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Move it or lose it

Antwerp physio gets sports stars and others back on their feet after injury

Leo Cendrowicz

Among Antwerp physio Lieven Maesschalck's clients are a host of high-profile athletes from around Europe. Though these days his contact book is full of household names, he tells *Flanders Today* how he focuses on the injury, and not the injured.

With his chaotic grey tresses, trendy spectacles and hippy bracelets, Lieven Maesschalck certainly offers an alternative to the classic image of the sombre physician. His manner is equally unconventional, with a machine-gun delivery of unconnected phrases and occasional sidetracking into almost dreamy language.

"You have just one tool, your body," he repeats. "The body is made to move. So you're just creating a way to do it. You help the body heal itself."

Maesschalck has become the go-to physiotherapist for Europe's top athletes seeking rehabilitation after injury. His Move To Cure clinic in the old Antwerp quays – brilliantly located in front of the MAS museum – has become a Mecca for footballers, runners, cyclists and others as they try to cut the time it takes to heal whatever breaks or aches they may have. "It is all about functional rehabilitation," Maesschalck says. "You treat people in a very functional way, in an active way. We try to rebuild the body using the body itself."

Maesschalck refuses to name his clients, but among the footballers he is known to have treated are Ukrainian Andriy Shevchenko, Cameroon's Samuel Eto'o, former AC Milan captain Massimo Ambrosini, Brazil and AC Milan's Kaká and West Ham and England centre-forward Andy Carroll. He knows almost all the therapists in England's Premiership, who regularly call him when they want to send an injured player over.

In addition, Maesschalck is firmly entrenched in the Belgian national team, and he talks enthusiastically about Red Devils coach Marc Wilmots, who convinced him to join the team set-up, which will of course include going to the World Cup in Brazil next summer. Other local clients include cyclists Jurgen Van den Broeck, Tom Boonen and Kevin De Weert, former cyclo-cross world champion Niels Albert and tennis star Yanina Wickmayer.

But Maesschalck is careful to distance himself from suggestions that he is just a celebrity healer, stressing that only a quarter of his clients are "top-level sportsmen". Although he accompanied the Belgian team to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, he no longer plays any formal role with the country's athletic hopefuls.

"It's not about who the person is, or what level they are, it's



© Filip Van Roo

UK gives football pitch to Ypres

Centenary pitch will open in time for 2014 Christmas Truce match

Alan Hope

England's Premier League plans to build a state-of-the-art football pitch in Ypres, West Flanders, as a donation to the centenary commemorations of the First World War, the British Foreign Office has announced. The league has signed a memorandum of understanding with the city of Ypres and with local football club KVK Westhoek to complete the pitch by next November. In December 2014, the pitch will be inaugurated with an International Christmas Truce tournament, marking the centenary of the many unofficial ceasefires that took place around Christmas 1914 between German and British soldiers. The



period is famous for the mingling of the two sides, who sang holiday songs, shared food and – most famously – played football in No Man's Land (*pictured*). The Premier

League already stages an annual Christmas Truce tournament in Ypres. At other times, the pitch will be available for school, youth and

community teams from England and Wales and to other sport and football clubs from across Europe. "This new 3G pitch represents a fantastic opportunity to continue the messages of peace and understanding associated with the original Christmas Truce match of 1914," said Ged Roddy, youth director of the Premier League. "It will also provide a high-quality football facility for young people, linking the history of what happened in Ypres to their education." "In the whole of our First World War centenary, the opening of this Premier League pitch will be one of our most high-profile events," said Ypres mayor Jan Durnez. "This is an

important development for the city because of the impact it will have on young people both today and tomorrow. It will be up to future generations to take on the spirit of peace and reconciliation that was at the heart of the Christmas Truce in 1914." The building of the pitch emphasises the positive relationship between KVK Westhoek and the Premier League, said club chair Willy Lemaire. "We thank them not only for this wonderful gift but also for their expertise in youth football and their continuing commitment to our community."

Flemish Traffic Science Foundation calls for lower speed limits

The speed limit on motorways should be reduced from 120 km/h to 90 km/h, with other roads outside built-up areas limited to 70, according to the Flemish Traffic Science Foundation (VSV). The VSV conducted a survey of organisations active in road safety and mobility at a conference organised at the request of Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits; 50 of the organisations polled were in favour of reducing speed limits. The 90km/h limit would apply to roads with at least two lanes in each direction and a central barrier. The proposal is one of 31 formulated from the positions expressed at the conference. Others include driving lessons imposed on those convicted of moving violations.

The VSV also recommends extending mandatory inspections to all motor vehicles, including all motorcycles and agricultural vehicles. It would also introduce spot-check technical inspections of vehicles on the streets. The conference and the resulting recommendations are meant to help realise Flanders' target of 200 or fewer road fatalities by 2020. "This is an important direction indicator to safer roads in Flanders," Crevits said. "The conference has shown that the will and the motivation of all partners to make additional efforts are there. Together we can make Flanders into a European model of road safety." **AH**

UGent helps astronauts survive in space

Researchers from the Food2Know centre at Ghent University (UGent) have started their search for ways to turn carbon dioxide, exhaled air and waste into food, water and oxygen during long space missions. The research is part of a European project called Micro-Ecological Life Support System Alternative, co-ordinated by the European Space Agency. The research encompasses all dimensions of the recycling process, from ultra-safe recuperation of food substances out of waste to the complex use of the substances to grow food in space. Plants can play an invaluable role during space missions: Not only can they transform carbon dioxide into oxygen, providing pure air to breathe, but they can also purify water. Without re-use of resources, it is estimated that a manned Mars mission would require 30 tons of supplies.

The research is also important for the future of Earth, since the rapid growth of population and urbanisation are causing growing demand for water and food. Supply is also threatened by global warming, reduced phosphor reserves and an energy-consuming nitrogen production. With the new knowledge, food can be grown in areas that are currently not suitable for this purpose. "Companies can use the new insights to develop, for example, more energy-efficient light systems to grow plants in greenhouses," says Professor Benedikt Sas of Food2Know. The Belgian Science Policy Office is an important partner of the project, promoting the implementation of space-based innovations on earth via the industry sectors.

Andy Furniere

Insurance industry promises fast pay-outs for A19 victims

Insurance claims from victims of the massive pile-up on the A19 between Kortrijk and Ypres on 3 December will be paid as quickly as possible, insurance industry federation Assuralia has promised. The accident – a chain of three separate crashes involving a total of 132 cars and lorries – took place near Zonnebeke in heavy mist that descended suddenly. Two people died and 12 were seriously injured, though no one currently remains in critical condition. Because of the exceptional nature of the accident, Assuralia said, insurers can pay out without waiting for a report on the causes of the accident or the individual responsibility of each driver – the subject of a judicial investigation. The pay-outs cover bodily injury to the insured person, as well as 50% of the material damage to the vehicle and 50% of the towing costs. All 132 vehicles involved are currently in the custody of the



© Julien Warrand/Legea/Corbis

Ypres prosecutor's office. Assuralia has asked owners to keep photographs, invoices and other relevant documents available for any claim to their own insurance company to help the process move as quickly as possible. The fast-track procedure involves some 30 insurance companies, including AG Insurance, Belfius Verzekeringen, Delta Lloyd Life and Ethias.

€1 million to restore facades on Brussels' Grote Markt

The Brussels-Capital Region has approved a subsidy of €1.1 million for the restoration of 10 of the most important facades of buildings on the Grote Markt. The grant is the latest stage of a campaign to clean up all the facades on the historic square, said Brussels minister-president Rudi Vervoort. The latest phase involves the houses numbered 1 to 7 along the north-eastern side of the square: the buildings known as Den Coninck van Spagnien (number 1); Den Cruywagen, once home of the guild of gardeners (2-3); Den Sack of the guild of carpenters (4); De

Wolf of the archers' guild (5); Den Horen of the shippers' guild (6) and De Vos, former home of the merchants' guild (7). The money also covers five houses (34-38) at the northern corner of the square near Boterstraat. The region has already carried out restoration work on the facades on the eastern part of the square between numbers 20 and 28, from Heuvelstraat to Haringstraat. Like during that phase, the scaffolding in the current phase will be covered with tarpaulins that depict the original facades of the buildings. The work is expected to take less than a year. **AH**

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

4.8%

more expensive to employ someone in Belgium than in France, the Netherlands and Germany, according to the federal government's Central Business Council. The gap should drop to 3.8% in two years

€70 million

saved by small businesses in a year by the switch to electronic meal vouchers, which involve less administration and less expense for employers, Unizo said

1,000,896

passengers for tour boats in Bruges this year, only the third time the one-million mark has been exceeded in the last decade. August was the best month with 178,000

€55

fine for anyone caught driving with an iced-up windscreen, Antwerp police warned on Twitter last week. Rear and side windows must also be clear, police said

10%

less pay in 2012 for the bosses of the largest listed companies than in 2007, according to research from Vlerick Business School. Smaller listed companies paid their CEO 31% more, however

WEEK IN BRIEF

Yvan Mayeur was sworn in last week as the **new mayor of Brussels-City**, taking over from Freddy Thielemans. Mayeur, formerly head of the social aid agency OCMW, was given the ceremonial keys to the city hall. In his inaugural address, he laid out his vision for the centre: the creation of two traffic-free squares at Beurs and De Brouckère. Plans were due to be announced this week for the makeover of the central artery linking North and South stations, first mooted under Thielemans and largely inspired by the popular Picnic the Streets movement.

Leuven is Flanders’ **most sustainable municipality**, according to an annual award given by Cofely Services, part of the GDF Suez group which offers advice on energy management to companies and public authorities. Leuven won for its plan for climate neutrality by 2030, described by the jury as “innovative and ambitious”, which calls on the public, government and private sector to work together on reducing energy consumption. Projects include making the city centre traffic-free, premiums for home insulation and installing 32,000 parking places for bicycles.

► www.duurzaamstegemeente.be

A group of 133 Brussels businesses are ready to help set up **the capital’s 4G mobile data network** by accepting a new mast on their buildings, it was announced. Brussels lags behind Flanders in making 4G available because of stricter radiation limits, which make it necessary to install new GSM masts to cover the capital. 4G offers mobile internet at up to 10 times normal speeds for those equipped with a suitable smartphone or tablet. The 133 volunteers were among 1,000 businesses approached by economy minister Céline Frémault.

A man sacked by his employer because his daughter was born with a serious handicap has **won his case before an employment tribunal** in Leuven. The man, who brought the

case with the support of the Centre for Equal Opportunities, was awarded damages of six months’ salary and an additional sum to be determined. He began to work for the fitness centre in 2003, and in 2010 his third child was born handicapped. When he told his employer, he was fired in what the centre called a case of “discrimination by association”.

Pilots for Brussels Airlines have issued a **pamphlet calling for more industrial action**, as talks to reach a solution to problems ran into difficulties. The pilots and management agreed a solution in principle in November, but problems arose in giving it definitive form. Now unions say management has stopped talking. “The ball is in the management’s court,” said one union representative. “The dialogue has completely dried up.”

A group of pig farmers have filed a legal complaint against the animal rights group Bite Back **after they released an undercover video** showing the treatment of pigs at locations in Antwerp province, East Flanders and West Flanders. The farmers claim the group trespassed on private property to make their film; Bite Back say the doors were open and no break-in was required. Bite Back have in turn reported the treatment of animals to the prosecutors in Bruges, Ghent and Turnhout.

Belfius bank has **withdrawn an advertising campaign for loans** intended to allow football fans to travel to Brazil for the 2014 World Cup. The loans were criticised for their 10.5% interest rate, described by consumer organisation Test-Aankoop as “ethically unacceptable”. “We realise the campaign may have shocked people,” a spokesperson for the state-owned bank said. “That is not at all what we intended.”

