models transfixed with rockets and women riding elephants and horses that looked like elaborate codpieces. The collection also featured Van Beirendonck's trademark knitwear, this time combined with leggings and high heels for men.

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

20th-century man

Jean-Luc Dehaene famously calls himself “a politician of the previous century”. When his term as prime minister ended in 1999, he knew right away that he had lost touch with politics – at least in the Belgian sense, where discourse is dominated by perception and short-lived topics. He decided instead to focus on European issues. So has Dehaene finished with Belgian politics? Not exactly. The Christian Democrat has been given a royal assignment to find a solution to the seemingly unsolvable issue of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV) – the bilingual constituency that threatens this country's linguistic equilibrium. With Dehaene's formidable reputation, it is no wonder that the king thought of him as practically the only person who could lift this millstone from the federal government's neck. The former prime minister is working on it in his own typical way: with the utmost discretion and none of the media leaks and inflated doorstep declarations that usually accompany these talks. To him, this has always been the only way to move forward. Is he making any progress right now? Maybe, maybe not. We simply do not know.

At the same time, Dehaene has made headlines in an entirely different matter, as he is also linked to AB Inbev, the Leuven-based beer giant that, despite being profitable, planned to slash more than 200 jobs. His post as an independent on AB Inbev's board of directors means that Dehaene can look forward to huge bonuses. This looks a lot like cashing in while ordinary people are losing their jobs and conflicts sharply with Dehaene's roots as a social Christian Democrat.

This conflict is something that that union leaders and political rivals never failed to point out and has made some of his fellow Christian Democrats quite nervous. Dehaene himself has never commented on this. Who cares about perception anyway? A 20th-century politician certainly does not.

After fierce industrial action, which nearly resulted in a beer shortage, AB Inbev decided to reconsider its cost-cutting plans. For now, it looks like the Leuven jobs are saved. Did Dehaene play any part in this? Maybe, maybe not. We simply do not know.

So what do we know about Dehaene's role at this moment? Very little, except that, sometimes, the 20th-century formulas seem the only ones left in the 21st. We can only hope that they work in the case of BHV.

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End of an era

Saying goodbye to the car plant that started up more than 85 years ago

ALAN HOPE

Unions reacted to the announcement of the closure by immediately blockading the plant and threatening to hold back all new cars from leaving the factory until GM had agreed to a satisfactory social plan for the job redundancies.

Opel Antwerp thus became the latest in a series of hot spots of industrial relations in Belgium, including the fire department and prison services. (To even the balance somewhat, workers at AB InBev in Leuven were asked to dismantle their picket line after the company withdrew plans to cut 260 jobs.) Last Friday, 22 January, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters held talks with Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens and the province's governor Cathy Berx to appraise them of the situation. He also briefed the "social partners": trade unions, employers' organisations Voka and Unizo and even the Farmers' Union, not normally included in such meetings.

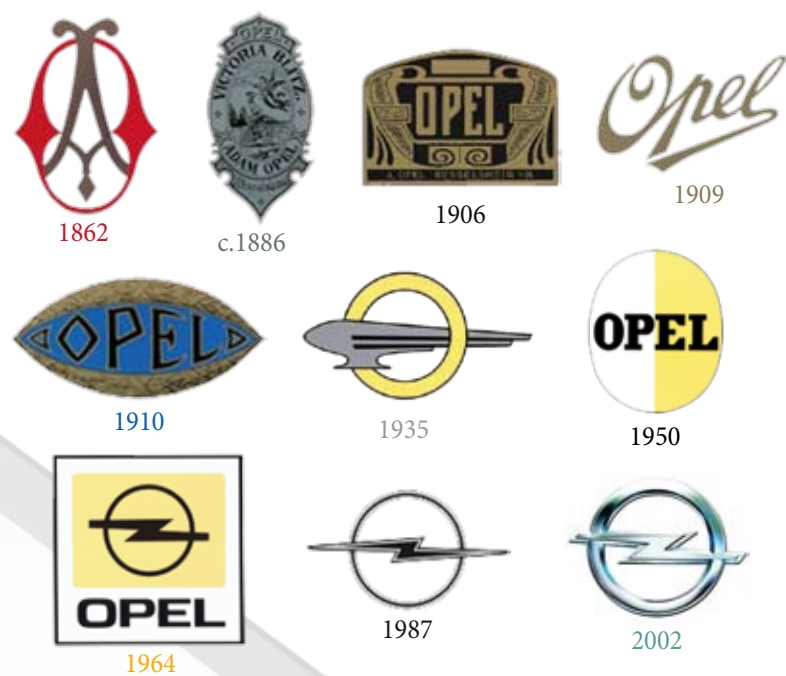
GM has been careful to speak only of the "possible" closure of the plant. That is because the Renault law obliges them, in the first instance, to seek all possible alternatives to closure. "All alternatives must be examined and discussed. That's just the law," Peeters said. The procedure could take months. GM has made it clear it is not interested in keeping Antwerp open as a parts centre. And CEO Nick Reilly expressed his wish, Renault law or no, to close the

gates for the last time by the end of June this year.

Quite what the alternatives for Antwerp might be is anyone's guess. Particularly in the current economic climate, ideas for soaking up more than 2,000 newly unemployed are not likely to be abundant. "When Renault closed [in 1997] it was still relatively easy to find a job," explained Peter Leyman, managing director of Voka, who used to be the chief executive of Volvo Ghent. "Today, that'll be a lot harder. Nonetheless, we're sitting here with an enormous pool of talent that absolutely mustn't be lost."

The blow to employment at Antwerp is, however, a drop in the ocean compared to what's going on across the country. "We estimate that this year 60,000 jobs will be lost," Leyman said. According to one economist, Geert Noels, the chemical industry could be the next to be hard hit. Writing in *Het Nieuwsblad*, Noels blames the loss of Opel Antwerp not to competition from the Far East, but to competition from Germany. Belgium's high employment costs – only Norway is higher, according to 2007 figures – make the country unattractive for industry. Germany started working on its competitiveness and industrial policy in 2000 until it overtook Belgium in terms of attraction to industry – with the results that were seen last week. ♦

A HISTORY IN BADGES



OPEL ANTWERP IN FIGURES



2,606
people employed

88,873
Astras built in 2009, 96% for export

36 hectares
surface area of the factory. Opel intends to sell the land, but the Port of Antwerp has the right to first refusal

€2.7 billion
state aid sought by GM to carry out its restructuring plans

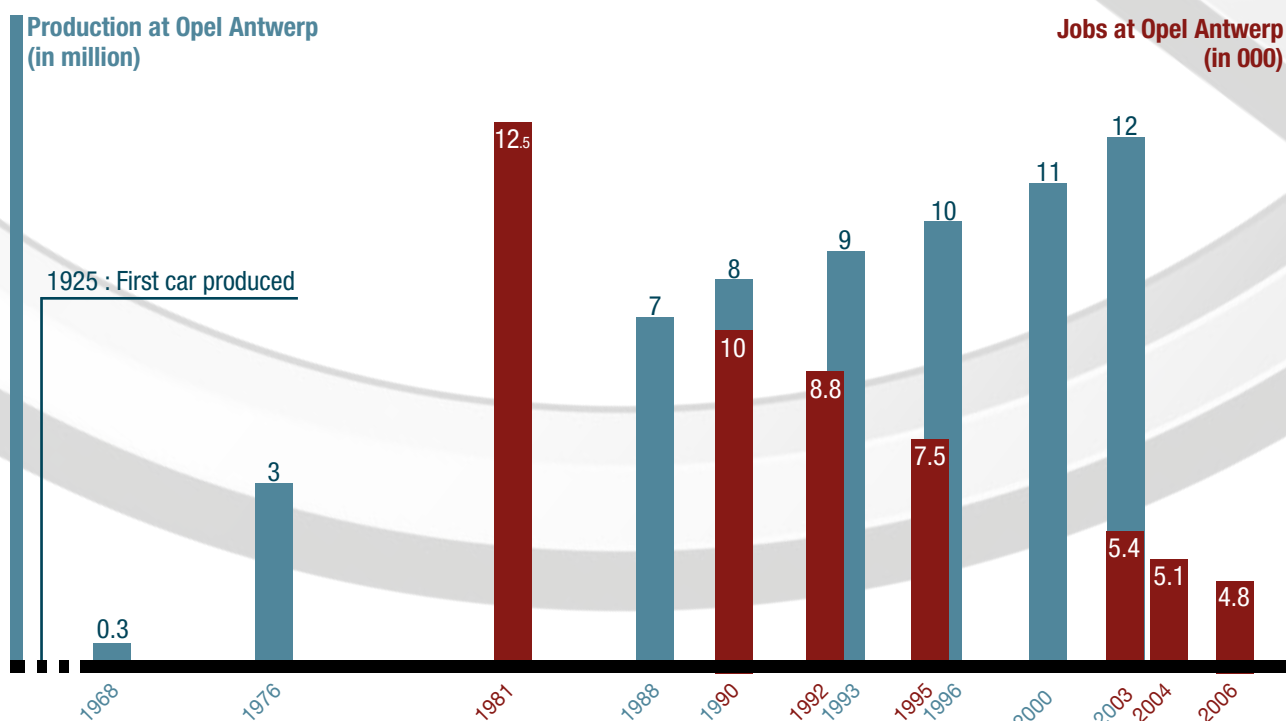
€300 million
aid promised by the Flemish region, as well as a €200 million sale and lease-back plan for the ground on which the plant stands

8,300
jobs to go across Europe, from a total workforce of 48,000

1.5 million
fewer cars to be sold in Western Europe this year, down to 12.1 million

Opel Antwerp from start to finish

- 1863** Adam Opel starts the company of the same name in Rüsselsheim, Germany, making household goods, including sewing machines and bicycles
- 1899** Opel makes its first cars
- 1924** The American auto manufacturer General Motors (GM), founded in 1908, sets up in Antwerp, producing 2,040 cars in its first year
- 1929** GM acquires 80% of Opel, increasing to 100% in 1931. The plant moves to the harbour area, where it suffers severe damage from bombing during the Second World War
- 1950** Construction begins on a new plant on the Noorderlaan (where it still stands today)
- 1953** the first cars roll off the assembly line, including Opels and Vauxhalls
- 1971** Production at the two Opel plants in Antwerp hits 500,000 for the first time
- 1974** The oil crisis depresses demand for cars, and Opel Antwerp cuts more than one-quarter of its production days
- 1981** Employment peaks at 12,600
- 1988** Production is consolidated into one plant, thanks to productivity increases
- 1991** Opel launches the new Astra and Vectra models, to be produced in Antwerp
- 1996** 10,000,000th Opel car comes off the line
- 1998** The Vectra moves out of Antwerp, which instead takes over all Astra three- and five-door models, as well as the estate version
- 2004** Under restructuring launched in 2001, employment at Opel Antwerp has dropped to 5,000
- 2007** The successor to the Astra will not be built in Antwerp, the company decides. Half of all jobs, 2,300 in all, are lost
- 2008** GM asks for a bail-out from the US government and gets it
- 2009** Ten thousand jobs are lost in the US, and GM seeks Chapter 11 protection. In July, three bidders express an interest in taking over GM's Opel Europe activities. In September, GM favours the Magna offer, but in November the company changes its mind
- 2010** GM announces the closure of the Antwerp plant after 86 years of operations in the city



Electric Dream

The Flemish government and consumers have high hopes for cars that run without petrol

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

When it comes to cars, the Flemish Region has two pressing needs: it must cut the emissions of greenhouse gases they emit, and it must invigorate the ailing industry if it is to preserve jobs for the thousands of people who depend on this sector for their income.

