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Signs of the times

**While sign languages work
to get recognition from the EU,
Flanders' cochlear implants
become standard for children**

DENZIL WALTON

Last autumn, the Declaration on Sign Languages in the European Union was signed by all 36 representatives on behalf of 160 delegates of deaf communities at a special conference to initiate legislation for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. The document declares that the sign languages of every member state are native languages and that minimum standards for adequate services for the deaf throughout Europe should be implemented.

Next month in Brussels, meanwhile, the Flemish deaf community will celebrate the recognition of Flemish Sign Language by the Flemish government five years ago with a major three-day event in parliament.

This got us thinking that sign language might just be as hot a topic as spoken language. What we discovered took us all the way back to the beginning – what first happens when a deaf baby is born in Flanders. In 1998 Flemish agency Kind & Gezin (Child & Family) introduced a neonatal hearing screening programme – the first region in Europe to implement such a scheme. Previously, hearing problems in many children went undetected until they went to school for the first time. Every newborn in Flanders now gets a visit from a care worker from Kind & Gezin, who conducts an automated hearing test. Virtually all countries in western Europe and most states in the US have now followed Flanders' lead.

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Belgium sends F-16s to Libya

Belgium is sending a minesweeper, six F-16 fighters and about 230 military personnel as part of the international action being taken against the Gaddafi regime in Libya.

Belgium already has eight F-16s on exercise in Greece, and, according to the Air Force, six of those would go into action as *Flanders Today* went to press. The personnel detail will include about a dozen pilots as well as support staff, whose numbers will depend on the base at which the jets are stationed and whether other nations are also present to share technical responsibilities. The detail will be supplied from air bases in Kleine Brogel, Limburg province, and Florennes, Namur province. The planes themselves come from Limburg.

Each F-16 will be equipped with two medium range AIM-120 Amraam air-to-air missiles and two short-range AIM-9 Sidewinders. Since the aircraft on exercise have only missiles equipped with guidance systems, warheads and other parts will be delivered by C-130. The minesweeper Narcis is also in the Mediterranean, with its crew of 32. The duration of the mission is not known, but federal defence minister Pieter De Crem warned at the weekend that it "could last a long time" and cause "very many casualties".

Meanwhile, about 1,500 people in Brussels took part last weekend in a march in support of the "Arabic spring" – the series of popular uprisings in the Arab world, including Libya.

Reactors to undergo stress tests

Nuclear power plant closure hangs in the balance

ALAN HOPE

Nuclear reactors in Belgium that fail a European stress test will be closed down, federal energy minister Paul Magnette has promised. Meanwhile last week, "a small incident" was reported at the nuclear power plant at Doel in Antwerp province.

The European Union has called for the tests following the earthquake-related crisis at the Fukushima plant in Japan and a decision by German chancellor Angela Merkel to shut down seven older reactors in Germany for an indeterminate time. Two are unlikely ever to open again.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, Magnette was due to discuss the issue with his fellow EU energy ministers. Only then would it

become known how the tests, which are not obligatory, will be carried out and by whom. "Belgium will also argue for as many member states as possible to submit their nuclear plants to the tests," he said.

Magnette pledged the results of the tests would be made public, and any reactor that failed would have to close. Belgium has seven nuclear reactors, four at Doel and three at Tihange in Liège province. "But I should be surprised if all seven reactors failed," said Magnette. "When they were built, the rules were very strict."

 ➤ *continued on page 3*



FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



© Luk Collet

Bärbel Buyse

This year's winner of the Women in Enterprise and Development Award (Womed) for entrepreneurs is Bärbel Buyse, managing director of Sepia, a promotions and publicity materials company based in Beveren, East Flanders. The Womed Awards are organised by Unizo, the organisation that represents small businesses, together with women's business networks Markant and Mabizz. The award was presented this year by Princess Mathilde of Belgium.

Sepia produces publicity material for all sorts for businesses, and its offshoot Tinta makes "visibility materials" such as banners and terrace umbrellas. Sepia was set up in 1954, a small family business, until Buyse, together with business partner Guido Vandenabeele, took it over in a management buyout in 2002. They've built it up to a company with turnover last year of €10.5 million.

Buyse didn't grow up, as many women in enterprise have traditionally done, in a family business. "It was actually during my MBA studies at the Vlerick School that running a business appeared as an option," she says. Between university and an MBA,

she worked in several companies, but "I'd had a feeling for some time that I was in a rut. I always wanted to run forward, but kept on coming up against a wall." Buyse, 39, has two children and a husband who works partially from home. She credits his presence at home with her being able to run her business 100 kilometres away without the need for child care.

Being a woman, she says, allows her to bring something particular to the job of running a business. "I'm a perfectionist by nature. I'm hard as far as results go, but with a heart as far as the way they're achieved, with attention to the people behind the business," she says. "Those two things help you to get people to go that little bit further – for the client and also for themselves. Maybe it's easier for a woman to put someone else in the spotlight, whereas a man would perhaps prefer to be the central figure himself."

That view is endorsed by a study showing that 83% of businesswomen feel they do business differently from their male colleagues, while 82% find it harder for women to achieve the right work-home balance.

→ www.sepia.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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News in brief

Cycling legend **Eddy Merckx** is to be awarded an honorary doctorate from the Free University of Brussels (VUB). Merckx receives the honorary degree – his first – for his efforts to democratise cycling, his winner's mentality and his warm human personality, the university said. Also honoured on the same day in May is Senator Marleen Temmerman, a world-renowned campaigner for women's health.

The four new horses of the federal police will move into a new home in Evere, accompanied by **18 police dogs and two cats**. The cats have perhaps the most important duty: to protect the horses' feed from rats and mice. The new complex, including a training track and accommodation for all of the animals, will cost around €2.5 million.

The Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) invites all healthy adults aged between 18 and 35 to **donate blood** at its twice-yearly donation drive from 21 to 24 May. Donors will receive a "goodie-bag" and be treated to a concert and film evening. The last action in November attracted 3,807 donors.

→ www.bloedserieus.be

Antwerp Zoo last week unveiled the **new elephant accommodation** at Planckendael, which will welcome the zoo's elephant youngster star, Kai-Mook, and her family sometime this spring. The inside quarters alone are the size of their entire compound at the zoo now, with additional outside grounds of 12,000 square metres, or the size of two football pitches. The grounds will include a swimming pool, sandbox and dust and mud baths.

A magistrate who spent 14 years trying to crack the mystery of who carried out a series of **violent robberies in the 1980s** in which 28 people died has quit the case. Jean-Paul Raynal was recently involved in a call for witnesses to the raid on the Delhaize supermarket in Aalst in 1985, where eight people were murdered. The culprits, known as the Brabant Killers, have never been found; after five more years, it will be too late to bring any proceedings. "The clock is ticking, and the chance that the gangsters will ever be found is getting smaller. But I don't rule it out," Raynal said.

Brussels public waste authority Net Brussel has announced it will start **collecting green waste** from all homes in the region starting in September. Until now households in Elsene, Etterbeek, Sint-Gillis, Sint-Joost-ten-Node, Schaerbeek and Brussels-City have had to bring their plant and garden waste to collection points themselves.

One of the alternate jury members at the trial of the alleged killers of **police officer Kitty Van Nieuwenhuysen** in Brussels was dismissed last week after falling asleep during testimony. The man, a prison officer working in Sint-Gillis prison, had earlier in the day fallen on the steps of the Justice Palace. Belgian alternates sit through the trial, but are only called upon to deliberate if a regular jury member drops out.

Ten **Greenpeace activists** who made their way through tight security to protest at the entrance to a European summit in Brussels in December 2009 were last week given one-month suspended sentences by a court in Brussels. The activists had used fake passes to bypass security and unroll protest banners. The court said they had put public order at risk. A journalist accused of lending out an official pass to be copied was acquitted, as was Greenpeace itself.

OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

Cheap steak is "slap in the face"

To be sure, the hugely popular furniture and fittings superstore Ikea has tons of great bargains, even if you have to trek for miles round its winding paths to get to them. But one such bargain last week seemed too good to be true to the members of the Flemish farmers' union, the Boerenbond.

Ikea was offering shoppers a steak with fries for only €2.50 – a fraction of the price you'd pay in your local café, and nothing like the €145 charged (for two, admittedly) in Peter Goossens' Hof Van Cleve.

But farmers took exception and brought a complaint before the inspectors of the federal economics ministry. Belgian law prohibits what is called "dumping" – selling something at retail for less than the price you paid for it.

Farmers are having a tough time getting prices for their wares that allow them to even make back production costs, let alone make a profit. Whoever was selling steak at the prices Ikea was paying must be operating at a loss. Besides which, public pressure to keep food prices down was made worse by an expectation that a steak could be had for loose change.

The price was "a slap in the face" to the farming industry, said Piet Vanthemsche, president of the Boerenbond. At the same time, Horeca Vlaanderen, which represents the restaurant industry, complained that Ikea was competing unfairly with its members, who do not have the purchasing muscle the giant chain has.



Ikea was happy to open up their books: the beef was of Belgian origin, and Ikea had paid a wholesale price of €9.77 a kilo. The steak on the plate weighed 150g, so Ikea was paying €1.46 for each serving, allowing a reasonable €1.04 over for a portion of *frietjes* and a dollop (or *dølløp*) of sauce.

In any case, the inspectors said, selling meals is a service, while the law only relates to the sale of goods. The complaint was rejected.

The promotion, in any case, is over. The Ikea restaurants are now instead offering those famous meatballs with fries for €1.50, or fish and chips for €1.



Future of nuclear reactors uncertain after Fukushima

→ *continued from page 1*

Nevertheless, the federal government took the decision in 2003 to close the country's oldest reactors (Doel 1 and 2 and Tihange 1) by 2015, and the rest by 2025. However the VLD party (now Open VLD) of the then-prime minister Guy Verhofstadt worked to have that law overturned, a view which was supported by a committee set up by his party colleague, energy minister Marc Verwilghen, in 2006.

CD&V, an even greater opponent of the closure plan, won the 2007 election, and a report commissioned by Magnette recommended postponing closure by 10 years for the three older reactors and by 20 years for the rest. That was about to become law, when Open VLD caused the fall of the Leterme government. In effect, the plan for plant closure in 2015 is still in force.

This month, just two days before the earthquake in Japan, the International Atomic Energy Agency called on the Belgian government to make a decision on keeping the reactors open – something it cannot do until a new government is

formed. Since the nuclear disaster of earlier this month, however, all bets are off. Last week Magnette made it clear that even if a new government were to be formed tomorrow, the question of whether or not to close the reactors is now off the table until the stress tests have been carried out.

The incident in Unit 4 of the Doel power plant (*pictured*), meanwhile, was caused by one of the six pumps that brings cooling water to the reactor as a back-up if the normal supply goes down. In a routine test it was discovered that the pump was delivering water at a pressure lower than intended. Investigation found that the pump had not been properly calibrated when it was installed six months ago. "The incident could not have had serious consequences since we have the capacity to handle any possible problem with only two pumps," a spokesperson said.

