



Baker for a day

Politician Joke Quintens gains hands-on experience

► 5

They will come

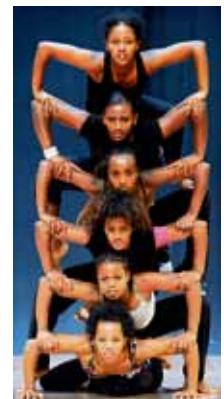
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A singer's perseverance

Flemish music icon Will Tura looks back on his long and successful career

Tom Peeters

A photo book and an exhibition provide a retrospective of the most popular Flemish singer of the last 50 years. Before he blows out 72 candles – on 2 August – Will Tura told us the secret behind his biggest hit, “Eenzaam zonder jou” (Lonely Without You,) and a career that has spanned more than half a century.

Wbefore we sit down in the bar of a luxury hotel on Brussels' Avenue Louise, Will Tura asks if he can keep his scarf on. It's a typical reflex of an artist who takes his job seriously and always thinks ahead: He doesn't want to get sick from air-conditioning, something that would compromise his voice, and the next show. It's also the reflex of an artist who keeps listening to the advice his mother gave him as a boy: “You can be a musician and build your dream, but only when you work hard for it.” So that's what he did, all through his career. For the one thing he loved the most, he had to sacrifice the rest.

His wife had already asked him to slow down – meaning only around 50 concerts a year. It's a far cry from his 1960s heyday, when he'd do the same number of concerts in less than two months. You'll find proof of his busy schedule in the new photo book *Will Tura, een leven in beeld* (Will Tura, a Life in Images). The photos are also on display at an exhibition in Ostend until 19 August. Among the pictures from the family archive – most of them never published before – there are a few lists of dates. Take July 1969: 31 days, 31 concerts, from Booischot to Berg. Every day he took his orchestra to another ball in another town.

“Now I try to stick to about 55 concerts a year,” he says, because he knows his wife is right: “I will be 72 soon, but I'm still acting like I'm 50. It must be the music that keeps me young. But if I slow down a bit, maybe I can even go on a little bit longer?”

A risk that paid off

The career of Arthur Blanckaert – that's the name on Tura's birth certificate – reads like a guide to post-war entertainment in Flanders. In the rural society of the 1960s and even the 1970s, he travelled the country to perform his countless hits for his fans, in a tent on the town square or in front of the church. “Now it seems like folklore, but they sure were great times,” he remembers. “The whole village was present and they all sang with me. I was the king of the balls.”

Later, as society (and the entertainment industry) changed, he was the first Flemish artist to sell out Forest National (in 1974), and in the 1980s he shifted from rowdy tents to more intimate indoor shows. “It was a risk my late brother Staf, who was my sound engineer, and I were willing to take. Instead of the drinking and dancing at the balls, fans came to sit down and really listen to my music.”

By the end of the 1980s, when the first Flemish commercial TV channel appeared, he took advantage of the renewed interest in local artists; with the catchy “Mooi, 't leven is mooi”



Flanders' most enduring musical celebrity, Will Tura, whose life and career are being celebrated with a new book and an exhibition

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



The new nobility

© Belga

A farmer, a shopkeeper, a journalist, a choirmaster – all examples of the new Belgian nobility, as decided by the King last week. In the run-up to the national day on 21 July, as is his custom, King Albert II gave out honours to 22 prominent personalities – some more prominent than others. The Belgian nobility is essentially nominal – unlike in the United Kingdom, a noble title brings no institutional rights, such as deciding on legislation in the House of Lords. And not surprisingly for a country with less than 200 years of history, it's fairly minimal. The titles available range from prince down to knight, via duke, marquis, count, viscount and baron. There are quite a few noble families, especially in the lower reaches, but if you know the names at all, it's likely you associate them with street names or metro stations: De Smet De Naeyer, Merode, Surlet de Chokier, Arenberg, Berlaymont, de Broqueville.

In Belgium, the granting of titles has become a question of recognition of public service, with none of the virtually automatic reward for senior civil servants and long-serving politicians which sees the twice-yearly Honours List in Britain filling page after page. So the King's list was not only short, it also included quite a few well-known names, and many of them from Flanders: Jef Colruyt (pictured), CEO of the supermarket chain of the same name; Piet Vanthemsche, president of the

farmer's union Boerenbond; Julien De Wilde, chairman of the technology industry association Agoria; mathematician Ingrid Daubechies of the Free University of Brussels (VUB); Kristine De Mulder, director-general of Europa. All of them become barons or baronesses, the highest honour routinely awarded. Lower down, the knighthoods all go to men, Belgium having no female equivalent. Among them are Luc Vandewalle of ING, architect Philippe Samyn, Geert Ghys, leader of the Belgian international disaster rescue team B-Fast, and Raf De Rycke of the religious organisation Broeders van Liefde.

The BV contingent of Flemish celebrities receive the title Commander of the Order of the Crown, not strictly speaking a noble title, for those who care about such things. They include journalist Annemie Struyf, Stijn and Steven Kolacny, founders and directors of the girls' choir Scala from Aarschot, former city carillon player of Antwerp and Mechelen Jo Haazen, and perhaps the most popular choice of all, Kamil Sergant, aged 77, honorary citizen of Aalst and for many years Keizer carnavaal there – emperor of the world-renowned carnavaal. "When they called, at first I thought it was a joke," he told *Het Nieuwsblad*. "I'm very proud, of course, but there are so many other people this could have gone to."

News in brief

The acting mayor of Bonheiden in Antwerp province, Julien Stephani, has responded to complaints of **nuisance caused by two peacocks** by having the birds shot. The two peacocks, owned by one of the town's residents, pecked on neighbours' windows and ate plants in their gardens. Stephani explained that the birds were impossible to catch with nets, so hunters were called in to shoot them.

Fans who were unable to obtain tickets for the popular dance festival Tomorrowland in Boom in Antwerp province will be able to **follow events on YouTube**. Organisers of the festival, which this year features Skrillex and David Guetta among others, will relay the festival from 19.00 to 2.00 nightly from 27 to 29 July.

► www.youtube.com/user/TomorrowlandChannel

Police investigating a fire set in the offices of the clerk of the court in the Brussels Justice Palace have **arrested a second suspect**. One man was arrested in January this year shortly after the fire, which destroyed a number of sensitive documents, leading investigators to suspect the fire was started deliberately. Both suspects are thought to have been identified from security camera images.

The city of Brussels is to build a huge **market garden on the roof of the slaughterhouse in Anderlecht**, growing local products such as spinach, sprouts, asparagus, witloof, mushrooms and lettuce on 3,000 square metres of space. The produce will be used to supply a restaurant and shop to be installed below the roof. The total cost of the project, which will be partly financed by the Brussels Region and the European Regional Development Fund, is estimated at €21 million, and could

provide up to 7,755 jobs.

The Council of State has overturned a federal law **allowing motorcycles to park on the pavement**, after the Brussels Region protested it had not been consulted over the legislation. The law, introduced in June last year, has an impact on mobility policy, which is a regional responsibility, the Council ruled, and so could not be introduced without consultation. The regulation allowed parking on footpaths providing 1.5m was left clear for foot traffic, but the Brussels Region maintains it is in conflict with its own policies on pedestrian areas.

Bruges is to be the setting of a new **BBC historical drama series**, *The White Queen*, on which filming will begin in September. The series is set in the 15th century and tells the story of the conflict between the houses of York and Lancaster for the throne of England, which ended when Henry Tudor defeated Richard III to put the Tudors on the throne for the next century. Three of the lead roles and many other parts will feature Belgian actors, and 12 of the scheduled 125 shooting days will take place on the streets of Bruges.

A 25-year-old **jet-skier has died after being involved in a serious accident** during the Belgian jet-ski championships in Mons in Wallonia. Kevin Soetaert from Maldegem in East Flanders lost control of his own jet-ski, which flipped on top of him. He was then struck by another jet-ski, which reports said was driven by his brother.

The Chinese government is reported to be looking for prestige premises in Brussels for the installation of a **new cultural centre to promote Chinese culture**, including

language classes and exhibitions, as well as Chinese gastronomy. China already has cultural centres in Paris and Berlin.

The north beach **bathing zone in Ostend was closed last week to swimmers** after water samples revealed the presence of bacteria which can cause diarrhoea. The high levels of bacteria are thought to be a result of heavy rainfall which overwhelmed water purification stations, sending raw sewage out to sea.

Researchers at the Institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp have developed a test for the **so-called super-parasite which causes Leishmaniasis**, characterised by skin sores which victims suffer after being bitten by sand flies, with later symptoms including fever, anaemia and liver and spleen damage. The disease affects 1.5 to 2 million people every year, and the super-parasite is a strain so far resistant to treatment. The research involved unravelling the whole genome of the parasite to look for identifying features.

A group of Swiss cyclists on a 5,000km ride across Europe to raise money for children in South Africa last week **paid a visit to the primary school 't Stekske in Lommel** in Limburg, which lost 15 pupils and two members of staff in a bus crash in Sierre in Switzerland in March while returning from a ski holiday. Some of the cyclists are members of the emergency services who took part in the operation to rescue injured survivors from the wreck and take them to nearby hospitals. The visitors held a minute's silence at the school, and left a bunch of white roses in memory of the victims.

FLANDERS TODAY



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OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Party like it's 1399

On one side of town they were getting legless in the rain; on the other, they were putting children in coffins. In between, they buried a man in an attempt to break a world record, but he started feeling ill and had to be exhumed and taken off by ambulance. They know how to have a party at the Gentse Feesten. Suffice it to say that the 10-day Bacchanalia is not only a celebration of local (and other) culture, it's also an offering to the gods of excess, and a veritable school for scandal.

During the week or so that had passed at the time of writing:

- A man caught peeing in the street took exception to being reprimanded by police, and ended up injuring three of them;
- A man arrested for absconding from a restaurant without paying was detained and asked for 500 similar offences to be taken into consideration;

• A stolen painting by Rubens was returned, they say coincidentally, to the city;

• An attempt was made on the world record for cleaning carrots.

The biggest scandal, however, was provided by Batabang, a meditation on the end of life – for kids. Since the world is coming to an end this year – according to the Mayan calendar – the group Cirq organised an exhibit on the end of times.

