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© Francois Lenoir / Reuters

The state of the union

ANJA OTTE

As the headlines continue and the calendar keeps ticking off the days, residents of Belgium are asking themselves: Has all common ground between Dutch and French speakers disappeared? Or are there other obstacles in shaping a new federal government? Political scientist Dave Sinardet certainly thinks so: "Moderates have let radicals take the lead – on both sides," he says.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, yet another crucial week was

Ten months have passed since the federal election and still a new government is nowhere in sight. What is going on in Belgium?

unfolding in Belgian politics. Siegfried Bracke of the election-winning N-VA called the ongoing formation talks a mere sham. "The grease has dried up," as he put it. Unlike Wouter Beke (CD&V), the latest in a long line of royal mediators, Bracke no longer sees any progress in the talks to shape a new federal government.

Are these the final stages of formation attempts that include the nationalist N-VA? And why is all of this taking so long?

"Moderates have let radicals take the lead – on both sides"

 ➤ *continued on page 5*

Wickmayer serves up computers

Rising Flemish tennis star Yanina Wickmayer last week opened the annual My Zone project with a gift of five laptop computers to long-term sick children in the Sacred Heart hospital in Roeselare-Menen, West Flanders.

The My Zone project, which was set up by Telenet in 2006, allows children who spend long periods in hospital to keep in contact with family and friends using computers and wireless internet. Telenet is also one of the sponsors of Wickmayer's tennis career, and this year she is a My Zone ambassador.

"Computers, internet and social network sites are now an indispensable way for children and young people to keep up to date with what's going on

with family and friends," Wickmayer said. "I always have my BlackBerry and my laptop with me when I have to play in a tournament abroad. I couldn't do without them."

"Medical and nursing care are essential in paediatrics, but we pay just as much attention to the pedagogical aspect of the child," said paediatrician An Demeester. "Our play-leaders found the addition of laptops very important, which is why we signed up to become a My Zone hospital."

My Zone now has projects in the UZ Leuven, the Queen Fabiola hospital in Brussels and the Jessa hospital in Hasselt, as well as others in Mol, Sint-Truiden and Sint-Niklaas.


 ➤ www.my-zone.be

Brussels open-air pool could rise again

Proposal to tackle youth gangs at recreation parks

ALAN HOPE

Brussels should revive plans to build an open-air swimming pool and recreation park in the canal zone of Molenbeek – known as the Maritime Quarter – to help tackle the problem of gangs of youths from the capital causing trouble at recreational areas in Flanders, according to Pascal Smet, Flemish minister for youth affairs. Last week some 200 youths, most of them from Brussels, attacked police and threw bottles and other missiles at the Hofstade recreation park in Zemst to the north of Brussels, which is run by the Flemish sport and recreation federation Blosco. Two policemen were injured, and only one of the youths was arrested.

However, the incident led to a strong reaction from interior minister Annemie Turtelboom, including a plan to treat trouble-makers at recreation parks like football hooligans and introduce a swimming ban, and a proposal to set up a databank of known trouble-makers. Blosco, meanwhile, intends to build a permanent fence around the park, put up more security cameras, and introduce an entrance fee of €4, intended as a disincentive to the trouble-makers, but which would however not apply to local people. The recreation park at Huizingen has already implemented a fee.

 ➤ *continued on page 3*

FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



Sas Van Rouveroij

He's been described as a "newcomer" after 33 years in politics. He himself puts it more robustly: "I'm a political virgin with a lot of experience." Last week Sas Van Rouveroij was elected by his Open-VLD colleagues in the Flemish parliament to chair their party faction. The faction leader chairs meetings of the party members in Parliament and represents them in the institution's Bureau, the steering committee that oversees the running of Parliament.

Van Rouveroij replaces Sven Gatz, who unexpectedly resigned to take up a post with the Belgian Brewers Union. Van Rouveroij is something of a newcomer to the Flemish parliament, where he took his seat in 2009. In his hometown of Ghent, however, he's known to everyone. For the 20 years preceding his election to the parliament, he was an alderman on the city council, where he gained a reputation, in the words of one of his colleagues, as "a team player, a bridge builder, beyond the boundaries of party". (The photo above was taken in 2007 for a campaign for the tech network Gent BC.)

In his career as a Ghent alderman, Van Rouveroij, 53, held portfolios including finance, public works, traffic planning, culture, tourism, innovation and port management. He is the author of numerous policy documents, as well as a book written together with Gatz and Antwerp businessman Christian Leysen on liberal cities policy. The position left vacant by Gatz led to rumours of a return to the front-line of former Flemish ministers Patricia Ceysens, Dirk Van Mechelen or Marino Keulen. In the end, the choice of Van Rouveroij took everyone by surprise. His candidacy was proposed by party president Alexander De Croo and was supported unanimously by members.

"I was flabbergasted," said Van Rouveroij. "I didn't see myself as a candidate, but when I heard the members of the faction were supporting me, I made the decision quickly: Let's do it."

"He was an alderman here for 20 years, but he made not a single enemy," commented Daniel Termont, the socialist mayor of Ghent. "Sas will do the job tremendously well."

→ www.sasvanrouveroij.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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FLANDERS TODAY

MAY 4, 2011

News in brief

Four leading Flemish members of the European Parliament last week called for the removal of all remaining nuclear weapons from the military base at Kleine Brogel in Limburg province as part of a nuclear-free Europe. Marleen Thyssen (CD&V), Frieda Brepoels (N-VA), Annemie Neyts (Open VLD) and Kathleen Van Brempt (SP.A) said all weapons should have left European soil by 2015. The government refuses to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear warheads at Kleine Brogel.

Three computer students at Ghent university last week unveiled their own version of the micro-blogging site Twitter. **Yelper** (www.yelper.be) allows messages of one more character than those on Twitter and was a project for Microsoft Students to Business day, held last week in Antwerp.

All of the remaining tickets for the Olympic Games in London in 2012 that were allocated to Belgium are sold out. Sales of the 20,000 tickets started in March, and demand immediately crashed the online reservation system. The 8,000 remaining tickets were sold out in one day last week.

A plan by Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege to limit the noise levels at music festivals will not come into effect in time for this summer's festival season.

The plan for the introduction of noise levels, attacked by the music industry when they were first proposed in January, has been put off until 2012, the minister told the Flemish Parliament last week.

A student SM club that sought recognition from Ghent University authorities to receive subsidies has been turned down. However, the club Kajira was told the refusal was given on procedural grounds only because the application was not complete. The university has until now declined to make a decision on the basis of the club's activities. It will be able to apply again in December.

Public health inspectors intend to carry out 3,000 spot-checks on cafés during July and August to check if the new total ban on smoking, which comes into force on 1 July, is being respected. The café industry has strongly opposed the ban, although only a few hundred protesters made it to a march in Brussels last week. The initial checks are intended to raise awareness of the new law, the federal health ministry said, rather than to hand out fines.

A man who spent 10 years under suspicion of murder, including a period of four months in prison on remand, is not entitled to any compensation, according to justice minister Stefaan De Clerck. Olav Herremans was cleared last year by

the assises court in Ghent of the murder of teenager Joke Steen in 1995. De Clerck said Herremans' "false declarations" to investigators meant he needed to be locked up while his story was checked out. Herremans intends to appeal. The murder remains unsolved.

Acupuncture has at best only a light pain-relief effect, according to a report last week by the Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre, a federal think-tank. The main conditions for which patients in Belgium were treated last year – when 3% of the population visited an acupuncturist – are neck pain, lower back pain, headache and insomnia, usually chronic conditions for which conventional medicine has been unable to find a cure. The report says that some patients' satisfaction with the results is a placebo effect.

The Flemish socialist party SP.A was "not surprised" at the departure of the maverick Erik De Bruyn, who last week left the party claiming it was "not enough to the left". De Bruyn will set up his own party, called Rood! (Red). "It's a pity Erik feels the need to divide the progressive parties further," a spokesperson for SP.A said. De Bruyn has, however, already received an invitation for his new party to work together with the far-left Workers' Party (PVDA), which includes among its ranks Tine Van Rompuy, the sister of European Council president Herman.

OFFSIDE

Vultures at the seaside

We've all seen some unusual things, from seabirds to lovebirds, in the dunes of the Flemish coast. But one thing you'd never expect to see is an Egyptian vulture, spotted by a half dozen bird watchers over the polders of Zandvoorde near Ostend last week and reported on the website www.waarnemingen.be. The Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) is a small Old World vulture, sometimes called the White Scavenger or Pharaoh's Chicken. It's one of the few birds that uses tools, in this case dropping rocks on the eggs of other birds, which it then eats. It's also special for being the only surviving member of the genus *Neophron*.

"The bird in flight can be confused with a stork," explained Dominique Verbelen of Natuurpunt. "But unlike the stork, vultures don't have a long neck and do have a typically wedge-shaped tail. The photos taken on Friday show an unmistakable

Egyptian vulture." The vulture's usual habitat covers Southern Europe and North Africa to South Asia and into the Indian subcontinent. So what was it doing in West Flanders?

According to Natuurpunt, winds blowing from the southeast have carried birds far beyond their habitual breeding grounds in southern Europe. There have also been sightings of such oddball visitors as the whiskered tern (in Zoutleeuw and Tienen), the marsh sandpiper (in East Flanders and near De Haan), the gull-billed tern (in De Haan and Ostend) and the charmingly named red-rumped swallow (in Zeebrugge).

For ornithologists, one of the most exciting windswept wanderers was the sociable lapwing spotted in Merelbeke, East Flanders, some days ago. That rare wading bird is an endangered species and usually spends its time in places like Israel, Eritrea and Sudan.



As for the Egyptian vulture, it's not a danger to lost children at the beach. Its main diet is, like all vultures, carrion, but it also has a taste for animal (and human) faeces. One of the places you're most likely to see it is hanging around landfill sites or rubbish dumps.

ALAN HOPE

© Shutterstock

Cyclo-cross

Dendermonde has introduced a new regulation to fine cyclists who go around in pelotons of more than 10, after mayor Piet Buyse lost patience with "cycle-terrorists" who intimidate and hinder other road users



Swimming ban in store for rowdy youths

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"We are proposing for the short term that every park introduce a regulation such as the one in force at De Nekker in Mechelen," Turtelboom said. "Anyone who misbehaves there one time is not allowed back in. Everyone has to put their identity card through the card-reader; if the red light comes up, then you're out of luck. That means you must have broken the rules previously." Blosso said it had no plans for the time being to operate a "black-list" of its own, but the option had not been ruled out for the future, a spokesman said. The problem of youths from Brussels causing trouble at the nearest recreation parks in Flanders is one that comes back every year. The trouble-makers are most often identified as Moroccan youths, presumably on the basis of their appearance alone. Blosso parks are patrolled by private security guards. But the problem also extends to the public transport system, with De Lijn drivers suffering frequent problems caused by young men travelling from Hofstade to the capital. Smet's solution – to remove the need for the bands of youths to travel to Flanders by providing more recreational facilities in Brussels itself – dates back to the time when he was still



An architect's impression of how the canal zone would look, including a new footbridge, an esplanade and a swimming pool along the canal in front of the Tour & Taxis complex (centre, left)

a minister in the Brussels regional government, responsible for public works. The plan involved a sort of esplanade along the canal in the centre of Brussels by Tour & Taxis, with part of the space being taken up by an open-air swimming pool. But while other developments in the plan were picked up by the Brussels government, the swimming pool was not. "Youths from Brussels have to go to Huizingen or Hofstade to relax and enjoy themselves. They go

swimming there without any form of social control, and everyone knows what happens then. That's unacceptable. It would be better to create those sort of possibilities in their own city," Smet said on VRT's *De Zevende Dag* at the weekend. The project would also help give young people from the area more pride in their surroundings: "This is not just recreation, it's actually an integration project," he said. Responsibility for the project has now passed to CD&V minister Brigitte Grouwels. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



€220,000

bill facing the Flemish government for the royalties on music that officials listen to on the radio in offices and canteens, according to performing rights organisation Sabam. The government has questioned the calculation

2,899

night departures last year of aircraft from Brussels Airport, down from 3,585 in 2009. Total flight movements were up, but take-offs are the main source of noise nuisance for residents

2,099,472

visitors to the cinema last year to see a Flemish film, according to the Flemish Audio-visual Fund. Flemish films were selected 975 times for foreign festivals and won 110 prizes

10,536

prisoners on average in Belgian jails in 2010, a record figure. The population has now already risen above 11,100, as the trend continues

€856,000

paid for a painting bought at a Brussels sale for €9,500, claimed to be by Antwerp artist Pieter-Paul Rubens. Authenticity is now being questioned by some Rubens experts, including VUB art professor Arnout Balis and Antwerp Fine Arts Museum curator Nico Van Hout

Relief and caution over Bin Laden death

The government reacted this week with "relief" but also with caution to news of the death at the hands of American forces of Osama Bin Laden, the figurehead considered to be leader of the terror group Al Qaeda. Bin Laden's death was announced on Sunday by US president Barack Obama. "We have to consider that a first

reaction could now be possible," warned foreign affairs minister Steven Vanackere. "The battle against terrorism is not over, and we have to fight on." His ministry, as well as that of defence minister Pieter De Crem, will now study the possibility that Belgian troops in Afghanistan may be under a heightened threat.

