



Less than daring escape

Two inmates bust out of Dendermonde prison

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Showing off the shrimp

The Flemish Primitives bring the best chefs in the world to Ostend

p10

Grab your masks

No one does Carnival like Flanders

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"Tell us your wildest dreams"

© Christophe Ketels/Compagnie Gagarine

Antwerp is named European Youth Capital 2011

MONIQUE PHILIPS

Antwerp honestly did not expect to win the title European Youth Capital 2011. And yet they've put together a programme Flanders will find difficult to forget – and other cities will find difficult to compete with.

A European Youth Capital (EYC) is a city with an exemplary local youth service – a standard bearer for the rest of Europe. The designation is also a challenge to create a rich and varied programme of youth activities throughout the year. Antwerp hopes to become Europe's permanent free-thinking haven for youth services.

The story started in 2009, when Rotterdam boldly proclaimed itself European Youth Capital. Consequently, REYC 2009 organised an impressive year of events involving the entire population. By facilitating encounters between young and old, Rotterdam, a dynamic but demanding and hectic port city, benefitted from many rejuvenating experiences.

One of the geniuses of REYC was that organisers encouraged the city's youth themselves to put forward their ideas for sustainable projects to make Rotterdam a better place to live. Young people – from children to 20-somethings – were to feel proud about living in Rotterdam. The slogan was "Your Ideas, Your World", and their dreams were obvious: a friendlier environment with respect and tolerance, fun things to do for everyone, free music festivals. As any parent knows: kids are not shy about asking for what they want.

After 2009, the Brussels-based advocacy group European Youth Forum took over the title and philosophy behind it. Now each year a jury of young people awards the EYC designation to a European city, based on a hefty application process.

In 2010, Turin was the lucky one. They focussed on more opportunities for young people to participate at every level in their communities, which is one of the main criteria of the application.

Surprisingly, the title EYC doesn't come with a budget or subsidies, so finances and accommodation need to be in place before cities can even apply. Even if Antwerp has plenty of infrastructure, youth and child services alderwoman Leen Verbist wasn't initially keen to put in the time to apply this year.

"I didn't think it was in the stars," she admits. "We'd had Rotterdam and Turin in the past years, and I was sure they'd go for an Eastern European city. Plus, Rotterdam speaks Dutch, as do we. And it's a port city, as are we."

But Antwerp's programme was strong, and Verbist's team enthusiastic. And they won. They had prepared themselves financially: €2.2 million comes from the city, and AEYC 2011 can count on a further €250,000 from the Flemish youth ministry. A further €300,000 for specific projects has been secured from the city council, private partners and the European level.

Antwerp's youth department has gotten the rest of the city's administration – which employs 8,000 people in 11 departments, from sports to employment – on board. The department of finance, for instance, came up with a well-received interactive game on budget management by cities and individuals.

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Riding the wave

Lommel in Limburg province may be about as far from the sea as it's possible to get in Flanders, but that hasn't stopped local boy Steven Van Broeckhoven, 25, from rising to the crest of the international wave of champion windsurfers.

Van Broeckhoven is currently in Cape Town, South Africa, preparing for the World Championships, which started last week and continue until October. "As a Belgian you start out with a disadvantage," he told *De Morgen* last week. "But if you also live so far from the sea, you have to be either crazy or enormously passionate."

Whichever it is, he's going into the World Championships in fourth

place, the leading European and the only Belgian. The tournament will take him to Germany, Lanzarote, Vietnam, Fuerteventura, Aruba, Austria and Bonaire. Last week he was voted Limburg sportsman of the year.

In his first world championship two years ago, he was named Rookie of the Year; last year he came fourth. This year, according to forecasts on the website of the Professional Windsurfers' Association, "he could do some real damage".

"I'm hoping for a place in the top three," he confided to *De Morgen*. "Everyone has very high expectations. I'm curious to see how it will go."



Belgium leads Western Europe in divorce

Changes to laws have missed their target, study shows

ALAN HOPE

Belgium is the West European leader in divorces, according to figures from a study requested by the Flemish government from researchers from four universities: Ghent, Antwerp, the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) and the Free University of Brussels (VUB).

Every year around 40,000 couples in Belgium get married and about 30,000 get divorced (32,606 in 2009, of which 14,991 lived in Flanders). Two divorces out of three involve children, with about 35,000 children every year being affected.

Belgium does not have the highest number of divorces in absolute terms, but it does have most when compared to the number of marriages. In Belgium there are 4.1 marriages for every 1,000 head of population, and three divorces, for a ratio of 4.1/3. In second place, Denmark has a ratio of 6/2.7, followed by Finland at 5.6/2.5. The EU average, according to figures from 2007, is 4.4/2.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



Piet De Somer

Last week it was announced by the Leuven city authorities that Maarschalk Fochplein, the square at the very centre of Leuven that is currently the scene of an archaeological dig, will be renamed when it opens again. The new name, Pieter De Somerplein, is after Pieter De Somer, who was rector of the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) from 1968 until his death in 1985.

De Somer not only steered KUL through one of the most difficult periods in its history – the change from a bilingual university to a Flemish centre of excellence – he also, in many ways, prepared it for a future where a commitment to scientific research would be as important as its former reputation as a world centre of philosophy and theology. Pieter De Somer was born in 1917 in Niel, Antwerp province, and studied medicine at the KUL, where he was active in the movement around priest-philosopher Albert Dondeyne, whose thinking influenced the later Second Vatican Council. As a researcher, De Somer concentrated on microbiology and immunology and was active in work to improve production

of the recently discovered penicillin.

His laboratory later worked on other antibiotics and anti-viral agents and was taken over by what is now GlaxoSmithKline. De Somer continued with research into a polio vaccine, and the success of his lab enabled him to pay his own research staff. The RIGA institute that he set up is still active, now as a leading centre of Aids research. De Somer was also active in expanding the Gasthuisberg campus of the Leuven University Hospital, now the largest hospital in the country.

When the troubles over the splitting of the KUL happened in the 1960s, De Somer was rector of the Dutch-speaking side, and in 1968 he became the first ever lay rector of the now-Flemish university. "The vision and the policies of Pieter De Somer created a dynamic university that benefited the whole region around Leuven," said Leuven councilman Carl Devlies, who proposed the name change of the square. "The expansion of the university transformed Leuven from a somewhat sleepy city into a dynamic high-technology region."

News in brief

Members of the Flemish parliament begin weekly 90-minute **French lessons** this week – the first time the institution has organised courses. Members previously had access to lessons organised by the federal parliament.

Kortrijk chef Matthieu Beudaert of Tables d'Amis is to provide the menu for the **restaurant in London's National Gallery** until 31 May, in conjunction with the current exhibition there of the works of Flemish primitive Jan Gossaert (*Flanders Today*, 16 February). Beudaert is also a trained art historian.

Two men were arrested last week after a **botched revenge attack** on the lover of one of the men's girlfriends. The two set out to attack the man, who lives on the Lichterveldestraat in Koolskamp, but instead kicked down the door of a house on the Koolskampsstraat in Lichtervelde. They later paid the innocent bystander compensation for the damage, but were arrested anyway on suspicion of attempted murder.

The detention centre for asylum seekers known as 127bis in Steenokkerzeel will remain closed for two to three months **following rioting** there by inmates last weekend, which caused damage worth €150,000. The rioting took place after a demonstration protesting the treatment of inmates by staff.

Children have been ordered to **stop playing football** on a municipal playground in Poperinge, West

Flanders, following complaints from nearby residents. At the same time, a ban on ball games at the town park has been lifted. A demand from residents for a curfew after 19.00 was refused.

The Senate's justice committee last week approved a new law making it mandatory for a **lawyer to be present** if requested from the first time a suspect is interviewed by police or magistrates. The law was brought forward after Belgium was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights. The bill has broad party support, but is opposed by many in the judicial system. The committee approval is only the first step in a long legal process.

The trial began in Brussels last week of three men accused of murdering **policewoman Kitty Van Nieuwenhuysen**, who was shot in December 2007 while responding to a reported robbery in Beersel, Flemish Brabant. The men opened fire on the police vehicle, killing Van Nieuwenhuysen and injuring her colleague.

Almost three-quarters of households in Belgium last year had **access to the internet**, up from two in three in 2009, according to a survey by the economy ministry. The increase brings Belgium up to the EU average, though it still trails neighbouring countries. Email and home banking are the main uses. Meanwhile, a poll by Eurostat revealed that only 4% of Belgians accessed the internet last year by mobile phone and 15% by laptop.

Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege last week unveiled a new **virtual museum devoted to the Ostend painter James Ensor**. The website is the first of a series planned on Flemish artists and gives an overview of the master's life and work. It was created by Flemish Art Collection, a cooperation between the Fine Arts museums in Ghent and Antwerp and the Groeningemuseum in Bruges.

→ www.jamesensor.eu

This year's gala fund-raising show for the cancer charity **Kom Op Tegen Kanker** raised a record amount of €1.75 million, including a cheque for €500,000 handed over on behalf of the Flemish government by minister-president Kris Peeters. "With this money we will be able to develop and improve Flanders' umbilical cord blood banks and give more leukaemia patients a better chance of life," said charity director Leo Leys.

The Belgian cycling season started last weekend with the **Omloop Het Nieuwsblad**, a 200-kilometre race in East Flanders that begins and ends in Gent. It was won by Dutchman Sebastian Langeveld after a final 15 km struggle with last year's winner, Juan Antonio Flecha of Spain, which ended in a photo finish. The best finish for a Flemish cyclist was Jürgen Roelandts, in ninth place. Both Tom Boonen and Stijn Devolder had trouble on the Taaiberg hill and came in five minutes behind the winner. A day later, Australian Chris Sutton took first place in the **Kuurne-Brussel-Kuurne** cycle race.

OFFSIDE

Under the table

First the good news: six Flemish beers won medals at the 125th Brewing Industry International Awards in Burton-upon-Trent in England. La Guillotine, brewed by Huyghe in Melle, East Flanders, won gold in the category of Strong Speciality beers. Mort Subite Original Kriek by Alken-Maes of Mechelen won gold in the Fruit & Vegetable category, and Premium Pils Estaminet by Palm in Londerzeel, Flemish Brabant, took gold in the category Smallpack Lager. Affligem blond and tripel won silver in the category Smallpack Ale and bronze in the category Strong Ale. The Halve Maan brewery in Bruges also won silver in Strong Dark Beer for Brugse Zot. The winners were announced earlier this month, and the medals will be awarded in a ceremony in April. Now the bad news: Belgian drinkers are not pulling their weight in the international

drinking stakes. Belgians last year drank two litres less than the European average of alcohol consumed (taking all drinks together).

According to figures from the Union of Belgian Brewers, 844 million litres of beer were consumed in 2010, 2.8% lower than in 2009, and an average of 84 litres, or 332 *pintjes* for every man, woman and child in the country.

According to statistics from the World Health Organisation, meanwhile, Belgians drank an average of 10.2 litres of alcohol, two litres less than the European average, and an eye-popping eight litres less than league-leaders Moldavia. Men come closer to that figure, downing an average of 17.5 litres a year, with women trailing behind on 7.8 litres. Men are also less likely to be tee-total: only 3.4% never touch a drop, compared to more than 12% of women.

Belgian consumption in 2010 was good for only 33rd place in the international tables.

The tippable of choice, not unexpectedly, is still beer – responsible for more than half of all alcohol consumed, followed by wine at just over one-third. Belgians are not especially fond of hard liquor, which accounts for only about 6% of consumption.



FLANDERS TODAY

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Custody sharing brings no relief to children, report says

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One major conclusion, according to Christine Van Peer of the government's research department, which coordinated the study, is that attempts to change the law to make the divorce process simpler and easier have not been successful. While the judicial process itself has indeed been made shorter, she said, removing a number of matters from the consideration of the court has done nothing to remove the causes of conflict, while taking away the one forum to resolve them.

"The majority of conflicts now take place outside the courtroom," Van Peer said, including disputes over property and child custody. Despite changes in the law – the latest in 2007 – the whole process still takes as long as it did in 1994: an average of 18 months.

The 2007 law allowed for co-parenting, in which children would be able to share their time between parents. However, that has led to the opposite of what was intended

by the law, which was to increase feelings of stability and security on the part of the child. Sharing arrangements in fact often lead to conflict between parents. In one and four cases, the parents never see each other at all.

While the most common arrangement for custody sharing is for each parent to take the child every other week, the average number of moves from one parental home to the other in a month is between five and six, with some children moving eight times or more.

