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# A pretty penny

## As the price paid for copper goes up and up, thieves turn to a precious public commodity

Alan Hope

Copper theft is well known as being the plague of the railways, as the cables made of the lucrative metal regularly disappear, bringing the trains to a standstill. Now thieves have turned their attention to another ready source of copper: statues, standing right out in the open.

A statue of Jan Palfijn used to stand at the entrance to the maternity hospital on the Bijloke site in Ghent. The hospital moved in 1983, but the statue remained. Then it, too, was removed when renovation work began on the site in 2008 to turn it into the cultural campus it now is, which includes the city museum STAM.

Palfijn was born in Kortrijk in 1650, the son of a barber-surgeon. He studied anatomy, and he had to flee the city and move to Ghent when he was caught carrying out dissections of cadavers. He went on to specialise in surgery and in obstetrics and is credited with the invention of the forceps used to deliver babies in difficult cases.

The plan was to return the statue (*pictured*) to its original position when the renovation was complete. But in December of last year, it was discovered that the bronze statue by the early 20th-century Flemish sculptor Godfried Devreese had vanished from the roads department depot in Oostakker. Bronze is a metal alloy, primarily consisting of copper.

"It's clear that, in this case, the thieves were after the bronze. This is no art theft," concluded Lieven Decaluwe, the city's alderman for culture.

### Monumental disappearances

Decaluwe had good reason to think so. Around the city, similar thefts had been happening, albeit on a smaller scale than a statue weighing up to 500 kilograms. Commemorative plaques have vanished, from the façade of the Leopoldskazerne and from the Griendeplein.

More strikingly, a bronze model of the Hof ten Walle palace, the Ghent birthplace of Emperor Charles V, was stolen from the Prinsenhof in November last year. The seven buildings later turned up after being sold and re-sold at a flea market – eventually going for €450 to a buyer who assumed they were copies of the original. But the solid metal base is still missing.

Like the statue of Jan Palfijn, it's unlikely ever to be seen again. The installation is now gone (though it can still be seen on Google Street View, like a ghost of its former self). In the meantime, letters have been stolen from the statue of Charles V that still stands on the little square.



## FACE OF FLANDERS

## Frie Leysen



Alan Hope

Frie Leysen, one of Flanders' most respected arts administrators, has been appointed the new theatre director of the Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival), with a two-year contract beginning in 2014.

Leysen began her career in Antwerp, where she played a major role in transforming deSingel from a local conservatory into not only one of the main cultural centres of Flanders but an international arts centre, presenting work by locals Jan Fabre, Jos Van Immerseel and Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, but also world-class names like Pina Bausch, Yannis Xenakis and Peter Brook. Her success at deSingel was so profound, that the king ennobled Leysen as a baroness for her work there.

Leysen was then asked to lead the new Kunstenfestivaldesarts, which would give her an opportunity to put to the test her views on language and culture. "Frie Leysen wanted more than just a cultural cooperation between Dutch and French speakers," said Professor Els Witte, honorary rector of the VUB, when the university awarded Leysen an honorary doctorate in 2007. "At the same time, Brussels

had to deliver a cultural offering that one might expect from the capital of Europe. So, more international productions, a new cultural impetus and a place on the European map, next to the festivals of Paris, Vienna and Amsterdam."

She achieved that with her 15 years at the helm of Kunstenfestivaldesarts, creating what is perhaps the hottest ticket on the annual arts festival calendar. Leysen has built up wide international experience, with jobs in Essen, Mülheim and Berlin in Germany, as well as the Meeting Points festival in nine Middle Eastern cities in 2007. Last March, she was appointed to lead the Asian Arts Theater in Gwangju, South Korea, starting in 2014.

"I think it is a wonderful, unique project for the region, Korea and Asia as a whole, she told *The Korea Herald*. "Gwangju will become a regional hub where Asian artists and arts will be the centre of attention." The new appointment is unlikely to clash with that post. If any curator can hold down simultaneous top jobs at opposite sides of the world, it's Leysen.

## FLANDERS TODAY

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Hans De Loore

## News in brief

The Flemish government will invest €17 million to bring the region's major **tunnels up to EU safety standards**, public works minister Hilde Crevits announced. The main projects involve the Vierarmen tunnel on the Brussels Ring and the Craeybeckx and Kennedy tunnels in Antwerp. Work will take place mainly at night and at weekends. The entire project involves the renovations of 30 tunnels.

In the last six years, the number of reported **crimes has decreased in 12 of the 19 Brussels communes**. Brussels City has the most crimes, with 37 per 100 inhabitants – four times the national average. Etterbeek, Koekelberg, Schaarbeek and Molenbeek were among the areas which saw the largest decrease. The latter saw its crime rate fall nearly 14% from 2005. Elose, meanwhile, saw an increase of more than 39% over the same period.

Open-VLD has proposed making the Beursplein in Brussels, scene of the recent protest picnics, **closed to traffic permanently**, possibly by putting through traffic on the north-south axis into a tunnel under the square. The socialist parties oppose the idea as expensive and technically difficult.

According to animal physiology professor Frans Jacobs of Ghent University, one of the victims of the poor weather earlier this year was the **wasp population**, which is only expected to emerge next month. Wasp nests are still in the process of developing, he said, and that could take two or more weeks, depending on how the weather situation evolves.

World famous Magnum photographer **Martine Franck died last week** after a long illness. She was 74. Franck was born in Antwerp and lived her early life in the US and England. She studied art history in Madrid and Paris before becoming a photographers' assistant at

*Time-Life* in 1963. She met the famous French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson three years later, and they married in 1970. Through her work with Magnum, she became active in covering women's rights and poverty. She also presided the Cartier-Bresson Foundation to support independent photojournalism.

The city of Hasselt is offering **land cheap or even free** to anyone who agrees to build a house on it with a crèche attached, in an effort to increase the provision of child care. The city council has 10 plots waiting, though the city will retain ownership of the land. The owner of the building would only be allowed to sell to a buyer who agreed to continue operating the crèche.

One of Flanders' most unusual TV stars, "**artistic whistler**" **Alfons Beckx**, has died in Merkplas, Antwerp province, at the age of 81. Beckx shot to fame in 1972 on the TV show *Echo*, whistling with the aid of, for example, the fingers and toes of his nine-year-old son and a fish. Beckx can be seen in action in a short clip from the VRT archive:

► [www.tinyurl.com/alfonsbeckx](http://www.tinyurl.com/alfonsbeckx)

A ceremony took place in Antwerp city hall last week to **commemorate the first mass round-up of Jews** in the city exactly 70 years ago. On the night of 15 August 1942, 800 Jews were arrested and later transported to Auschwitz, with the cooperation of the city council and the police. In all, 13,000 Antwerp Jews were deported.

Police in Erpe-Mere, East Flanders, **shot and killed a man** after they were called to intervene in a domestic dispute. The man was armed with a knife and had threatened his wife. He was shot as he appeared to attack police and died later of his injuries. An investigation is underway, but Dendermonde prosecutors said the first indications were that the shooting was legitimate

self-defence.

A 21-year-old Ganshoren man has been arrested and charged following a **hoax bomb threat** at the Viangros meat wholesaler in Anderlecht, which led to the closure of the Brussels Ring for a time and the evacuation of the premises, where 300 to 400 people are employed. Also in Ganshoren, a suspect metal suitcase at an ING bank branch led to the closure of the Keizer Karelalaan. The army's bomb squad Dovo attended the scene and carried out a controlled explosion, but the suitcase was later revealed to be empty.

Minesweepers from the Dutch and Belgian navies last week exploded the **1,000th piece of Second World War munitions** in coastal waters since the two services joined forces to patrol the coast in 2005. The two navies began working together after an accident in which a Dutch fishing boat picked up a bomb dropped by an American warplane, which then exploded on the boat's deck, killing three.

The casting agency XtraZ is looking for **1,700 extras to take part in the filming** of a new BBC drama series. *The White Queen*, part of which will be filmed in Bruges, requires people to play 15th-century nobles, farmers, soldiers, squires and families with children. They are also looking for players of historic instruments. Filming takes place between September and next March.

► [www.xtraz.be](http://www.xtraz.be)

More than 20,000 children took part in a treasure hunt at one of Flanders' museums, cultural centres, libraries or tourist attractions during the summer holidays, according to CultuurNet Vlaanderen. The operation, *De schatten van Vlieg* (The Treasure of Fly) continues until 31 August. Successful hunters were entered in a prize draw for a year of free cultural activities for the whole family.

Alan Hope

## OFFSIDE

## Turn off, tune out, drop in

We hear all the time about new media, but how about something really new, like a website that invites its fans to refrain from visiting, and to go and do something else instead? That's what cobra.be, the VRT's culture website, did last Sunday. For weeks in advance, it had asked its readers not to tune in on 19 August, but instead to go out and take part in some kind of cultural activity. It's the ultimate sacrifice for any web presence, most of whom are hell-bent on getting "traffic" by any means possible. Operatie Nul (Operation Nothing), by contrast, not only sowed the seeds of offline activity in its readers' heads, it even offered them prizes for taking part. Anyone who sent in a tip for something to do other than sit staring at a computer screen on that day could win a prize – a season ticket to Brussels' KVS theatre, the Handelsbeurs or Vooruit in Ghent or the Toneelhuis

in Antwerp.

Hundreds of people responded with ideas for books to read, exhibitions to visit or festivals to attend. Jazz Middelheim in Antwerp, Beaufort at the coast and Dido and Aeneas in Antwerp were hotly tipped, but won't win any prizes for originality. Our favourite tips included: start a custard pie fight; act out your own movie; visit your neighbours (but not "surf to another website"). The

top tip, however, and the favourite of Flanders Today not just for 19 August but for every day, came from one Tom Mosmans: Let yourself be led astray. In the event, 6,599 people visited the Cobra website on the day, more than a normal Sunday in August. According to psychologist Maarten Vansteenkiste, people just like doing what they're told not to.

► [www.cobra.be](http://www.cobra.be)



© Shutterstock

# A pretty penny

## Thieves may take melted copper to dealers in the Netherlands, where no ID is required

► continued from page 1

### Copper prices skyrocketing

The reason for the rise in metal thefts is simple: The price of copper is going up and up. World demand for the metal has never been so high, as developing industrial nations, led by China, have an increasing need of the metal for use in electronics and other applications. Reserves of copper ore are vast, but the metal lends itself extremely well to recycling. After iron and aluminium, it's the most recycled metal.

So thieves out for an easy haul have always found it profitable to steal copper, whether from the roof of a church or from electrical cables along railway lines – and the rocketing price is just more of an incentive. The rail infrastructure authority Infrabel estimated that thefts of cables cost €2.2 million in 2011 in material alone, and the disruption caused to electrical supplies led to 31,000 minutes of delays.