Supermarkets will close early on 24 and 31 December, *De Standaard*

reports. Colruyt stores will close at 18.00 instead of 20.00; Delhaize and Carrefour both close at 18.00 but will be open on Sundays 22 and 29 December. Local supermarkets in the AD Delhaize, Proxy Delhaize, Carrefour Market and Carrefour Express chains will vary in closing times, as they are run by independent franchise managers. Banks and post offices will close at 16.00.

Public transport authorities De Lijn (Flanders) and MIVB (Brussels) will, together with rail authority NMBS, offer **increased and cheaper services over the holiday period**. The MIVB (www.mivb.be) will increase bus and tram services during the two weekends as well as the first weekend in January. De Lijn (www.delijn.be) will increase capacity in Ghent and offer free travel in Bruges, Torhout and Roeselare. Hasselt will offer a shuttle service for shoppers linking the centre with outlying areas. And each weekend in December, as well as every day in the holiday period, the NMBS (www.nmbs.be) is offering cheaper train tickets.

The Brussels region has **issued 50 licences for electric taxis**, the first to operate in the capital, due to come on to the roads in spring. Electric taxis already operate in Utrecht, Amsterdam and London, as well as in Asia, but this is a first for Belgium, public works minister Brigitte Grouwels said. The taxis will be distinguishable from their less green counterparts by a logo.

The man accused of being the brains behind the robbery of a Swiss aircraft carrying diamonds at Brussels Airport in February has been **freed on bail of €20,000 by a Brussels court**. French-born Marc Bertoldi is one of eight suspects arrested in connection with the case; he was extradited from Metz in France to Belgium in July. His release was not contested by the Brussels prosecutor.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



© Koen Broos/VRT

Ruth Joos

It’s not often that the Face of Flanders column is able to note when a prominent Flemish personality has gained a face where there was none before, but this is such a time. Ruth Joos is a radio personality who has, as many people who have heard her would agree, attained a mastery of the craft of talk radio. Many have skill – the demands of talk radio are such that the individual needs to carry most of the burden, as there are few props to rely on. Very few have real talent: A British listener might think of Alistair Cooke, Mark Tully or Dr Anthony Clare. Joos is an example of Joni Mitchell’s words: You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone. Earlier this year she lost her spot on VRT Radio 1, where she had delivered consistently great performances on her interview show called simply *Joos*. She was born in 1976 in Dendermonde where she grew up with her brother Filip, three years older and himself a media personality as a sports presenter. She began her career with the VRT as a theatre reviewer for Klara, then moved to Studio Brussel, filling several roles there – including presenting sports programming – until 2007, when she returned to the VRT

and Radio 1, presenting first the cultural programme *Mezzo* and later her own interview show. Those interviews often made headlines of their own, not to mention personal testimony of people pulling over to the side of the road to hear her interview out without distraction. Despite the enormous esteem in which she was held, however, management deemed her a liability in their fight against falling listener figures and her show was for the chop. Widespread and vocal protest from some prominent names could not help. “My ambition is not to have the most listeners,” she told *De Morgen* at the weekend. “I want to present the best interviews.” But the end is still some way off: Last week it was announced that she would reappear in 2014 on Canvas, also a VRT property. “Canvas has given me the time and the space to think up a new programme,” she said. “What sort of programme, I don’t know. Maybe a culture programme, maybe not.”

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Secret Santa

Last week we took rather a tongue-in-cheek look at this year’s Sinterklaas news, but it should go without saying that Offside has the greatest of respect for the tradition. For who could fail to be charmed by the idea of a mysterious benefactor bestowing gifts from behind the cloak of anonymity on the sweet, apple-cheeked, expectant faces of the apartment dwellers of Koksijde as they wonder, what has he brought me this time? Allow us to explain. Over the course of several days, people in two blocks of flats, Residences Isaura and Adonis, in the coastal town awoke to find a €20 note shoved into their mailbox each day, a gift from they knew not whom. The beneficiaries of this largesse – more than €1,500 by the time the press got wind of it – proved



© Jessica Rossi/Wikimedia Commons

guilty of the crime gift-horse dental inspection, for as they explained, they feared the money might be counterfeit, or ill-gotten gains. They recalled the safe-robbers of Zedelgem, about 40km away, who threw a million euros into the street back in April. Some of that was gathered up by citizens who are still holding on to it: The people of Koksijde imagined the culprits might be trying to offload the guilt on them.

The truth turned out to be somewhat less exciting, but no less worthy of the pen of O Henry. The mystery money-man is a 39-year-old resident of the town who, police found out after they had caught him in the act of stuffing the mailboxes with banknotes, recently inherited a sizeable sum of money from his mother’s estate. He lives with his elderly father and decided, police said, that the pair had no need of extra money, so chose to give some away. The Adonis and Isaura blocks were selected because they have a lot of mailboxes which could be covered easily and quickly. His identity, obviously, has not been revealed. Offside, on behalf of *Flanders Today*, wishes all its readers a very happy Christmas, and best wishes for the New Year.

FLANDERS TODAY



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5TH COLUMN

Anja Otte

More liberal than the liberals

At its recent party congress, Open VLD seemed confident, rallying around the popular minister for migration and asylum, Maggie De Block. However, in the weeks that followed, clouds turned dark for party president Gwendolyn Rutten.

First Flemish MP Annick De Ridder left for N-VA. De Ridder had fallen out with her party some time ago. She became known when as a young woman she challenged then prime minister Guy Verhofstadt at a party congress on the issue of the migrant vote. Soon after, her political rise began... and stopped.

In the Flemish Parliament she never lived up to her party's high expectations. Eventually, she quit Antwerp city council to work for the logistics company Katoen Natie and its colourful boss, Fernand Huts, also a former liberal. Her political career seemed over until it was revived by N-VA, the party De Ridder's political friends such as Antwerp alderman Ludo Van Campenhout had joined before. Another liberal to join N-VA ranks was Lorin Parys. Like De Ridder, Parys had been an up-and-coming for Open VLD for some time. The young attorney got noticed as a spokesperson for Flemish economy minister Patricia Ceysens. He also headed Flanders DC, the organisation for business creativity he co-founded.

His political career was marred by his next job, with Uplace, the "lifestyle company" that wants to build a gigantic shopping experience centre in Machelen. The project has been controversial from the start and is especially unpopular in Parys' home town of Leuven. Because of this, Parys decided not to take part in the local elections, his political ambitions nipped in the bud.

Recruiting De Ridder and Parys, neither of them very popular, is a brilliant move for N-VA. Both are outspoken liberals, claiming to be disappointed by their former party's track record in the Di Rupo government. Both also have close ties to big business, giving N-VA more credibility there.

N-VA also welcomed Johan Van Overtveldt, editor-in-chief at the business weekly *Trends*. Van Overtveldt, an admirer of the monetarist Chicago School, no longer wants to be an observer, becoming a party activist instead.

With these newcomers, N-VA has managed to become almost more liberal than the liberals. It comes as no surprise, then, that in a recent poll more than 50% of entrepreneurs called N-VA their party of preference.

Memorial service for Mandela held in Brussels

Minister-president returns from Johannesburg service

Derek Blyth

Some 400 diplomats and politicians attended a memorial service for Nelson Mandela last week in Brussels' Sint-Michiels and Sint-Goedele Cathedral. Federal interior minister Joëlle Milquet spoke during the service, describing Mandela as "a wise and courageous man" who was able to achieve the impossible. "I would like to thank him for opening the way for us, so that we can continue with the struggle," she said.

The South African ambassador to Belgium, Mxolisi Nkosi, said that Belgium and South Africa had a strong relationship and that "South Africa can always count on Belgium to support positive developments in the country." In a tweet, he said: "We are heartened by the outpouring of sympathy and extraordinary messages of solidarity from Belgians."

Flanders' minister-president, Kris Peeters, meanwhile, returned from Johannesburg last



week, where he had attended a memorial service for Mandela, along with Wallonia's minister-president Rudy Demotte, prime minister Elio Di Rupo and King Filip.

Flanders has been developing close ties with South Africa since the collapse of Apartheid in the early 1990s. The region has sent aid to tackle

poverty and built up contacts with South African companies and universities, as well as developing cultural ties.

"With the death of Nelson Mandela, humanity has lost one of its greatest leaders," Peeters said in a statement. "Courage, idealism, leadership, forgiveness and equality formed the backbone of everything he said and did. He reminded us that every one of us has a duty to leave the world a better place than we found it. Mandela showed that one man can change the world and that a single idea can be more powerful than 1,000 armies."

Peeters travelled to South Africa in 2011, where he met Desmond Tutu and visited Robben Island, where Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years. "South Africa is a combination of history, hope and endurance," he tweeted earlier in the week.

Flanders and Netherlands launch joint strategy for integration

Flanders has signed an agreement with the Netherlands to co-operate on a series of integration policies aimed at foreigners settling in the regions. The agreement was signed last week by Flemish integration minister Geert Bourgeois and Dutch social affairs minister Lodewijk Asscher.

The two ministers want to share experiences on

different strategies and introduce new arrivals from abroad to the values and norms of the Low Countries, as well as the common language. The ministries will also exchange statistics on integration, said Bourgeois.

The region also wants to work with the Netherlands on a common strategy to deal with the "negative

impact" caused by the rising number of East European migrants. They hope to work more closely with other countries in the Benelux to tackle crime. Flanders and the Netherlands have developed their own integration strategies in recent years, but many newcomers in the Low Countries remain poorly integrated, according to Bourgeois. **DB**

Smet launches campaign against gay taboo in football

Flemish equal opportunities minister Pascal Smet has launched a campaign with the Royal Belgian Football Association to eliminate anti-gay attitudes in football. The motto of the campaign is: "Holebi of hetero, maak er geen spel van", or "Gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual – don't make a game of it".

"Football is a sport for young and old in Belgium, regardless of origin, skin colour, religion or sexual orientation," Smet said. "We have players, clubs, referees and also supporters now on board to take concrete measures to further the social acceptance of homosexuality." The campaign has also adopted

the catchphrase "The Only Gay In Football", giving the name to a new Facebook page featuring Robbie Rogers, 26, the only openly gay footballer in the US. Rogers came out earlier in 2013, also saying he was giving up football, but he changed his mind after fans showed overwhelming support.

Smet, who is himself gay, is taking advantage of social media to spread the message. Along with the Facebook page, supporters are encouraged to use the Twitter hashtag #onlygayinfootball. Other partners in the campaign include the Pro League and the Football Federation of Flanders. **DB**

► www.maakergeenspelvan.be

Peeters meets Botswana foreign affairs minister

Flanders and Botswana are to work more closely together in the fields of diamonds, agriculture and tourism, it was agreed last week at a meeting between Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and Botswana's foreign affairs minister, Phandu Skelemani. Peeters took part in a mission to southern Africa in April this year, which included Botswana, where he met president Ian Khama and government ministers. Botswana is the world's largest producer of raw diamonds, while Antwerp is the largest trading centre. Trade between Flanders and Botswana grew by 35% in 2012, thanks largely



to the rising trade in gems. Agriculture is also an important export area for Flanders, and one where the region has a great deal of know-how to offer. Botswana would like to make its agriculture more intensive and more diverse, both areas in which Flanders can offer years of expertise. **Alan Hope**

Two more years of roadworks to fix motorway network

Flanders' transport minister, Hilde Crevits, told the Flemish parliament last week that it would take two more years of roadworks to deal with major problems on Flemish motorways. In her annual report, Crevits said that almost 60% of motorways were now classified as "normal" or "excellent", compared to 55.7% in 2011. She added that the figure for motorways in need of repair work was almost unchanged at just under 12%, despite damage caused by the severe winter weather last year.

Crevits said the road authority had inherited a backlog of motorway repairs, but that the situation was improving every year. However, she told MPs that it would take two more years of work before all the problems had been eliminated, with urgent work needed on the E34 between



Antwerp and Turnhout, the E40 around Ghent and the E403 near Bruges.