- There is "absolutely no need" to take iodine tablets to protect against the effects of radiation from the Fukushima accident, according to the Federal Nuclear Control



© Friedrich Tellberg

Agency, in response to queries from pharmacists inundated by requests from the public. The tablets are, however, available free to people living within a 20-kilometre radius of the nuclear power plants at

Doel and Tihange, as well as the nuclear energy study centre in Mol and the National Institute for Radio-elements in Fleurus, Hainaut province. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



410,000

owners of firearms in Belgium, in possession of a total of 740,000 weapons, according to the Flemish Peace Institute

5,663

places available at the 74 carpool parking lots in Flanders. The practice is most popular in Limburg, where the car parks are 92% occupied on average and where the first one opened in 1991

177

cases of assault and aggression against railway staff in 2010, up from 143 the year before

€90,000

paid out by the king in 2010 to 450 families who applied to him for help. Each one received €200. The king receives about 10,000 letters a year asking for financial assistance

148,606

people in Belgium living on benefits, 5,400 fewer than in 2009. There are in 43,848 in Flanders and 36,994 in Brussels

Smoking ban extended

Smoking will be banned entirely in cafes from 30 June, following a ruling last week by the Constitutional Court. Smoking has been banned in public buildings, restaurants and cafes that serve food since 2009. An exception was made for cafes that only serve packaged snacks, with the intention of extending the ban to them in 2014.

However, that measure was challenged in court by a group of companies that sell microwave pizzas and croques monsieur, who have seen their sales plummet since the partial ban was introduced.

The constitutional court last week ruled that the law as it stands was discriminatory. The smoking ban was introduced as a public health measure, the court said, and the presence or otherwise of cooked food makes no difference.

The catering industry has predicted a "bloodbath" as a result of the extended ban. Cafes will see a major drop-off in customers, according to Horeca Vlaanderen, which represents the industry,

as the trend towards drinking at home is exacerbated. And cafe owners who had decided to scrap serving food during the five-year grace period now see their choice nullified, as they will have to ban smoking anyway.

The sole exception to the ban will be cafes that have a separate smoking room with adequate ventilation and where drinks are not served by staff. "For many that is financially and structurally impossible," said Danny Van Assche, managing director of Horeca Vlaanderen. Industry representatives are now calling for compensation for cafe owners, perhaps in the form of a reduction of VAT.

The respiratory health-care association VGR said the exceptions had created an "absurd" situation. "In a short time no-one will even think about a smoking ban any more, it's all a matter of becoming accustomed," said a spokesman. "That's already the case in other countries like Ireland and France, where a general ban has been in



© Shutterstock

place for some time."

Leo Leys, director of the Flemish Anti-Cancer League, said he was "extremely delighted" with the judgement. "We have nothing against smokers; let them smoke. But we can't have other people smoking along against their will," he said. "The exceptions in the law meant a lot of people weren't protected, and the exceptions were unjustified since they were actually economically motivated." ♦

Budget measures announced

The caretaker federal government last week announced its proposals for the budget for 2011, requested by the king, despite their technical lack of the power to do so. The main points:

- The **budget deficit** to be brought down to 3.6% of GDP down from 4.4% and half a percent lower than the EU requires
- No new taxes for companies or individuals
- A reduction of excise duty when diesel reaches €1.50/litre and petrol €1.70/l to lessen the impact of price increases on consumers
- Gas and electricity prices to rise no more often than quarterly, with new price approval mechanism
- Pensions to go up by 1.25%; the minimum pension to rise by 2% by January 2012
- Pensions for the self-employed rise by 2.11% this year and 2.33% next year;
- Increased holiday money and benefits for the handicapped; the care allowance goes up from €12 to €15 a day
- Minimum wage increased by €120 net
- The 6% VAT rate for renovation of houses older than five years is prolonged;
- No increase in the cost of service cheques or the tax on digital TV services ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

Our new government

N-VA party leader Bart De Wever was invited to 10 Downing Street last week. One wonders what he talked about during his brief meeting with British prime minister David Cameron. Was it the "compassionate conservatism" they both believe in? Or did De Wever congratulate Cameron on forming a coalition government – somewhat of a novelty in the UK – in just five days?

In Belgium most people have stopped counting the days since the federal elections in June 2010. Not much seems to be happening right now, apart from De Wever's trip to London and Elio Di Rupo (PS), the winner of the elections with the French speakers, taking a plunge in a new swimming pool in notable snug trunks.

This column has repeatedly stated that being without a federal government in Belgium is relative: The governments of regions and communities, responsible for areas such as education, economy and mobility, are still in place. Meanwhile, the caretaker government under prime minister Yves Leterme (CD&V) is taking on more and more responsibility, too.

Having no majority in parliament and acting as a caretaker government until the new government takes its place, Leterme II started off with great caution, handling only pressing matters. Nine months on, it takes decisions on a new budget, including measures to curb energy prices – and even on going to war! All of this requires a majority in parliament, of course, but the decision on Libya, taken unanimously, shows that this is hardly a problem.

With everything seemingly back to normal, the sense of urgency in forming a new government has completely disappeared. When French-speaking vice-prime minister Didier Reynders (MR) said that this situation might last till 2014, when new elections are planned, it was hard to tell whether it was a joke or not.

On the French-speaking side, the PS, disappointed at the lack of progress and at Di Rupo's term as prime minister thwarted, refuses to take the lead. This leaves N-VA more and more frustrated by the new *de facto* federal government of which it is not part. The Flemish Christian Democrats, too, feel uncomfortable, fearing that this situation goes against the voters' will and only reinforces the power of the N-VA.

So is there no way out? De Wever has announced the beginning of "the endgame". Let's hope he did not use those words in any Beckettian sense: taking a long time to go nowhere.

WIN A BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOUR OF

DE MUNT!

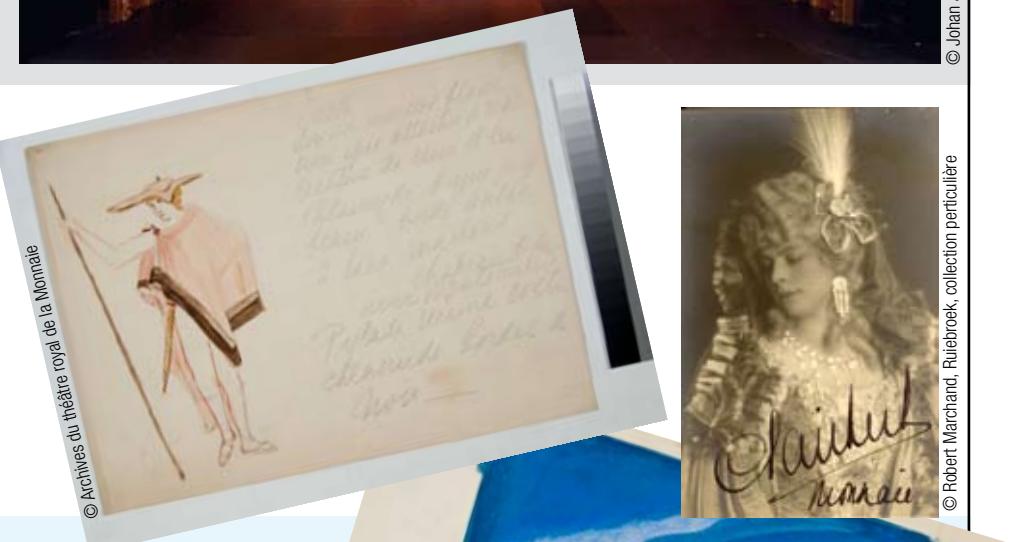


As the geographical centre of Europe, Brussels quickly embraced opera performances, but it was not until the end of the 17th century that a true auditorium was built. From that point, **De Munt** played a key role in the cultural life of Flanders, presenting the most famous composers, the most beautiful voices, the most recent plays and the greatest choreographers and dance companies.

With its 1,150 seats, **De Munt Nationale Opera** is the largest opera house in Belgium and one of Europe's most wonderful theatres. The sobriety of its beautiful neoclassical façade hides a fully restored rich interior decor typical of the 19th century. The theatre is home to works of art such as the fresco by Rube and Chaperon decorating the central cupola, the fine ceramic by Pierre Alechinski, large-scale paintings by Emile Fabry and works by Sam Francis, Sol Lewitt, Daniel Buren and Giulio Paolini, making it an essential part of the artistic heritage of the Belgian capital.



The scenery and costume workshops – construction, ironwork, sculpture, painting, decoration and costumes, including hats, shoes and embroidery – are located since 1999 in a building behind the theatre, sharing close to 20,000 square metres of installations with several work studios and two large rehearsal rooms. The opera offers the chance to benefit from its experience with artistic creations as well as from its relationships with renowned artists. A tour of the opera and its workshops takes you to the heart of the most beautiful opera performances.



A tour of **De Munt** allows you to discover rich cultural heritage – both historical and contemporary – as well as architectural and artistic works, costumes, scenery, crafts and “Les Machines du Rêve”, a fabulous baroque opera model designed and built by Michel Dumont and Thierry Bosquet.

Theme-based tours provide you with a special view of the opera:

The making of an opera today: How does an opera come to fruition? What is a theatre distagione? How does the collaboration between stage director, scenographer and costume designer unfold? When do rehearsals begin?

Scenery and costumes: Discover centuries-old crafts of stagehands and technicians as well as shoemakers, hatters, ornamental blacksmiths and more. **De Munt** provides you with a chance to discover these ancestral crafts in a modern setting with professionals from each field. Each tour is organised according to the participants' wishes..

Brussels Unlimited, De Munt & KBC



This joint venture is an initiative between Brussels Unlimited, KBC and **De Munt**.

We have 15 pairs of tickets for a visit of the opera on **9 April** from 11.30 to 13.00, followed by a reception. To win tickets, simply answer these questions and send them to competitions@ackroyd.be before noon on 31 March

1. In what year did a fire destroy the opera? (tip: www.demunt.be)
2. How many movies are there on the KBC website explaining the use of ATMs? (tip: www.kbc.be/expats)
3. Who did The Bulletin magazine have lunch with in the March 2011 issue?

Good luck!



Signs of the times

There are as many sign languages as there are spoken languages

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If the screening shows hearing problems, the parents are referred to a specialised audiological assessment centre or university clinic, where additional testing is completed within four weeks. These centres work closely with the five early intervention teams in Flanders (one per province), which inform parents about hearing problems and the communication and therapy options.

Early screening is vital because it gives health workers the chance to implement early onset of intervention. In this area too, Flanders is a pioneer, particularly in the area of cochlear implants.

Helping to hear

A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device that helps provide sound to a person who is deaf or severely hard of hearing. An external portion sits behind the ear, and a second portion is surgically placed under the skin. A cochlear implant has:

- a microphone, which picks up sound from the environment
- a speech processor, which selects

and arranges sounds picked up by the microphone

- a transmitter and receiver/stimulator, which receive signals from the speech processor and converts them into electric impulses
- an electrode array, which is a group of electrodes that collects the impulses from the stimulator and sends them to different regions of the auditory nerve

An implant does not restore normal hearing. Instead, it gives a deaf person a useful representation of sounds in the environment and helps him or her to understand speech.

"About 200,000 people worldwide are wearing cochlear implants," says Leo De Raeve, Director of the Independent Information Centre on Cochlea Implants (ONICI) in Zonhoven, just north of Hasselt. "In the last three years in Flanders, 95% of all children born deaf received a cochlear implant – nearly three-quarters of them before they were 18 months old." The average age of implantation is 14 months, but implants have been

successfully installed in babies as young as six months. Of course, such early intervention would not have been possible without the universal hearing screening programme.

The results are impressive. Around 60% of all deaf babies given a cochlear implant can be sent to a normal, hearing school by the time they are six years old. The reason is that the implant stimulates the auditory nerves as early as possible – when the brain is the most receptive.