Bronze, a material used in statuary for thousands of years, is an alloy containing about 90% copper and 10% tin. The technique for melting down something like a statue is dangerous but not particularly difficult – there are several videos on the internet giving instructions on how to build a simple furnace, and though the smelting of a statue would be lengthy and difficult to do safely, it's feasible – and inexpensive.

The theft of Jan Palfijn has put Ghent on guard. The statue "Het Meisje" (The Girl) by Geo Verbanck – sculptor of the monument to the Van Eyck brothers outside Ghent's Sint-Baaf's cathedral) – which once stood in Citadelpark, has been brought into the Museum for Fine Arts (MSK) for safe-keeping. Three huge copper sculptures by the German-based artist Dahn Vo, intended to be displayed in the Citadelpark as part of the TRACK exhibition, have instead also been placed inside the MSK.

### New rules for scrap dealers

According to a spokesperson for alderman Decaluwe, the



On second thought: Dahn Vo's "We the People" was moved indoors for its run in the TRACK art parcours; the model of the Hof ten Walle palace before it was liberated from its spot in the Prinsenhof neighbourhood; "The Gladiator" statue in Ghent's Zuidpark long ago lost his sword, though that's more likely to be vandals than copper thieves

investigation into the theft of the statue of Jan Palfijn is ongoing, although Ghent police offer little hope that the statue will ever reappear. "I think we can assume it was melted down long ago," a police spokesperson said.

The authorities are convinced that Palfijn was stolen for the metal content, but Koen Van Hecke isn't so sure. He's a manager at William Van der Gucht metal recycling in Sint-Gillis-Waas in East Flanders. "I don't think the statue was stolen for the metal," he says. "I think it's more likely it was stolen to be sold, maybe to a private collector in another country. You hear all the time about copper cables being stolen and melted down. We almost never see melted metal being brought in here. In the first place,

that would immediately arouse suspicion because someone is trying to camouflage the origin of the metal. So questions would certainly be asked."

them to be traced in the event of an investigation. Sums under €1,000 can be paid in cash, but the dealer has to take a copy of the seller's identity card, which is

there they have no ID law; so I suppose the thieves just go a little bit further, and they can sell what they have without anyone making a fuss."

So, can anything be done to prevent thefts of valuable public art? According to chief inspector Patrick Willocx of the judicial police in Ghent, the answer lies with local authorities providing more security, especially security cameras at vulnerable sites. "You can hardly take all the art out of the public space just in case it gets stolen," he said. "In 2012, in the whole judicial area of Ghent, there were only three cases: in Evergem, in Eeklo and in the provincial domain in Wachtebeke. That's very little compared to the damage suffered by the railways."

### "You can hardly take all the art out of the public space just in case it gets stolen"

The law doesn't give scrap metal dealers the right to question suspects, but it does make it possible to check the identity of anyone who wants to sell scrap metal. Under a law introduced in 2011, all payments over the value of €1,000 have to be made by cheque or bank transfer, to allow

kept on file together with details of the transaction. It's a bit too early to tell if the new rules are making a difference in metal theft. "We only started dealing with individuals after the identity law was changed," Van Hecke said. "We're also ... very close to the Dutch border, and

## A HAPPY ENDING FOR PALFIJN?



"Het Moorken" still safe in Ghent's Citadelpark

Ghent has been here before, but it all turned out fine. In October of 2007, "Het Moorken" disappeared. It's one of the city's best-known sculptures: an African boy that sits atop the monument in Citadelpark to Jozef and Lieven Van de Velde, two Gentenaars who helped in the Belgian colonisation of Congo.

The statue represents Sakala, the son of a chieftain, who was brought to Ghent by the brothers in 1884 and taken to the hearts of the people of Ghent. Sakala returned to Congo in 1887, and the statue was raised in 1888.

In 2007 when it went missing, the immediate conviction of the monuments agency was that this was the work of metal thieves. Only months before, thieves had broken into a warehouse where Ghent folk artist Walter De Buck was

working on a new sculpture of the port and stole copper plates worth €30,000.

But "Het Moorken" turned up again. He had in fact been toppled from his position atop the monument, part of an artificial rock grotto, by a falling tree branch. He had been taken to a foundry in nearby Oostakker for repairs.

Could the story of the stolen statue of Jan Palfijn also have a happy ending? Perhaps, but of another sort. While the council waits for the results of the police investigation, it turns out that the moulds used to cast the original statue still exist somewhere at Ghent University. "If the statue doesn't turn up, which nobody really expects," says a city council spokesperson, "it's possible that another copy could be made."

# Suspects arrested in murder case

Three neighbours of Priscilla Sergeant have confessed to killing the 14-year-old

Alan Hope

Three suspects have been arrested in connection with the death of 14-year-old Priscilla Sergeant from Huizingen, Flemish Brabant, who was found dead in a field in nearby Dworp last month. The three are a 41-year old man and two minors, aged 16 and 12. The man says he helped the two youth to dispose of Priscilla's body but was not responsible for her death. He fell asleep in his house, where all four were spending the evening, and Priscilla was dead when he woke up, he says. All three suspects are neighbours of the girl's family. The man is the only one of the three to have been formally

charged, with manslaughter. He was due this week to appear before a court in Brussels to have his continued detention confirmed. The two minors are under the supervision of a youth magistrate who has the power to detain them, but no details of their whereabouts have been released. According to a prosecutor's office source, all three have offered some sort of confession, although no details have yet been released.



Priscilla's parents, Josiane and Ronny, at their daughter's funeral earlier this month

## F-16 crash pilot ejects to safety

An F-16 fighter crashed near the air base at Kleine Brogel in Limburg last week, the 34th to do so since the Belgian air force took delivery of the first of the jets in 1979. The accident on 16 August created a loud explosion heard throughout the surrounding area. The crash is believed to have been caused by a bird-strike – when a bird or flock of birds flies into the aircraft engines.

The 23-year-old pilot, who had almost completed his training, ejected from the plane before it came down and was only slightly injured. The plane was largely destroyed when it crashed in a wood and caught fire.

Since 1979, 13 of the 34 accidents involving F-16s have been fatal, involving 16 deaths, most recently on the Dutch island of



Vlieland in 2005. The Air Safety Directorate will carry out a formal investigation of the latest incident.

## (Ain't no cure for the) Summertime news

- 189,000 fans turned out over the warmest weekend of the year to enjoy this year's edition of Pukkelpop at Kiewit, Limburg province, one year after a massive storm killed five people. Before the start of the three day event, festival director Chokri Mahassine gave politicians and the media a tour of new safety measures. Eight stages hosted 211 bands from 25 countries. Organisers commented: "Pukkelpop is back, and how!"
- In Brussels, the annual Zuidfoor

- carnival near South Station closed on Sunday having received an estimated 1.4 million visitors.
- The 10-day Brussels Summer Festival featuring Iggy Pop and John Cale attracted a record 105,000 visitors.
- In Antwerp, the four-day Bolleksefest, which featured Humo Rock Rally winners School is Cool, attracted 120,000 to events featuring music, street theatre, comedy and food.
- Last weekend, the rail authority NMBS laid on extra trains to carry

75,000 day-trippers to Ostend and Blankenberge at the coast.

- The North Sea coast was awarded 64 points out of 100 by the Ocean Health Index for the quality of its sea water. The score puts Belgium in 22nd place worldwide, behind France (18), the Netherlands (9) and Germany (4).
- The fine weekend did not make up, however, for a low tourist season at the coast, 75% of whose businesses suffered a drop in income of up to 10% over the summer as a whole.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**8,599**

blood donations from the over-65s in the year since the age limit was raised, according to the Flemish Red Cross – 2% of all donations

**30km/h**

speed limit for cyclists on canal paths in Flanders, a little-known law from 1935 and the subject of a new campaign by the Flemish waterways authority

**2,231**

criminal cases opened in the 1990s in the judicial area of Antwerp that remain open, according to the justice ministry. Brussels has 2,106 and Ghent 153

**400**

new traffic cameras on the way in Flanders – and 100 in the Brussels Capital Region – to carry out checks on the new road taxes for cars and trucks from 2016

**50,000**

new begonias delivered on Saturday for the flower carpet on the Grote Markt in Brussels, to replace flowers wilted by the heat. The carpet contained 700,000 flowers in all

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### Power struggle

Every legislation needs a trophy, a symbolic issue addressed to please at least one of the coalition partners. What BHV is for the Di Rupo legislation, ethical issues such as euthanasia and same-sex marriage were for the Verhofstadt years. The nuclear exit – an end to the nuclear power production in this country – was another of Verhofstadt's trophies.

The nuclear exit, which was legislated in 2003, came with a time frame; the last nuclear power plant in Belgium is to close in 2025. It also came with an extra clause, which said that the exit may be reversed in case the energy provision is threatened. Now that may mean all or nothing.

The supporters of nuclear energy, usually situated on the right of the political spectrum, have always hung on to the reversal clause, stating that electricity shortages are just around the corner. Opponents, usually more left wing, have played down shortages. As long as there is uncertainty about the nuclear exit, they say, investments in alternative energy will remain too low.

Many, but not all, of the opponents, will remember the times of "Kernenergie, nee bedankt" (Nuclear power, no thanks). This slogan was printed on thousands of stickers, the words surrounding a smiley face sun. The sticker was an icon for anyone who was young in the 1970s and '80s. Most typically, they were attached to backpacks of hitchhikers or the equally iconic Citroën 2CV, a hippie car known as "the goat" in Flanders.

The nuclear exit legislation did not end the debate, and both the time schedule and security issues continue to fuel it. The nuclear disaster at Fukushima lead Germany to introduce its own nuclear exit.

Now it turns out that the nuclear plant at Doel in East Flanders has security issues of its own. According to FANC, the federal agency for nuclear control, the nuclear plant at Tihange in Wallonia may have similar problems.

If both Doel and Tihange are shut down, Belgium needs to import more energy from abroad. This may lead to higher prices, the secretary of state for energy, has warned. Socialist vice-prime minister Johan Vande Lanotte calls this unacceptable.

So what is this country to do? Some suggest that older power plants, fuelled by gas or even coal, should be reopened. Others think that this calls for more investment in nuclear power. Meanwhile, there are very few hippie "goats" around to turn to for advice.

# Antwerp's Badboot opens with a splash

The new open-air swimming pool and café are afloat on the Scheldt River

Marc Maes

Just in time for the hottest weekend of the year, the Badboot, the world's largest floating open-air swimming pool, opened on Antwerp's Kattendijk dock last week. About 8,000 people had lined up to swim in the new pool by Sunday afternoon.

The project has been highly anticipated by *Antwerpnaars* since last year when the city's development office and alderman Ludo Van Campenhout put out a public call for the design, construction and financing of a new open-air swimming facility in Antwerp's Eilandje area.

"I still have the beer mat with my first illustrations of the Badboot," recalls Philip De Prest. "In September we got word that our idea had won." De Prest is the director of V-Zit, which rents boats for special events and arranges boat tours.

