

Food, glorious food

Flanders' food production is leading the way in what is now the country's top industry

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Green, green grass of home

Researchers in Ghent get touchy-feely with a brand new form of drought-resistant grass

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Performance of resistance

Kunstenfestivaldesarts is back, with its mind-altering mix of performance and visual arts

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Like a rolling stone

Flemish rock icon Arno celebrates his 65th birthday with special concerts and an exhibition

Christophe Verbiest

One of Flanders' most endearing – and enduring – celebrities, Arno turns 65 next month with an exhibition and two birthday concerts. Journalist Christophe Verbiest has interviewed the rock singer many times over the years.

“I didn't want to work. That's why I started making music,” Arno told me when I visited him a few years ago in his apartment in Brussels for a long, career-spanning interview. “Of course,” he added, “I was passionate about music. But not having to have a job, that was my main drive. And I've never worked a day in my life.”

Arno – born Hintjens but having shed the surname long ago

– is the godfather of the Belgian rock scene, loved as much by the Flemish as by the francophones. And contrary to what he might have you believe, he's certainly no lazy bones.

From the moment his career really got off the ground with the band TC Matic at the start of the 1980s, he's been working hard: releasing loads of amazing records and basically being on tour continuously. “But I never had a boss. What I do never feels like working,” he adds with his characteristic gravelly chuckle: “I've been one hell of a lucky bastard.”

Arno turns 65 on 21 May. In celebration, the singer, who has been living in Brussels for decades now, returns to his hometown of Ostend for the festivities. The day of his birthday

and the day after, he plays the Casino Kursaal; both shows are sold out. On 2 May, the exhibition *CinemArno* opens in the former Cinema Capitole in Ostend's Langestraat: an exhibition that “through pictures, film, videos and soundscapes wants to immerse visitors in the wonderful world of Arno”.

It was in that same Langestraat, once the heart of the city's nightlife, that Arno saw the light of day. Musically, that is. “When I was 16, I was walking through the street, and, from a window of a pub, I heard a voice like I had never heard, which left me thunderstruck: Bob Dylan singing ‘Like a Rolling Stone’.” From that day on, I knew I would never feel lonely again.”

Emissions down in Flanders

Greenhouse gas emissions in the region decreased by 9% over the last decade

Alan Hope

Flanders' emissions of greenhouse gases decreased in 2012 to a level 9% lower than in 2000, environment minister Joke Schauvliege announced. The figures are from a report on the period 2000-2012 from the Flemish Environment Agency. For particular emissions, the figures are more impressive: dioxins went down by 37%; HCB, a chemical toxic to the aquatic environment, decreased by 49%; and PCBs, the culprits that destroy the ozone layer,

fell by a whopping 97%. Reductions were also seen for heavy metals and fine particulates. The report reveals that the contribution of households and road traffic to pollution is increasing. That is partly explained by the increased use of wood-burning stoves in homes, but is mainly the result of the technical advances made by industry, which saw their contribution towards total pollution decrease as a consequence. The reduction in total emissions



is the result of a combination of factors, according to the report: a switch to natural gas, decreased use of coal, a preference for fossil fuels with a lower sulphur content and measures taken by the Flemish government to reduce emissions. An example is the Flemish Air Quality Plan, approved in March 2012, which aims to reduce traffic emissions through dynamic traffic management, investment in green buses and the introduction of gas-powered vehicles.

Flemish community centre staff in Brussels hit by poor exam results

A majority of employees without indefinite contracts at Flemish community centres in Brussels have lost their jobs as a result of an examination, given to all staff with temporary contracts. The failure rate of the recruitment and promotions exam was 60%, with more results to come. The personnel affected are all working on temporary contracts, in many cases after repeated renewals, but those contracts will now not be extended beyond 30 June for those who failed the exam. Both staff members who are losing their jobs and contracted staff were angry about the exams, which, they say, have cost them many valuable employees. Bruno De Lille of the Flemish Community Commission (VGC), which employs community centre staff and administered the exams, said he understood the emotional reactions. "I work regularly with a number of the staff who did not pass, so I understand their situation," he said. "However, VGC's hands are tied because of the rules, which state that an indefinite contract can only be accorded after passing the exam". The VGC looks after the interests of the Flemish community in Brussels and its board also includes ministers Guy Vanhengel and Brigitte Grouwels. The organisation had done everything to ensure the examinations were carried out objectively and honestly, said De Lille. Particularly hard hit were De Maalbeek in Etterbeek, which will lose its director, Ciska



Vandendriessche, who has been in the post for five years, and De Kriekelaar in Schaarbeek (pictured), which loses its cultural functionary and its head of child education. Of the 527 people who have taken the exam so far, 292 did not pass. Another 150 people are still awaiting their results. Unions have contested the relevancy of the exams, which were postponed for five years while a suitable formula was found. "It is extremely doubtful now whether vacation work and autumn activities will go ahead," one representative said. "That depends on each centre, but a great deal of expertise has now been thrown overboard." The 22 centres concerned will close on 8 May in a collective protest, unions said. AH

€500 million extra for low-income housing loans

The government of Flanders has agreed to bail out the system of loans designated for low-income home buyers, Freya Van den Bossche, minister of housing and the social economy, announced yesterday. Starting in June, the government will pay an extra €500 million to the social lending fund. The new funding comes on top of the initial annual budget of €814 million, which has all but run out for the Flemish Housing Fund (VWF) and Flemish Social Housing Company (VMSW), leaving them unable to issue new loans. The year's budget lasted barely three months, despite being €114 million more than the previous year. In 2013, the money only ran out in the autumn. Flanders' budget minister, Philippe Muyters, was opposed to pumping more money into the system, he said, proposing a thorough audit of the housing fund instead. Muyters approved the latest decision according to certain conditions. The interest on social loans, which allow families who might have trouble acquiring bank loans the opportunity



to buy a house or apartment, goes up from an average of 1.91% to an average of 2.41%, ranging from 2.14% to 4.29% depending on income. The higher rate is roughly on a par with the private lending sector, although 100% loans – requiring no down payment – for housing remain available. A minimum family income of €10,000 now applies to the loans, and they are no longer available for new construction or for the purchase of building land. The VWF and VMSW will be able to allocate loans based on the new budget from 1 June. It is estimated the €500 million will be enough to finance more than 3,200 loans. AH

Domain names .vlaanderen and .brussels coming soon

The new internet domain names ending with the extensions .vlaanderen, .gent and .brussels are expected to become operational by the end of this year or early next year after being approved last week by the international body Ican, which manages domain names. Popular extensions, such as .com,

.net and .org, are nearly used up, so Ican has received thousands of applications for new extensions in order to increase the number of them available worldwide. Thousands of ideas for new extensions, such as .art, .bank and .cafe, were submitted to Ican. Among those approved were the first four ever using

non-Roman letters. The new domain extensions .vlaanderen, .gent and .brussels will cost about €25 to register instead of the more usual €3-€5. That is because DNS Belgium, which handles all the country's domain name registrations, including the .be extension, is including a surcharge

of €20. DNS is applying the surcharge, it says, because it is not expecting many registrations for the new domain names. "However, we have to cover our overhead; we have to invest a great deal in the new extensions," DNS director-general Philip Du Bois told the magazine

Data News. "The agreement with the Brussels region and the Flemish government allow for prices to fall once volumes reach an acceptable level. The .be domain names were more expensive in the beginning than they are now." AH

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€15,000

in unpaid fines for a shopkeeper in Brussels' Stooftstraat, home of Manneken Pis, for a larger-than-life statue of the famous landmark displayed outside his waffle shop. The first fine was imposed in 2011

5

cases of recent building fraud in Brussels by a group that goes from door to door offering to carry out works such as patio construction or driveway resurfacing, only to disappear after an advance is paid

84%

more visitors to Planckendael animal park in the Easter school holidays, a total of more than 300,000. Antwerp Zoo received 250,000 visitors, an increase of 40% over the same period last year

3%

reduction in the number of crimes reported to police in Antwerp last year. Burglaries were down 15%, and violent robberies by 13%. Drug-related offences, however, went up by 22%

1,000

new employees will be taken on this year by Brussels public transport authority MIVB, including drivers, engineers, technicians and IT personnel

WEEK IN BRIEF

Last Sunday’s **Heritage Day** attracted **250,000** visitors to events and sites across Flanders. This year’s theme was Grenzeloos (“limitless” or “border-free”) and was influenced by two anniversaries. Fifty years ago saw the signing of treaties on worker migration between Belgium and Turkey and Morocco, while this year marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the main subject of many events.