The electric car, then, would seem to be the answer. It is arguably cleaner and greener and, with much of Europe exploring their potential, persuading the auto industry to build them here could turn plants that face closure – as we've seen this week at Opel in Antwerp – into goldmines.

Flemish innovation minister Ingrid Lieten announced earlier this month that she would invest €400,000 in the promotion of electric vehicles. This would involve a series of pilot projects, including the development of an infrastructure of charging points for these battery-run cars.

Her decision came hot on the heels of an announcement from the European Union's Spanish Presidency that it would push for a Europe-wide policy to promote electric cars and hoped for an action plan to be put in place by the end of its six-month tenure in June.

Amid all this enthusiasm, however, there are many question marks from both an environmental and economic point of view.

Emissions conundrum

First of all, it is not necessarily the case that emissions will turn out to be lower. Cars powered by renewable energy such as wind and solar are certainly more environmentally friendly, but one charged with electricity from a coal-fired power station might not be so squeaky clean.

"It's a good opportunity to promote them, but we would like to combine this with the need for green energy in Flanders," says Wouter Florizoone, a transport campaigner for environmental organisation Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen. "More than 90% of our energy comes from nuclear or coal."

Belgium is shifting to renewable sources of energy, but this is still a small portion of the total output – and is already being used up. The extra demand from electric cars is likely to be met from "dirty" energy.

The construction of the autos must also be considered as these are intensive industrial processes, themselves responsible for huge emissions of greenhouse gases. According to Greenpeace, the whole life cycle from well to wheel must be taken into account.

Aside from direct emissions, European legislation to limit tailpipe emissions from conventional cars gives huge advantages to electric car makers who may earn so-called super credits, entitling them essentially to pollute more with their existing, conventional fleet.

EU law requires that all new cars must start to meet an emissions limit of 130 grams per kilometre in 2012. This is much softer than the originally proposed 120-gram limit, and gaping loopholes, such as the credits, mean car makers have to do practically nothing to improve petrol- and diesel-fuelled cars. "This is the real reason why you see such a lot of enthusiasm on the part of car makers for electric cars," a European policy maker wryly comments.

Environmentalists also fear that pushing electric cars is a diversion from other measures to lower transport emissions for a government that has a hard time selling alternative forms of transport to a nation of car drivers. "This allows something tangible for politicians, but we see it as a political threat," said Nuša Urbančič, policy officer with Transport & Environment. "Politicians who focus on this might not be putting the pressure on conventional technologies." There are other environmental benefits of electric cars – lower noise pollution and lower emissions of other pollutants, such as sulphurous gases – but, all in all, experts are



Electric cars were all the talk this month in Brussels at the European Motor Show

divided on the environmental benefits.

The European Commission is about to embark on a study to determine once and for all whether they will do the trick. However, everyone (including industry) agrees that they are indeed just part of a bigger picture.

"They are not the silver bullet on cutting greenhouse gas emissions," said one industry source. "We should also look at fuel efficiency, bio fuels and natural gas, as well as using techniques such as eco-driving."

Supply and demand

Second of all, it's not clear that electric cars will provide the economic benefits the government hopes for. Car makers are already shifting production of conventional cars to cheaper parts of Europe.

"This push for the electric car is a desperate move," says Joeri Thijs, a campaigner with Greenpeace Belgium. "The government hopes these cars will be built here...but it's more likely they will be built in Eastern Europe or Russia."

Wherever they might be built, electric cars are clearly on their way, given the ample demonstrations by manufacturers at the European Motor Show in Brussels earlier this month. But with their hefty price tags, the next question is whether people will buy them.

The technology is developing fast, but electric cars currently need to be charged more often than a convention car needs fuel. It would take a pretty committed individual to run the risk of being marooned between the few charging points.

One local transport expert said that consumers buy cars with all their likely journeys in mind, including the once-a-year holiday to the south of Europe. The best car makers and the government can hope for is that people buy them as a second car for trips in the city.

Even industry, which suffered deeply from the global financial crisis, has doubts that the electric car will provide the much-needed boost in demand. "This is not something for tomorrow," said our industry source. ♦

→ www.emis.vito.be

The green commute

Getting suburbanites out of their cars is the big challenge

The Flemish government is investigating ways to get more people out of their cars and on to buses, trams, trains and bicycles in a bid to cut mushrooming emissions of greenhouse gases. By 2050, emissions from transport are projected to wipe out the cuts made by some of Europe's most polluting industries, threatening the region's legally binding environmental targets.

The promotion of green transport in the region's cities has seen results thanks to well-developed plans. Brussels has introduced a bicycle rental scheme and announced plans to extend metro lines, while Ghent has introduced pedestrian-only zones to limit inner-city traffic.

The real challenge lies in persuading commuters from the suburbs to quit their gas-guzzling vehicles and find alternative means to get in and out of the cities. Intra-city transport in Flanders can be time consuming and often overloaded, making it an all-too-easy choice for people to hop in their cars, despite traffic bottlenecks.

The government needs to accelerate initiatives if it wants to achieve a large-scale shift. "This has to go a lot faster," maintains Joeri Thijs from Greenpeace Belgium. "There are plans to better connect certain regions, but it's really slow, mainly because of budgets."

There are programmes to boost alternative forms of transport, such as Express Net, which will add more rails for trams and trains to the Brussels network. Stations have been reopened, and soon all residents should have access to buses.

It's hoped that this comprehensive approach will improve the situation for commuters. "We need to integrate different kinds of transport," says Wouter Florizoone from environmental organisation Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen. "A lot of people just take their car to the train station. A lot of stations also have limited capacity for bicycles."

Thijs says that there should also be better infrastructure for budding cyclists to travel into Brussels. "Many people are coming from only 10 or 15 kilometres away, but you'd have to be crazy to go by bike."

While there is much to be done in the region, there is also little understanding from the population about the alternatives that already exist. "It's an issue of communication," says Florizoone.

Environmentalists believe there's an appetite from frustrated car commuters. Thijs concludes: "If the government would really push the plans, it would go much faster."

→ www.greenpeace.org/belgium

InBev unions drink to victory

Management cancels plan to cut more than 260 jobs

ALAN HOPE

The industrial action at AB InBev breweries in Leuven, Jupille and Hoegaarden is over. Last week, management withdrew plans to cut 263 jobs, as 16 days of union blockades saw supplies of InBev brands — mainly Jupiler, Stella Artois and Leffe — reach the brink of running out.

The plan actually involved cutting a total of 299 jobs, not all of which could be covered by early retirement or other unforced redundancies. But about 40 jobs would have been created in a new customer service division. Just two days before the end of the dispute, the differences seemed unbridgeable. A second attempt to bring management and unions together flopped on Wednesday, 20 January, with local negotiators unable to make a move without being overruled by senior management in Brazil. As late as last Thursday 21 January, InBev announced it was stopping payment to workers on the grounds that they had voluntarily made themselves unemployed through strike action.

Following the announcement that job cut plans had been scrapped, the first trucks left the depot, laden with beer supplies, before union supporters had even broken down their picket and extinguished their fires. In some parts of the country, InBev supplies had dwindled to nothing, especially in cafes; some shops and supermarkets still had cans and bottles in reserve, while others were left with empty shelves; what little reserves the chains maintained were soon swallowed up by panicked customers.

Trucks would also be riding out over the weekend, said InBev spokesperson Karen Couck. "We'd like to service as many clients as possible, but not everyone can count

on full deliveries," she said. "It will take at least until the end of next week for things to get back to normal."

The restructuring at InBev is the result of changing drinking habits, as Belgians no longer go to the café for their beer as much as they used to. More people are entertaining at home, which translates into a fall in sales.

InBev's loss was rival brewer Haacht's gain — the brewer of Primus pils saw sales to trade clients grow by 30%, while sales

to the public increased by 100%. Some of those sales will not last, since many cafes are tied to InBev by contract. Primus took advantage of the blockades not only to launch a nationwide advertising campaign but also to deliver free beer to picketers. That was an audacious move, admitted Primus managing director Frédéric Van der Kelen. "We did it because AB InBev are really bankers. If there had been a picket at Moortgat, we never would have done it," he said. "Besides, it's not unimportant for us to remind people from time to time that there are still real Belgian brewing families."



Stacked up against the competition: other brands rushed in to fill the gap caused by the InBev dispute

- One unexpected effect of the resolution of the InBev dispute was the cancellation of a free outdoor showing of Michael Moore's new film, *Capitalism, A Love Story*, planned to take place outside the Leuven plant. "It makes little sense to provoke a management with whom you've just reached an agreement," said a union representative. ♦

Flanders reshapes Dutch-language book scene

A Flemish media group and two publishers, one Dutch and one Flemish, last week signed a deal that promises to change the face of bookselling in the Netherlands and Flanders. De Persgroep, publishers of *De Morgen*, bought up 51% of the Amsterdam-based PCM Uitgevers last year, with its portfolio of newspapers, magazines and book publishing. They will hold onto the newspapers and magazines (*Trouw*, *De Volkskrant* and *Het Parool*), but the publishing side of the business has now changed hands.