Crevits said that once the motorways were fixed, funds would be available to improve regional roads. A recent survey in West Flanders found that fewer than 16% of regional routes were satisfactory and that almost a quarter were in a dangerous state that required immediate action. **DB**

Simplified planning permit will cut red tape

The planning procedure could be simplified in Flanders so companies will in future only have to submit one application to get a project approved. Environment minister Joke Schauvliege and planning minister Philippe Muyters have agreed to introduce a new simplified *omgevingsvergunning*, or environmental permit.

This would replace the existing system in which companies have to apply separately for an environmental impact permit and an urban planning permit. The new procedure would

be more efficient, while continuing to protect the environment and the public from damage, the ministers said.

The government also plans to introduce a step in the planning process to allow a company to submit a proposal before the formal planning process has been launched. The company would get advice on the likelihood of the project being approved, which would help in streamlining a successful planning application. The government hopes to launch the procedures by early 2015. **DB**

Move it or lose it

Functional movements allied with technology are key to rehabilitation

► continued from page 1

about what we can do with them,” he says. “It’s about the injury and the recovery. I do everything in the body, from the feet to the neck. Shoulders are the most common injuries. Some 80% of lower back pain can be avoided by movement, by workouts. Even with a hernia, you can deal with the pain through movement. And science can measure it.”

The 49-year-old might look scatty – his trainers and tracksuit bottoms seem at odds with his sophisticated wool jumper – but he is sharp and energetic as he shows off his clinic. The main space is a gym floor where clients of all shapes, sizes and ages practise exercises aimed at rebuilding muscle and regaining balance. These involve free weights, machines, elastics and balance balls, and most of the clients seem to work one-on-one with members of Maesschalck’s 15-strong staff.

The walls are decorated with inspirational quotes: Sources include Nietzsche, sports stars, Japanese proverbs and Maesschalck himself. In a corner, there is a space to film clients doing specific movements, to better understand the dynamics of the injury and identify the strengths and weaknesses in their bodies. “You could have a weakness in the hip that gives you a lower back problem, or in the foot that gives you a shoulder problem,” Maesschalck explains.

So how did he earn his reputation? “It grew organically, by word of mouth,” he says. “It’s not about marketing. It’s step by step. In the beginning, it wasn’t even about sports injuries – it was just about treating people with orthopaedic problems. I started with only orthopaedic problems, which includes the muscles and the



© Filip Van Roe

His second practice, in Antwerp, began in a small room in a fitness centre in Berchem before moving portside. Maesschalck sold the Lebbeke practice six months ago, though it is still mentioned on his Move To Cure website.

The sporting connection grew gradually. An athlete comes in, he says, “and you treat him, and he goes back at the highest level. In the end, you create a certain expertise. And you’re getting better over time, getting better scientifically, with new technologies. You create a system, step-by-step, by trial and error – this one works, and that one doesn’t.”

Maesschalck’s unique selling point is his insight that rehabilitation can begin far sooner than previously thought. “You can start it almost right after the injury,” he says. “Before, they would say rest, rest, rest after surgery. Twenty years ago, you would be put in a cast. Now, after three days you can run. Twenty years ago it was all about deep massage, manipulation and ultrasounds. When you ruptured a muscle, it was four weeks before rehabilitation. I start on day three. I start them walking backwards, dealing with the calves.”

The idea, he says, is that while the bone, muscle, tendon or ligament might be damaged, everything around it is still working well and needs to maintain – or better, surpass – its previous strength to support the recovering body part.

“First of all, you have the lesion, of course. But you also have everything around it, so you have to be ready when the lesion is cured. So indirectly, you can help speed up the recovery. And that way, you can also

help prevent future injuries,” he says. “It’s all about adapting. The secret is that there is no secret. There are people with a fast recovery, others with a slow recovery.”

Maesschalck has attracted scepticism from the trade, some of whom say he isn’t doing anything radically different from what other physios offer but is simply trading on his reputation. And Maesschalck accepts that many of his principles are obvious. “The body is incredible.

“*It’s not about who the person is, or what level they are, it’s about what we can do with them*”

The body will continue to move – it is the reason we limp, but you can’t stay limping all the time,” he says. “And if you don’t have a spontaneous recovery, then you have a problem. That is the whole principle. The dynamic system of recovery is the healing response. The body is made to recover – we have an immune system and healing processes. The question is how you influence it.”

Technology helps too, Maesschalck says. Scanners can identify the scope of the injury better, and surgery is less invasive than before. And there is a better understanding of how different muscles interact. “We have to look at issues like compensation among the muscles that could, in time, create injuries. With rehab, you have to prevent what went wrong, so you can directly take it out,” he says. His clinic is only part of the recovery process, and Maesschalck says he always gives “homework” to clients after their sessions. Their time at the clinic can last from a few days to six months. And he insists on different training regimens, including what he calls the pre-warm-ups for footballers, before they even get into their warm-ups.

Maesschalck keeps himself fit with running – he managed 4h10min in the New York marathon, on just two runs a week – and cycling. “I never get injured,” he laughs. “But I do get hip pain when I run too much.”

He is planning to open a London practice shortly but insists his ambitions are more about service than size. “I want to grow in quality,” he says. “I want to ensure that my clients are happy. If your business gets too big, you can’t do your job properly. It takes a lot of investment and time. I see myself as an innovator, giving ideas to people to develop their skills and talents. I always want to inspire people.”

► www.movetocure.com



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Among the athletes known to have been treated by Maesschalck are Andy Carroll, Yanina Wickmayer and Samuel Eto'o

WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Autos ▶ D'ieteren

The Brussels-based car distribution group, the country's exclusive importer of Volkswagen, Seat and Audi, is to take over the Antwerp Beerens dealership.

Banking ▶ Dexia

The ailing Belgo-French financial institution has sold its ADTS data processing and services affiliate to IBM and signed a seven-year €1.3 billion subcontracting agreement with the company.

Banking ▶ Van Lanschot

The Dutch private banking group is launching online banking service Evi on the Belgian market in an attempt to capture some of the €247 billion deposited in savings accounts.

Biotech ▶ Covagen

Flanders' government investment fund is investing €6.8 million in the Swiss Covagen biotechnology company, which specialises in the development of medicines against cancer and inflammatory diseases.

Carpets ▶ Balta

Britain's investment fund Doughty Hanson is said to be considering the sale of its West Flanders Balta carpet activities, one of the largest in the country. Doughty Hanson acquired Balta in 2004 for €600 million.

Grain ▶ Natural Granen

The world-leading pigeon food and grain producer, based in Schoten, Antwerp province, and with sales of €23 million annually, has been sold to the Aveve affiliate of Flanders agricultural group Boerenbond. The move is expected to help the company further expand its activities in Asia and the Middle East.

Mail ▶ Bpost

The CVC private equity fund has sold its remaining 19.7% stake in Bpost, the country's post office. The €580 million move follows the June IPO of Bpost which had already netted CVC €860 million for a 30% stake floated on the Brussels stock market. CVC had become a 49.9% shareholder of Bpost in 2006.

Steel wire ▶ Bekaert

The Zwevegem-based steel wire producer is opening a unit in Costa Rica to acquire the steel wire activities of Arcelor Mittal in the country. The move will significantly strengthen Bekaert's position in Latin America to supply the building, agriculture and industrial sectors.

Belgacom aims to make network more secure

Cyber Defense Unit will detect and counter cyber crime

Alan Hope

The board of telecommunications giant Belgacom has approved a plan of action to better protect its IT and telecoms systems, following the recent revelation that the company's networks had been hacked by a foreign intelligence service, probably the UK's GCHQ.

"Cyber security has always been a major priority for Belgacom, not only within the company but also for our customers," said chief technology officer Geert Standaert. "It's that focus on protection that allowed us to discover the break-in to our IT systems in September and to take care of it."

The company will now set up a Cyber Defense Unit whose only task will be to detect and counter cyber incidents. IT platforms and networks will also be better protected. The multi-year plan involves an initial investment for 2014 of €15 million,



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Belgacom said.

"No individual company can guarantee zero risks as far as cyber-crime is concerned," said former justice minister Stefaan De Clerck, now chairman of the Belgacom

board. "Especially not in cases of state espionage."

Meanwhile, Belgacom has stepped down as the main sponsor of the Memorial Van Damme, the country's main athletics tournament.

Belgacom said in a statement that the company intended to concentrate more on sponsorship of cycling and football. The news comes as a further blow to the Memorial, following the news that the new national stadium planned for Heizel will not include athletics facilities, forcing the Memorial to continue using the King Baudouin stadium until it is demolished in 2020.

"Thanks to the hype surrounding the Red Devils, everyone now wants to jump on the bandwagon, which makes it difficult for other sports," Memorial organiser Wilfried Meert said. The Memorial is in talks with three possible new head sponsors. Belgacom will continue to support the Memorial, but for a smaller amount. No details of sums of money or of other potential sponsors were made public.

Electrawinds seeks protection from creditors

Green energy provider Electrawinds of Ostend has filed for protection from its creditors, the company announced last week. The filing concerns both the Ostend-based holding company and the Luxembourg-based holding company, which is listed on the stock market.

Electrawinds is in talks to strengthen its capital base and find new investors, and the filing aims to allow those negotiations to go ahead without the pressure of demands from creditors of the company's €362 million debt. Earlier in December, €40 million in bank debt fell due, and another €77 million was repayable on 15 December.

The company last week also announced a loss of €59.4 million for the first nine months of the year – almost three times as much as the same period last year. Income was also up, however, by 14% to €93.2 million.



Unions at the troubled company complained about the lack of information. "It's about time the staff at Electrawinds were told what is going on," said socialist union representative Jan Van Wijngaerden. "This soap opera has gone on long enough ... Everything we find out comes from the press."

Electrawinds operates an offshore wind farm as well as biomass plants at home and abroad, employing a total of 235 people, 135 of them in Belgium. Last Friday saw a new effort – the fourth – to rescue the company, launched by the Ghent business consultancy Verbaere, De Clercq & Partners. AH

Fortis ordered to repay client for risky investments

BNP Paribas Fortis bank has been ordered by a court in Kortrijk to repay €375,000 to a client after he lost the money making risky investments on the bank's advice.

The West Flemish business owner sold his business in 2004 and turned to the bank for a consultation on how best to invest the money gained by the sale. Despite stressing his desire for a safe haven for the capital, the court heard, the man later discovered he had suffered heavy losses from risky investments advised by his bankers. "A great deal of money vanished like snow under the sun," said the client's lawyer, Geert Lenssens. The bank

refused a settlement and the issue came before the court.

The court ruled that Fortis had behaved illegally and ordered the repayment of the full amount involved. At a later sitting in January, the court will specify the exact sums of capital, interest and expenses to be paid. "Fortis gave its client insufficient information," the court said, while stressing that the case did not set a precedent.

The ruling, said Lenssens, is encouraging for all investors dealing with banks and financial advisers. "The law cannot be strong enough when it comes to protecting savers and investors without experience." AH

Beer Project mixes beer with chocolate

The Brussels Beer Project to create to create atypical beers has assembled a budget of more than €50,000 in six months via crowdfunding. The initiators, two entrepreneurs in the capital, will launch two beers in January – one of them with a chocolate taste. The next step is to found a micro-brewery.

Since young *Brusselaars* Olivier de Brauwere and Sébastien Morvan set up the project this summer, about 370 people have pledged financial support. The two brewers create prototypes of new beers and let the public decide which should be developed and brought to market. Their first beer, called Delta, was selected during 10 tastings in Brussels and brewed at Brewery Anders in Halen, Limburg province. In January, the entrepreneurs will introduce their two new creations, one of which will be the dark version



© Courtesy Brussels Beer Project

of the current Delta beer. The second, developed with a Canadian brewery, is a special dark beer with a typical local ingredient: chocolate. Initially, 500 bottles of the chocolate beer will be produced.

The two are now searching for a convenient location in the city for a micro-brewery – preferably in the centre or canal area. The site should be at least 500 square metres and will house an open brewery, where visitors can walk in and out freely.