Robert “Bobby” Laumans, the **last survivor of the Belgian pilots** who served with the Royal Air Force during the Second World War, has died at his home in Brussels. He was 93. Laumans escaped to England at the outbreak of war in 1940 and joined the 350 Squadron of the RAF, one of two units made up of Belgian officers. He was shot down over Ostend in June of 1942 and sent to Stalag Luft III prisoner of war camp, where he later helped 76 fellow prisoners take part in a now-famous tunnel escape.

The **Grote Markt and historical town hall** in Brussels need to host fewer events if they are to escape permanent damage, according to Geoffroy Coomans, the city’s alderman for buildings and heritage. Coomans is working on a plan to move some or all of the municipal services out of the town hall. The council has agreed to limit the number of large-scale events on the Grote Markt to the Winterpret, Ommegang celebration and the concert held on Flemish Community Day.

American doughnut chain **Dunkin’ Donuts is planning an expansion** into Belgium, with a first shop in Brussels in the near future, the company said. The chain, which has 11,000 shops in 33 countries, plans to eventually open up to 25 franchises in Belgium.

Martine Durez, **chair of Bpost, stepped down** unexpectedly last week for personal reasons, just months after the departure of CEO Johnny Thijs. Durez’s contract was due to run until 2018. A successor has already been announced: Françoise Masai, another protégée of the French-speaking socialist party, who will leave her seat on the board of the National Bank in June.

Leuven barkeep **Marjolein Geuens is the best beer-server** in the country, following a contest held last week in Leuven. The 144 taking part had to present two perfectly poured *pintjes* that met all the rules of beer service – the state of the glass, temperature of the beer, depth of head etc. Geuens, 24, has been working behind the bar for only six months. She is the first-ever female winner.

Belgium’s Royal Mint has announced a **special commemorative €2 coin** in memory of the start of the First World War – the only country in the euro zone to do so. Announcing the production of the planned 1.7 million coins last week, the federal finance ministry said the war was “a tragic period from our collective history that invites remembrance as well as reflection”.

The municipal council of Elsene in the Brussels-Capital Region has imposed a **ban on alcohol on and around Kasteleinsplein** on Wednesdays, where the weekly market has become the starting point for an all-night street party. Customers can still drink in bars around the square, but terraces will close at 23.00 as a result of noise complaints from residents. The ban on drinking on other parts of the square is in effect from 17.00 on Wednesdays to 7.00 on Thursdays.

The consortium selected for the **construction of the first phase of the Neo development** at Heizel in Brussels was announced last week. The choice, which still has to be ratified by the city council, is French-Dutch group Unibail-Rodamco, in consortium with the Belgian developers Besix and CFE. The first phase consists of a shopping centre, 20,000 square metres of offices and 700 homes. Construction will cost €500 million, and the group will pay €180 million for use of the land.

Queen Maxima of the Netherlands ran out of petrol on the E19 motorway between Brussels and Antwerp was last week while driving herself home after visiting the studio of Antwerp fashion designer Edouard Vermeulen. The queen’s security detail was not far behind and soon arrived with the necessary petrol.

Charges have been dropped against former federal police commissioner **Fernand Koekelberg** for allegedly raping a former girlfriend. Koekelberg will now act as a strategic advisor to the federal police. “I am 59 and still want to give the best of myself for the six years before I retire,” he told reporters.

Johan Bruyneel, the West Fleming who was the cycling team manager of disgraced champion Lance Armstrong, has been **banned from sport for 10 years** for his involvement in doping, the United States Anti-Doping Agency has announced. Bruyneel, 49, was born in Izegem and lives in London. A former professional cyclist, he was once hailed as a genius for helping his riders win nine Tour de France titles.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



© David Stuckman / Belga

Delfine Persoon

Jean-Pierre Coopman took Muhammad Ali to nearly five rounds in 1976, and that’s as close as a Belgian has ever come to a world boxing title. Until now. On Easter Sunday, in a packed hall in Wingene, West Flanders, Delfine Persoon, 29, became the World Boxing Council’s lightweight champion of the world. That brings Persoon’s world titles to four, but the WBC title is considered the real thing. Persoon defeated Erica Anabella Farias from Argentina on a unanimous points decision – 96-92, 96-92, 96-93. The bout itself was messy: both women were warned about head-butting, and Farias was also warned over her trademark holding. Persoon finished victorious, bleeding from both eyebrows. But that didn’t spoil the mood for the victor – or for the crowd in the Zwevezele sports hall. Persoon was born in Hooglede in the middle of West Flanders in 1985. As a child, she went to ballet class with her elder sister. At the age of six, again following her

sister, she took up judo and went on to win medals up to national level, moving on to the school for top sports performers in Antwerp before a back injury put an end to that career, with two Belgian champion titles under her belt. The switch to boxing was originally for fitness rather than competition. No-one could then have predicted what has now happened. When her trainer Filiep Tampere first saw her training, Persoon told *De Standaard* last week, “he told me: ‘You can’t box forward, you can’t step backwards, your guard is worthless, you don’t know how to punch, and you lead with your chin.’ I couldn’t do anything.” But, she continued, “nobody ever had to teach me how to give it my all. When I was a kid, and someone shoved me, I shoved back so hard my opponent fell over, and I won. As a judoka I wasn’t afraid to break arms. You get these hard-headed types who just won’t give in. I’m one of those.”

► www.boxingdelfine.be

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Bumpy ride

Do you know what the biggest problem facing cyclists is these days in Flanders? The cyclist organisation Fietsersbond carried out a survey of 4,000 of its members in Flanders and Brussels to find out. The first and biggest problem, unsurprisingly, is motorised traffic, mostly cars and trucks. Not only is this traffic a danger in terms of accidents, it’s also a risk to health, with cyclists breathing in toxic gases. Cars drive too close to vulnerable cyclists, and they park in awkward places – including right on the cycle path – which forces cyclists to make dangerous manoeuvres. The answer, according to Fietsersbond? Separate cycle paths separated from the road by barriers. The second worst problems is



© Westtor

the quality of the road surface. Glass, rubbish, cobbles, drains and potholes are a few of the problems noted. Number three is junctions. The law now allows cyclists to turn right on a red light at certain junctions, in an effort to avoid the almost weekly occurrence of a cyclist being caught in the blind spot of a lorry driver. But crossroads and junctions remain a nightmare for cyclists, with cycle paths disappearing and dangerous manoeuvres by other road users. Some cyclists

are tempted to use pedestrian crossings to escape the hell of junctions, much to the annoyance of pedestrians. Serious problems all, but Jelle Veyt from Dendermonde might just be Flanders’ most disappointed cyclist right now. He left home last summer and turned up last week, 13,000 km later, in Nepal with the intention of climbing Mouth Everest, a journey to benefit Shangrila Home, which looks after street children in Nepal. Unfortunately, Everest is shut. No more south face expeditions are going up for the rest of this season because of a strike by sherpas, after 13 were killed by an avalanche two weeks ago. “Nothing to be done about it,” Veyt told *Het Laatste Nieuws* stoically. “I’ll cycle back to Kathmandu and wait for my next opportunity.”

FLANDERS TODAY



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5TH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Who's afraid of Liesbeth Homans?

In the lead-up to the 25 May elections, a new duel appeared last week, with the post of minister-president of the Flemish government at stake. Liesbeth Homans, N-VA party president Bart De Wever's sidekick since their student days, played an unexpected role in the conversation. "I will take up my responsibility," Homans wrote in a column for the weekly *Knack*.

Since the 2010 debacle, when N-VA negotiated for months but never entered the federal government, the party has had to thwart arguments of obstinacy and cowardice. These arguments re-emerged when De Wever recently called being Belgian prime minister "the worst thing that could happen to a person". Homans wanted to put things straight by saying that her party, which stands at the enviable position of 30% in the polls, will not shy away from power this time. Soon enough this was interpreted as Homans' bid for minister-president.