According to a study by Professor Koen Matthijs of the KUL's Centre for Population and Family Research, half of all children from families where the parents are divorced have learning problems enough to cause them to repeat a year of school or to change to an easier course of studies.

Of children who live with both parents, 64% begin secondary school following the general humanities curriculum known as ASO. Among children living with one parent, the figure is 54%. At the other end of the school



© Shutterstock

career, about half of all students living in homes with both parents leave school with a diploma; but for children of single parents, only 22% obtain a diploma.

• Meanwhile, about one in five marriages investigated last year by the Department of Foreigner Affairs – 9,133 out of a total of 43,000

– was found to be a marriage of convenience contracted in order to allow one of the parties to enter or stay in the country. The department admitted the true figure was probably greater. It also reported a rise in the number of letters received from anonymous neighbours or even family members drawing attention to suspicious marriages. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



89

pilots temporarily blinded while landing at Belgian airports last year by people on the ground pointing laser pens. Most of the cases (34) took place at Zaventem

6,558

instances of cyber crime reported to the federal computer crime unit in the first six months of 2010. The vast majority, nearly 6,000, concerned computer fraud, followed by hacking, forgery and sabotage

100,000

trained to administer first aid, the target of the Red Cross Flanders in its new five-year plan. About 70,000 people currently hold Red Cross first aid certificates

1 in 10

samples of meat contained dangerous levels of sulphites, a heavily restricted substance used to give meat a red colour, according to a survey by consumer organisation Test-Aankoop

1,300

workers to be hired this year by the rail authority NMBS to help make up for retiring staff. Some 20,000 are expected to retire by 2020

No investigation into errors in murder case before trial

Members of parliament have attacked a decision by the High Council for Justice (HRJ) to investigate alleged blunders in the case of the murder of Flemish teenager Annick Van Uytzel only after the accused killer has been tried, possibly later this year.

Van Uytzel (*pictured*) disappeared after a late-night party in April 2007 near Diest, Flemish Brabant. Six days later her body was found wrapped in plastic in a canal not far from her home. There were no arrests made until 2010, when Ronald Janssens was arrested for a double murder in Loksbergen, Limburg province, where he lives. During questioning, he admitted he had also killed Van Uytzel. It later emerged that he had been a suspect in that investigation from the start, but police had never amassed enough evidence for an arrest.

According to the P Committee, which oversees police matters, Leuven-based investigators in the case made several mistakes in their investigation, in what it called a "chronicle of a failure foretold". They also refused to cooperate fully with other police

services, including the missing persons' unit and officers drafted in to help. The leader of the detective squad defended his team, protested at the "caricature" portrayed in the report, and the magistrate in charge resigned.

MPs called for a parliamentary enquiry, reinforcing the echoes of the case of Marc Dutroux in 1996, another case in which someone had killed before, been under suspicion by the police but passed over against a background of intra-police rivalries. In the Dutroux case, parliament carried out an enquiry into the investigation before the trial took place, leading to a veritable media circus with record ratings for live sessions, acres of newspaper articles, a mountain of books (including one by a senior member of the commission and one by its president) and outlandish new allegations by attention seekers.

The majority of the parliament is reluctant to see this happen again. The HRJ, as an alternative, at first said it was not competent to look into the case, then changed its mind

and accepted to do so, but not before the trial. Otherwise the trial might be delayed, postponed or even prejudiced, the HRJ said.

MPs responded angrily. "The parents and the public alike have the right to go into the trial knowing the truth," said Renaat Landuyt, a Flemish socialist, former member of the Dutroux Commission and his party's judicial specialist.

"People will say there has been only a half investigation," commented Stefaan Van Hecke of Groen!. "There should be no blind spots as to the responsibility of the judiciary." ♦



Old-fashioned prison break in Dendermonde

Two Albanian inmates escaped from the prison in Dendermonde last week by sawing through the bars of their cell window and climbing down a rope of sheets they had tied together. Ilir Ceni, 31, and Adi Martinaj, 33, were serving time for breaking and entering, forgery and conspiracy.

Dendermonde is known to be a security risk: In 2006, 28 inmates escaped in one massive exodus now referred to as The Great Escape. The building is old and "hopelessly run-down," according to Luc Neiryndck, national secretary of the union that represents prison officers. This could explain the ease with which the bars were cut, although the tools used in the escape have not been found. It is also overcrowded, designed for 168 but occupied by 250. Because of that overcrowding, Ceni and Martinaj were sharing a cell meant for one, and were both able to escape.

Ceni and Martinaj remained at large as *Flanders Today* went to press. Only a second or two of the escape was filmed; despite investment in camera equipment since the 2006 escape, the route taken by the two was not covered. They were also able to cut electrical wire separating the prison from an adjacent building – which belongs to the federal judicial police. ♦



Culture clash

Luc Tuymans, our greatest living painter and currently on view at Bozar in Brussels, holds strong opinions and not just on art. Tuymans sees a lack of tolerance in Flanders. He cannot understand why "even intelligent people" would vote for the Flemish nationalist Bart De Wever (N-VA), whom he refers to as "Meatloaf". Tom Lanoye, one of our greatest living writers, has expressed similar irritation. He calls the N-VA the New Flemish Elite. If the N-VA is popular throughout Flanders, it has yet to convince the intellectual and cultural crowd. Some of this crowd gathered a couple of weeks ago in the Brussels theatre KVS for a protest against "bigoted nationalism". Although Not in Our Name was limited to a small in-crowd, N-VA could not refrain from reacting.

A Flemish N-VA MP asked the minister for culture in parliament whether the action was subsidised or not. The real culture clash came later, though, when De Wever spoke out in a column about the "evening of ideological masturbation" in the KVS. De Wever accuses his intellectual opponents of narrow-mindedness, navel-gazing and boring uniformity – exactly the qualities his opponents attribute to him.

The criticism from artistic circles is nothing new. In the 1990s, the same crowd reacted strongly to the popularity of the ultra-right Vlaams Blok. The outcome was more than ironic: the more the intellectual elite rejected the party, the more common people identified with it. As a result, Vlaams Blok, now Vlaams Belang, became one of the largest parties in Flanders, and, although it was always banned from government because of its racist views, it was a force to be reckoned with.

De Wever, a historian and a hardened opponent of Vlaams Belang, knows this mechanism. He knows these attacks are basically harmless to him, maybe even helpful. Only last week he was elected politician and man of the year 2010 by the readers of *Humo*, a popular and slightly left-wing weekly of the type that regularly features Tuymans and Lanoye.

So is there anything that might stop De Wever's growing popularity? It seems like all the artists can do is sit it out and wait. In the case of Vlaams Belang, it took a decade and another party to halt its ever-rising popularity. Bart De Wever's N-VA, indeed.



BRUSSELS

One of the nicest view over brussels, 15th floor, close to Brussels centre and european institutions by Métro, 2 minutes from Métro Yser, 2 balconies (one with south view on a farmbrussels centre, one with north view on the canal and the atomium.) quiet neighbors, surrounded by parks.



SCHAERBEEK

exceptional house at 2 min walking distance from the Rogierplace, near all type of transportation, at 5 min from the Dansaertstreet. large livingroom, 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, separate storage/laundry room, 1 toilet, fully furnished kitchen. Nice view and access to large garden.



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert area, metro(Yser) and ring.



BRUSSELS



Centre Brussels near Dansaert area: Nice apartment DUPLEX 135m2, 2008 + parking place 1 car. Livingroom +/-30m2- separate diningroom + 16m2- fitted kitchen - 3 bedrooms (20m2;12m2;12m2) bathroom - showerroom - 2wc. Individual gas heating. Apartment with a lot of light. In good condition. Excellent situation near shops,Dansaert area, metro(Yser) and ring.

WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 m² - 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m² - 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m² - 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m²

SAINT-GILLES



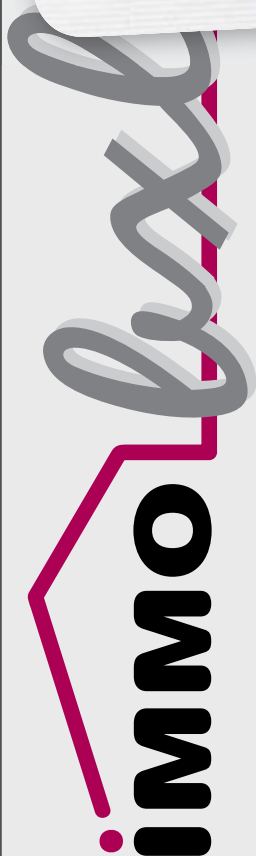
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UCCLE

which has been totally renovated and reconstructed and was sold to the European Commission. There are different luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a splendid view over Brussels. All the apart-

ments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden floor, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), videophone, complete bathroom with shower, new window frames with double glazing, security door, airconditioning.



BRUSSELS

Facing the nice Parc Cinquantenaire very spacious 4 bedroom house facing the Parc- 3 bathrooms - fully equipped kitchen - garage. One large and nice living room, 2 quiet bedrooms, kitchen is equipped, all in good conditions. Quiet

neighbors, surrounded by parks. A lot of light. In good condition. Excellent situation near shops, theatre,...



ANDERLECHT

Godeaux - Bemel area, house 3 façades of +/- 240m², completely renovated in 2004, living room 42m², fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), breakfast corner, 4 bedrooms, closets, wooden floors, bathroom, toilet,

Jacuzzi, 2 shower rooms, garage + space in front of the house, garden, terrace, alarm system, security door, airconditioning.



FOREST

villa 4 facades of 300m², completely renovated in 2000, living room, wooden floors, fireplace, separate dining room, fully equipped kitchen, breakfast area, laundry room, 4 bedrooms, wooden floors, office area, bathroom,

shower room, cellar, garden 5acres, nice terrace, garage 2 or 3 cars, alarm system.

Your wildest dreams

Alderwoman Leen Verbist leads the youth of her city on a magical mystery tour

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"It's important to get young people involved hands on everywhere in your city," says Verbist. "They need to realise that it's *their* city, that we'll back them up in their plans, and that they can have a major impact on the future of the community." With 124,000 people – one third of the Antwerp population – younger than 25, you can see her point. "In a highly urban environment, you can't wait for youth to become 35 before finding their way to a museum or a job," Verbist says. So, an AEYC project like MAS in Jonge Handen (MAS in Young Hands) – in which the new city museum, which opens in May will showcase the creations of 15- to 25-year-olds – perfectly fits the bill.

AEYC officially kicks off this Friday, 4 March, in the city's Central Station. School kids from all over town will parade into the station and count down to the official start of AEYC 2011 in a giant dress-up party, dubbed European Carnival Bal. TV channel Ketnet will broadcast the event at 15.00 on Friday, which should liven up the last period of class before the annual Crocus Holiday. Ketnet will repeat the event at the weekend.

The following day, 5 March, Club Central will host pop-up music and dance acts, while free performances on two stages will keep teenagers awake until 4.00.

Antwerp has historically been a youth-oriented city, with more than 200 youth clubs and 5,000 dedicated volunteers manning them. Each of its nine districts has a Jeugdraad, or Youth Council. Verbist feels proud when she sees them at work. "They truly represent a cross-section of our city."

Moreover, Antwerp youth actively participate. "Young people want to take responsibility, and, in turn, we take their suggestions seriously. That's always been

our philosophy, and we're reaping the benefits of those policies today."

Activities planned for AEYC 2011 will be threefold: a continuation of running projects wrapped in a bow, test cases that might stay on, and daring experiments.

One of the more intriguing test cases is "De Werf", or The Yard, a 5,000 square-metre space in the Van Immerseelstraat. From April, a construction site for 10- to 14-year-olds will be set up. With on-site materials, they will be allowed to construct towers and other structures to their hearts' content. They'll learn to plan, build and persevere if the going gets tough. (Don't worry – all AEYC events are supervised by professionals.)

Verbist is convinced that what youngsters need most is room – both physically and mentally – to experiment, whether it turns into success or failure. You need to look at more than results: the road travelled is equally important.

Antwerp has consciously made the decision to have a festive year "for youngsters by youngsters". AEYC will continue to welcome projects of all sorts throughout the year. No preconceived criteria or boundaries have been set. If you have a project you'd like to share, now's your chance.

"Tell us your wildest dreams," encourages the AEYC website, and Verbist is anything but afraid of what those might be. "I can take it. Anything goes in my book. I find kids nowadays a bit too well behaved."