Under the deal, WPG Uitgevers (a Dutch concern led by Fleming Koen Clement) will take over Bruna and Standaard Uitgeverij. Bruna publishes popular fiction, celebrity biographies and self-help books and has a large share of the Dutch book market, while Standaard is a fixture at the top of the Flemish bestsellers lists, with names such as Marc De Bel, Tom Lanoye and Herman Brusselmans, as well as classic strips from Willy Vandersteen

to Urbanus.

The long-established Uitgeverij Lannoo, meanwhile, with offices in Tiel, Leuven and Brussels, will take over Meulenhoff and Unieboek/Het Spectrum from the PCM stable. Lannoo is specialised in non-fiction and photo books, with authors like Carl De Keyser and Stephan Vanfleteren. Unieboek is also a non-fiction publisher with titles on lifestyle, food and health. Het Spectrum publishes the highly successful Prisma range of dictionaries. Meulenhoff, finally, publishes novels, poetry, essays and non-fiction and already has close ties with the Antwerp-based publishing house Manteau, publishers of Pieter Aspe and Mark Tijsmans.

"All of the imprints concerned will carry on operating independently," promised Lannoo managing director Matthias Lannoo. "We are not planning to make cuts, to hive off any activities or to seek any mergers." ♦



Standaard Uitgeverij author Urbanus signs books at the recent Boekenbeurs in Antwerp

Competition authorities probe Electrabel over gas prices

The federal competition authorities have opened an investigation into alleged manipulation of gas prices by Electrabel, federal economy minister Vincent Van Quickenborne announced at the weekend. The allegations arise out of a report by the energy market regulator, the Commission for Electricity and Gas Regulation (CREG). "The prices are still much too high," said CREG chairman François Possemiers. "The consumer is still not getting the prices he is entitled to."

The energy market in Belgium was liberalised in two parts: first the market for business and industry, from the year 2000, then the domestic market, in 2003 in Flanders and four years later in Wallonia and Brussels. However, Electrabel, now 100% owned by

the French holding company Suez, is still by far the major provider of electricity in the country and the second-largest supplier of gas.

"We thought there would be more competitive pressure on prices," said Possemiers. "That hasn't happened." Prices instead continue to rise: following a recent reduction in tariffs for transport and distribution of gas, prices went straight back up again less than two months later. And, despite reductions in oil and gas prices internationally, the consumer saw little benefit. "We noticed that when world prices came down, the companies simply increased their profit margins," he said.

Last year, the CREG accused Electrabel of price manipulation, which the company denied. Now further

research has shown that their conclusions were correct. The main problem, CREG says, lies in the fixing of the market index, which is used to calculate prices for long-term contracts with businesses. The new study is now on the desk of energy minister Paul Magnette. Electrabel is not alone; according to one report, SPE-Luminus and Distrigas are also named. "In a few weeks we will know if the Competition Council considers the complaint serious enough to open a full investigation," said Van Quickenborne. "We take it extremely seriously. The companies should know that manipulation of market prices will not be accepted. And they needn't think they'll get off with a fine." ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • JP Morgan

JP Morgan Europe, the UK-based affiliate of the leading US financial institution, is to open a custody operation in Brussels.

Banking • KBL

The sale of KBL, the Luxembourg-based private banking institution owned by Flanders' largest bank KBC, is attracting widespread interest from some of the biggest players in the business. No less than 10 major banks are preparing bids, including Barclays, HSBC, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank and Belgium's Bank Delen.

Chemicals • Lanxess

German chemical products company Lanxess is investing €35 million to update its caprolactam production unit at Lillo, near Antwerp. The investment was planned in 2008 but shelved because of the economic crisis.

Cinema • UGC

UGC, the French cinema group, will invest some €10 million to renovate its multiplex cinemas in Brussels and Antwerp.

Energy • GDF Suez

French energy group GDF Suez has decided to sell its stakes in the local gas and electricity transport affiliates Fluxys and Elia. Potential buyers are Publigaz and Publi-T, two publicly owned holding companies that regroup the financial interests of the country's local authorities.

Leisure • Fun

Fun, the family leisure products retailer, will open a store in Wilsele, near Antwerp, later this year. The company already operates 25 stores in Flanders.

Real estate • K in Kortrijk

K in Kortrijk, a €200 million shopping and housing complex in the city's central area, will open on 11 March.

Steel • Bekaert

Zwevegem-based steel wire company Bekaert has inaugurated its €100 million Russian production unit in Lipetsk, south of Moscow. The new plant, opened by Russian president Dmitri Medvedev, will supply wire for the local tyre industry.

Vinyl • IVC

IVC, the Avelgem-based vinyl floor manufacturer, is investing €50 million to build the world's first green vinyl tiles production unit using recyclable materials.

Workforce • Productivity

Belgium's workforce is the third most competitive in the world, according to the recent report from The Conference Board. The leading country is Luxembourg, followed by Norway, but Belgium has overtaken the United States for the first time and is now ahead of its long-standing rival, the Netherlands.

Cultural kick-start

deFilharmonie stages theatre concerts for children and young people

ANNA JENKINSON

“It’s a bit like making a movie based on a book. It’s impossible to get everything from the book into the film. And it’s impossible to get everything from the music into the performance.”

In other words, making the right choices is key. Geert Riem is the programme manager for deFilharmonie, the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, and is explaining how they handle what sounds like quite a daunting task – arranging classical concerts for children.

The starting point for *Baron von Münchhausen*, the Philharmonic’s brand-new creation for children, is Joseph Haydn’s symphony no 83, *La Poule*. With that selection made, Riem and his artistic planning department, together with the conductor and author, then had to decide which excerpts to use and how to integrate a story.

To complement the 18th-century music, the team looked to the Baron von Münchhausen, whose extraordinary tales about his life as a soldier, hunter and sportsman formed the basis for Rudolf Erich Raspe’s *Baron Munchausen’s Narrative of His Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia* of 1785. The Philharmonic has taken seven or eight of these tall stories, which have been passed down from generation to generation of children, and adapted them to mesh with the mood and emotions of Haydn’s music.

“It’s so much more than a ‘normal’ concert,” explains Riem, as music from an orchestral rehearsal drifts up to his second-floor office, which is decorated with pictures and paper models that children have sent him as thank-you presents. “We start from the music, but the challenge is to find a good story, good actors and a good balance between music and text.”

Often the text will have a second layer aimed at adults, similar to the technique used in animation films like *Shrek*. “It’s fun for the authors to add a second nuanced level,” notes Riem, adding that sometimes the actor simply throws in a joke for the adults.

A KIDconcert is aimed at six- to 12-year olds and lasts about an hour, with 40 minutes dedicated to music and 20 minutes to text. Riem, who has four adult children of his own, acknowledges that concentration spans are not as long as they used to be when the Philharmonic started the tradition of kids’ concerts in the 1970s.

“It’s much more difficult today,” he says. “We must capture their attention with something from their world.”

The orchestra’s efforts to reach out to this age group can also be seen online; the KIDsite page has a violin case landing noisily on the floor and opening up to show slips of paper and photos. Click on one, and the Philharmonic’s musicians talk to the young internet surfers about their instruments and allow them to discover all the sounds that make up an orchestra. Another link takes you to a diary of upcoming children’s concerts and a third to the CD books that accompany KIDconcerts. The site is noisy, colourful and fun.



© Steven Goovaerts

The Philharmonic has plenty of other initiatives for toddlers through to teenagers. “Sex and the Orchestra” is one such, aimed at 12- to 18-year olds. Held in a rehearsal hall at the Philharmonic’s Antwerp base, young people come and hear the conductor talk about how passion and love can be expressed through music. “It’s interactive and much more focussed on the music,” Riem explains. “Every performance is different. We start from the same musical material, but, depending on the reactions, it can go in very different directions.”

Some of the more conservative schools in fact found the title a bit too racy and asked the orchestra to remove the word “sex”. “We were a bit surprised because everyone knows *Sex and the City*”, Riem says with a chuckle, adding that they did change the title for those schools that asked.

The Philharmonic certainly tries to spice up the image of classical music and convince young people that it’s exciting and vibrant. In another project called Masterworks, video projections, studio lights and digital television broadcasts take centre stage along with the orchestra. Aimed at those aged 17 and above, the Philharmonic travels to the studios of the Eurocam Media Center in Lint and stages a true spectacle to bring to life the story behind a piece of music.

A specially-recorded documentary is shown on a big screen and live music played, while the whole perform-

ance is broadcast on the digital television channel EXQI. This season’s Masterwork is *Scheherazade* by the Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, to be performed in March under the baton of leading British conductor Martyn Brabbins.

The orchestra, subsidised by the Flemish government, has a general budget of about €2 million for artistic planning, with children and social projects taking up about 15 to 20% of that. The orchestra isn’t obliged to do so many projects for young people; it’s a matter of wanting to do so and, of course, investing in the future.

“It’s a bit of a cliché, but they are the audience of the future,” Riem points out.

“Research has shown that first impressions are quite lasting, so if you want to get them back to the concert hall, you have to make a good first impression.”

The ideas keep bubbling away, and the Philharmonic is already planning a Children’s Festival Day when the orchestra settles into its new residence in Antwerp’s Queen Elisabeth concert hall as of autumn 2012. The new venue will provide many small rooms, which will allow all sorts of workshops to take place during a day of music. The plan is to close the festival with a concert in the 2,000-capacity hall. “It will be an opportunity to explore the orchestra and the new venue,” says Riem. ♦

Conducting for kids



Geert Riem: “We must capture their attention with something from their world”

British conductor Martyn Brabbins is the Philharmonic’s principal guest conductor and has a wealth of experience conducting concerts aimed at a younger audience. The orchestra’s two permanent conductors – Philippe Herreweghe, who concentrates on music up to the middle of the 19th century, and Jaap van Zweden, whose main focus is from the mid-19th century onwards, have also been involved in youth concerts. “From time to time, the big-name conductors like to do these things, but not every year,” says Geert Riem. Such performances are therefore an opportunity to invite young conductors. But as the Philharmonic’s programming and planning manager discovered, such experiments can sometimes prove risky. “I made a mistake once by giving a chance to a very young conductor, who just didn’t have enough experience,” Riem recalls. “You need to know the repertoire and where the tricky passages are, so you finish rehearsing the orchestra quickly and can move on to the difficult part of adding in all the different elements.” This young conductor needed too much time to work with the orchestra, and the whole experience was a struggle. “Never again!” exclaims Riem, who now has a pool of conductors who know how to put on a successful children’s concert.