Current minister-president Kris Peeters (CD&V) reacted straightaway. Peeters is one of Flanders' most popular politicians, but his future is on the line, as his party stands at only 20% in the polls. "To avoid chaos and uncertainty, voters should choose CD&V," he said. At the CD&V congress, he spoke of "reliable progress" – another reference to N-VA's perceived lack of reliability.

SPA's Bruno Tobback, meanwhile, called Homans a "second rate candidate" – for the real candidate should be De Wever himself. Tobback's comment backfired immediately, as it was interpreted as a lowly sneer to Homans.

As if that was not enough, last week sociologist Jan Vrancken called Homans, who presides over Antwerp's social aid agency (OCMW), "Thatcher on the Scheldt". The N-VA alderwoman "stigmatises the poor, instead of emancipating them," he said. He believes her policies are only inspired by her own experiences growing up in social housing.

All of this made Homans the centre of attention. One could almost forget that another prominent N-VA member also sees himself as the future minister-president: Geert Bourgeois, the party's founding father, who is currently vice-minister-president.

For De Wever, it's one more item on his list of worries: will his party succeed in getting the mythical 30% of the vote? Will it enter the federal government? In a coalition with whom? Who should become prime minister? And now: Who should become minister-president?

Parliament apologises to victims of sexual abuse

Official recognition of former victims of abuse in region's institutions

Derek Blyth

Jan Peumans, the speaker of the Flemish Parliament, made a public apology on behalf of "the whole of Flemish society" to past and future victims of child sexual abuse. The apology was printed out and placed in a frame to hang in the parliament building. The declaration follows a recent resolution calling on the parliament to acknowledge sexual abuse in youth and educational establishments between 1930 and 1990.

The declaration was signed by Peumans and the three MPs who initiated it – Else De Wachter (SPA), Katrien Schryvers (CD&V) and Lies Jans (N-VA). It acknowledged that "prominent people in youth and educational institutions were guilty of improper conduct and the use of unjustified violence." The apology also noted that many of



From left: Else De Wachter, Jan Peumans, Katrien Schryvers, Jo Vandeurzen and Lies Jans present their official apology to the public

the victims were not believed, which added to the trauma they suffered.

The prominent Flemish child psychiatrist Peter

Adriaenssens praised the gesture as it "sent out an important message" and "helped victims come to terms with the abuse". It doesn't bring an end to their suffering, he said, "but it will lessen the pain". The initiative was steered through parliament by Flemish welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen, who set up a committee in 2013 to look into the mounting allegations of sexual abuse in religious and educational institutions in Belgium over several decades. "One of the recommendations was to organise a public moment where apologies would be made," he said. "This moment is very important. It demonstrates our commitment to the future: We acknowledge that things happened that should not have happened, and we declare that we as a society will be more alert in future."

Open VLD bid to end "misery tax" fails

A motion to repeal the so-called "misery tax" paid after a divorce has failed to win support in the Flemish parliament. The tax, which is charged when couples sell their house during a divorce, used to be set at 1% but was raised to 2.5% in 2012.

The opposition party Open VLD had tabled an urgent motion to abolish the tax, which has never been popular, but the move was rejected by coalition partners CD&V, N-VA and SPA. The motion will now have to wait until a new government is formed following the 25 May election.

Speaker Jan Peumans made a final

speech in the Flemish parliament in which he told MPs: "You were a fantastic parliament. I thank you and until later." It was the last time that the full parliament will meet until after the next election.

Peumans noted that more than 6,000 parliamentary questions were answered during the period 2009-2014, which was six times as many as during the 1995-1999 parliament and three times as many as during the period 2004-2009.

The speaker went on to award the government a mark of 9.5 out of 10 for promptly answering questions and dutifully attending parliament sittings. **DB**

Schools network asks new government for more money

The directors of the Flemish Network of Catholic Primary Education have called on the government of Flanders to provide more funding to cover the cost of upgrading school buildings and recruiting more staff.

The issue of funding was raised with Flemish political leaders from the five main parties at an education conference held last week in Brussels' Ancienne Belgique. Groen chair Wouter Van Besien made the most generous offer to schools, pledging an extra €200 million a year, while Wouter Beke of the Christian Democrats CD&V offered about half that amount.

Bruno Tobback of the socialist SPA cautiously promised more investment while adding that "it's easy to promise more money, but it has to achieve something".

The political leaders also touched on the question of which party should take over the education ministry after the 25 May elections. Bart De Wever of N-VA argued that it should go to the party that wins the largest share of the vote, but minister-president Kris Peeters had previously suggested that his party (CD&V) deserved the post as it had not held the education portfolio for more than 20 years. **DB**

Government subsidies for companies with high emissions costs

The government of Flanders has approved a proposal to award subsidies to energy-intensive companies to offset carbon emission costs, with a ceiling of €60 million a year across the region.

The new regulation was drafted by minister-president Kris Peeters and environment minister Joke Schauvliege as a way of stopping companies with high emissions fees from moving to countries with weaker climate-change regulations. But the region had first to submit the proposal to the European Commission to ensure that it conformed with the EU's carbon emissions trading system.

The EU requires companies to pay for carbon emissions through its carbon trading policy, but



this means that companies sometimes relocate to other countries with less strict rules. The

European Commission has tried to prevent this happening by allowing states to award subsidies to a limited range of companies that use large amounts of energy.

The Flemish government has drawn up a list of about 200 companies that are eligible for subsidies in sectors such as paper manufacture, chemicals and smelting.

"The goal is to stop companies relocating to countries with a more relaxed climate policy," said Schauvliege. "The state support is not intended to eliminate carbon emission costs, which ensure that companies are still being encouraged to adopt measures to cut their carbon emissions." **DB**

Nature decree encourages citizens to protect environment

The Flemish parliament last week approved an environmental decree aimed at implementing 36 ecological targets set by the EU. "This is a huge step forward in our goal of protecting the environment in Flanders," environment minister Joke Schauvliege said.

The decree – which covers about 100,000 hectares of land – brings together the various government bodies involved in protecting Flanders' endangered habitats and animals. Schauvliege pointed out that Flanders was a special case because it was densely populated

and intensively developed.

"This is a crucial breakthrough after five years of intense and wide-ranging discussions with the various interest groups involved – nature organisations, agricultural and business organisations, governments and administrations,"

she said. "From now on, everyone will be given equal support, whether they are a citizen, a nature organisation or a government body. We want to encourage everyone to become involved in protecting the Flemish environment." **DB**

Like a rolling stone

TC Matic was one of Europe's foremost rock bands of the 1980s

► continued from page 1

In the 1960s, buying new music in Belgium was not at all easy. A lot of great American blues or rock'n'roll couldn't be found in record stores and had to be bought abroad. If you lived in Ostend, with its busy ferry line to England, you were a bit more lucky, since travellers often brought music with them.

That's how Arno first heard American delta blues, for instance, by singer and harmonica player Sonny Boy Williamson. When he was old enough, Arno went to London by himself to buy records. So perhaps it doesn't come as a surprise that Arno started his musical career as a harmonica player and only started singing a few years later. At 23, he formed his first band, Freckleface. They released only one, eponymously titled album, which dissolved in the mists of time until it finally got rereleased last year.

His next project was the blues duo Tjens-Couter, which he formed with Paul Decoutere. It would lead to TC Matic, the band that definitely put him on the European rock'n'roll map.

"In 1978, Paul and I went to the United States," Arno remembered. "And the scales fell from my eyes. American bands play American music better than I will ever be able to. On the other hand, our European music culture is much richer. I realised: I have to make European

fan of Jethro Tull; and a keyboard player with a great knowledge of synthesisers, Serge Feys."

Bluesman Decoutere stayed aboard, and a band was born with members from radically different backgrounds. Arno: "All those different influences thrown together, I call that surrealism. It's very European, Belgian even." He laughs: "*Stoemp* is our invention!"

In the spring of 1980, Decoutere left TC Matic, after playing with Arno for almost a decade. Arno replaced him with Jean-Marie Aerts, who described himself as "the missing link". And indeed, the pieces of the puzzle Arno had been fostering for two years fell into place.