"A lot of people will be experiencing a feeling of relief, in particular the victims of attacks," said prime minister Yves Leterme. "In normal circumstances you would expect a trial, but I think given what Osama Bin Laden has done in the past, this is a good solution." ♦

Museum Prize nominees announced

The nominations for this year's Museum Prize, to be awarded on 31 May, have been announced. There are five names on the short-list from each of the three regions. In Flanders, two relative newcomers make the list: Museum M in Leuven, opened in September 2009, which features everything from Old Masters to children's book illustrators; and the city museum STAM in Ghent (pictured), which reopened in October last year and includes a permanent exhibit on the story of the city, as well as temporary exhibits.

Ghent also scores with Het Huis van Alijn, with a collection covering daily life in the 20th century, and MIAT, the museum for industrial archaeology and textiles.

Joining them is Gaasbeek castle in the Pajottenland in Flemish Brabant, a mediaeval castle renovated in a Romantic style at the end of the 19th century by the eccentric Marquis Arconati Visconti. The museum features a collection of mediaeval artefacts, while the garden features many heirloom fruit trees. The castle will welcome a new installation by Spencer Tunick, the artist who works in the medium of naked bodies, in July.

In Brussels, the short-list includes the Comic Strip Center, the Royal Library of Belgium, the hugely popular Magritte museum, the David and Alice van Buuren museum in Ukkel and the Fine Arts museum of Eisele.

In Wallonia, meanwhile, the five nominees are the Beaux-Arts museum in Mons, the Grand Curtius museum in



Liège, the House of the Giants in Ath, the silver museum in Seneffe castle and the French Community archives, also in Mons.

The winning museums, one from each region, are chosen by a professional jury and receive a prize of €10,000 each. In addition, there is also a public prize of €2,500 for the museum that receives the most votes from the public. Finally, the votes of children will decide the winner of the prize of the children's jury, who award their seal of approval to the most child-friendly museum. No cash prize is attached. ♦

→ www.museumprijs.be

New since 1 May • On 1 May two important new measures came into force:

Owners of a **home or office premises** in Brussels region larger than 500 square metres are required to present an energy performance certificate (EPC), drawn up by an accredited energy surveyor, when they come to sell the property. The requirement will be extended to renters from 1 November. The EPC is already required in Flanders and Wallonia. The cost of an EPC can vary between €100 for a studio apartment and €300 for a house. The cost for office premises will depend on surface area.

The sale of **traditional herbal remedies** is only allowed if the product in question is registered or licensed. Licences are only granted to products that can prove they are not harmful, and have been in use for at least 30 years, of which 15 years in the EU. The proof of traditional use is a replacement for the clinical trials that other remedies are required to carry out before being allowed on the market. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

A way out for Gennez

The presidency of the Christian-democrat CD&V has often been described as the hardest job in Belgian politics. Presiding over a party that unites farmers, workers and employers means constantly accommodating different factions, while being part of a coalition makes for a permanent disgruntlement among party members.

Recently this description has fit the presidency of the socialist SPA even more. Factions, discontent and disappointment, it's all there. When *De Morgen* last week reported that SPA president Caroline Gennez would not stand for a second term, the news, though unconfirmed, surprised few.

Since 2007, Gennez has blundered a couple of times. She tried to change the party's name without much internal consultation. She disappointed allies by denying them ministerial portfolios. Leaked mails from her inner circle showed little respect for fellow party members. More fundamentally, Gennez has had to undergo the steady decline of social democracy in Flanders just like in the rest of Western Europe. At the same time she has been the object of relentless attacks by political opponents and comedians alike, often focusing on her shaky tone of voice and her prominent nose, with sometimes more than a hint of misogyny.

Aside from that, her legacy is quite poor. She has not succeeded in making SPA the relevant political force it once was. In fact, the only time the Flemish socialists do get some attention is when Frank Vandenbroucke and Johan Vande Lanotte, both belonging to an older generation than Gennez, speak out.

As if that wasn't bad enough, the election-winning N-VA is now trying to manoeuvre SPA out of the new federal government (although a blueprint drawn up by Vande Lanotte as royal mediator may well form the basis of an agreement). In theory, spending time in the opposition is the best way for a party to find its bearings again. A right wing government could be just what is needed to revive the suffering left. SPA is hampered by two things, however. One: it is still part of the Flemish government. And two: PS, the French speaking socialists who are more Old Labour than SPA is, but are inevitably associated with them, will be in the federal government. Both elements render a revival in opposition more difficult.

On Labour Day, Caroline Gennez put on a brave face. Quitting is not on her mind, she says. But in these circumstances, who can blame her for trying to find a way out?

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The state of the union

continued from page 1

Rewind to election night, 13 June, 2010. In Flanders, N-VA, the nationalist party lead by the charismatic Bart De Wever, wins no less than 27% of the vote. "Nil volentibus arduum," De Wever says in his victory speech, using his favourite language Latin and the letters making up N-VA. "Nothing is impossible for the willing."

In French-speaking Belgium, there is another winner: the socialist PS. Party president Elio Di Rupo reaches out to Flanders, implying that the constitutional reform the Flemish have asked for for years may well be on the way. The atmosphere is one of optimism: With two clear winners, the formation of a new government seems a matter of days – weeks at most.

Fast forward 10 months. Still no government.

Professor Sinardet, a political scientist at the universities of Antwerp and Brussels, who recently explained the Belgian impasse at the Association for the Study of Nationalities world convention at Columbia University, never shared the post-election

optimism. The current deadlock was inevitable, he says.

"Two related elements stand in the way of a new government," he says. "One is the central role of N-VA, which is quite a radical nationalist party. N-VA finds it extremely hard to accept a compromise on community issues. This should not surprise us: The party was founded out of disagreement with the previous compromise in 2002, the Lamberton agreement."

If N-VA, he says, "could obtain a very large, symbolic step towards a split of the country, I guess they would be able to make a deal." But this brings us to the second element: "In this federalised country, there is not that much left to devolve to the regions and communities," Sinardet explains. "The so-called 'fat fish' the N-VA is after can only be some aspect or other of social security financing. The French speakers strongly oppose any devolution there, for ideological reasons as well as a fear of impoverishment. But also the Flemish parties do not support this. N-VA is isolated on this point."



So many microphones, nothing to say: Wouter Beke, the latest negotiator in the formation of a federal government

© Julien Warnand / BELGA

Wanted: state reform

The Flemish parties have pledged not to enter a government without constitutional reform – "state reform" in the political lingo. But what is this state reform about? "Although Flemish parties, such as the Christian-democrat CD&V, have demanded state reform for years, it is not always obvious what the exact priorities are," says Sinardet. "They differ from party to party and sometimes also within parties. In the past couple of months, it has also become clear that the possible consequences of the demands have not always been thought through thoroughly, most notably concerning the role of Brussels."

In part, he continues, the demand for state reform has to do with "a frustration about the federal government, which PS is invariably part of. This party's presence makes the right-wing solutions many parties in Flanders believe in difficult to realise. Also, the way some competences are divided between the federal and the other levels of government is far from coherent. The parties involved have their own interests, too. That CD&V has always favoured devolving health care has a lot to do with the dominance of the Christian care institutions in Flanders. Likewise, PS is not adverse to splitting up justice, as it would like a greater influence in magistrates' appointments."

The Flemish demands being sometimes unclear and shifting according to the parties around the table is just one element of the failure to shape a new government. "It is hard to say who is to blame. The responsibility really is collective," Sinardet says. "Moderates have let radicals take the lead – on both sides. The French speakers constantly profess a love of Belgium, but they have made few proposals to bring both communities closer. Party interests prevail on both the French-speaking and the Flemish sides. And then there is the way this country is organised, with divisions already strong and no central parties that unite us. Belgium is the only federation without federal parties."

Play-acting

"No government without state reform" has become axiomatic in Flanders, but there really is no reason for this, Sinardet says. "It is perfectly possible to form a government first and bicker later, but this requires a coalition that functions well, as was the case with Verhofstadt I (1999-2003). Liberals Guy Verhofstadt (Open VLD) and Louis Michel (MR) formed a tandem and worked out the Lamberton agreement, the previous state reform."

The Flemish parties' pledge stands in the way of a similar scenario. "The idea behind this is that not having a government will act as a sort of lever for state reform," says Sinardet. "I find that odd. It is not as if the Flemish will not be affected should the financial markets decide to attack Belgium or should pensions no longer be paid."

"The CD&V and the N-VA are holding each other – as well as the whole country – hostage"

Many French speakers believe in a hidden agenda, casting a fearful eye on N-VA's ultimate goal of Flemish independence. Is the end of Belgium really at stake now?

Sinardet refuses to believe in the "decomposition theory", whereby N-VA's only objective is demonstrating that Belgium simply does not work. "It was certainly not Bart De Wever's goal from the onset of the talks," he says. "Along the way, however, it has become nearly impossible for N-VA to accept an agreement. At that point, it would be logical to withdraw. N-VA has not done so, for tactical reasons. Both N-VA and PS are play-acting at this point."

Why does N-VA not throw in the towel after all these months? "That would be like a gift to all other parties. It would prove their theory right: N-VA never takes up responsibility," explains Sinardet. "Likewise, CD&V refuses to cast N-VA aside, as the nationalists would accuse it of selling out. This way they are holding each other – as well as the whole country – hostage."

New formulas

Still, in spite of the fundamental differences that plague politicians from North and South, the country functions, with an economy that is picking up and budgetary problems that are minute compared to some other European countries.

"The illusion of a country doing fine without a government is tricky," cautions Sinardet. "Without a government, a number of reforms are stalled. With an ageing population, our pension and health-care systems are badly in need of reform. People are not confronted with this right now, but this standstill's consequences will affect them in the future. The only reason there is no mass protest is because everything is still functioning and the community issues do not touch people directly. If this crisis was about pensions – people's money – they would be out on the streets right now."

So what happens now? "Everyone knows that new elections will only yield the same results," notes Sinardet. "Trying out new formulas is, therefore, the only option. The other parties can leave N-VA out and probably come to an agreement around the proposal of Johan Vande Lanotte (SPA). Maybe even PS should be left to the side or – unlikely, but why not? – both N-VA and PS, as they have the most radical positions, the one on community issues, the other on socio-economic issues. They did win the elections, but the vote of people who preferred other parties is worth just as much. All that is needed for a new government is a majority in parliament and two-thirds for a state reform." ♦

© Jan van de Vel / REPORTERS



Political scientist Dave Sinardet

What about BHV?