For a recent photo shoot of the AEYC team, for instance, Verbist suggested spray painting something on the bright red wall behind them. By the time the kids recovered from the shock ("but that wall has been freshly painted!"), Verbist had mastered a canister full of silver paint.

"Kids nowadays are very good, responsible



Youth alderwoman Leen Verbist (third from left) is spray painting the town red

© Ariette Stubbe/Gazet van Antwerpen

and sometimes grow up a bit too fast," she says. "Which is beneficial for the city, but young kids need to dare to colour outside the lines first. Dreams are so quickly adjusted."

As for the European component, AEYC will bring about 10 European youth conferences to Antwerp this year, including Erasmian European Youth Parliament, which will find more than 150 youth from across Europe in Antwerp to discuss problems in their own cities and countries.

And thus we come to Verbist's own dreams. "I'd like Antwerp to remain a European Youth Capital, to see it become an acknowledged haven for forums on

youth issues," she says. "If Europe wants to become a visible part in the life of its future citizens, they should invest way more in projects like the EYC. Europe shouldn't only focus on the elite of Erasmus students, but open up as widely as possible."

Verbist worries less for the future of Antwerp. "I feel pretty optimistic about what this city will look like in 10 years' time. Just look at how many children of different nationalities get involved here in creating their ideal town. It's important that they have a great year." ♦

→ www.AEYC2011.be



Gevaarlijke Dingen (Dangerous Things) (7 March to 20 November) 6-12y

Inspired by the book *50 Dangerous Things (You Should Let Your Children Do)*, two actresses will tour Antwerp cultural centres with a theatrical laboratory, suited for conducting thrillingly dangerous experiments. This is for those kids who like to stick their fingers in electrical sockets or climb the highest tree.



Children's University (27 March) 8-14y

Do ghosts exist? Why is bloodred? What happens to nosy children? They get to go to the Children's University of Antwerp, a feast of Q&As. The surrounding streets will be turned into a playground where giant cameras and a car that runs on BBQ briquettes await.

→ www.ua.ac.be/kinderuniversiteit



Antwerp Street Kicks (11-12 Sept) 6-26y

Extreme sports festival in Park Noord. Spectacular demos by international riders from the US and UK on the park's internationally acclaimed skateboarding terrain. Also a graffiti meeting and musicians from the urban scene.ait.

→ www.back2oldschool.be



Youth Fashion Day (14 May) 15+

This free event is custom tailored for the discerning teenager. Personal shoppers guide them to stores and styles and offer clothes swapping and workshops, like Pimp-my-style and clothes. The evening grand finale is a fashion show and mega DJ party.

→ www.youthfashionday.be



Nicht (November) 15-25y

Sven Spur, 18, realises there's plenty of drama in a young gay person's life. With his 40-minute film *Nicht*, he plans to tackle taboos. Filming will start this summer, but apply now if you're a would-be actor/actress or technician.

→ www.nichtdefilm.be

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New governor for National Bank

Luc Coene was right-hand man to Verhofstadt

ALAN HOPE

The new governor of the National Bank of Belgium (NBB) will be Luc Coene, the government decided last week. Coene succeeds Guy Quaden, who steps down at the end of March after 12 years in the job.

Coene (*pictured*) is presently deputy governor, but his history is political. From 1995 to 1999 he was a senator appointed by the Flemish liberal party Open VLD. Later he was the cabinet chief to VLD prime minister Guy Verhofstadt. Constitutionally, the appointment is somewhat unusual since the age limit for National Bank governor is 67. Although Coene will be 64 this month, he has been appointed for a term of five years.

The administration of Yves Leterme, which has held caretaker office since the June elections, is only mandated to take care of "running matters" – which does not include nominations for top jobs. However, since negotiations to form a new government have now taken a world-record length of time, with no end in sight, the government decided to go ahead with the appointment.

Coene had last year been seen as the clear

successor to Quaden, but his position was made difficult not only by the arrival of a caretaker government, but by the departure of Open VLD from both that government and the negotiations to form a new one.

Now those hurdles, and the opposition of N-VA to his promotion, seem to have been left behind. One of the main pressures on the government was the change due to come into force on 1 April, whereby the Banking, Finance and Insurance Commission (CBFA), which currently regulates the whole financial sector, hands its oversight of the banks and insurance companies to the NBB. According to Quaden, speaking in an interview with financial daily *De Tijd*, it was now time for the government to give the NBB "a stable direction" in light of the transfer.

Coene was born in Ghent in 1947 and studied economics at the city's university and European economic integration at the College of Europe in Bruges. He started work in the research department of the NBB in 1973, moving on to the International Monetary Fund in 1979. He became Verhofstadt's cabinet



© NBB

chief in 1985, when Verhofstadt was budget minister, then was called back in 1999 when Verhofstadt became prime minister.

At the same time as Coene's appointment, the government also renewed the appointments of four NBB directors for a period of six years. ♦

"Fortisgate Four" appear in court

In a case likely to go down in Belgian judicial history, four senior judges went on trial in Ghent last week, accused of forgery and breach of confidentiality, only to hear the prosecution argue that they had "suffered enough" and request the minimum sentence. The four are Ivan Verougstraete, chairman of the Cassation Court, and three judges at the Brussels Court of Appeal: Christine Schurmans, Paul Blondeel en Mireille Salmon.

The case arose out of the controversial sale in September 2008 of Fortis Bank, which was in financial difficulties. The sale was organised directly by the federal government, and the buyer was BNP Paribas, a French bank. But thousands of small shareholders objected, and called upon the courts to suspend the sale. A first interim judgement by the Brussels commercial court upheld the sale, but the shareholders appealed to the Court of Appeal. The three justices on the bench for that case were Blondeel, Schurmans and Salmon.

A decision was announced in December 2008, but it later emerged that there had been a difference of opinion between Schurmans and the two other judges, and Schurmans had taken sick leave. The other two judges produced their ruling as if she had been present, and the ruling went against the sale by the government.

Then the head magistrate of the Cassation Court, Ghislain Londers, passed a letter to the speaker of the parliament in which he claimed to be in possession of evidence of political pressure in the case. A senior official in the cabinet of prime minister Yves Leterme admitted having contacts with persons close to the case, and Leterme, along with justice minister Jo Vandeuren, resigned.

Verougstraete and Schurmans are accused of breach of confidentiality, having discussed the case with outside parties. Blondeel and Salmon are accused of forgery in having presented their ruling without the third judge.

The prosecution last week presented its case, but, according to prosecutor Dominique Debrauwere: "The four people who now stand here accused have suffered greatly as a result of the case. For that reason, a nominal sentence will suffice." For the two who breached their oath of judicial confidence, he demanded a fine of €550 and eight days in prison; for those who forged a judgement, one month in prison and a fine of €143.

The case continues in April, when the defence is expected to argue for an acquittal. A final verdict is expected in May or June. ♦

Good news for government finances

The government received news of a dividend from its 10.8% share of BNP Paribas, obtained when the French bank took over Fortis in 2008-2009. The Paribas dividend amounts to €2.10, bringing in €267.9 million for the state's coffers. Paribas' retail banking division for Belgium and Luxembourg, BeLux Retail Banking, made a profit of €688 million, twice as much as in 2009.

In other dividends that the government holds in a range of companies, the state can expect

a pay-off this year of €1.6 billion, according to a calculation by daily newspaper *De Tijd*. €391 million comes from Belgacom, in which the state holds a share of 53.5%. The two other banks bailed out at the time of the banking crisis, Dexia and KBC, will pay back dividends of €16 million and €297 million respectively.

As well as its own dividends, the government also takes a tax on dividends paid out to other shareholders of between 15 and 25%: good for a total of €1 billion in income. ♦

Top employers named

A list of 43 companies and institutions have been named Belgium's Top Employers by the former Corporate Research Foundation, now known as the CRF Institute. The list includes commercial businesses as well as hospitals, the Port of Antwerp and a university.

CRF looked at the performance of the companies under 10 criteria: organisational strategy, human resources strategy, communications, diversity, social responsibility, knowledge management, talent

management, partner development, performance management and salaries and recognition.

The companies obtaining the certificate are not ranked. They include the university hospitals of Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and Leuven; the Catholic University of Leuven; state-owned telecoms giant Belgacom; the Antwerp Port Management company; nanotechnology research centre Imec; and commercial companies from hotel group Accor to PepsiCo.

→ www.topemployers.be



© BASF

Chemical company BASF, another of the best employers named

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airlines • Korongo

Korongo Airlines, the Brussels Airlines subsidiary that will operate flights in the Democratic Republic of Congo, is nearing its inaugural flight this summer with the first BAE 146 aircraft already under its new livery.

Beverages • ABInbev

The world's largest brewer, with headquarters in Leuven, will launch a beer-like soft drink on the local market to counteract the drop in beer consumption. The new non-alcoholic beverage, branded as Jupiler Force, will be produced in Sint-Pieters-Leeuw. It will complement the best-selling Jupiler product line, which ranges from Jupiler Blue, with 3.3 degrees of alcohol, to Jupiler Tauro, with a hefty 8.3 degrees.

Chemicals • Solvay

The Brussels-based chemicals and plastics group has acquired a fluorspar mine in Bulgaria to help increase its production of fluorinated specialty polymers and special chemicals. The new acquisition allows Solvay to significantly increase its supplies of fluorspar, which previously came exclusively from the Okorusu mine in Namibia.

Economy • Business confidence

The National Bank indicator of future business prospects was again higher in February for the eighth consecutive month, reflecting the confidence of the country's bosses in the economy. The manufacturing and services sectors note that economic growth is slowing, but the trade and building industries are still buoyant.

Pharmaceuticals • Sanofi

French pharmaceutical company Sanofi-Aventis is establishing a Benelux headquarters in Diegem, just outside Brussels, and will transfer part of its personnel from its offices in the Netherlands and Luxembourg to the new unit.

Property • Bernaerts

Brasschaat-base property developer Bernaerts has plans to build a 200,000 square metre European Market City on a brownfield site between Brussels and Antwerp. The project, slated to open in the second half of 2012, will allow manufacturers of furniture, hi-fi, fashion and home decor products to find local distributors and retailers. The new facility is expected to compete with the Brussels Trade Mart.

Supermarkets • Carrefour

French supermarket group Carrefour will invest some €300 million over the next three years to renovate its still-existing Belgian outlets. The chain, which began a heavy restructuring programme last year that closed 11 local stores and sold an additional 10 to the Mestdagh company, also plans to open up to 25 Express convenience markets.

A New York state of mind

A Flemish student takes on the great literary traditions of one of the most challenging cities in the world

REBECCA BENOOT

Getting your debut novel published can be quite an ordeal for any writer. Frederick Morel not only got his first novel published, he wrote it in English – virtually unheard of for a young Flemish author.

Morel, 26, is a PhD student at the University of Ghent whose love for American literature made him want to be a writer. “I really wanted to become part of the English literary market, especially the literary world in New York,” he says. “So first I had to write in English because there’s no way to do that in translation; it would just never happen.”

After studying English, writing in English came naturally enough to him. But publishing in English was an entirely different ball game. After no less than 80 rejection letters from US publishers and agents, Morel (*pictured*) finally landed a contract with UK publisher The Knives, Forks and Spoons Press but still dreams of breaking the US market. “It’s a lot harder to enter that American literary field, especially as an outsider. But if I succeeded, I’d reach a bigger audience.”

The Ferris Wheel can in fact be described as a New York novel, an urban treatise where the city isn’t just a location but an intricate part of the story. Morel: “I never intended to write a New York story; I was writing an American novel set in the US, a bit like Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* because there are several scenes where Paul [the main character] is on the road. But then I went to New York in 2008 and fell in love with the city.”

New York has famously inspired many American authors, such as Paul Auster, Edith Wharton, Don DeLillo and of course Bret Easton Ellis. Morel admits that Ellis’ *American Psycho* and Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City* were big influences. The so-called Brat Pack authors portray a dangerous and darker side of the city that is usually forgotten by contemporary literature. “New York was a terrible city in the ’80s, but it was so much more alive, and that’s what fascinates me,” says Morel. “When you walk around now at 3.00 you feel perfectly safe, but it wasn’t like

that then. Instead, you had sex, drugs, partying, violence and yuppies. Brat pack writers incorporated the gritty reality, but they also show you a time of irresponsibility and dreams. The concept of failure wasn’t there yet.”