V-Zit assigned the design of the Badboot to Sculp(IT) architects. "Philip gave us *carte blanche*," says Pieter Peerlings of Sculp(IT). The new complex combines the Badboot, which sports both the pool and a children's pool, with a restaurant, an open-air lounge and a space for special events.

"You have the impression of swimming in the river," says De Prest, "but we have taken safety measures to prevent people from making the jump into the docks."

The financing, meanwhile, is through a group of private



investors and Belfius Bank under the name Badboot Vastgoed bvba, which has chosen not to release the cost of the project.

The complex was built by HSS shipyards in Maasbracht, the Netherlands, in little more than six months. Right from the start, the idea was to combine leisure

and recreation with ecology. The Badboot's deck is made from reeds, which work to purify the water, a European first. A "thermos concept", meanwhile, conserves energy. "Every night, the 29-degree water is transferred to a huge tank under the main pool," explains De Prest, "so the

water temperature remains constant."

## Multi-purpose

The whole Badboot platform has a total capacity of 600 people and the pool itself of 120 swimmers. A 750 square-metre sundeck offers great views to both the MAS museum

and old port infrastructure. In 2013, the Red Star Line Museum will open its doors on the opposite side of the dock.

The pools will be transformed into ice skating rinks during the winter and host "official curling competitions," says De Prest.

At the opening, Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens emphasised the importance of having an open-air swimming pool in the city. "Despite the substantial investments to comply with environmental regulations, we think it is crucial for a city like Antwerp to support the project," he said. "We have more than 500,000 people living here and only two open-air pools; this new facility will allow us to make swimming accessible to everyone." The city will pay €150,000 annually for a period of 10 years to keep the entrance fee to €4 per hour.

"The Badboot is poised to become the key to the future city development of the Eilandje neighbourhood – a unique place in the world," says Van Campenhout.

*The swimming pool of the Badboot is open until 15 September. A €4 ticket gets you one hour of swimming and must be booked in advance via the website or at [reservations@badboot.be](mailto:reservations@badboot.be)*

► [www.badboot.be](http://www.badboot.be)

## Tennis legends entertain crowds at Knokke-Heist

Iconic tennis players John McEnroe and Björn Borg were the main draw at the third edition of the Optima Open in Knokke-Heist last weekend. The former sparring partners joined forces to win the doubles title on Sunday to the delight of the 2,500 crowd. "I prefer to play with him; he is an excellent doubles player," said Borg after the duo defeated Henri Leconte and Mats Wilander in a tie-break 10-3.

The Optima Open singles final was earlier won by charismatic Croatian player Goran Ivanisevic, who beat Swede Thomas Enqvist in a tie-break 7-3. It was the second title for Ivanisevic, who lifted the trophy in the first Optima Open final in 2010.

The Belgian leg of the veterans' ATP Champions Tour boasted a magnetic line-up of all-time greats that also included Mark Philippoussis, Guy Forget and Carlos Moya. The veterans' tour is a chance to see legendary players in action. Former Flemish tennis champ Sabine Appelmans presented the trophies.

"It was a pleasure to play here; I'll definitely be back next year," said McEnroe. The American was absent from Knokke last year due to injury and allegedly requires physiotherapy before being able to pick up a racquet. The 53-year-old remains a familiar figure and voice as a popular pundit for both British and American networks. Sarah Crew

► [www.optimaopen.be](http://www.optimaopen.be)



John McEnroe (left) and Björn Borg took the doubles title at the veterans' Optima Open in Knokke-Heist

## Ghent street artist creates a stir in New York

The Ghent street artist known as ROA is well known in Belgium for his depictions of animals – often less than cute ones, such as rats and crows – on sides of buildings. Often playful, such as a pig appearing to sleep under a window or a prehistoric-looking bird emerging from a hole in a brick wall, ROA's work is instantly recognisable and highly respected in the world of graffiti art. He has been asked to take part in public initiatives around Europe.

But in Rochester, New York, some residents are not so impressed. ROA's painting of two bears on the side of a building, part of a local street art project called "Wall Therapy", has caused controversy among local residents since its premiere earlier this month. "It's not something we feel this neighbourhood deserves," said a woman who lives in the same street as the mural. "It definitely has sexual overtones." Another passer-by said she thought it more resembled a mama and baby bear. The city of Rochester, meanwhile, has



The bears of Flemish street artist ROA have left quite an impression on local residents in Rochester, New York

decided to leave the fate of ROA's bears to the discretion of the owner of the building, who refused to comment and has left the painting alone. As for ROA, he is naturally delighted. "People stop, look and talk to each other about it," a friend of the reclusive artist told a local news outlet. "That's what art is all about, right?" After Rochester, ROA moved on to create work in New York City and Chicago, where he had also been invited to take part in a street art project. Lisa Bradshaw

THE WEEK  
IN BUSINESSAir  
► American Airlines

American Airlines will end all flights to Zaventem from 6 November, with the loss of 33 jobs at Brussels Airport and the airline's office in Brussels. American currently flies daily between Brussels and JFK in New York. Passengers with tickets beyond that date can receive a refund or an alternative flight. America has operated at Zaventem for 20 years.

Pets  
► Tom & Co

Pets supplies retailer Tom & Co, a subsidiary of Delhaize, is now offering medical insurance for cats and dogs, in cooperation with insurer De Europese. A policy for a cat starts at €110 a year, and for a dog, €135.

Plastics  
► Renolit

The Oudenaarde branch of Renolit, a German family firm producing high-tech plastic film for industry, will close, with the loss of 136 jobs. Production at Oudenaarde will be transferred to Spain. Another 30 jobs in Flanders will remain in marketing, sales and R&D.

Steel wire  
► Bekaert

Management at steel wire producer Bekaert has declined to comment on reports that a new restructuring plan is in the making which would involve around 200 redundancies, as part of an attempt to cut €100 million in costs. The latest job cuts at the Kortrijk-based company, which has production facilities in Zwevegem, Aalter and Ingelmunster, would mainly affect skilled and administrative employees. A plan announced in February saw the loss of more than 600 factory jobs in Flanders.

Telecoms  
► Base

Dutch telecommunications group KPN has withdrawn its Belgian subsidiary, mobile phone operator Base, from sale after initial bids fell well below the €18 billion the company was hoping to raise.

Telecoms  
► Motorola

The Zaventem office of smartphone producer Motorola Mobility will remain open, Motorola Mobility Benelux confirmed. The US parent company, taken over by Google in May, is cutting 4,000 jobs worldwide and plans to close one-third of its offices. Eleven people work at the Zaventem office.

# One in five self-employed earn under poverty level

## Government proposes a new calculation for social security taxes

Alan Hope

**C**hanges proposed by the federal government for the calculation of the amount of social security the self-employed need to pay will not be enough to resolve the problem of large numbers of business owners earning less than a living wage, said Unizo, the Flemish organisation that represents the self-employed. The exact numbers of business owners who earn less than minimum wage is unclear, but Unizo puts the number at 15%. Last week, the Neutral Union for the Self-Employed (NSZ) said its polls show that 18% of fully self-employed people are making less than €833 a month net, less than the poverty line, which is set at €972 a month.

The figures should, both organisations point out, also be considered in the context of the business income not necessarily making up the whole of the household income: Many self-employed people have a partner in employment.

Nevertheless, even a conservative

estimate shows that the rate of poverty among the self-employed is about four times higher than among other people in the workforce, and the difference between the two extremes of earnings is also greater. In the first six months of this year, 1,100 self-employed applied from either Tussenstap or Efrem, both of which help small businesses in trouble. That is nearly 50% more than last year but not the whole picture. According to Pol Vermoere of Tussenstap, the self-employed are more likely to seek other options for help before coming to his organisation. "For everyone who comes to us, there are 10 others who don't," he told *De Standaard*.

The government's response has been to change the way the self-employed pay social security – one of the main sources of problems. At present, self-employed people pay social security based on the earnings they made three years ago, and the proposal is to pay based on the income of the current year.



© Shutterstock

However, commented Unizo director-general Karel Van Eetvelt, businesses will then have to estimate the current year's earnings and could face hefty penalties if the estimate turns out to have been wrong. "Pretending that a reform of the calculation of social charges will solve the problem doesn't make sense," he said.

Unizo proposes a system that would allow the self-employed to make provisional payments for the future, which could then be refunded if the business gets into difficulties. In 2011, just under 20,000 self-employed people were excused paying any social security because their incomes were too low.

## Closure of nuclear plants could mean electricity imports

Talks continue in the federal government around the closure of two of the country's nuclear reactors for tests after faults were found last month. Last week federal energy minister Melchior Wathelet warned there could be a "slight increase in price" if other power stations were forced to meet winter demand while Doel 3 in East Flanders and Tihange in Wallonia remained closed. Federal minister of the economy and consumer affairs Johan Vande Lanotte (*pictured*) then described any increase in price as "undesirable". "The stoppage at such a station has no impact on international market prices," Vande Lanotte said. "So there can be no impact on Belgian prices." Energy prices have been frozen by law until 1 January 2013, he pointed out.

Vande Lanotte also split with Wathelet over the question of importing electricity to meet demand. Last week Wathelet reacted to a warning of possible power cuts this winter from the federal agency for nuclear control (FANC). The two reactors account for about 20% of the country's needs. Buying electricity in at peak moments was, he said, unreliable and unsafe, and would lead to an increased dependence on external suppliers. Vande Lanotte said he saw no problem in importing electricity if need be. "Foreign electricity just happens to be cheaper," he said. Vande Lanotte did agree with his colleague, however, on the question of warnings from FANC. The information they were putting out, he said, was "incoherent. Rather than sowing panic in the



media, he [director-general Willy De Roover] would do better to give the government and the public concrete and correct information on the risks and what might be done about them."

## Flemish days at Floriade

Flanders deserves to be considered a world-class player in horticulture, according to Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, speaking at the start of a three-day Flanders focus at the world horticultural exhibition Floriade in Venlo, the Netherlands, last week. "Nowhere in the world is there such an exchange of know-how," said Peeters, whose portfolio includes agriculture. "The cooperation between research institutions, scientists and growers works extremely well, and research results find their way quickly into practice."

Flanders accounts for 95% of Belgium's

horticultural output and counts 1,800 growers, who annually produce €500 million in flowers and plants. In addition, its central position in Europe makes it, Peeters said, "a hub for international trade in horticultural products". The region exports €656 million in plants every year – more than it produces itself. Peeters singled out the azalea and bay tree – both recognised as traditional Flemish products – as well as the begonia as the jewels in the crown of Flemish horticulture. The begonias in particular, he said, had been on show to the world that very week in flower carpets on the main squares in

Brussels and Sint-Niklaas. Floriade takes place once every 10 years, has been running since April and goes on until October. In April EU Council president Herman Van Rompuy visited the Belgian pavilion at the event, where he inaugurated a new azalea named Aiko, developed by the Flemish institute for agriculture and fisheries (ILVO). The special three-day Flemish event was marked by a magnificent 40 square-metre planter showing off the best of Flanders' horticulture. Peeters also unveiled an artwork by flower arranger Geert Pattyn of Wervik, West Flanders.