The reason there was a federal election last June in the first place was Brussel-Halle-Vilvoorde (or BHV), the bilingual constituency on which the previous government could not come to an agreement.

BHV sits at odds with the Belgian Constitution, as it lies in two separate regions, Brussels and Flanders. Flanders therefore asks that it should be split along the region lines. But this would leave Brussels (French speaking) politicians with a smaller electorate.

Many Flemish associate BHV with a "Frenchification" of the Brussels periphery, which is in fact in Flemish Brabant. To French speakers it is one of the last bulwarks that keeps the country together. A compromise is not far off, though: a split of BHV with compensations granted to the French speakers. Flemish nationalists resent these compensations, as they believe the split is in any case required by the constitution.

Finding your inner *baksteen*

Seminar helps expats navigate the ins and outs of buying property in Belgium



© BELGA

KATY DESMOND

In a country with seven governments and three languages, the process of buying property is filled with administrative and linguistic hurdles that can be perplexing to the locals, let alone the foreigners.

That's why this month the East Flanders Chamber of Commerce has organised an English-language seminar addressing the topic. Held in Ghent, "Buying Property in Belgium" aims to help expats understand the necessary steps in becoming property owners.

Responding to a trend

While they say that every Fleming has *een baksteen in de maag* – a brick in the stomach – that drives them to buy or build their own homes, as a rule, expats here have traditionally tended to come and go.

But today, as the number of English-language jobs and programmes at universities, hospitals and multinational firms grows, more and more foreign residents are buying homes and settling in Brussels and across Flanders.

"We are seeing an increase in foreigners choosing to make Flanders their home," says Stefan Derluyn of the East Flanders Chamber of Commerce. "It is not always easy for them to connect with the services and resources they need when trying to buy property."

This free seminar offers a broad outline of the Belgian real estate market and examines the best ways to purchase property in Belgium as a foreigner. Experts will be present to talk about the purchasing process from every angle – from how to find real estate and secure financing to the legal aspects and fiscal implications.

Besides information, the seminar gives expats the chance to connect with professionals who can help through the buying process.

Ron De Meyer is the managing director of Dewaele Vastgoed & Advies, a real estate firm operating in East and West Flanders. "In many ways, the Belgian real estate market is a good investment," he says. "It is stable, and property values continue to show steady growth."

Although he acknowledges fairly

heavy taxes and fees (on top of notary fees, there are registration taxes of 10% in Flanders and 12.5% in Wallonia and Brussels), De Meyer also notes that property costs on the whole are low compared to many other European countries.

How hard is it?

While the property buying process is laden with administrative hoops, in many aspects it is "quite easy" for foreigners to buy property in Belgium, according to notary Stein Binnemans. "There are no legal restrictions on foreigners, and it is relatively easy to secure a mortgage as long as you have a Belgian bank account," he says.

De Meyer, meanwhile, points out that real estate brokers are used to accommodating other languages. "Our culture is already multilingual, so we try to make it as easy as possible for non-Belgians."

Finally, while the paperwork involved may seem endless, the good news is that much of it is completed for you by a notary whom you are required by law to enlist. (www.notaris.be provides a list of all notaries in Belgium). "It is our job to make sure that the contracts are correct and in order," says Binnemans, "We report to the Belgian government, so we take our jobs very seriously."

The basics

Tips every potential buyer should know from the start

1 Be careful where you sign. "Never sign something without having a professional look at it first," warns notary Stein Binnemans. "An 'agreement of purchase' is a binding document, so if you sign it, you cannot complain later."

2 Know the market. Real estate agent Ron De Meyer advises: "Make sure that the investment is a good one. If the market [in the area] is not good now but in five years it will be, you need to know this."

3 Choose an older model. If you buy an older house or one that needs substantial renovations, you pay registration taxes of only 6%, down from the 10% or 12.5% you normally pay when buying an existing home. If you build a new home, you will be saddled with paying value added tax of 21%.

4 Use a real estate broker. If you have the extra 3% of the purchase price to pay a broker, you can have much of the more complex and time-consuming work done for you, like searching for a property and preparing papers for the notary.

5 Be in it for the long run. Only buy if you are planning to keep the property longer than five years. If you resell your house within five years, you will have to pay heavy capital gains taxes on any profit you make.

IN THE HOUSE

ALAN HOPE

Television takeover

The members of the Flemish parliament were agreed last week that the takeover of TV stations VT4 and VijfTV by the consortium De Vijver is a good thing.

In a debate called to discuss the latest development, in which the stations change from German hands to the joint ownership of production house Woestijnvis, magazine publisher Sanoma and newspaper publisher Corelio, **media minister Ingrid Lieten** told the chamber the takeover would change the whole media landscape. "There will be many consequences, not only for the VRT but for all the other players and certainly for the viewer," she said.

The takeover was good news as it brought the channels into Flemish hands, said **Carl Decaluwe**, **media specialist** for CD&V. "That can only be good for the quality of Flemish TV," he concluded.

N-VA's Wilfried Vandaele agreed, but for Jurgen Verstrepen of LDD there was one tiny cloud in front of the sun: Sanoma is owned by a Finnish parent, he reminded members, and that influence should not be underestimated. Some members sought extra time for talks on the **new charter that governs the public broadcaster VRT**, as the current version runs out at the end of the year. Talks on the charter for 2012-2016 had already begun before the VT4 deal took place, but minister Lieten has no intention of allowing the new uncertainty in the market to slow things down. A new charter should be finalised before the summer, she said.

Health campaign needed

The Flemish government needs to provide more and better information to the public on the problem of incontinence, according to Tom Dehaene of CD&V. In Flanders alone, some 400,000 people have problems of control over bladder or bowel or both. Yet only one in three, Dehaene said, seek help for the problem.

"This is a condition that people don't dare to talk about," he told the chamber. "Information on incontinence is limited and very little is known about prevention. That's why I'm calling on the Flemish government to work on a better approach to this problem."

⇒ www.vlaamsparlement.be

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Chemical sector sees shadows over recovery

Energy and wage costs pose a threat

ALAN HOPE

The chemicals sector, including plastics and "life sciences" – the whole sector of biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and other related businesses – had a good year in 2010, more than making up the fall in production volumes that has taken place since the start of the economic crisis in 2008, according to figures presented last week by essencia, the industry's federation. However, despite an encouraging turnaround, the industry continues to be beset by the problems of high wage costs and energy prices. The turnover for the industry nationwide rose to €52.2 billion, an increase over the previous year of 15%. Employment, at the same time, fell by 1% or 1,000 jobs, although the long-term trend of a workforce of about 90,000 remained steady. Investment in research and development (R&D) rose by 6% to a record level of €2.43 billion.

Flanders by itself accounts for a chemical industry that employs 62,000 people directly and another 100,000 in indirectly created jobs – about 10% of the private sector workforce in the region – and has a turnover of more than €30 billion a year. That's 70% of the national sector's turnover. Antwerp province accounts for fully 50% of the region's total, followed by East Flanders (19.1%) and Limburg (12.6%). The sector also makes up about 25% of Flanders' total exports.

"Given the rather limited loss of personnel, and the fact that the sector has consistently continued investing in research and development, I take the liberty of saying the recession has been well-managed. That has undoubtedly had a positive influence when the economy started to recover," said Wouter De Geest, chairman of essencia. "Now we have to move forward, look towards the future as far as the development of products, so that the demands of society are met, but also as far as investment. When it comes to investing in new installation, we have to be prepared to look 20 or 30 years into the future."

On the question of energy policy, however, the industry was critical. Despite being able to cut in



Antwerp accounts for half of all chemical industry activity in Flanders

half its energy consumption per tonne of product produced since the 1970s, companies are still facing ever-increasing energy bills.

"Economic indicators are once again pointing in the right direction," said Yves Verscheuren, managing director of essencia. "Belgium is home to a world-class chemical and pharmaceutical industry, a major advantage that gives us a strong position in the European industry, and helps protect our companies against the waves of consolidation they face," he said.

"Our sector stands by the ambitions of the Belgian government to see 13% of all energy produced from renewable sources by 2013. But that has to take place in a way that allows cost competition, which is at present not at all the case. For the average chemical company, the cost increases of electricity today are 20 times higher than in 2003. If governments don't step in, those costs will escalate, through the

exponential cost of offshore wind turbines, the over-subsidising of green energy and the knock-on costs of solar panels," Verscheuren said.

"This country has to put energy policy higher on the agenda," said De Geest. "We need intelligent solutions, where energy policy is coupled with climate policy."

"Chemicals is an important sector of the Belgian economy, but if energy policy doesn't change soon, more and more companies will make their investments elsewhere," warned Verscheuren.

The Belgian industry is also facing tough competition in the area of employment costs. While a German worker and a Belgian worker earn roughly the same net wage, De Geest pointed out, the additional costs to employers mean the German turns out 27% cheaper than his Belgian counterpart. ♦

Food allergens could go undetected

Food labelling laws which require manufacturers to list the presence of food allergens are missing their target because there is no universally recognised method of detecting them, according to doctoral research carried out by Céline Platteau for the Flemish government's Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research.

European law requires the manufacturers of foodstuffs to indicate on labelling the presence of items which can cause food allergies, such as gluten, lactose or nuts. Platteau's research looked at hazelnuts and soya, and found widely differing results according to the detection methods

employed. Since there is no single recognised method in use, the testing could produce a negative result or a positive result for precisely the same product, her research showed.

In addition, detection methods in use fail to take account of the effect of processing on the presence of allergens, either by masking the presence of dangerous compounds, or by creating cross-reactions which can lead to increased risk which the mere list of ingredients did not reveal.

"Because of a lack of international harmonisation of detection methods, the presence of allergens like hazelnuts and soya can go unnoticed," Platteau said. And she called for the development of common reference materials for allergens, the official validation of accepted detection methods and the introduction of a uniform system for presenting the results of analysis. ♦



Loss of border-workers "will slow company growth"

The end of a special status for border-workers which will come into force on 31 December this year will slow down or stop the growth of 64% of the companies in West Flanders who rely on French labour, according to a survey carried out by the employers' organisation Voka. Every day some 6,878 workers turn up at West-Flemish companies, mainly in the textile, food and metals industries, from their homes in France, just across the border. At present, they enjoy a special status which allows them to pay tax in France, while they have to pay social security in Belgium.

At the end of the year, that special status will disappear. Voka surveyed 133 companies, collectively responsible for the employment of almost 4,500 border-workers. According to estimates, the companies concerned will need to take on about 1,000 new French workers this year and next. "The question is," said Patrice Bakeroot of Voka West Flanders, "whether

those 1,000 French workers will come and work for us when the advantages fall away. If not, the question remains as to how we make good that shortage in a tight market."

At present, vacancies which remain unfilled at West Flanders companies are hard enough to fill locally, and the problem persists even when Walloon workers are sought. One in four companies surveyed are now setting their sights on the East European labour force.

The problem, according to Voka, could lead to companies from West Flanders having to "delocalise" their production facilities, in order to go where the labour is instead of having workers come to them. The continuation of the special status for French border-workers is, in any case, not up for prolongation. "We already obtained an exception from the European rules, which now apply to everyone," Bakeroot said. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Beverages • Coca Cola

US-based Coca-Cola last week inaugurated an additional €3.3 million Minute Maid fruit juices production line in its Ghent plant. The move takes the company's total investments in its three local sites to over €31 million over the last five years.

Branding • Colruyt

Halle-based discount supermarket Colruyt has the country's best corporate reputation according to research by communication firm Akkanto in partnership with the US Reputation Institute. Second is chocolate maker Neuhaus, followed by Delhaize. Last in the ranking is railway operator NMBS.