Andy Furniere

▶ www.beerproject.be

Change at the top of Ford Genk

Filip Verbeeck, currently chief executive of Ford Genk, has been promoted to head of new models for parent company Ford Europe, unions were told last week. He will be replaced by Vic Daenen, who will run the car factory for the last year of its life before it closes at the end of 2014. Verbeeck's new job puts him in charge of the introduction of new models, including those that were originally promised to his Genk factory, back when the future of the Limburg plant seemed assured. Instead, the company changed its

plans and Ford Genk learned that its days were numbered.

Daenen was previously assistant plant manager. A mathematician by training, he has been with Ford since 1990, including a stint as quality control manager in Cologne. Another new face arrives at the head of the Ford sales organisation in Belgium, in the form of Laurent Charpentier, formerly operations director of Ford France. He replaces Paul Flanagan, who moves to become managing director of Ford France. AH

Where there's a will

i-Cleantech Flanders shows the way to speed up eco-friendly transport

Andy Furniere

At a seminar last week hosted by i-Cleantech Flanders, the umbrella organisation for the Flemish cleantech sector, experts from both the public and private sectors presented their plans for the transport of the future. The event, called Weg van de Toekomst, or Way of the Future, took place at the Belgian Road Research Centre in Zaventem.

But in fact, the Weg van de Toekomst already existed. It is the name of a prestigious project that transformed the N329, which connects the Dutch city of Oss with nearby industrial areas, the port and the rail infrastructure. When the road could no longer cope with the amount of traffic, local authorities decided to turn it into an experiment for carbon-neutral and socially innovative transport.

About five years ago, the project team started to assemble ideas for the new motorway, which led to a roadmap designed with residents, businesses, knowledge centres and artists. This brainstorming process has resulted in an energy-neutral road that includes innovative projects with imaginative names.

The Flowman system puts lit signs at the side of the road that show drivers the ideal speed to get through traffic without having to brake. Outside peak hours, cargo vehicles benefit from longer green-light periods, which the developers named the Magic Green method. PleasantPass uses riddles – a question at one end, and the answer at the other – and light panels to make cyclists feel better about riding through the dark



Brussels architect Luc Schuiten's click-car at an exhibition in Lyon

tunnels.

The energy for the innovations is generated by solar panels at the roadside, some of them placed on tree-like installations.

The Dutch example provides much

distribution of cargo to city centres. Schepers emphasised the importance of promoting the economic profit for merchants. "The growing popularity of e-commerce, will only make our services more valuable," he said.

“By putting platforms at, say, supermarkets, people don't lose time while charging their cars

inspiration for Flanders, but that doesn't mean there is a shortage of activity in the region. CityDepot CEO Marc Schepers announced his company's plans to expand from its base in Hasselt to Bruges and Ghent in 2014. CityDepot is a logistics service centre that develops efficient and green solutions for the

CEO Gunter De Pooter of VitaeMobility, specialised in sustainable mobility innovations, presented his scheme for the charging of electric cars. "By putting platforms at, say, supermarkets, people don't lose time while charging their cars," he explained.

Roger Kesteloot, director-general of

Flemish transport authority De Lijn, showcased public transport projects that operate partially or fully on electricity and hydrogen. He also explained that De Lijn is looking to start a project in West Flanders to use biogas in the *belbussen*. A *belbus* only runs when a passenger books it in advance.

Kesteloot also referred to visionary architect and designer Luc Schuiten's Vegetal City project. The Brussels-based Schuiten has developed futuristic concepts, like "click cars" and "tractainers". A click car is a small, fully automatic car that is guided by a system that interacts with other vehicles nearby. They would be powered and programmed to drive in convoys, so that they make more efficient use of the city space and consume less energy.

The tractainer is a similar concept for freight transport, consisting of modular units so that the vehicles can always be adapted to requirements. "It sounds more utopian than it is," said Kesteloot. "Such ideas about automated driving and modular units are creative interpretations of realistic blueprints for the future."

Stefaan Van Thielen, general director of Continental Automotive Benelux in Mechelen, confirmed that revolutionary automated driving systems are being developed. According to him, cars could be fully automated by 2025, so that drivers can just read their newspaper in the car without having to watch the road. "Much will depend, however, on the will of policymakers to adjust traffic legislation," he said.

► www.i-cleantechvlaanderen.be

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Universities expect 100 spin-offs

Belgian universities estimate that about 100 of their current research projects and departments will lead to spin-off start-up companies over the next five years. The figures come from a survey by law firm NautaDutilh, which questioned the country's six Dutch-speaking and four French-speaking universities. The most ambitious are Leuven and Ghent. KU Leuven, already responsible for such world-class private concerns as Thrombogenics and imec, hopes for about 40 spin-offs in the next year, while UGent sees about 35 possibilities. Each expects one or more spin-offs in the course of next year, leading to about 30 technical and scientific start-ups in 2014. Eight universities confirm that a new ICT company is in the pipeline for next year, and the biotech, diagnostics and medical devices sectors are also popular.

€1.5m EU grant for VUB scientist

The European Research Council has awarded Flemish scientist Nathalie Vermeulen a starting grant of €1.48 million for her research on ultra-compact lasers made from carbon-based materials. Vermeulen works at B-Phot, the photonics team of the Free University of Brussels (VUB), which specialises in light technology. She is working to improve the energy efficiency of lasers on a chip that emit a wide variety of colours, making them fit for large-scale applications. The light sources could be used for biomedical purposes, such as making sure diabetes patients no longer have to take a blood sample to check their sugar levels.

VUB professor leads Cern experiment

Jorgen D'Hondt, a physics professor at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), has been chosen as the new chair of the CMS experiment at Cern, the European laboratory for high-energy physics in Switzerland. The CMS experiment led to the discovery of the Higgs particle, for which Belgian scientist François Englert and his colleague Peter Higgs recently received the Nobel Prize for Physics. The non-profit World Economic Forum chose D'Hondt as its Young Scientist 2013, one of the 40 best scientists under the age of 40. For the next two-and-a-half years, he will lead the CMS board of directors, which unites 183 institutions from 43 countries and has about 4,300 members. AF

All Flemish daily newspapers available in audio format for visually impaired

With a little help from Flemish newspaper distributors, press database Gopress and the government of Flanders, the non-profit Kamelego has begun offering all Flanders' daily newspapers in an audio format. Until now, only *De Standaard* and *Het Nieuwsblad* were available as the *Audiokrant* (audio newspaper). Now, *De Morgen*, *De Tijd*, *Gazet van Antwerpen*, *Het Belang van Limburg* and *Het Laatste Nieuws* have also joined the initiative.

Kamelego president Jan Engelen is pleased with the growing list of partner publications. "This has been a long and cherished dream of our organisation and our readers," he says. Originally founded in 1990 as the non-profit Braillekrant, the organisation began printing selected news articles from *De Standaard* and *Het Nieuwsblad* in braille two years later.

Costly and time-consuming to produce, these

braille publications have today been replaced by high-tech software that assembles press data from different sources and makes the entire content of a newspaper available in audio format overnight.

At the launch event at Muntpunt in Brussels last week, Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege said that an audio newspaper is not just a dream but a fundamental right. "In Flanders, we believe that every individual has the same right to information, to develop critical opinions and to engage in societal conversations," she said. "Now, with all Flemish newspapers joining Kamelego's efforts, the door to this world of information has been opened to the visually impaired."

There are more than 100,000 visually impaired people (blind, partially blind or dyslexic) in Flanders. Michel Claeson, who is

completely blind and was at the launch of the paper, says the audio newspapers are an important development. "Before, we had no access to the written news," he says. "Now we can listen to entire newspapers."

While many devices support Kamelego's *Audiokrant* software, Claeson's personal favourite is the Plectalk, a pocket-sized device with a wi-fi streaming connection. "It is the easiest to use. Its voice-activated buttons help me navigate articles, and news content can also be sorted according to my preferences."

Most importantly, Plectalk can be used on the move. Claeson can now listen to his newspaper like any other commuter on the morning train to work. "Especially when compared to surrounding countries where no such services are available, I think we can say that the Flemish government is making major strides for the visually impaired," he says.

These strides are set to continue in 2014. "We hope to add Flemish weeklies within the year," Schauvliege says. Smartphone and tablet applications will also eventually be released.

A yearly subscription to the *Audiokrant* with all seven Flemish papers costs €240 and is delivered every morning through a CD-ROM, email or via the organisation's website. Those not ready or able to purchase a subscription can head to Muntpunt, which is offering the audio newspaper free of charge – the first public institution to do so. Kelly Hendricks

► www.anderslezen.be





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Combatting online bullying

Researchers are developing software to automatically flag cyber-bullying

Andy Furniere

Hoping to develop software to alert web moderators to abusive online comments, three Flemish universities have partnered up to combat online bullying.

According to a recent study by the University of Antwerp, one in 10 Flemish teenagers has been the victim of cyberbullying. In the study, called Developmental Issues in Cyber-bullying amongst Adolescents (Dica), one in 10 teens admitted to having cyberbullied someone else, while 35% said they had witnessed online bullying.

The Dica study polled 2,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 16 from the fifth year of primary school to the fourth year of secondary school.

The ambitious project Automatic Monitoring for Cyberspace Applications (AMiCA) wants to do something about those numbers. By developing software that automatically flags hurtful comments, the scientists hope to take action against the online abuse that has become a familiar reality for many children and teenagers in Flanders.

AMiCA brings together a dozen researchers from the universities of Ghent (UGent), Antwerp and Leuven and has received a €2 million grant from the Agency for Innovation in Science and Technology (IWT).

A few weeks ago, the AMiCA research team called on people to send in hurtful or abusive messages from various online sources like chats, Facebook, Twitter and the question-



and-answer social networking site Ask.fm. "We need this data to design software that automatically detects possible cyberbullying messages or images," says Veronique Hoste, language technology expert at UGent.

"This worrying trend is gaining force everywhere, as youngsters spend more and more time online"

The researchers hope to put together a list of frequently used insults and threats but also more complex language strategies and constructions. The slang Flemish teens use on social media is often a mixture of Dutch and English words,

which makes it even more difficult to analyse.

In addition to recognising these kinds of posts, the software should eventually also pick up suicidal or sexually transgressive online behaviour. The flagged messages won't be automatically deleted, and users won't notice anything different. The website moderators, however, will receive alerts about a potentially abusive online conversation. The comments would be sorted according to three labels – potential online bullying, suicidal or sexually transgressive.

But the end users would retain control since it would be impossible to make the software programme entirely foolproof. "The filter could, for example, interpret ironic comments as harsh insults," Hoste explains. If they require assistance, the moderators can contact organisations like the Centre for the Prevention of Suicide.

The AMiCA researchers hope to establish partnerships with technology companies like Facebook and Twitter to develop the software tool. The researchers are already

collaborating with software giant Microsoft, the Federal Computer Crime Unit, sexual health centre Sensoa, youth rights organisation De Ambrassade and the Privacy Commission.

The software programme could prove a useful application for many organisations. Children's channel Ketnet could, for instance, use the AMiCA tool to monitor the comments children post on their website.

AMiCA researchers are also hoping to set up an international project funded by the European Commission and are in talks with organisations in Sweden, Spain, Italy, Germany and several Eastern European countries. Because, Hoste says, online bullying extends beyond the borders of the region. "This worrying trend is of course gaining force everywhere where youngsters spend more and more time online."

The increase in cyber-bullying has also drawn the attention of the local, regional and federal administrations. The Belgian government recently launched the "Stop cyberhate!" campaign. Set up with the federal police, the campaign will use video clips and a smartphone application, developed by the Brussels ISFSC university college, to raise awareness about online bullying.

RE: Pest, a recent initiative of the government of Flanders, uses a video game to raise awareness among children and teenagers. The educational kit also offers tools for teachers and information for parents.

► www.amicaproject.be

Limburg school attempts to break HIV taboo

When an HIV-positive toddler enrolled at the Limburg school De Horizon, both teachers and parents were worried. To provide answers to their questions and to avoid stigmatising the child, school administrators decided to launch an awareness-raising project.