## NMBS seeks volunteers on accessibility

The national rail authority NMBS is looking for volunteers to test its facilities for accessibility for the disabled. The 200 or so volunteers will act as "mystery shoppers" by using rail facilities and reporting back on how accessible they are.

Aside from determining how easy it is to get on and off trains, "we'll also be looking into how easily they can ask for help by phone or online," said spokesman Bart Crols. "We've already set up an anonymous test panel on communication with passengers on the train." Representatives for the disabled pointed out that, in many instances, help is not available. In just over half of the country's 213 stations, staff are available to help the disabled on and off trains, but that help usually has to be ordered 24 hours in advance.

"In practice, that's a big problem," said the Flemish federation for the handicapped. "If as a wheelchair user you want to go to the seaside for the day, you have to decide 24 hours in advance when you're going to go and also when you're going to come back. If you don't book your assistance, there's no guarantee you'll even [be able to] get on the train."

# The Polish side of the family

## Speakers of a wholly unique language in a southern Polish village believe its roots lie in Flanders

Andy Furniere

Language sets the community of Wilamowice in southern Poland apart from the rest of their country. Although linguists are divided, residents firmly believe that its unique language, called Vilamovian, stems from the founding of the town in medieval times by Flemish colonists. The language has slowly been dying out, but both young and old are determined to preserve the culture of their ancestors.

Flemish historian and linguist Rinaldo Neels was warmly welcomed in Wilamowice, when he paid a visit to the municipality for his PhD thesis at the University of Leuven: "The imminent language death of Vilamovian, a Germanic language island in South Poland". While some members of the folklore association dressed up in traditional clothing, others related stories on the Flemish roots of their hometown.

According to these tales, a group of about 100 weavers and farmers from the Low Countries settled in southern Poland at the end of the 13th century. Wilamowice was named after the community leader, Willem. "Historical documents confirm that the Polish monarch of that time gave a certain Willem, coming from the West, permission to establish themselves in the area," says Neels. "The lands were ravaged by the Mongols around the middle of the 13th century, and the Polish monarchy was happy to have migrants come and help revive the country."

### German or Dutch?

After six centuries of an oral tradition, a local poet, Florian Biesik, put Vilamovian into print. Having left the region, Biesik wrote nostalgic poems in the 1920s about his birthplace. His example soon inspired scholars to compile Vilamovian dictionaries and



A Polish speaker of Vilamovian (centre) offers a warm welcome to two Flemish women, who visited the town with linguist Rinaldo Neels and took the opportunity to don traditional Polish dress

grammar books.

Biesik declared his conviction that colonists from the Low Countries were responsible for the Vilamovian culture and saw similarities in the clothing and hard-working mentality of the two regions. Linguists are still discussing the origin of the Vilamovian language, which could also be linked to German-speaking territories.

"The grammar includes many elements of High German languages," explains Neels. These were used mainly in medieval Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Luxembourg. "Wilamowice was a prosperous trading town with many contacts in important trading centres like Bremen and Vienna."

Contacts with Flemish merchants could similarly explain the influence of Low Franconian and Middle Dutch, which was spoken in medieval Flanders. "There are a lot of 'German colonies' in southern Poland," says Neels, "but nowhere

else do people feel related to Flemish ancestors. It seems unreasonable to consider this collective memory of 700 years a fantasy."

He notes that it can hardly be a coincidence that classic Flemish nursery rhymes such as *I Saw Two Bears Making Sandwiches* and *Sleep, Baby, Sleep* are popular in Wilamowice.

### The loss of a language

The medieval colonisation of southern Poland was not unusual, as many immigrants fled overpopulation in Western Europe in search of land in the East. The majority of the resulting language clusters in Eastern Europe disappeared centuries ago, but Vilamovian was spoken in the households of Wilamowice until the Second World War. "Most people mastered Polish and German as well – Polish for administrative reasons and German for the prestige. But in the daily life of their homes, shops and cafes, the townspeople spoke

their own tongue."

The decline of the Vilamovian language inevitably set in. Some children attended secondary schools outside Wilamowice, where they only spoke Polish. More and more inhabitants found their future spouses outside of their birth place. The townspeople did not object to switching languages.

This pragmatism also prevailed during the Second World War. "The Nazis considered them a Germanic people and offered inhabitants the chance to register as ethnic Germans so they could avoid forced labour," says Neels. "Four out of five people accepted."

During Communist rule post-1945, those who had accepted the deal were punished by a commission investigating collaboration. "Around 70 people were sent to Siberia, and many others lost their possessions," Neels relates. "To prove its loyalty, the community decided to speak only Polish." When the Stalinist terror subsided around 1956, this decision stuck. It seemed more practical and ensured future career prospects for young people.

Today only 70 of the town's 2,800 inhabitants speak Vilamovian, and most of them are in their 80s. While the language is irreversibly dying, the community has not abandoned its identity. A survey carried out by Neels shows that three out of four inhabitants would like more financial support from the municipality to preserve the cultural legacy, and more than half of the population think that children should acquire basic knowledge of Vilamovian in primary school. There are also two folklore associations in the town, with more than 100 members, which teach Vilamovian to children. "And a new grammar book is on its way," says Neels. "The language is becoming a museum piece, but a carefully maintained one".

## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Patients with certain retina disorders no longer need to undergo surgery, thanks to a breakthrough at the University Hospital Leuven. A simple injection with the protein ocriplasmin is capable of completely restoring the eyesight. Following successful clinical trials on 652 patients, injections should be used as treatment within a year, after approval by the US Food and Drug Administration and the European Medicines Agency.

Gynaecologist Jasper Verguts of the University Hospital Leuven discovered that women are most fertile when they have a womb with a length-to-width ratio of 1.618, which is in fact the so-called "golden ratio" – a proportion considered aesthetically pleasing when applied to the human body, art, architecture, in addition to maths and sciences. Verguts measured the wombs of 5,000 women using ultrasound technology and drew up a table of the average ratio of length to width for different age categories. He found that when women are most fertile (age 16 to 20), their wombs correspond to the golden ratio (1.6).

Surgeons at the AZ Sint-Jan Hospital in Bruges have used a **Da Vinci Robot** to perform speech-improving surgery on a child. It's the first such surgery in the world using the robot. The robot's instruments are highly manoeuvrable, enabling surgeons to work in deep spaces via a narrow entrance.

By mid-September, scientists at Ghent University's department of soil management will have examined part of Stonehenge's landscape with a soil sensor they have developed themselves. The sensor and its measurements will enable the Ghent scientists to identify now-underground formations, such as valleys, to help reconstruct the former landscape surrounding the prehistoric monument in southern England. It is rare for the National Trust and English Heritage to grant permission to scientists to work at the site.

Parents of children in full-time education have received a **higher back-to-school subsidy** compared to last year. The annual supplement is intended to help families with extra expenses that come at the start of the school year. The bonus for students between 17 and 25 years of age is €108.25, €28.66 more than last year. For younger students, the increases are smaller, anywhere from €0.53 more to €1.58 more. **AF**

## Q&A



### Véronique Van Vlasselaer just finished a Master's in economy and management at the University of Leuven, where her thesis was on the use of Twitter in Belgium

Twitter account. I also found that Flemish Twitter users are quite internationally orientated. The average Flemish user has around 50 connections with people abroad. That's twice as many as the number of domestic connections.

#### What's the most popular subject among Flemish tweeters?

In November, it was "Follow Friday" [#ff]. This is a popular topic that helps inexperienced Twitter users to find other people to connect with; the rule is that you post a message on Friday (recommending another user to follow). But, of course, the real interest of experienced Flemish tweeters lies in following their idols

– celebrities from showbiz, politics, sports... For example, DJ Sven Ornelis of Q-music appears to be quite a catch on Flemish Twitter.

#### Who is the average Flemish tweeter? How old is he or she?

Actually, that kind of basic personal information is difficult to find. The only information Twitter users give about themselves are their tweets. And in most cases, they're not saying how old they are.

#### You have also discovered that Twitter has made the world more "compact".

Indeed. Several decades ago, the famous [American] sociologist

Stanley Milgram said that it would take seven steps through interpersonal relationships on average to connect two random people on the planet with each other. Due to modern communications technology, of which social media is definitely the spearhead, it now takes only four or five steps. For Flemish Twitter users in particular, we see that they are connected with each other by an average of 4.38 "friends of friends". This means that to reach every single Flemish tweeter, a tweet has to be forwarded only four or five times.

#### Are you on Twitter yourself?

Of course! @Veronique\_VV.  
interview by Senne Starckx

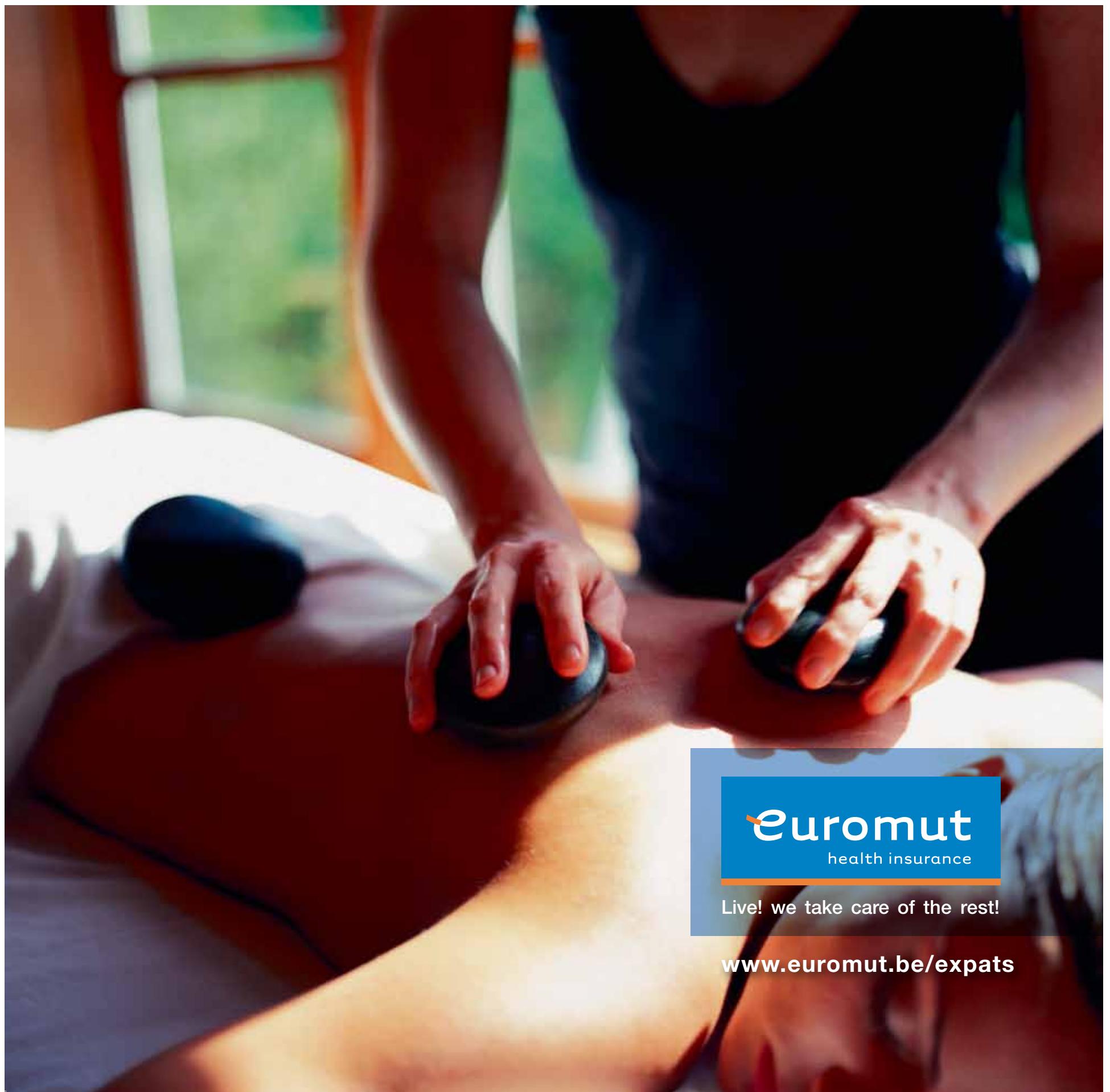
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# One sip at a time