The sore point, as far as some were concerned, was the part where children were invited to have their pictures taken in a coffin. Among the protesters were parents who had lost children for real. Among the photographic subjects, however, were a few delighted children, and one might reflect that children do tend to enjoy doom and disaster, from fairy stories to games of soldiers – as long as it's in fun. Which just about sums up the whole of the Gentse Feesten.



A singer's perseverance

Will Tura: "I will be 72 soon, but I'm still acting like I'm 50. It must be the music that keeps me young"

► continued from page 1

(Beautiful, Life is Beautiful) he had a big hit. "It's a song written by Nelly Byl, who sadly passed away last year. I hesitated at first, wasn't too sure about the lyrics, but ever since it's been a standard in my repertoire."

Tura really experienced the power of the small screen when he sang at the funeral of King Baudouin in 1993. His emotional performances of "Hoop doet leven" (Hope Gives Life) and "Ik mis je zo" (I Miss You So) were broadcast live and written in the collective memory. "That was a very strange moment," he recalls. "Luckily, pianist Steve Willaert accompanied me. He showed me where to breathe. After the funeral I received postcards from all over the world, and even now, for my concert at Rimpelrock, the organiser asked me to sing 'Hoop doet leven' in remembrance of the victims of last year's Pukkelpop disaster."

In the meantime, younger generations have covered Tura's songs on tribute albums, and today that mutual respect remains. Witness Tura's collaboration with the rock trio Triggerfinger, who are backing him on a song on his latest album, *Ik ben een zanger* (I'm a Singer). "They can make me sound so huge," he says with a big smile.

"Let him make music"

Raised in a working-class family in Veurne, Tura heard his mother singing all the time. It caught on. "While my brothers and sisters picked real jobs, such as baker, electrician and dressmaker, I was the problem child," he says. "Where I lived, in West Flanders, it was important to learn a craft. Once I was writing music during a maths exam, and my teacher sent me to the head teacher. He said to my mother: 'He's useless here. Let him make his music.' What a relief!"

"I was very lucky I was allowed to follow a private accordion course, and later I

studied guitar, so I could play in a band, and piano. My mother was much too proud to let me be just a street musician. I had to give everything I had to reach my goal, she insisted. For example, I couldn't just play football if I had to perform the same evening, even if I was only the goalkeeper. Catching a cold, sweating, possible injuries: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." As an adult, first he would buy a Steinway piano, which he really needed, and only later would he splash out on his favourite cars.

His education proved fruitful. Aged 12, he sang in a revue in Veurne, led by his accordion teacher. The black and white photo of him in country outfit in the photo book and at the exhibition is a cute souvenir. At the time he was still Arthur Blanckaert, but that would soon change. The director of the local revues suggested changing my name. 'Tura' sounded more modern and English than Arthur, especially combined with Will. And it would be better visually. I approved."

By the time Tura was 17, he released his first single, a Dutch translation of the Everly Brothers' "Bye Bye Love", accompanied by Francis Bay's big band. In December 1962, his breakthrough hit, the classic "Eenzaam zonder jou", entered the charts and stayed there for seven months, competing with Petula Clark and Adamo to be number one.

"I had written the song in a

laid-back Anglo-Saxon style, a bit like the easy rock'n'roll of Cliff Richard. The way I sang it was new here. My phrasing was more English than Flemish. I really connected and stretched out the words."

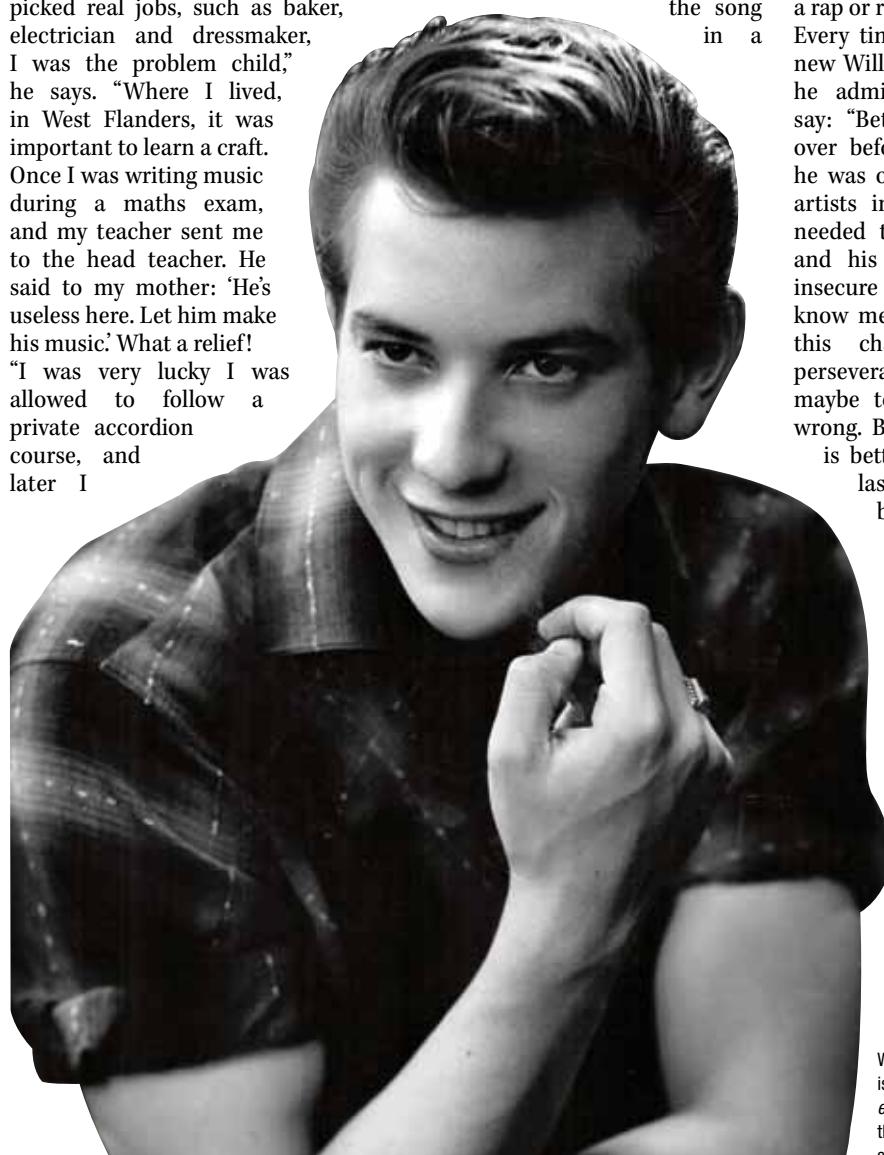
Gut instinct

Tura came up with the melody, but Ke Riema wrote the words. "She asked me what I was thinking when I composed the song. I told her I was in the south of France and I missed my girlfriend. I remember I had written the notes on beer mats. She linked my feeling with soldiers, far away from home and feeling lonely without their spouses." Later, Tura worked a lot with Nelly Byl and producer Jean Kluger for his lyrics. "I recorded a song on a tape and a few days later Nelly would suggest the words. It was a close collaboration, but Jean had the gut feeling. He felt whether something would work or not."

The strong coalition between singer-composer, lyricist and guiding producer, backed by a solid group of musicians and engineers, prevented his career from lagging. "I never needed a comeback. I was always there. And if things were quieter, we came up with a new concept, such as adding a symphonic orchestra or a country and gospel album recorded in Nashville. I was lucky that I was interested in all kinds of musical styles, so I could bring something jazzy, sing chanson, and even make a rap or reggae single."

Every time the press announced a new Will Tura, he was a bit scared, he admits. His mother used to say: "Better take care; it can be over before you know it." Though he was one of the most successful artists in the country, he always needed the approval of his peers and his audience. "I've been an insecure man all my life. My friends know me for this. But I also think this characteristic trained my perseverance. I was always busy, maybe to avoid doing something wrong. But this kind of adrenaline

is better than indifference for a lasting career. I still want to be prepared when I step on a stage, and give all I have."



Will Tura in his younger days. The singer is still going strong, with the album *Ik ben een zanger* released at the end of March, though he's reduced his touring schedule somewhat in recent years

► www.willtura.be



Tougher sentences for hate crimes

Anti-gay attack in Aalst was “cowardly act of aggression”

Alan Hope

The federal government last week introduced proposals to increase the maximum sentences for homophobic violence, following a brutal attack in a bar in Aalst that left one man in a coma.

The attack took place in Kelly's bar near the railway station, when two brothers aged 19 and 28, Dimitri and Kevin D.N., attacked two gay men, aged 35 and 55, with fists and furniture. The local prosecutor in Dendermonde said the attack was clearly motivated by anti-gay sentiment, though no details were given. One of the men was injured but allowed to leave hospital after treatment. The other was briefly in a coma, but his condition the following day was no longer considered life-threatening. According to the bar's manager, the attack was unprovoked and particularly violent. Another gay man who was present was not attacked.

Gay rights organisation Cavarria said the attack was a “cowardly act of aggression”, and an illustration that homophobic violence could happen anywhere.

“It is unacceptable that in 2012 someone can be the victim of violence because of

his nationality or sexual orientation,” said justice minister Annemie Turtelboom (pictured, with prime minister Elio Di Rupo), after the ministerial meeting.

“We want an open, free and tolerant society,” said Di Rupo, who is himself openly gay. “We are a society with broad freedoms, but we cannot permit someone's physical integrity to be attacked. We need to show that this will not be tolerated.”

The new maximum sentences increase for manslaughter from 20 years to life, in cases where homophobic or racist motives are proven. For assault and battery, the current maximum of five years is increased to 30 years. The minimum sentences for such hate crimes were increased in 2007.

Di Rupo denied the government's proposal was a knee-jerk reaction. In Liège earlier this year a gay man was beaten to death and the government has been considering its response since then, he said. The alleged attackers in Aalst, who were arrested shortly after the incident, will not be affected by the changes.



© Belga

New anti-discrimination centre agreed

The Flemish government gave its support last week to a new Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Discrimination and Racism. The centre takes over from the existing federally supported agency, and will work on an “interfederal” basis – essentially allowing it to take positions on matters that are regional responsibilities, such as education.