Fishing • Catch up

The volume of shrimp landed in Belgian fishing ports increased by 38% last year to 600 tonnes. Plaice and sole catches also increased to 3,800 tonnes and 3,400 tonnes respectively, while cod dropped 27% to a mere 588 tonnes. The country's leading fishing ports are Zeebrugge, with 55% of the volume, followed by Ostend and Nieuwpoort.

Food • Puratos

Puratos, based in Groot-Bijgaarden and specialised in bakery and biscuit additives, has acquired the Latvian Pure Food company, specialised in fruit flavoured fillings for biscuits, pastry and dairy products. The move strengthens Puratos' position in northern and eastern Europe.

Education • Vlerick

The Vlerick Leuven Ghent Management School will open a new campus in Moscow this autumn. The move follows the success of an earlier venture in Saint Petersburg that has attracted more than 600 students. The Vlerick MBA programme is among the world's 10 best in the rankings of *The Economist*.

Economy • Confidence down

The National Bank business confidence indicator dropped for the first time in nine months, hit by concern in the building and services sectors of the surge in inflation. Economists, however, are confident that the country's growth rate will still reach 2% this year.

Technology • AEG

Brussels-based AEG TranzCom, an affiliate of the German multinational company specialised in transport communication and power supply systems, has signed a contract worth €14 million to supply some 6,000 Paris metros, trams and busses with on-board computers.

Telecom • Mobistar

The country's second largest mobile phone operator may be up for grabs following the decision by France Telecom, its majority shareholder, to review its position in some of the smaller markets. One of the options favoured by analysts is the creation of a joint venture with Mechelen-based Telenet.

Mother knows best

In honour of Mother's Day in Belgium (we asked the mothers of Flanders about)

Goedele Demecheleer, 42, Galmaarden (Flemish Brabant)

Mother of Altaseb (15), Bertucan (14) and Ferre (10)

What are the most important lessons your mother taught you?

We had a lot of freedom as children, both physically and mentally. We were allowed to choose what we wanted to study, our friends, our partners – my mother never tried to influence our choices. She was always there for us and even today she puts her own needs behind those of her children and her grandchildren. Sometimes I want to tell her that she should think about her own needs more often, relax and enjoy life.

How has motherhood changed your life?

I'm a real mother hen. I had to wait so long for my children that when they finally arrived, I gave up everything for them. Some people may find this strange, but I don't understand people who put their own needs before

those of their children. I also absolutely don't mind the fact that children "restrict" my life; I find it normal. We did all our travelling before the kids arrived. Now we concentrate on them.

What are the most important lessons you want to teach your children?

I want my children to think very carefully before having children; they shouldn't have them just because everyone else does. I want them to make a very conscious choice. Apart from that, I want my children to be respectful toward others. And I would love a whole variety of nationalities and backgrounds amongst my sons- and daughters-in-law so that I'll have lots of different grandchildren. But most of all, I wish them love. Lots of love. All the rest will follow on from that.



Kelly Quaghebeur (29), Wevelgem

Mother of Iele (2), Ditte and Mare (5 months)

What are the most important lessons your mother taught you?

I had a strict upbringing, and my mother had very clear rules – not like some parents today who want to be their children's best friend. Rules were rules, and they had to be obeyed. To have good manners, to be respectful and honest, that's what she drummed into us.

How has motherhood changed your life?

Motherhood has changed my life completely, both in positive and negative ways. I never imagined just how much joy and fulfilment one could get from loving children; on the other hand, it's also extremely exhausting, and I

have absolutely no time for myself at the moment. I'm also surprised that I enjoy my children more as they become toddlers, which is interesting considering that I am a midwife and work with babies all the time!

What are the most important lessons you want to teach your children?

Just like my mother, I want my children to be well mannered and respectful. I also hope they will grow up to be calm, tranquil people who know how to enjoy life. I also hope that they will be able to do what they love and that they will be happy; the wish of every mother, I guess.

Kim Leysen, 31, Meerhout

"Plus" mother of Ruben (15), mother of Jef (5) and Abel (1)



What are the most important lessons your mother taught you?

My mother is very orderly, punctual and quite reserved, and I am the complete opposite. In some things I wish I was more like her, but in others I'm happy to be the opposite. My mum always told me that I should act normal, not be arrogant or conceited and never look down on others. That's an important lesson.

How has motherhood changed your life?

It has made me experience emotions that I didn't know existed. I do worry a lot more now, and I sometimes even catch myself envisaging doom scenarios when, for instance, I can't hear the kids anymore – which is so unlike me. My kids are also still young, and I spend all my time with them right now, so at the moment I feel more "mother" than "woman".

What are the most important lessons you want to teach your children?

I want my kids to grow up to be open-minded adults with a sense of humour who don't always take themselves too seriously. I believe being able to laugh at yourself is so important in life.

TEXT: SABINE CLAPPAERT

PHOTOS: CARMEN DE VOS



Bieke Vanassche, 31, and Sandy

Mothers of Felix (11 months)

What are the most important lessons your mother taught you?

Bieke (left in photo): My mum was a teacher, and she placed great importance on always being there for her children. She even came home to cook us warm meals at lunchtime. Being there for our children is now also important to me.

Sandy: My mum taught me to be independent. I was given a lot of freedom to explore the boundaries of what was acceptable and what was not.

How has motherhood changed your life?

Bieke: Motherhood has changed my life fundamentally, both physically and mentally. Suddenly, everything takes second place to our son.

Sandy: Our routines have changed less dramatically than

this Sunday, 8 May, but their kids, their lives and their own dear mums

57, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw
and grandmother of Anna (3)

they educate and shape us as parents, too.

What are the most important lessons you want to teach your children?

I want my children to stand strong and solid in the world and to live their lives to the fullest. I want them to remain true to who they are, regardless of what others may think. And I hope that they will become the best they can be and use their talents to make a positive contribution to society.



Fatima Rafiy, 40, Antwerp

Mother of Yassira (17), Ilyas (15), Yassin (12) and Yasmina (11)

What are the most important lessons your mother taught you?

My mother raised us according to the norms of Islam. Although she didn't raise us in an authoritarian or restrictive manner, she always made sure we knew which values were important. The biggest lesson was to respect everyone, regardless of his or her culture, religion, beliefs or the colour of their skin. She also taught me the importance of being true to myself and of being able to integrate in a western society without losing my own values. Today, my mum is my best friend. I can discuss anything with her, and I know I can always turn to her for advice.

How has motherhood changed your life?

Being a mother has brought an enormous sense of responsibility to my life, both towards my own children and to society as a whole. I have learned that everyone wants to be happy, regardless of who they are.

What are the most important lessons you want to teach your children?

I want to pass on the lessons my parents taught me: to have respect for everyone, to develop your own opinion and have the courage to express it and to believe in yourself. I think those values are very important in helping to build a happy, fulfilled life.



Sandy Van Robays, 31, Ghent

I thought they would, but as Bieke says, what does change dramatically are one's priorities.

What are the most important lessons you want to teach your child?

Bieke: Self-confidence and respect are very important values to both Sandy and I. To us it is important that our children will have respect for everything and everyone.

Sandy: I also want them to be able to stand their ground and to come up for what they believe in.

Bieke: Most importantly, I hope that Felix may become who and what he wants to be, without having to conform to the pressure others may put on him to conform to their norms. We want him to be happy, that is what matters most.



Man about town

What happens when the guide becomes more interesting than the tour?

I'd done the research, yet no article, not even the recent one in *The New York Times*, had prepared me for the crackling livewire charms of Tanguy Ottomer, personal shopper, guide, author, draughtsman and entertainer *par excellence*.

To my surprise, we didn't meet up in one of Antwerp's streamlined pop-up hotspots he is so famously well acquainted with, but rather on a sunny terrace in the neighbourly Hoogstraat.

I've ambled through this street many times, but in the company of Ottomer, who greets many of the passers-by, I realise for the first time how gregarious it is – and how a good guide can make you notice things you've passed by a thousand times.

In every conversation, Ottomer, 30, makes a point of bringing up his grandmother, Mariette, 91. "We share a dog, so we see each other about three times a day," he notes, for instance.

When, as a younger man, Ottomer applied at the Gidsenbond association, where the average age of a city guide is about 60, he'd hoped to gain an extra dozen grandparents with whom to share his passion for Antwerp. That didn't quite pan out, so he started his own tour company, Beroepsantwerpenaar (Professional Antwerpenaar).

"Now I am at liberty to say what I want and to create my own specialised tours, which works way better for me," he says. "I don't want to be a teacher type of guide who lives in Ekeren, comes to town to deliver a speech on the Spanish Fury and goes home again."

Talking rather than touring

There are more or less 15 themes, divided in two sets of group tours – one accommodates first-time tourists, the other those who have visited Antwerp at least once. The first group, international tourists mostly, are shown as many as beautiful spots as possible, with a few surprise locations thrown in, in one of the 10 languages available.

With locals, he says, "we can dig a bit deeper, talk about buildings that have been demolished, for example, or how the city has evolved."

Ottomer has also teamed up with several hotels for group tours. At breakfast, he finds out where his clients are from, what they'd like to see and, perhaps most importantly, what they don't want to see. Then they set off to explore the city on a tailored tour. "It's one long conversation, really."

All tours are infused with personal anecdotes. "I live right here in the city centre. I show them where I drink a Bolleke and at what market I buy flowers. I want to give people the feeling they've visited a friend and seen personal stuff."

His clients, he says, "surprise me a lot. They point out cultural differences. I get to travel and learn about other cultures right here, and get paid for it. There are worse jobs," he smiles. "When I'm 90, I still won't know everything about this city. And that's how it should be."

Spoken like a *sinjoor*

Ottomer's brand of guided tours are in fact a big success. So much so that he now has five more guides, each with their own insights and backgrounds. "Obviously they know their history, but I've selected on enthusiasm and personality, too."

These were the same criteria he kept in mind when he compiled the 2008 book *Antwerpen, mijn engeltje* (*Antwerp, My Angel*), in which different people talk about their love for Antwerp, interspersed with pen drawings by Ottomer himself.

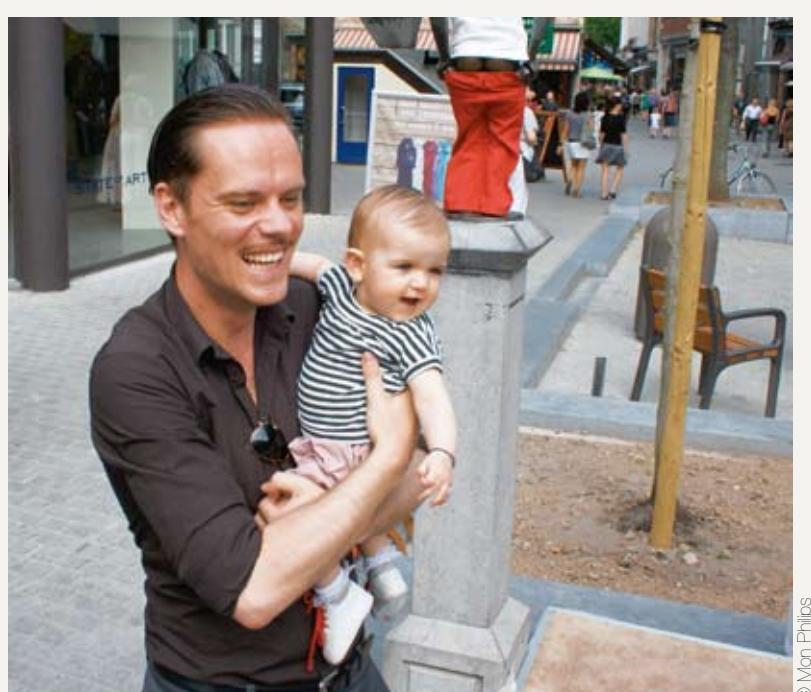
In the pipeline awaits his graphic novel *Karelje*, which will feature Antwerp in the 1950s, while this month his 400-page book in English on the history of cufflinks, inspired by one of the largest collections in the world (a private collection in Antwerp), will hit the stores.