For five years, the band kept their nose to the grindstone, released four albums and toured as much as possible – even as support for the immensely popular Simple Minds. Though they were responsible for classics like "Oh La La La", "Putain putain" and "Elle adore le noir", they never seemed to get the recognition as pioneering European rockers that they deserved. In the end, it was the tension between some of the band members that finished them off. I remember, one morning in 1986, their split being one of the headlines on the radio news.

Arno didn't waste any time wallowing in that demise: The same year, he released his first solo album. "I didn't really want a solo career, I



Arno performing at the Crammerock Festival in Stekene last year

“In 1978, I went to the United States, and the scales fell from my eyes

music. 'Urban!' was the word that was buzzing around in my head. The music should be repetitive, taut and nervous."

So he went looking for musicians who could realise his dream. "I found a bass player in the world of dance and funk, Ferre Baelen; a drummer who didn't want to have anything to do with dance, Rudy Cloet, a

just wanted to create music that I couldn't create with TC Matic," he explained. "But since the band split, the solo career became the main focus."

Some of the members continued to play with him, but gradually they left and now Serge Feys is the only ex-TC Matic man still in Arno's entourage. In the 30 years since, Arno has built

a rich career (he hates this word) based on the same principle mix that guided TC Matic through several years – though the ingredients did change now and again. French *chanson* became more important to him, for instance, but he hasn't given up on scorching rock, either.

And of course, there's that unique voice, singing in a unique language. His take on English is as unconventional, to say the least, as that on French. But listeners tend to chalk it up to creativity; when he is criticised for his lyrics, it usually comes from non-native speakers.

And that voice – yes, it became rougher, more worn out throughout the years. Arno sounds more and more like a blues man who has lived several lives. But it's still as unique a voice as you'll ever hear. "I turned my shortcomings into my blessings," he said. "I stutter, but not when I'm singing. I'm not a great singer; I never took lessons. And my songs are ramshackle, but they function." Arno's sound is indeed so unique that a journalist coined the term *à l'arnaise* to describe his musical blend.

"I started playing music because I

wanted to be free," said Arno. "In the 1960s, freedom was our ideal. In the 1980s, everyone wanted to make money. And now becoming famous seems to be the main drive. People sell their freedom for fame. That's the difference between now and then."

That doesn't mean, he cautioned, "that I'm saying it used to better before." A final characteristic laugh: "You're wise enough to come to your own conclusion."



A bare-chested Arno fronted TC Matic until 1986

THE MUST-HAVE ALBUMS

TC Matic (1981)

The debut album by, in retrospect, one of the most important European bands of the early 1980s. The sound is a mix of hyperkinetic new wave rock, lashing repetitive funk, weird synths and a touch of ghostly blues, with Arno singing like a modern-day shaman.

Idiots Savants (1993)

Arno's fourth solo outing turns the term *idiot savant* into an honourable nickname. He went to Nashville to record his most soulful album, with a remarkably broad sound and some absolute Belgian classics.

À la française (1995)

From the first recordings of TC Matic, Arno had been writing songs in French, but this is his first album that's solely in French. A great artistic effort, and commercially a bull's-eye. It paved the way for his success in the French territories, where he's much more popular than in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Charles Ernest (2002)

Over the last decade or so, Arno has been releasing one great album after the other, the highly underrated *Future Vintage* being the latest. But this might be his all-time best: stripped of all possible trifles, Arno delves deeps into his soul. "*Like I said before, I am just a lonely solo gigolo*".

► www.arno.be

2 May
to 1 June

CinemArno
Cinema Capitole
Langestraat 49, Ostend
► www.tinyurl.com/cinemarno

WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Beer ▶ AB Inbev

The Leuven-based brewer has acquired the Chinese Siping Ginsber brewery with a capacity of eight million hectolitres a year for an estimated €450 million. The deal strengthens AB Inbev's third position on the Chinese market behind SABMiller and Tsingtao.

Branding ▶ Averbode

The Averbode abbey in Flemish Brabant is lending its name to third parties to produce beer, bread and cheese. The first Averbode brew, outsourced to the Huyghe brewery, will be available in Delhaize supermarkets from May. Bread will be baked by the La Lorraine bakery group while cheese will come from Milcobel. Averbode hopes its branded products will be exported to France and the US.

Construction ▶ Besix

The construction group has won the €180 million contract to develop the Neo project in the Heysel area of Brussels, with CFE and the Franco-Dutch Unibail-Rodamco developer. The deal includes a 70,000 square-metre shopping centre, up to 700 dwellings and 20,000 square metres of office space.

Retail ▶ Texaco

The 276 local petrol servicing stations of the US-based oil group have been sold to the British TDR Capital private equity fund by the Israeli Delek group. The move is part of a €355 million deal that includes all Texaco petrol retailing activities in the Benelux and France.

Taxation

▶ Belgo-US deal

The Belgian and United States governments have signed a financial information exchange agreement to improve fiscal transparency and ease the implementation of the US Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act between the two countries.

Transport

▶ T-Systems

The German group has won the contract to develop the Viapass electronic toll payment system for trucks of more than 3.5 tonnes to be implemented from 2016. The move, expected to bring more than €900 million a year of additional revenue, is aimed at securing payment from heavy trucks travelling on local roads.

Food service biggest industry

Food production accounts for 27% of industrial enterprise in the country

Alan Hope

The food industry in Belgium grew last year by 1.5% to a value of more than €48 billion, according to the latest annual report from the industry federation Fevia. Taken together with a shrinkage of 3.3% across industry as a whole in 2013, this means the food sector is now the country's largest sector, accounting for 27% of all industrial enterprises.

"In recent years we've been the largest in a number of areas," said Fevia director-general Chris Moris. "Now we also lead on added value, ahead of the chemicals sector."

Flanders accounts for 80% of the country's food production, 72% of all added value and 72% of jobs in the industry. Sectors where the food industry is a world leader, including potato products and deep-frozen vegetables, are dominated by Flemish companies. The dairy industry, which



was the fastest-growing, is also based mainly in Flanders.

The food industry has grown by 50% over the last decade. Fevia chair Bernard Deryckere placed the watershed moment during the dioxin crisis of 1999, when it was revealed that the toxic

substance had entered the food chain through contaminated animal feed. Since then, Deryckere said, the food industry has invested in quality and innovation, helping it attain a leading position.

Also in 2013, jobs in the industry grew by 0.5%, compared to a reduction of nearly 3% in the industrial sector overall. The food sector now employs 88,747 people directly, with indirect employment – transport and retail, for example – at 138,000.

Investment, however, dropped by 10%. The food industry is facing the same problems as other industries, Deryckere said: problems of profitability and a salary cost handicap compared with neighbouring countries. Fevia estimates those costs to be about 21% of total costs – higher for the food industry than for any other industry.

Creditors approve rescue plan for Electrawinds

Renewable energy provider Electrawinds was pulled back from the brink of bankruptcy last week as creditors agreed to a rescue plan, which was then approved by the Ostend commercial tribunal.

Under the deal, the Liège-based Tecteo – a consortium of municipal authorities known as an intercommunal – will take over all wind energy activities of Electrawinds in Belgium and France for the symbolic sum of €1. Tecteo will also take on most of Electrawinds' €100 million debt; Electrawinds is now left with a manageable €3 million in debt. Electrawinds' other activities, including wind energy in other countries, and a loss-making biomass business, remain in control of the company.

Most of the company's investors have suffered severe losses along the way except for the co-operative Groenkracht, which was allowed to walk away with 86% of its investment to be repaid in three tranches. Analysts are noting that the Bruges-based company is receiving preferential treatment despite



its investment of subordinated loans – a high-risk, high-yield instrument that is supposed to rank behind other debts in the event of liquidation or bankruptcy.

By comparison, only 29% of the €150 million total investment made by government concerns – including the Flemish and federal governments, Gemeentelijk Holding and the state-owned Belfius bank – will be reimbursed. Electrawinds chair Dirk Vermeersch pointed out that none of the other creditors complained about the deal given to Groenkracht, and the court allowed the package to go ahead.

The deal also covers the workforce of Electrawinds: 30 of the 43 employees will become Tecteo employees, while the rest remain in what is left of Electrawinds. AH

Companies support Tomorrowland in court action

A group of 33 companies ranging from the local press shop to Brussels Airlines presented evidence in an Antwerp court last week in defense of Tomorrowland's plan to extend its programme in July.