"It's a successful combination of early screening within weeks of birth, cochlear implantation in the next six months if possible, and the provision of excellent support of the parents," adds De Raeve. "This involves helping parents to use the implant properly and advising them how to communicate most effectively with their child."

When the child enters mainstream education six years later, his or her language ability is either average or only slightly below average. Without implantation, many of these children would not be able to communicate with hearing children or teachers.

Since February 2010, medical insurance companies in Flanders also reimburse the second implant (that is, in the child's other ear) – previously, only the first implant was covered. Most countries, in fact, reimburse just one implant, but after Flanders began covering the second, Sweden, the UK, Austria, Switzerland and some areas of Germany are now introducing legislation that allows the second implant to be reimbursed.

It's highly advantageous for parents, as the total cost of a cochlear implantation is about €22,500. After reimbursement, the cost to parents winds up at only about €500, part of which covers the child's stay in hospital.

Going to school

Despite being in mainstream education, children with cochlear implants still need support, as they can face issues, especially when they are the only deaf or hard-of-hearing child in their class.

"We give them comprehensive counselling to help them look after their device and to learn how to react when a classmate laughs at them or tries to remove their microphone," says De Raeve. "It's also important that hard-of-hearing children meet similar children and even adults who wear these devices so they realise they are not the only child with a hearing problem."

The field of deaf education has been riddled with controversy for hundreds of years, so it's no



© Courtesy of Fevlado

The Federation of Flemish Deaf Organisations (Fevlado) is spearheading a three-day event next month in celebration of the recognition of Flemish Sign Language by the Flemish Parliament five years ago (www.fevlado.be)

surprise to find that cochlear implantation has its critics. On one side of the fence are those – particularly the hearing parents of a deaf child – who support cochlear implants because they believe that they allow children to function successfully in society.

On the other side is a sizeable portion of the deaf community who believe that deafness is a cultural identity, not a disability.

"With deaf children of deaf parents, we say that their first language is sign language, and we emphasise the need for the child to learn that important language – even after receiving an implant," explains De Raeve. "But in situations where the parents are hearing and don't know sign language, the cochlear implant is a huge advantage both to the child and the parents."

Sign language(s)

However, when it comes to sign language, nothing is clear and simple. If you are under the impression that there is one global sign language that allows deaf people everywhere to communicate with each other, nothing could be farther from the truth.

There are as many sign languages in the world as there are spoken languages. Unlike spoken English, sign languages used in English-speaking countries aren't similar to each other. Someone using British Sign Language, for example, would not be able to communicate with someone using American Sign Language (which is much closer

to French Sign Language).

An attempt was made to create an International Sign Language, but this has never been well received. Therefore, there is no universal sign language.

Even in a region as small as Flanders, there are two main sign languages (Flemish Sign Language and French-Belgian Sign Language) as well as a multitude of dialectical variants. So the chance that a deaf person in Hasselt can understand what a deaf person in Knokke-Heist is signing is, unfortunately, very small.

This dichotomy is also linked with the absence in Flanders of a special academically oriented college or university for the deaf, at which sign language could be further developed. In fact, there is no such institution in the whole of Europe. The only university specifically designed for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the world is Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.

The advantage of such a specialised institution is that all deaf students from the US (and elsewhere) can come together to study at a high academic level. It's therefore a wonderful learning opportunity and a place to build on your sign language. This is one of the reasons why American Sign Language is at such an advanced level in all academic subjects, from civil engineering to art history, and computer science to modern languages.

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Breaking new ground in Flanders



Born deaf to a Flemish hearing family in the late 1960s, Helga Stevens spent the first half of her childhood in KIDS Hasselt before moving to a mainstream school – Heilig-Grafinstituut in Sint-Truiden. She then spent a year in the US as an exchange student and visited Gallaudet University, the world's only university designed for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

There Stevens met a deaf attorney who inspired her to pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer. Returning to Belgium, she enrolled in law school at the Catholic University of Leuven. In 1994, Stevens passed the

bar examination in Brussels and became a certified lawyer. Two years later, Stevens (pictured) became a project coordinator for the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and later its president. In July 2007, the Flemish Parliament appointed Helga Stevens to the Senate as a Community Senator. She is the only deaf person who has entered the parliament chambers and also served as Senator. Consequently, Stevens has raised significantly the profile of the deaf community in Flanders, and all discussions in parliament are now signed.

► www.helgastevens.be

Spreading its wings

Flanders' SonicAngel takes its music investment plan on the road

MARC MAES

Propelled by the success of its first signing – last year's Belgian Eurovision entry Tom Dice – online music platform SonicAngel is going abroad, setting up joint ventures and companies in western Europe and the US. SonicAngel was launched one year ago by two Flemings, who combined the best of both their worlds: musician and producer Maurice Engelen (otherwise known as Praga Khan) and internet entrepreneur Bart Becks.

Becks' background is like a how-to of business: He started his career with FNAC in Paris, became CEO of Belgacom, switched to SBS Media Group, where he was named Senior VP of New Media, and was at the cradle of Netlog, Flanders' answer to Facebook.

He was introduced to Engelen about 10 years ago. "We worked together to produce the first-ever streaming concert in Belgium – Praga Khan's performance in the Ancienne Belgique, which was streamed via Skynet," Becks explains. "We were specialised in our own domains but wanted to cross over: Maurice was interested in innovating within the music business, and music was never far away from what I did."

It finally came together when Engelen was on the jury of *X-Factor*, a Flemish TV talent search. "Tom Dice, one of the finalists, was not given a recording contract," Engelen says. "That's when we decided to go ahead with SonicAngel, combining my long-time experience in the 'traditional' music industry, with a thorough knowledge of promotion, distribution, publishing and media deals, and Bart's expert knowledge of new media like Facebook and Twitter – the direct communication between artists and fans."

How it works

SonicAngel replaces the current music industry business model with a new combination of music and technology in which fans invest in musicians they believe in. Known as "fanfunding", SonicAngel makes music listeners stockholders in their favourite bands and artists, plus supports specific project financing and corporate financing.

"The name SonicAngel stands for music, innovation, and angel investors," says Becks. "Plus, Maurice's surname is Engelen." (*Engelen* is the Dutch word for "angels".) Becks and Engelen screened hundreds of internet music companies to see what worked and what didn't. The conclusion was that fan empowerment continues to grow and could serve as a basis for a new business model, with fans helping to discover, finance and even release the music of their favourite artists.

In a parallel move, the two persuaded sponsors such as AB-Inbev, Sony Ericsson and ING bank to give financial support to the project. "We produced tailor-made programmes for the sponsors where we go along with their business philosophy," explains Becks. "The goal is to give new talent an opportunity, and many companies bear the same concern."

Partner companies have access to SonicAngel artists and their music for marketing, promotion and concerts, such as the AB-Inbev club tour, summer concerts for ING or free SonicAngel downloads on Sony Ericsson phones.

Corporate interest has been so successful, that SonicAngel recently launched the FAB division (Fans, Artists & Brands) "that finds new partners to see how we can work together, with all respect for the artists," says Becks.



SonicAngels Bart Becks (left) and Maurice Engelen (aka Praga Khan)

© Fred Gherardi/REPORTERS

They asked, they received

Business has moved very fast for SonicAngel – after they signed Tom Dice (whose supporters received back 260% of their €10 investments in his album *Teardrop*), the idea was to launch about 12 artists in the first year. Less than a year later, their artist roster lists 16 artists and bands, 12 of them fully financed for amounts between €12,500 and €45,000. "The concept is really catching on with the fans as we gave ourselves until mid-June to finance the whole roster," enthuses Becks. Backed by the success in the home market, SonicAngel is now launching internationally, via strategic partnerships in Germany, France and the Netherlands. "A thorough knowledge of the market is crucial, so we prefer to work with local partners, who have an eye for emerging talent," explains Engelen. "We supply the platform for their artists, traditional talent scouting and monitoring what's moving

on the internet, for which we developed our own tools."

On 1 March, SonicAngel launched as a fully fledged company in the US. Corporate and strategic partners in Belgium, supporting the idea of exporting the concept, paved the way with American parent companies and affiliates, like Anheuser-Busch and Hewlett Packard.

"The fan base idea has much more potential in the US, with so many artists," says Becks. "So we plan to start up a number of sub-labels there to categorise different music styles." The first will be Electroland, for techno and dance artists.

The launch of SonicAngel in the States includes a one-month tour that kicked off 2 March at the Los Angeles Nokia theatre, featuring Engelen's Praga Khan spin-off band Lords of Acid and Radical G.♦

► www.sonicangel.com



"The cochlear implant is a huge advantage": Leo De Raeve

► *continued from page 5*

"This contrasts with the situation in Flanders, where most of our deaf students are studying a vocation – learning to be a baker, butcher, carpenter etc," says De Raeve. "However, there are notable exceptions." (see sidebar, page 5)

Flanders does have special schools for the deaf – one per province. KIDS, the Koninklijk Instituut voor Doven en Spraakgestoorden (Royal School for the Deaf and Speech Impaired) in Hasselt, for instance, provides education, rehabilitation and counselling services for around 1,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing children aged three to 18. This assistance is offered in residential, semi-residential and outpatient form, delivered by a staff of more than 400. (On our cover is Xander, who goes to KIDS.)

Born deaf

Despite vaccinations against rubella and meningitis, deafness is not on

the decline. "At KIDS Hasselt we are supporting about 20% more deaf and hard-of-hearing children than 15 years ago," says De Raeve, who works part time at the school as a psychologist. "This is partly because of universal

hearing assessment leading to more hearing problems being detected, but there is another possible reason for the increasing prevalence of deafness. Hearing loss in a child may be linked to a virus that the mother got while she was pregnant."

That is the cytomegalovirus (CMV). It's a common virus that normally causes a harmless infection. However, if a woman gets CMV while she's pregnant, there is a 33% chance that it passes on to the baby.

Research is still inconclusive but is beginning to link hearing loss with CMV. Studies indicate that about 9% of all children who have some degree of hearing loss had CMV at birth. The degree of hearing loss varies from

partial impairment in one ear to total deafness. As yet, researchers don't know why being exposed to CMV *in utero* might cause hearing problems in babies but think that the virus damages the cochlea.

"Infection with CMV is very common, but it rarely causes symptoms – often only a runny nose or a slight fever – so most infected people are not aware of their infection," adds De Raeve. "It therefore largely goes undetected. But knowing how exactly CMV causes hearing loss is important if a treatment is going to be developed."

In research into CMV, looking for the cause of deafness in general and possible solutions involving gene therapy and hearing cell regeneration, Flanders is in the front line of European research, with the Catholic University of Leuven and Antwerp University taking a leading role.♦

► www.onici.be

Diamond fraud case targets 220 suspects

€800 million in fraud suspected

ALAN HOPE

The Antwerp prosecutor's office will by this summer present evidence in what is being called the country's biggest diamond fraud case ever. The investigation concerns 220 individuals, including 107 diamond traders and companies charged with falsifying documents, money laundering and criminal conspiracy.

The case centres on Mostrey Worldwide Services, which once held a quasi-monopoly on diamond delivery, but which was closed down by authorities in 2005 after a courier was stopped with a huge sum of cash.

Investigation suggested the company was using the free trade zone in Geneva, which is intended to simplify customs restrictions, to smuggle diamonds and escape tax. Swiss authorities cooperated and turned over more than 35,000 seized Mostrey shipping dossiers, which showed that diamonds supposedly for export were instead rerouted to Antwerp to be sold on the black market.