When I ask Ottomer how he would feel if he had been born in Ghent or Brussels, he recoils in mock horror. "It's bad enough my grandparents moved to Ghent right when my mother was born," he laughs. "Now I'm a mere *pagadder* [born within Antwerp's city walls], where I could have been a *sinjoor* [when your parents have also been born within the city's walls]. You know, you can fall in love with another city, but it's your personal history that binds you to your hometown."

He goes on to talk about the golden era of the 16th century and how, when the Scheldt River was cut off, Amsterdam took over as the main city of the low countries. "If we hadn't been put on hold in the 16th century, can you imagine how gigantic Antwerp would have been today?"

With these parting words, he jumps up and waves to his granny on her balcony. "Time for supper!" A hug and a smile and off he goes.♦

→ www.beroepsantwerpenaar.be



Tanguy Ottomer runs into his godchild in the streets of Antwerp

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Brave new sounds

Kortrijk bursts out with the Festival of Flanders' most confident programme

MARIE DUMONT

Some strange sounds will be coming out of Kortrijk over the next couple of weeks. Throughout the city, the usual traffic noises will merge with the unnerving plink-plunk of dripping water, chanting Tibetan monks and an eerie polyphony of tones and voices produced by dozens of transistors tuned to different stations.

Welcome to the Festival of Flanders Kortrijk, the most confident yet by far the quirkiest of the long string of festivals that dominate the Flemish musical life from April to October.

"There's more to classical music than red plush"

It wasn't always so. For years, Kortrijk's was a run-of-the-mill festival with a mostly classical programme lacking in adventure. When the Flemish government withdrew its funding in the mid-noughties, the festival was discontinued until local programmer Joost Fonteyne was asked to relaunch it last year. Fonteyne saw the interruption as an opportunity to wipe the slate clean. He wanted to create something new, an event that would transform the city's soundscape and wreak havoc with the concert experience as we know it. "There was no point recreating what already existed," he says. "The festival belongs in the 21st century. It needs a new history."

Fonteyne was known at the time as the founder of Happy New Ears, a local sound art fest that had established provincial, drowsy Kortrijk as a pioneering capital of this fledgling art form

he describes as "the twilight zone between the visual arts, music and sound". In 2008, British music magazine *The Wire* named the event "one of Europe's premier sound art festivals". Although it was suspended the following year, the revamped Festival of Kortrijk clearly follows in its footsteps. Its centrepiece is the exhibition *Klinkende Stad*, which features half a dozen sound art installations. One of them is by Norway's Maia Urstad (the lady with the transistors), another by Belgian Pierre Berthet (who works with dripping water but also with doctored vacuum-cleaners). Yet another is the work of Dutchman Paul Devens, who records ambient noises as he cycles around Kortrijk, then works them into a riveting, seamless continuum. The idea behind all these works is to open our ears by focusing on the raw materiality of sound, undistilled into speech or music.

New public for new music

While *Klinkende Stad* draws devotees from across Europe, the rest of the programme is a merry jumble of concerts that attracts mostly local enthusiasts. These differ from the traditional concert-going public in that they don't mind the positively weird sounds of Heiner Goebbels' *Songs of Wars I Have Seen*, based on poems by Gertrude Stein, or the combination of professional and mentally handicapped musicians in the Wild Classical Music Ensemble's concert – an extraordinary aural equivalent to *art brut*.

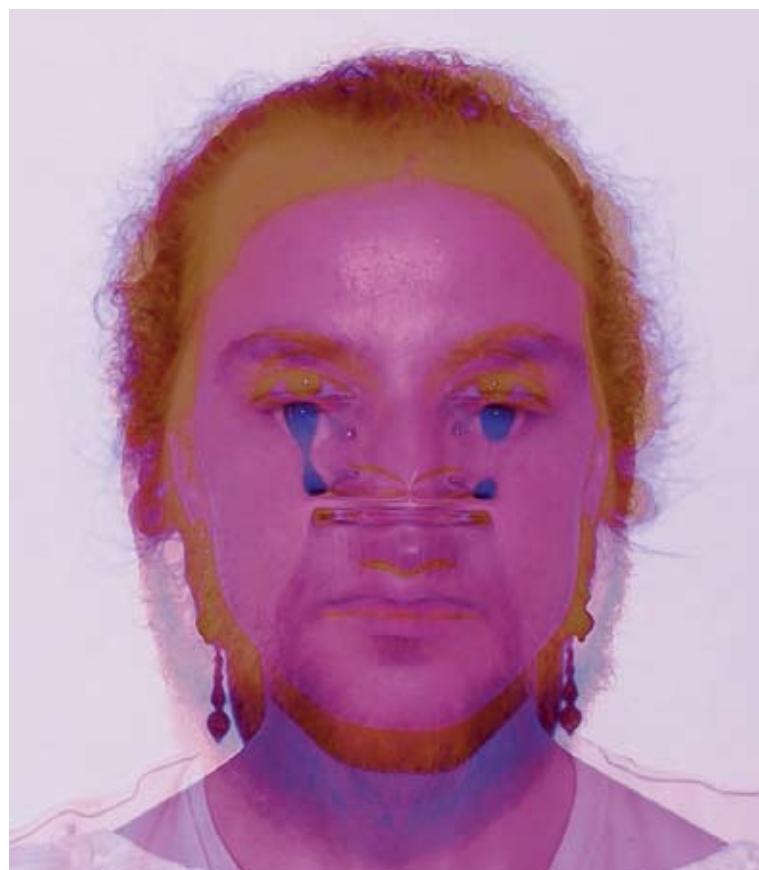
"We're in the process of creating a new public," argues Fonteyne. "It's unlikely to happen overnight, though."

The classical repertoire features prominently, yet with none of the stuffiness associated with old-fashioned concerts. Acutely

aware of the need to remove the mental barriers that make it so difficult for some to enter a concert hall, Fonteyne has gone as far as to redesign a local theatre into an ultra-cool club with soft lights and comfy chairs. Three performances will take place there, two of them featuring members of the celebrated Kuijken family. "These are no second-rate concerts," emphasises Fonteyne. "They're an experiment – an attempt to show that there's more to classical music than red plush." Elsewhere, the classics step down from their pedestal and mingle freely with other genres and styles. Take the Hilliard Ensemble's opening concert, which mixes Renaissance polyphony with contemporary sounds by British composer Gavin Bryars. Or Claire Croizé's *The Farewell*, a fluid choreography based on Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Or *The Arabian Passion according to JS Bach*, the delightfully irreverent closing concert that presents music by the Leipzig cantor with a Middle-Eastern and very sensual twist.

If you can only devote one day to the festival, though, make it Sunday, 15 May, when several small concerts on the theme of "East meets West" will be staged around the city centre, from a piano recital by South Korean Tae-Hyung Kim (the revelation of last year's Queen Elisabeth Competition) to a demonstration of the Chinese *p'i-p'a*, the Middle-Eastern *oud* and other instruments from the lute family. Visitors can pick a programme and organise their visit as they fancy, as one orders a meal from a restaurant menu.

Enjoy it while it lasts, before the dull roar of everyday traffic sweeps over Kortrijk again.♦



Seelenvoll, the final concert of the festival's East Meets West day, is as visual as it is auditory



Brussels Philharmonic is joined by African soloists for a performance of Western works inspired by music of other cultures

Festival of Flanders Kortrijk

5-22 May
Across Kortrijk

→ www.festivalkortrijk.be

The Festival of Flanders doesn't exist as such – it is a label shared by eight music fests, each with its own theme and personality, that dominate the region's musical life for six months every year.

This formidable machine, which began in 1958 with a handful of concerts staged in Ghent, is set into motion towards the end of April in Mechelen, which welcomes a fine programme newly devoted to the voice. It grinds to a halt in late October with the heady mix of chamber music and contemporary sounds served up by the Festival of Flemish Brabant. In between is a winding musical journey that takes us from Kortrijk to Limburg, a choice destination for lovers of percussion and carillon. But the Festival of Flanders' mainstays are four events huddled together in August and September. Staged at the height of summer, Bruges' MA festival, formerly Musica Antiqua, offers a zesty programme of concerts,

organised this year around the theme of artistic legacy, as well as a world-famous early music competition. Antwerp follows a couple of weeks later with Laus Polyphonia, a treat for dyed-in-the-wool lovers of early music, but also for babies and toddlers, who will be catered for in a promising new concert series introduced this year. Brussels' Klara festival greets us back from the summer holidays with its trademark mix of high-profile concerts and more intimate events in parks, metro stations and private homes. Utopia is the flavour of the year, with performances by René Jacobs, the Akademie für alte Musik Berlin and the London Philharmonic. Finally Ghent, where it all began, hogs the limelight with a star-lined programme, concerts on rivers and canals and even cycling tours.

There is no doubt about it: "Festival" is a Flemish word.

→ www.festival.be

© Sangwook Lee



Tae-Hyung Kim, who won hearts at last year's Queen Elisabeth Music Competition – and some say should have won



© Gregory Hallinan

BRUSSELS

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



SCHAERBEEK

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



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert area



MERQEN

BRUSSELS



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

WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 m²

- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m²

SAINT-GILLES



Luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden

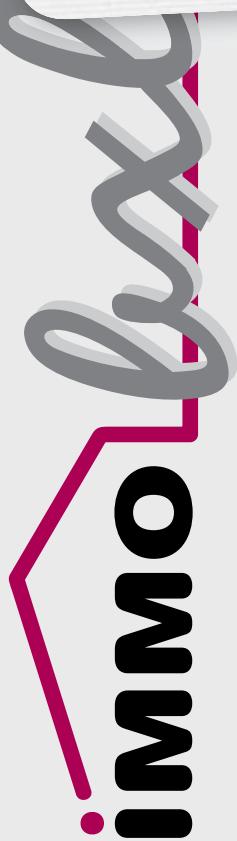
Expat? Visit ING first.

As an expatriate, would you like to invest or save in Belgium? For the purchase of a property in Belgium, our experts will set out the purchasing and taxation process for you. They can also deal with your mortgage loan, your outstanding loan balance insurance and even your fire insurance. If you

are interested in simple savings plans or more complex schemes such as investments in mutual funds, the ING Expat experts will guide you in your new fiscal environment, on the basis of your investment profile. To find out what ING can do for you, don't hesitate to call us on +32 (0)2 464 66 64.



www.ing.be/expat



UCCLE

which has been totally renovated and reconstructed and was sold to the European Commission. There are different luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a splendid view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden floor, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), videophone, complete bathroom with shower, new window frames with double glazing, security door, airconditioning.



BRUSSELS

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

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



ANDERLECHT

Godeaux - Bemel area, house 3 façades of +/- 240m², completely renovated in 2004, living room 42m², fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), breakfast corner, 4 bedrooms, closets, wooden floors, bathroom, toilet, Jacuzzi, 2 shower rooms, garage + space in front of the house, garden, terrace, alarm system, security door, airconditioning.