The hugely popular outdoor dance festival – regularly hailed as the world's best – in Boom, Antwerp province, has expanded this year from one to two long weekends in celebration of its 10th anniversary. A group of seven local residents are fighting the extension because of noise and crowd nuisance.

Tomorrowland sells its 150,000 tickets every year in a matter of hours. This year's edition, planned to span six days over two weekends, has doubled the number of tickets sold.

The majority of the companies defending the festival are local businesses, including a drinks wholesaler, a bakery and two *friet* sellers. Some are local suppliers to Tomorrowland, including Fosfor, the company that produces the colourful rubbish bins, and Nilorn, which makes the wristbands.

Others are more unexpected. Brussels Airlines flies 20,000 of the festival-goers into Belgium and home again; artist Arne Quinze's company Paradox Art is building a 500-metre bridge; Great Green Gadgets from the US supplies tents and other sleeping accommodations; Dutch company Jachthaven Ridderkerk makes decorative fountains.

The participation of the 33 companies was reportedly solicited by lawyer Olivier Verhulst. "The stakes are high," he told *De Morgen*. "Hundreds of jobs are involved, temporary as well as full-time jobs, with some companies working on the festival most of the year."

Three of the original 10 residents behind the action to stop Tomorrowland's second weekend have removed their names from the legal action, they said, after receiving threats. "Some of my clients buckled under the psychological pressure and threats," said their lawyer, Griet Cnudde. "Nonetheless, these are brave people who had the courage to let their voices be heard." AH

Sunday shopping in central Antwerp approved

Sunday shopping in the historic centre of Antwerp will soon be possible, after federal ministers approved a request from the city council. Shopkeepers and industry representatives called for extra protective measures for workers before they accept the change.

The council required the approval of federal labour minister Monica De Coninck and minister for small businesses Sabine Laruelle. The approval depends on the designation of a tourist zone in the centre of the city, where shopping will be allowed. The text making Sunday shopping possible now must appear in the government's official journal before it comes into effect.

Antwerp's alderman for small businesses, Koen Kennis, stressed that businesses were free to open or not on Sundays once the measure comes into effect. However, shop workers fear the competitive situation in Antwerp means they will be forced to follow those businesses that do open.

Shop owners are concerned that an extra day will



not bring in additional income but simply spread the existing income over seven days instead of six. That would effectively result in a loss, as staff who work on Sundays would have to be paid, most likely at a bonus rate.

To combat that possibility, NSZ and Unizo – both organisations that represent the self-employed – have called on the city to ensure that Sunday shopping is sufficiently promoted by the city and

included in promotions for other events.

Examples from other cities show a variety of results. Bruges' shops have long been allowed to open on Sundays, given the large number of tourists, while Maastricht, in the Netherlands on the border with Limburg, opens one Sunday a month, attracting a sizeable number of shoppers from Belgium. Antwerp stands to gain from visitors from the Netherlands, particularly the border cities of Breda and Tilburg.

According to Nico Volckeryck, chair of Unizo Antwerp-City, Sunday openings should be restricted to the first Sunday of the month, as previously agreed with the council. For NSZ, the priority lies with attracting tourists from abroad, from Wallonia and from other parts of Flanders, in order to ensure additional income.

They also demand an early evaluation of the success of the idea. "If Sunday opening turns out not to be a success, then it ought to be scrapped," said NSZ chair Christine Mattheeuws. AH

In search of greener grass

Ghent University team develop hardier drought-resistant grass species

Andy Furniere

To prepare Western European agriculture for longer periods of drought and heat, researchers at Ghent University are breeding a new variety of grass that is more resistant to these conditions than those of the species currently sowed most often. The new variety, called *Femelle*, is part of the tall fescue species already often used in the less intensive agriculture of Southern Europe. Recent climate change reports are clearly showing that Western Europe, like other parts of the world, is going to be confronted with increasing periods of heat and drought. This may jeopardise the yield of the grass species currently used most often in Flanders, the perennial (or English) ryegrass. Anticipating these changes five years ago, researchers at Ghent University's department of plant production started to consider a more robust alternative. "We quickly identified tall fescue as the most promising candidate species, since it has the well-known characteristic of being very resistant against heat and drought," explains project leader Mathias Cougnon. "It is also abundant in Flanders and neighbouring countries." To ascertain the positive features of tall fescue, the research team sowed various fields of grass of about 10 square metres and regularly mowed them to compare the amount of biomass produced by different species in the same periods. For this practical side of the project, the team was supported by the Flemish Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research. The results lived up to the team's expectations: They demonstrated that tall fescue on average yields 20% more biomass a year than perennial ryegrass. In drought periods, tall fescue yielded up to 60% more. However, while the grass species



Femelle, the first tall fescue variety with leaves soft enough for a sheep, cultivated by Ghent University researchers

is commonly found along dykes and canals in Flanders, it is not yet often sown to feed livestock. "That's because the species poses important challenges," explains Cougnon. "The feed value is lower than that of perennial ryegrass, animals find it less tasty, and the leaves are sometimes so harsh that they can cause wounds." Cows and sheep, in other words, don't tend to like to eat it and don't get much protein out of it, with the consequence of less milk and meat production for their owners. Yet in Southern Europe, particularly in the south of France, tall fescue is commonly used in the agriculture sector. "But the agriculture there is far less intensive than here," says Cougnon. To adapt the grass to the needs of the agriculture in Flanders, the researchers decided to breed a new

variety of tall fescue. The research team first raised about 6,000 tall fescue plants from populations found here and in neighbouring countries. "Just as you have different varieties of apples, like jonagold or golden delicious, you have different varieties within the grass species," explains Cougnon. The team then analysed how resistant the plants were against diseases, how nutritious they were and how soft their leaves felt. "To examine the softness of the leaves, we used a simple technique," Cougnon explains. "We stroked them with our fingers and gave them a score from one to five." In the end, the researchers made a final selection of the four plants with the softest leaves, the best resistance against diseases and the best growing rate. These were then crossed to create a new

variety. *Femelle* is a contraction of *Festuca* and *Melle*: respectively the scientific name of tall fescue and the name of the East Flanders town where the research team's testing infrastructure is situated. The quality of the new grass variety is now being examined by authorities to make sure it meets the EU's criteria for commercial use. If it does, *Femelle* could be introduced to the market within two years. However, the creation of *Femelle* is only a starting point for the department's research. "We will keep on striving to improve the quality of tall fescue through our breeding programme," says Cougnon. For this purpose, the team is now carrying out experiments involving sheep in order to understand better which factors affect the preference for different tall fescue varieties. www.plantproduction.ugent.be

Q&A

Sander Dieleman, an electronics and information engineer at Ghent University, won the Galaxy Challenge with a programme that classifies images of galaxies

What exactly is the Galaxy Zoo? Galaxy Zoo is an international crowdsourcing project that invites people to visually classify images of galaxies made by telescopes, like the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, the Hubble Space Telescope and the UKIRT – an infrared telescope in Hawaii. The project was launched in 2007, with a dataset made up of a million galaxies. During the first year, the crowd classified 50 million galaxies, but, of course, the telescopes keep on taking pictures from the sky.

And what's the Galaxy Challenge? The goal of the competition was to automate the classification process, because there are literally hundreds of millions of galaxy images still waiting to be classified, which is too much for the Galaxy Zoo users to

handle by themselves. The challenge was to build a model that can predict how Galaxy Zoo users would classify each image, thereby automating the process. That model had to be based on the idea of "machine learning", so it would be able to learn from large amounts of data. For example, there are spiral galaxies and elliptical galaxies, but this knowledge doesn't have to be encoded in the model – it can figure this out for itself by looking at lots of examples of galaxies.

How can a machine learn from all this data? Because of the way the Galaxy Zoo project is set up, what you get in the end is a set of probabilities for each of the various classes of galaxies. For example, you know for each galaxy

which percentage of participants thought it was elliptical and which percentage thought it was a spiral galaxy. You can use these percentages to determine how difficult a specific image is to classify: If 90% of the users say it is a spiral, then we can be pretty sure it is one. If the distribution is roughly 50-50, then clearly this is a tough image. These particular images could then be forwarded to an expert to determine the true classification.