Morel’s main character, Paul, flees his provincial life for New York to pursue his dreams. They are dreams that is no longer feasible in contemporary society, but that doesn’t stop him because he somehow believes that this Dream still lives on, especially in New York. “Everyone I met in New York is not just a waiter or working in a hotel – they all have a dream, and they come to New York to accomplish it,” explains Morel. “Although 99.9% of them will fail, they still believe in that American dream, and that feeling is still very much alive in this city. It’s the city of opportunity. That’s what I fell in love with, so if I ever want to be a writer of American literature, that’s where I have to be.”

Both Morel and Paul are outsiders trying to get a grip on a city full of hope and disillusionment, but that’s where the comparison ends. Paul is an everyman, with delusions of grandeur. “There’s a lot of Paul in every man, I think, because you think that when you grow up, you’re going to drive a Porsche, date Gisele Bündchen and big things will come to you. But that’s not going to happen.”

The story is about being happy with who you are, but “someone like Paul does not see that because he keeps on believing that he was made for bigger things,” says Morel. “That’s one of the key mistakes anyone can make. There’s a little Paul in everybody.”

This fear of failure and a lingering feeling of unfulfilled desire is reflected in the book’s title. “The event at the Ferris wheel in the first chapter deeply effects Paul at a young age, but at the same time, it symbolises a vicious circle. Paul is stuck in the Ferris wheel of life, unable to get out and do something about the situation.”

Morel is currently working on a Dutch translation which will be published by Artus in May. ♦



© Martin Smeets

“It’s a challenge for people to see their dreams get shattered and still be happy with what’s left”

Fresh fiction

This week sees the first edition of Mind the Book, a new annual event mutually supported by the cities of Antwerp and Ghent. The international literary festival and book fair in Antwerp’s deSingel brings more than 80 authors, essayists and journalists together for discussions and interviews and will also sell their books. Here are the books we most recommend by a handful of the authors appearing at Mind the Book.



Gitte

Kristien Hemmerechts

Kristien Hemmerechts is a one-woman Flemish literary institution. Often writing about children and loss, her new novel deals with a past tragedy that still has disastrous consequences for a young girl who lives in an otherwise idyllic home. It’s a melancholy tale about love, religion and the loss of innocence narrated by an engaging and feisty main character.

Clausewitz

Joost de Vries

Dutch author Joost de Vries’ debut novel is an exhilarating tale of a young researcher who goes in search of a cult author, reclusive for more than 30 years. He soon stumbles onto an intricate web of lies, peppered with paranoid academics. *Clausewitz* is written in a smoulderingly suggestive style that is lathered with lingering metaphors. This exciting quest filled with literature, war and politics is reminiscent of the late Chilean author Roberto Bolano.

Zomerhuis met zwembad

(Summer House with Swimming Pool)

Herman Koch

Dutch author Herman Koch’s last book, *Het Diner*, sold over 300,000 copies and made him one of the most popular contemporary writers in the Netherlands. His latest fiction deals with a general practitioner who makes one tiny mistake that ultimately kills one of his patients. But was it really a mistake or did the good doctor just even the score with a man who got too friendly with Mrs Schlosser? If you’re looking for a cynical and witty page turner, look no further.

De Begraafplaats van Praag

(The Prague Cemetery)

Umberto Eco

Legendary Italian author Umberto Eco is back with a new multi-layered novel that delves into conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism, causing uproar in the Catholic realms of Italy. *Begraafplaats van Praag* (the English translation isn’t expected until November) is about a master forger called Simonini who suffers from amnesia and tries to regain his memory through an experimental form of auto-hypnosis. His past is gradually unveiled in this challenging novel about deception and destruction by the master of contemporary mind games.

Play, instead of Playstation

Get your kids moving during the upcoming school holiday

ALAN HOPE

Next week sees the schools closed for the charmingly named *krokusvakantie* (Crocus Holiday), which coincides with Carnaval (see p11). It is also the occasion for youth services, museums and cultural centres across Flanders to lay on special events and week-long workshops to keep kids busy and get them out from in front of the Playstation.

Here's some we think can't miss, but keep in mind that they might require reservations and are usually only in Dutch.

Where: Toy museum, Nekkerspoelstraat 21, Mechelen
When: Saturday 5 to Sunday 13 March
What: Treasure hunt involving solving puzzles while exploring the museum's collection. For 3+ years.
How much? Free to museum visitors

→ www.speelgoedmuseum.be



Where: Gravensteen Castle, Sint-Veerleplein 11, Ghent
When: Monday 7 to Friday 11 March
What: A five-day workshop preparing a mediaeval feast, with everything from costumes to weapons to food. For 8-11 years, with a performance for parents on Friday
How much? €130 for five days. Reserve at boekjebezoek@gent.be or 09.267.14.66

Where: Het Loo culture centre, Vismarkt, Tessenderlo
When: Monday 7 March
What: Sculpture workshop using plastic bottles and plaster bandages. For 7-12 years, reserve at info@cchetloo.be or 013.35.53.20
How much? €36

→ www.cchetloo.dsc-services.be

Where: Royal Army Museum, Jubelpark, Brussels
When: Tuesday 8 to Friday 11 March
What: Celebrate the museum's 100th birthday with a puzzle hunt while exploring the institution's history and collection of uniforms, weapons, aircraft and tanks, with prizes for all. The circuit lasts about two hours. For 6+ years, reserve at sandra.verhulst@klm-mra.be or 02.737.79.07
How much? €5, museum entrance is free

Where: Museum for Industrial Heritage and Textiles (MIAT), Minnemeers 9, Ghent
When: Monday 7 to Sunday 13 March
What: Special exhibition for parents and children, on a holiday theme, with a memory game. On Monday, Pablo the Mexican Beetle – a Volkswagen Beetle that has travelled 9,000 km through Mexico to arrive in Belgium with photographer Evy Raes – makes his entrance into the museum

How much? €5 for grown-ups, kids are free

→ www.miat.gent.be



Where: Zwaneberg culture centre, Bergstraat, Heist-op-den-Berg
When: Tuesday 8 March
What: An interactive family musical featuring the characters from the Fairytale Forest in the Efteling theme park. 3+ years. Reserve at info@zwaneberg.be or 015.25.07.70
How much? €15

Where: Molenhoek youth centre, Hundelgemsesteenweg 445, Merelbeke
When: Tuesday 8 March
What: Silk painting workshop. 8-12 years, reserve at 09.210.35.60
How much? €3

Where: Play Beach, Driebeekstraat 21, Gentbrugge
When: Friday 11 March
What: Day-trip to De Nekker sport and recreation centre in Mechelen, to spend the morning in the indoor playground, then off to Technopolis for a visit to the child-friendly science museum. 7-11 years, requires Grabbelpas. Reserve at jeugdendienst@gent.be or 09.269.81.10
How much? €12, includes transport

Where: Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA), Leopold de Waelplaats 1, Antwerp
When: Tuesday 8 March
What: Building workshop based around the exhibition Museums in the 21st Century. 5-7 years, reserve at 03.242.04.16
How much? €6

→ www.kmska.be

Where: Photo Museum (FoMu), Waalsekaai 47, Antwerp
When: Tuesday 8 March
What: Painting and printing workshop. Take your own photo and design a movie poster, then print it on paper to take home. 4-6 years, reserve at reservatie@fotografie.provant.be or 03.242.93.20
How much? €8

→ www.fotomuseum.be

Where: Kreakatau, Putstraat 4, Korbeek-Dijle (Bertem)
When: Monday 7 to Thursday 10 March
What: Yoga workshop on the theme of animals, with visits to three local farms. For 6-12 years, reserve at admin@kreakatau.be or 0485.02.05.20
How much? €100 for four days

→ www.kreakatau.be

Where: Children's Museum, Burgemeesterstraat 15, Brussels
When: Saturday 5 to Sunday 13 March
What: Track down and gather up all of Grandpa's things, hidden around the museum. Later you can bake some cookies! 3+ years
How much? €7.50

→ www.kindermuseum.be

Where: Museum of Natural Sciences, Vautierstraat 29, Brussels
When: Tuesday 8 March from 10.00 to 16.00
What: An environmentally friendly, do-it-yourself workshop. 6+ years
How much? €25

→ www.naturalsciences.be

Where: Royal Museum for Art and History, Jubelpark, Brussels
When: Wednesday 9 to Friday 11 March
What: Learn the craft of batik to make a scarf and bag, then take off on an imaginary trip around 1,000 islands of the South Seas. Organised by the Electriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art. 6+, reserve at 02.741.72.14
How much? €50 for three days

→ www.kmkg.be

Where: Hasselt culture centre, Kunstlaan 5, Hasselt
When: Monday 7 or Tuesday 8 March
What: Stomp workshop for children over eight, inspired by the British dance-percussion group. Watch a video, learn the moves, then put on a performance. 8+ years, reserve at 011.229.933
How much? €6

CULTURE NEWS

Flemish film director and host of the popular TV quiz show *De slimste mens ter wereld*, Erik Van Looy, is in Hollywood preparing to direct the US remake of his **2008 hit movie *Loft***. The film drew 1.2 million people to cinemas in Belgium, making it the most popular Flemish film ever made. Local producer Hilde De Laere promises that there won't be any major changes to the plot. Actors names being banded about for roles are Patrick Wilson (*Little Children*) and James Marsden (*Death at a Funeral*).

Brussels subscribers to Belgacom TV have a new station to check out: **Al Maghreb TV**, or AMTV, which is aimed at North Africans. The station is showing mostly music and entertainment programmes and will also air short films. AMTV is headed up by Mohammed Tijjini, a former jurist and volunteer at TV Brussel, where he worked on the production of *Arabesk*, the first Brussels broadcast geared towards the North African community.

→ www.amtv.be

First year students from the Lyceum school in Mechelen were met with a surprise when they visited Technopolis earlier this month: it was announced that they were the **three millionth visitor** to the hands-on science and technology museum for kids since it opened in 2000. The students were welcomed by Mechelen education alderwoman Caroline Gennez and held placards that made up the number 3,000,000 for an aerial photo.

The 98 candidates selected to take part in the first round of the **Queen Elisabeth Competition** have been announced. The prestigious Brussels-based competition is for pianists, violinist or singers, depending on the year. This year is singing, and six Flemish sopranos and tenors have made it through: Thomas Blondelle, Katrien Baerts, Stefan Cifolelli, Emilie De Voght, Joke Cromheecke and Anneke Luyten. The competition, which is open to the public and televised, begins on 5 May at Brussels' Royal Conservatory.

Nathalie Meskens took home the Best Actress award from the **Night of the Television Stars** last week and was a bit of a surprise recipient of the Most Popular Television Personality. The actress is known for her work on the skit comedy show *Tegen de sterren op* and for her guest appearance on the jury of the recent *De allerslimste mens ter wereld*. That programme won Best Entertainment Show and also Best Show overall. Best actor went to Peter Van den Begin for *Oud België (Old Belgium)*, but *Dubbelleven (Double Life)* beat out that show for Best Drama. **Barbara Sarafian**, of both *Tegen de sterren op* and *Dubbelleven*, went home empty handed but in fact last week was voted the Most Popular Gentenaar.

Eating is believing

The best chefs from across the globe come together in Ostend

COURTNEY DAVIS

The famed Hertog Jan restaurant in Bruges is planning to present a plateful of tomatoes this summer. Normally, a dinner of a single vegetable sounds pretty humdrum, but when talking to chef Gert De Mangeleer, it is easy to see why his restaurant has earned two Michelin stars.

"We have our own farm a few kilometres from here where we're rebuilding a restaurant in two years," he says. "On three hectares of ground, we're cultivating all our own vegetables, herbs and flowers. And this summer, we will have 50 types of cherry tomatoes."

Fifty? I double-check he didn't say 15. "Fifty. It is amazing. We have black ones, really dark black ones. Others that look like lychees." As he sings the praises of vegetables, it becomes clear why he is one of the presenters at The Flemish Primitives.

A two-day food conference in its third year geared towards food industry specialists, The Flemish Primitives wants to inspire chefs and bring them together to discuss their projects and new ideas, especially around the concept of innovation.

"Simplicity is not simple"

While many think of food innovation in terms of molecular gastronomy and technology, De Mangeleer has a different definition. "For me, innovation is in the combination of vegetables, to use a special vegetable no one else has. Like courgettes; we use the very small ones, about one centimetre, the closed flower. Or our 50 tomatoes. Innovation is in the new tomatoes and presentation. Simple doesn't mean it's not innovative. Simplicity is not simple."