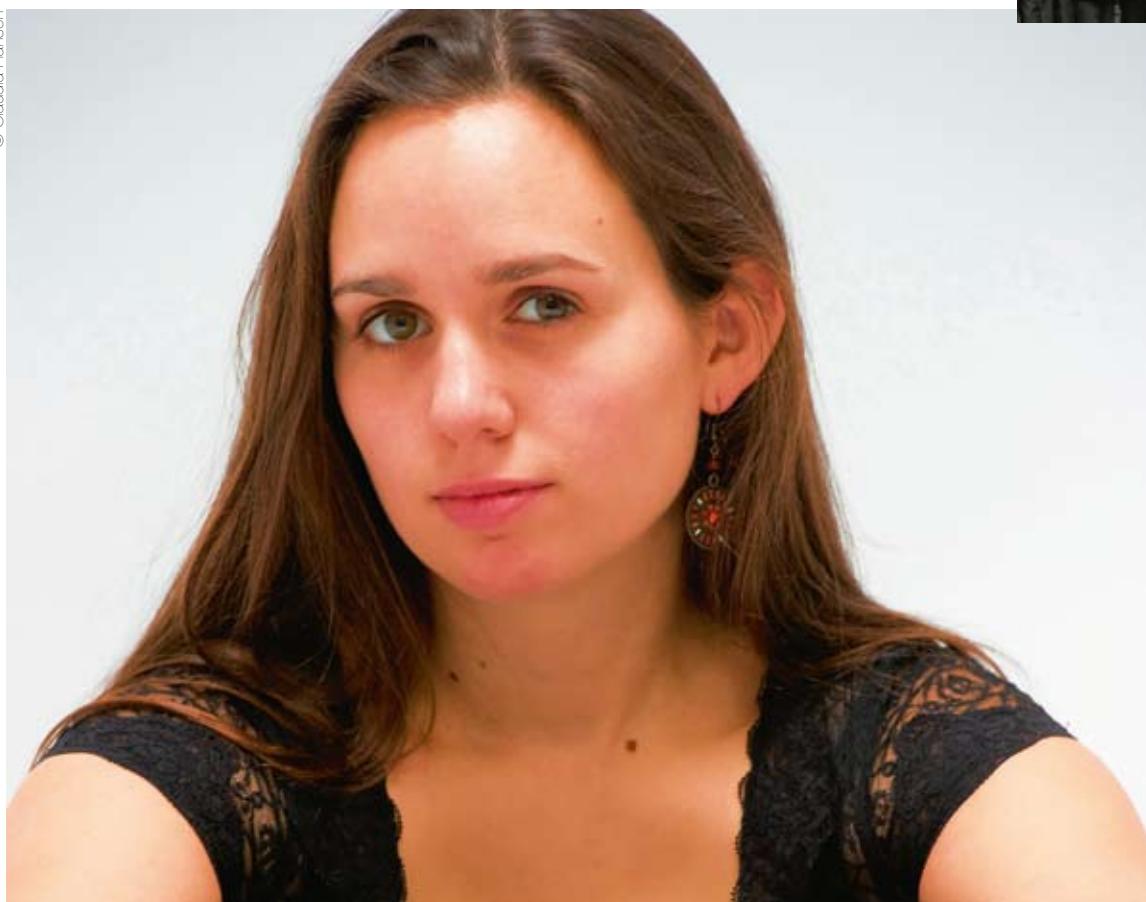


FOREST

villa 4 facades of 300m², completely renovated in 2000, living room, wooden floors, fireplace, separate dining room, fully equipped kitchen, breakfast area, laundry room, 4 bedrooms, wooden floors, office area, bathroom, shower room, cellar, garden 5 acres, nice terrace, garage 2 or 3 cars, alarm system.

The Sonics – 5 June

The forefathers of garage rock from the American northwest hit the AB in all their 60-something glory for a multi-band evening that is sure to sell out
→ www.abconcerts.be



Let the nail biting begin THE QUEEN ELISABETH

ALAN HOPE

On 5 May, 98 candidates – 82 women and 16 men – will begin the struggle to become winner of this year's Queen Elisabeth Music Competition for vocalists.

The competition, launched in 1937 under the patronage of the wife of Albert I, began as a violin competition but has since broadened out to include, in a three-year cycle, piano and voice. It's among the top music competitions in the world and not only places Belgium firmly on the international musical map, but also places classical music, for a few weeks each year, in the forefront of media and public attention.

Contestants must be under 30 years of age upon application, and they apply from across the world to take part in the infamously gruelling contest. Laureates (the top 12 from each year) have included the late Soviet violin master David Oistrakh, Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer and Lebanese pianist and composer Abdel Rahman El Bacha.

Twenty-six nationalities make up the playing field, and seven of them are from Brussels or Flanders.

Katrien Baerts (pictured) was born in Hasselt and graduated in Brussels before going on to study at the Dutch National Opera Academy in Amsterdam. She's performed in opera and as a soloist in works like Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. In 2009

she gave a recital with star Flemish harpist Anneleen Lenaerts.

Thomas Blondelle was born in Bruges and went on to study musicology in Leuven, debuting at De Munt while still a student in 2003. Since then he's performed in numerous operas, solo roles and lieder recitals. He has also composed a musical, *Sarah*, and an oratorio.

Stefan Cifolelli was born in Antwerp and studied in Brussels, starting work immediately in opera and *bel canto* roles. He's performed several times at De Munt, as well as the Accademia Rossiniana in Pesaro, Italy. Among his likes he lists not only Rossini and Jacqueline du Pré, but also Wannes Van de Velde, the late bard of Antwerp.

Joke Cromheecke studied singing at conservatories in Bruges, Ghent and Maastricht, and also graduated in violin from the Royal Conservatory in Brussels. She's become something of a protégée of Dirk Brossé, the composer and conductor with whom she's performed in concert and in the recording studio.

Emilie De Voght started studying guitar and violin at the music academy in Asse, Flemish Brabant, at the age of seven and graduated from the Royal Conservatory in

Brussels in 2006. She is now part of the Blindman 4x4 Voice group, as well as a soloist in performances by the Flemish Radio Choir, Collegium Vocale and La Petite Bande.

Alice Depret, born in Brussels, studied violin while singing in children's choirs, then at 18 decided to devote herself to singing. She studied in Brussels and in Barcelona. Still only 23, she's performed in operas and as a soloist.

Anneke Luyten comes from Herselt, Antwerp province, and studied at the Lemmens Institute in Leuven. Since then, she's attracted interest in Denmark, Portugal and even Syria, going on to study at the Flanders Opera Studio and the Queen Elisabeth Chapel under Jose Van Dam. In January she sang with De Munt in Wagner's *Parsifal*.

The competition, from the first round to the finals, is open to the public, but tickets are going fast.♦

5-21 May

Royal Conservatory & Bozar
Brussels

→ www.cmireb.be



MORE VOCAL THIS WEEK

Festival of Flanders Mechelen

Die Frau Ohne Schatten → Flemish Opera, Antwerp

Die Jahreszeiten by Collegium Vocale → De Bijloke, Ghent

FLANDERS TODAY
MAY 4, 2011

DON'T MISS

Sea Caravan

4, 7-8 May
Across Ostend



Antwerp

Trix
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
MAY 6 19.30 Murphy's Law + Bad Luck Charms + Not Afraid + Generation 84
MAY 11 19.30 Panic! At the Disco

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAY 5 Jenifer **MAY 7** Pam Ann. **MAY 9** Fitz and The Tantrums **MAY 10** Kaki King Gentleman & The Evolution + Jahcoustix. Kaki King **MAY 11** Gerald De Palmas

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
www.fuse.be
MAY 7 23.00 Seth Troxler + Benoit & Sergio + Lee Curtiss, more

K-NAL

Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00
www.k-nal.be
MAY 7 23.00 Gesaffelstein

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
MAY 8 17.00 Line Renaud
MAY 12 20.00 Congotronics vs Rockers featuring Konono n°1 + Kasai Allstars + Deerhoof, more

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recycleart.be
MAY 4 20.00 Marc Ribot & Ceramic Dog
MAY 6 21.00 Razen + Basketball **MAY 11** 19.00 Jaap Blonk

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
MAY 5 21.00 Slim Cessna's Auto Club **MAY 6** 21.00 Metronomy + Playboy's Bend + Disasteradio **MAY 8** 21.00 Red Snapper

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Roussealaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestrational.be
MAY 7 20.00 Jean-Louis Aubert **MAY 12-14** 20.00 Yannick Noah

Woluwe Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre

Charles Thielemanslaan 93; 02.773.05.88
www.art-culture.be
MAY 7 20.30 Calixte de Nigremont

Ghent

Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
MAY 7 20.00 Vessels + Bikinians **MAY 11** 20.00 Creep + Handsome Furs **MAY 12** 20.00 Rauw & Onbesproken + Look & Trees

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAY 4 20.15 Ron Sexsmith + Hannelore Bedert **MAY 5** 20.15 10 years Mojano + guests **MAY 7** 20.15 Kraakpand 5.4 with Melanie De Biasio and The Handsome Family **MAY 11** 20.15 Eva De Roovere

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAY 6 22.00 Jamie XX + Bibio + Benji B, more

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
MAY 12 20.30 Bob Corritore & Dave Riley

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
MAY 4 20.00 Barn Owl + Jefre Cantedesma

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
MAY 11 20.00 Uurkultuur with Amatorski
MAY 12 20.00 Intergalactic Lovers



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00

Agenda

www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAY 12-15 20.30 Wait for me featuring Zita Swoon, Stef Kamil Carlens, Mamadou Diabaté and Awa Démé

Bruges
Stadsschouwburg
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40
www.ccbrugge.be
MAY 4 20.00 Loudon Wainwright III

Brussels
Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
MAY 6 20.00 Duo Una Corda (Spain)

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAY 7 20.00 Andalussiat, Arab-Andalusian song featuring Beihdia Rahal and Omar Metiou

Espace Senghor
Waversseesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
MAY 7 20.30 Etran Finatawa: Desert Blues (Nigeria)

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAY 6 20.15 Johan Verminnen



Antwerp
deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAY 8 11.00 Haydn Happening: concerts and lectures featuring Philippe Herreweghe, conductor; the Collegium Vocale Gent; deFilharmonie; the Accademia Chigiana Siena; Alain Planès, piano

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
MAY 12 20.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Seikyo Kim: Enescu, Mozart, Berlioz

Brussels
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be

MAY 4 20.00 Hilary Hahn, violin; Valentina Lisitsa, piano; Tartini, Beethoven, more
MAY 5 12.30 Sophie Causanschi, Maria Elena Boila, violin; Mihoko Kusama, Katelyn Onsia, viola; Olsi Leka, Taras Zanchak, cello; Peter Swinnen, Brahms
MAY 6 20.00 Les Agrémens conducted by Guy Van Waas: Salieri, Cherubini, Beethoven, Haydn
MAY 7 20.00 Radu Lupu, piano; Schumann, Schubert
MAY 8 11.00 Christia Hudziy, Philippe Riga, Dana Protopopescu, piano; Marie-Stéphanie Radauer-Plank, violin; Camille Merckx, mezzo (laureates from the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel): Schubert, Liszt, Szymanowski, more
MAY 11 20.00 Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Christoph Eschenbach: Schumann, Brahms

Chapelle de Linthout
Oude Lindelaan 2; 0475.90.88.87
www.laudantes.com
MAY 5 20.30 Laudantes Consort conducted by Guy Janssens: Josquin Desprez, Nicolas Gombert

D'Ieteren Gallery
Maliestraat 50; 02.772.34.26
MAY 6 20.00 Jean-Luc Votano, clarinet; Véronique Bogaerts, Frédéric d'Ursel, violin; Vincent Hepp, viola; Sarah Dupriez, cello: Mozart, Weber, Kodály

Protestantse Kapel
Museumplein 2; 02.507.82.00
MAY 10 20.00 Eugène Ferré, lute: Dowland, Holborne, Byrd, more

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
MAY 6 12.30 Nikita Boriso-Glebsky, violin; Dana Protopopescu, Philippe Riga, piano; Sonja Volten, soprano; Trio Avanesyan

piano trio (soloists from the Queen Elisabeth College of Music): Fauré, Bellini, Rossini, Shostakovich
MAY 7 20.15 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Hervé Niquet with Bart Naessens, organ; Leen Van der Roost, harp; Saint-Saëns, Chausson, Gounod, more