De Horizon principal Marc Broeders remembers being puzzled when the mother of the child explained the situation to him at the beginning of the 2012 school year. The mother gave him permission to take the matter up with the school board and teaching staff. The school administrators' concerns primarily revolved around ensuring the safety of the other children, "in a case where the child would, for example, have a little wound," he explains.

"Parents ordered their children to avoid contact with the HIV positive child"

The doctors who were treating the HIV-positive child – a three-year-old adopted from Tanzania – reassured the school staff; the risk of transmission was minimal since the virus was hardly detectable in the blood and completely under control. Still, administrators of the school in Zonhoven decided to enforce strict hygiene rules, and teachers were required to wear gloves when treating any child's

wounds or staunching any kind of bleeding.

Although the school didn't inform other parents in order to maintain the child's privacy, word about the situation eventually got around town. "Understandably, many parents were distressed," says Broeders.

With the approval of the mother of the HIV-positive child, De Horizon organised an info meeting for parents to calm the waters. During the session, Leuven University Hospital expert Jaan Toelen explained that playing with the child posed no danger to the other children whatsoever.

Still, according to Broeders, some children said they no longer wanted to play with the child in the subsequent weeks. "Their parents had ordered them to avoid contact," he says.

De Horizon administrators also found inspiration in a children's book by Dutch writer Hiltje Vink, who also adopted a daughter with HIV: *Brenda Has a Dragon in Her Blood*, which has been translated into English. The little girl Brenda is in good shape when the dragon (symbolising the HIV virus) sleeps, but gets sick when the dragon wakes up. Luckily, medicine (and warriors) can keep the dragon asleep. In the hope of sparking a broad debate about HIV, the entire primary school embarked on a project, creating their own picture book based on Vink's story. Two professional illustrators helped the students with the drawings. In May, the school presented the fruits of their labour at the Zonhoven cultural centre, and the book has since been distributed to several other schools. The school is also looking for a publisher to reach a larger network of schools.



Implementation of the project was financially supported by the Flemish cultural subsidies project dynamo3, the educational programme Kleur Bekennen (Showing Your True Colours) and Stichting Lezen (Reading Foundation).

With Positief op school (Positive at School), sexual health centre Sensoa also offers a roadmap for schools with questions about best practices in integrating HIV-positive children. **AF**

► www.seksuelevorming.be

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Weekend boarding schools closed

The Flemish government is closing the community education network's four emergency boarding schools. These schools currently provide overnight accommodation to about 250 children who stay at a regular boarding school during school weeks and do not have a home to go to for weekends and holidays. Last year, there were complaints of sexual abuse at the emergency boarding school of Leopoldsborg in Limburg province. In De Haan, the school's aged infrastructure was the subject of controversy. Because of these cases, the Flemish welfare ministry took over responsibility for the schools from the education ministry. Welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen has invested €500,000 in new solutions such as placing children in permanent foster care.

2 in 5 eat less healthily during exams

Forty percent of Flemish students eat more unhealthily during exam periods, while 23% insist on a healthier diet, according to a survey by the Christian Mutuality (CM) of 1,650 university and college students. During exams, many students prefer to buy ready meals and unhealthy snacks, "while a healthy diet would give them more energy and have a positive effect on study performances", said the CM in a press statement. The survey also examined students' eating habits throughout the year. Only one in five (19%) eat fruit every day and only half (49%) eat vegetables on a daily basis. The CM has launched the campaign Kok op Kot (Chef in Student Room) with an app, cookbook and Facebook page to help students eat healthily all year.

New UAB president elected

The former president of the Flemish socialist party (SPA) Caroline Gennez has been elected president of the University Association Brussels (UAB). Gennez says she will remain politically active and keep her seat in the federal House of Representatives. Launched a decade ago, the UAB joins the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and the Erasmus University College Brussel, which together have about 180 areas of study. Gennez has contributed to the development of a future mission for the organisation over the last few months and succeeds scientist Bart De Schutter. **AF**

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIESWintersfeer in
Zilvermeer

The "Silver Lake" in Mol (Antwerp province) is the setting for an evening of outdoor wonders and entertainment. Walk along the 2.5km route – lit by candles, lanterns and fire pits – encountering circus acts, live bands, puppeteers and fire dancers along the way. Enjoy award-winning barbecue and finish the evening with a fireworks show. *20 December, 18.30-23.00, Provinciaal Recreatiedomein Zilvermeer, Zilvermeerlaan, Mol, free*

► www.wintersfeerzilvermeer.be

Dickens Days

The weekend before Christmas, Bilzen will be transformed into a 19th-century English town from the novels of Charles Dickens. Men in frock coats and top hats, women in Victorian finery, street performers and Christmas carollers stroll the streets, while merchants proffer seasonal treats to delight the senses. *21 December, 14.00-20.00, 22 December, 13.00-18.00, Bilzen centre, free*

► www.bilzen.be/dickensdagen-0

Winter Nights
at Bokrijk

Limburg province's open-air museum is closed for the winter but opens every year for five nights between Christmas and New Year's Eve. The theme this year is "Winter Carnival", with old-fashioned rides and attractions, circus acts and a fire show. Many of the historic buildings will be open and costumed interpreters add historic ambiance. *26-30 December, 16.00-21.00, €4-€6*

► www.bokrijk.be

Brussels Ice Magic

The International Festival of Ice Sculptures comes to Belgium, with 420 tonnes of ice transformed into characters and scenes from comic strips. Be sure to dress warmly, and don't forget to slide down the ice slide and have a drink at the ice bar! *20 December-9 February, from 11.00 (closing times vary), €11-€15*

► www.brusselsicemagic.be

Christmas Walk
in Tongeren

For the third year in a row, the Begijnhof Museum in Tongeren will host a unique holiday walking tour through the historic centre of Tongeren. Along the way, hear traditional and modern Christmas stories accented with live music. The walk ends at the museum with mulled wine, pea soup, stories and song. *21-23, 26 & 27 December, 19.30, €5-€10, registration required*

► www.begijnhofmuseumtongeren.be

Philanthropy House opens

Building in Brussels will house European Foundation Centre

Alan Hope

The European Foundation Centre (EFC) has opened Philanthropy House in the centre of Brussels to provide a one-stop shop for connecting with foundations across Europe. The building houses the EFC as well as the European Venture Philanthropy Association and provides a "home from home", says the centre, for the network of European philanthropy associations.

"I think Philanthropy House is a very exciting moment. The vision has become reality," says Gerry Salole, chief executive of the EFC. "We now have a context in which the collective story of philanthropy can be told. This is a moment when European philanthropic players are working together to strengthen the sector and to tell its story in a completely new and unique way. This is a sector that's slightly invisible, and we need to make it more visible."

The house is supported by six major European foundations: the Körber-Stiftung from Germany, Fritt Ord Foundation from Norway, Realdania from Denmark, Stichting Fonds 1818 and the Van Leer Group Foundation from the Netherlands and the King Baudouin Foundation in Belgium. It is open to member foundations of the EFC, which was set up in 1989 and represents more than 200 philanthropic organisations active in Europe and elsewhere.



EFC staff in Brussels provide monitoring and lobbying for members on European affairs that could have an effect on their charitable activities.

The house will welcome delegations from the EFC's member organisations that come to Brussels to meet with EU officials, explains events officer Andrea Salvadori. "We've always offered them logistical support, but now we can offer them state-of-the-art meeting rooms, as well as our expert knowledge. Philanthropy House will be the place where our members can welcome their own guests in a familiar environment."

The house also includes an exhibition space where member organisations can show their work to partners in Brussels as well as to their peer organisations within the foundation world.

Philanthropy House, in a stately building on Koningsstraat close to the federal and Flemish parliaments, will also be open to the public for organised visits. "There's great value in having a space open to the public," says Triona Keaveney of EFC. "In speaking with teachers from European and international schools here in Brussels, we know that they're very excited about bringing their students over to learn more about philanthropy."

► www.philanthropyhouse.eu

Niyona gets "Handmade in Belgium" label

Last spring, Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed and small businesses in Flanders, launched the Handmade in Belgium (HIB) labels, awarding one designer in every Flemish province a label. Last week, leather goods maker Niyona became the first business in Brussels to receive the label, which designates quality local craftsmanship.

Niyona was founded in 2010 by Nina Bodenhorst and Jonathan Wieme. They recently opened their shop, Hello James, on Lakensestraat in the city centre, where they sell a mix of their own bags, wallets and accessories as well as a limited selection of travel-related items by other designers. From a large hole in the wooden floor you can see

Bodenhorst's workshop. Everything is hand-made on the premises, in limited quantities.

Unizo created the HIB label as a quality label for manufacturers, ensuring that what customers buy is hand-made using traditional methods. The first five HIB labels went to bicycle manufacturer Achielle (Pittem, West Flanders), bespoke tailor Aravinda Rodenburg from Ghent, bags and accessory label Deville from Rotselaar (Flemish Brabant), Rondou butcher's from Leuven and Atelier Schrauwen, woodworkers from Loenhout (Antwerp province). Niyona received their plaque symbolising the label last week from Unizo's managing director, Karel Van Eetvelt. **Katrien Lindemans**

► www.tinyurl.com/unizohandmade



Alan Hope

BITE

In praise of local ingredients

Stefaan Couttenye is described as a pioneer in the use of beer in the kitchen, and he's happy to accept the honour. It doesn't hurt, of course, that he comes from Poperinge, the centre of the Flemish hop-growing industry. In the district of Watou, where his restaurant 't Hommelhof is situated, there are fewer than 2,000 inhabitants but two breweries – Sint-Bernardus, which makes the eponymous ales, and Van Eecke, which makes Hommelbier and Kapittel.

Couttenye (pictured) is a member of the select circle of the Order of the 33 Masterchefs, a group of chefs-owners who swear by running your own kitchen and working as far as possible with local ingredients. He's just produced a new book that is a sort of hymn of praise to those local ingredients: *Biergastronomie uit de Westhoek* (Beer Gastronomy from the Westhoek).



© Rob Mitchell / stillation.com

Apart from hop shoots – the delicacy that makes headlines every year when some restaurant or other buys the first harvest for about €1,000 a kilo to present it to the queen –

there's nothing particular to the Westhoek, says Couttenye.

The Westhoek refers to the part of West Flanders around Ypres, Diksmuide, Poperinge and Veurne. "It's a small area," he explains. "When they talk about regional products in France, they're talking about a region the size of Belgium. What's typical here is the hop shoots, and that's it. But we have very good pork, *witloof*, lamb, we have some mushroom farmers and North Sea fish, of course."

The book, his second, has two goals: to shine a light on the excellent products available in the Westhoek and to continue Couttenye's crusade for beer in the kitchen and beer on the dining table – a battle now joined by his son Simon, the restaurant's sommelier, who provided the pairings for the book.

It's more than a recipe book, with each chapter dedicated to a regional

product – the list includes pigeon, North Sea fish, lamb, "forgotten" vegetables produced by a local sheltered collective, local cheeses, game and of course the inevitable hop shoots and beers from the town's two breweries. The producers share the limelight, and the recipes are practical but also inspiring on the matter of using beer in the kitchen.

"Preparing food with beer has been around for a long time," says Couttenye. "Our grandparents did it, but it wasn't as common in restaurants. When I started about 30 years ago, I was one of the first, and the first I think in the whole world who served beer at the table. That was just not done in those days."

Biergastronomie uit de Westhoek is available in Dutch and will be published in English in April

► www.hommelhof.be

Fun and fire in Flanders

'Tis the season to be jolly – and we've got a few ideas to make sure you are

Wintervuur is a biennial nomadic festival that takes places in a different district of Antwerp each time. This year it's the turn of Ekeren, where the area surrounding the old Veltwijck Castle will be turned into a winter village. With its combination of circus, theatre, music and long wintry walks, you'll definitely find something to brighten up these cold, dark days.