Since then, raids have been carried out on the offices and homes of dealers, including one incident in December 2006 when a diamond executive, Nikhil Manilal, collapsed and died in front of police when a warrant was being executed.

The Mostrey investigation also led to protests from diamond industry representatives after police seized about €63.5 million worth of diamonds as evidence, leaving many traders unable to do business. In 2010 a number of members of parliament proposed a new law

that would enable traders involved in cases of seizures to appeal and allow the facts of the case to be considered by diamond trade experts to ensure seizures were justified. That proposal, however, was rejected by the Council of State. The 220 suspects have been identified from four fraud circuits used by Mostrey to launder money and avoid tax. One of the most notable is Dilip Mehta, CEO of one of the world's largest diamond companies, Rosy Blue, which has annual sales of about €1.2 billion. Mumbai-born Mehta, who was made a baron by the king in 2006, has denied any wrongdoing.

The 107 parties that form part of the first phase of the prosecution include 11 executives of Mostrey and the 36 companies who made the most use of the fraud system or against whom there is the most evidence. The worst offender is suspected of fraud worth €55 million, and the total fraud package could be worth more than €800 million.

The Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), which represents the sector, said it had already taken steps to combat fraud since the Mostrey case first came to light, including tightening controls and making trade more transparent. Antwerp accounts for about 80% of the world's trade in rough diamonds, 50% of trade in polished stones and represents 5% of all Belgian exports. The industry is responsible for the employment, directly and indirectly, of about 34,000 people in the city.



The Antwerp diamond district accounts for 5% of Belgian exports

- Meanwhile last week the Antwerp city council announced it had won a contest to host a new International Training Center on Corporate Opportunities, organised by the United Nations to do trainings in commercially responsible enterprise in the diamond trade. Antwerp beat competition from Tel Aviv, Mumbai and New York. ♦

Awards for Microsoft, Torfs and Umicore

Computer software giant **Microsoft** and family shoe business **Torfs** were last week named this year's best employers in Belgium by the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. Microsoft won the award for companies with fewer than 500 employees, ahead of SAS Institute and Accent Jobs for People.

Schoenen Torfs, based in Lier, Antwerp province, won for the third time for companies with more than 500 employees. Human resources agency Randstad came in second place and KBC bank in third. The rankings

are drawn up by Vlerick experts with the help of votes from companies' own employees. Special awards were given to KBC, Cisco Systems and confectionery manufacturer Mars for their commitment to lifelong learning, diversity and inspirational leadership, respectively.

Brussels-based materials and technology company **Umicore** is the only Belgian company of the 110 that make up the latest World's Most Ethical Companies list, drawn up by New York consultancy

Ethisphere. The list includes companies that show "real and sustained ethical leadership", according to criteria established by a panel of lawyers, professors, government officials and leaders of organisations. Companies submit their own applications for inclusion in the list, which is not ranked in any order. Umicore was ranked fifth, meanwhile, in the 2010 Global 100 of the world's most sustainable companies, published by the Canadian-based social enterprise Corporate Knights. ♦

Low-cost terminal plans scrapped

Brussels Airport Company (BAC) last week announced a five-year investment plan worth €460 million that will involve the construction of a new pier but not the introduction of a new low-cost terminal.

The new Pier A West will be an extension of the existing Pier A, which currently handles European flights as well as the African flights of Brussels Airlines, with 31 of the airport's 54 gates. Though the number of gates in the new pier extension, to be completed by 2015, is not yet specified, the plan also involves the construction of a new building connecting the check-in hall with Pier A.

"As a result, fewer flights will be boarded using buses, aircraft steps and on-foot boarding exposed to the elements," the company said in a statement. "Pier A West will allow airlines to concentrate their hub activity largely within the same zone. This will mean reduced walking distances for

passengers transferring between flights."

The plan was met with immediate concern from the action group Sterrebeek 2000: "The intention is to increase capacity, but more flights will bring more noise nuisance."

The plans for a new low-cost terminal were in response to increased consumer demand for low-cost flights by companies like Ryanair and EasyJet and increased competition from Charleroi Airport. The plan was attacked by the Belgian Air Transport Association, the Board of Airlines Representatives Belgium and the Airline Operators' Committee, which together went to court to get the plan suspended. In particular, the groups opposed plans to apply a lower tariff for low-cost airlines than the one their own members paid. The action was dropped when BAC put the discussions of the new terminal on the back burner.

The investment plans will be financed by an increase in the tax airlines pay for their use of the airport, meaning a possible increase in fares. ♦



Brussels Airport in figures

- **17.2 million passengers** last year
- **94 airlines** serving 235 direct destinations
- **260 companies** at the airport employing 21,000 staff

► www.brusselsairport.be

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banks • KBC

Flanders largest bank KBC has suffered a setback in its plans to sell its KB Lux Private Banking affiliate to the Indian Hinduja financial group for €1.35 billion. The Luxembourg financial authority has turned Hinduja's application down, pointing to the lack of transparency of the Indian group. The KBL sale was one of the conditions set by the European Union in approving KBC's €7 billion rescue by the Belgian authorities in 2009.

Diplomacy • Swedish embassy

About 300 businesses active in Belgium have put their names to a letter of complaint to the Swedish foreign minister to protest the planned closure of the country's embassy in Brussels, one of five slated for closure worldwide. Swedish companies employ some 25,000 people here, and Belgium is the country's ninth-largest trading partner.

Food • PinguinLutosa

Deep frozen vegetable and potatoes conditioning group PinguinLutosa has acquired the Bree-based Scana Noliko canned fruit and vegetables producer. The move values Scana at some €155 million and allows its leading shareholder, the Flemish regional investment fund GIMV, to walk away with a €40 million book profit on its stake.

Hotels • Crowne Plaza

The landmark Crowne Plaza hotel on Brussels' Wetstraat will close by the end of this year. The facility, owned by the Belgian Atenor Group, is expected to be demolished to make way for an office block. A new 400-room hotel is expected to be built nearby for opening in 2015 at the earliest.

Hotels • Sodehotel

The Brussels-based Sodehotel, owned by the Chinese Hainan Airlines, is set for a €39 million facelift to turn it into a five-star Tangla hotel, following standards set by the Chinese group. An up-market Chinese restaurant and special facilities for VIP guests will be built for inauguration in early 2013.

Insurance • Mercator

The Mercator insurance company, controlled by Switzerland's Baloise group, has acquired the Nateus affiliate of the Ethias insurance group. The move will help Mercator reach its goal of a 10% local insurance market share.

Logistics • Wim Bosman

Antwerp-based logistics and transport group Wim Bosman has been sold to the New Zealand Mainfreight company for some €110 million. The Wim Bosman company employs some 1,800 people in seven countries.

Pharmaceuticals • Janssen

Janssen Pharmaceuticals, the Beerse-based affiliate of the US Johnson & Johnson group, is to sell its animal health division to Elanco, a subsidiary of Eli Lilly. The deal includes some 50 patents and veterinary treatments for pigs and poultry.

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Spreekt u Engels?

A new Speakers' Corner asks whether French + Dutch = English

Claire Davenport

Expats in Belgium could be forgiven for thinking they live in a country whose national languages include English. The subject of the next Speakers' Corner at de Rand is whether the ever-encroaching influence of English is helping or hindering the Dutch language in Belgium.

Els Witte, professor of history at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), has dedicated her working life to writing about Belgium's linguistic idiosyncrasies. At the event later this month, she will, together with philosophy professor Philippe Van Parijs, talk about the impact of English on Belgium's well-known duel between French and Dutch. "Belgium is being swallowed up by a Europeanisation," says Witte. English is gaining an influence in Belgium for two reasons, she says: because Brussels is host to the predominantly Anglophone EU institutions and because the country has an open and attractive economy for foreign business whose lingua franca is also English. By 2006, English was the second most-spoken language in the Belgian capital next to French, according to a language barometer put together

by BRIO, a research and statistical information centre for Brussels and the Flemish periphery known as the Vlaamse Rand. But English does not clash with Dutch the way French does, Witte asserts. Belgian newspapers, for instance, regularly report on French or Dutch speaker claims that their linguistic autonomy has been compromised.

Nineteen municipalities that border Brussels but are located in the province of Flemish Brabant are known collectively as the Vlaamse Rand. After the First World War, economic migrants from Wallonia were given the right to speak French for administrative purposes and to attend French-speaking schools in six municipalities in the Vlaamse Rand. This has caused what de Rand – an organisation that promotes the Dutch language in the Vlaamse Rand – calls the "Frenchification" of the Flemish region.

Although there are Walloon towns with facilities for Dutch speakers, the Flemish there speak French as a matter of course. The same is not true for French (or English) speakers in the Vlaamse Rand.



Professor Els Witte will talk about the impact of English on Belgium's language landscape at the next Speakers' Corner

Living in Translation

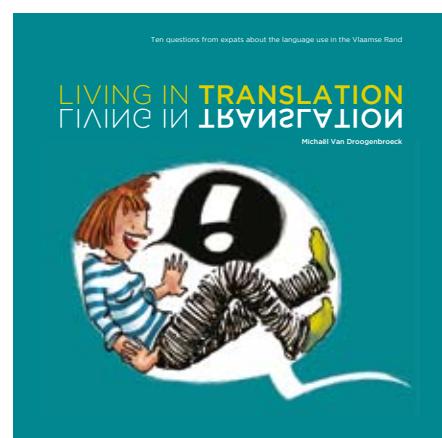
Belgium can be so infuriatingly complicated that some just give up. For example, what language should a newcomer speak when trying to navigate the high seas of Belgian bureaucracy? Don't despair, help is at hand.

This is what "Living in Translation" by VRT journalist Michael Van Droogenbroek sets out to explain. The booklet aims to answer internationals' frequently asked questions, like which language their kids will speak at school and why they are expected to speak Dutch if they live just outside of Brussels. It also sets out in plain language what the multiple levels of local government can (or cannot) do for you.

Van Droogenbroek explains the linguistic politics of the Vlaamse Rand, the Dutch-speaking municipalities that ring Brussels, which is so difficult to understand for non-Belgians (and for not a few Belgians). It goes over why locals in the Flemish region are worried about a steady influx of non-Dutch speakers, who are slowly changing the sociological fabric of Flemish Brabant.

"Living in Translation", available in Dutch, English, French and German, is a must read for anybody who hasn't quite got their head round Belgium's unique cultures and administrations. Which is, let's face it, most of us.

"Living in Translation" will be distributed at the Speakers' Corner on 29 March. If you are a Flanders Today subscriber, you will receive the booklet with your 6 April issue



Too many languages to learn?

The French-speaking Walloons are reluctant to learn Dutch, even today. Already speakers of a major world language, they prefer to learn English, which they can use both inside and outside of the country. Why take on a third? This attitude is doing Dutch no good, Witte explains. Though there is no real evidence of souring relations between English- and Dutch-speaking communities, Flanders' historical battle to assert its right to speak Dutch has led to a fear that other languages will begin to beat their chests, too. In addition, Anglophones are spilling over into Dutch-speaking regions, particularly the Vlaamse Rand, and their second language is more often French than it is Dutch, Witte explains.

But times are changing, and recently there has been a spike in expats taking Dutch classes. Last year, there were 14,650 foreigners over 18 years of age registered for Dutch classes in Flemish Brabant alone, 25% more than in 2008. Nearly all of the students claim to be learning Dutch for professional reasons.