The regions will also be represented on the centre's governing body, taking as many as half of the seats on the board. The German community will also get a seat. The centre will have two directors, one man and one woman; one Dutch-speaker and one French-speaker. The board will be made up of 10 members nominated by the federal government, four from Flanders, four from Wallonia and two from Brussels. Gender balance is required, and none of the board members may be a member of a parliament or a ministerial cabinet.

The centre's exact working methods have yet to be worked out, with all parties committed to a deadline of next June for it to come into operation.



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Opposition to new airport noise measures

A residents' group representing people in municipalities north of Brussels has threatened legal action against plans by the federal government to redraw the routes from Brussels-National airport over the capital.

The plans, unveiled last week by federal minister for mobility Melchior Wathelet, aim to direct as many flights as possible over the canal zone in Brussels and over the Ring on the northern side, in an effort to minimise the nuisance caused by aircraft noise.

However, Actie Noordrand said the plan would instead concentrate flights over Koningslo, Grimbergen, Meise and Wemmel, and subject residents there to even more nuisance than at present. The plans, it said, were the result of political lobbying by Brussels French-speaking politicians intent on sparing their residents at the expense of the Flemish in neighbouring municipalities.

Wathelet's plans in fact date back to 2008 and 2010, and a previous government of which

he was not a member. Those plans could not be implemented because of the fall of the government and the year-long struggle to form another. Since the government was formed in December, the plans have been under consideration. The number of possible take-off routes is cut from over 100 to only 40. As well as reducing noise nuisance, the plan also cuts out many routes that cross each other, to improve safety.

Sun comes out for national day

Belgium's national day escaped the downpour that usually marks the event and, in contrast to last year, brought a smile to the King's face. Last year's royal address to the nation, which was then in the grip of a long-running political crisis, was full of foreboding. This year, however, His Majesty was more upbeat.

After a word in memory of the children who died in the Swiss bus crash in March, he expressed his delight at the various agreements that had been reached, in forming a government and later. The policy worked out, he said, gave “encouraging signs” for employment and economic growth. He also called for a change in mentality and more openness towards not only other communities within Belgium, but also other cultures coming here from outside.

About 300,000 people took part in the festivities. The podium at the traditional military parade, this year in honour of the 60th anniversary of the para-commando regiments, was graced with the presence of Prince Laurent, excluded last year after a controversial visit to Congo, and later, 25,000 people gathered to watch a fireworks display from in front of Brussels' royal palace.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

7.1km

the longest bus-lane in Flanders, newly installed between Haacht in Flemish Brabant and Brussels, serving eight bus lines including the express between the two destinations

879

drivers submitted a claim for compensation to the Flemish government in the first half of the year for damage caused by potholes in regional road surfaces. The final bill could amount to €300,000

86.6mm

of rain fell in the first 15 days of July at the weather station in Ukkel in Brussels, more than the 73.5mm expected for the whole month normally. The average temperature at 16.8 degrees was lower than the seasonal average of 18.4 degrees

69,605

births in Flanders in 2011, the second-highest figure since the turn of the century. The number of women giving birth for the first time was the lowest ever at 48.5% of the total

187h

of non-stop radio broadcasting achieved by DJ Tom Berg in Knox, Indiana in the US, breaking the record set by VRT presenter Peter Van de Veire less than one month ago

€10,000

fine for the VRT by the Flemish media regulator for product placement for a brand of ski-goggles repeatedly shown in an episode of the reality show *Tomtesterom* in which Tom Waes trained as a ski-jumper

Step into their shoes

Flemish politician Joke Quintens gets fired up about other people's jobs

Alan Hope

Joke Quintens is deputy chair of the Flemish socialist party SPA, she's standing in October's municipal elections, and she has a job as a creativity consultant to businesses. But despite all that, for the past few months she's also been spending a day here and a day there working at a variety of other occupations – kindergarten teacher, special needs teacher, lorry driver, employment consultant, serving behind the counter in a baker's shop...

Looked at holistically, she says, they're all part of one job: the work experience. She calls them "taking part stages" that help to form her political judgement and give her issues to campaign with. On the other hand, her political connections allow her to step up as a champion for each of the sectors she's worked in, and bring the most pressing matters to the attention of her party colleagues by way of personalised letters (see sidebar).

The idea is so self-evident, the first question ought to be, why aren't all politicians doing this? How did you first come up with the notion of stepping into the shoes of a worker for a day?



What sort of lessons have you learned?

I want to put these jobs at centre stage, to show them off to people, let them see what's good and bad about the jobs. For my selection, the main inspiration was: what do I not know about? My parents spent years in the food service industry, so I know perfectly well how that works. I chose jobs where I don't have any experience, but certainly admiration for those who do it. And I also chose Genk as my field of action, and that's linked to the local elections. In another town the choice might have been different.

Your opponents will accuse you of running a campaign stunt to get attention for yourself and your list, and win votes.

No, it isn't a stunt. I want to carry on doing this even after the elections. I did this more in order to give some shape to my thoughts about what this city needs. This is the best training for politics you could have: down in the trenches with your feet in the mud, and living with the people.

I could have done it differently, and gone in as a politician on an official visit, but then you'd get a different picture, with everything cleaned up for your arrival and the spokesperson giving the official version of the story. Whereas this way I get the chance to talk to bosses and workers who just tell it like it is. They complain about certain issues, and of course you get to see things for yourself.

That's another part of the reason I'm doing it, and part of the reason for the choices I made (to work as nurse, kindergarten teacher and behind the counter in a baker's shop): because I have respect for those people, and because it's hard work. The baker who faces huge competition from multi-national chains, or the employment office where you see that some people really don't want to work while others are begging for a job. You get a fuller picture of what the situation is really like.



The most important lesson is that everybody ought to be doing this. I'm thinking mainly of politicians, and especially the ones who are based in Brussels and have little or no local base. It would be great if a hospital surgeon spent a day in a kindergarten classroom, for example. Why on earth not? That sort of thing broadens your horizon. A lot of people spend their whole lives in their own little pigeon-hole. I've learned much more on a day like this than I ever learned on a study day organised by the party. For that reason alone it's worthwhile.

For each individual stage I've

tried to articulate the lessons I learned in the letters I wrote to politicians. It's just a matter of me saying what I think in as positive a way as possible, while still being critical. I was pretty outraged when I spent a day in special education. Those teachers are under constant pressure to provide a safe learning environment for children with all sorts of psychological and behavioural problems, and they do a great job, but the infrastructure they're forced to work in was awful, and I think that kind of thing needs to be said.

Politics for me up to now has been an unpaid occupation. Most of my

colleagues are paid professionals, in the senate or the chamber or the Flemish parliament, in Brussels mostly. So I think as a self-employed person who makes her living elsewhere, I already have a different point of view from those who are in politics full time. I've often noticed, while sitting in meetings with them, that I have the point of view of an outsider, even before I started with these stages. I'm not saying they're cut off from the world - that wouldn't be fair - but I believe it's important to have a viewpoint from outside politics.

► www.jokequintens.be

DEAR COLLEAGUES

After each stage, Quintens writes a letter to one of her socialist ministerial colleagues. A selection from the ones written to date, which are published on her blog:

Subject: De Luchballon (school for children with special needs)
To: Flemish equal opportunities minister Pascal Smet

It warmed my heart to see how these people worked with the children even in the most difficult circumstances. How they prepared class material in their own time because there's no money to buy things. How they used their creativity to make the playground a safe place. Every one of these teachers gives themselves, heart

and soul, to their job. That deserves the very best infrastructure, wouldn't you think?

Subject: Employment agency VDAB
To: Federal employment minister Monica De Koninck

Monica, we shouldn't be afraid to invest in the support of job-seekers, because it's an investment that pays an immediate return. We need more support staff because every time they lead a man or woman into a job, they effectively

repay their own salary right back. And do you know what we really mustn't do? Stick our heads in the sand.

Subject: De Soete Inval baker's shop
To: Federal economy minister Johan Vande Lanotte

Johan, local business delivers real added value to our social welfare, as well as to employment and the creation of wealth. This is a human economy that's not driven by the

short-term thinking of faceless shareholders, or managers' lust for bonuses. These are people who make something and offer it to their community. And that's something we have to strengthen, stimulate and support.

Subject: The nursing ward of South Limburg hospital
To: Flemish innovation minister Ingrid Lieten

If we want to entice more people into this challenging sector, we

need more innovative ideas. The job of nurse could be made a lot more attractive. As you know, I still have a job besides my political commitments; I organise brainstorming sessions. And I've been going around with this idea of organising a brainstorming session around the question: "How can we make our hospitals a more attractive place to stay?" After today, I'd like to add, "and to work".

► <http://jokequintens.wordpress.com>

THE WEEK
IN BUSINESSImaging
► Barco

Image processing company Barco from Kortrijk has announced a half-year profit of €43.5 million, an increase on forecasts and on last year's €34 million for the same period. All company divisions contributed to the improved results, CEO Eric Van Zele said. Orders in the first half reached €501.5 million.

Mail-order
► Neckermann

The German mail-order and online store Neckermann has announced it will go into receivership, with the loss of 30 jobs at the distribution centre in Temse in East Flanders.

Office furniture
► Pami

Office furniture supplier Pami, based in Overpelt in Limburg, has taken over the inventory of Mewaf in Kortrijk, after parent company Van Marcke announced closure last month. The deal promises job security for some of the 74 Mewaf employees due to be made redundant at the end of the month, though numbers are currently unknown.

Ports
► Zeebrugge

The port of Zeebrugge has been granted certification by the Halal Food Council of Europe, the first port on the west coast of the continent to receive the certificate, which guarantees that food remains halal throughout its passage through the port. The port hopes to extend its contacts in the Middle East and the European interior, for export as well as import.

Security
► Securitas

The European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg will not prolong its contract with security specialists Securitas after 2016, it was announced. The parliament, which is served by around 400 Securitas agents, will employ its own security staff. A spokesperson stressed there were no complaints about Securitas's service.

Textiles
► Libeltex

Technical textiles company Libeltex from Meulebeke in West Flanders could cut 50 to 60 jobs as a result of its forthcoming takeover by TWE Group of Germany, reports said. TWE's offer includes the loss of up to 60 of the factory's 245 jobs, as well as the closure of a sister plant in Sweden. TWE is a subsidiary of arms manufacturer and dealer Lüke & Ortmeier.