© Sofie Silbermann

Baron von Münchhausen

31 January

Antwerp (11.00) and Ghent (16.00)

→ www.defilharmonie.be



Outside the lines

New museum in the Marollen displays the work of outsider artists

MARIE DUMONT

Cécile Franceus is an unwitting artist – an artist who hasn't a clue what an artist is, or does. She is mentally handicapped and spends her days engrossed in the same repetitive task – drawing long parallel and intersecting lines with a biro on a sheet of paper. When the paper tears open, she glues another one underneath and continues drawing.

Can the resulting patterns be regarded as works of art? Can one even speak of art when the person who created it doesn't? Don't expect to find any neat answers to these questions at Art&Marges, a new Brussels museum where one of Franceus' drawings is currently displayed. Its curator, Carine Fol, doesn't believe in answers. She much prefers questions, especially those that blur traditional frontiers and hierarchies and open up new, shifting vistas in our understanding of art and its limits.

Art&Marges opened in early December in the heart of the working-class Marollen district, only a short walk but feeling light years away from the hallowed museums on Kunstberg and the glitzy art galleries around the Zavel. Housed on two renovated floors next to Sint-Pieter's hospital, it is the new, improved version of a research centre that was created on the same premises more than 25 years ago, and which staged most of its exhibitions *extra muros* for lack of space. No need for that now: thanks to additional rooms donated by the local social welfare office (OCMW) in exchange for art works, the centre is now a proper museum housing a permanent collection and temporary exhibitions.

Art&Marges is dedicated to so-called outsider art: the raw and intense creations of psychiatric patients, handicapped people and generally isolated, self-taught artists – what the French artist Jean Dubuffet in the 1940s called Art Brut. Dubuffet was a rebel, an iconoclast who abhorred the codes and artifices of the official art scene and went to look for genuine artistic expression where no one else did – in the works of children and of people locked up in prisons and mental

institutions. "Art," he wrote, "doesn't sleep in the beds that are made for it. It escapes as soon as its name is pronounced. ... Its finest moments are when it forgets what it is called."

An art historian currently writing a PhD thesis on outsider art at the Free University of Brussels, Fol took up the reins of Art&Marges in 2002. She belongs to a new generation of curators who, while clearly indebted to Dubuffet, refuse to embrace his vision of Art Brut as a closed, parallel world and of its artists as working in a cultural void. Rather, she feels, society is opening up, frontiers are dissolving and cross-fertilisations have become the norm.

"Sick people used to live as recluses from the age of 30 until they died," she says. "But that's not true anymore. Outsider artists are influenced by insiders – and vice versa."

She also claims a right for art works to be seen independently of their authors' circumstances, a consideration that has led her to change the museum's name from Art en Marge ("art from the margin") to Art&Marges ("art and margins"). "I was feeling more and more uncomfortable about stigmatising a whole chunk of artistic creation," she explains. "The new name places art and margins side by side; they're connected but not assimilated."

Surprising Dialogues, the opening exhibition, brilliantly illustrates Fol's credo by pairing outsider with insider art works: a 15th-century wooden Virgin of Mercy is placed next to a terracotta figurine by Congolese artist Seyni-Awa. Sketches of cars and spaceships by a psychiatric patient find echoes in those of the consecrated, if resolutely eccentric Panamarenko.

There's also a copy of a famous Manet painting by a handicapped man called Alexis Lippstreu, and a copy of Lippstreu's copy by mainstream artist Jacques Charlier. Exhibits are shown on an equal footing, with biographical information kept to a minimum. The effect is deliberately destabilising: if you're not familiar with either of the artists' names, you're often at a loss to say which is which.

The museum's first floor houses its perma-

nent collection. Fol is in the process of extending it, visiting art workshops in hospitals and mental institutions. "I see a lot and select very little," she says. "I only go for authors with a distinctive, unmistakable voice and with already a substantial body of work behind them."

What comes across is an extraordinary vitality and emotional charge. Some works express intense suffering or frustration, such as the flat, encircled silhouettes by Umberto Bergamaschi that seem forever shut out from the world; or Bruno Dupuis' drawing of a naked female figure standing next to a table, too short to reach the fruit bowl sitting there – she is, literally, not up to the task.

Other works are explosions of joy, fantasy and humour, like the colourful whorls and grotesques painted by Algerian artist Jacqueline Vizcaino, or the fantastical guns cobbled together by André Robillard from old fabric, light bulbs and scraps of wood. "For many of these artists, there is tremendous joy associated with the act of creating," says Fol. "It also gives them social recognition."

Clearly, art offers people a chance to become truly themselves by temporarily setting their ailing existences aside. As Dubuffet put it, "Artists are only happy when, looking at a finished work, they feel it wasn't made by them." ♦

→ www.artetmarges.be

Marriage made in heaven • The Vlaams Radio Koor performs Jef Neve's new work •

ALAN HOPE

One of the most harrowing passages in the Old Testament comes in 2 Samuel 18:33, when King David is informed of the death of his rebellious son Absalom and gives way to his grief. The passage is the subject for American composer Eric Whitacre's work *When David Heard*, and, if you start your programme with this rich and challenging piece, you'd better have the forces to follow it up.

The Vlaams Radio Koor (VRK), or Flemish Radio Choir, have all that and more, in a series of concerts conducted by Timo Nuoranne that kicked off in Brussels last week and continues throughout Flanders until March.

The *a cappella* work by Whitacre is followed by the evening's title piece: Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, written in Yiddish

and presented here in a version adapted for choir, organ, harp, boy soprano and percussion. The unusual backing sets off the choir perfectly, although the organ was a touch too loud for this listener.

Bernstein returns later, but first comes a new work by Flemish jazz pianist Jef Neve, voted Musician of the Year at the recent Music Industry Awards. "I was commissioned to compose a work for choir, and I decided to go for something completely different – an *Agnus Dei*, which is a liturgical work from the Mass," he explains.

In fact he strayed into the classical sphere last year with his piano concerto performed with the Flemish Radio Orchestra, but this is a new departure into a vocal work. "I used the Latin

text, but I also wrote a text in English, which is a personal vision of the power of the Church and the use of symbols like the Lamb of God. I wrote it in English because it's more accessible, but you're not likely to hear this text sung in church."

After an intermezzo for solo piano, the choir comes back, and he accompanies them in extracts from *West Side Story* (which even the impressive talents of the VRK, only 24 strong, cannot convince me is a work that should be sung by choir). They conclude with the short *Ilo* by Finnish composer Jukka Linkola that's like a fireworks display – a fitting end to a performance marked by variety, power and emotion. ♦

→ www.vlaamsradiokoor.be



© Blom Tagamose

Cut loose the city

While away your stress with a winter day at Blankaart

MELISSA MAKI

Last week, we went just outside Belgium's capital city for a winter nature escape; for the third in our *winterwandeling* (winter walking) series, we're much farther away from the crowds. Blankaart is an extraordinary nature reserve in West Flanders that hosts a castle and is an internationally-known habitat for wintering birds.

The demands and hectic pace of modern life can sometimes be exhausting. Research has shown that people benefit from spending time in nature, both physically and psychologically – hence the reason for the big push in recent years to establish “green space” in cities worldwide.

But you never have to drive more than an hour to get to one of the region's natural areas, and Blankaart is Flanders at its most pristine. Located just south of Diksmuide, the nature reserve is a protected area of over 300 hectares.

Natuurpunt, Flanders' largest private environmental organisation, owns the Blankaart; adjacent to the reserve is a castle and a park that are owned by the Flemish Region. The castle hosts “De Otter”, an informative visitor centre staffed by Natuurpunt employees and volunteers.

De Otter also features a wealth of information about the area. Kids may especially enjoy the exhibits on the region's flora and fauna and a film that visually and sonically leads you through day and night in the reserve.

The Blankaart landscape is reedy swamps and grassy meadows and features a large, shallow pond. The reserve lies in the floodplain of the river IJzer, making it susceptible to flooding, especially in the winter. This makes it a paradise for wintering and migrating birds.

The Blankaart is part of a larger area of wetlands designated as a Ramsar site, which gives it status as an internationally-important area for water birds, particularly for the wintering Eurasian wigeon.

A winter trip to the Blankaart can be a little challenging, as parts of the path may be under water or ice, but you'll be rewarded with beautiful scenery and the sights and sounds of thousands of birds. Commonly found there in the winter are white-fronted geese and a variety of ducks, including northern shovellers and common teals. If you're lucky, you might also spot tundra swans, cormorants and herons.

The “Blankaartpad” is a 9.6-kilometre trail through the reserve that is clearly marked. You can either walk the whole trail or portions of it with your detailed map from the visitor centre.

Starting your walk at the back of the castle, you'll soon see the old *ijskelder* (ice cellar) on your left, which now serves as a home for hibernating bats. Soon after that, veer off the main path and to the left when you see a sign for an observation hut. Here you can sit in a blind and observe birds at close range.

Continue across the arched bridge, where there is a good view of the castle and a pretty spot for photos. You'll also see a statue of



an otter in the water – the mascot of the reserve. Otters used to inhabit the Blankaart, but in the 1980s they disappeared due to deteriorating water quality. The otter is now held up as a barometer for the health of the reserve. With careful management and restoration of the land and water, there is hope that someday they will return.

Soon after the bridge, go left off the main trail to visit another observation hut that has a wonderful view of the Blankaart pond. On the day I visited in early January, there were more birds to watch at this blind, though they were farther away. (Bring a pair of binoculars for optimal enjoyment of the reserve.) As I sat in the hut, flock after flock flew hurriedly by, and birdwatchers sat in rapt attention.