The varying definition of innovation is what has made The Flemish Primitives, which is also open to the public, so popular. "Innovation is the idea on which The Flemish Primitives is based because Belgium is very much at the heart of culinary innovation at the moment," says event producer Peter Monbailieu.

Named after the 15th- and 16th-century painting masters who were pioneers in technique and talent, the event aims to continue in this spirit by promoting interaction between the best of Flanders' – and the world's – most innovative chefs, scientists and artists.

"It's a beautiful event," say De Mangeleer. "It is the perfect tool to contact other colleagues to come together and do some brainstorming. Plus, you present your own restaurant worldwide, show the world what we're doing here in Flanders. It is an honour to be on the stage. It is an appreciation of my work and of what we want to do on the farm."

The Flemish Primitives, which this year has moved from Bruges

to the larger Kursaal in Ostend, also offers the opportunity to promote Flemish products. "We have a large number of local products, like Zeebrugge shrimps, hops and asparagus. It's nice to show the world what we do with our unique products."

His own presentation will focus on, not surprisingly, vegetables. "We're going to work around vegetables and wine. I'm discussing my farm and some of the small, rare vegetables we are working with now. My business partner will talk about wine and how to pair it with vegetables."

Peter Monbailieu: "For the 2011 edition, chefs will present projects in duos or groups, displaying contrasts, like-mindedness and passion. Every duo will work around a strong theme. The first edition focused on food pairing, the second was more an overview of technical innovations and for the third edition, the focus lies on cooking, cooking and cooking."

There are a number of different elements to the event. On Sunday are Master Classes, in-depth sessions with international specialists on a specific topic such as fermentation or precise temperature cooking, while on Sunday Night is a Gala dinner featuring 13 Belgian chefs. The main event is on Monday, with various lectures and presentations beginning at 9.00 and ending at 19.30.

The list of big chef names and fascinating courses is inspiring. De Mangeleer and his sommelier, for example, will share the stage with Jonnie Boer of De Librije, one of two restaurants in the Netherlands with three Michelin stars. The day closes with a final session by Flemish chocolate icon Dominique Persoone of The Chocolate Line, together with Brazilian Chef Alex Atala, whose São Paulo restaurant D.O.M. creates classic Brazilian dishes using innovative techniques, earning him 18th place on the prestigious S Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list (just below Flanders' Hof Van Cleve).

The full day's program isn't cheap, but the €295 price tag is geared towards industry professionals who know what it is worth to be in the same room as famed French perfectionist Michel Bras; René Redzepi, the talent behind S Pellegrino's number one restaurant, Copenhagen's Noma; or avant-garde Italian pioneer Massimo Bottura. ♦

The Flemish Primitives

13-14 March
Kursaal Ostend

➔ www.theflemishprimitives.com



"It's a beautiful event": Gert De Mangeleer



Belgian students test drive DAA's Education Centre

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Early last month Designers Against AIDS' new International HIV/AIDS Awareness Education Centre (IHAEC) marked an important day: the first three students entered the programme designed to teach them everything there is to know about raising awareness about HIV and AIDS.

Evelien Gerene, Ibrahim Moumouh and Joey Ceunen are students who weren't looking for the average internship experience. Instead of knocking on the doors of media corporations, they turned to Antwerp-based Designers Against Aids (DAA) to complete their communication studies with some hands-on experience.

As a reward for their enthusiasm and confidence in the relevancy of DAA's cause, they are currently enjoying their final days of what has to be both the most unusual and challenging internship in Flanders.

"This is definitely not a boring place," says Ceunen. "We meet lots of very different people, from CEOs at companies like H&M to local ecological gardeners." The students are included in every activity going on at DAA, from promoting the non-profit organisation's new book to planning the

RESPECT festival that will take place in September.

As they are the first participants in the educational programme, they have kind of functioned as guinea pigs. "The atmosphere is very relaxed because we're actually 'testing' the experience before the first international students arrive this summer," explains Ceunen.

Which is not to say the experience is any less educational for these Belgians. "We've visited the Fashion Museum and The Pink House, we've been taught yoga by our programme manager, and we've made a spiritual walk through the woods," says Gerene. "It's not your standard internship! But what I love most is that people here actually respectfully listen to what you have to say – which is not always the case at big companies where you have to make coffee and copies, and that's it."

Apparently, this is one internship that not only proves to be rewarding professionally, but personally as well. Read more about the trio's experiences at the DAA centre on their blog:

➔ www.designersagainstaids.com/ihac_blog



Join the masquerade

Your best bets for Carnaval this weekend

ALAN HOPE

Carnaval celebrations are directly linked to Lent, the period leading up to Easter during which the faithful are expected to fast, but, despite that religious connection, it's a resolutely secular feast, profane in every sense of the word.

In Belgium, the tradition is for huge, elaborately organised events and excess in all things – from drinking to political satire to the liberal distribution of sweets to children lining the parade routes.

Small celebrations take place all over Flanders, but three haul in the Carnaval faithful from around the region.

The oldest

Herenthout, in the Kempen country of Antwerp province, calls itself the oldest Carnaval *stoet* in Belgium, a claim endorsed “until proven otherwise” in 1978 by then-Flemish culture minister Rika De Backer. According to the Carnaval's unofficial historian, André Cambré, the statement came after the king's visit to Aalst's 50th *stoet* led to “a whole polemic, with questions in parliament”.

The first Carnaval *stoet* in Herenthout dates to 1882, when the well-known actor Flor Hoegaerts left the theatre in his costume and, with friends and onlookers in tow, rode a white stallion round the town square. Later in the evening, lubricated with drink, the participants decided they would do the same the following year, and so the event was born. The municipal authorities only gave their imprimatur, as well as funding, in 1893, apparently at the request of “a large number of townspeople”. Apart from the war years, the parade has taken place without a break since then. The special character of Herenthout, Cambré says, is its basis in theatre. “About 40 to 60 groups take part, stopping every 50 metres to put on a short piece of street theatre. That goes on for about four hours.”

Herenthout, like other Carnaval towns, elects a Carnaval Prince each year who presides over the festivities, together with his *Nar*, a sort of jester or Fool, who performs somewhat the same role as the Lord of Misrule during the pagan feast of Saturnalia (with which Carnaval has much in common, aside from the date).

This year's prince is Rudy Dieltjens; his *Nar* is his twin brother Luc. Prince Rudolf is well-placed to lead the parade: his float will be built by students at the Scheppers Technical Institute in Herentals, where he trains future electricians. “The students came and asked me what exactly I want, and I told them to show me what they can do. I'll be standing up there later, but only thanks to the work of a lot of young people and colleagues.”

The biggest

The Aalst Carnaval is without a doubt the most famous in Flanders, and it's fair to say that, while the *Aalstenaars* consider the onion to be their emblem, for most other people they're represented by the enormous turn-out on Carnaval weekend and for the elaborate and politically tinted floats that make up the annual *stoet* (parade).

Historian Wim Beelaert wrote his thesis on the Aalst Carnaval for his degree from the University of Ghent, and maintains a detailed website (www.vastenavond.be) on the history of the event. He dates the first *stoet* to 9 March



Herenthout, the longest-running Carnaval in Flanders “until proven otherwise”

1851, when it was organised by a traders federation. The event didn't become an annual event, however, until 1923, when it received an official sanction from the municipality. “Then there were 23 groups that rode through the city. The initiative was an immediate success,” he says. This year's parade counts as the 83rd.

According to Ann De Block, a conservator at the city museum, Carnaval in Aalst is a manifestation of the highly active social and associative life of the town. Aalst is a place with deep working-class roots and a tradition of labour activism dating back to the 19th century. The same social cohesion helps bring people together in the dozens of large or small groups who work all year round to prepare the festivities of Carnaval.

“The groups are very close-knit, and there's a huge feeling of working together,” says De Block. Aalst's Carnaval is included in Unesco's list of notable examples of intangible cultural heritage.

The one on the coast

Blankenberge claims the first Carnaval “cavalcade” in 1875, with men going in costume from café to café and being pelted with snowballs by children. Later, the event achieved such renown that special trains were laid on for visitors from Bruges and, in the days before the coast tram, from Heist.

But the Catholic authorities in the town weren't happy with the unruly nature of the event and managed to bring enough pressure that the cavalcade was boycotted by the municipal authorities (masks were even banned from 1918 to 1923). But it went ahead all the same. In the end, the main impetus for the Carnaval parade came from the Casino, mindful of the need for winter tourist income. The event has been an annual occurrence since 1952, despite severe flooding at the coast in 1953. ♦

What's on when

Carnaval activities go on for weeks in these three towns, but the big parades happen this weekend

Herenthout:

The *stoet* in Herenthout – complete with street theatre – takes place twice, on Sunday 6 and Sunday 13 March – strategic, so it needn't clash with another town. There's a **fancy-dress ball** on Monday 7 and a **Children's Carnaval** on Tuesday 8. Herenthout is also organising a poetry contest in the run-up to its 121st *stoet*, and visitors can see the winning entries on banners hung from the church tower and the public library, as well as printed on beer mats. (It is *still* Carnaval, after all.)

Aalst:

The big *stoet* is on 6 March, and if you've never experienced it, now's the time, when it's slightly later in the year than usual and perhaps not quite so freezing cold. The famous **Voil Jeanettenstoet** (where men dress up as hideous, bare-breasted women) takes place on Tuesday 8 (Fat Tuesday). On Saturday 12, there's an afternoon of **fitness, meditation and voice exercises** to get participants in the recent *stoet* back into shape and on the road to next year. That evening is a **champagne reception**, dinner and sing-song, followed, somewhat optimistically, by **morning gymnastics** at 5.00 on Sunday morning.

Blankenberge:

Blankenberge's official *stoet* is Sunday 6 March, and it also has its own version of the Voil Jeanettenstoet (cross-dressing is one of the oldest traditions of Carnaval) on **Fat Tuesday**, 8 March. At the same time are **Carnaval games for kids** (hopefully in some distant part of town). On Saturday 12, there's a dip in the icy sea from the beach west of the pier, followed in the evening by fireworks on the beach and the burning of an effigy of last year's Prince, all in good fun of course.



Elaborate floats in Aalst this Sunday

© Frederik De Buck

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Dance by Hilere Van den Broek and Wouter Sel, part of the "It's Belgian" short film series

Anima turns 30

IAN MUNDELL

Anima is 30 this year, so naturally it's throwing a party. "We've asked some of the directors who've been coming to the festival for a long time, and who've become more like friends, to offer us some surprises," says Doris Cleven. She is co-director of the animated film festival, which opens its doors at Flagey in Brussels this week.

Sneak previews can be expected from American animator Bill Plympton, French silhouette animator Michel Ocelot, Peter Lord of Aardman Animation and Kevin Deters and Stevie Werner of Disney. There will also be retrospectives from several of these guests, while Plympton – a sort of one-man film studio – will be animating before a live audience.

German animation has a special place this year, with retrospectives of work by Gil Alkabetz and Andreas Hykade, and programmes devoted to the Film Bilder and SOI studios, the Kassel film school and the Pictoplasma multimedia festival.

"It's quite a significant retrospective," says Cleven. "Germany is an interesting country because its films are rather innovative at a visual level, while often also having something to say." There will also be mini-surveys of recent films from Ireland, Romania and Chile.

The festival opens with *Arrietty*, a feature-length version of Mary Norton's classic children's novel *The Borrowers*, which has been produced by Japan's celebrated Studio Ghibli. Although not by the studio's moving

force, Hayao Miyazaki, the film has the distinctive style of films such as *Spirited Away*.

Other features to look out for include Cuban love story *Chico & Rita* and *Technotise - Edit and I*, a Serbian film in the Japanese retro-futurist style. These and some other features have English subtitles.

For younger children, there are films such as *Allez raconte* (with Dutch subtitles), which tells a story about story-telling, and the Norwegian film *Pelle Politibil går i vannet* (*Pelle the Police Car Makes A Splash*), which plays in Dutch.

Short films are organised into Belgian, international and kids' competitions, with a special selection for Animated Night on 12-13 March. "The Animated Night has a rather special atmosphere because we select the films thinking particularly of the night-time audience," Cleven explains. "Let's say that the programmes are rather original."

If submissions to the festival are any guide, the Belgian cartoon industry is in fine form. "We received 80 films, which is not at all bad for a small country," Cleven says. Looking across the 26 films selected, there is no particular style or subject that unites them. "What makes Belgian animation original and what we are known for internationally, is the wide variety of our films and their creativity."