New contract for co-parenting workers

Employers welcome improved flexibility at home-care provider

Alan Hope

Familiehulp, a Catholic organisation providing home-care in Flanders and the Brussels region, has launched a model employment contract for divorced parents, aimed at allowing them to work less when they are looking after their children in a co-parenting situation, and to make up for it when the children are with the other parent.

The organisation, which employs 12,000 people and is the largest of its sort in Flanders, hopes the contract will attract more applicants for the 200 or so job vacancies it has but has been unable to fill. While the contract, which will be used from September, is intended for Familiehulp's own use, it has sparked interest in other quarters.

"People want more account taken of their private situation," said Agnes Bode of Familiehulp. "This is a new sort of contract – an experiment. We will see what the reaction is, and

the impact on the organisation of work. If our evaluation is positive, we will extend its use within the organisation."

As well as the week-on, week-off contract, Familiehulp will also offer two variants, one where working hours are arranged to suit school hours and one that covers school holiday arrangements.

Unizo, the organisation that represents small businesses, welcomed the introduction of the new contract, but pointed out that it only applies to part-time workers. Such arrangements are often agreed informally in small businesses, but the organisation said it was in favour of increased flexibility across the board – as long as it was of mutual benefit. "If a boss is flexible enough to let you work less when you have the children, you need also to be ready to work longer when you don't have them," the group said. "Flexibility is good for both sides."



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However, at present, employment contracts stand in the way. "Someone who wants to work 28 hours this week and 48 hours next week can't always do that," a spokesperson said. "Labour law in many sectors says there is a maximum of 38 hours a week." Parents with family

responsibilities would have more flexibility, Unizo argues, if working time were calculated on an annual rather than a weekly basis – a proposal that has already been made to the federal government, and is apparently still under consideration.

Ford Genk to remain open after closure rumours

Management at Ford Genk in Limburg province moved swiftly at the weekend to put down rumours that the plant, the largest employer in Limburg with a workforce of about 4,000, was slated for closure. The factory "will certainly remain open," a company statement said on Sunday.

The clouds started to gather after a report from financial news service Bloomberg quoting the investment

bank Morgan Stanley saying Ford had no option but to close a factory in Europe due to over-capacity in the industry. Ford Genk was explicitly mentioned as a possible casualty. Like its sister factory in Southampton in England, Ford Genk has suffered from the drop in sales of new cars, and is currently reported to be running at about 63% capacity, manufacturing the Mondeo, the S-Max and the Galaxy – all larger models, more

vulnerable to a shrinking market. The news from Bloomberg led to anxiety in Genk, according to the socialist trade union ABVV, on top of unrest created several weeks ago when Ford postponed the introduction of production of the new Mondeo. In April the company said it would take on 200 extra staff for the new line. But union representative Erik Verheyden told the VRT, "At this moment I'm not afraid of a closure."

The management of Ford Europe signed a contract with workers in 2010 guaranteeing future employment until 2020, and that contract was re-confirmed last week, he said. A statement from Ford Genk management repeated that point, and said that the so-called Contract for the Future, which also includes the introduction of three new production lines, was being carried out.

Road toll measures delayed

The planned introduction of a toll for heavy lorries using the roads of Flanders is on the road to being realised, minister-president Kris Peeters announced last week. However, environmentalists have criticised delays in introducing the system.

The plan to bring in a road toll for lorries over 3.5 tonnes based on the number of kilometres travelled, plus a paid tax-disc for private cars, was agreed by the three regions in 2011, with the aim of making it operational in 2013. However, that deadline cannot be met, and the earliest date for introduction of the system is now thought to be 2016.

The plan is recognition of Belgium's central location in Europe's infrastructure, and the many vehicles which use the road in transit from one country to another. Belgian drivers account for 5.8 million cars, to which can be added another 4 million every year which are passing through or visiting. Under the present system, only about 60% of those who use the roads pay for their upkeep and for the related environmental measures, such as improving air quality. The new system would go some way to remedying that.

Visiting motorists would buy a virtual tax-disc by the border, register their number plate and pay

the fee. Cameras along the roads would then track number plates to see who had paid. Lorries would be fitted with an apparatus that uses GPS to record the distance travelled, and they would be billed

accordingly. According to Peeters, various technical aspects of the plan still need to be hammered out among the regions, and discussion was due to continue this week.



Flemish guarantee fund amended

The Flemish government has agreed changes to the organisation of its Guarantee Fund, to allow it to intervene in new ways to support enterprise and to make it more flexible in rapidly changing economic circumstances.

The fund provides about €200 million a year in investment guarantees, which provides businesses with the opportunity of raising some €450 million in backing from outside investors. The system was extended in the crisis period between January 2010 and June 2011 to allow guarantees on bridging loans to be made, which were taken up in 209 cases for a total value of €69 million. The changes involve those bridging guarantees on the one hand, to allow the reorganisation of company capital to take account of debts up to one year old; and to permit the extension of the terms of some loan guarantees. On the other hand, the government is to change the law on the matter, to allow it to act and react more speedily to changing economic circumstances. "In the event of an economic crisis, the government of Flanders wishes to be able to take rapid and effective action to give a positive stimulus to lending to businesses, to help support the Flemish economy," minister-president Kris Peeters said in a statement.

Global education

New international school to draw world's research talent to Leuven

Andy Furniere

The city of Leuven, Leuven University (KUL) and the nanotechnology research centre Imec intend to create an international primary school in Leuven, with the financial support of the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB). The principal aim is to attract more foreign researchers by providing English-speaking education to their children at democratic prices. To avoid an elitist reputation, the school will be integrated into an existing institute and the children will receive Dutch language lessons.

An estimated 10,000 expats live in the city of Leuven, many of them young researchers who work at the KUL and Imec. The international staff at the KUL have almost 200 children under 12 years of age and the staff at Imec around 100 children. At the moment, these children are mostly enrolled in Flemish schools or international schools in the Brussels area.

"Neither of these solutions is ideal," says Imec staff manager Hubert De Neve, who is involved in the planning of the school. "At Flemish schools, many expat children have difficulties following the lessons in Dutch. But the international schools in Brussels

are not only quite far away, they are also very expensive." Bart De Moor, vice-rector for international policy at the KUL adds: "The research world has become global and the mobility of scientists keeps on increasing. When they plan to stay for a maximum of ten years at a university, they want their children to receive an international education that prepares them for a life elsewhere as well."

The war for research talent

To attract more high-level researchers, Imec and the KUL are collaborating closely with the city of Leuven – with the financial aid of the VIB – to establish an international school closer to home that has democratic enrolment fees. "The enrolment fees would not be higher than €8,000," says the education alderman of Leuven, Mohamed Ridouani. "That is three times less than the fees at certain international schools in Brussels."

The project benefits from the experience of an external consultant who also helped to create the International School of Ghent, which

will open its doors next school year. What does this sudden surge of international schools mean? "Don't be mistaken; these ideas have been developing in Flanders for a long time, and are now coming to fruition," says De Moor. Ridouani agrees: "Flanders is an open region that adapts to globalisation. University cities, and in particular Ghent and Leuven, spend a lot of effort profiling themselves as international cities where expats can easily feel at home."

Integration

Partners of the project hope to open the school in September 2013, but 2014 is more likely. After a few years, the ambition is to have around 80 pupils. Negotiations are being held with institutes in Leuven to provide the infrastructure for the international school. "This way, we integrate the school in the existing community of Leuven," explains Ridouani. "The children would receive Dutch language lessons and have common activities with the other pupils of the school, such as music, drawing and sports lessons, plus excursions and festivities. We want to avoid the school developing



Bart De Moor, vice-rector for international policy at the KUL, fully supports the new international school

an elitist character and make the possible transition to Flemish schools easy for children." This integration would also reduce the costs of the project. At the moment, the necessary budget is estimated at about €500,000. The four partners would each contribute between €100,000 and €150,000. After the first start-up years, the school could also receive children of the staff of other companies, which would make a financial contribution to allow their employees a reduced enrolment fee.

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Researchers from the Centre of Medical Genetics at the University of Antwerp and colleagues from the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, in the United States, have discovered a **genetic cause of the hereditary form of an enlarged aorta** or aortic aneurysm. These swellings of the aorta can lead to fatal tears or ruptures in the inner wall of the aorta. The condition is the cause of death of 1 to 2% of the western population. Certain existing medications can now be used to treat enlarged aortas.

The University of Hasselt and the Provincial University College Limburg have launched a **new, unique study course: Advanced Retail Design**, which combines the worlds of retail and design. Retail consultants give academic insights and professional advice which are complemented by testimonies from experts in the design sector. The course is mainly aimed at professional managers, designers, consultants and interior architects who want to update their knowledge of designing shops and consumer behaviour. The programme starts on 2 October and consists of seven weekly sessions.

► www.uhasselt.be/advancedretaildesign

The Plantijn University College in the province of Antwerp adapts to the growing ethnic cultural diversity in healthcare services by **developing the intercultural skills of the students in orthopedagogy**. In their last year, the students can choose the option "intercultural work". Their final project, internship and a part of their educational programme will then be dedicated to working in a multicultural environment.

In the last 10 years, the Flemish have become more "Burgundian", according to a study by the department of Agricultural Economics at Ghent University. In separate studies in 2001, 2006 and 2011, Flemish consumers responded to the statement: "I eat what I like to eat, without worrying about how healthy the food is." While in 2001 24% of Flemings agreed with the statement, the number increased to 32% in 2006 and 39% in 2011. One explanation is that the overload of information about food and health leads to growing indifference among consumers. But more consumers have also adapted their lifestyle in recent years and discovered that tasty and healthy food can go together.

The number of students **combining their education with a job** has increased by 52% over the past four years in Flanders, according to the Flemish ministry of education. In total, 70 of these students are women, and one in four is enrolled in healthcare education. AF

Electric vehicles on show at the coast

This week sees the unique opportunity to combine a day out at the Flemish coast with a test drive of a fleet of electric vehicles. As part of the project Electric Vehicles in Action (EVA), the Flemish government has organised an information campaign on electric mobility in three seaside resorts at the North Sea under the slogan EVA on the Beach.