Inspired by travelling carnivals and traditional circuses, the organisation tries to lure us to different parts of the city to get acquainted with new places and hidden gems, while offering a mix of nostalgic and innovative entertainment. Local and international productions alternate, offering a wide variety of premieres and old favourites. This year you can choose from 30 shows, of which 20 are free.

After years of touring, Compagnie Circ'ombelico is back in Flanders for the final showing of *DA/FORT*, an acrobatic production in a converted lorry. Then there's Gabriele and Giancarlo, the inseparable clowns of Circo Ripopolo who decide to part ways after 20 years, resulting in an unscripted encounter in an improvised setting. Or if you like your acts a little edgier, try



Extremités by Cirque Inxtremiste, a show that will surely have you on the edge of your seat.

If theatre is more your cup of tea, enjoy the premiere of *Café Bohème* by Walpurgis and Tutti Fratelli, in

an abandoned industrial lot that has been turned into a cafe filled with artists, philosophers and drunks.

Take part in the action as the story unfolds around you. Or you can enjoy dinner and a show with *Bye Bye Gillo*, a production by Moussem and 't Arsenaal Mechelen about a man who organises a party for his last night in Belgium before being deported.

And for those of you who can't help but peek inside someone's windows as you walk past on the sidewalk, there's *Gluren* by Lieke Benders, a walk through the houses of five locals, each with its own tale to tell. But let's not forget about the music: There are concerts every afternoon and evening in the mirror palace as well as a huge New Year's Eve party. There are also guided walks through Ekeren's Oude Landen and homemade food. And no edition of Wintervuur would be complete without Crazy Cinématographe, a mix of old black-and-white slapstick films, with live piano music in an old-fashioned movie theatre.

The opening of the festival on 28 December promises to be a true fire spectacle. So put on your scarves and gloves and indulge in some winter whimsy. **Rebecca Benoot**

28 December to 4 January
Veltwijck castle, Ekeren (Antwerp)

► www.wintervuur.be/ekeren

A medieval Christmas

Bruges' Historium has been delighting families since it opened last year. The multisensory attraction takes visitors back in time to the middle ages, when today's tourist Mecca was yesterday's commercial and financial hub. The museum's holiday programme shows us what Christmas was like in those days, too.

Kids will enjoy the daily crafts

workshops and medieval holiday games, while the whole family will marvel at the daily live demonstrations by falconers, fire-eaters and acrobats. Finally, local historian Jo Berten will give a special 23 December presentation on the historical roots of the Flemish Christmas tradition. You'll be surprised to learn that more customs were imported from



Scandinavia than from Palestine.

All this takes place in the Historium's holiday village, a fully dressed, open-air courtyard, complete with nativity scene, pine trees and a cosy fire. Upstairs (and indoors) is the museum's Duvelorium Grand Beer Café, where you can enjoy a Flemish brew and an impressive panorama of Bruges' market square and belfry just out front.

Best of all, these holiday events are totally free. There's even a special discount on the main, multimedia attraction on 21 December. **Georgio Valentino**

21 December to 5 January
Markt 1, Bruges

► www.historium.be

When too much is not enough

Christmas, of course, lends itself to this kind of easy-going, family-oriented fun, but New Year's Eve is another animal. This is the night of epic parties, and none comes close to rivalling Brussels' Bal Royale in just-too-muchery.

Hosted in the capital's most

sumptuous *ancien-régime* ballroom, Bal Royale promotes everyone to the decadent aristocracy – at least for a night. (Revolution might sweep us all away tomorrow.)

The sybaritic grandeur is, of course, meant ironically. Basically this is a chance for the average Joe and Jane

to dress up in their finest powdered wig and play the debauched libertine to the hilt. The night's entertainment doesn't come from the age of Louis XIV but rather that of another, more recent King: Elvis Presley. Ghent's retro-flavoured talent agency Radio Modern presents its star performers

Black Elvis, King B and burlesque dancers Emilienne de La Levrette and Peggy Lee Cooper.

There are also games, drinks (of course) and DJs aplenty, spinning swing and rock'n'roll records all through the night and into the following year. For those who really

want the royal treatment, dinner-and-hotel packages are available through the Bal's corporate partners. **GV**

31 December, from 23.00
Concert Noble, Brussels

► www.bal-royale.be

Holiday aan zee

Spending Christmas or New Year at the Flemish coast has its special charms. One of them is: You won't find any of those pesky bans on fireworks – in fact, authorities seem to almost encourage them. And you'll find a few Christmas tree burnings towards the end of December and into January, where residents gleefully pile up their beloved trees on the sands and set them alight – creating massive bonfires.

That's the thing about a beach – everyone is pretty casual about explosives and open flames. This



is perhaps nowhere so evident as in the tiny town of Oostduinkerke, huddled between Nieuwpoort and Koksijde, which hosts a

Sylvestervuur, or a Christmas tree bonfire, this year on 30 December. There is also glühwein and smoked herring on hand for modest prices. But before all that is a parade of children carrying lit torches – even very small children. I try to keep my hair and flammable clothing out of their way as I let the bonfire warm me up.

You'll find me in Oostduinkerke every New Year's eve, in fact, gazing out at the never-ending shower of fireworks from inside a cosy seafront apartment. Everywhere along the coast you'll hear the

boom and crack of fireworks for about eight solid hours the night of 31 December and into the wee morning of the first day of the year. But it's Knokke-Heist that might just be the best resort to rent a room in this year, particularly if you have children. The most northerly of Flemish coastal resorts has launched something new this year: Flamboyant. And is it ever.

Boldly proclaiming that it will "set the city on fire", the coast's appreciation of pyrotechnics is front and centre at this family performance festival featuring fire

performers from across the country. They take over all the city's squares with their brightly lit antics, which all include lighting something on fire – swinging balls, bicycles, parts of the square – and one that builds an eight-metre metal construction, sporting giant fireballs and "fire acrobats".

Just watch your hair and down jacket. **Lisa Bradshaw**

Until 5 January
Across Knokke-Heist

► www.flamboyantkh.be



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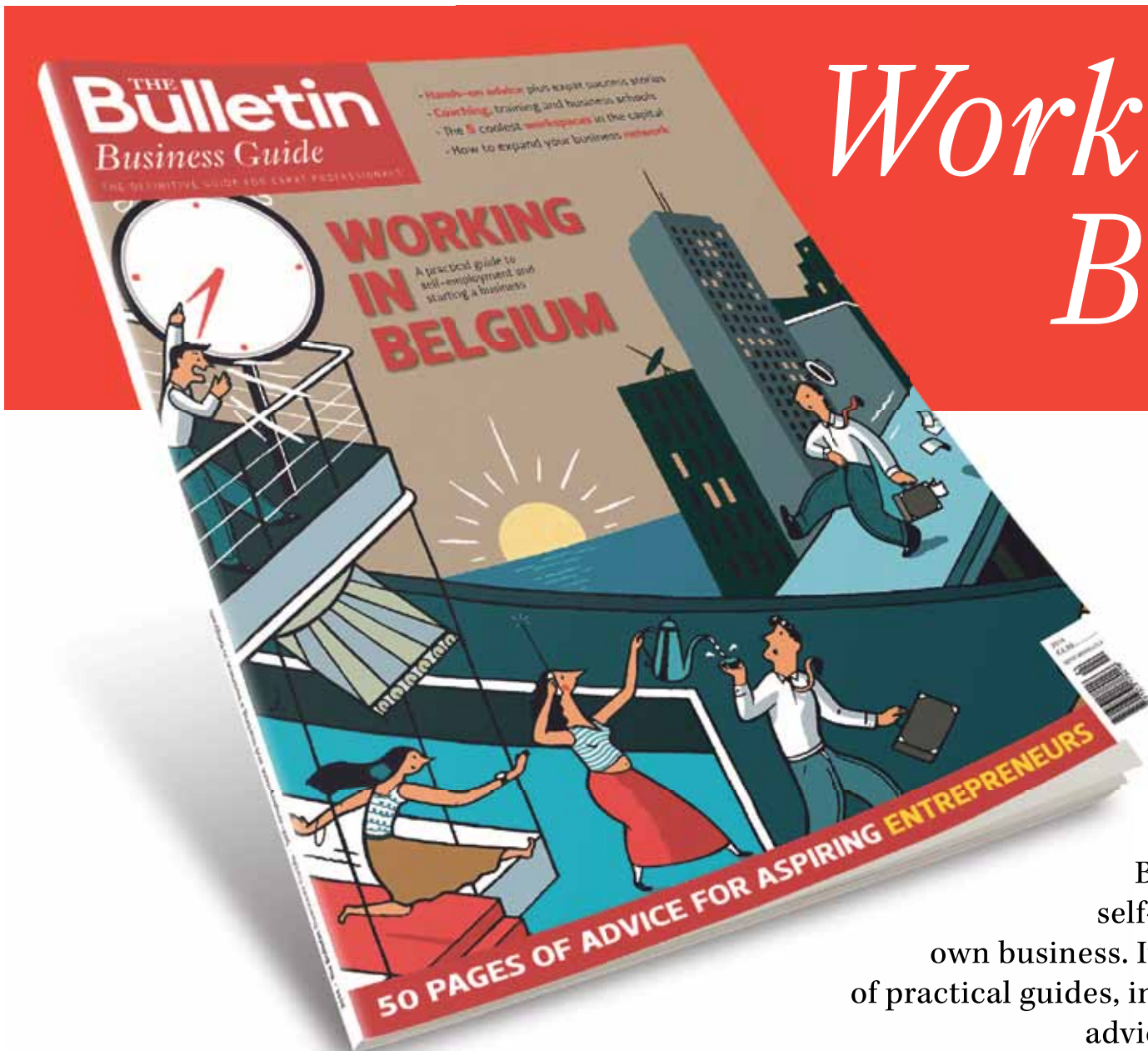


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Fighting talk

Monologue has harrowing stories to tell about everyday people caught up in war

Daan Bauwens

Actor Valentijn Dhaenens immersed himself in war texts in preparation for a solo performance that zooms in on the daily life of ordinary people during conflict. He describes the show as “a necessary sequel” to *Bigmouth*, his tribute to rhetoric through the ages.

Many of us know him best as Gunther Strobbe, the grown-up version of the child of a deplorable alcoholic family in the 2009 film *De helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*). But actor Valentijn Dhaenens spends much more of his time on stage than on a set.

The 37-year-old's stage career started in 2000 when he graduated from the Antwerp Conservatory. With four fellow graduates, he founded the collective SkaGeN.

Since *The Misfortunates*, Dhaenens has toured Europe with the self-written, self-directed monologue *DegrotomonD* (*Bigmouth*). For the past four years, his performance has wowed audiences in Flanders, Helsinki, London, Edinburgh and elsewhere. The monologue, a clever tribute to more than two millennia of oration, from Socrates to Caesar to Osama bin Laden, demonstrates that the dynamics of rhetoric will never change.

A “brilliant” piece according to Britain's *The Guardian*, *Bigmouth* was selected for both the Dutch and Flemish versions of Het Theatrefestival after its premiere in 2009. Last year, it featured at Ostend's Theater aan zee, and New York and Sydney are on next year's list.

Between shows, Dhaenens wrote and directed his second monologue. *DeKleineOorlog* (*Smallwar*) premiered last month in Leuven and has a radically different outlook to its predecessor. Once again all alone on stage, Dhaenens now tells the tragic fate of those who fell victim to the powerful speeches of so-called great leaders quoted in the first monologue.

“This is the necessary sequel,” says Dhaenens. “More than 80% of the

speeches in *Bigmouth* are directly or indirectly linked to events that led to war. Nevertheless, they're speeches with wonderful words, where heroism is emphasised. Leaders try to convince the masses to revolt or to go to war, then they praise the ones who have died and pretend to be grieving with their families.”

He felt obliged, he says, “to show the other side. There are millions of people who suffered the consequences of what was being said in those speeches. Those stories needed to be told.”