English may be a lingua franca because people want to make money, but Dutch remains an important language for Belgian business. Flanders' biggest employers, like Johnson & Johnson, KBC bank, Colruyt and the ports of Antwerp and Ghent, still expect a good command of Dutch from their employees. But like all other multinationals from here to Japan, if you want to do business elsewhere, you will probably do it in English. "I am not saying this is a bad thing," says Witte. "In fact, what I think is irrelevant. I am here to explain *how* this is happening," Witte concludes that her job is to write history not to judge it.

Witte's apartment, a picture-perfect study lined with walls of books, is smack-bang in the centre of the Schuman area, where she rarely meets any Belgians. For those of us who once came here for EU jobs, this is a familiar complaint. When I first came to Brussels, the few Belgians who graced parties overrun by EU workers were eyed with astonishment. "This one was actually born here!" a friend would exclaim.

Changing all that

"This is where we come in," says Marijke Verboven from de Rand, which was set up in 1996 as an umbrella group of all Flemish cultural organisations.

Today, de Rand is trying to build a bridge between the expat community and the Flemish community. Verboven says she has gauged a lot of interest from expats to meet Flemish people. But because they don't speak Dutch and spend too much time in expat-heavy communities, they struggle to make contact.

So far de Rand has made strides in bringing the Dutch language to French speakers and expats with language classes, plays and social events



that mix the communities. One of the most popular shows is the three-man band Lennaert & de Bonski led by the frenetic Lennaert Maes, who has taken his Dutch sing-alongs as far as Indonesia. "Geef mij een kus voor de laatste bus," or "give me a kiss before the last bus (which rhymes nicely in Dutch), is one of the band's many memorable lyrics.

Bernadette Vriamont from de Rand produces children's plays for French-speaking schools in the Flemish periphery.

De Rand receives €4.3 million from the Flemish Region and €690,000 from the Flemish Brabant province annually. This covers the organisations' operational costs, its seven community centres, its magazine *de RandKrant* and its many activities to promote Dutch.

"We urge foreigners to make an effort to learn Dutch, just as we make an effort to learn other languages," says de Rand director Eddy Frans. "In Flanders, it is a matter of respect that people who come to live here, do their shopping here and whatever else, try to learn and speak Dutch." ♦

→ www.derand.be

Speakers' Corner: (NED + FR) / ENG = ?

29 March, 20.00

Palace of Tervuren
Paleizenlaan, Tervuren

The event will be in Dutch, with simultaneous translation into English, French and German. Register in advance at info@derand.be

Help us help you

As a foreigner who has spent the best part of 10 years learning Dutch, I implore you, Dutch speakers, to welcome our efforts to string together a few sentences in your language. Whereas the communities in the Vlaamse Rand are urging us to try, the rest of Flanders seems more focused on making it "easy" for us. So often a simple question asked in a shop is shot down by a barrage of excellent English – and that is a shame. Instead, try simple, direct Dutch. (CD)

The new kid on the block

There is change at the top of Brussels' most celebrated live music venue

PM DOUTRELIGNE

How time flies. It was only a year ago that the front page of this magazine was devoted to the venerable Brussels institution known as *Ancienne Belgique* and its general manager, the genial Jari Demeulemeester. And now he's gone. Strange as it may seem to AB *aficionados*, Demeulemeester has retired after 31 years – the last 22 as general manager – on Anspachlaan. His unrivalled passion for live music, his never-ending enthusiasm and his shrewd business acumen made him one of the most famous – and best-loved – music personalities in the country. Add a beaming smile and a real gift for storytelling, and you realise that his will be difficult boots to fill.

Tellingly, the search for his replacement began almost a year ago. Thirty candidates were interviewed for this prestigious position, an arduous process, until the smoke finally rose. The new person in charge is 48-year-old Dirk De Clippeleir.

Your CV (general manager at EMI Music, managing director at Universal, chairman of recording industry lobbies IFPI and SIMM) is impressive. Did you apply for this position or were you approached?

I applied in a totally straightforward manner, having seen an ad on the website – like a good boy! OK, I had heard about the vacancy though the grapevine, but I applied through the normal channels, just like all the other candidates.

Another more recent string to your bow is to be an executive consultant to high-flying CEOs. Will you run both careers simultaneously?

I have my own company, yes, which specialises in coaching and consulting. But that has now been put on hold, as you can understand. This [*the Ancienne Belgique*] is not a job you can give less than 100% to.

Glad to hear it! You are, after all, taking over from someone who quickly became almost synonymous with the AB. No pressure. Let's be clear about this: Nobody can replace Jari, and I do hope nobody is foolish enough to think they can. He is an institution himself – like the *Ancienne Belgique*. I am a different person and will bring different qualities to the job.

What have you already identified as you most pressing priorities in your new role? It looks, to the untrained eye, that the *Ancienne Belgique* is already a well-oiled machine.

As general director, there is no need to change anything. The programming team is doing a sterling job, and long may it continue. Where I intend to be most active is in fighting to get the money to run the place properly. As you know, we are partly dependent on subsidies from the Flemish authorities. My goal is for us to consolidate the existing subsidies and to receive extra money which would be used to give a leg-up to emerging Belgian artists. I feel it's a real duty for the venue.

Without meaning to open a can of worms, where do you stand on the recent exchange of views regarding noise levels and the Flemish government's intention to set a cap on them?

All parties need to be heard; all parties need to talk to one another. We want to be at the forefront of the noise debate. It is essential for our credibility that we are seen as a key player in this debate. First of all, skilful sound mixing yields better results at a lower volume.

But sometimes, having the best intentions in the world just isn't enough. Some bands have built their reputation on being aggressively loud.

The AB has a duty to talk to these artists. Yes, some bands like to boast that they are "the loudest around", but we want them to look at it from a health perspective. You don't want people who come to your venue to enjoy some quality music developing hearing problems.



Being from Brussels, and from the Flemish community to boot, you inherit a place of the highest social – and symbolic – importance. I cannot convey how excited I am about my new position. The *Ancienne Belgique* is not only one of the key musical places in Brussels, it is one of the key *cultural* places. It means so much to me as a Brusseleer, but also as a Fleming. I went to see the French band Indochine play the AB the other night, and it was such a perfect moment. A French band playing to a delirious French-speaking audience – in a Flemish venue in the heart of Brussels. To me it spoke volumes for the open-mindedness of the Flemish institutions. I felt immensely proud.

Immense pride is also what music fans from Brussels – and Belgium – feel when it comes to this venerable music venue. Over the years, the AB has acquired a kind of dual identity: the venue where established international artists genuinely love playing because of the sound quality, the warm welcome and

"The *Ancienne Belgique* is not only one of the key musical places in Brussels, it is one of the key **cultural places"**

the infrastructure; but also the place that so many budding Belgian artists know will provide them with the perfect environment to cut their teeth.

This double-pronged tactic is partly what made Jari Demeulemeester such a respected figure. How reassuring, then, to hear that his successor intends to perpetuate this tradition and ask for more money for young local bands. Here's to a prosperous future then – no need to shout it out too loud! ♦

The heart of the matter

Lessons on saying goodbye by Flemish painter Marc Kennes

REBECCA BENOOT

Marc Kennes' trademark oil paintings featuring human figures in a variety of provocative poses look deceptively simple; but there's a strong emotional undercurrent that proves to be intoxicating.

This Antwerp native was drawn towards the human form at an early age, a fascination that was ignited by his humanist education. "I've always been interested in Greek mythology and especially in their depiction of man, which plays a vital role in my work," he says. "I did an 'Inferno' series a few years ago based on Dante which focused on the darker side of mankind, another theme of mine." His latest show, *Requiem for M*, is composed of several series of paintings and etchings that are bursting with colour and vitality, while at the same time suggesting a melancholy tenderness. As a whole, they draw you into a solitary world that shows humans in their most vulnerable state.

Kennes emphasises the inner world by externalising it. The series *Frequency*, for example, consists mainly of ferocious landscapes seen from an interior perspective. "I'm usually inspired by strong emotions – overwhelming

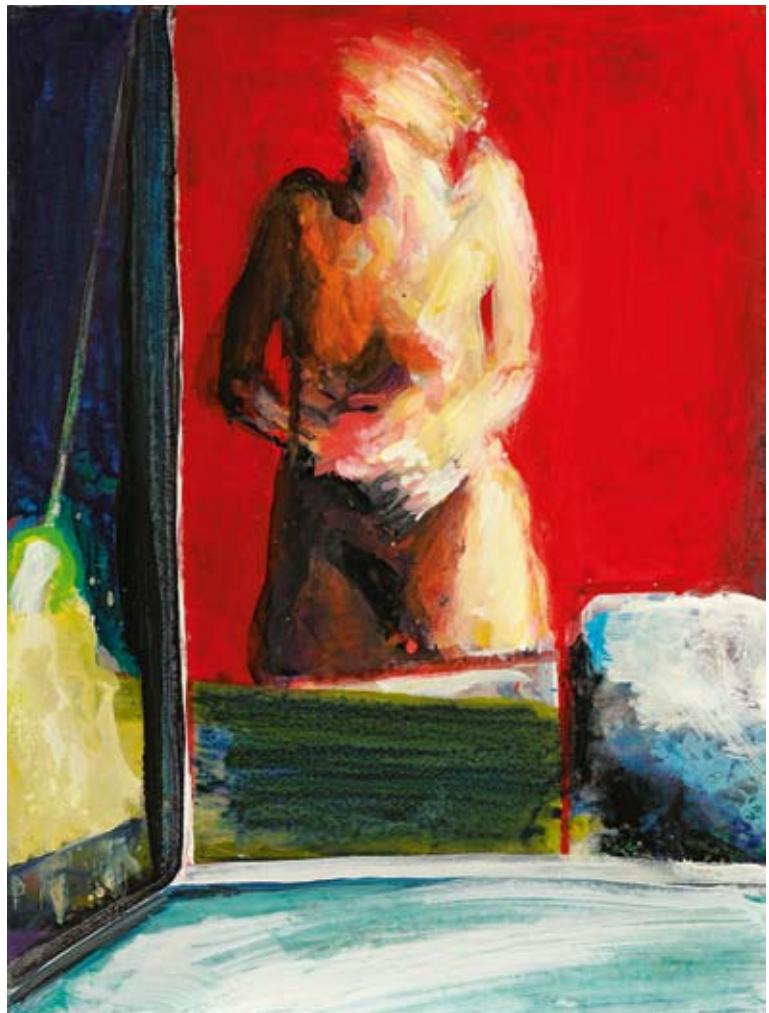
emotions," says the artist. "During the painting process, these feelings usually become abstract. *Frequency* is made up of several emotional landscapes in which the psyche is externalised." As the exhibition title suggests, Kennes' work offers a glimpse at that specific moment between life and death – when you're simultaneously saying goodbye and becoming aware of the next phase. This feeling is almost tangible through the use of windows and sharp corners that separate life from its cosmic counterpart. Feelings of loss play a key role in his *Medea* series in which richly coloured portraits show women filled with anguish and despair (*pictured*). According to Kennes, loss is a universal subject and this series focuses on banishment from one's homeland – being forced to leave and being unable to go back. Kennes' goal is to boil everything down to its essence. "I try to abstract and intellectualise these powerful emotions of abandonment and anguish."