Among the Flemish films are contributions from established

animators, but it's even more encouraging to see the work produced by students. In *Onderrok* (*Underskirt*) by Jade De Paepe, a small boy is swept up into the dresses of giant women who dances around him. Her fabric animation is beautiful, the music and sound design haunting.

Meanwhile, in *De Volgende* (*Next*), Babs Raedschelders has drawn and painted on filmed images to produce an animated documentary about visiting the school doctor. *Ahasverus, the Wandering Jew* by Inne Haïne is different again, telling a fable in a painterly style with touches of Marc Chagall, while *Mouse for Sale* by Wouter Bongaerts is a classically simple animal cartoon told with computer animation. ♦

4-13 March

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein
Brussels

→ www.animatv.be



Aalst

Centrum for Hedendaagse Kunst
Houtkaai; 053.70.97.73
www.network-art.be
MAR 5 14.00-00.00 Kraakfestival featuring Call Back The Giant, Isos, France, Bridget Hayden, more

Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 5 20.00 Antwerp Live Looping Festival featuring Theo Travis, Yellow6, Aidan Baker, more
MAR 7 20.15 CW Stoneking

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAR 3 20.30 BJ Scott: Planet Janis
MAR 4 19.45 A Tribute to Alan Lomax: The Golden Glows + Roland

Kelly's Irish Pub

Keyserlei 27; www.kellys.be
MAR 5 22.30 Basically Basic

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
MAR 3 20.30 Bos & Voet

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
MAR 2 & 7 20.00 Usher

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 2 De Poulains: Arquettes + Customs + Hooverphonic + more **MAR 5** Wir Sind Helden. LCMDF **MAR 6** Buffalo Tom **MAR 7** Litfiba **MAR 10** Musth + Steak Number Eight

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAR 8 20.00 Youssou N'Dour

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 2 Cloud Control **MAR 3** The Bewitched Hands **MAR 5** Mona **MAR 6** Mike Posner. Hercules and Love Affair **MAR 9** The Joy Formidable + Megaphonic Thrift. CW Stoneking **MAR 10** Gruff Rhys. Mr T-Boned The Caroleregians & Pepper Seed

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
MAR 5 22.00 Nostalgia 77 + BRZZVLL + Rumble Jungle Orchestra + Funky Bomp

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.foresnational.be
MAR 5 20.30 Frédéric François **MAR 6** 20.00 Taylor Swift **MAR 8** 20.00 James Blunt **MAR 10** 20.00 Katy Perry + New Young Pony Club

Ghent

Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
MAR 5 20.00 The Phantom Band + Low Vertical

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 4 20.15 Kraakpand 5.3 featuring Nid & Sancy, Disco Drunkards, Chris Jagger, more

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAR 4 19.30 A Brand + The Galacticos. 23.00 Distance + N-Type + Joe Nice
MAR 5 23.00 Hindu Nights
MAR 6 19.30 Splash: Turbulence & Warrior King, reggae

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Novarock

26 March, 14.30-4.00
Kortrijk Xpo

If you like to hear live the catchy, melancholy riffs of Flemish rock musician Admiral Freebee (*pictured*), you'd better get a ticket to Novarock – it's the only venue at which you'll find him until the summer, when the music festivals will coax him out again. In fact, the Flemish rule at this one-day festival, which reads like a *Humo* Rock Rally reunion: Amatorski, Mintzkov, Arid, The Van Jets, Steak Number Eight. The action happens over four halls, so you can make your own programme, and it all wraps up with DJ duo Mumbai Science.



→ www.novarock.be

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
MAR 8 20.00 Fu Manchu
MAR 10 19.00 Bonecrusher Fest featuring Dying Fetus, Keep Of Kalessin, Carnifex, more 20.30 Hokie Joint

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
MAR 4 20.00 Nostalgia 77 + Hidden Orchestra



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
MAR 2 21.30 Playtime Session
MAR 3 22.00 Not Johnny Cash & The Tennessee Four
MAR 4 22.00 Albert Vila Quartet

De Hopper

Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33
www.cafehopper.be
MAR 3 16.00 Mohito

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
MAR 3 20.30 Bos & Voet

Ardoois

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduwnet
MAR 3 19.30 Ed And The Gators

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
MAR 3 20.00 A Tribute to Alan Lomax featuring The Golden Glows and Roland + screening of The Land Where the Blues Began

MORE FILM THIS WEEK

Ciné Kadée → *Station North neighbourhood, Ghent* →

Hungarian Ebb and Flow → *Cinematek, Brussels*

Film Night: In Transition → *Eha Ecohuis, Antwerp*

Archiduc
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
www.archiduc.net
MAR 5 17.00 Collapse
MAR 6 17.00 Albert Vila Quartet

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31
www.bonnefooi.be
MAR 2 21.00 F, B and I **MAR 5** 20.30 The
BF Acoustic Jam **MAR 8** 22.00 Lunatic
Toys **MAR 9** 22.00 Roselien Tobback

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
MAR 2 20.30 Toine Thys Trio
MAR 3 20.00 Jazz Station Big Band

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be
MAR 3 20.00 Jazz Station Big Band
MAR 4 20.00 Sweet & Hot
MAR 9 20.30 Timescape Project featuring
Fabian Fiorini

Kid's Rhythm 'n' Blues Kaffee
Grote Markt 50; 03.289.05.79
www.kidvanthienenmusic.com
MAR 6 21.00 Rusty Roots

Le Caveau du Max
Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88
www.lemax.be
MAR 3 20.30 Fred Delplancq Quartet

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
MAR 2 Caribe Con K **MAR 3** Marc
Lelange Blues Lab **MAR 4** Multitude
MAR 5 Albert Vila Quartet **MAR 7**
Master Session with Erik Vermeulen
MAR 8 Borderline Quartet **MAR 9**
Chamaquiando, salsa **MAR 10-11** Enrico
Pieranunzi & Rosario Giuliani Quartet

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAR 2 20.30 Paradigm Junction **MAR**
3 20.30 Ochumare **MAR 4** 21.00 Gino
Lattuca Quintet **MAR 5** 21.00 New
Orleans Roof Jazzmen

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 10 20.15 Mike Zito, blues

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAR 2-3 20.00 Christian Mendoza
Group + Yaron Herman
MAR 8 19.30 Mulatu Astatke

Ostend
Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00
www.kursaalostende.be
MAR 5 20.00 Toots Thielemans Quartet
MAR 6 20.00 Lenny Kuhr



Antwerp
Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 4 20.15 Balaxy Orchestra

Kolveniersshof
Kolveniersstraat 20; 03.658.68.86
www.middagconcerten.be
MAR 4 12.00 Tango con Piazzolla

Lotto Arena
Schijnpootweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
MAR 3 19.30 Das Frühlingfest der
Volksmusik

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 4 20.30 Mogil, experimental
soundscapes
MAR 5 20.30 Nayan Ghosh (India)
MAR 9 20.30 Boubacar Traoré (Mali)

Ardoois
Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82

www.deschaduw.net
MAR 4 20.00 Dranouter rally

Brussels
Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
MAR 4 20.00 Mankindabi Trio (Senegal/
Gambia)

Théâtre 140
Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08
www.theatre140.be
MAR 8 20.00 June & Lula + Claudine
Muno & The Luna Boots

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 5 20.15 A tribute to Alan Lomax
featuring The Golden Glows and Roland,
Americana

Leuven
Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
MAR 31 20.00 Yevgueni



Antwerp
Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.292.36.80
www.amuz.be
MAR 6 15.00 Le Jardin Secret featuring
Elisabeth Dobbin, soprano; Marian
Minnen, violoncello; Romina Lischka,
viol; Sofie Vanden Eynde, theorbo
& baroque guitar; David Blunden,
harpsichord: favourite composers of the
Hapsburg court

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAR 3 20.00 Martin Helmchen, piano:
Bach, Schoenberg, more
MAR 4 20.00 Hugo Wolf Quartet with
Bernarda Fink, mezzo: Schumann,
Respighi, Wolf

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
MAR 3-10 16.00/20.00 Jan Vermeulen,
fortepiano: Schubert
MAR 4 20.00 Budapest Festival Orchestra
conducted by Iván Fischer: Wagner
MAR 9 20.00 Carolyn Sampson, soprano;
Tuva Semmingsen, mezzo-soprano;
Robert King, organ; members of the
King's Consort: Sainte-Colombe, Marin
Marais, Couperin

Brussels
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAR 2 12.40 Marie Hallynck, cello;
Sophie Hallynck, harp; Gaby Van Riet,
flute: Bach, J Jongen, more **MAR 3** 20.00
Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted
by Iván Fischer: Wagner **MAR 4** 20.00
Luxemburg Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Emmanuel Krivine:
Mussorgsky, Sibelius, Brahms **MAR 6**
11.00 Sarah Picavet, piano; Benjamin
Glorieux, cello: Webern, Birtwistle,
more **MAR 9** 12.40 Minguet Quartett:
Schumann, Mendelssohn

Ghent
De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
MAR 4 18.00 Voorwaarts Maart: event
aiming to encourage creativity in young
composers, with the Kryptos Quartet,
Emanon Ensemble, more
MAR 6 16.00 DeFilharmonie conducted
by Steven Verhaert: Saint-Saëns' Carnival
of the Animals, Prokofiev's Peter and the
Wolf (for children aged five and up; in
Dutch)

Leuven
30CC – Predikherenkerk
Onze Lieve Vrouwstraat; 016.23.84.27
www.30cc.be
MAR 2 20.00 Flemish Radio Choir
conducted by Kaspars Putnins: Dimitri
Bortniansky, Sofia Gubaidulina



Antwerp
Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until MAR 8 15.00/20.00 Jules
Massenet's Hérodiade, staged by
Joachim Schlömer, conducted by Dmitri
Jurovski (in French with Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp
Monty
Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81
www.monty.be
MAR 2-3 20.30 Kunst/Werk in Nowhere,
choreographed by Salva Sanchis

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 3 20.30 David Pérez, flamenco

Brussels
Kaaithater
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaithater.be
MAR 10-12 20.30 Pichet Klunchun and
Myself, choreographed by Jérôme Bel

Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
MAR 2 20.00 La Fabuleuse histoire de
Bollywood (The Fabulous History of
Bollywood)

Les Brigittines
Korte Brigittinenstraat 1; 02.213.86.10
www.brigittines.be
MAR 4-6 20.30 Parijs- Turijn-Brussel,
three solos by choreographers from all
three cities

Hasselt
Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.33
www.ccha.be
MAR 5-6 20.00 Ultima Vez in Radical
Wrong, choreographed by Wim
Vandekeybus (world premiere)



Antwerp
Fakkelteater
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036
www.fakkelteater.be
Until MAR 6 15.00/20.30 Judas Theater
Producties presents Onderweg (On the
Way), solo performance by Anne Mie
Gils (in Dutch)

Fakkelteater Zwarte Zaal
Reyndersstraat 7; 03.232.14.69
www.fakkelteater.be
Until MAR 3 15.00/20.30 Wanda Joosten
in W van de Wereld (in Dutch)
MAR 4-6 15.00/20.30 Compagnie Lowie
in De Bemoeial (The Busybody) (in
Dutch)

HetPaleis
Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11
www.hetpaleis.be
MAR 5-6 15.15 Pantalone in Het geheim
van de keel van de nachtegaal (The
Nightingale's Secret) (in Dutch)

Sportpaleis
Schijnpootweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
Until MAR 5 20.30 Alex Agnew, stand-
up comedy (in Dutch)

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be
MAR 3-5 20.00-22.45 Monty Python's
Spamalot, musical (in Dutch)

't Kwartier
Keistraat 11; 0475.28.66.10
www.tkwartier.be
MAR 3 20.00 Stefan Perceval in De leraar
(The Teacher) (in Dutch)

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Un Peu de tendresse bordel de merde!

16-18 March, 20.00

deSingel, Antwerp

Are you the sort who doesn't know where to look among the naked masses at a Flemish sauna? Then beware of choreographer Dave St-Pierre's *Un Peu de tendresse bordel de merde!* (roughly, *A Little Tenderness, For F**k's Sake!*). If you're not that sort, then by all means snap up tickets for this before it sells out like the last time he was in town, when the applause was thundering for the body-loving, free-thinking Canadian, who emphasises the beauty of natural phenomena in contrast to structural impositions, such as religion and rationality.