“The First World War was, without question, the most useless and meaningless of all wars

Smallwar is not to be mistaken for a staging of Louis Paul Boon's 1947 book *My Little War*, though its concept is quite similar. Much like Boon's legendary chronicles about the Second World War, *Smallwar* zooms in on the daily life of ordinary people during wartime. Dhaenens' story is set in a field hospital during the First World War, where doctors, nurses, wounded soldiers and mothers speak out about what they see happening.

“I read one speech a day for a year as preparation for *Bigmouth*,” he says, “just to fathom the mysteries of the power of words. For this one, I did the same. I read books on war and nothing else, for one year.” The final text, he says, hovers between fiction and non-fiction. “It's a composition of existing fragments and things I've written myself, based on diaries and personal letters – documents that give more personal impressions of what was happening.”

The choice of the First World War



© Inge Lauwers

themselves blocked at the same place, but now with almost all of their men dead. They must have known they would probably never get out of there alive.”

At the end of his research, Dhaenens came to the following conclusion: “Meaninglessness and uselessness, death and destruction on an enormous scale; these are the characteristics of war.”

While deciphering the mentality of war, Dhaenens stumbled upon elements he hadn't expected to find. “We tend to think that ‘progress’ truly exists,” he says. “We are convinced that, as humans, we are becoming more civilised. Notwithstanding all that is going wrong, the world is a better place now than it used to be. But this is only true in some ways: We get older, and technology advances. There it stops. For everything else, history goes in circles. As humans, we are not getting any better. That is what war shows us.”

Zooming in on the question of why war keeps on happening, Dhaenens' piece turns the coin one more time. “The common man is not just the victim of great leaders,” he explains. “In this piece, I needed to address the question of where the culture of war really originates from. Why is there still no definitive solution? It was a mystery to me at first, but then I found an answer. Man wants to go to war; it is a human craving. Man needs war; it is a part of us. We cannot escape war, ever.”

The English version of Smallwar premieres at the Drum Theatre Plymouth in July and will be shown at the Edinburgh International Festival in August. The Dutch version in February at deSingel is nearly sold out, but the show will tour Flanders next year

as a backdrop was a logical decision as it coincides nicely with the 1914 commemorations. It's hardly surprising that the English version of the piece will be shown mid-2014 at London's Imperial War Museum. But, according to Dhaenens, there is a lot more to it. “The First World War was the mother of all modern wars,” he explains. “It was the first time that killing had been industrialised. Modern warfare took shape back then and has barely changed since. But after months of reading, I also started to think of this war as a symbolical war. It was, without question, the most useless and meaningless of all wars; its cause

was preposterous. The world just really felt like fighting, so it did, with spectacular marches and proud armies.”

But the reality, he continues, “proved to be quite different. Young soldiers found themselves trapped in trenches for months, trying to conquer the next trench, just 20 metres away. When they had succeeded, maybe a week later, they had to retreat again to find

6-7 February

deSingel, Antwerp

Desguinlei 25
▶ www.skagen.be

MORE PERFORMANCE THIS WEEK

An Ideal Husband

NTGent/Nationale Toneel

“You just have to be rich. It doesn't matter how much it costs.” Back in 1895, Oscar Wilde's play (pictured right) about the hypocrisy of public morality was a slap in the face for English society. In 2011, Nobel Laureate Elfriede Jelinek transformed it into a modern parable about contemporary economic morals – which are no less despicable. To quote Wilde again: “No man is rich enough to buy back his past.” 18-21 December, NTGent, Ghent

▶ www.ntgent.be

Uitgesteld!

Liesa Van der Aa

Liesa Van der Aa, previously busy with television, theatre and opera, now creates new songs on stage. Equipped with a voice, a violin, loop-stations and effects pedals, she is the only member of the smallest orchestra on earth. 21 December, Beursschouwburg, Brussels

▶ www.beursschouwburg.be

Van den Vos

FC Bergman and Toneelhuis

Reynard the Fox is the pinnacle of Middle-Dutch literature. In this 13th-century epic poem of 3,469 lines, the anthropomorphic

red fox plays tricks on all the other animals of the kingdom. FC Bergman, with Josse de Pauw, Liesa Van der Aa and the German ensemble Kaleidoskop, have created an



© Kurt Van der Elst

opera about immortality and the one who will always do as he pleases. 18-21 December, Bourlaschouwburg, Antwerpen

▶ www.toneelhuis.be

Discografie

Marc Vanrunxt, Arco Renz and Rob Fordeyn

Two choreographers create a solo for one dancer. Classical ballet is invited into a world of glitter and glamour. Vanrunxt and Renz, though from different backgrounds and generations, share a fascination for stillness and mystery, a sustained radicalism in dance aimed at achieving poignant beauty. 20 December, Kaaithheater, Brussels

▶ www.kaaitheater.be

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTUREBJO nominated for
two Grammys

The Brussels Jazz Orchestra (BJO) have been nominated for two Grammy Awards for their latest CD, *Wild Beauty*. The orchestra were nominated for Best Instrumental Arrangement and Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album. The music on the album was written by famed American saxophonist Joe Lovano; the eight pieces are something of a showcase of his years of work, drawing inspiration from his Italian roots. Lovano has worked with BJO before, as well as other Belgian jazz ensembles. This year is the 20th anniversary of the BJO, the largest professional jazz outfit in the country. Their next concert is on 22 January in Antwerp's deSingel. The Grammy Awards take place in Los Angeles on 26 January.

► www.brusselsjazzorchestra.com

Broken Circle
Breakdown wins
EU's LUX Prize

The Broken Circle Breakdown by Flemish director Felix Van Groeningen has won the European Parliament's LUX Prize. Three films were nominated and screened for the 766 members of the Parliament: The others were Italian drama *Miele* and the British film *The Selfish Giant*. Van Groeningen said winning the award was "an unbelievable honour" and meant that all MEPs had seen his film. The award comes with additional promotion and a version for those with hearing and vision difficulties. Members of the public can still vote for the LUX Public Mention online and enter for the chance to win a trip to the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in the Czech Republic next summer, where the public prize will be announced.

► www.luxprize.eu

Ballet student to
Grand Prix final

Mikiya Kakehashi, a student of the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp, has won the European semi-finals of the Youth America Grand Prix, a prestigious international competition for dancers in training. He will go to New York in April to take part in the final. The 14-year-old came to Antwerp from Japan six months ago to study at the school after impressing artistic director Michael Shannon during an audition. "The instructors here are very good," he said, "and I also find Antwerp a fun city to live in."

Lisa Bradshaw

► www.koninklijke-balletschool-antwerpen.be

Books as windows

Benjamin Moser takes Bozar stage to lead its popular English book club

Gorik de Henau

Bozar's Book Club is heading into its third season with a proven track record of getting Brussels' readers excited about the monthly sessions. The 80 seats available for the discussion between the audience and the moderator are often fully booked, so if you'd like to sit in on the next English version in January, buy the book and make your reservation now.

Book clubs have become something of a fad over the last few years, but it could be argued that they have helped make reading sexy again. And that's no small feat in an age of electronic gizmos and ever-decreasing attention spans.

The club switches between English, Dutch and French, and on 21 January, American author Benjamin Moser takes the stage to lead the discussion on Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet*.

In addition to being a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books* and *Harper's Magazine*, Moser is the author of *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* and a translator to English of multiple languages, including Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch. He has translated the works of authors such as Elie Wiesel, Bernard-Henri Lévy and Bernardo Carvalho. He is currently working on the authorised biography of Susan Sontag.

For the past 14 years, Moser has lived in Utrecht in the Netherlands, where he earned his PhD from the local university. He also speaks perfect Dutch, which he says is not that small a language "on a European level. For example, more people speak Dutch than all the Scandinavian languages combined." Still, he notes, it doesn't have the power of numbers that English and French do. Which is why he's so struck by the number of good Dutch-language writers. One he mentions



Author and translator Benjamin Moser moderates Bozar's English book club

is Flemish author Dimitri Verhulst of *De helaasheid der dingen* fame, three of whose novels have been translated into English.

But getting to that level of literary production requires help, he says. The government "has to pay for it. And if the language and culture are important to them, they will. You can't keep cutting the subsidies for writers and culture in general as they've been doing in the Netherlands. Culture is expensive, but would you like to live without it?"

For Moser, the power of literature and the benefits of collective reading experiences, like those of a book club, can't be underestimated.

"If you read good books, they will automatically widen your horizon," he says. "A good book club can introduce you to writers – and even languages and cultures – that you would not have otherwise known. Presumably, if you took any three good books, they would offer you perspectives into other people's lives."

Moser spoke with Bozar literature programmer Tom Van de Voorde at length about the selection of books to be discussed this season. "What was clear was that we wanted a mix of contemporary and classic authors and a mix of English-speaking writers and translations," he says, "in order to try to represent the people

that we hope will come."

Under Moser's stewardship, the book club will next month tackle *The Book of Disquiet*, Pessoa's posthumously published book. You might wonder what the appeal is of a book by a writer who didn't even try to have it published during his lifetime. But Moser finds it remarkable. "If you had to choose one book to name the best book ever published, this would be a serious candidate. I read it in Lisbon when I was studying Portuguese. When you go to a country as a cultural tourist, you tend to buy the two or three famous books that you're embarrassed you haven't read yet."

So he bought *The Book of Disquiet* out of duty, read it and fell in love with it. "It's about how one man survives, about his doubts and his fears. It tells how he gets through his working day, over and over again, without any sort of glamour or hope for fame or money or love, or any of the things that motivate people. It's a book about how to live. I still keep it by my bed. You can just pick it up wherever and read a few paragraphs."

In April, the English section of Bozar's Book Club will discuss *The Flamethrowers* by Rachel Kushner. She's an up-and-coming American writer who isn't very well-known in Europe, but, according to Moser, that will soon change. "It's only her second book, but it's coming out in Dutch and French in the spring. She's had rave reviews in the English-speaking world," he says.

Kushner's book, says Moser, offers a contemporary take on the late 1970s, "a romantic period that many people might remember". The novel takes place in different American settings, but also in Italy at the age of the Red Brigade terrorists. "So European readers can certainly relate to it."

► www.bozar.be

Arne Quinze designs world's largest
interactive art installation for Tomorrowland

The provincial recreational domain De Schorre, best-known for hosting the international dance festival Tomorrowland, will unveil a new bridge designed by Flemish visual artist Arne Quinze next year. The bridge's design was inspired by the "Nike of Samothrace", a 2000 BC marble statue with stretched wings that symbolises the victory of freedom.

Quinze's public installation in Boom, Antwerp province, is meant to serve as a "bridge" between nature, music, the local environment and the world. It won't include wings. Instead, Quinze will use glass windows in the steel construction, as a reference to the stained glass in Flanders' cathedrals. All of this fits in nicely with the "natural chaos" concept the

artist has been developing recently, as seen at his *Chaos in Motion* exhibition currently on show in Antwerp.

Unlike "The Sequence", his public work in Brussels – the monumental canopy sculpture near the Flemish parliament and the already-demolished "City Scape", the new "One World" installation is in Schorre to stay.

And everyone is invited to take part in its construction. Quinze always aims to provoke interaction with his large-scale sculptures – art in conversation with society, as it were. With space for 210,000 messages, visitors can leave a personal note on wooden slats that will be used in the construction of the bridge. A personalised slat can be ordered

through the project's website for €10. This is Quinze's idea of crowdfunding, which makes sense if you look at the scope of the project: The bridge will be 537 metres long, use 160 tonnes of wood and 750 tonnes of steel and cost a total of €8.7 million. Boom mayor Jeroen Baert says he's proud to figure on the same list as Brussels, Rouen, Beirut and Shanghai – other cities where Quinze's installations have made an impact on their surroundings. "Making art accessible for everyone is a smart initiative," says Wendy Weckhuysen, mayor of nearby Rumst.

Combining an artwork with a bike and pedestrian lane for daily use was also a selling point for Bruno Peeters, the province's deputy for recreational domains. "It will be an attraction the



© Tomorrowland

whole year round," he says.