So your model does it all by itself? Not entirely. My model is not able to reproduce the classifications of the Galaxy Zoo users perfectly, so it isn't going to replace them. But it could form an additional step in this process. First, have the model predict the classification. If the model is



uncertain, let the Galaxy Zoo users classify it. And if they are uncertain as well, forward it to an expert. As a result, the "easy" images don't have to be classified manually, which saves a lot of time. **interview by Senne Starckx** www.galaxyzoo.org

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Schaarbeek in Mayors Challenge final

The Brussels municipality of Schaarbeek is the only Belgian candidate selected for the Mayors Challenge, a competition for innovative urban projects. To collect information on energy consumption, Schaarbeek wants to deploy a drone that will fly over houses in the district and create 3D images of them. The main prize is worth €5 million, and the rest of the top five also get €1 million each. "We have many beautiful old buildings, but they are often badly insulated," said project co-ordinator Mélanie Rasquin. "If we win, we will develop a 3D map of energy consumption and loss."

Prize for KU Leuven gynaecologist

Queen Mathilde handed the prestigious InBev-Baillet Latour Fund award to four laureates last week. In the Clinical Research category, Flemish gynaecologist Dirk Timmermans of the University of Leuven won the award with the French-speaking scientists Edouard Louis of Liège University and Denis Franchimont of the Free University of Brussels (ULB). The awards are given to scientists younger than 50 who are connected to a Belgian university. They receive €75,000 each. Timmerman was selected because of his multi-centre study of computer models for the diagnosis of ovarian tumours. "This work includes clinical scientific research defining and quantifying medical problems in order to develop diagnostic models for improving patient care, which have already changed a number of international clinical guidelines," said the jury.

Minister promises hospital comparison site

Consumer organisation Test-Aankoop handed over a petition with 36,328 signatures to Flemish welfare minister Jo Vandeuren last Friday, European Patients' Rights Day. The petition requests a central website where patients can examine the quality of Flemish hospitals. Many hospitals already publish statistics on the quality of their care online, with information on, for example, the satisfaction of patients, the hygiene of medical staff and the number of survivors of breast cancer five years after diagnosis. Vandeuren agreed that steps need to be taken to make the quality of hospitals more visible. **AF**



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Association of Belgian Relocation Agencies meeting

MAY 17

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Voices from the past

Gaasbeek's Once Upon A Castle is as mystical as it is educational

Daan Bauwens

Imagination can take you just about anywhere – even back in time. This spring and summer, students will be able to learn more about historical times past as several castles across Flanders are rolling out art-meets-education programmes that let youngsters experience medieval life first-hand. Belgium's many castles, approximately 3,000, are the perfect setting for such an experience. After all, it's said that, after Wales, this country boasts the world's highest density of castles per square kilometre.

And when it comes to experiencing historical lives and times, the castle of Gaasbeek – a world-renowned chateau in the sleepy village of Gaasbeek in Flemish Brabant – is the icing on the cake. In *Once upon a Castle*, which opened last week, the Cornwall-based theatre company WildWorks stages performances and installations that bring some of the castle's most prominent inhabitants back to life.

“When you read these letters, these figures communicate directly with you

“We wanted to look inside the memory of the castle over time,” says Mercedes Kemp, archive researcher for Wildworks. “The first thing I had to do was talk to the people working for the castle – those who know most about its history – about the important figures who lived here. Based on their answers and extensive research in the castle's archives, I came up with three central characters whose lives couldn't be more fascinating – the count of Egmond, Paul Arconati-Visconti and the last marquess of



Ghosts haunt Gaasbeek Castle to teach students – and everyone else – lessons from the past

the castle, Marie Peyrat.” After Kemp wrote their stories, her texts were transformed into theatre installations by the company's musicians, composers, designers and performers. The castle caters to school groups, and many are expected to visit this particularly unique exhibition, which is coupled with historical workshops catering to different age groups. But *Once Upon a Castle* is also open to the public.

Kemp stresses that, even though appealing to children, the stories and performances target a much larger audience. “Everyone can enjoy them,” she says, adding that they especially focus on the characters' emotional lives. “We express human emotions in awe-inspiring stories, making use of what truly happened at the castle.”

Kemp finds the story of the count of Egmond, a central figure in the religious wars of the 16th century, the most striking. While initially a loyal representative to the Spanish crown, he was still deemed not Catholic enough and was beheaded in Brussels by the Spanish Inquisition.

“We found a letter, which we use during the performances, from the count to his wife and children, written after he had received the news he was going to die,” Kemp says. “The letter is emotional and

moving. The story of his life is beautiful and sad.”

In the middle of the 18th century, meanwhile, the illustrious Italian Arconati-Visconti family reigned over the castle. “Paul Arconati-Visconti, the first of the Milanese family to live in the castle, was eccentric all over and truly ambitious,” Kemp says. “But, most importantly, the man wrote everything down. He left behind a huge archive of documents – which can all be found in the castle's

archives – on how he wanted to improve world health, reform education and agriculture.”

Once upon a Castle ends with the figure of Marie Peyrat (1840-1923), the last marquess and the woman who donated the castle to the Belgian state in 1922. Kemp sees her as a romantic with a clear dislike of the contemporary world. “Marie longed for the romance of Renaissance and medieval chivalry,” the WildWorks writer explains. “Her nostalgia is expressed by a plenitude of objects she collected and exhibited in the castle. Most of these objects are still there today.”

For Kemp, the most fascinating element in the production process was the retrieval of the original material. “The stories are based on letters,” she says. “When you read these letters, these figures communicate directly with you.” But more than anything else, *Once upon a Castle* demonstrates the importance of Gaasbeek throughout history. “The inhabitants of the castle were well-connected, and they have all played crucial roles in European history,” Kemp says. “Now you can see them talking again, after centuries of silence.”

Until 9
November

Once upon a Castle
Gaasbeek Castle

Kasteelstraat 40, Gaasbeek
► www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be

MORE CASTLE ACTIVITIES

Several other castles across Flanders are offering educational activities for children over the next few months. In Ghent's Gravensteen, for instance, Six-to 12-year-olds can dress up in steeple hats, Italian turbans and heart-shaped gowns for a royal feast in the courtyard. At Castle de Merode Westerlo in Antwerp province kids can change into one of the many extravagant personalities who have inhabited the castle in the last 1,000 years.

At the Beauvoorde castle in Wulveringem, West Flanders, children can become the castle's cook, gardener or architect for the day. After that, they can forge their own knight's helmets, design a coat of arms or learn how to play medieval tunes in workshops organised in the castle's coach house. Meanwhile, older children can attempt to uncover the truth behind the “Merghelynck Mystery”, one of the castle's most gruesome murder plots.

Students to become housemates of the elderly

The social aid agency (OCMW) in Ghent, in co-operation with the city council, is developing an innovative plan to help the increasing population of elderly people to live at home instead of having to move into a rest home. The idea is to have university and college students move in with over-65s.

OCMW is currently working on adjusting certain housing regulations so that it will be “legally easier for a student to move into an empty room in a house,” explains Ghent's OCMW chair, Rudy Coddens, in *De Standaard*. “A lot of elderly people today are now living alone in a house that is actually much too big for just them.”

This kind of accommodation would be cheaper for students than renting a student room in the city. In exchange, students will be expected to help the elderly people in the household, such as with chores like going for groceries. OCMW will discuss the purpose of the project beforehand



with students and will provide continued assistance.

“Students in a social study stream will probably be more interested in participating, but we are not excluding anyone,” says Coddens. He added that it will probably be a small-scale project as he realises that a limited number of elderly people

will be comfortable housing a student – and vice versa. “The most important condition is that the student and the elderly person feel a positive connection,” he says.

The first students would make the move in October of this year.

The project is one of the measures the OCMW is taking in response to the estimated 5,000 additional over-65s by 2030 in Ghent. Apart from more rest homes, OCMW plans to launch a co-housing project. About eight older people with considerable age differences will live together in a house at the Sint-Elisabeth *begijnhof*, with common living and recreation areas but also private rooms.

“They can live independently, and the younger residents can help out their older housemates,” explains Coddens. The nearby OCMW services centre would provide the necessary assistance.