Ghent
De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyvensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
MAY 5 20.00 Spectra Ensemble conducted by Filip Rathé: Somei Satoh, Toshio Hosokawa, John Cage, more
MAY 6 20.00 DeFilharmonie conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Haydn



Antwerp
Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until MAY 8 15.00/19.00 Richard Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, conducted by Alexander Joel, staged by Marco Marelli (in the original German with subtitles in Dutch)

Brussels
De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
www.demunt.be
Until MAY 11 15.00/20.00 Toshio Hosokawa's *Matsukaze* conducted by Pablo Heras-Casado, staged and choreographed by Sasha Waltz (in German with subtitles in Dutch and French)

Espace Senghor
Waversseesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
MAY 4 20.00 *Itinéraire du Sel*, multimedia opera by Miguel Azguime

Kaaitheater
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaitheater.be
MAY 14-16 15.00/20.30 Purcells *The Indian Queen*, performed by B'Rock conducted by Frank Agsteribbe, staged by Jan Decorte, with Hanna Bayodi-Hirt, soprano; Magid el-Bushra, alto; Havard Stensvold, baritone (in Eng: part of Kunstenfestivaldesarts)



Antwerp
Monty
Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81
www.monty.be
MAY 4-7 20.30 *tgSTAN in Oogst* (Harvest), each evening a different cast/play/ choreography

Ghent
Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAY 4-7 20.00 Damaged Goods in Intimate Strangers #4, choreographed by Meg Stuart

Roeselare
CC De Spil
Spilleboudtstraat 1; 051.26.57.00
www.despil.be
MAY 7 20.00 *Ultima Vez in Radical Wrong*, choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus

Turnhout
De Warande
Warandestraat 42; 014.41.69.91
www.warande.be
MAY 9 & 11 20.15 *Ultima Vez in Radical Wrong*, choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus

Antwerp
Fakkeltreater Theatercafé
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036
www.fakkeltreater.be
Until MAY 29 12.00-14.00 Hotel Vocal: musical theatre (in Dutch)

Theatre
Sint-Katelijneplein
Sint-Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45
www.deelektriciteitscentrale.be
Until AUG 21 Jane Alexander: *Security - Surveys* (from the Cape of Good Hope), sculptures, installations, photographs and videos by the South African artist

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
MAY 10 20.00 *De Gehangenen* (The Hanged), written and directed by Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

Brussels

KVS Box
Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12
www.kvs.be
Until MAY 5 20.00 *De Gehangenen* (The Hanged), written and directed by Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

Wezembeek-Oppem

DeKam Cultural Center
BEEKstraat 172; 0487.371.643
www.bloc-brussels.com
MAY 4-7 14.30/20.00 Brussels Light Opera Company in *Threepenny Opera*, written by Bertolt Brecht with music by Kurt Weill



Antwerp

Central Station
Van Immerseelstraat-Kievitplein; 02.537.68.75
www.artinhalofus.be
Until MAY 8 Art in All Of Us, photographs of children around the world by Anthony Asael and Stéphanie Rabemialara

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be

Until MAY 22 Liam Gillick and Lawrence Weiner: A Syntax of Dependency, double portrait of the New York-based artists
Until AUG 21 Ten Oosten van 4°24' (East of 4°24'), group show of artists from the Caucasus, India, China, Iraq, Egypt and more

Fashion Museum (MoMu)
Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70
www.momu.be
Until AUG 14 Unravel: Knitwear in Fashion, knitted garments and accessories from across the centuries, with a focus on high fashion pieces and their vernacular interpretations

Koningin Fabiolazaal
Jezusstraat 28; 03.203.42.04
www.provant.be
Until JAN 8 2012 The Moderns, top pieces from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA), including works by Emile Claus, James Ensor and Marc Chagall

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

Until JUN 5 Julien Maire: Mixed Memory, works from early film and projection projects

Plantin-Moretus Museum
Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50
www.museumplantinmoretus.be
Until JUN 5 Playsante huysinge op eenen hof, prints, drawings, topographic views and books provide a glimpse of the numerous country homes bought outside Antwerp in the 16th century

Zilvermuseum Sterckshof
Hooftvunderlei 160; 03.360.52.52
www.provant.be
Until JUN 12 Van haarnaald tot schoengesp: Accessoires in goud en zilver (From Hairpin to Shoe Buckle: Accessories in Gold and Silver), 14th- to 20th-century European accessories

Bruges
Stadshallen
Markt 7; 050.44.82.82
www.ccbrugge.be
Until JUN 12 Berni Searle: Interlaced, installations, video and photographs by the South African artist

Brussels
Argos Centre for Art and Media
Werkstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argoarts.org

Until JUN 18 What Will Come, videos and installations by contemporary Spanish artist Jordi Colomer

Until JUN 18 Mise en abime: Dismantling the Economics of Television, videos by Richard Serra, Ant Farm and more

De Elektriciteitscentrale
Sint-Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45
www.deelektriciteitscentrale.be
Until AUG 21 Jane Alexander: *Security - Surveys* (from the Cape of Good Hope), sculptures, installations, photographs and videos by the South African artist

DON'T MISS

Architecture for Justice

Until 15 May
Bozar, Brussels



© A. Chaudemarque BXLMRS

Are you tired of that scaffolding-clad eyesore that is Brussels' Justice Palace? One of the city's icons, built in the latter half of the 19th century, it has been under renovation as long as many of us have lived in Belgium. So last year during Belgium's presidency of the EU, the federal buildings agency and the justice ministry launched a contest for ideas of how to best renovate and use the building in the future. Ideas poured in – from the serious to the silly (such as the giant roller coaster shown above, not entirely unlike the scaffolding). Bozar shows them all, including the winners, in the exhibition *Architecture for Justice: Brussels Courthouse, Imagine the Future!*

→ www.brusselscourthousecontest.be

Until JUN 18 Ria Pacquée: Westerly Winds, photos, slides, notes and videos by the Belgian artist

art&marges
Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20
www.artsetmarges.be

Until JUN 5 Mad about Hungary, drawings by patients from Pécs psychiatric institution

Association du Patrimoine Artistique
Charles Hassenstraat 7; 02.512.34.21
www.associationdupatrimoineartistique.be
MAY 6-28 Guillaume Vogels, paintings by the 19th-century Belgian artist

Autrique House
Haachtsesteenweg 266; 02.215.66.00
www.autrique.be

Until DEC 31 Victor Horta: A Lost World, works highlighting decisive moments in the career of the architect born in Ghent 150 years ago

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

Until MAY 8 Luc Tuymans: Retrospective, works by the contemporary Flemish painter. Talk by Tuymans on APR 28 at 20.00

Until MAY 15 Architecture for Justice:

Brussels Courthouse, Imagine the Future!, display of projects submitted for the courthouse's modernisation/conservation plan

Until JUN 12 Maurice Frydman: Plasticités, works made from everyday plastic materials by the contemporary visual artist

Until JUN 12 Jordi Colomer: What Will Come, film, maquettes, photos and installations by the Spanish contemporary artist (also at Argos)

Until JUN 24 Jean-Louis Vanesch: Junctions, photos by the Belgian photographer

Brussels Expo
Hall 2 – Heysel; 070.25.20.20
www.kingtutbrussels.be

Until NOV 6 Tutankhamun: His Tomb and His Treasures, reconstruction of the Ancient Egyptian king's tomb chambers, with more than 1,000 replicas of funerary objects including jewellery, amulets, weapons, musical instruments and more

City Hall
Grote Markt; 02.279.64.24

www.brupass.be

Until JUN 11 Deportation and Genocide - A European Tragedy, documentary-style reminder of historical events

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until DEC 31 Handmade, hand-sewn clothes and accessories from before the invention of the sewing machine in 1850 including cut-out patterns, hats by Brussels milliners, waistcoats and corsets, dresses and coats

De Elektriciteitscentrale
Sint-Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45

www.deelektriciteitscentrale.be

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

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be

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

Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxis.com

Until MAY 31 From Brussels: Xiè Xiè Shanghai, a look at the Belgian pavilion from the World Expo last year in Shanghai, plus information on business opportunities involving China (www.thankyoushanghai.com)

Until JUN 19 Zes miljard mensen (Six Billion People), photo project by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

Until JUL 4 America: It's Also Our History!, three centuries of cross-Atlantic relations with frescoes, charts, audiovisual material, installations, objects and artwork

ULB - Campus de Solbosch
Paul Hegerlaan 22-24; 02.650.37.65
www.ulb.ac.be/culture

Until JUL 16 Les Voyageurs du Savoir, statistics, interview extracts and portraits of international students

LISA BRADSHAW



Classics at Flagey

It's a rich week for cinema, with not one, not two, but *three* film festivals: Opendoek in Turnhout, Docville in Leuven and the Brussels Short Film festival. They mostly concentrate on new, new, new, but this month at Flagey, you can also find some great, offbeat classics.

Yakov Protazanov's *Aelita* was released in 1924 just two years after the official formation of the Soviet Union. Although it's often referred to as the Soviet's first sci-fi film, it's more of a politically infused fantasy, with specific references to the "past", both revolutionary and personal - Protazanov had been in voluntary exile in Europe but had returned to the Communist fold.

But you can forget the politics if you please and just get involved in the story: Los, along with the rest of the earth's radio engineers, becomes obsessed with a signal from Mars. *Aelita*, resident of Mars, in turn becomes obsessed with watching Los (though a high-power telescope, naturally). Eventually Los gets to Mars - in his self-built space ship - and finds more than he bargained for in its totalitarian regime.

Aelita (*pictured*) is a silent film, and it will be accompanied live by the Polish foursome Pustki, who often channel their screeching ambient melodies into soundtracks for film and theatre. Even if you're not so much interested in the film, Pustki is worth seeing on its own.

Also in Flagey this month is the 1959 western *Rio Bravo*, Howard Hawks' and John Wayne's answer to *High Noon*. Last and even perhaps should we say least, is *The Fearless Vampire Killers* by Roman Polanski, who himself stars as a vampire seeker in the 1960s horror comedy.