## Spanish wine importer has built up quite a reputation among Flanders' connoisseurs

Diana Goodwin

In a quiet residential neighbourhood not far from the busy centre of Hasselt, tucked away behind a leaf-covered fence, lies a charming brasserie called In de Windmolen. On any given day, you can find patrons enjoying a drink or a meal on the terrace while the proprietor darts between tables, a constant blur of motion. The service is pleasant and efficient, the food reliably tasty, the atmosphere relaxed and convivial.

This bustling scene – one any restaurateur would envy – hardly seems a side business. And yet In de Windmolen, though popular with locals, is merely a front (albeit a legitimate one) for the owner's true passion – wine.

Luc Bollen never planned to open a restaurant, he says, but gradually found himself expanding the food in what was originally intended to be a wine and cheese bar.

After working in restaurants in Spain and Switzerland, Bollen came home to Hasselt, where he had graduated from culinary school, to start his own business. In de Windmolen, a former carriage stop dating from 1865, was up for sale. At first, he offered a few snacks at lunchtime to go with the wine, but soon gave in to customers' requests for more substantial fare. Bollen's wife, Lut Steegmans, became the chef.

It was the restaurant – and the need to keep its wine list stocked – that led Bollen to his second business, which now outstrips the restaurant in terms of revenue. Wijnhandel Luc Bollen is now the second-largest importer



Luc Bollen and Lut Steegmans outside their import business, where they also run the restaurant In de Windmolen

Priorat region of Catalonia. He is especially proud to have been chosen as one of Marco Abella's two Belgian importers. When the Priorat winemaker came to Belgium to meet with potential partners, Bollen made a lasting impression by reacting immediately to his first taste. "That's exactly what I'm looking for!" he exclaimed. Abella never forgot it.

It's this enthusiasm for his product, along with personal attention to both his wine list and his customers, that has made Bollen a successful wine dealer, now 15 years in business. He admits it was hard at first to convince people that he knew what he was doing, especially given his youthful appearance. But now, he says, "My clients come here because they know I have good wine." Besides French and Spanish wines, he also stocks cava and olive oil, champagne and cognac. Customers stop in for a meal, to drink a glass of wine or to purchase a bottle or two. Bollen manages to find time for everyone. Although he never seems to stop moving, he also never seems anxious or rushed. And he always sports a smile. This is a man who clearly loves his work, never more so than when someone asks him to recommend a good wine.

*In de Windmolen is located at Casterstraat 46, a few kilometres southeast of Hasselt's city centre. The restaurant is currently closed for its annual holiday but re-opens on 7 September. Opening hours are Friday-Tuesday, 11.00-midnight*

► [www.wijnhandellucbollen.be](http://www.wijnhandellucbollen.be)

of Spanish wines in Flanders, after La Buena Vida in Mol. Whereas the latter is a large-scale enterprise with a customer base of major restaurants across the region, Bollen's clientele is largely local and consists mostly of individuals who share his love of wine.

### Cognac and olive oil, direct from Spain

Bollen first learned about wine while working as a student at some of the

finest restaurants in Hasselt, including the legendary Scholteshof. One of his first teachers was Luc Bellings, chef at Hasselt's two-Michelin-star restaurant Aan Tafel, whom Bollen credits with introducing wine pairings to fine dining in Flanders. At In de Windmolen, Bollen began with a couple of French wines, then gradually added to his cellar, hand-picking vintages from small producers that he knew personally. His first Spanish wine came from a bodega in the Penedes region,

Masa Giro del Gorner, which he had visited years earlier. "It's not easy to be small," he says, especially when larger importers are competing for the same wines. But he deals with family-run wineries, where personal relationships and loyalty are key. It also helps that he speaks Spanish and a little Catalan, thanks to several seasons spent working at a hotel near Barcelona.

Bollen now deals in wines from all of Spain's major wine-producing regions, including the much-coveted

# The last hurrah

## All the fun fit to cram into the next 10 days before school starts again

Alan Hope

As the summer holiday draws to a close, so, too, does our series on family activities. Here are a few suggestions for the final week of your kids' freedom.

As adopted citizens of Schaarbeek, my family is obviously a big fan of the donkey (it's the symbol of the commune), so a **donkey farm** is a must. That's what Bart and Inge Sels have created with De Hoef in Messelbroek, Flemish Brabant. There is a special chance to get to know the donkeys better on 27 August, with an introductory visit for smaller kids from 9.30 to 12.00. Older kids from six to 12 are invited on 23 and 28 August at 9.00. But it's always possible to take a trip with the animals through the beautiful Brabant countryside. The farm will have accommodation for a longer stay starting next March, and they'll also organise birthday parties for kids over five.



There's still time to join in the **Witches and Wizards parcours** at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels, in three languages, with a sheet of clues that you can pick up at the entrance. The

Museum, don't forget, has free entry every first Wednesday of the month from 13.00.

► [www.naturalsciences.be](http://www.naturalsciences.be)

On 26 August, as tradition demands, Ostend will say goodbye to its summer season with **Fin d'Saison**, an afternoon of activities for everyone at five locations along the seafront, starting at 14.00. A kite-making workshop is followed by a competition flying the new kites, with prizes for the best one and the one that stays in the air longest. The contest requires a reservation by 24 August, which can be done via email at [cultuur@oostende.be](mailto:cultuur@oostende.be), with the child's name and age. Other activities include music, street theatre and origami.

► [www.oostende.be/cultuur](http://www.oostende.be/cultuur)

The Blaarmeersen recreation park in Ghent has boats and pedalos to rent, but maybe you'd prefer a canoe or a

**kayak trip along the Leie**, all the way into the centre of the city? It's even possible to do it at night by torchlight – real torches, that is, not the battery-operated kind. The minimum age to participate is 10, and the smallest group is also 10. Elsewhere in the park, there's a jungle gym in the woods, a beach with supervised swimming, miniature golf, a playground, fishing and camping.

► [www.tinyurl.com/blaarmeersen](http://www.tinyurl.com/blaarmeersen)

Remember last week we mentioned the chance to play football on the hallowed ground of Sint-Truiden team STVV's stadium? Well, the town also offers **street soccer** for children over six, every day on the playground at Koekeplein Sint-Pieter and Frederik de Renaisselaan. No need to reserve, just show up. For more information, call 011.70.17.70.

Finally, the town of Lier in Antwerp province hosts the fascinating

exhibition **Verzameld Lier – Lier Verzamelt**, based around collections of every sort, from old postcards to local lace to views of the Sint-Gummarus church. Many children love to collect things, and this might just be the inspiration for a life-long passion. The exhibition runs until 26 August, from 10.00 to 12.00 and from 13.00 to 17.00, in the Timmermans-Opsomerhuis. The museum is also looking for photos of local people with an unusual object that tells a story about themselves or the town. That'll be another great exhibition to look out for later.

► [www.bruegeland.be/lierverzamelt](http://www.bruegeland.be/lierverzamelt)

*More ideas for fun activities across Flanders can be found on an extended version of this article online: [www.flanderstoday.eu/active](http://www.flanderstoday.eu/active)*

*Contributions to this article were made by Olga Hope*



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# The bridge between heaven and earth

**This year's Klara Festival brings sublime spirituality to a concert hall near you**

Alan Hope

The Klara Festival this year takes on the largest of all of music's themes and widens its grasp, taking in Antwerp and Bruges for the very first time.

The tagline of this year's Klara Festival of classical and new music is Knockin' on Heaven's Door, which recalls Bob Dylan's song. But in name only. In practice, it's an opportunity to rise to the challenge of presenting one of the greatest works of music ever composed, as well as some others that could be in the running for the title. And, as if the works weren't challenging enough, the festival is approaching them from the innovative angle it's become known for across the world.

"The title Knockin' on Heaven's Door is about the bridge built by artists between the heavenly and the worldly sphere," explains festival director Hendrik Storme. "It's made up of two aspects: on the one side, music that is religious – the St Matthew Passion for example, or the Symphony of Psalms by Stravinsky. And on the other side, music that is spiritual but not in a religious manner. You might think of the Bach Cello Suites, which have no text. It's not considered a religious work, but we can agree that Bach has written purely spiritual music in this work."

The same might be said about the Four Seasons, "which at first glance is a simple metaphor, an evocation of Nature," Storme continues. "But if you listen more profoundly, it becomes clear it's a different sort of spiritual work, a sort of Ode to Nature. That's the general theme: the bridge between Heaven and Earth."

## In a Singing Garden

There's nothing like taking on the big questions: Some say that the very existence of music is a manifestation of humans' spiritual quest, whether it's through religion, nature or another way. But the

programme for this year's festival shows the title isn't simply a giant umbrella under which anything can be made to shelter.

The festival hosts an artist in residence, and this year there are two, who Storme calls "main highlights" of the festival. "Marc Minkowski and the Musiciens du Louvre Grenoble will perform, over three days, all of the Schubert symphonies," he says. It's "obviously a fantastic project that I'm very pleased about." That will happen not only in Brussels (Bozar) but also for the first time in Antwerp (deSingel) and in Bruges (Concertgebouw). "So it's a musical trilogy, with one musical theme shared among three musical partners."