On three afternoons, you will find all the information you need on electric driving at the coast, plus the opportunity to test out electric cars, bicycles and scooters. The dates and locations of EVA on the Beach are:

25 July - Knokke-Heist, Lichttoren Square

26 July - Blankenberge, King Leopold III Square

27 July - De Haan, Christianahelling

EVA is one of five Flemish "living labs" on electric mobility. The project is supported by the Flemish minister for innovation, Ingrid Lieten, and receives financial aid from the Agency for Innovation through Science and Technology (IWT). The main partners are Flemish energy distributor Eandis, cable TV and internet provider Telenet, Ghent University and the Free University of Brussels, electric mobility service provider Blue Corner, electric mobility consultancy company 4IS and car industry federation Federauto. Representatives of each will be present at EVA on the Beach.

By September, the EVA project will have installed a network of 71 charging points for electric vehicles. The infrastructure consists of parking spots and

bicycle racks where electric cars, vans, bikes and scooters can charge their batteries. AF



Q&A



Valérie Van Hees is project manager of the initiative "Divided by numbers – Studying with dyscalculia" at the Artevelde University College Ghent

of the population suffers from this maths disability, which means that on average there is one pupil with dyscalculia in every Flemish class of 20 children. Dyscalculia occurs as often as dyslexia, but is not as well documented.

How do you want to raise more awareness of the condition?

The Artevelde University College Ghent is launching an educational package, under the name "Divided by numbers", which includes a booklet with scientific information on the disability and advice for schools and parents. In an additional documentary, experts explain what is known about the condition and people with dyscalculia talk about

the difficulties they experienced during their school years.

How did it affect their school careers and later lives?

As arithmetic skills are highly valued in primary schools, teachers often pushed them intensively to catch up with the rest of the class. When they didn't succeed, their teachers assumed that they either refused to work hard or that they were not bright enough, resulting in a big blow to their self-confidence. In their later lives, they are confronted with daily limitations. They may, for example, have difficulty arriving anywhere on time because they can't read the clock properly. Paying at the checkout of a supermarket

can also prove a serious challenge. We don't realise how much numbers determine our lives.

How can students with dyscalculia be helped?

In the first place it is important to make the correct diagnosis as early as possible through special maths tests. Although there is no cure for the disability, there are methods to stimulate students to get an academic degree in line with their intellectual potential. What's essential is to slow down the learning process to the individual capabilities of the child, to repeat many exercises and to make abstract calculations concrete using materials such as cubes. AF

Is dyscalculia akin to dyslexia?

Yes, it is also a learning disability but instead of having reading problems, children with dyscalculia struggle with numbers and calculations. Both are the result of malfunctioning brain mechanisms that can be hereditary and are not related to someone's IQ. Around 5%

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Future foodies

Since the other half of this page is taken up with food and drink this week, we're looking at ideas for what to do with children in the area of eating, cooking, baking and that sort of thing

Alan Hope

It comes from the west but is associated with the south, it's red and there are hundreds of species: The tomato is a central part of life for most of us, and the subject of a tomato festival on the last weekend of the holidays at the Arboretum in Kalmthout in Antwerp province. *1 and 2 September from 10.00 to 17.00, with something for all ages. Children under 13 free, others €7, reserve up to three days before.*

► http://terranova.provant.be/programma_detail.php?id=49

The **children's farm** De Lenspolder in Nieuwpoort in West Flanders offers a range of activities like baking and looking after animals, as well as candle-making, paper-making and spinning and weaving. There's also a cafe and a picnic field, and you can arrange guides for a wander through the dunes.

► <http://to.ly/eDyh>



The **children's farm** De 7 Torentjes in Assebroek outside Bruges works all year round with classes from schools far and near, and there are still places left for their bread-making and snail-trail day on 9 August from 8.15 to 17.00. Children of school

age learn what bread is made of, how to knead dough and how to bake their own hand-made bread in the farm's original wood-fired oven. The snail trail, meanwhile, is a treasure hunt for pre-schoolers - and don't worry, the snails are not real and, unlike those hot buns, they won't be coming home with the little ones.

► www.ckbzt.be/contact

The city of Antwerp has its own children's farm in Wilrijk, free to visit every day (except Monday) from 10.00 to 16.00, where children can learn all about farmyard work, cheese-making, bread-making and **ecological gardening**. There's also a fairy-tale promenade, and education on environmental and sustainable farming. The site also lists children's farms in other parts of Flanders.

► <http://to.ly/eDxK>

It's perhaps not the healthiest food subject, but it's one kids love: sweets. The Brussels museum of milling and food is installed in a former working windmill in Evere, and their permanent collection includes everything to do with turning grain into flour. The temporary exhibition **Sweet Candy**, however, is about the history of everything sweet, from honeyed almonds in the ancient world to *cuberdons* and pralines of today, with examples of sweets from across the world: Asian sesame crepes, *cotignacs* (made of quince jelly) from Orléans in France, *brigadieres* (chocolate bonbons) from Brazil and more. *The museum is open Wednesday to Friday from 10.00 to 17.00 and weekends from 13.00 to 17.30. Adults €3, children under 12 free.*

► www.moulindevere.be

Pur-fruit in Oeselgem in West Flanders is a 12-hectare **biological fruit farm** that grows all kinds of fruit including berries, brambles, raspberries, nuts, heritage apples, plums and pears, with a particular preference for blueberries and red and white currants. And you can pick them yourself to

take home. Entry is free and there's no need to reserve. Just turn up and you'll see what's ripe on the day, and how much each variety costs. You can taste what's available if you're not sure, and then go to work. When you're done, your harvest is weighed and that's all there is to it. (*Open Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 9.00 to 19.00.*) On Tuesday, 7 August there's a special jam-making day for grown-ups, including a demonstration and lesson, ingredients and coffee and cake. *Contact bart@purfruit.com to be sure there are still places available.*

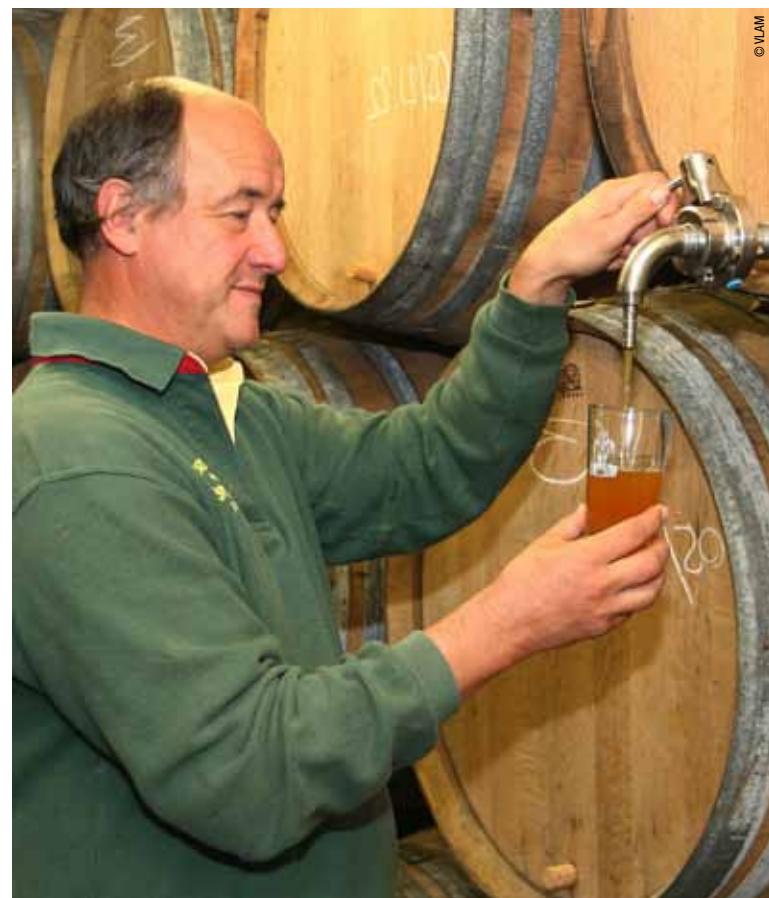
► www.purfruit.com

Contributions to this article were made by Olga Hope



STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

Alan Hope



The oak casks of the 3 Fonteinen brewery in which the old geuze matures

Oude Geuze

Geuze is one of the hardest beers to get even beer-lovers to like. Those who would willingly work their way through the serried ranks of bottles in the best-stocked cafe will often pass on the geuze, because its highly distinctive flavour is not to everyone's liking. Geuze is an acquired taste, but ironically it's an Ur-taste: the first primitive woman (probably) who found an unattended pot of fermenting barley porridge poured off a liquid which tasted very much like this.

Geuze is based on lambic, made according to the oldest of recipes. Wheat and malted barley are mixed 30-70 in a copper kettle with water, and briefly heated over an open coal fire. To the resulting wort, matured hops are added, which don't have the bitter taste of young hops, but do have the same preservative function. The mixture is cooked for hours and then cooled overnight in an open container. Natural yeasts and micro-organisms in the air react with the mix, and spontaneous fermentation takes place. Because the microbes are so important, brewing only takes place between late October and early April, when the nights are cool enough.

Traditionally, the air of Pajottenland in Flemish Brabant is the richest in the necessary microbes, and once it's fermenting the beer is transferred to oak casks to mature (*see photo*), for months or years.

Oude geuze (old geuze) is a mixture of young and old lambic up to three years of age. After bottling, it's left to ferment further for a year before going on sale, and ripening continues to take place even when you bring it home. Three Brabant geuzes are listed as recognised *streekproducten*, and we tried the Oude Geuze 3 Fonteinen from Beersel, alongside two other old geuze varieties from Beersel and Dworp for comparison, and as a control sample, a simple ordinary geuze from Bellegem.

The difference between young and old lies primarily in the taste. The older varieties simply have a more complex flavour, with less harsh acidity, a more citric and less chemical taste. The sourness typical to geuze is still there, but the rough edges have been rubbed off by maturity. The beer from Dworp was slightly cidery, very dry, and somewhat flat. The Oud Beersel fizzed up enthusiastically but the head quickly vanished; the flavour was full and clean, light with a hint of something darker in the bottom notes.