The path was flooded not far beyond the observation hut, but, the weather being what it has been, the path was frozen, and I could continue walking on the ice until I reached the Kleine Blankaart, or little pond. The trail is easy, but it's not paved, so waterproof boots are recommended and buggies are not. Staff at De Otter can inform you of trail conditions and recommend alternative routes if necessary.

Each first Sunday of the month, a Natuurpunt guide leads a tour of the Blankaart, which departs from the visitor centre at 14.30. ♦

De Dolle after the cold

After a cold winter walk, I recommend warming up by a wood-fired stove at the De Dolle brewery in the Esen suburb of Diksmuide. If it's still available, try the Stille Nacht, a high-density, complex Christmas brew. Fruit juice and water are available, too, as is a homemade pâté, crafted with another of their fine beers, the Oerbier. De Dolle is only open on weekends and offers guided tours in English on Sundays.

→ www.dedollebrouwers.be



GETTING THERE ►►

You can get to Blankaart by public transport if you don't mind a little extra walking. Take the train to Diksmuide, then bus 30 from the station (direction Roeselare) to the centre of Woumen. (Get off at “Woumen station”.) It's a 20-minute walk south on Iepersteenweg to the reserve. On weekdays, there is a bus every hour; on weekends every two hours.

©Photos by Melissa Maki



The statue of the lone otter reminds of the devastating effects of environmental degradation



De Blankaart castle is home to visitor centre De Otter

De Otter visitor centre

Iepersteenweg 56, Woumen (Diksmuide)

Weekdays: 9.00 to 16.30

Weekends: 13.30 to 17.30

→ www.otter.be



◀ Entrance to the cellar of the castle, now a refuge for bats

Ahead of the game

Three students invent a board game to keep immigrants in school

ALAN HOPE

Board games, with the possible exception of chess, don't tend to change the world. But three students at the Catholic University College of Leuven (KHL) hope that a new board game will at least transform the chances of the next generation of students from immigrant backgrounds to move on to higher education.

During their final year, students at KHL's economic higher education department (Echo) have to do an internship, explains Bie Strypens of the department. "But at the last minute, the internship partners of these three students called it off. We think their ethnic origin may have had something to do with it," she says.

Rachid Aredouani, Mohammed El Mahroui and Rached Ikan opted for a Small Business Project as an alternative. They set up a business to develop the Diversity Game, which allows secondary school students to confront and discuss the issues involved in discrimination in higher education – the better to prepare them to make the move themselves.

The game takes the form of a typical Game of the Goose board where a throw of the dice may land a player on an obstacle. By overcoming the obstacle, the player gains points.

The project received the support not only of the Echo staff but also the Flemish confederation of parents and parents associations (VCOV), which sponsored the development of the game and are publicising it to target groups.

According to VCOV, only 6% of students of immigrant origin in Flanders go on to higher education, compared with around 50% of the population as a whole. The figures for immigrants, according to a 2007 study in the magazine *Klasse*,

are the same as they were for Flemish students 50 years ago – for the New Flemings, it's as if the last half-century of democratisation of higher education never happened.

An even smaller percentage makes it through the first year: one in five (19%) compared to three in five of the general population. And nearly one in two never gets to the end of the course, compared to 22% for all students.

The reasons, according to Professor Marlies Lacante of the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), are various (*see table*): their secondary school background tends to be more technical or professional, rather than academic; they are more likely to have had to repeat a year; and they tend to study less and have a worse attendance record. They also tend to come from a more disadvantaged and lesser educated family background.

"For an 18-year-old Fleming who stays away from or fails in higher education, the causes are the same," says Professor Lacante. "It's just that these circumstances emerge more often for immigrants, especially from Islamic areas. And the worst thing is that they are visible from early on in primary school."

This in fact is the background of the Diversity Game's three developers, who all made it through the three-year Bachelor's course and are now continuing their education, one in post-Bachelor's studies and two in a Master's course.

"The game is based on the obstacles that disadvantaged students can face," explains Linde Brewaeys of the VCOV. "It helps to convince the students in a playful way that, whatever the obstacle might be, a solution exists."

The game's makers, as well as the VCOV,



From left: Game developers Rachid Aredouani, Rached Ikan and Mohammed El Mahroui, pictured with Leuven's symbol of scholastic knowledge

advise its users – schools, youth groups and community workers – to solicit the participation of what in Dutch is called an *ervaringsdeskundige*, or "experience expert": someone who's been through the situation.

"A lot of immigrant young people think they're going to be all alone to face the world after secondary education," Strypens said. "For example, they might think a combination of working and studying isn't feasible. There are a lot of sources of assistance, but they don't know about them. This game will show them the way." ♦

Students in higher education

	Immigrant student	Flemish student
From general studies (aso) at secondary level	47%	63%
From technical studies (tso)	38	36
From business studies (bso)	15	0.3
Repeated a year	53	21
Parents have secondary school diploma maximum	56	10
Pass first year	19	56
Drop out before graduation	45	22

Source: *Klasse voor Leraren* magazine, no 175
→ www.klasse.be

The developers of the Diversity Game will explain it to parents and teachers on 8 February at 19.30 at Don Bosco College, Zwijnaarde, and on 6 May at 10.00 at the VCOV offices in Leuven. Games can be obtained for the cost of postage and packing by sending an email titled "Diversity" to info@vcov.be

Flanders makes some smart choices for this year's Henry Van de Velde Awards

LISA BRADSHAW

What's the difference between art and design? If you answered "nothing", then you have the right frame of mind to fully enjoy the exhibition of the Henry Van de Velde Awards, which honour the best in Flemish design each year. Organised by Design Flanders, the awards were given during a ceremony on 19 January in the Flemish parliament in Brussels, where the exhibition will remain until 27 February.

Named after the designer and architect who helped to usher Art Nouveau into Belgium, the three awards are given to a company, a young designer and to a designer for an entire career. It's the latter that makes headlines, and this year that went to Martine Gyselbrecht, whose weaves and warps have been changing the landscape of textiles for more than 30 years (*pictured left*). Based in East Flanders, she is the kind of designer who marries art and design perfectly, with a technical skill enhanced by decades of fearless experimentation.

The young designer award, meanwhile, coveted as you can imagine for its ability to open doors, was won by Jorge Manilla Navarete, a jewellery maker whose work evokes myth and spirituality. Born in Mexico, Navarete came here to study several years ago, and his natural materials and earth colours indeed call up the essence of his homeland. He also seems to poke fun at the notion of "fine jewellery", almost daring you to wear his primitive designs of stone, wood, bone and fish skin. (*pictured right*)

The gorgeous seating of Drisag was overdue for a Van de Velde, but it finally got its due. You'll find the work of the Herentals-based furniture design and manufacturing company scattered across offices in Europe and even in fashionable kitchens where splashes of colours are appreciated.

→ www.vlaamsparlament.be

The art of design



© Lieve Heremans

The OVAM Ecodesign Award is now also part of the Van de Velde awards, and its Product on the Market went to Sas Adrienssens for his "Buzzispace" products, including the Buzziscreen and Buzzizone space separators. The Ecodesign award for Product in Development went to the Beci Bike Project by Fosfor, the bicycle leasing concept for the city of Brussels.

At the Van de Velde exhibition, you'll also find new products that have been given the "Henry van de Velde Labels", a designation of excellence. Of these, visitors can vote for their favourite for next year's Public Prize. This year's Public Prize winner is Fredrik Aerts for his Neo set of pans, which he designed for Berghoff International. ♦

See more on career award-winner Martine Gyselbrecht on page 16



© Bart Vermaerke



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putting people first



© David Berge



Aalst

De Werf

Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12,
www.ccdewerf.be
FEB 4 20.00 Te Gek!?

Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192,
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
JAN 29 20.15 Johan Verminnen 20.30
Ansatz der Maschine + Simple Songs

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345,
www.sportpaleis.be
JAN 29 20.00 Sick Of It All + The
Mahones + Dropkick Murphys

NOXX

Straatsburgdok – Noordkaai 3,
www.noxxantwerp.be
JAN 28 23.00 Blue Flame Thursday
JAN 30 23.00 Sky Club

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63,
www.petrolclub.be
JAN 30 22.00 Miss Kittin & Ivan
Smaghe

't Kwartier

Keistraat 11; 0475.28.66.10,
www.tkwartier.be
JAN 29 20.00 Hotel Imun + Ernst Löw &
de Bloedvogels

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00,
www.trixonline.be
JAN 28 19.30 Enter Shikari
JAN 29 19.30 Bill Wyman's Rhythm
Kings 20.00 The Big Pink
JAN 30 18.00 The Casualties + The Real
McKenzies + SS-Kaliert + The Agitators
+ The Filth
FEB 2 19.30 Adept + Her Bright Skies +
Admirals Arms + Grey Like Masquerade.
Talib Kweli, hip-hop

Ardooi

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,
www.deschaduw.net
JAN 29 20.30 De Foute Avond with
Twilight

Bornem

CC Ter Dilft

Sint-Amandsesteenweg 41; 03.890.69.30,
www.terdilft.be
JAN 29 20.30 Sioen

Bruges

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40,
www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be
JAN 30 20.00 Sioen

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
JAN 30 17.00 Brown Bird + de portables
+ Fanfarlo + Lou Barlow + Isbells +
The Low Anthem 20.00 Jan & Kim
Stripconcert (in Dutch)
FEB 1 20.00 Old Believers + Cataldo +
Laura Veirs. Billy Talent
FEB 4 12.30 Senne Guns (free)

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,
www.art-base.be
JAN 31 13.30 Les Øffs

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
JAN 29 20.30 Mieke Lambrijs + Osso
Exótico

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15, www.cirque-royal.org
JAN 30 20.30 One Night of Queen

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Lou Reed's Metal Machine Trio

22 April, 20.00

Ancienne Belgique Brussels

The annual Domino music festival, a celebration of all things quirky, left field and avant-garde, has hit the jackpot this year. Topping the bill of the 2010 edition, held at Brussels' Ancienne Belgique as always, is none other than Lou Reed. Yes, *that* Lou Reed, the man responsible for "Walk On The Wild Side". Except he won't be playing any songs. Instead, he will be performing his most controversial album, 1975's *Metal Machine Music*: a solid hour of feedback, white noise and drone, this time augmented by a free-jazz saxophonist and a self-styled "electronic alchemist". You have been warned.
PM Doutreligne