And yet, there is also a slight tongue-in-cheek element. In *Reflections*, for instance, he incorporates himself into the work. "These paintings convey the way I look back on a series after

it's finished," he explains. "They are my own reflections and were painted last. In one of them you see a man with a hat – that's me. I'm reflecting on this series but also on what it's like to say goodbye to someone." Ultimately, Kennes remains a traditional craftsman. He doesn't use photographs or other media as a starting point, so popular these days with contemporary painters. "I think it's very important to be in control and create something personal, which is why I never participated in a certain movement or consciously focused on current affairs. I always tried to do my own thing which kind of makes me a loner." This lone wolf is rightfully proud of his singular place in the Flemish art world. "Critics can say what they want, but that doesn't influence me," he proclaims. "I just keep on going where my passions take me. In the end I wasn't made by my critics; I created myself." ♦

Requiem for M

Until 17 April
De Zwarte Panter
Hoogstraat 70, Antwerp
→ www.marc-kennes.be



© Anna Jenkinson

The secret murals

Sint-Jan's Church in Mechelen finds a hidden room with 15th-century treasures

ANNA JENKINSON

We must hurry," our guide said. "We have a surprise for you, but we must get there before it goes dark."

After a packed day of sightseeing in Mechelen, legs were beginning to tire and minds thinking more about finding a warm bar than visiting another monument. But off we strode towards our final destination of the day, Sint-Jan's Church.

As we entered, we were greeted by an old Flemish man looking worriedly at his watch. He immediately scurried to the back of the church and started climbing the steep, spiral steps. We followed suit. Only as we reached the top and found ourselves in a small, vaulted space did we see what all the worry and hurry was about: two stunning murals, one of Saint Christopher and one of Saint George, dating from the early 15th century. Had we arrived much later, the light would have faded, and the murals, both about four metres high, would have barely been visible.

The paintings, which will be open to the public by appointment as of April, were discovered by chance in the summer of 2008 during restoration work. While dismantling the church organ, restorers stumbled upon a small room behind it. On one of the walls were the remains of a painted figure.

This was the Saint Christopher mural, whose quality and excellent state of preservation make it "a spectacular find"

according to the Flemish Institute for Archaeological Heritage (VIOE).

The details of the mural are indeed spectacular: a bearded Saint Christopher, staff in hand, looks up at the young Christ who he is carrying on his shoulders and whose foot he is protectively holding. Christ holds a globe in his hand.

When the mural was discovered, parts of it were covered in dirt and hard to make out, but conservation work has allowed the full painting to come to light. Opposite the Saint Christopher mural another was found of Saint George, on horseback in battle with a dragon, his flag of a red cross on a white background emblazoned on his shield (*pictured*).

The murals are not the only reason to visit Sint Jan's Church. It is also home to a Rubens triptych, which has been hidden for months because of the restorations, but which can now again be seen. Rubens is said to have been particularly proud of the central panel, "The Adoration of the Three Wise Men". Hanging above the altar, the painting is in the same place as when it first arrived in 1617.

At the time, the parish of St John was the richest in Mechelen, and the religious treasures inside testify to that. Also look out for the exquisitely carved churchwardens' benches, where the rich sponsors of the parish sat. But most importantly, don't forget to book a visit to view the murals upstairs. ♦

→ www.toerismemechelen.be



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**Al het stadsnieuws in 3 talen
Toute l'info régionale en 3 langues
The local news in 3 languages**

 www.tvbrussel.be

Gregoria – 30 March to 2 April

Poet and playwright Bart Meuleman's new work, based on the novel of marriage gone wrong by late Flemish author Maurice Gilliams, runs in Antwerp
→ www.toneelhuis.be



FLANDERS TODAY
MARCH 23, 2011



© Guy Kokken

Raising the roof NOVAROCK

PM DOUTRELIGNE

Rock musical festivals in Flanders, eh? There are so many of them, it's very difficult to keep track. 99.9% of them have a name ending in “-rock”, and you're never quite sure whether to pack your sunglasses and suntan lotion or your wellington boots and rain jacket.

But there's always that glorious exception that takes you by surprise – and in this case, doesn't fill you with dread at the thought of having to relieve yourself in an outdoor portable toilet. (That's after you've queued 20 minutes and missed the beginning of a concert you really wanted to see.)

This exception can be found in Kortrijk – a city not immediately associated with rock music – in the shape of the Novarock festival. Now in its 10th edition, Novarock most certainly has a name ending in “-rock” but, more importantly, takes place in the Kortrijk Xpo complex. That's right, indoors!

The bill showcases, over two stages, the cream of emerging Flemish alternative bands from

the past five years or so: The Van Jets, Drums Are For Parades, Steak Number Eight, Mintzkov, Mumbai Science... Big-league players Arid (pictured) and Admiral Freebee, both performing in the Main Hall, come across like seasoned veterans in comparison.

The Netherlands is also represented: duo Mason (responsible for Princess Superstar's worldwide hit “Perfect”) and madcap Amsterdam rap outfit De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig (literally, “the youth of today”).

No music festival these days would be complete without a DJ stage, but Novarock has decided to do without the disturbances that booming heavy bass frequencies would cause and equipped the “Silent Disco Room” with set of cordless headphones. Just like on the aeroplane, you get to switch between channels, maximising your chances of hearing tunes that suit your style!

Given the pop star success that

Flanders has bestowed upon stand-up comedians over the past decade, it has almost become the norm for all self-respecting festivals to feature a Comedy Stage. Once again, Novarock happily obliges, with sets by Yousef (Flanders' first ever Moroccan stand-up comedian, no less) and Steven Mahieu.

With the first band starting at 14.40 and the last one finishing at 4.00, the ticket price of €22.50 is highly attractive. The proximity of the venue to the motorway and the direct bus connection to and from the train station are only the icing on the cake for this most unusual festival. Kortrijk, rock city? You read it here first, folks.♦

26 March, from 14.30

Kortrijk Xpo
Doorniksesteenweg 216

→ www.novarock.be

MORE ROCK THIS WEEK

Kaizers Orchestra → **Vooruit, Ghent**

The Twilight Singers → **Ancienne Belgique, Brussels**

The Bony King of Nowhere → **Muziekodroom, Hasselt**



Antwerp

Lotto Arena
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
MAR 27 20.00 Charles Aznavour

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
MAR 26 20.00 Back to the 90s with Paradisio, Culture Beat and Bonzai All Stars
MAR 30 20.00 Justin Bieber

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be
MAR 24 20.00 The Ten Tenors
MAR 25 20.00 Trans-Siberian Orchestra: Beethoven's Last Night

Trix
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
MAR 23 20.00 The Chariot + Mychildren Mybride + Campus + Doyle **MAR 25** 21.30 III Years of Rampage featuring Brookes Brothers + Logistics + Delta Heavy + more **MAR 26** 14.30 Paganfest 2011 featuring Eluveitie + Korpiklaani + Unleashed + more **MAR 28** 19.30 Anika **MAR 29** 19.30 The Kills + S.C.U.M. + Everyone Dies Alone

Ardooie
Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
MAR 25 20.30 Buyse van 't Hof

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 25 Seefel + Low Vertical **MAR 28** Everything Everything + Norman Palm **MAR 29** Ayo **MAR 30** Axel Krygier + Benito Band. The Twilight Singers + Deadseats

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAR 26 20.00-4.00 Bozar Night, electronic music festival, plus exhibition, performance, concerts and DJs

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31
www.bonnefooi.be
MAR 27 16.00 The Vinyls Freaks and The BF Acoustic Jam by Erwann **MAR 28** 22.00 Les Bourgeois **MAR 29** 22.00 Juan Carlos & Martin de Marneffe

De Kriekelaar
Gallastraat 86; 02.735.64.68
<http://dekriekelaar.vgc.be>
MAR 28 20.00 The Blackberry Bushes **MAR 30** 20.00 Hannelore Bedert

Koninklijk Circus
Onderstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
MAR 23 20.30 Gospel pour 100 voix

Le Botanique
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
MAR 23 20.00 The Go! Team **MAR 24** 20.00 Troy Von Balthazar **MAR 25** 20.00 Akro **MAR 30** 20.00 Dan Le Sac vs Scroobius Pip

Ten Weyngert
Bondgenotenstraat 54; 02.340.95.80
<http://tenweyngert.vgc.be>
MAR 27 16.00 Jef Mercels

Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 070.660.601
www.ticketnet.be
MAR 25-26 20.00 (Pias) Nites Part 2: Faithless + Cassius, Aeroplane, Crystal Fighters, more

Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
MAR 23 20.00 Slayer & Megadeth

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Maxim Vengerov

2 May, 20.00
Bozar, Brussels

It's not so much a recital as an “event”: arguably the world's greatest violinist, who hasn't play a full concert in three years, presents a concert of Brahms in Brussels. After a serious shoulder injury in 2007 interrupted his playing, causing him to cancel many appearances, Soviet-born Maxim Vengerov has spent his time conducting and teaching. Don't expect it's the beginning of another insane schedule of 50 appearances a year: This concert, which includes pieces from Sonatas for Violin and Piano, op 78, 100 and 108, is in support of the Musica Mundi Teaching Festival.



→ www.bozar.be

Ghent

Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
MAR 23 20.00 The Blackberry Bushes + The Grave Brothers

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 23 20.15 Intergalactic Lovers + Faustine Hollander
MAR 26 20.15 Bettye LaVette

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAR 24 21.30 Reggie Watts
MAR 27 19.30 Kaizers Orchestra

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootsstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
MAR 26 20.00 The Bony King of Nowhere

Leuven

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



Jazz & Blues

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 24 20.15 Jools Holland and his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra

Buster
Kaasru 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
MAR 23 21.30 Playtime Session **MAR**

Agenda

FLANDERS TODAY
MARCH 23, 2011

24 21.00 BabL Jam **MAR 25** 22.00 Raw Kandinsky **MAR 26** 22.00 Nadine Nix & Band **MAR 29** 20.30 Jazz Night **MAR 30** 21.30 Playtime Session featuring Flavio Silva

De Hopper
Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33
www.cafehopper.be
MAR 27 16.00 Yvonne Walter & guests

Rataplan
Wijngemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
MAR 30 20.30 Christian Mendoza Group

Brussels
Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
MAR 25 20.00 Larisa Quartet

Beursschouwburg
August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.beursschouwburg.be
MAR 26 22.00 De Beren Gieren & Grigri

Café Kafka
Visverkopersstraat 2; 02.504.99.00
MAR 24-APR 21 21.30 Jazz on Thursday featuring Darius Clynes, piano; Calvin Renee, bass

CC Jette
De Smet de Naeyerlaan; 02.426.64.39
www.tgo.be/2.htm
MAR 23 20.30 Tom Goldschmidt & Blue Heat

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
MAR 25 20.15 The Jetsky Trio

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be
MAR 23 20.30 Ruby
MAR 26 18.00 The Sidewinders
MAR 30 20.30 Stéphane Mercier Quartet

Het Huis der Kunsten van Schaarbeek
Haachtsesteenweg 147; 02.240.34.99
www.culture1030eco.be
MAR 25 20.30 Trio Adib Garti

Sazz'n Jazz
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
MAR 25 21.00 Cem Adrian
MAR 26 21.30 Sazz'n Jazz Quartet

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
MAR 24 22.00 Hatzigeorgiu & Galland Duo **MAR 25** The Unexpected 4 **MAR 26** Alexandre Cavalieri Quintet **MAR 28** Master Session **MAR 30** Mess Trio