© Dave St-Pierre

→ www.desingel.be

Asse

CC Asse
Noorderlaan 20; 02.466.78.21
www.ccasse.be
MAR 3 20.00 Kris Wauters, Marc Vanhie
and Sarah and Billie Kawendever In Over
songs gesproken (Speaking of Songs)
(acoustic musical theatre, in Dutch)

Brussels

The Warehouse Studio
Waelhemstraat 69a; 0477.408.704
www.ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Until MAR 5 15.00/20.00 English
Comedy Club in Private Fears in Public
Places by Alan Ayckbourn (in English)

Geraardsbergen

CC De Abdij (Arjaantheater)
Abdijsstraat 10; 054.41.13.94
www.tisvoortelachen.be
MAR 6 20.00 Gunter Lamoot: Rauwe
Kloten, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

Herzele

CC De Steenoven
Kerkkouter 40; 053.60.60.90
www.tisvoortelachen.be
MAR 5 20.00 Gunter Lamoot: Rauwe
Kloten, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)



Antwerp

Central Station
Van Immerseelstraat-Kievitplein;
02.537.68.75
www.artinallofus.be
Until MAR 30 FC De Kampioenen,
exhibition on the comedy show, which
ends this year after 20 years on Flemish
television

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be
Until MAR 27 LATT: Graphology,
Chapter 1, drawings in film, photography,
print and computer graphics
Until MAY 22 Liam Gillick and Lawrence
Weiner: A Syntax of Dependency, double
portrait of the New York-based artists and
their work
Until AUG 21 Ten Oosten van 4°24' (East
of 4°24'), group show of artists from the
Caucasus, India, China, Iraq, Egypt and
more

De Winkelhaak
Lange Winkelhaakstraat 26; 03.727.10.30
www.winkelhaak.be
MAR 3-APR 1 Photo Academy Award
2011, a selection of photographs by
the award winners, including Melanie
Matthieu, Linelle Deunk and Bart
Koetsier

Maagdenhuismuseum
Lange Gasthuisstraat 33; 03.338.26.20
www.ocmw.antwerpen.be
Until APR 3 Kanttekeningen, a history of
lace production in Antwerp

Photo Museum (FoMu)
Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
www.fotomuseum.be
Until JUN 5 Hungry Eyes, food
photography by Tony Le Duc, Valérie

Belin and Dimitri Tsykalov
Until JUN 5 Julien Maire: Mixed
Memory, works from early film and
projection projects, including the camera
obscura and the magic lantern

Plantin-Moretus Museum
Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50
www.museumplantinmoretus.be
Until MAR 13 Contemporary Past: Peter
De Koninck, etchings by the Flemish
artist

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
www.kmska.be
Until APR 30 Museums in the
21st Century: Concepts, Projects,
Buildings, the most significant trends in
contemporary museum architecture

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argosarts.org
Until APR 2 Hans Op de Beeck: Sea of
Tranquility, installation by the multi-
disciplinary Flemish artist
Until APR 2 Shelly Silver: Here, His,
video
Until APR 2 Down Low Up High:
Performing the Vernacular, video

Belgian Comic Strip Centre
Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80
www.stripmuseum.be
Until MAR 6 European Comic Strip
Treasures, original works from the past
100 years by 50 European comic-strip
artists
Until MAY 29 L'Emprunte Delcourt, 25
years in the life of comic strip editor and
enthusiast Guy Delcourt

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
Until MAY 8 Venetian and Flemish
Masters, masterworks from the
Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, Italy,
shown alongside Flemish masterpieces
from Antwerp's Royal Museum of Fine
Arts, spanning the 15th to the 18th
centuries
Until MAY 8 Luc Tuymans:
Retrospective, works by the
contemporary Flemish painter

De Markten
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
www.demarkten.be
Until APR 3 Drawing in an Expanded
Field, group show to honour the 300th
anniversary of the Royal Academy of Fine
Arts (also at ARBA and MAAC)

Espace Architecture La Cambre
Flageyplein 19; 02.642.24.50
www.civa.be
Until MAR 27 Cécile Massart:
La Conscience du paysage (The
Landscape's Conscience) Phase 1: le
nucléaire, photographs, prints and video
installations on nuclear waste

Goethe Institute
Belliardstraat 54; 02.230.77.25
www.goethe.de
Until MAR 25 Stefan Moses: Deutsche
Vita, 50 photographs by the celebrated
post-war society photographer

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
www.mjb-jmb.org
Until MAR 27 David Seymour: Een
humanistisch fotograaf (A Humanist

WEEK IN FILM

LISA BRADSHAW



Het Jeugdfilm Festival

5-13 March
Antwerp & Bruges

I love this film festival for many reasons, not least of all because it convinces children of the value of film festivals. They might not see the production and distribution deals being made behind closed double doors, but they learn to appreciate a good movie when they see it.

And they will see many of those at this Youth Film Festival, which takes place in both Bruges and Antwerp during the Crocus school vacation period. In the European Competition is *The Crocodiles Strike Back*, a follow-up to the first Crocodiles film (which closes the festival) and based on the novel by German author Max von der Grün. The Crocodiles are a bevy of pre-adolescent kids, who get themselves in regular trouble, this time to investigate the strange goings-on at the factory where some of their parents work, which is facing closure. It's a good balance of humour, mystery and the beautifully awful pangs of first love that got rave reviews in Germany.

Also in the competition are *Ways to Live Forever*, a Spanish film about 12-year-old Sam, who has an impressive number of quirky, impossible dreams and goals considering that he is struggling with leukaemia (pictured), and *Super Brother*, a Danish film that finds Anton desperate for a "normal" older brother rather than his own autistic one. But when brother Buller suddenly acquires super powers, Anton must re-think his position.

That film also falls into the Super Hero theme of the festival this year, which brings in older and newer films, including 1968's *Pippi Longstocking*, a handful of episodes of the 1960s Flemish TV series *Captain Zeppos* and a special screening of films made by local children in a festival-sponsored workshop. The festival also includes a series of films for very young children, shorts and a great section called Cut the Crap, full of films for young people 12 and older that do not yet have a distributor in Belgium – so this may be the only chance you get.

→ www.jeugdfilmfestival.be

Photographer), works by the Warsaw-born Magnum agency photo journalist

Librairie Saint-Hubert
Koningsgalerij 2; 02.511.24.12
www.librairie-saint-hubert.com
MAR 3-MAY 2 Back in Belgium Baby, paintings by the Paris-based Belgo-American artist

MAAC
Kartuizerstraat 26-28
www.maac.be
Until MAR 19 Drawing in an Expanded Field, group show to honour the 300th anniversary of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (also at ARBA and De Markten)

Museum van Elsene
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
www.museumvanelsene.be
Until MAY 15 Olivier Debré, lyrish abstract (lyrical abstraction), retrospective of the French painter's work

Natural Science Museum
Vautierstraat 29; 02.627.42.38
www.naturalsciences.be
Until MAR 20 Destination Mars, interactive exhibition in three sections: The Imaginary, The Planet and Exploration

Royal Museums of Art and History
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until APR 24 Tussen hemel en hel (Between Heaven and Hell), exhibition on death in the Middle Ages

Sint-Gorikshallen
Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24
www.sintgorikshallen.be
Until APR 31 Brussels Boutiques: from Art Nouveau to Present Day, a history of Brussels shops and window displays

Toy Museum
Verenigingstraat 24; 02.219.61.68
www.museedujouet.eu
Until MAR 31 Husa: genie van het houten speelgoed (The Genius of Wooden Toys)

Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxis.com
Until APR 3 Zes miljard mensen (Six Billion People), photo project by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

VUB - Building F1
Paul Hégerlaan 22-24; 02.650.37.65
www.ulb.ac.be/culture
Until MAR 12 VUB on display: multimedia show by the university's artists

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org
Until MAY 15 David Claerbout, photographs by the Flemish photographer

Ghent
Dr Guislain Museum
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95
www.museumdrguislain.be
Until MAY 8 The Weighty Body: Of Fat and Thin, Perfect or Deranged, a history of fasting for personal, esthetic, religious or economic reasons

Kunsthal Sint-Pietersabdij
Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30
www.gekleurdverleden.be
Until APR 25 Gekleurd verleden: Familie in oorlog (Coloured Past: Family at War), stories of the Second World War by everyday people in 1944

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
www.smak.be
Until MAR 27 Inside Installations, 10 installations from the museum's collection
Until MAR 27 Adrian Ghenie, paintings by the Romanian artist

Hasselt
Fashion museum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
www.modemuseumhasselt.be
Until JUNE 5 Alter Nature: The Future That Never Was, a look at the year 2000 from the point of view of designers from the 1960s and a glance at new possibilities in fashion

z33
Zuivelmarkt 33; 011.29.59.60
www.z33.be
Until MAR 13 Alter Nature: We Can, works by international artists about human manipulation of nature

Kemzeke
Verbeke Foundation
Westakker; 03.789.22.07
www.verbekefoundation.com
Until APR 10 Certified Copy, works by 20 international artists on reproduction and cloning
Until APR 10 Mark Verstockett: A Portrait, an overview of the Flemish artist's work in celebration of his 80th birthday
Until APR 10 Trou de Ville, group show featuring press releases, e-mails, videos and photographs on guerilla art

Leuven
Museum M
Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29
www.mleuven.be
Until MAR 20 David Shrigley, drawings and sculptures by the British artist
Until MAY 15 Freek Wambacq, installations by the Belgian artist
Until MAY 22 Pedro Cabrita Reis: One After Another, A Few Silent Steps, sculpture, paintings, photos and installations by the Portuguese artist
Until JUN 12 Gebonden Beelden, rare books

Machelen-Zulte
Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be
Until JUNE 19 Tussenruimte: Het onzichtbare zichtbaar maken (Space In-between: Making the Invisible Visible), paintings by Flemish artist Roger Raveel on white frames

Ostend
Kunstmuseum Aan Zee (MuZee)
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18
www.muze.be
Until MAR 27 The Responsive Subject, works by Flemish artist Guy Mees

Venetiaanse Gaanderijen
Zeedijk/Parijsstraat; 050.40.34.38
www.west-vlaanderen.be
Until MAR 13 Visual Arts Competition 2010, recent works by West Flemish artists

Tervuren
Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
www.africamuseum.be
Until MAR 13 Perspectives on the Congo River Expedition, photographs by Kris Pannecoucke from the Congo 2010 scientific project exploring the river's biodiversity
Until MAR 25 Madagascar: Meet the People, large-scale panoramic photographs by Wim De Schamphelaere of village scenes in the Indian Ocean island



Ars Musica: Contemporary music festival
Until APR 3 across Brussels and Flanders
www.arsmusica.be

Aalst
Carnival: Flanders' biggest Carnival celebration, Unesco-recognised, with parades, street parties, concerts and more
MAR 6-8 across Aalst
www.aalst.be

Antwerp
Het Literaire Pleidooi II (The Literary Plea): Willem Brakman and Filip De Pillecyn are both in the running for one permanent gallery at Den Haag's Letterkundig Museum, and the audience gets the final say (in Dutch)
MAR 3 20.00 at Letterenhuis, Minderbroedersstraat 22
02.212.19.30, www.deburen.eu

Mind the Book: First annual edition of this international meeting of the minds organised by Antwerp's deSingel and Ghent's Vooruit, including readings,

interviews, debates and a book fair, with special guests Ingrid Betancourt, Robert Fisk, Fawzia Koofi, Umberto Eco and more
MAR 4-6 at deSingel
www.mindthebook.be

Blankenberge
Carnival: Carnival celebrations including parades, concerts, performances, folk games, polar bear swim and more
MAR 4-12 across Blankenberge
www.blankenberge.be

Brussels
Batibouw 2011: Belgium's largest international fair for building, renovation and interior design
Until MAR 6 at Brussels Expo, Heysel
02.474.89.81, www.batibouw.com

Comic Strips Market: Show and sale of micro edition and alternative comic books
MAR 6 13.00-17.00 at Sint-Gorikshallen, Sint-Goriksplein 23
www.hallessaintgery.be

Helden II: Wetenschap: Henriëtte Louwerse talks with prominent scientists, author Lia van Gemert and professor Gustaaf Cornelis about their heroes in the field of sciences (in English)
MAR 2 19.30 at Rits Café, Dansaertstraat 70
02.212.19.30, www.deburen.eu

International Women's Day: 100th annual Women's Day to celebrate and bring awareness to women's issues through events worldwide
MAR 8 in Brussels and around the country
www.internationalwomensday.com