→ www.abconcerts.be

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
JAN 30 20.00 Thao with The Get Down
Stay Down. Reel Big Fish + Sonic Boom
Six

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34,
www.recyclart.be
JAN 28 20.30 Jean-Louis + Clement
Nourry + Jam session Brussels Open
JAN 30 20.30 We Are Electronix: D-Fuse
+ Scratch Massive + DJ Maud + Darko

Eeklo

CC De Herbakker

Pastoor De Nevestraat 10; 09.218.27.27,
www.ccdeherbakker.be
JAN 29 20.30 Filip Jordens, tribute to
Brel

Ghent

Capitole

Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00,
www.capitolegent.be
JAN 29 20.00 Natalia: Acoustelicious

Charlatan

Vlasmak 6; 09.224.24.57,
www.charlatan.be
JAN 28 21.30 Strawgods 22.30 The
Perfect Tool

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
JAN 30-31 20.15 Moreese.com by
Maurice Engelen + Tom Dice

Kinky Star

Vlasmak 9; 09.223.48.45,
www.kinkystar.com
JAN 30 21.00 Pröte
JAN 31 21.00 Patton

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13,

Re:Move

SHARON LIGHT

Dance has long been the most ephemeral of the arts. A painter creates a painting; a composer writes a score. But, until the advent of video, dance history was stored only in the dancers. Works were staged by the choreographer and transferred person-to-person over the years; some works survived, others were naturally lost.

Kaaithater takes on dance history in its own way with the Re:Move dance festival. Several international choreographers explore themes of dance history and repertoire in a dozen works in as many days. Each work poses a challenge: some challenges will be met, some will miss the target, but all should shed new light on a century of dance.

Several Re:Move works reach back to the beginning of the 20th century. I'm particularly curious to see Amsterdam-based dancer Nicole Beutler's interpretation of Mikhail Fokin's classical ballet masterpiece *Les Sylphides*. The plotless work is 100 years old and remains a test of a corps de ballet's precision of movement.

French dancer Xavier Le Roy, meanwhile, tackles the famous Stravinsky/Nijinsky collaboration, *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), whose premiere in Paris in 1913 led to an audi-

ence riot. Le Roy focuses on the music, basing his work on the movements of conductor Simon Rattle during rehearsal with the Berlin Philharmonic – an unusual approach to this difficult work.

Other Re:Move choreographers will hone in on an individual influential dancer or choreographer. The festival itself is dedicated to two dance greats who died last year – Merce Cunningham, leader of the American *avant-garde*, and the German modern dance choreographer Pina Bausch. The Re:Movies film series, integrated into the festival, features free films on these influential choreographers.

In fact, the illustrated book *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years* serves as an inspiration to the French choreographer Boris Charmatz's latest work, *Flip Book*. Charmatz links together the photos from Vaughn's book, reviving Cunningham, his work and his methods in one fell swoop.

Still other performances take on the practice and process of developing dance. Dance works are traditionally staged with an emphasis on recreating the steps of the original – even while emotions and stylistic turns may change. In *Anarchiv #2*, American choreographer DD Dorvilier dances the work of German

choreographic partners Katrin Deufert and Thomas Plischke, rendering these artists' pieces in her own style.

Ecuadorian Fabián Barba, meanwhile, searches for a new method of staging in *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*. Wigman was a groundbreaking modern dancer of 1930s Germany, and Barba attempts to stage some of her works using photos and texts by Wigman – the only surviving sources. Barba admits that the work will not be the original...but can it capture the same essence? ♦



2-13 February

Kaaithater, Kaaistudio's
and Beursschouwburg
Brussels

→ www.kaaithater.be

MORE DANCE THIS WEEK

Emanuel Gat Dance → deSingel, Antwerp

Charlotte Vanden Eynde → Vooruit, Ghent

SlovaKs Dance Collective → Kortrijkse Schouwburg



www.muziekodroom.be

JAN 29 19.30 Humo's Rock Rally pre-selection

JAN 31 17.00 Bonecrusher Fest 2010

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be

JAN 29 20.00 Dez Mona + Choir of Young Believers

Leuven

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be

JAN 28 20.30 Dez Mona + Blackie & the Oohoos

Mechelen

CC Stadsschouwburg

Keizerstraat 3; 015.29.40.00, www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be

JAN 29 20.15 We zijn hier nu toch

Cultuurcentrum

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00, www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
JAN 28 20.15 The Sedan Vault + Creature With the Atom Brain + Agents in Panama

Roeselare

CC De Spil

Spilleboutdreef 1; 051.26.57.00, www.despil.be

JAN 30 21.30 Fennesz, electronica

Sint-Niklaas

OJC Kompas

Driekoningenstraat 48; 03.776.72.70, www.ojckompas.be

JAN 30 18.00 Beatifull Dawn part IV with mplant + Deviant + XMH + Misery + Novus + DJ Xormic

Stadsschouwburg

R. Van Britsomstraat 21; 03.766.39.39, www.ccsint-niklaas.be

FEB 3 20.00 Ballroomquartet

Ternat

CC De Ploter

Kerkstraat 4; 02.582.44.33, www.ccdeploter.be

FEB 4 20.30 Filip Jordens & Les Chopins du p'tit Matin: Tribute to Brel

Turnhout

De Warande

Warandestraat 42; 014.41. 69.91, www.warande.be

JAN 30 20.15 Customs, Selah Sue + MVSC + Baloji



Alseberg

CC De Meent

Gemeenveldstraat 34; 02.359.16.00, www.demeent.be

JAN 28 20.15 De Nolf + Sheppard + Pallemmaerts

Antwerp

Buster

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53, www.busterpodium.be

JAN 28 21.00 Buster Jurassic Jam
JAN 29 22.00 The Basily Gipsy Band
JAN 30 22.00 Purple Faze
FEB 2 21.30 D.E.C.C.

De Hopper

Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33, www.cafehopper.be

JAN 31 16.00 Yvonne Walter & guests: the Coltrane ballads

FEB 1 21.00 Wout Gooris Trio

FEB 2 21.00 Augusto Pirodda Quartet

Bruges

De Werf

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29, www.dewerf.be

FEB 3 20.30 The Belgian SwingJazz Orchestra

Brussels

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

JAN 28-29 20.15 Brussels Jazz Orchestra live recording

JAN 29 12.30 The Brussels Vocal Project

JAN 30 20.15 Mélanie de Biasio

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78

JAN 27 20.30 The Flying Fish Jump

JAN 30 18.00 Fanny Bériaux Quartet

Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78, www.sazznjazz.be

JAN 27 20.30 Octet Red

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be

JAN 27 22.00 Caribe con K - Los Soneros del Barrio
JAN 28 21.00 The Singers

Night **JAN 29** 22.00 Holger Scheidt Trio

JAN 30 22.00 Astolfi & Repond Quartet

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45, www.themusicvillage.co

JAN 27 21.00 De Beren Gieren

JAN 29 21.00 Yvonne Walter & guests - The Coltrane Ballads

Diksmuide

CC Kruispunt

Maria Doolaeghestraat 2b; 05.151.91.56, www.cckruispunt.be

JAN 28 20.00 Gezelle gezongen

Lier

CC De Mol

Aarschotsesteenweg 3; 03.488.06.79, www.lierscultuurcentrum.be

JAN 31 14.00 Rico Zoroh Band

Lokeren

Lokerse Jazzklub

Gasstraat 27; 09.348.32.78, www.lokersejazzklub.be

JAN 29 21.00 Maggid + Boss Ross Quintet and Rudy Reunes + William Souffreau and The Moonlovers

JAN 30 21.00 Bob Mover Quintet

Roeselare

CC De Spil

Spilleboutdreef 1; 051.26.57.00, www.despil.be

JAN 31 15.00 Glenn Miller Orchestra, swing



Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be

JAN 29 20.30 Etta Scollo (Sicily)
JAN 30 20.00 Folklove Orchestra, with guest Sam Vloemans

JAN 31 15.00 Jimmy Frey & Golden Bis-Band
FEB 3 20.30 Raquel Tavares, fado

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40, www.rataplanvzw.be

JAN 30 20.30 Le Trio Perdu

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be

JAN 29 20.30 Emilio Maya, flamenco guitar

JAN 30 20.30 Zabít Nabízade

(Azerbaijan)

Brussels

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be

JAN 28 20.30 Romengo (Hungaria)

JAN 29 20.30 Yom the New King of Klezmer

JAN 30 20.30 Martin Lubenov (Bulgaria)

Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78, www.sazznjazz.be

JAN 28 20.30 Bruxelles' Aires Tango Orchestra

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublieke.be

JAN 30 20.00 Shantalla (Ireland/ Scotland)

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30, www.wolubilis.be

FEB 2 20.30 Raquel Tavares, fado

Dendermonde

Belgica

Kerkstraat 24; 052.220.26.40, www.ccbelgica.be

JAN 30 20.00 Raquel Tavares, fado

Ghent

De Centrale

Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28, www.decentrale.be

JAN 29 21.30 Original Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orchestra

JAN 30 20.30 Souad Massi (Algeria)

JAN 31 20.00 Trio Zabít Nabízade

(Azerbaijan)

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum

Kunstaan 5; 011.22.99.31, www.ccha.be

JAN 30 20.00 Buenos Aires Madrigal

Roeselare

CC De Spil

Spilleboutdreef 1; 051.26.57.00, www.despil.be

JAN 29 20.00 Buenos Aires Madrigal

Ypres

CC Ieper Stadsschouwburg

Vandenpeereboomplein 31; 057.239.480, www.acci.be

JAN 28 20.15 Barrage

JAN 30 20.15 Kleinkunsteland



Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28, www.amuz.be

JAN 28 21.00 Chichester Psalms: Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Timo Nuoranne, with Jef Neve, piano: Leonard Bernstein, Eric Whitacre, Jef Neve

JAN 30 21.00 Compagnie Bischoff in HMS Orianna, staged by Jan Van den Bossche: a masque in honour of Queen Elizabeth I by Thomas Morley