The 3 Fonteinen brew was outstanding from all the rest. It fizzed like champagne, and the *mousse* popped noisily as bubbles streamed up the glass. It's also like champagne in its effervescent mouth-feel, with a flavour that's sharp and citric on top, with notes of honey and apricots behind it, and a hint of burnt sugar in the aftertaste. Altogether richer and more festive, geuze is sometimes called the "champagne of beers", and this one lives up perfectly to the claim. The 3 Fonteinen brewery, incidentally, also makes an Oude Kriek which will change the way you think about that fruity, feminine beer forever; but that's another story.

► www.streekproduct.be

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Lint's best-kept secret

The magic for circus maestro Franco Dragone's latest breathtaking show is perfected right here in Flanders

Rebecca Benoot

He was born in Italy, grew up in Wallonia, taught in Canada and is making huge waves in Macau. So what does Cirque du Soleil visionary Franco Dragone have to do with Flanders? The answer is hidden in a tower block in Lint.

After travelling the world for almost 20 years, 15 of them with Cirque du Soleil, the visionary Franco Dragone returned to his Walloon home town in 2000 to establish the Franco Dragone Entertainment Group. It's a company that aims to create spectacles – but not just any spectacle. They are state-of-the-art multidisciplinary escapades filled with passion, technology and creativity.

Dragone was born in Italy and emigrated to Belgium in the 1950s when his father decided to look for work in the then lucrative Walloon coal mines. He turned to the arts at a young age and after studying drama at various prestigious European schools he moved to Canada in 1982 to teach improvisation classes at a circus school in Montreal.

There, he caught the eye of Guy Laliberté, who had just started a company that would become famous as Cirque du Soleil. Together they created world famous shows such as *Alegria*, *Saltimbanco* and *Quidam*. Dragone's dream, however, was to found his own company.

His creativity combined with local and international financial backing enabled him to create a group of the world's best artists, technicians and performers. In 2003, he gained international acclaim with *A New Day*, Céline Dion's intricate tour, which kicked off in Las Vegas. While there, he met hotel mogul Steve Wynn, who asked him to create a permanent spectacle for his hotel, and in 2005 *Le Rêve* was born. It was Dragone's first aquatic adventure, and paved the way for his latest show *The House of Dancing Water*.

Larger than life

The show premiered in 2010 in Macau and was the first production of this magnitude the world had ever seen. No other spectacle was as sophisticated or dazzling as *The House of Dancing Water*, created especially for Lawrence Ho, an entrepreneur who was determined to make his city an internationally renowned travel destination. Dragone's creation was intended to put Ho's luxury hotel complex, City of Dreams, on the map. *The House of*



© Belga

Dancing Water has to this date won multiple international awards and already more than 1.2 million spectators have experienced it.

Dragone's shows are epic, to say the least, and require an incredible amount of research and preparation. They also require a location in which performers can rehearse their legendary stunts, such as the human chandelier, in which 20 people are slowly hoisted out of the ocean, dangling from the sails of a large ship. And this is where Flanders comes in. It took a year to compose

an international cast of divers, acrobats and dancers that could pull this off; a cast that isn't just multidisciplinary but that also lives together in a close-knit community at the Eurocam studios in Lint, Antwerp province.

The Eurocam media centre is a conspicuous compound in the small and sleepy town of Lint. Just opposite Kontich railway station, it houses no fewer than 13 studios, which are used for events, awards ceremonies and as a film studio for video clips and commercials. Matthew Jessner, artistic director for *The*

House of Dancing Water, said: "We needed a location with the right infrastructure for the rehearsals; preferably a wide open space with lots of options where the acrobats as well as the divers could train. The Eurocam studios were perfect because of the size and their central location in Europe."

Intensive training

Studio 12 at Eurocam was modified according to the technical specifications of the theatre in Macau, in 2008, meaning they equipped it with a 4m deep 900m² pool, a dry

stage of 1,500m², an exclusive backstage area, apartments, an entertainment area and production rooms. In this little microcosm, there are 80 artists and 50 crew members working (and living) around the clock to rehearse, improve and create Dragone's vision.

Sita Bhuller, a British gymnast in Macau who is a recent addition to the cast, said: "We eat, we sleep and we train here. It's our own little village. The training is pretty intensive so we don't get out as much as we'd like." There are no fewer than 20 nationalities, not to mention countless disciplines and backgrounds among the performers, who will stay at the Eurocam studios for three months before heading to Macau for the dress rehearsals, which last about eight weeks. Due to the strenuous training, most have a short career lasting eight to 10 years, during which time they'll be part of two or three spectacles.

What makes *The House of Dancing Water* so special? Is it Dragone's visionary virtuosity, the innovative technologies he uses, the blinding aesthetics, multidisciplinary talents, powerful story or the timeless array of emotion on display? It's all that, plus the simple yet majestic grandeur of the project. The theatre in Macau was built especially for the show and cost a whopping US\$250 million (€203 million); the result, however, is the most high-tech venue in the world, containing a 50m black pool resembling the ocean in the middle of the theatre out of which a ship is able to rise daily.

To date, 75 million people have seen Dragone's productions. What appeals to them isn't just the magnitude of the shows but their innovative and universal charm that breaks language barriers, boundaries and even traditions, reaching a place of wonder in every generation. Due to its epic scale, there is no venue outside Macau large enough to house *The House of Dancing Water* but Dragone organises events all over the globe: an Indian wedding in Venice and a carnival in Bilbao, and he's even planning on creating an urban opera for his home town of La Louvière, enabling Flanders to get a taste of that Dragone magic.

► www.dragone.be



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ING

Painful joy

Bruges's MAfestival probes the intricate links between sadness and pleasure

Marie Dumont

“How much better to weep at joy than to joy at weeping,” wrote Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Next month’s MAfestival, as the Festival of Flanders is known during its 10-day Bruges stopover, will be a chance for us to do both. Broken hearts and existential anguish have always made for beautiful music: take the late works of Schubert, or the aching 15th-century song by Gilles Binchois from which the rather grand title of this year’s edition, “Triste Plaisir et Douloureuse Joye” (“Sad pleasure and painful joy”), is borrowed. But never was the connection between tears and beauty stronger than in the first part of the 17th century, when musicians generally shifted from the contemplation of divine order to the expression of individual woes, and invented a whole new language of jagged rhythms and dissonances to describe them.

This repertoire is right up the street of the MAfestival, which was once called Musica Antiqua and broadly specialises in Baroque music. But Baroque music with an edge, insists artistic director Tomas Bisschop, who, although indebted to the old guard of pioneers who rediscovered this repertoire in the 1960s and 1970s, also banks on younger artists. “There’s a whole new generation of Baroque musicians coming forward,” he tells me. “They’re full of energy and very concerned about finding new ways to reach out to modern audiences. They have a right to be heard and to experiment with new ideas. And that means a right to get things wrong, too.”

Expect many new names, therefore, as well as a few unusual approaches, right from the opening concert, which will be devoted to Mozart. Hardly a composer one associates with anguish. Still, for all his sunny,



classical poise, the man had his dark sides, one of them being the unrequited passion he supposedly bore for the German singer Aloisia Weber, before he settled for, and married, her younger sister Konstanze. By all accounts, Aloisia was a wonderfully expressive soprano, and Mozart composed a substantial amount of music for her. The young French diva Sabine Deviehle (pictured) lends it her silky voice, backed by flautist Alexis Kossenko and his two-year-old orchestra Les Ambassadeurs, which

brings together musicians from all over Europe. A festival about sadness in music wouldn’t be complete without at least a few songs by the Elizabethan lutenist John Dowland, a man who pushed the art of depressing lyrics and aching dissonances to such sophisticated heights that he even coined himself the punning Latin motto “Semper dolens, semper Dowland” (“Always mourning, always Dowland”). German-Ukrainian singer Dorothee Mields, who is well attuned to his dusky sound-world,

will perform a selection with help from Lee Santana on the lute and Hille Perl on the viola da gamba. Mary Magdalene and her scandalous mix of sensuality and devotion was a pet subject of Baroque composers, and as many as three concerts will

be devoted to her. One of them, an exquisite but virtually unknown mass by the Liège Renaissance composer Nicolas Champion, will be presented by the young British choir Alamire, performing in Belgium for the first time.

“Remember me, but ah, forget my fate,” sings another *femme fatale* of the time, Carthage’s queen Dido, as her lover Aeneas sails off to found a new empire, in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. The opera, a marvel of restrained pathos, will bring the festival to a close in a concert performance by Britain’s young Restrospect Ensemble and its conductor Matthew Halls. It will be paired with John Blow’s *Venus and Adonis*, another miniature opera from the same period that is generally regarded as a timid, though no less attractive, sister to Purcell’s masterpiece.

Not all concerts fit into this year’s doleful theme, and the festival will thankfully have its upbeat moments, like Dominique Visse’s homage to Guillaume Costeley, a maverick figure of the French Renaissance; or the gutsy fandangos and folias performed by three Spanish brothers who go by the name of Forma Antiqua. Not to forget the festival’s by now well-oiled harpsichord competition, which over the years has revealed such luminaries to the world as Pierre Hantaï and Christophe Rousset. There’s nothing quite like the joy of hearing so many young talents on the cusp of a brilliant career. Don’t be surprised if it brings tears to your eyes.

3-12 AUGUST

't Zand 34, Bruges

► www.mafestival.be

MOURNING MONKS

Raising their hands to heaven or bowing their heads under their hoods in a timeless picture of grief, 37 medieval monks form the tantalising centrepiece of Bruges’s exhibition *De treurenden. Tranen van liefde* (“The Mourners. Tears of Love”)

The works of two 15th-century sculptors named Juan de la Huerta and Antoine Le Moiturier, these diminutive alabaster statues have, for centuries, been shuffling in a frozen parade around the tomb of John the Fearless, the second Duke of Burgundy, and his wife Margaret of Bavaria. Two years ago, when the room at the Dijon fine arts museum where the tombs are displayed closed for renovations, the mourners were set into motion for the first time and sent on a world tour. After New York, San Francisco and a few other US destinations, they reached Bruges’s Memling Museum last spring, where they can still be seen until the first days of September. Surrounded by wooden pietas and old master paintings, they look quite at home, and in a way, they are – Flanders was once part of the sprawling and cosmopolitan duchy of Burgundy, a powerful rival to the kingdom of France, and the two regions share deep-running cultural bonds.