According to Tomorrowland festival organisers Manu and Michiel Beers, One World will no doubt match the uniting and positive energy of their festival. "It's going to be something very beautiful and unique," they said in a statement. "This project will bring enormous added value to the area, domain and municipality." Tom Peeters

► www.peopleoftomorrow.com

Fairy-tale voices
Lais

Until 21 February | Across Flanders
▶ www.lais.be

Shakespeare famously asked: “What’s in a name?” The answer for the *a cappella* trio Lais is: a great deal. The group’s name is the Celtic word for “voice” and the name of a poetic genre of chivalric romance from medieval Brittany. The name and all its associations fit singers Annelies Brosens, Nathalie Delcroix and Jorunn Bauweraerts, whose delicate vocal harmonies sound like they came straight out of a fairy tale. Friends since childhood, the three women from Kalmenhout have been singing together for two decades, which helps explain the seeming effortlessness with which they execute their three-part arrangements.

Lais got their first big break at the Dranouter Festival in 1996. They’ve since opened for the likes of Sting, performed extensively across Flanders and toured internationally in the Netherlands, France and as far afield as China, South Africa and the United States. In 2011, they represented Belgium at the May Festival in Memphis, Tennessee. The trio’s next move is an unconventional one. They’re undertaking a three-month church tour of Flanders. Lais will call in at two dozen spiritual sanctuaries from Anzegem to Zoersel. This weekend it’s Beigem, Tongeren, Dendermonde and Schoonbroek-Rozemaai, on the outskirts of Antwerp.



The women are also expanding their line-up, adding cellist Seraphine Stragier and, naturally enough for a church tour, organist Niels Verheest. As a quintet, Lais will perform brand new material in addition to their extensive catalogue of originals and cover versions (they’ve been known

to interpret artists as diverse as Sinead O’Connor and Jacques Brel). Several dates are already sold out so be sure to reserve tickets at your local church as quick as you can.
Georgio Valentino

CONCERT
GET TICKETS NOW

Hooverphonic
24 March, 20.00 | Het Depot, Leuven
▶ www.hetdepot.be

Antwerp’s Hooverphonic have been making electronic pop music with a cinematic scope for nearly 20 years. Sure, there have been some changes, most notably in 2008 when lead singer Geike Arnaert went solo. She has since been replaced by Noémie Wolfs, who quickly became a fan favourite. But the creative core of Hooverphonic remains songwriter

Alex Callier and guitarist Raymond Geerts. Their eight album, *Reflection*, is out now and tickets for a national spring tour are selling at a brisk pace. The inaugural date in Leuven has already sold out, prompting the venue to add a second concert the following night. Other Flemish stops include Ghent, Brussels, Bruges and Hasselt. **GV**



FILM
Be Film Festival
26-30 December | Bozar, Brussels
▶ www.befilmfestival.be

The ninth edition of the Be Film Festival brings together the finest Belgian filmmakers from both sides of the linguistic divide for five days of cinematic show-and-tell. The event boasts 11 previews, 20 feature films, 17 shorts and six documentaries (plus parties, concerts and even a post-festival New Year’s Eve party). This year’s guest of honour is Brussels-born director Frédéric Fonteyne, who presents his Francophone prison drama *Tango Libre*. There’s plenty of Flemish fare too. Crime thriller *Het Vonnis* (co-starring Veerle Baetens, recently named Best European Actress at the European Film Awards in Berlin) will be screened in the presence of director Jan Verheyen. Another Flemish production on the

programme is Joël Vanhoebrouck’s romcom *Brasserie Romantiek*. **GV**



CLASSICAL
Brussels Philharmonic: America
20 December, 20.00 | Royal Conservatory of Brussels
▶ <http://bpho.be>

Two giants of American music feature on the programme at the Brussels Conservatory. George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* is a concerto in everything but name, and features Boyan Vodenitcharov, Queen Elisabeth laureate in 1983, on piano as soloist. Gershwin’s unique fusion of jazz and classical is also evident in his *American in Paris* suite, which inspired the movie of the same name starring Gene Kelly and directed by Vincente Minnelli. The other work by him on the programme, the *Porgy and Bess* suite, is an orchestral adaptation of the opera, arranged by Gershwin after the opera closed early on Broadway. The concert also features a work by Leonard Bernstein (*pictured*), the symphonic dances



from his classic *West Side Story*, a Broadway musical based on the story of Romeo and Juliet, later to be turned into an unforgettable film. David Navarro Turres conducts. **Alan Hope**

VISUAL ARTS
Wim Vandekeybus: Portraits and Landscapes
Until 3 February | De Bond, Bruges
▶ www.ccbrugge.be

Wim Vandekeybus’ name is synonymous with contemporary Flemish dance. Lately, however, the celebrated choreographer has been dabbling in other art forms. This exhibition showcases the results of his exploration of analogue photography. The eponymous portraits and landscapes were snapped all over the world during the development of Vandekeybus’

next project, *Galloping Mind*. When it premieres next year, this cinematic portrait of orphaned equestrians in far-off lands will be his first feature film. In the meantime, it’s a work in progress that requires a bit more funding to reach the finish line, hence this exhibition. The artist invites the public to become co-producers by buying a photograph. **GV**



Concert
Ostend
Fête d’Hiver: The seaside cultural centre De Grote Post ends the year with a bang. Opening night features not one, not two, not three, not four but *five* up-and-coming local pop/rock groups.
20 & 21 DEC at De Grote Post, Hendrik Serruyslaan 18A
▶ www.degrotepost.be

Exhibition
Brussels
Peep!: This collection of rubber squeaky toys (*pictured below*) will make you feel like a kid again. The exhibition spans the nearly 100 years since the playthings were introduced.
UNTIL 15 JUNE at Hallepoort, Zuidlaan 150
▶ www.kmkg-mrah.be

Leuven
Aleksandra Mir – The Space Age: The Polish-born, London-based, Swedish-American artist has spent the last 14 years riffing on space exploration. This retrospective presents the results, including a series of collages and three films.
UNTIL 16 FEB at Museum M, Vanderkelenstraat 28
▶ www.mleuven.be

Family
Ghent
Spekken Festival: The seventh edition of this children’s theatre extravaganza promises something for everyone, from puppets to comedy to musical theatre. And, yes, there will be clowns.
22-30 DEC at Tinnenpot, Tinnenpotstraat 21
▶ www.spekken.be

Antwerp
Kerst in De Studio: More family-friendly holiday theatre. This programme encompasses two long weekends and features a film and craft workshop titled *De Sneeuwman*.
26 DEC-5 JAN at De Studio, Maarschalk Gérardstraat 4
▶ www.destudio.com

Hasselt
Winter tour: Take a guided tour through Hasselt’s centre in a tourist tram. Christmas stories, food, music and carols add to the festive atmosphere.
19-23 & 27-30 DEC 14.00 at Cultural Centre, Kunstlaan 5, €18, reservations required via 011 23 95 40
▶ toerisme@hasselt.be



Talking Dutch

Growing your own thing

Derek Blyth

You might be wondering what your Flemish neighbours are up to these days. Well, here is the answer. For the past few weeks, about one in four of them has been glued to the sofa watching the television comedy series *Eigen kweek*. The series on Eén has been a big hit across the region. Set in the West Flanders village of Wijtschate, it has attracted 1.5 million viewers, making it the second most popular programme of the year, taking a backseat only to the 1.58 million who watched the Belgian national football team play last month. *De Vlaming houdt van de personages* – the Flemish like the characters, explains the series’ creator Philippe De Schepper. *Ze zijn herkenbaar, warme, brave mensen, die met eenvoudige dingen bezig zijn* – they are people we can recognise – warm, likeable people who are busy doing simple things. The simple things include running a cannabis farm. But that just adds to the charm of these country folk. *Ze brengen ons terug naar een tijd zonder keuzestress en smartphones* – they take us back to a time when we didn’t have the stress of having to make so many decisions or smartphones. *En het zijn underdogs, daar is de Vlaming helemaal weg van* – and they are underdogs, which



the Flemish just love. But the funniest part of *Eigen kweek* to me is the language. Main character Frank has a beautiful Filipino girlfriend called Julita who doesn’t speak Dutch, so he talks to her in a bizarre mixture of West Flemish dialect and bad English. “The blue pedal that’s the *frein*, *Om te freinen*, *hé*,” Frank tells Julita during a driving lesson. *Vlaanderen smult van het kromme Engels van Frank* – Flanders can’t get enough of Frank’s broken English. The VRT has even posted some audio clips on its website to help those who want to *leer Engels spreken zoals Frank* – learn to speak English like Frank.

You can, for example, click on the word *strijken* – to iron – and you hear Frank tell Julita: You have to do the striking of the clothes, *hé*? Or click on *Hagelslag* (little chocolate bits sprinkled on bread) and you hear Frank ask: *Shit of mouse. You want shit of mouse?* There is now a Facebook page called *You like shit of mouse on your stutje?* It gathered 30,000 likes in just two days. “That is no catpis,” said one comment. “Jaja very good wi!” another added. The final episode of *Eigen kweek* was broadcast this week. The series is already being talked of as a TV classic. Yes, yes, very good! Shit of mouse.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

- Frederik François** @FredmFrancois
@UNESCO added horseback shrimp fishers of #Oostduinkerke on the Flemish coast to world list of intangible cultural heritage. #Belgium
- Visit Flanders** @VisitFlanders
“Antwerp, Belgium’s second largest city after Brussels, is full of surprises,” says the Detroit Free Press (@freep) <http://on.freep.com/18mRjEU>
- FlandersBio** @FlandersBio
Bone Therapeutics to present at Biotech Showcase in San Francisco – 14th January 2014 <http://ow.ly/rNm8q>
- Emad Van Ben**
Flanders Today is my favourite newspaper in Belgium. Really like it.
- In response to: Government closes weekend boarding schools**
Linda Pieters: Where are they supposed to go then?
- In response to: Premier League donates football pitch to Ypres**
Priscilla Draper: Great initiative. Wonder how many spectators it will hold.

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Poll

Teachers are being asked to repay up to €20,000 each in back-pay because of an administrative error. Should they have to?

- a. The mistake was not the teachers’ fault. They should not be penalised**
58%
- b. They received money they’re not entitled to. Of course they need to pay it back**
33%
- c. Everyone should accept a compromise: Claim back half and let the teachers keep half**
8%

For once, we can say quite categorically: Most of you were right, and some of you were wrong. Late last week education minister Pascal Smet announced that the government would not be claiming back the overpaid sums after all, so that question appears to be settled.

But is he right? One in three of you would say no, and in strict terms that’s the only logical position. Few of us would keep the money if the person on the till at the supermarket changed a €50 note when we’d paid with a €20, would we? There’s surely nothing in someone else’s honest

mistake that entitles us to keep something that doesn’t belong to us. Perhaps more importantly, don’t go thinking you can cite Smet’s generous example as a precedent if you ever find yourself in the situation. Chances are it won’t wash.

Next week’s question:
The Traffic Science Foundation has said speed limits on major roads should be cut to 90 km/h, and on other roads to a maximum of 70 km/h. What do you think?
Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on the VOTE button on the home page

THE LAST WORD

- Fire fighters**
“We regret what happened to the utmost. We stressed to our members that this was supposed to be a funeral procession carried out in peace and calm. That it came down to a confrontation with police is a sign of how stretched our people’s nerves are.” More than 1,000 firemen clashed with police in Brussels at a demonstration to protest government failure to agree their status
- Personal electronics**
“At least now I know that my gizmo works.” Basketball player Kristof Hoho of Maaseik suffered an on-court cardiac arrest but was on his feet again moments later, thanks to his defibrillator implant
- No snow**
“Don’t count on there being a White Christmas.” VRT weatherman Frank Deboosere prefers meteorological science to dreaming
- Clash action**
“We want to avoid the creation of a market in damages such as there exists in the United States, where lawyers go around actively recruiting victims.” Federal consumer affairs minister Johan Vande Lanotte is to introduce a bill to allow class action lawsuits in Belgium for the first time



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