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAR 23 20.30 Myrddin De Cauter Solo **MAR 25** 12.30 Maria João Mendes **MAR 26** 21.00 Jan Menu and the Johan Clement Trio **MAR 30** 20.30 Joachim Caffonnette Quintet



Antwerp
Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 23 20.30 Orquesta Tanguedia

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAR 24 20.30 Stefano Bollani: Sheik Yer Zappa
MAR 25 20.30 Lura
MAR 27 14.00 Diwane Al Tarabe & Ismael Belouch

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaaï 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 27 20.30 Pastor de amor: 'Tres culturas por la paz'

Brussels
Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
MAR 26 20.00 Luiz Marquez & Mezcal

Trio (Mexico)
MAR 27 18.00 Harsh Wardhan & Arup Sen Gupta, bansuri and tabla (India)

Café Kafka
Visverkopersstraat 2; 02.504.99.00
MAR 27 21.30 Bruxelles-aires tango-orchestra

GC De Kroon
Kerkplein 15; 02.482.00.10
<http://dekroon.vgc.be>
MAR 24 20.30 De Achternoenen van Buenos Aires (Argentina)

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAR 24 12.30 Berlaen. 20.30 Carlos Barros and a Banda do Céu (Brazil)

Viage
Ansprechlaan 30; 070.44.34.43
www.viage.be
MAR 23 20.00 Recording of VTM's Anne's Vlaamse Tien

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 25 20.15 Ottmar Liebert with Luna Negra, flamenco



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.292.36.80
www.amuz.be
MAR 24 21.00 Collegium Vocale conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Josquin des Prez
MAR 27 15.00 Les Voix Humaines, viola da gamba duet: Sainte-Colombe, Marais, Couperin, more

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAR 24 20.00 Alexander Melnikov, piano; Isabelle Faust, violin; Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello: Haydn, Beethoven, Schumann **MAR 25** 20.00 DeFilharmonie conducted by Hannu Lintu: Sibelius, Lindberg, Prokofiev
MAR 28 19.30 Charlemagne Orchestra for Europe conducted by Bartholomeus-Henri Van de Velde: Chopin, Gorecki

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
MAR 25 20.00 Bamberger Symphoniker conducted by Jonathan Nott: Liszt, Ligeti, Bruckner
MAR 26 20.00 DeFilharmonie conducted by Hannu Lintu: Sibelius, Lindberg, Prokofiev

Duke's Palace Kempinsky
Prinsenhof 8; 050.44.78.86
MAR 25 19.30 Véronique Bogaerts, violin; Marie Hallynck, cello: Rheinhold Glière, Erwin Schulhoff, Ravel

Brussels
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be

MAR 24 12.30 Baudouin Giaux, flute; Anne Lavoisier, harp; Sophie Causanschi, violin. 20.00 Liège Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Louis Langrée: Mahler, Bruckner **MAR 28** 20.00 Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia conducted by Antonio Pappano: Verdi, Liszt, Mahler **MAR 29** 20.00 Hagen Quartett: Mozart, Shostakovich, Schubert

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
MAR 23 20.15 Royal Wallonia Chamber Orchestra conducted by Augustin Dumay: Mendelssohn, Mozart

MAR 25 12.30 Christia Hudziy, piano; Sébastien Parotte, baritone; Philippe Riga, piano; Lies Vandewege, soprano: Schubert, Rachmaninov, Massenet, more

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be
MAR 25 20.00 Anima Eterna Brugge conducted by Jos van Immerseel:

Beethoven
MAR 26 20.00 Dezsö Ranki, piano: Bartók, Liszt

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
MAR 23 20.00 Isabelle Faust, violin; Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello; Alexander Melnikov, piano: Haydn, Schumann, Beethoven
MAR 25 20.00 New Dutch Academy conducted by Simon Murphy: early symphonies from the Low Countries

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 24 20.15 Stephen Kovacevich, piano: Bach, Beethoven, Schumann

Hoeilaart

Maison de la Musique
Edgar Sohierstraat 33; 02.657.96.52
www.maisondelamusique.be
MAR 28 20.00 Christia Hudziy, piano; Lysa Choi, violin; Dana Popescu, piano: Schubert, Liszt, Scarlatti



Brussels

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
www.demunt.be
Until MAR 30 15.00/19.00 Mozart's La Finta Giardiniera with De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Nelson/Peter Tomek, staged by Karl-Ernst & Ursel Herrmann (in Italian with French and Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp

Monty
Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81
www.monty.be
MAR 24 20.30 Little Perceptions, choreographed by Noé Souli + Being together without any voice, choreographed by Daniel Linehan

Peña Al Andalus
Vorstermanstraat 1; 03.830.31.99
www.alandalus.be
MAR 26 21.30 Camino Flamenco

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be
Until MAR 23 20.00 Bounce Streetdance Company in Insane in the Brain, hip-hop infused performance based on One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Bruges
Magdalenaala (MaZ)
Magdalenastraat 27; 050.44.30.60
www.ccbrugge.be
MAR 30 20.00 Ultima Vez in Radical Wrong, choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus

Brussels

Beursschouwburg
August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.beursschouwburg.be
MAR 24-25 20.30 Fields, choreographed by Franziska Aigner

Kaaistudio
Parochiaanstraat 4; 03.231.76.87
www.vlaamsfruit.be
MAR 24-29 21.30 De Groene Lach in Het Laatste Kwartier (The Last Quarter, in Dutch)

Toneelhuis/Bourla
Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
Until MAR 26 15.00/20.00 Olympique Dramatique and Mexicaanse Hond in Bij het kanaal naar links (Left at the Canal), written and directed by Hans Schmidt (in Dutch; ages 3 and up)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaaï 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be

MAR 25-26 20.30 Secret Gardens, the story of Moroccan political prisoner Aziz Binebine, directed by Dahlia Pessemiers/ Benamar (in Dutch and French)

Brussels

De Kriekelaar
Gallastraat 86; 02.512.34.25
www.markten.be
MAR 24-APR 2 20.00 Woyzeck written by Georg Büchner, directed by Nimfa Tegenbos (in Dutch)

De Markten

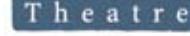
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
www.demarkten.be

MAR 24-APR 2 20.00 Woyzeck written by Georg Büchner, directed by Nimfa Tegenbos (in Dutch)

Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be

MAR 25 20.00 Animula Eterna Brugge conducted by Jos van Immerseel:



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be

MAR 25 20.00 Animula Eterna Brugge conducted by Jos van Immerseel:

DON'T MISS

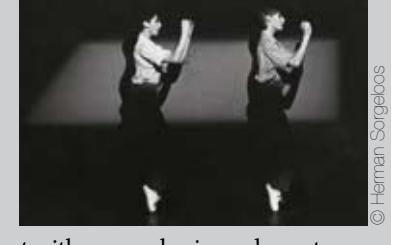
Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

Early Works

Until 7 April

Kaaistudio, Brussels

An excellent opportunity if you haven't seen this seminal choreographer's work from the 1980s, when she kick-started a new contemporary dance movement with an emphasis on dramaturgy, props and a much more organic relationship with music – from right here in Brussels. Running in the capital before going on a worldwide tour, the four works include her ground-breaking *Fase: Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich*, which made her an overnight sensation in 1981 and is still her most-performed work, and *Rosas danst Rosas*, a series of gorgeously fluid, repetitive movements during which the piece's music was created simultaneously.



→ <a href

centuries, with a focus on high fashion pieces and their vernacular interpretations

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 Tsyalov

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

Brussels

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33

www.wittockiana.org

Until APR 30 Mikhail Karasik: Onder druk van tijd (Pressed for Time), lithographs

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

www.bozar.be

Until MAY 8 Venetian and Flemish Masters, works 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

WEEK IN FILM



Courtisane Festival

30 March to 3 April

Across Ghent

Ghent's gi-mongous film festival in October leaves all other attempts in its wake, but this film, video and media art festival is certainly worth a look as it this year celebrates its 10th anniversary. The loaded term "experimental" can so often frighten away the masses, but Courtisane has a way of making alternative filmmaking seem perfectly every day. Many of the short-ish films are narrative, some are documentaries, and these mix up with more abstract endeavours to make a programme varied enough to appeal to both film and art fans. Courtisane is split up into a number of themed screenings, with a few films making up each screening. So, for instance, under the heading "Scripted Spaces", you get portraits of football pitches in Senegal, a parody of DVD audio commentaries, a sliced-up auto (part film, part sculpture) and Flemish filmmaker Nicolas Provost's *Stardust*, a new kind of meditation on Las Vegas.

That's just one in 12 choices of themed screenings, but there's more besides, such as the "Baby Matinee" and the opening night, which features a special live performance of the new film

Until MAY 8 Luc Tuymans: Retrospective, works by the contemporary Flemish painter

De Elektriciteitscentrale
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45
www.deelektriciteitscentrale.be

MAR 25-AUG 21 Jane Alexander: Security - Surveys (from the Cape of Good Hope), sculptures, installations, photographs and videos by the South African artist

ING Cultural Centre

Koningsplein 6; 02.547.22.92

MAR 24-JUN 19 Joan Miró, the lyrical painter, 120 paintings, etchings, sculptures and drawings by the Catalan artist

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11

Until JUN 5 Walter Leblanc, kinetic and optical works by the Belgian artist

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50

Until MAY 15 David Claerbout, photographs by the Flemish photographer

LISA BRADSHAW

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
www.museumdd.be

MAR 27-JUN 5 Christopher Williams, photographs by the American photographer

MAR 27-JUN 5 Thomas Bogaert, film projects by the Belgian director
MAR 27-JUN 5 Picture This: Sophie Kuijken, paintings by the Belgian artist

Ghent

Bank van de Arbeid
Volderstraat 1; 051.42.42.11

www.lannoo-events.be

Until MAY 6 Lieve Blancquaert: Photographer, retrospective of the Flemish photographer's work over the past 25 years

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99

www.designmuseumgent.be

MAR 26-JUN 13 L'Objet Sublime, over 300 ceramic works from 1875-1945 France

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

MIAT

Minnemeers 9; 09.269.42.00

www.miatgent.be

Until APR 23 Viva Vélo, photographs from the book Foto Vélo by Ghent natives Steven Geirnaert and Heidi Renwa, taken during their 20,000 km bike trip from Hungary to China (www.foto-velo.be)

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03

www.smak.be

MAR 26-JUN 5 Joy and Disaster, group show featuring contemporary Hungarian artists

MAR 26-JUN 5 Carlos Rodríguez-Méndez: Agua Caliente, Hot Water, gigantic minimalist sculpture by the Spanish artist

MAR 26-JUN 5 MARCEL: The Marcel Broodthaers room, work by the Belgian artist

MAR 26-JUL 3 Michaël Sailstorfer: Raum und Zeit, sculptures by the German artist

Hasselt

National Jenever Museum

Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60

www.jenevermuseum.be

Until JUN 5 De kunst van het drinken (The Art of Drinking), paintings of drinking scenes by 19th- and 20th-century Belgian artists

Kortrijk

Benedengalerie

Hazelaarstraat 7; 056.23.98.50

www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

Until APR 3 Fien Muller, photographs by the Flemish photographer

Schouwburg

Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50

www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

Until MAR 30 Actually, I Am Someone, photographs of Palestinians by Aurélia Berthe

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28;

016.27.29.29

www.mleuven.be

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

Mechelen

Het Firmament

Brusselpoort; 015.34.94.36

www.hetfirmament.be

Until APR 10 Kopstukken (Protagonists), relics from the 42-year history of the now-defunct Flemish figure theatre troupe Theater Taptoe

Ostend

Kunstmuseum Aan Zee (MuZee)

Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18

www.muzee.be

Until MAR 27 The Responsive Subject, works by Flemish artist Guy Mees

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11

www.africamuseum.be

Until MAR 25 Madagascar: Meet the People, panoramic photographs of villages on the Indian Ocean island by Flemish photographer Wim De Schampelaere

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

DUSK TIL' DAWN



I love the 90s

16 April, 20.00-6.00

Ethias Arena, Hasselt

If you have no trouble at all remembering who sang "What is Love?", "Never Alone" and "Fred Come to Bed", then you must love the '90s. Admitting you're a fan of 2-Unlimited or Alana Dante is no longer a crime, as prove the many '90s parties organised all over Flanders. On 16 April, Hasselt is the place for the big I Love the '90s Party. We're all a bit older than back in the '90s; we no longer listen to cassettes in our walkmans, but play MP3s on our iPods. But let's forget all of that and party like it's 1999. (or '93, or '96?)