The monks are not alone: Laurent Busine, who curates the exhibition, has surrounded them with modern meditations on loss and transience: lone figures by Giacometti, a slow-motion video by David Claerbout in which a woman serving tea slowly recedes into the distance, an unsettling gallery of portraits by German photographer Hans-Peter Feldmann of people aged a few months to 100 years. It’s all very affecting, but never quite as much as the monks themselves

which, although nearly six centuries old, have lost none of their emotional power. There is something terribly sweet and life-like about these disconsolate figures, some of them lost in contemplation, others wringing their hands or brushing back tears.

In Dijon, the statues stand under a miniature arcade that half conceals their cloaked figures. You practically need to crouch down to study their postures and features. Not in Bruges, where they stand facing us, fully lit and at eye level – a unique chance for us to admire, up close and from various angles, the loose folds of their robes, the tiny veins on their hands and their church books that are so finely sculpted you can almost see the pages being flipped. In case you feel, as I do, that magic has been traded in for clarity, that their shadowy charm evaporates by being thus exposed in the limelight, console yourself by knowing that this is only temporary. Come next year, they’ll be back under their gloomy arcade in Dijon, to stay.

UNTIL 2 SEPTEMBER

Sint-Janshospitaal, Mariastraat 38, Bruges

► www.brugge.be



Together alone

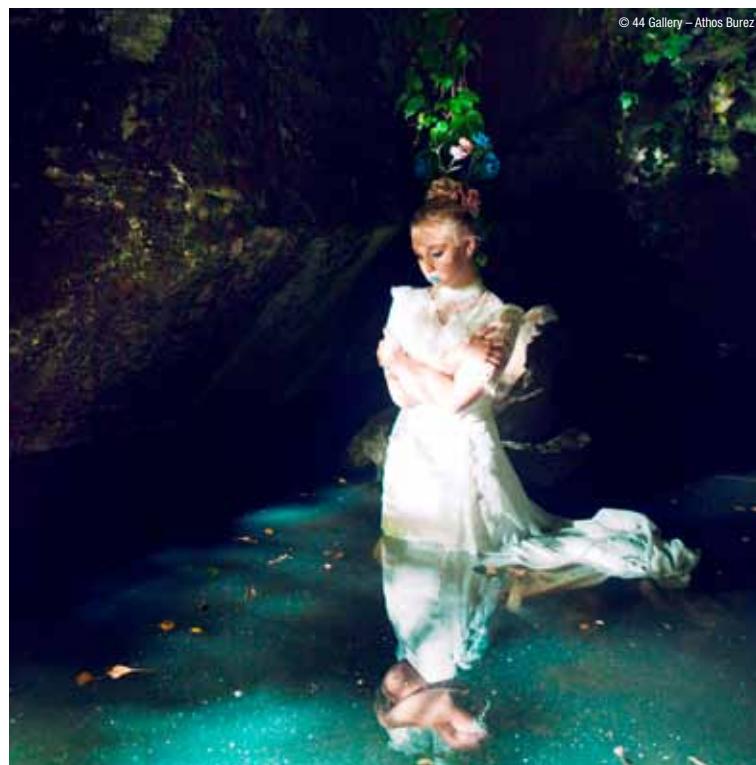
Wonderful World

Rebecca Benoot

44 Gallery, which specialises in contemporary photography, and the Pinsart gallery, focusing on modern art in all its forms, are both in the picaresque Genthof near the centre of Bruges. It's a quiet street filled with old houses and galleries, making it the perfect spot for a laid-back summer stroll. Both venues have joined forces for the second year running for the Genthof exhibition, entitled *Wonderful World*, in which the entire street has been turned into one large (not to mention free) exhibit with over 100 works by no fewer than 24 artists.

Besides galleries, the works are often displayed in unusual places such as the window of a pharmacist or a bed and breakfast, making it an exhilarating quest. This unexpected and slightly voyeuristic way of exposing the art and photographs also confronts us with a clash between contemporary works and the medieval architecture that Bruges is famous for.

In the Pinsart gallery we encounter, among many others, urban sketches



"Happiness" by Athos Burez, just one of many magical works featured in *Wonderful World*

by Sara Bomans in which delicate, man-made structures such as houses and roads are brought to life using simply a pencil. Each sketch is a screenshot and tells a story, often aided by a funny or absurd tagline. One level up we find the works of Luc Vandervelde, which are big collages, almost Pollock-esque paintings that are often loud, sometimes calm but always chaotic.

The highlight of 44 Gallery, however, are the photographs by Titus Simoens, a young photographer who was recently awarded the Nikon Young Promising Photographer Award. The portraits on display here have a nautical theme and are truly refreshing, even exhibitionistic due to his use of light and clarity. The *Wonderful World* exhibition as a whole is a compact, eclectic and surprising mix of photography, paintings and installations that look at random beauty in our daily lives, while juxtaposing it with the ordinary and often harsh reality. The results

are unique and often magical pieces that uncover hidden layers usually overlooked by the average spectator. *Wonderful World* invites you to become a part of this intangible aura instead of simply bearing witness to it. The exhibition also investigates whether we are able to see genuine art without its counterpart in the ugly, imperfect world in which we live, or are we doomed to have a lingering love-hate affair with the universe?

Every artist gives us his or her interpretation of reality which ultimately makes us wonder whether art does in fact make this world a better place or simply emphasise, even hide, its cruelties. Many works such as the numerous portraits and urban paintings examine the human impact on the world, or lack thereof. Leading its spectators indoors as well as outdoors, *Wonderful World* is a surprising journey focusing on human solitude and its artistic companion, and well worth the small detour.

Until 12 August | Genthof, Bruges | www.genthof.be

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bruksellive

The Dutch-speaking youth organisations of Brussels know how to throw a party. Bruksellive, the annual free music festival in Laeken, is proof of this. Kids can play to their heart's content in the children's village while those teenage and older enjoy one rocking concert after another, making it the ideal family outing. This year's line-up features: Nouvelle Vague, a group with the swooping elegance of Bossa Nova, the melancholic melodies of New Wave and the distanced approach of the French films of the Nouvelle Vague; Floating Points, a DJ from the UK who produces his own future dub, pounding house, soul and classical music sets; BRNS (pronounced "brains"), four multi-instrumentalists known for their catchy voices, hypnotic synths, atmospheric guitars and exotic percussion; and Matias Aguayo, the danceable electronic music wizard, among others. **Robyn Boyle**



28 July, 15.00 | Groentheater, Ossegempark, Laeken (Brussels)

www.bruksellive.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Eeklo (East Flanders)

Helden in het Park (Heroes in the Park): Free annual outdoor world music festival, this year featuring Amsterdam Klezmer Band, Internationals, Juicebox and more

Until AUG 16 Thurs 20.00-1.00 at Heldenpark

www.n9.be

Tienen (Flemish Brabant)

Suikerrock: Outdoor rock festival, this year featuring Status Quo, Alice Cooper, Triggerfinger, ZZ Top, LMFAO, Daan, Ozark Henry, Gabriel Rios and more

JUL 26-29 at Grote Markt

www.suikerrock.be

EXHIBITION

Dressing the 20th Century

Women's fashion in the last century changed at an alarming rate: from early "Orientalism" to the Roaring Twenties, from the elegant 1930s to the revolutionary sixties, followed by a distinct anti-fashion trend, the avant-garde and beyond. The 20th century was an exciting, turbulent time for fashion,



giving birth to an extremely diverse range of styles. Driven by technology, supply and demand as much as by cultural and social change, the concept of fashion took on different meanings over the course of 100 years. While Parisian couture was the fashion standard at the beginning of the century, designers began popping up everywhere later on, especially in America, Italy, Britain and Japan. This exhibition looks at the fascinating roller-coaster history of fashion, with a special focus on Limburg designers who have had a role to play in the creation of a single Belgian fashion identity. **RB**

Until 1 January | Modemuseum, Gasthuisstraat 11, Hasselt

www.modemuseumhasselt.be

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Jimmie Durham – A question of life and death and singing: Retrospective of the US-born sculptor, essayist and poet, and American Indian Movement activist

Until NOV 18 at M HKA, Leuvenstraat 32

www.muhka.be/jimmiedurham

Poperinge

Permeke tot Permeke: A unique exhibition on the life and work of Poperinge artist Henri Permeke and his involvement in the great evolution of the Belgian art scene pre-First World War

Until SEP 23 at Stadhuis Poperinge, Grote Markt 1

www.poperinge.be/permeke

CLASSICAL

Midis-Minimes/Zomer van Sint-Pieter Conservatory

One of the pleasures of spending the summer in Brussels or Leuven is the wide selection of bite-sized midday concerts organised by the sister festivals Midis-Minimes and Zomer van Sint Pieter. The older of the two, the Midis-Minimes, is 26 years old and a well-oiled affair that draws ever larger crowds of tourists and Eurocrats on their lunch breaks to the down-at-heel but congenial Brussels Conservatory (the festival stopped using the Marolles church after which it is named a couple of years ago). The Leuven festival was set up in 2002 as a spin-off of the former and benefits, for some of the concerts at least, from the superb setting of Sint-Pieter's church on the Grote Markt. Performers are hand-picked by artistic director Bernard Mouton, a man with far-ranging tastes and a sixth sense for ferreting out the stars of tomorrow. Catch the Schubert Lieder sung by French tenor Jean-François Novelli (Brussels, 26 July/Leuven, 27 July); the Ensemble Nekouda (*pictured*) with traditional Jewish music from Provence (Brussels, 30 July/Leuven, 31 July); or the wonderful Belgian choir Vox Luminis (Brussels, 31 July/Leuven, 1 August), and we bet you'll be coming back for more. **Marie Dumont**



Until 31 August |
Brussels & Sint-Pieterskerk and 30CC Schouwburg, Leuven

► www.midis-minimes.be, www.zomer-van-sint-pieter.be

MORE CLASSICAL THIS WEEK

Hasselt

Muscadet: Series of free weekly outdoor classical concerts, this week featuring Consortium Hasseletum