Oek de Jong: The Dutch author talks about his 35-year writing career (in Dutch)
MAR 10 20.00 at Passa Porta, A Dansaertstraat 46
02.226.04.54, www.passaporta.be

Performatik 2011: Annual contemporary performance and visual art festival encompassing theatre, music, dance, exhibition and talks
Until MAR 5 at Kaaitheater, Sainctelettesquare 20, and other Brussels venues
www.kaaitheater.be/performatik

Science Bar Brussel: Is alles rondom ons gevaarlijk en giftig? (Is everything around us dangerous and poisonous?), debate and film on the link between our environment and medical ailments (in Dutch)
MAR 10 20.00 at Rits Café, A Dansaertstraat 17
02.212.19.30, www.deburen.eu

Ghent
Low-Impact Man: Talk by Steven Vromman, Flanders' best known visionary ecologist (in Dutch)
MAR 3 19.30 at Huis van Alijn, Kraanlei 65
09.269.23.50, www.huisvanalijn.be

Herenthout
Carnival: Carnival festivities including parades, masked ball, more
MAR 6-13 at Karnavalvereniging Peer Stoet, Kloosterstraat 1
www.peerstoet.be

Kortrijk
Garden fair: Everything for gardeners, landscapers and hobbyists
MAR 4-7 at Kortrijk Xpo, Doorniksesteenweg 216
www.tuinxpo.be

Hobby Creatif Salon: Arts and crafts fair
MAR 4-6 10.00-18.00 at Kortrijk Xpo, Doorniksesteenweg 216
www.beobeurzen.com

Sint-Truiden
Villarte Vocaal: Jazz festival featuring Blackie & The Oohoos, Tape Cuts Tape, Stemmen op God, more
MAR 10-12 at Academiezaal, Plankstraat 18
www.villarte.eu

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

JAKE SHAW



Demervallei

Statieplein 8, Aarschot

The brightly lit "open" sign rarely goes unplugged at this brasserie. Its website lists the closing hour with a "???", a challenge a group of British tourists once put to the test. Having missed their train, the tourists "could do one of two things," owner Charles Ariaans says. "They could sleep in the station or drink beer in here. I said, 'OK, I'll stay open, and we'll have a couple beers.'" The group left Demervallei when the next train arrived – at six in the morning.

Tourists hardly account for the majority of Demervallei's customers, even though the café is directly across the street from the Aarschot train station. Most of its customers are locals or from villages surrounding Aarschot (north-eastern Flemish Brabant). It certainly has had the time to build its clientele; Demervallei opened in 1925 and has kept its name through multiple ownership changes.

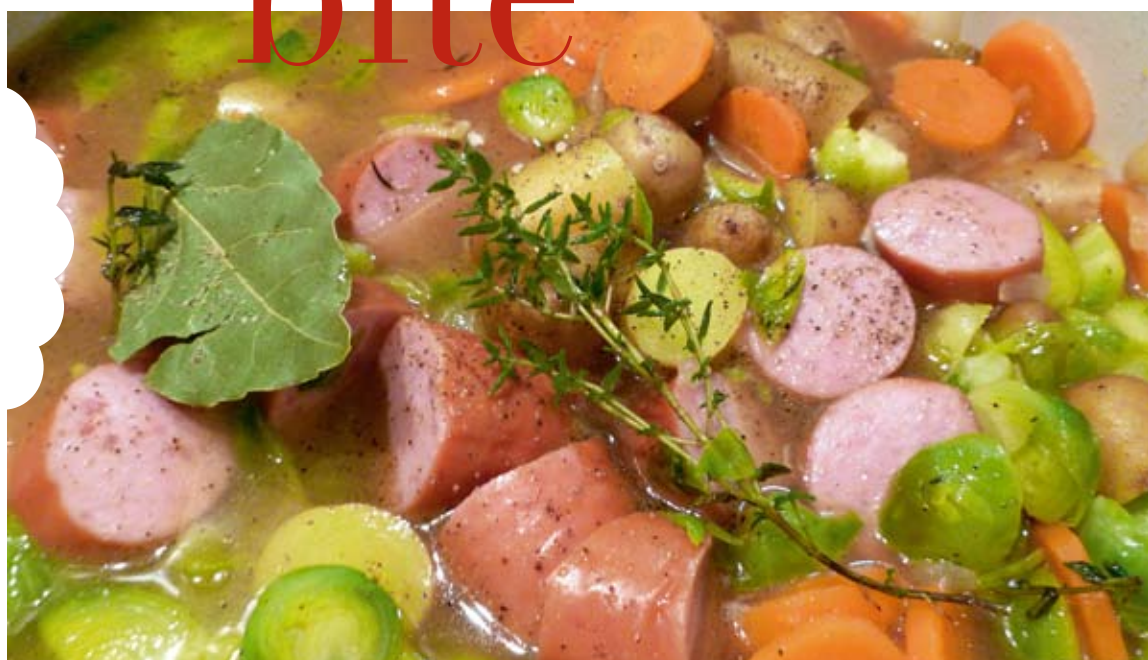
If upon entering Demervallei you can't figured out the draw, head to the WC. The water spout under which patrons wash their hands is a former beer tap, and the beer theme never ends. Ariaans, who bought Demervallei in 2005, has gradually grown the beer list that at last check numbered 510. Most are Belgian beers, though it's not uncommon to find a beer from the US, Norway or even China. There's a scattering of food on the menu, too, but it's the beer selection that keeps customers coming back.

Among the options are the hard-to-find Achel Trappists and even Westvleteren (though the latter will cost you nearly a tenner). You'll also find an original beer unavailable anywhere else in the world. Working with a local brewery, Ariaans developed both a brown and blonde version of a beer made specifically for his café. Called "Deimerwaghter" after a statue in Aarschot of the same name, the beers have become a café favourite. Back on the Demervallei website, you can find a menu that links most beers to info about their make-up and taste – in three languages.

→ www.brasserie-demervallei.com

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



Hutsepot

When visiting family in the United States recently, they inevitably asked me to prepare something "typically Belgian". I went for authentic and old-fashioned, a dish that Flemish grandmothers have been putting on the table for centuries: *hutsepot*, a meat and vegetable stew.

My brother-in-law's reaction? "It looks like you just opened the fridge and said, 'Hmm, I've got a little of this and a little of that; why, let's just throw everything in a pot and see what we get.'" Although not exactly the feedback I was going for, he was absolutely right. This filling, one-pot meal made for centuries – especially in rural areas and during the wars – is made up of whatever is available.

Hutsepot comes from the Dutch word *hutsen* which means to shake up, as you do the pot while the stew slowly cooks. But it sounds, appropriately enough, very similar to the English word hodgepodge (or hotchpotch), a mix or jumble of a variety of things.

So instead of being defensive about my adopted country's tradition of wonderfully uncomplicated farmer fare, I am in fact quite proud. These days, more and more people are going back to basics. Just look at Flemish chef Jeroen Meus' very popular show on channel Eén: *Dagelijkse kost* has more than 400,000 viewers daily; through his cooking demonstrations, Jeroen reminds us that cooking recipes from the past is easy, fun – and even delicious.

This does not, however, mean that we have to follow the old recipes verbatim. *Hutsepot* was traditionally made with the "leftovers" of the pig (ears, tail, cheeks, shoulders, etc), often prepared in melted lard. Jeroen's recipe, below, calls for a more modern-day version – using smoked sausage and butter.

As for which vegetables to add to your *hutsepot*, anything goes. Some add celery, leeks, turnips and cabbage. This version calls for Brussels sprouts

and potatoes, to which I added carrots for some variety and colour.

Those who carry over an aversion to sprouts from their childhood should really give them another go. In *hutsepot*, the little mini-cabbages lose their bitterness, even taking on a pleasant, dare I say sweet, and mild flavour.

Ingredients (for four people):

- 750g fresh Brussels sprouts, cut into quarters
- 800g starchy potatoes (*binjtje*), cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3 onions, roughly chopped
- 3 carrots, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 or 2 smoked sausages (pre-cooked), sliced into pieces
- 6 dl chicken bouillon
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 4 bay leaves
- Butter
- Nutmeg
- Pepper and salt

Preparation:

- Set a large pot over a medium fire and melt a good sized slab of butter
- Cook the onions in the melted butter until tender
- Add sprouts to the butter and onions
- Stirring regularly, add carrots and potatoes, thyme sprigs, bay leaves and sliced sausage
- Pour in the chicken bouillon until the ingredients are just covered
- Cover and let simmer, shaking the pot from time to time, for about 20 minutes or until all the vegetables are soft
- Season to taste with salt, pepper and a touch of nutmeg

This hearty winter dish is best served in a deep bowl with a dab of spicy mustard and a cold pint of Belgian lager.

→ www.een.be/dagelijksekost

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

TALKING DUTCH

PHILIP EBELS



A typical day at the *stamcafé*

For more than two years now, I've been going to the same café around the corner from where I live in Sint-Gillis, to write, have coffee and look out the window. I go there almost *iedere morgen*, every morning, and it has become something of a second home to me. It is my *stamcafé*, my regular local hangout.

I know the people behind the bar, and the people behind the bar know me. Or at least, we recognise each other; it's not the kind of place where you bond with the staff much. One of them, a French speaker, is always keen on learning Dutch and wants me to order in my native language: *een kleine koffie alsjeblieft*, a small coffee please. Or, if I haven't eaten yet, *de ontbijtformule*, the breakfast formula.

Each morning produces a similar scene, with two main types of lead characters: fellow freelancers, tucked behind laptops, and young mothers (fathers are rare), proudly parading newly born babies, comparing *kindervagens*, prams. The odd pensioner reads *de krant*, the newspaper. Sounds of Belgian jazzman Toots Thielemans gets the morning going.

It is a remarkable kind of daily cybercrèche that usually lasts until *rond het middaguur*,

around noon, when it is rudely disturbed by the loud and the hungry. Mums flee, and only the brave remain seated in front of their computer screens. Cups of coffee make way for *pintjes* and *wijntjes*, glasses of beer and wine, and smokers crowd the outside entrance for perhaps their first cigarette of the day on *een volle maag*, a full stomach.

Peace returns in *de namiddag*, in the afternoon, when most people go back to the office. It is the time of the day, lost somewhere between lunch and the early evening, *de vroege avond*, when people seem least productive. It is when the Spanish take *een middagdutje*, a well-deserved nap. For the people behind the bar, it is *de stilte voor de storm*, the calm before the storm.

Happy hour is approaching: *twee voor de prijs van een* (you can probably guess what that means). Twenty-somethings with mustachios and partly shaven heads start to arrive, thirsty for *een borrel*, an aperitif, followed by slightly older men and women in suits, happy to have survived another day. Most laptops have gone by now, and all tables are *bezet*, taken. An eager group of four is looking at mine, and I get the hint: *tijd om te gaan*, time to go.

This week, we introduce our new "Talking Dutch" columnist, Philip Ebels, who lives in Brussels and yet still manages to speak Dutch every single day. We also say goodbye to our long-standing "Talking Dutch" writer, Alistair MacLean, originator of the column in 2007. Our undying thanks to Alistair, who not only taught us words like "vergankelijkheid", "uithoudingsvermogen" and "peuterinternaat", but did so with the kind of humour only a Dutch-speaking Scot could muster.

THE LAST WORD...

Never too late

"There are talks for seniors on computers, but I wanted a real course, with homework and exams. It has to be a bit serious, you know."

Georges Willems, former chemistry professor, is Flanders oldest student at 90

Being democratic

"Brussels is a great town, and Russians love this country, but Belgium has not had a central government for 250 days."

Former KGB boss Vladimir Putin presumes to teach Belgium a lesson in democracy

Reading the riot act

"The EU completely misunderstood the situation from the start. They feared a seizure of power by Muslim fundamentalists, but they were entirely wrong."

Former PM Guy Verhofstadt, now an MEP, in Cairo

The quip master

Does this mean I can go to the buffet twice?

Bart De Wever, on receiving two medals – Man of the Year and Politician of the Year – in the *Humo* magazine's Pop Poll

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #170

Feature

Jan Fabre is one of Flanders' most recognised artists worldwide, with triumphs in art and theatre in Venice, Paris and New York. We talk to him ahead of his new production *Prometheus II*

Focus

We start a new series of interviews with Flanders' top CEOs: first up is Frank Coenen of Belwind, a leader in environmentally friendly energy

Arts

Introducing our new monthly music page, with interviews, reviews and a run-down of the best local venues