The second residency came out of the preparations for the 30th anniversary of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, a Baroque orchestra with whom Klara is presenting three projects: *St Matthew Passion*, conducted by René Jacobs (pictured below), and two other concerts "in which old music will be given a contemporary twist," says Storme.



© Philippe Matsas

Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* is part of a new composition by Toshio Hosokawa called *Singing Garden*. The following day should prove to be another of the festival's best: "the fantastic choreography to *The Four Seasons* by Juan Kruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola, a student of Sasha Waltz, in which the orchestra doesn't just play music, but takes part in the dancing."

These residency projects have been in the works for about three years. "A residency is something specific and



A danced concert: the musicians in *4 Seasons - 4 Elements* are at the mercy of Basque choreographer Juan Kruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola.

something unique," says Storme. "With the Akademie, for instance, we were looking for a series of concerts that would represent a sort of summing-up of what they've been doing in the 30 years of their existence. The relationship that's built up is what opens the door to innovation and trend-setting works like *Singing Garden*".

## Klara Festival: Best bets

The story of the Passion of Christ has inspired many composers, and JS Bach himself composed three versions. His *St Matthew Passion* is the greatest of them, and arguably the greatest choral work ever composed. It's led by Flemish conductor René Jacobs, who is not only an acknowledged expert in the music but also a conductor with a strong feel for the theatrical. The production features the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and the RIAS chamber choir, and soloists Werner Güra (as the Evangelist who carries the narrative), Bernarda Fink and Konstantin Wolff. *31 August, 20.00*,

### Bozar, Brussels

Later in the calendar lies the other side of Bach: no cast of thousands, just one musician and one instrument. The *Cello Suites* are an example of the purely spiritual, a deep meditation not only intellectual – the single instrument gives Bach a chance to explore the very boundaries of composition – but also emotional. Oddly enough, each suite is a series of movements all in dance form. The soloist is Christian Poltera, a student of Heinrich Schiff. *12-13 September, 20.30, De Munt, Brussels*

### Singing Garden

*Singing Garden* is a "concert installation" by the Japanese composer Toshio Hosokawa, from a concept by recorder player Jeremias Schwarzer. Using music by Vivaldi, it features Schwarzer and the

Akademie in a work that examines ideas of nature from the Far East to the Baroque tradition. *7 September, 20.00, De Munt, Brussels*

Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (*The Song of the Earth*) was noted by the composer as a symphony for voices and orchestra, but somehow it is even too large for that description, generally considered the largest work a composer can produce outside of opera. It's in six movements, based on six Chinese poems, and it features a tenor and alto voice. Mahler, a Jew converted to Catholicism and at that time going through a difficult time in his life, considers matters of life, parting and salvation. Grown men have been known to weep during music like this. *2 September, 20.00, Flagey, Brussels*

**31 AUGUST TO 14 SEPTEMBER**

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► [www.klarafestival.be](http://www.klarafestival.be)

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MR CAGE



John Cage photographed by Andreas Pohlmann in Frankfurt in 1986

If music is the manifestation of humans' search for the sublime, then silence is the spiritual pinnacle all music strives toward, and nobody represents silence more than John Cage. His *4'33"* – scored for any instrument or group of instruments and consisting of musicians not playing those instruments for four minutes and 33 seconds – is ironically one of the most famous pieces of modern music there is.

Cage was born in Los Angeles only four years after Mahler in Vienna conceived *Das Lied von der Erde*, and the centenary of his birth is the occasion for his inclusion in the Klara Festival. Happy Birthday Mr Cage is a concert of his music and music

that came before him (Samuel Barber) and around the same time (Elliot Carter). That concert ends with *4'33"*, which was originally titled *Silent Prayer*. The music is provided – or not – by De Munt's wind quintet and brass quintet.

Later, there's From Cage to Bach, with violinist Guido De Neve, which traces the history of music for the solo violin over more than three centuries. And if you've heard Bach's mighty Chaconne from the *Partita* in D minor, you don't need to be convinced how music can be a bridge between Earth and Heaven, no matter what your religious beliefs.

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# Crossing borders

Turnout author Chika Unigwe has a lot of firsts to her name

Rebecca Benoot

Born in Nigeria and now at home in Turnout, Chika Unigwe is Flanders' only immigrant author to have her Dutch-language books translated into-English. She recently made the longlist of Africa's most prestigious literary prize.

Chika Unigwe (pictured) was born in the city of Enugu in southern Nigeria but moved to Flanders 17 years ago after meeting the Flemish man who would become her husband. She'd already earned a BA in English Language and Literature from the University of Nigeria in Nsukka and then, once here, she completed an MA at the University of Leuven. In 2004, she completed a PhD from the University of Leiden. Before coming to Flanders, she had already written several volumes of poetry and educational material. Today, she has published three novels in Dutch, her second language, all of which have been translated into English. Her second novel, *Fata Morgana* (*On Black Sisters' Street*), earned her a place earlier in the summer on the longlist for the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa, locally known as the African Nobel Prize.

This biennial prize is given to the best literary work produced by an African author. The jury is composed of distinguished African intellectuals, seasoned writers and literary critics. Last week, the shortlist was announced and, although Unigwe wasn't on it, the title on the longlist should gain the book even more exposure than it has already had.

## A life-changing project

Unigwe, who now lives in Turnout with her husband and four children, is no novice when it comes to awards. In 2003, she was shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing, and a year later, she won the BBC Short Story Competition and a Commonwealth Short Story Competition award. "The importance of a prize such as the Wole Soyinka isn't just the recognition," Unigwe tells me. "It also

gets your name out there because it's such an important prize in Africa."

Unigwe, 38, understands the significance of awards. "To really break through in the fiction market, you need a lot of contacts and exposure, which is why winning prizes can be a big deal – for a budding author especially. I met my agent, for example, by being on the shortlist of the Caine Prize."

*On Black Sisters' Street* is a novel about the lives of four Nigerian women who came to Europe in search of a better life but ultimately ended up working as prostitutes in the red light district of Antwerp.

It was an important novel for Unigwe, both professionally and personally. "I put so much time and effort into it," she explains. "I also learned a lot about myself while doing the research in the red light district. In a sense, this novel has really changed me. *On Black Sisters' Street* so much more than a book because it introduced me to so many people. It also gave me the opportunity to go to Nigeria to do anti-trafficking campaigns."

## New way of thinking

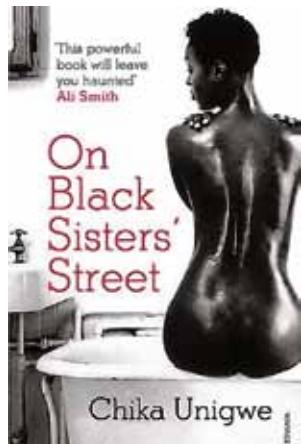
In Nigeria, Unigwe had a very conservative Catholic upbringing: "I used to love the song 'Let's Talk about Sex' by Salt-n-Pepa," she says, "and

every time I wanted to sing along, I had to substitute 'sex' with 'bread'. So I was constantly singing: 'Let's talk about bread, baby'."

**"On Black Sisters' Street has really changed me"**

I soon realised there was so much more to it. That's when I started the research that lead up to *On Black Sisters' Street*.

## CHIKA UNIGWE: THE BOOKS



**The Phoenix** (Published by Meulenhoff/Manteau, 2005; English 2007)

Unigwe's first novel, *De feniks*, was published in Dutch in 2005 and was the first book of fiction written by an author of African origin living in Flanders. Dealing with themes from her previous short stories such as grief and loneliness, it is set in Turnout and focuses on a Nigerian woman trying to find her way in her new homeland. *The Phoenix* is an unyielding and captivating look at how Flemish society treats African immigrants.

**On Black Sisters' Street** (Published by Meulenhoff/Manteau, 2007; English 2009)

Released as *Fata Morgana* in Dutch and as *On Black Sisters' Street* in English, this novel is a raw and vivid depiction of the lives of four Nigerian prostitutes in Antwerp's Zwartzusterstraat. They all came to Belgium full of hopes and dreams and are ultimately united by courage and tragedy as they each reveal what has brought them here. *On Black Sisters' Street* is a moving story of the illusion of the West through African eyes.

**Night Dancer** (Published by De Bezige Bij, 2011; English 2012)

Unigwe's latest novel *Nachtdanser* tells the story of Mma, a Nigerian woman who has just lost her mother. Alone and scared, she tries to hold on to the only thing she has left – her memories, which have been tainted by her mother's mysterious past. With no knowledge of her father, she goes in search of her roots. *Night Dancer* is a vibrant exploration of one woman's search for family.

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Flemish organisation Velt, which promotes ecological living and gardening, recently opened a Brussels branch and are looking to organise an English-language group within it to discuss and share knowledge on city gardening, guerrilla gardening and a variety of workshops. Interested parties can email [bennydebruyne@gmail.com](mailto:bennydebruyne@gmail.com) or visit the website.

▶ [www.velt.be](http://www.velt.be)

Days after it was announced that Flemish film director Michaël R Roskam (*Rundskop*) was working on a pilot episode of a new series for HBO, the news broke that he has been pegged by American studio Focus Features to direct the new movie *The Tiger*. The film is based on the 2010 book by American writer John Vaillant, which recounts real-life events in a small Siberian town in the 1990s, when villagers were under attack by a marauding tiger. *Black Swan* director Darren Aronofsky was meant to helm the film but had to back out. Roskam has been offered other Hollywood projects since *Rundskop* (*Bullhead*) was nominated for an Oscar, but this is the first he has accepted. The project is at least a year off, said Roskam in a statement, and he first wants to make his feature *Lefidèle*, the story of a French woman in love with a Flemish gangster.

"Twenty to 30 percent" of those making use of the *kunstenaarsstatuut*, or artist statute, are not really artists and are abusing the system, according to the director of ACT-Cultuur, an information service for working artists. The statute was launched to put a stop to artists selling their work in the black and allow them to build up social security and pay taxes. But many – from amateur artists to housepainters – are taking advantage of the system's benefits. At the end of 2003, the year the statute was launched, the number enrolled was 3,616. Now that number is 15,556. The National Employment Office, which handles the programme, has promised to better monitor those registering.

Following up on the hit TV quiz series *De slimste mens ter wereld* (The Smartest Person in the World), Flemish production house Woestijnvis will air *De slimste gemeente van Vlaanderen*, or The Smartest Town in Flanders, early next year. All participating towns and cities will choose teams of residents to represent them on the show, which will be hosted by Michiel Devlieger, host of *De laatste show*.

▶ [www.woestijnvis.be](http://www.woestijnvis.be)

The Sphinx cinema in Ghent is continuing its *Film Poll 2012* until 5 September. On the cinema's Facebook page, visitors can vote for their favourite film that played in Sphinx in the last year. Every week, the winner will be re-shown on Wednesday and Saturday.