JAN 31 15.00 Veronika Skuplik, violin: violin sonatas from 17th-century Austria

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

JAN 27 20.00 Hui Liu Ensemble (Het Collectief and Dragon Ensemble), conducted by Renchang Fu: world premières of pieces by composers Huang Ruo, Kee-Yong Chong and Annelies Van Parys, followed by traditional Chinese music

JAN 28 20.00 Christian Poltéra, cello: Bach, Britten, Dutilleux

FEB 3 20.00 Steven Osborne & Paul Lewis, piano: four-hand piano pieces by Schubert

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be

JAN 27 20.00 L'Armonia Sonora conducted by Mienieke van der Velden: German baroque cantatas

JAN 28 20.00 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Hervé Niquet: Debussy cantatas

JAN 29 20.00 Claron McFadden, soprano; Roberta Alexander, mezzo; Marcel Reijans, tenor; Reinild Mees, piano; Guido Segers, trumpet: songs by Leonard Bernstein

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,

DON'T MISS



Raquel Tavares

27 January to 3 February Across Flanders

Unless you live in a cave, you know that fado is all the rage. This Portuguese powerhouse will show you why. Long held as the music of Portugal's people, with its origins in sailing ships, influenced by the songs of Brazilian slaves, fado channels a spirit of longing and of loss. Backed by Spanish and Portuguese guitar, the emotion in the lyrics of Raquel Tavares' traditionally melancholic fado belie her 20-some years. ➡ www.uitinvlaanderen.be

www.bozar.be

JAN 27 & 28 20.00 Mariinsky Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev: Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov (Wednesday), Mussorgsky, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky (Thursday)

JAN 28 12.30 Baudouin Giaux, flute; Annie Lavoisier, harp; Sophie Causanschi, violin; Luc Vandermaelen, narrator: music by Berlioz and readings from his memoirs

FEB 1 20.00 La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Hespèrion XXI, Al-Darweesh, Les Trompettes de Jéricho conducted by Jordi Savall: Jerusalem, the city of two peaces

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be

JAN 30 20.00 Joyce DiDonato, mezzo; David Zobel, piano: Italian songs from the 16th to the 20th centuries

Royal Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37, www.kcb.be

FEB 2 20.00 Accademia Bizantina conducted by Ottavio Dantone: concerti grossi by Arcangelo Corelli

FEB 3 20.00 Bläserensemble with Sabine Meyer, clarinet: Beethoven, Toshio Hosokawa, Mozart

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluykensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78, www.debijloke.be

JAN 27 20.00 Les Jeunes Solistes

conducted by Rachid Safir: choral works by Monteverdi, Scelsi, Carissimi

JAN 29 20.00 Hui Liu Ensemble, Het Collectief, Dragon Ensemble conducted by Renchang Fu: world premières of pieces by composers Huang Ruo, Kee-Yong Chong and Annelies Van Parys, followed by traditional Chinese music
JAN 30 20.00 François Fernandez, violin; Rainer Zipperling, cello; Boyan Vodenitcharov, piano: Haydn, Mozart

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be

JAN 28 20.15 Gavriel Lipkind, cello; Roman Zaslavski, piano: Beethoven, Brahms, more

FEB 3 20.15 Edding String Quartet: Mozart



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Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
Until FEB 4 15.00/20.00 Elektra by Richard Strauss, directed by Guy Joosten, with Evelyn Herltzius/Nadine Secunde, sopranos (Elektra), and De Munt Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Lothar Koenigs

Ghent

Capitole

Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00, www.capitolegent.be
JAN 31 14.30 Der Zigeunerbaron by Johann Strauss II, with music and dance by the Kiev National Theatre of Operetta



Antwerp

CC Berchem

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20, www.ccberchem.be
JAN 29 20.30 Compagnie Barbarie in Too Far East is West

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
FEB 4-6 20.00 Emanuel Gat Dance in Silent Ballet/Winter Variations

Het Toneelhuis

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44, www.toneelhuis.be
JAN 28-30 20.00 Olympique Dramatique in Adams Appels, music theatre staged by Peter Missotten, choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until FEB 13 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Grands Egarde, with music performed by deFilharmonie, conducted by Benjamin Pope

Dilbeek

Westrand Cultuurcentrum

Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30, www.westrand.be
JAN 28 20.30 Circa in By the light of stars that are no longer..., acrobatic dance

Leuven

30CC Schouwburg

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.32.03.20, www.30CC.be
JAN 30 20.00 Gala Flamenca, with guitarist Emilio Maya and dancers Patricia Guerrero and Federico Ordonez

Roeselare

CC De Spil

Spilleboudtref 1; 051.26.57.00, www.despil.be
JAN 30 20.00 Damien Jalet and Alexandra Gilbert in Three Spells, choreographed by Christian Fennesz
FEB 4 20.00 Gregory Vuyani Maqoma/Vuyani Dance Theatre in Beautiful Me, choreographed by Maqoma

Sint-Niklaas

Stadsschouwburg

R. Van Britsomstraat 21; 03.766.39.39, www.ccsint-niklaas.be
JAN 29 20.00 Maya Sapera Dance Company
JAN 30 20.00 Rosas in In Pieces, choreographed by Tim Etchells



Aalst

De Werf

Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12, www.ccdewerf.be
JAN 30 20.00 Els Dottermans: Was will das Weib?, music theatre
JAN 31 17.00 I Solisti del Vento & Theater Taptoe in De Vliegende Hollander, music theatre (ages 12 and up)

Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
JAN 29-30 20.00 Heinter Goebbels & Hilliard Ensemble in I Went to the house but did not enter (in English)

Bruges

De Werf

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29, www.dewerf.be
JAN 28 20.30 De Werf/Frank Adam in Erotische Fabels, staged by Fabrice Commeyne (in Dutch)
JAN 30 20.30 Abattoir Fermé in Galapagos, staged by Stef Lernous (in Dutch)

Brussels

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
JAN 28-29 20.30 NTGent in Julius Caesar, written and staged by Peter Verhelst (in Dutch)

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 19; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
Until JAN 30 20.30 Tristero in Living, theatre/dance/installation (without dialogue)

The Warehouse Studio

Waelhemstraat 69a; 0477.40.87.04, www.theatreinbrussels.com
Until JAN 30 20.00 American Theatre Company presents Oscar and the Lady in Pink by Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt (in English)

Diksmuide

CC Kruispunt

Maria Doolaeghestraat 2b; 05.151.91.56, www.cckruispunt.be
JAN 31 14.30 Compagnie Lowie in Edith (Piaf), music theatre

Ghent

Bij' De Vieze Gasten

Reinaertstraat 125; 09.237.04.07, www.deviezegasten.org
JAN 29 20.30 Dirk Elst & Co in Een gorilla op het dak van de Nationale Bank (A Gorilla on the Roof of the Nationale Bank), music theatre (in Dutch)

NTGent Schouwburg

Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01, www.ntgent.be
JAN 28-31 15.00/19.30 Zomertrilogie, written by Carlo Goldoni, staged by Ivo van Hove (in Dutch)
Until APR 2 20.30 Els Dottermans in Was will das Weib? (music theatre, in Dutch)

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
FEB 4 20.30 Villanella & Cinderella in Falsch!, staged by Hanneke Paauwe (in Dutch)

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum

Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31, www.ccha.be
JAN 29 20.00 Chicago, musical
FEB 3 20.00 Philippe Geubels in Droog, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

Leuven

30CC - Schouwburg

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.23.84.27, www.30CC.be
JAN 31 15.00 Toneelschap Beumer & Drost in Maliënkolder (in Dutch)
FEB 3 20.00 Ensemble Leporello in Minnevozen/Scènes galantes, written and staged by Dirk Opstaele (in Dutch)

Lier

CC De Mol

Aarschotsesteenweg 3; 03.488.06.79, www.lierscultuurcentrum.be
JAN 28 20.15 Je zal alles worden (You'll Become Everything) by Wouter Deprez (in Dutch)

Overijse

CC De Bosuil

Witherendreef 1; 0497.73.93.52, www.marlis.be
JAN 29-30 20.00 Seven Year Itch or The Best of Marlis, musical cabaret

Ypres

CC Ieper - Stadsschouwburg

Vandenpeereboomplein 31; 057.239.480, www.acci.be
FEB 2 20.15 Villanella & Cinderella in Falsch!, staged by Hanneke Paauwe (in Dutch)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60, www.muhka.be
Until MAY 2 Animism, animated projections of artificial dummies by Italian graphic design company ToDo, with live sound by Dimitri Brusselmans

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09, www.kmska.be
Until FEB 28 Work on paper, paintings by Koen van den Broek

Sfinks Café

Heuvelstraat 63a, Boechout; 03.455.69.44, www.sfinks.be
Until MAR 11 Arbeiders onder druk (Workers under pressure), photographs by Tineke D'haese and Eric de Mildt, in cooperation with Oxfam-Solidariteit

Brussels

art)&(marges

Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20, www.arthis.org
Until FEB 21 Surprising Dialogues, selection of outsider art from the new museum shown alongside works from fine arts museums in Belgium

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
Until FEB 26 I Wasn't Born Yesterday, Deary: A Trip in the Eye of Guy Maddin, photographs by Michèle Matyn of the Canadian town of Winnipeg, home to cult film director Guy Maddin

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until APR 18 Frida Kahlo y su mundo, works by the famous Mexican artist on loan from the Dolores Olmedo Museum

Brussels Info Place (BIP)

Koningsplein; 02.563.63.99, www.biponline.be
Until JAN 29 Christophe Licoppe: Brussels by Night, photographs

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until FEB 21 Arno Stern: Retrospective, some 50 works by the French artist known for founding Expression Semiology

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11, www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until MAR 14 Vier Doornikse wandtapijten uit Pastrana (Four Tournai Tapestries from Pastrana), historically important tapestries originating from the Belgian city of Tournai and restored in Spain (marking the EU Spanish presidency)
Until APR 18 Isabelle de Borchgrave's I Medici: a Renaissance in Paper, life-size paper replicas of historic costumes

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

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

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50, www.wiels.org
Until APR 25 Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form, retrospective of the late Cuban-born American artist