➡ www.flagey.be

Uccle Cultural Centre
Rodestraat 47; 02.374.04.95
www.ccube.be

Until MAY 21 Yves Ullens: Traqueur de Lumières, works by the Belgian photographer (www.traqueurdelumieres.be)

Villa Empain
Franklin Rooseveltlaan 67; 02.627.52.30
www.villaempain.com

Until SEP 25 Of Women's Modesty and Anger, rituals, wigs, scarves, make-up and more constraints that determined the life of women for centuries

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org

Until MAY 15 David Claerbout, photographs by the Flemish photographer

Deurle

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

Until JUN 5 Christopher Williams, photographs by the American photographer

Until JUN 5 On the Way to the Peak of Ecstasy, film projects by Flemish artist Thomas Bogaert

Until JUN 5 Picture This: Sophie Kuijken, paintings by the Flemish artist

Ghent

Bank van de Arbeid
Volderstraat 1; 051.42.42.11
www.lannoevents.be

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

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
www.designmuseumgent.be

Until JUN 13 Fantasy Design, works by young people from Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Spain

Until 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, aesthetic, religious or economic reasons

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
www.smak.be

Until JUN 5 Joy and Disaster, group show featuring contemporary Hungarian artists

Until JUN 5 Carlos Rodriguez-Méndez: Agua Caliente, Hot Water, gigantic minimalist sculpture by the Spanish artist

Until JUN 5 MARCEL: The Marcel Broodthaers Room, work by the Belgian artist

Until JUL 3 Michaël Sailstorfer: Raum und Zeit, sculptures by the German artist

Until SEP 18 Jorge Macchi: Music Stands Still, paintings, sculptures, installations and videos by the Argentinian artist

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43
www.ccstrombeek.be

Until MAY 15 Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Mechelen and Knokke-Heist)

Hasselt

Fashion museum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
www.modemuseumhasselt.be

Until JUN 5 Alter Nature: The Future That Never Was, a look at the year 2000 from the point of view of designers from the 1960s and a glance at new possibilities in fashion

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

Knokke-Heist

White-Out Studio

Van Bunnenlaan 58A; 050.62.93.63
www.whiteoutstudio.be

Until JUN 5 Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Grimbergen and Mechelen)

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, work by the multi-media Portuguese artist

Until JUN 12 Gebonden Beelden, rare books

Until SEP 25 Pieter-Jozef Verhaghen: In het spoor van Rubens (In the Footsteps of Rubens), paintings by the 18th-century Flemish artist

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be

Until JUN 19 Tussenruimte: Het onzichtbare zichtbaar maken (Space In-between: Making the Invisible Visible), paintings by Flemish artist Roger Raveel on white frames

Mechelen

Exhibition Halls

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be

Until JUN 5 Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Grimbergen and Knokke-Heist)

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)

Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75
www.speelgoedmuseum.be

Until JAN 8 2012 Het Circus Kan Beginnen! (Let the Circus Begin!), circus figurines, clowns and maquettes

Meise

National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20
www.plantentuinmeise.be

Until OCT 2 Groene Omzwervingen (Green Detours), works made of leaves and flowers by Sandrine de Borman following her year as artist-in-residence

Until NOV 6 Kriebelbeestjes van het bos (Crawling Bugs in the Woods), photographs of insects by Barbara Cook

Ostend

Venetian Galleries

Corner Zeedijk and Parijsstraat; 059.80.55.00
www.oostende.be/cultuur

Until MAY 15 Oostende: (ge)zichten (Ostend: Faces/Views), photographs by Daniël de Kievith and Jef Van Eynde

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
www.africamuseum.be

Until SEP 4 FetishModernity, exhibition created by six European museums exploring modernity

Turnhout

De Tweede Helft

Gratalkker 5
www.twintigplusnuldrive.be

May 7-JUN 12 Tom Woestenborghs: Salvation Can Be Found in the Illusion of Indifference, installations, prints and drawings by the Belgian artist

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum

Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220
www.inflandersfields.be

Until NOV 13 Tribute to Donors, a wide selection of donated works, including paintings, drawings and photographs



Feest van de Folk: Tenth anniversary of the Muziekmozaïek folk festival

Until MAY 7 across Flanders and Brussels
www.muziekmozaiek.be

Antwerp

Cesar Millan: Live show from the star of

National Geographic's The Dog Whisperer
MAY 6 19.30 at Sportpaleis, Schijnpoortweg 119
www.cesarmillanlive.com

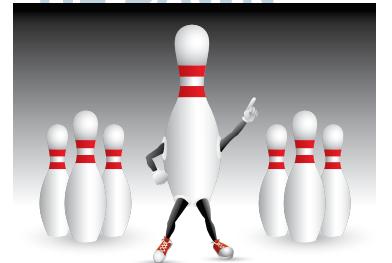
Brussels

Brussels Short Film Festival: Annual festival of short films from around the world, with special screenings of Belgian shorts, shorts

for kids and the popular all-nighter Night of the Shorts
Until MAY 8 across Brussels
www.courtmetrage.be

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

DUSK 'TIL DAWN



Bowling Stones' birthday bash

7 May, 18.00-4.00

Wemmel

And what if we all went bowling this weekend? Spare! Strike! Silly multi-coloured shoes and loud pop music.

Sounds good, right? Then head to the awesomely named Bowling Stones in Wemmel, Flemish Brabant, for its big birthday bash on 7 May. As Benelux's biggest bowling alley turns three, join them for cocktails, a party and ... bowling.

Besides the 36 bowling lanes are snooker tables, table football, a lounge bar, internet cafe and a big restaurant called N9ne, which boasts a terrace with an excellent view. Catering to the younger set, Bowling Stones knows how to entertain.

On 7 May, expect a bowling night you've never seen before. As of 18.00, join the crowd for a few games of 10 pin. When a red pin appears on your alley, roll it over with a strike and win a bottle of bubbly. To challenge your senses, the Trouble Shakers will be mixing cocktails all night long. (But be warned, cocktails and bowling can make a losing combination.)

But who cares about your score with MC Velasquez putting you in a party mood to the beats of DJ Jay Mackenzie. Expect a mix of commercial dance and techno and a disco light show. The bowling alleys are equipped with specials lighting, making your lane look like a proper dance floor.

As always, you don't have to make reservations for the bowling lanes, but you'll need some for the restaurant if you're planning dinner as well. The evening starts at 18.00 to end at 4.00 in the morning. There's no dress code, but should you want to wear something to go with the shoes, think white, blue, red and green. And bright.

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

De Rare Vos

This timeless gem on the market square of Schepdaal village, 12 kilometres west of Brussels, was an inn and café since 1880. But it wasn't until after the Second World War that it got its name The Strange Fox, when brewer Louis Moles de Bailly took over the business.

The illegitimate son of an aristocrat, Louis was indeed an odd one, and red-haired to boot. He started producing different types of lambic by spontaneous fermentation, often mixing it with the then-plentiful local cherries to create his own kriek beers. It didn't take long before *Brusselaars* discovered Louis' brews, and made De Rare Vos their favourite countryside retreat. Backed by this success, Louis began organising folk festivals called *pensekermissen*, around sausages (blood or otherwise). He was a beloved figure in Flemish Brabant and beyond, his presence sorely missed since his death in 1997.

The good news is his spirit lives on in the traditional café that doesn't appear to have changed a hair since the post-war period. Snug and cosy, the room is fitted with a dozen or so wooden tables and chairs, a simple bar and a whole lot of knick-knacks – beer posters, clocks, antique tins, old photographs, lanterns and even a stuffed fox.

But my companion and I are here to eat. We make our way through the antique interior to the back terrace. Beyond this stretches another lawn and outdoor seating area, bringing the total capacity up

Contact *Bite* at flandersbite@gmail.com

to about 400 people – something you don't expect when entering from the modest street-side doorway.

Other expectations are met, however, when our eyes fall on the extensive selection of geuze, lambic and kriek beers. Without hesitation we order a bottle of Oude Geuze 3 Fonteinen. Its nose is sour and the finish dry and yeasty. Perfect, except for the server's failure to place the bottle on our table, let alone even show it to us.

Most of the menu contains brasserie-type dishes such as scampis and steak. In addition there's horse steak, rabbit stew and the very tempting pigeon prepared in Orval. But it's the special Easter menu that draws us in with its promise of four courses at €35 each.

My companion takes the Carpaccio starter, thin red slices of succulent raw beef topped with rocket salad, sharp aged cheese and coarse grains of sea salt. Although this is one of my favourite dishes, I am not the least bit envious thanks to my cutely named blushing tuna. Four thick chunks of rosy tuna rest on slices of pan-fried courgette. It comes with triangles of toasted white bread and what couldn't be a more perfect sauce: a mixture of warmed honey, parsley and red chilli peppers.

The next course is creamy carrot soup, subtly seasoned with curry powder. Floating on top are a handful of tiny crunchy croutons. My companion's main arrives: rack of lamb with diced garlic still clinging to its roasted exterior. He takes



a bone in his hands and bites into the juicy meat, a lovely reddish pink colour. It comes with a dark brown sauce, a batch of tender green beans and some sinfully creamy gratin dauphinoise potatoes with a golden, bubbly broiled crust.

Meanwhile I'm struggling to finish my trio of fish, but not for lack of taste. Two overly generous pieces of white fish (one skin-on) and a hunk of salmon are beautifully laid out over a heap of mashed potatoes surrounded by a moat of orange lobster bisque. The trio tastes fresh enough to have come straight out of the sea that morning.

Seriously stuffed, I'm thankful to be able to swap my dessert for a Hasseltse coffee. My companion, however, can't resist the

old dame blanche and is presented with an enormous glass of vanilla ice cream with warm chocolate dripping down the sides and a cloud of whipped cream and chocolate sprinkles.

Marktplein 22, Schepdaal; 02.569.20.86

Thurs-Sun, 12.00-21.30

Mains: €15-€25

Flemish brown pub and traditional restaurant with a lot of history and old geuze

TALKING SPORTS

Football playoffs: An unwanted addendum

For the past month, the Belgian football league has been over: the 16 teams in the top tier, the Jupiler Pro League, have all played one another twice – at home and away – and the familiar end-of-season table resulted, with Anderlecht at the top, and Charleroi bottom.

Except that it's not over. We are currently in the midst of a confusing and unwanted playoff system that drags out the season for supposed extra excitement. This extension, which will only be wrapped up on 17 May, divides the league table into three sub-leagues:

- the top six play one another anew to see, once again, who will emerge the winner, and who plays in Europe next season. In recognition of the table ranking of the eight-month general season, the top six playoff table is pre-stacked with points awarded through a complex coefficient. So Anderlecht, in first place, started the playoffs with 33 points, while Lokeren, in sixth, had 25;
- the next eight clubs play in two four-club groups for a place in the Europa League, with the winners of each group in a final playoff. This playoff winner then plays the fourth-placed team from the top six in a "test match" to claim the Europa League spot;
- The bottom two play each other five times. The loser is relegated, but the winner still has to endure a four-team playoff with the second- to fourth-placed clubs in the Second Division.

Got that? At the moment, Genk is leading the playoff table, with 44 points, with six out of 10 games played by each. Anderlecht and Standard Liège are both on 41 points, while Club Brugge, Gent and Lokeren are all out of contention for the top spot.

This is only the second season that this new system has been in place, and fans hate it.



Lokeren's Marcel Mbayo and Genk's Jose Ferreira Nadson compete in Lokeren last Sunday, on the sixth day of the playoffs

In February, the country's two national fan federations issued a statement slamming the playoff system, "which needs a mathematics degree to explain" and pointing to polls showing that up to 80% of supporters opposed them. "If our system of playoffs is ideal, why is it not copied elsewhere? Have we really invented hot water?" their statement said.

There was an effort a few months ago to revert to a simpler system, but the top four Flemish clubs – Anderlecht, Gent, Genk and Club Brugge – blocked it. This is a shame: football's enduring appeal is its simplicity, and this season after the season devalues the game.

LEO CENDROWICZ

THE LAST WORD . . .

Last orders

"The dog never bites, he isn't cynical or voyeuristic, he just observes, with empathy and a lot of compassion. He shows people, not freaks."

Yves Desmet in *De Morgen* mourns the TV programme *Man Blijt Hond*, whose end was announced last week

Job description

"Some priests think they have a monopoly of the term 'faith'."

Norbert De Bethune of the service Rent-A-Priest

Early bird

"We're a business, right? You can't blame us for wanting to sell something."

Van Roey Automation in Turnhout sold 20 highly coveted white iPhones in one afternoon last week before being told they were not officially for sale

Red flag

"Let's not kid ourselves, things aren't looking so rosy for socialism. Anywhere the beatings are being handed out, that's where we are. I've seen happier May Days."

Socialist veteran Freddy Willockx on his party's prospects (see also Fifth Column, p. 3)

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #179

Feature

We've been waiting for years, but the MAS Museum in Antwerp is finally ready to open. The quirky design, the hundreds of thousands of artefacts, the snazzy café: It was worth the wait

Focus

Geert Bourgeois is a Flemish minister any expat should know – his dossier includes integration, tourism and the Flemish periphery of Brussels. We talk to the minister about his priorities and follow up with an article on integration efforts in Flanders

Living

Anyone in Brussels who hasn't found the right painting for above the mantle just isn't trying. First there was the Affordable Art Fair and this month is the Accessible Art Fair. We'll tell you just what makes it accessible