Andy Furniere

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Students want more motivated teachers

Flemish secondary school student organisation VSK has presented its memorandum with six priorities for the next government, based on a survey of 3,000 students. Students are tired of demoralised teachers and request more teachers in front of their class. “We demand that schools coach the teachers and provide them with trajectory guidance so they are fully motivated, because that has a big effect on students,” said VSK chair Kaylee Surgeeloose. Mieke Van Hecke, head of the Catholic schools network, said she agreed, saying there was too much regulation that impeded teachers' creativity. Education minister Pascal Smet said the regulation already left room for creativity.

Students in Brussels up a fifth

Brussels' student population has grown by a fifth in 10 years, according to a study by the Brussels Studies Institute, the platform for research on Brussels. With about 86,000 students enrolled in higher education – about a quarter of the total student population in Belgium – the capital remains the biggest student city in the country. About 72% of students follow classes at a French-speaking university or college, while the remaining 28% are enrolled at a Dutch-speaking institution. A little over half of the students study at a university, with the rest enrolled at a college. About 23% do not have Belgian nationality, and 7% are not European.

Decree increases language requirements

More than half the places in Brussels' Dutch-speaking education are reserved for children of Dutch-speaking parents. In a decree approved by the government last week, the quality of the parents' Dutch must reach a certain level. Currently, any child with a parent with a diploma from a Dutch-speaking educational institution automatically gets a place. If neither parent has a diploma, they must obtain a certificate from the Huis van het Nederlands (House of Dutch). To receive this, parents had to prove they had reached level B1, which demonstrates that they have enough knowledge for independent conversations in Dutch and to understand texts in everyday language. This is normally obtained by non-native speakers after six programmes of 120 hours. The level will now be raised to B2, which means the speaker makes very few mistakes in conversation.

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIESSilver Market and
Closing Festival

The 10th edition of the Silver Museum's annual market at Sterckshof Castle in Antwerp shares the bill with the museum's closing festivities. The market combines antique dealers, jewellers and collectors with concerts, children's entertainment, workshops and free guided tours of the museum. A day later, the Silver Museum will close for its move to a new location near the city's Grote Markt. *1 May; Hooftvonderlei 160. Market 10:00-17:30, €6; closing festival 19:30-23:00, free*

► www.tinyurl.com/zilvermarkt

O-Parade

This two-hour moving spectacle is a May Day tradition in Genk, drawing thousands of visitors every year. More than 40 national and international groups take part. Expect giant puppets, colourful costumes, creative street theatre, music and dance. *1 May, 16:00; free*

► www.tinyurl.com/oparade

Garden Day

Gardeners and nature lovers will enjoy this outdoor plant market on the grounds of Domein Bokrijk in Genk. Children can take part in several DIY activities, including planting a garden, making birdhouses and building a playhouse. *1 May, 8:00-18:00; Bokrijklaan 1, Genk; free but on-site parking €7*

► www.bokrijk.be

Côté Koer

This type of children's song festival is an annual tradition in Turkey. 160 young voices, accompanied by members of dePhilharmonie orchestra, take the stage at the Bijloke in Ghent, along with simultaneous live drawing and storytelling. *3 May, 15:00; De Bijloke, Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, Ghent; free*

► www.debijloke.be

Two-Day Walk

What started as a simple two-day hike in Blankenberge has grown into a big weekend event. This 45th edition has four walking routes of different lengths, from six to 42km, plus entertainment and kids' activities. *3-4 May; walk registration €5.50-€10*

► www.2daagse.be

Steam Festival

The Steam Centre in Maldegem, East Flanders, contains the largest collection of steam locomotives in the region. During this two-day festival, visitors can take a ride on a steam train between Maldegem and Eeklo, see steam tractors and steam cars, ride on a narrow-gauge train, see model trains and meet other train enthusiasts. *3-4 May, 10:00-18:00; €8-€12*

► www.stoomcentrum.be

The birth of glamour

Costume and Lace Museum showcases the 1930s' effect on high street

Katrien Lindemans

Gowns were long, black and became fashionable, and ladies of all social classes longed to be glamorous. The 1930s changed women's fashion quite remarkably, and it's the subject of *Glamour: 30s Fashion*, now on at the Brussels Museum of Costume and Lace.

"The exhibition starts with two contrasting silhouettes, one from the 1920s and one from the '30s," says the museum's director Caroline Esgain. "While the dress from the '20s is short with a low waistline, the '30s dress is floor-length and has a high waist." More than 50 outfits showcase the trends from 1930 to 1939, an era of elegance, which found its way into all levels of society. "Movies became popular in that decade, with stars like Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo," Esgain explains.

"For the first time, women of all social layers wanted to look as sophisticated as the actresses on screen."

To create those long dresses with a high waistline, fabric was often cut on the bias to maximise its stretchy capacity. "As a result, these dresses really showed off a woman's figure,

which made wearing a girdle a necessity," Esgain says.

"The exhibition features a lovely dress from 1939 by Madeline Vionnet, a French designer who mastered the bias cut.

And next to it we show a rather uncomfortable looking girdle."

The long dresses in *Glamour* are by designers such as Chanel, Lanvin and the third generation of Charles Frederick Worth, the inventor of *haute couture*. They come in all colours, from intense purple to bright gold, deep brown to sparkling silver and, for the first time, black.

"Coco Chanel designed some black dresses in 1926, which was quite revolutionary. Before that, the colour was only worn for mourning," explains Esgain. "In the 1930s, black became a lot more common."

But it wasn't all glamour, of course; the 1930s are marked by crisis

and unemployment. "Work hours were cut, and many people were on the dole," says Esgain. But for those who were working, a fixed amount of holidays was awarded, and "families also had more time off than before; that's how casual dresses came into fashion as well, often made from less luxurious

fabrics such as linen."

The exhibition also features 10 children's outfits: girls' dresses and boys' suits. "Children visiting the exhibition will get the chance to dress up in '30s-style clothes as well." There is no menswear on display, as the male suit didn't change drastically during the decade.

“These dresses really showed off a woman's figure, which made a girdle a necessity

Visitors will also see some old pictures of Brussels. "We've worked with the Brussels archive and found pictures of a garden party at the Chalet Robinson in Terkameren Bos, people gathering in front of the Cinéma Métropole in Nieuwstraat and a workers' demonstration in the streets of Brussels, during the crisis," Esgain says.

The Brussels Museum of Costume and Lace opened in 1977 "to showcase the lacework from the archives of the city of Brussels," Esgain says. "Lace was often a part

of costumes, and that's how the museum got its name."

Throughout the years, the collection grew to about 200 outfits and thousands of objects, ranging from buttons to gloves, shoes to hats.

"We buy some of the items at auctions or from antiquarians. Some were donated to us," Esgain says. "The oldest piece in the collection is lacework dating to the 17th century. The most recent is a 1930s-style dress made especially by Brussels designer Nicolas Woit for the *Glamour* exhibition. For every exhibition, we commission a garment from a designer, to expand our collection with something contemporary."

Lace and textile are delicate, which means they can't be put on display permanently. "Our collection is showcased through temporary and thematic exhibitions," Esgain explains. "We carefully regulate light and humidity levels so as to not damage the fabric of the garments too much. We restore where possible, but some outfits will eventually be too distressed to be shown again."

Previous exhibitions at the museum include last year's fashion of the 1970s and, in 2010, the institution's most popular one ever, fashion of the 1960s.

The catalogue for the exhibition Glamour: 30s Fashion is in English, Dutch and French

Until 1
Feb, 2015

Glamour
Museum of Costume and Lace

Violetstraat 12, Brussels

► www.museeducostumeetdeladentelle.be

© courtesy Museum of Costume and Lace

BITE

Rabbit with prunes

Konijn met pruimen (rabbit with prunes) is one of the most classic of all Flemish dishes. It has been widely enjoyed since the early 1900s, when rabbit was an important source of protein for the poorer part of the population.

Meat from cattle was not affordable for many, especially in times of war. Raising a rabbit, in contrast, takes up relatively little space, and transport is easy. The rabbit can be fed with cabbage leaves and other leftovers from the kitchen, or it can graze on a small patch of grass. Today, consumption of rabbit is much less common, though it can still be found on the menu of traditional restaurants across the region, especially in and around Brussels where they stew their rabbit with typical Brussels beers like gueuze or kriek.