JUL 29 Sun 11.00 at Het Stadsmus tuincafe, Guido Gezellesstraat 2

► www.irishtheatrebrussels.com

Nieuwpoort

Dancing Fountains: The completed renovation of the Kaaiplein and its 73 fountains will be celebrated with a show of water, light and atmospheric classical music by Johan Boutry

AUG 4 11.00-00.00 at Kaaiplein

► www.nieuwpoort.be

SPECIAL EVENT

Parkkaffee

In a lush park just north of Ghent is a lovely summer oasis for all ages. Parkkaffee, open every day from 14.00, is located on peaceful castle grounds surrounded by trees and with a lake at the middle. Tables are set up all over the grass, as are caravans where you can duck inside for a massage, to have your future read in tarot cards, or just to grab a quick, healthy bite. During the day, there are numerous activities for kids, from circus workshops and magic school to theatre and a marketplace. For adults, there are live concerts: This week features Nomad Swing (28 July, 21.00), an eclectic mix of eastern European folk music and 1920s swing, and spirited Flemish accordionist Rony Verbiest (29 July, 18.00). Every evening (from 21.00) there's a big cosy bonfire and guaranteed good atmosphere. **RB**



Until 31 August, 14.00-0.00 | Groenestaakstraat 37, Mariakerke (Ghent) |

► www.parkkaffee.be

MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Leuven

Leuven Zingt! (Leuven Sings!): Twelfth annual mass sing-along with standing place for around 9,000 people

JUL 28 19.30 at Oude Markt

► www.n9.be

Ostend

Zomerkaffee: Ideal place to chill out at the coast, with magazines and newspapers, drinks and finger food and an unbeatable view of the sea

Until AUG 29 Fri-Sun, 16.00-22.00 at Vrijstaat 0, Zeedijk 10

► www.vrijstaat-0.be

Katrien Lindemans

DUSK TIL DAWN

Boat Party

Wed-Sat until 12 August, Brussels Beach

Rain and grey skies... this must be a Belgian summer! Luckily there are a couple of places that make you forget all about the weather. Take Brussels Beach, for instance, where the sight of sand, cocktail bars, BBQs and tropical rhythms will get you into a sunny mood in no time.

This year, the beach celebrates its 10th anniversary. Besides an even more varied range of food and drinks, an extensive list of activities and music performances, the beach features live DJs and a party boat as well.

From Wednesday until Saturday, the city's best DJs gather behind the decks of Croisetteke (the main DJ bar on the beach). Join them for a warm-up from 17.00 onwards, before checking in at the Boat Club. This small but fancy cruise ship can take up to 200 people on a three-hour trip through the Brussels canal, guided by the beats of the capital's best clubs. On 27 July, the Fuse DJs will be your musical captains; the next day, the Strictly Niceness DJs will be your hosts. There will be drinks, lights and dance music: The big difference from a regular night out will be that the dance floor is part of a boat and you'll be dancing on water!

As Brussels Beach normally closes at around 22.00 (23.00 on Fridays and Saturdays), the Boat Club is perfect for anyone who gets a bit carried away on the beach by the music and generous glasses of mojito. Plan your night out and get tickets at €10 in advance, or pay €12 on the door.

Also good to know: There will be a couple of beach parties on the big sports field at the back of the beach. The organisers promise to make every grain of sand on the field bounce to the beats. The free parties will start in the afternoon and continue until closing time. Keep an eye on the website for more info.



► www.brusselbad.be

BITE

Mirante ★★★☆

"We got lucky again," my friend tells us sideways as the owner pushes together tables in an already packed room. The place is usually this crowded, but he somehow always manages to turn up and get a table. The remarkable thing this evening is that we are a relatively big group of five. Nonetheless we're given a makeshift table, before promptly being moved to a larger space at the back as soon as it frees up. The restaurant is warm and cosy, and we have a perfect view of the open kitchen, where a cook is busily preparing fresh pizzas for the wood-burning oven.

The server and boss, Lino, speaks to us in a waterfall of Italo-French words and friendly gestures. We order a bottle of red and proceed to devour the complimentary bread and olives. Ordering goes rather quickly, too, as we are all hungry and in the mood for pizza: one capricciosa, one quattro stagioni, one crudaiola, one quattro formaggi and one mirante.

We don't have to wait long, but while we do we enjoy the lively atmosphere, even the noise. Mirante has been around for 30 years and is a favourite of both locals and expats. Never mind the kitsch décor or tiny tables; it's the pizza and pasta that keep people coming back over and over again.

I can understand why as soon as I sink my teeth into the first slice of quattro formaggi. Its delectably thin and crispy crust can only be the work of a wood-burning oven. On top is a lovely, cheesy blend of gorgonzola, mozzarella, pecorino and parmesan. The blue gorgonzola stands out for its sharp, salty bite, the mozzarella for its subtle creaminess.

We're all exchanging slices across the table so as to taste the



different creations. It's pretty much unanimous: the mirante is most unique. The house speciality, this pizza comes covered in tangy tomato sauce, plenty of cheese, two different types of ham (one smoked, one spicy), crunchy white onion rings, a handful of green olives, loads of fragrant oregano and, in honour of traditional Italian pizzas everywhere, an egg cracked over the middle.

The capricciosa and quattro stagione pizzas are causing

a stir, as well, for their perfect combination of flavour and texture in the form of tender, tangy artichoke hearts, heaps of mushrooms, pink smoked ham and cheese that's gone golden brown and bubbly in the oven.

Another friend made a wise choice, in ordering the crudaiola. It's a winning combination of ripe tomato sauce, gooey cheese, paper-thin prosciutto di Parma, nutty pine kernels, parmesan shavings and a pile of crunchy, peppery rocket salad.

It'd be a shame to leave already, so we opt for a round of after-dinner drinks (sambuca, limoncello, grappa) and two desserts: One is a fluffy cream *parfait* with fresh strawberries, the other a thick milkshake-like coffee drink infused with the anise-flavoured sambuca.

The bill comes to less than €30 per person, which we find more than reasonable considering all the drinks involved. And word has it the pasta is just as good as the pizza, so we'll be back.

Plattesteen 13, Brussels; 02.511.15.80

Daily, 12.00-14.30 & 18.00-23.30

Main dish: €7-15

Quick, cosy, authentic Italian with excellent pizza

TALKING SPORTS

Flemish Tour heroes: Van den Broeck... and Wiggins!

It was a respectable Tour de France for Flanders this year, with Jurgen Van den Broeck making a welcome return and repeating his 2010 fourth-place finish. But if Flanders is ready to embrace its wider constituency, it was a spectacular year, as Ghent-born Bradley Wiggins stormed to a famous victory.

Yes, Wiggins, the sideburned would-be Mod who became the first British winner in the Tour's 99-year history, was born in Flanders. Bradley's father, Gary, an Australian professional cyclist, moved to Ghent in 1979 as he attempted to boost his training with other Flanders-based riders. Bradley was born shortly after, in 1980. However, the marriage collapsed and British mum Linda took young Bradley back to London in 1982, where he grew up. Some might say that this is an accident of geography, and Wiggins, a triple Olympic gold medallist, has only a passing link with the Low Countries. But this is no time for modesty: Cycling was always in his blood, and his birthplace surely deserves some credit for his success.

Yet if you want to be a stickler, Flanders can hardly complain with Van den Broeck: The 29-year-old Herentals rider recovered from last year's spectacular crash when he picked up a collapsed lung, three broken ribs and a broken shoulder blade. His fourth-place finish this year – 10'15" behind Wiggins – is more than decent. There were, however, disappointments for other Flemish riders. Jelle Vanendert was the next Fleming in the listing, in 29th place. But the 26-year-old



from Neerpelt failed to repeat last year's third place in the ranking for the red-and-white checked jersey for the climbers and was unable to score a single climbing point. Philippe Gilbert, who came in 46th overall, was also unable to repeat his third-place finish from last year in the green jersey category, coming in 20th in the sprint ranking. Indeed, it was Malle-born Kris Boeckmans, 25, who was the top-placed Belgian in the green jersey, coming in 16th. In the young rider classification, Romain Zingle, 25, from Lobbies, came 12th, while Boeckmans

was 15th. And teamwise, Lotto-Belisol, based in Brussels, came in only 11th, followed in 12th by Wevelgem-based Omega Pharma-Quick Step.

Attention now turns to the Olympics kicking off this week in London: Tom Boonen, who skipped the Tour to concentrate on the games, is hoping a recent fractured rib will not hurt his chances in the road race, while Gilbert, Jürgen Roelandts, Greg Van Avermaet and Stijn Vandenberghe are also competing. As is, of course, Bradley Wiggins.

Leo Cendrowicz

The last word...

Turning a blind eye

"The speed cameras on the A12 did not function in 2010 and 2011, mainly for technical reasons" Interior minister Joëlle Milquet revealed that the police did not have time to change the exposed film in the cameras along the road from Brussels to Antwerp

The height of ambition

"I was expecting it to be more difficult" Sophie Bresselleers, aged 13, from Vorselaar in Antwerp province, conquered Mont Blanc, despite a warning from the national mountain sport federation that she was too young for the mountain

Be prepared

"We had our swimsuits in our bags, but that was meant more for the sauna. We never expected the weekend to be so nice" A tourist from Limburg in Ostend, as the sun finally broke through

No place like home

"I won't be travelling any more" 70-year-old Guillaume Smits from Zoersel in Antwerp province missed his bus (on Friday 13 July no less) while on holiday in Italy, and walked 230km from Naples to the embassy in Rome

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

A buddy system for psychiatric patients that has been on trial in 13 projects in Flanders is to be extended to all 20 of the region's mental health care centres, matching patients with volunteers to help prepare them for life outside institutions. We meet a pair of buddies to talk about the impact it's had on each of their lives.

Science & education

Ghent University will be at the centre of the action in London this summer, making sure that all medals and world records are won fair and square. The university's doping control lab is sending a team of scientists to the anti-doping lab that will be active during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. We take a look at their work ensuring fair play all round.

Living

The building at IJzerlaan 30 looks like many of the old Antwerp warehouses that have been converted to office blocks. But unlike other offices, the former coffee roasting warehouse is now home to Flanders' first "skyfarm". Planting of fruit and vegetables started on the 2,000m² roof in May, and produce is already being sold to local restaurants and food outlets. We'll find out more about this urban agriculture.