▶ [www.facebook.com/sphinxcinema](http://www.facebook.com/sphinxcinema)

*Rewind, fast forward, pause*

# Het Theater Festival

Bjorn Gabriels

**A**s the holiday exodus traffic jams shorten and the quotidian queues assume their usual proportions, a new cultural season pulls itself out of hibernation. This moment is marked by Het Theater Festival, an annual selection from last season's Dutch-language productions.

This year, deSingel and Monty in Antwerp host the 12 re-stagings. Olympique Dramatique's *Onvoltooid verleden* (Unfinished Past), starring Tom Dewispelaere and Jan Decleir, is based on a Hugo Claus novel that delves into the public trial of an alleged criminal. In *Land's End*, Antwerp company Berlin also tackle the complexities of a judicial inquiry into a murder case.

Het Theatre Festival 2012 also offers a chance to (re)visit three lauded dance performances: *It's going to get worse and worse and worse, my friend*, a solo by Lisbeth Gruwez, *Cesena* by Anne Teresa de

Keersmaeker's Rosas and *A Louer* (For Rent), in which the Brussels-based company Peeping Tom offers a "swirling democratisation" of dance theatre.

But it's possibly *Krenz, de gedoodverfde opvolger* (Krenz, The Designated Successor) that is this year's must-see. Willem de Wolf of celebrated Dutch theatre group De Koe uses the life of former East German communist leader Egon Krenz as a launching pad for commentary on ambition, loyalty and political machinations. "Theater so disarming, so worldly, so full of urgency is a rare feat," comments the jury. Another monologue that moves far beyond the real-life character on whom it is based can be found in *Raymond*, Josse De Pauw's rendition of legendary football coach Raymond Goethals.

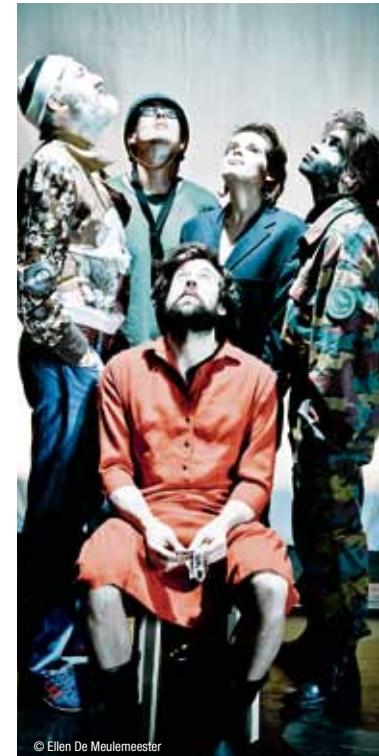
The Theater Festival jury particularly expresses a preference for theatre that brings people together and embodies solidarity, both in form and content. It strongly supports plays "that reach out to and surprise seasoned as well as non-seasoned audiences" over theatre that rouses zealous defenders and opponents.

*Het fantastische leven van de heilige Sint-Christoffel zoals samengevat in twaalftaferelen en drie liederen* (The Fabulous Life of Saint Christopher as Summarised in Twelve Scenes and Three Songs) by Leuven's De Werf and production house Silence Fini, for instance, is praised for its fresh and accessible approach to the lofty themes of Christianity and fear of the unknown (pictured). Addressing the lingering discussion about "best of" selections, the jury fires a round of warning shots. Two segments of the performing arts have specifically let them down: youth theatre and pieces from the classic repertoire. The latter,

although increasingly brought to the stage, demonstrate a lack of urgency and too little reflection, the jury says. "Why now? What do all these Greeks and Russians tell us?"

*Dit is alles* by Antwerp's Het Paleis is hailed as a welcome exception amongst the current crop for young people. Its take on the novel *This is All* by British author Aidan Chambers is "one of the rare performances in youth theatre that combines a telling form with an enriching content".

More reflection on the performing arts scene can be expected at the annual State of the Union. This year, Stef Lernous of Abattoir Fermé takes the pulpit. The Theatre Festival also stages Circuit X, a line-up of young theatremakers, one of whom will win the Roel Verniers Award, named after the festival's 38-year-old director who died last year of cancer.



© Ellen De Meulemeester

23 august to 1 September | deSingel and Monty, Antwerp | ► [www.theaterfestival.be](http://www.theaterfestival.be)

## PHOTOGRAPHY

### Antwerp City Photographer

In the 1940s, American photographer Weegee captured the essence of contemporary New York City with a series of gritty, street-level photos. His collection Naked City revolutionised both photography and urban studies. The camera had already been employed to study indigenous cultures in far-off continents, but Weegee used it to investigate the industrialised, Western city from the ground up. The non-profit Stadsfotograaf Antwerpen (Antwerp City Photographer) recently commissioned a similar project. The first batch of five photographers – Maarten Vanden Abeele, Patrick de Roo, Elisabeth Broekaert, Dan Zollmann and Alex Salinas – were enlisted in 2010 to begin building a collective vision of contemporary Antwerp. It was of course conceived with historical memory in mind, but the archive so far produced by these five also fascinates the present-day viewer. **Georgio Valentino**



© Photo Museum

Until 30 September | Waalsekaai 47, Antwerp | ► [www.fotomuseum.be](http://www.fotomuseum.be)

## MORE PHOTOGRAPHY THIS WEEK

### Brussels

**Gaël Turine: Portraits from an Art Collection:** The award-winning Brussels-based photographer presents portraits of artists and their work

Until OCT 10 at Art et Marges, Hoogstraat 312-314

► [www.artetmarges.be](http://www.artetmarges.be)

### Ghent

**Hun Schoonste Dag (The Most Beautiful Day):** The "museum of things that (never) pass" feeds us another slice of life. The fifth part of its From the Photo Album series is an exhibition of wedding photos from the 20th century

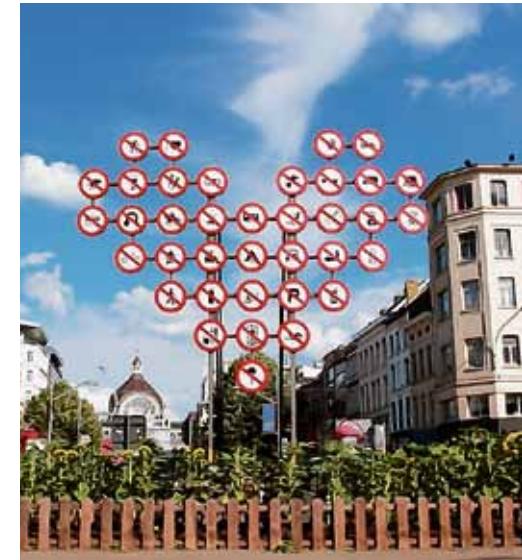
Until NOV 4 at Huis Van Alijn, Kraanlei 65

► [www.huisvanalijn.be](http://www.huisvanalijn.be)

## EXHIBITION

### Inject Love

The Inject Love project began last year with the publication of *Love Injections*, a book (and, of course, iPad app) which provides some 200 examples of creative ways to say "I love you". There followed a flurry of seemingly random outbursts via social media. Tweets from @LoveInjections tended to read like fortune cookies. A YouTube clip entitled "Welcome to Our World" featured a businesswoman getting out of the office to smell the flowers in soft focus. It was all so saccharine that it generated a bit of a buzz. Finally Brusse and Co launched a series of art interventions in public space. Antwerp is their current canvas, home to 13 installations, including a constellation of traffic signs in the form of a heart. **ev**



Until 2 September | Across Antwerp | ► [www.zva.be](http://www.zva.be)

## MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

### Bruges

**Maarten Van Praet: Dood, Verderf en Koekjes me Melk (Death, Destruction and Milk and Cookies):** The Surrealist Flemish comic strip artist celebrates the publication of his first book with an exhibition in the basement of a Bruges tavern

Until AUG 27 at Comptoir des Arts, Vlamingstraat 53

► [www.koekjesmemelk.be](http://www.koekjesmemelk.be)

### Neerpelt

**Awakening Woods:** Temporary indoor installations plus the opening of new outdoor acquisitions in Flanders' only "sound forest"

Until AUG 26 at Dommelhof Theater, Toekomstlaan 5

► [www.musica.be](http://www.musica.be)

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

## Feeërieën

Wander through Brussels' Warande Park and be wowed by the magical atmosphere of Feeërieën. This free open-air music festival put together by Ancienne Belgique takes place in the same fairy-tale setting as previous editions, where colourful lamps dangle from the trees and a laid-back vibe reigns supreme.

This year's impressive line-up is set up around different genres. Opening night is all about classical music, but in the broadest sense: Dez Mona & Saga perform their version of baroque opera, while the German group Black To Comm mixes contemporary classical music with electronics. Speaking of electronica, two days of Feeërieën are dedicated to pumping beats, with none other than the Norwegian ambient pioneer Biosphere as headliner, plus Kangding Ray, Gang Colours and GH.

Love Like Birds and Brussels band Tommigun promise to make Thursday the most romantic night. But Cold Specks is indisputably the most anticipated gig of the festival, with Canadian singer-songwriter Al Spx (pictured) set to perform her unique combination of doom soul and southern American gospel. **Robyn Boyle**



27-31 August |

Warandepark, Brussels ▶ [www.feerieen.be](http://www.feerieen.be)

## MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

## Mechelen

**Maanrock:** Free open-air rock and pop festival on several stages featuring Geike, Intergalactic Lovers, Daan, The Scabs, De Mens and more

**AUG 25-26 across Mechelen**

▶ [www.maanrock.be](http://www.maanrock.be)

## Oudenaarde

**Feest in het park:** Outdoor rock festival featuring Goose, Kelis, Arsenal, The Dandy Warhols, Absynthe Minded and more

**AUG 23-26 at Donkvijver**

▶ [www.feestinhetpark.be](http://www.feestinhetpark.be)

## SPECIAL EVENT

## Summer Sunday

Thanks to a history of gravel mining, the little-known town of Kessenich in Limburg province boasts several small lakes known as the Maasplassen. These are now used for recreational purposes, which includes this weekend's a lazy Sunday brunch on a "beachfront" terrace. Come lounge in a chair with your feet in the sand and feast on a range of tasty regional products. And if I may offer a tip: do put on the wackiest hat you can find. There will be a contest for the most original hat, with prizes including a culinary evening for 10 provided by Luc Ignoul, chef at the local Restaurant Ambassade and a weekend stay at the Flemish coast. You'll also have the opportunity to enjoy boat trips, horse and buggy rides, entertainment for kids, folk games and more. **RB**



**26 August, 11.00-16.00 | Dorpsstraat 10, Kessenich (Kinrooi, Limburg province) |**

▶ [www.tinyurl.com/zomersezonlagen](http://www.tinyurl.com/zomersezonlagen)

## MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

## Heist-op-den-Berg

**Hestival 2012:** Free, family-friendly, open-air festival of Belgian pop, rock and dance music, featuring an appearance by Kapitein Winokio

**AUG 25 13.30 at Evenementenplein, Bergstraat**

▶ [www.hestival.be](http://www.hestival.be)

## Waregem

**De Kleinst Steeple:** Festival during the Waregemse Koerse horse races, featuring circus, entertainment, theatre, music and workshops for young and old, located in a leafy castle park

**AUG 25 13.30 at Park Baron Casier, Stationsstraat 34**

▶ [www.waregemkoersefeesten.be](http://www.waregemkoersefeesten.be)

## DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

## Zomerfabriek

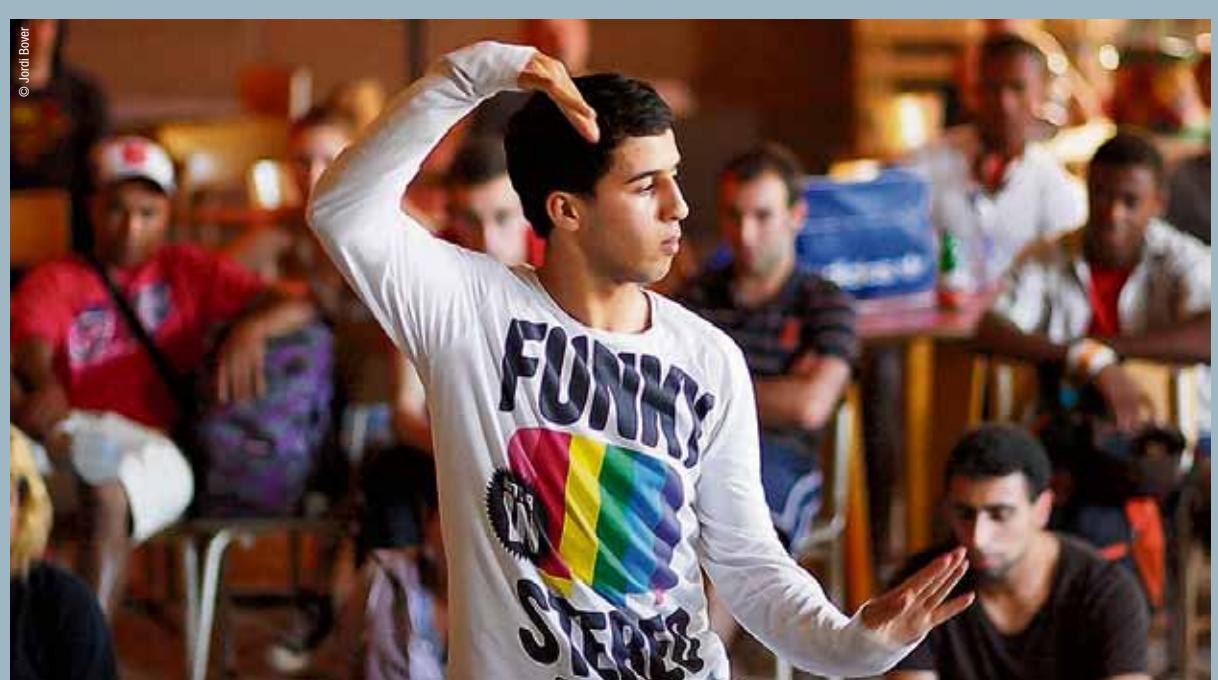
The month of September is rapidly approaching. Back to school, back to work and back to reality. Let's make the most of the last days of August! If you're in Antwerp, I highly recommend that you make your way to the old gas factory in the Zurenborg area for parties, open-air movies and much more at Zomerfabriek.

Zomerfabriek, or Summer Factory, is part of Zomer van Antwerpen and, until 2 September, hosts activities every single day from 15.00. There are the Crazy Movie Nights on Mondays, with films at 22.00. On Tuesdays, it's time to discover the best of the latest YouTube clips on the big screen. You can add your favourites to the selection via the event's Facebook page.

Night crawlers are especially spoilt for choice, with Global Bass Thursdays, Future Bass Fridays and Urban Saturdays. The music starts at 22.00 and continues until 3.00. Arrive early to play video games on the big screen for instance. All events at Zomerfabriek are free of charge. (Except the food and drinks, naturally.)

Since public transport does not run all night, the Zomerfabriek is home to the "Zero Star Hotel". A spot in a tent, a bed in a dorm or your own room – the earlier you check in, the more options you have. A night in the factory costs €18 and includes an organic breakfast in the morning. Or, as they say, "low cost, high value".

How does that sound for a last-minute summer plan?



## BITE

## Café de la Paix ★★★★

All I knew of the West Flemish town of Poperinge was what I learned from a label of local Hommelbier: that it's got a few nice-looking towers and is surrounded by hop fields. This romantic image is not far off the mark, in fact, which I find out as I enter the city via a narrow country road that winds its way through row after row of the climbing plants. Poperinge is indeed dotted with towers, from the ornate town hall to the gothic spire of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe church.

It's a balmy summer evening, and my dining companion and I are on the hunt for a terrace with good food, beer and people-watching potential. A local points us in the direction of Café de la Paix, conveniently located on the main square. We sit down and ogle the beer list that easily tops 100. He orders a Hommelbier (on draught), while I opt for another local brew: Poperings Nunnebier, with corresponding glass depicting a round laughing nun. One taste of this hoppy, bitter blonde nectar, and I know why she's so jolly. A chalkboard out front lists the day's suggestions, which include mussels, sole, eel and a regional dish called *hennepot*. We google it first to be sure what we're getting into, then order a portion, plus one order of grilled duck and a starter of beef carpaccio.

One taste of this hoppy, bitter blonde, and I know why that nun is so jolly

The thinly sliced raw beef is delicious with just a sprinkling of olive oil, sea salt and coarse black pepper, plus a bit of leafy lettuce, green olive, caper and cherry tomato salad. We're inspired to order two more beers: another Nunnebier and



a freshly tapped Sint-Bernardus Tripel from nearby Watou. The duck comes in a long strip, unfortunately missing its flavourful fat trimming, with a rosy centre and a meaty *jus*. Next to this are a few scoops of dry mashed potato speckled with black olives, soft and lovely sautéed chanterelle mushrooms and broccoli florets.

Across the table, the *hennepot* requires a few shakes of salt and pepper. This traditional dish, a Poperinge regional product, is a mixture of chicken, rabbit and veal inside a clear gelatine sauce. Served cold, it is a unique and refreshing warm-weather dish that tastes of lemon and chicken, but little else. It comes served with a tangy salad and below-average fries (supplement: €2.50) with homemade mayo. The dessert is the saving grace of this meal. *Mazarinetaart*, another local specialty, is named after an 1885 recipe by Cardinal Jules Mazarin. Light, airy sponge cake is drenched in a warm butter and cinnamon sauce until it reaches a doughy consistency. The result is sticky, sweet and perfect with a strong cup of coffee. Finally, we split a dessert-like St Bernardus Prior 8, a malty, rich, dark brew with a creamy head.

Our tab rings in at €75, which we find relatively high for a casual brasserie.

► [www.cafedelapaix.be](http://www.cafedelapaix.be)



Grote Markt 20, Poperinge; 057.33.95.78



Thurs-Mon, 10.00-midnight



Mains: €15-€25



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## TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

## The tipping point for the Red Devils?

One swallow does not make a summer, but football fans are hoping that Belgium's stunning 4-2 victory over the Netherlands last Wednesday marks the long-awaited turnaround for the Red Devils. For Flanders, which supplies two-thirds of the Belgian team and whose players claimed all four Belgian goals, this could mean a return to the big football tournaments after more than a decade in the doldrums. That's starting with the qualification for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, which begins next month.

The game at Brussels' King Boudewijn Stadium was only a friendly, but the Derby der Lage Landen, or Low Countries Derby, is laden with symbolism and represents the most competitive fixture of all for Belgium fans. The Oranje have mostly come out on top of their southern neighbours: The record, including last week's 125th meeting, shows Belgium winning 41 times, the Dutch 55, and the remaining 29 matches ending in a draw. At first, the game looked to be playing out to form. Genk's Christian Benteke gifted the hosts the lead before the break, but two quick-fire strikes helped the Dutch to a 2-1 lead. However, goals from Leuven-born substitute Dries Martens

and Chelsea's Brussels recruit Romelu Lukaku got the home crowd back on their feet. Tottenham's Jan Vertonghen then poured even more salt in Oranje's wounds in the 80th minute.

Much of the credit for the sparkling performance has to go to new Belgian coach Marc Wilmots, who succeeded the unlamented Georges Leekens in May and has injected a dose of single-mindedness and purpose into a side that seemed to be drifting into mediocrity.

But it is also down to the players themselves. This represents perhaps the most promising generation since the 1986 World Cup semi-finalists, with the likes of Vincent Kompany, Marouane Fellaini, Eden Hazard, Jan Vertonghen, Thomas Vermaelen and Moussa Dembele performing in the English Premier League, while others like Stefan Defour and Axel Witsel have attracted attention from Europe's top sides.

The challenge for Wilmots and the Red Devils is to turn this victory into sustained success. That means results in the next few days: The 2014 qualifiers begin against Wales on 7 September, and four days later against Croatia. With Serbia, Scotland and Macedonia also

in the group, qualification cannot be taken for granted. But the victory over the Dutch is a good sign.



A happy Christian Benteke (foreground) celebrates the win over the Netherlands with Nacer Chadli

## The last word...

## Bigger ambitions

"We had expected more Flemish medals. I'm thinking of equestrian, cycling, tennis, rowing, kayaking, mountain biking and swimming. In some cases, it was just bad luck. But bad luck is not a good enough explanation."

Flemish sports minister Philippe Muyters on the London Olympics, where one Flemish athlete earned a medal, in sailing

## Time served

"We want to show that there are still a lot of people who are not ready for Martin to be taken back into society." Paul Marchal, father of murder victim An, last weekend in Brussels, where 5,000 marched in protest at the early prison release of Marc Dutroux accomplice Michelle Martin

## I'm (not) your man

"That's very kind, but no thanks." Legendary singer Leonard Cohen, who played several sold-out shows in Ghent last week, politely turned down the offer of an honorary doctorate from the city's university

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

## Cover story

You've heard of rats helping in the discovery and disarming of land mines, but you might wonder how on earth they are trained to do that. We talk to the Antwerp branch of Apopo, the international organisation for detection rats technology.

## News

What would it take to get you to ride your bike through the steep Galibier pass in the French Alps? Find out which Flemish celebrities and politicians are accepting the challenge next month in the name of charity

## Science and Education

Wastewater treatment has always been a necessary burden to keep waterways from being poisoned and humans becoming sick. But one researcher at Ghent University is finding a lot more in sewage than meets the eye