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23, www.museumdd.be
Until FEB 14 Banks Violette, installations; Sophie Ristelhueber, photographs; Narcisse Tordoir, paintings by the Flemish artist

Ghent

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99, www.designmuseumgent.be
Until FEB 7 Siegfried De Buck, jewellery designer and silversmith
Until FEB 7 Artel (1908-1935), Czech cubism in daily life
Until FEB 7 Disappeared from the GDR, crockery design by Christa Petroff-Bohne

Modern Art Museum (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until JAN 31 Stefaan Dheedene, installations
Until JAN 31 Jasper Rigole, audiovisual installations
Until JAN 31 Faux Jumeaux (False Twins), changing exhibition curated by Michel François
Until FEB 7 Ben Benaouisse: Jan Fabre revisited, performance art

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
Until FEB 21 Witte schaduw (White Shadow), drawings by Roger Raveel

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum

Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31, www.ccha.be
Until FEB 21 Witte schaduw (White Shadow), drawings by Roger Raveel
Until FEB 21 Paul D'Haese: Dagblind, photographs, installations
Until FEB 21 MarieAnge, crafts based on photographs from psychiatric wards



Djangofollies: Festival celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Belgian Gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt
Until JAN 31 in venues across the country
www.lesrichesclaires.be

Europalia China: Festival celebrating Chinese art and culture, ancient to contemporary

Until JAN 30 across the country
www.europalia.eu

Gedichtendag 2010: Dutch-language poetry festival with readings, performances, exhibitions and more. Culminates in the award ceremony for this year's Herman de Coninck poetry prize
JAN 28 across Brussels and Flanders
www.gedichtendag.com

Brussels

Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair (BRAFA):

collection of fine arts and antiques from more than 100 national and international dealers
Until JAN 31 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86C
www.brafa.be

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



© enalme

Southern Thursdays

When it comes to having a good night out, Thursday is the new Friday. And it's getting easier to stay out on a Thursday night in the communes of Brussels without having to trek into the centre of the city, particularly due south in Elsene.

There are too many good starting points to choose. If I feel like uplifting beats, I meet friends at Delecta, a former 1950s *kruidenier* (or grocery shop) where a buzzing pre-party crowd meets for an apero on Thursday nights while the girls on the decks spin all things warm and sexy. It's loud, so expect to have a shouty conversation over your warm goat's cheese salad or any of the other delicacies on the day menu.

For your next stop, resist the allure of the slightly more well-heeled bars on Flageyplein and try Murmure, a dive tucked away out of sight behind the square. Even with the huge front window thrown open, it's a loud and smoky room with occasional DJs, where slightly grubby, bright young things from the art school buy drinks for the intermittent political asylum seekers sheltering in the nearby church in exchange for a glimpse of their experiences.

Get some fresh air next and walk a few minutes up the hill to Chez Doudou, nestled in the vibrant quarter known as Matongé after a popular area in the Congolese city of Kinshasa. It's one of the friendliest African bars on the street, where an easy conversation flows for anyone who courts it. Tuck into the fantastic chicken wings and savour a Congolese Tembo beer or glass of palm wine. If you're feeling brave, try the particularly potent rum punch and join in with the throng dancing to African pop in the back room.

Delecta

2 Lannoyststraat

Murmure

18 Bèlvèderestraat

Chez Doudou

17 Lang Levenstraat

FACE OF FLANDERS

LISA BRADSHAW

Martine Gyselbrecht

No doubt Henry Van de Velde would not have been happier than with the choice of Martine Gyselbrecht to be handed the award that bears his name. The Antwerp-born Van de Velde was an innovator, together with Victor Horta, of Art Nouveau, where long, fluid lines sprung from natural, organic sources. Long before his architecture, Van de Velde was a visual artist, eventually abandoning painting to work with the more utilitarian decorative arts – textile, wood, leather.

Gyselbrecht, on the other hand, has never doubted her loyalty to textile – but has innovated over the decades to the point where it is practically a new art form. She is the kind of artist who goes directly to the source for her materials and lives with them from ground to showroom. She was last week awarded the Henry Van de Velde Career Award, the highest honour for a designer in Belgium.

In the 1970s, on farms in rural East Flanders, Gyselbrecht helped to shear the sheep herself before hand-spinning the wool, which she then dyed with self-made colours from flowers and trees. She eventually followed textile courses in Ghent, pushing the more technical aspects of the form into creative artistic areas. “Actually, I’ve learned the most from self study,” she once told an interviewer. “I realised that the creative opportunities were never ending.”

She became a teacher of form and colour, and the awards began to pour in – both in art and design. These include the Henry Van de Velde Public Prize in 2000. Among a huge number of exhibitions, she brought a birch forest to life through the use of parchment-like paper in the Dhont-Dhaenens Museum in Deurle and



draped a Ghent church alter with a bow, white fabric stations of the cross on either side.

Always married to the idea of organic forms and of recycling materials, Gyselbrecht did not work with synthetic fibres until 1989. When certain techniques were simply “not done”, such as combining metal and textile threads, she tried them anyway, pioneering new styles.

“Textile is so fascinating, especially because – contrary to before – there are now opportunities for research and creativity in manufacturing,” she said. “It all depends on your own involvement and commitment and that depends in turn on your passion.”

© Lieven Herremans

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



mag →

Thank goodness a spade is a spade in any language. Learning the names of objects in another language is not too difficult and certainly not for an English speaker learning Dutch. Yes, you may say, a spade is *een* spade, but it's also *een schop*, and the four of spades is *schoppen vier*, and the expression “call a spade a spade” is quite different in Dutch: *het kind bij zijn naam noemen* (“call a child by its name”).

But that's nothing compared to learning how to use a word like *mag*, the singular of *mogen*, which can mean “may”, “should”, “can” or simply “is”, and is pronounced as a Scotsman would say “mach”. Modal verbs is what the grammarians call them – those words that add the idea of obligation, speculation or permission to a normal verb. You might be tricked into thinking that *mogen* with its singular form *mag* is simply the same as “may”. If only things were so simple.

First, *mag* can happily stand alone: *ik mag hem wel* – I quite like him; *alles mag vandaag de dag* – anything goes these days, and *dat mag niet* – that's not allowed. You can ask for permission: *mag hij blijven spelen?* – can he stay and play? If you go straight from English to *kan hij blijven spelen?* you're asking if it's possible, not if

he's allowed. The same applies to *je mag het gerust eens proberen* – you can give it a try. Though it does match up in the rather formal “may I have your name?” – *Mag ik uw naam?*

With some constructions, you have to turn everything on its head: *van mij mag het* (“from me it may”) – it's all right by me, or *ik mag niet van de dokter* – the doctor says I mustn't. So in the negative it equates to must not: *ik mag niet klagen* – I mustn't complain. But then with other phrases, it seems to mean should: *hij mag blij zijn* – he should be happy, or *je mag wel uitkijken* – you should be careful.

Still other phrases are more idiomatic. It can mean “to like”: *ik mag graag een whisky drinken* – I enjoy a whisky. If you want to buy someone a drink, you would say *wat mag het zijn* – what are you having, and you might hear a shopkeeper ask you the same to mean “can I help you?”

Getting to grips with modal verbs is perhaps best done by treating each of these phrases as an idiom. In other words, that's the way it is, and there's no good reason for it. Trust the good old parrot fashion, and before long you'll be buying rounds of drinks for your friends.

bite

SHARON LIGHT

La Boya

It seems like an odd juxtaposition to find Moroccan restaurant La Boya just next to the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw church in Mechelen. Morocco must have seemed amazingly far away to the builders who began work on the church in the 14th century. But the 21st century finds this small slice of Morocco as the church's neighbour, and the restaurant is well worth a visit.

While the exterior isn't worth a second glance, once inside, you'll find a cosy atmosphere and delicious fare. The tables are basic, and a bar dominates the main room, but your eyes will immediately be drawn to the ceiling, which is festooned with brightly coloured lamps – vibrant reds, green and blues surround the many twinkling bulbs. A back room features a bit more decoration, but once you're settled in and have absorbed the lighting, the focus is on the food.

Depending on your mood, you can diversify with a selection of tapas, or hone in on one main dish. The tapas are a mix of Mediterranean favourites. La Boya's hummus was a smooth and straightforward chickpea purée – low on the more bitter sesame of tehini, just the way I like it. Scampi came served in a garlic and butter preparation that begged to be lapped up with bread.



I was pleased to see a cameo of chakchuka on the specials list, a personal weakness: an egg cooked in a thick tomato and pepper sauce. Finally, we revelled in baked potato wedges topped with a generous dollop of garlic mayonnaise – perhaps more Belgian than Moroccan, but either way, not to be missed.

The main dishes take two forms: couscous or tajine (named after the pot they're cooked in). Either way, you'll choose from a variety of cooked meats: merguez, kofta, lamb or

chicken adorned with regional delicacies, like olives or raisins. Respectable fish and vegetarian versions appear on the menu as well. The piping hot tajines arrive at your table with their conical tops, which release a beautiful fountain of steam when removed. The slightly sweet spicing and moist ingredients are a delight.

For dessert, opt for the selection of Moroccan pastries – dense combinations of nuts and dough, flavoured with honey or rosewater, that make for a terrific ending to this rich dinner. A small pot of fresh mint tea completes the picture. You'll hardly believe you're still in Belgium.

www.la-boya.be

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

THE LAST WORD...

Smart thinking

“In the supermarket you wonder how many different kinds of pears you know; in the shower you re questioning what you know about the Eighty Years War (other than that it lasted 80 years). It gets under your skin and doesn't let go.”

De Standaard editor Peter Vandermeersch, a finalist in De slimste mens this week

Going Dutch

“A Dutchman is a member of on average four or five organisations that have something to do with charity. In this country (Belgium), you re lucky to get to one.”

Jan Rachels, professional fundraiser

No fashion sense

“You look for a handbag that goes with your boots. Men don't understand that, my Michel over there for sure. He would wear a blue jumper with a red hat.”

A shopper at the recent Delvaux sales in Etterbeek

Fatal Friday

“Friday morning, a year after the fatal Friday. My film of that day begins playing again in my head. 23 January will never again be a day like any other.”

Bart Van Belle, father of one of the survivors of the Dendermonde crèche attack, writing in Het Nieuwsblad