So who's coming to Hasselt on 16 April? Vanilla Ice is. Mr Ice Ice Baby may be 43 years old, but he's still got it. Also from the United States, Haddaway will perform his classics, of which "What is love?" ('93) is still his best known. It's hard to imagine this song was originally written as a ballad. The name of The Outhere Brothers may not ring an immediate bell, but we bet you sing along as soon as they shout "Don't stop moving baby...wiggle, wiggle". For the second time on the I Love the '90s stage, 2 Brothers on the 4th Floor will bring their hits "Dreams" and "Never Alone". And what would a '90s party be without the ever-rhyming naughty lyrics of E-rotic?: "Fred Come to Bed", "Nick, Not So Quick", "Max Don't Have Sex with Your Ex"...you get the idea.

This year, the cream of the Belgian '90s dance scene will be present as well. Absolom, Astroline, Fiocco DJ...remember them? Milk Inc's founding father Regi will find himself on stage, too, with a few of his famous '90s remixes. "I've got the key, I've got the secret"**...but have you got your tickets? Buy them at Media Markt, Free Record Shop or order them online (€32). The party starts at 20.00 and goes on until 6.00, baby.

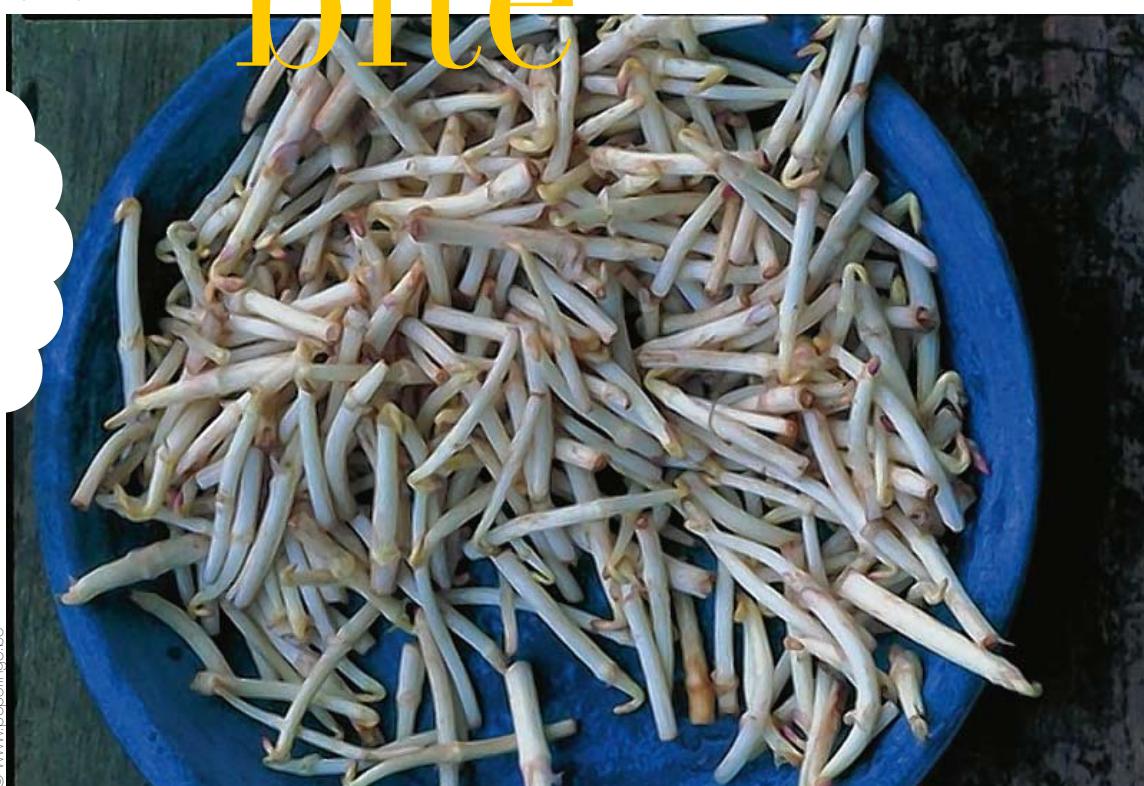
☞ www.ilovethe90s.be

*Haddaway, 2 Brothers on the 4th Floor, E-rotic

** Urban Cookie Collective

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



Hop shoots

The hop plant is hot these days, and not just for flavouring beer. The vigorous climber sprouts new shoots every spring – crisp, white and about the size of green beans. These grow out of the root, close to the top soil, and are best picked early on when the fibrous shoots measure five to seven centimetres.

In Flanders, which used to be covered in hop fields from Brussels to Poperinge, *hopscheuten*, or hop shoots, have been a common folk's food for centuries. Even the Roman logbooks were so detailed as to mention the "unknown vegetable eaten here, only harvested for a few weeks out of the year".

What started out as "poor man's fare" has been steadily gaining popularity among gourmets for the last two decades. Due to the extremely short season (about six weeks from early March until mid-April) and the shoots' hand-grown nature, quantities are limited, and prices are high – anywhere from €30 to €1,000 per kilo. Although greenhouses and modern technology manage to extend the season, it has had little effect on the product's reputation as one of the world's most exclusive vegetables.

Hop shoots are prized for their earthy and mild flavour, which, while entirely unique, often gets compared to asparagus. They can be eaten raw to give salad a bit of crunch or warm with a creamy sauce, usually next to poached eggs or fish.

The region around Poperinge, the last bastion of Flanders' hop farming tradition, is the place to be if you want to try hop shoots. During the annual Hop Shoots Festival, which runs until mid-April, a handful of top restaurants incorporate the so-called "white gold" into their refined menus.

There are also exhibitions, tours, even hotel

Contact *Bite* at flandersbite@gmail.com

arrangements – all in the name of the humble hop shoot. The recipes on the website have the versatile hop shoots prepared in a number of dishes, including marinated salmon, sole and risotto and even a dessert of hop shoot ice cream, bananas and hop jenever sabayon.

't Hommelhof in Watou is one restaurant serving up a seasonal menu. The cosy place with its walls draped in – what else? – hops, is known for its hearty beer cuisine. Not to stray from his specialty, chef Stefaan Couttenye has created the following suggestions: young pigeon in St Bernardus Prior (a strong dark local beer), with mashed peas and hop shoots in cream, and calf's head *maison* with hop shoots and a poached farm egg.

To really immerse yourself in the West Flemish hop culture, go for an arrangement. The Rentmeesterhoeve in Poperinge is a luxuriously renovated farmhouse offering an overnight stay plus participation in the *hopscheutenhappening* (until 26 March), and all-day event, with a guided tour through hop fields to a hop farm where you'll learn everything there is to know about the crop. Then you'll take part in a local beer tasting, have dinner in a gastronomic restaurant, take a walk through downtown Poperinge and, finally, visit the National Hop Museum.

Dinner is a three-course menu of beef Carpaccio and a salad of raw hop shoots with goose liver curls and truffle vinaigrette, cod prepared with hop shoots in a cream sauce flavoured and served with St Bernardus Tripel and a surprise dessert. This particular arrangement costs €132.50 per person; the others range from €100 to €222 per person.

→ www.hopscheuten.be

TALKING SPORTS

LEO CENDROWICZ



© Eric Lamard/BELGA

The last days of Clijsters

The Indian Wells Masters in California is the best-attended tennis tournament outside the four Grand Slams and a crucial staging post in the run-up to Wimbledon and Roland Garros, so it was inevitable that Kim Clijsters would be there, testing her strength against rivals.

Clijsters has twice been winner in Indian Wells – now officially the BNP Paribas Open – in 2003 and 2005, but last week did not go as planned for the Flemish star: she had to retire, injured, from her fourth round match in the middle of the second set, handing victory to France's Marion Bartoli. In fact, Clijsters had complained of shoulder problems all week and had been getting regular treatments for the injury, but it all caught up to her against Bartoli.

This might be simply a routine setback for Clijsters; all athletes face injury at some point. But the Indian Wells injury seemed more like a question of age catching up with the 27-year-old and a reminder that she won't be strutting on the tennis stage for that much longer. Indeed, Clijsters already said she planned to retire after the 2012 London Olympics, so her time limit is in some ways self-imposed.

Clijsters is one of the most popular tennis stars of recent

years and has already retired once, in 2007. That preceded an extraordinary turnaround: after marrying and having a daughter, she returned to the game two years ago. Her comeback performance surpassed her first career: retiring with just one major, the US Open, to her name, she has since notched two more and – just this January – the Australian title. After Australia, she was briefly number one in the world rankings – the first time ever for a mother.

Clijsters has been taking painkillers since January to cope with the shoulder injury. "I still felt I could have won," she said after the match. "I could have taken painkillers, but I don't want to risk tearing it, and I don't want to be in a situation where I am taking medication to cover something up. It makes me realise I am not the youngest out there, and maybe I don't recover as fast."

Maybe this is just usual wear and tear, Clijsters will recover, and even reconsider her 2012 retirement plans. But it also suggests that she is human after all, and tennis fans should savour her remaining moments on the court.

→ www.kimclijsters.be

THE LAST WORD . . .

Trust

"I used to have doubts about the trustworthiness of nuclear power experts. If you see now that even the Japanese experts didn't take all the necessary safety measures, those doubts seem justified."

Philosopher Etienne Vermeersch

Constancy

"The situation in Japan is terrible, but the risk of a nuclear accident in this country is not more or less than it was two weeks ago. Our position hasn't changed because of events there."

Marc Van Den Bossche, environment specialist at Voka

Safety

"The situation in Japan hasn't changed my view on nuclear energy. It is and remains the energy of the future and the safest energy in the world. More miners die every year in coal mines than have died in the last 50 years because of nuclear energy."

Politician Jean-Marie Dedecker

Necessity

"The first reaction to the images coming out of Japan is that we need to get away from nuclear energy as soon as possible because it's dangerous. But realistically, we can't get by without it: 50% of our energy comes from nuclear."

Peter Timmermans, director general of employers' federation VBO

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #173

Feature

Meet the ministers: It's time to get acquainted with the Flemish ministers who make the decisions that affect our daily lives. Kicking off our interview series is minister-president Kris Peeters

Focus

It's the European Year of Volunteering, and Flemish organisations are dreaming up new ways for you to get involved – from helping out the elderly to getting frogs safely across the road

Living

The cherry trees are beginning to blossom, and there's no better place than Hasselt's Japanese Garden to see them