A fine rabbit stew can be whipped up at home, and the meat is available in most supermarkets. Rabbit is tasty and lean, and, as an added health bonus, it is also one

of the few meats still cultivated in a traditional, small-scale way, with little risk of hormones or other harmful additives.

Ingredients

4tbsp flour
4 rabbit legs
Salt and black pepper
Butter
4 medium white onions
2tbsp brown sugar
250g de-stoned prunes (half-cooked are best)
2 sprigs of thyme, 2 bay leaves, 2 cloves
75cl of beer (dark abbey beers work well)
2 slices of bread
Spicy mustard
Dash of vinegar (optional)

Sprinkle some flour in a bowl. Season the rabbit pieces on both sides with pepper and salt, then dredge the meat in the flour and tap off any excess.

Heat a knob of butter in a large



© lekkervanbijns.be

casserole over medium heat. Put the rabbit pieces in the pot and let them turn golden brown on both sides, without cooking through. Remove from pot. Finely chop the onions and add them to the same pot. Once they have softened, allow them to lightly caramelize by adding the brown sugar.

Roughly chop the prunes and add them to the onions. Then put the meat back in the pot with the thyme, bay leaves and cloves. Pour in the beer until all ingredients are covered. To help bind the sauce, spread a thick layer of spicy

mustard on the slices of bread, place the bread on top of the rabbit and put the lid on the pot. Let the dish simmer for at least an hour on low heat. The final step is to taste the sauce, add salt and pepper as needed, and a splash of vinegar in case it is a little too sweet.

In the winter, rabbit with prunes goes nicely with potatoes in any form, especially croquettes or fries. In the spring, however, this dish is best served with a helping of spring vegetables, such as new potatoes, carrots and green beans.

Docville comes of age

Leuven's film festival celebrates 10 years and its rise to becoming Flanders' best doc fest

Bjorn Gabriels

In 10 editions, Docville has established itself as Flanders' biggest documentary film festival. Although the selection of documentaries favours visuals, sound and emotions over the numbers game, one statistic illustrates the festival's steep ascent: From nine films in the autumn of 2005, Docville has grown to 101 entries this year.

Johan Van Schaeren is the co-ordinator of Fonk, the non-profit organisation that runs Docville, arthouse Cinema ZED, the Leuven International Short Film Festival and, since last year, Dalton Distribution, which distributes documentaries and short films.

Looking back 10 years or so, Van Schaeren is amazed how quickly Docville has become a household name. "Docville came into being through a combination of factors," he explains. "We were already showing a lot of documentaries at Cinema ZED, but we wanted to expand beyond what our regular programme allowed us to do."

Another motivation was the end of Viewpoint in Ghent, the only documentary film festival in Flanders at the time. "There was clearly a demand, and we were interested in filling the gap. By then, we could also count on 10 years of experience organising the Leuven International Short Film Festival."



British filmmaker David Bond's *Project Wild Thing* encourages children to reconnect with the outdoors – by any means possible

The interaction with the local documentary film sector also sparked Docville, Van Schaeren explains. "In the beginning, the winners of our national competition mostly came from francophone Belgium, following their globally renowned documentary tradition. In recent years, Flemish films have

of a young drifter; *Desert Island* (Steve Thielemans); and *Flaxman* (Jan Lapeire), which tells the story of two elderly brothers clinging on to their waning flax-growing business in West Flanders.

"In general, the Belgian documentary is doing well these days," says Van Schaeren. "It would be immodest to attribute this to Docville exclusively, and there's always the question of what came first: the chicken or the egg? But it's certainly no coincidence that Docville has developed in an atmosphere of growing enthusiasm for documentary filmmaking."

He also gives props to the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF). "Over the last decade, it has supported non-fiction filmmakers who produce high-quality work that has a personal touch but is still capable of resonating with a broad audience." In this effort to encourage a documentary film culture in Flanders, Docville and VAF seem to share the same vision. "We don't show everything that VAF supports, but our vision is parallel to theirs."

A similar view of non-fiction

filmmaking can be found, he says, "in *De uil van Athena* (The Owl of Athena), the slot for documentary films on TV channel Canvas. Documentary is a very wide genre, including media reports and historical television series. All this has never disappeared, but in recent years, more auteur documentary making has seemed to flourish."

What, then, makes a film a Docville documentary? Van Schaeren: "We position ourselves as a broad documentary festival that reflects various contemporary tendencies, with a particular focus on auteur cinema. We seek films that express a personal vision through a strong cinematography, intended to be shown in cinemas."

What's most important, he emphasises, "is that documentaries no longer only speak to the head, but also to the heart. Whereas passing

on information used to be essential, now documentaries can also move you, or make you laugh. The tradition of documenting reality and distributing knowledge still exists, but the palette has been enriched. Documentaries are allowed to look beautiful and evoke emotions."

Van Schaeren stresses that it's imperative to bear in mind the audience while shaping the festival, and Docville wants to reach as broad a public as possible. This year's edition introduces an audience award to complement the jury awards.

In its first decade, Docville inclined towards contemporary documentaries from the US, Canada, Denmark and Austria, and not only because those countries have an acclaimed output in non-fiction filmmaking.

"So far, we have had three Danish jury prize winners – *The Monastery: Mr Vig and the Nun*, *Expedition to the End of the World* and *The Ambassador*. That is no coincidence, since Denmark has a solid documentary policy. But we've also found that our audience just loves Scandinavian films."

There's little doubt, then, that this year's rerun of eight jury prize winners will delight festival-goers. Equally crowd-pleasing will be the focus on Austria, with films by Michael Glawogger and Nikolaus Geyrhofer, among others, and a master class by Erwin Wagenhofer (*We Feed the World*), who will also present his new film, *Alphabet*.

Connecting the history of Docville, still a bit wet behind the ears, to its future, Van Schaeren hopes to strengthen audience involvement. "This year we'll introduce the Docville+ Sessions, in which we'll offer ample time to discuss topics raised by three selected films. In the years to come, we'd like to intensify our master classes and make them the spearhead of our festival."

“What’s most important is that documentaries no longer only speak to the head but also to the heart”

As early as its second edition, Docville was able to join forces with media partners like Canvas, Radio 1 and *De Morgen*, which in retrospect was crucial. "Just a few years later," continues Van Schaeren, "Docville received structural support from the Flemish government. Even as a young festival, we managed to get everybody on the same page."

been on the rise."

Last year, Flemish filmmaker Liesbeth De Ceulaer won the national competition with *Behind the Redwood Curtain*, a documentary (soon available on DVD) set among the giant sequoia trees in California. Other recent winners are Congo documentary *Empire of Dust* (Bram Van Paesschen), the intimate portrait

2-10 May

Across Leuven

► www.docville.be

DOING DOCVILLE

Although Docville presents its films in clear-cut segments, you might want to choose your own path. And why not celebrate this 10th edition by seeing through the eyes of a child?

Irish documentary maker Mark Cousins once said: "I like to watch movies like a child and then think about them like an adult." His *A Story of Children and Film* forms a complementary piece to the monumental series *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* and continues his hopscotch through the history of film, which is, says the filmmaker, "only 12 decades old – really young for an art form".

British filmmaker David Bond, meanwhile, wants children to leave their multitude of screens behind once in a while. His *Project Wild Thing* encourages them to reconnect with the outdoors. Also advocating a different approach to how children grow up is *Alphabet*, by Docville guest Erwin

Wagenhofer of Austria.

In *A ciel ouvert* (*Like an Open Sky*), French director Mariana Otero observes a centre for children with psychological and social disorders, while Fleming Griet Teck also applies an observational style in her debut film *Feel My Love*, which empathically approaches people living with dementia and offers a heartwarming and humorous supporting role for youngsters visiting this group of complex and fragile elderly people.

Finally, *The Missing Picture*, an absolute must-see by Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh, tries to deal with the absence of his youth – because it was destroyed by the Khmer Rouge's horrendous reign of terror. Panh reconstructs his own childhood, and his country's trauma, with a cinematic collage of propaganda films and clay figures (pictured) that is as intensely painful as it is beautiful.



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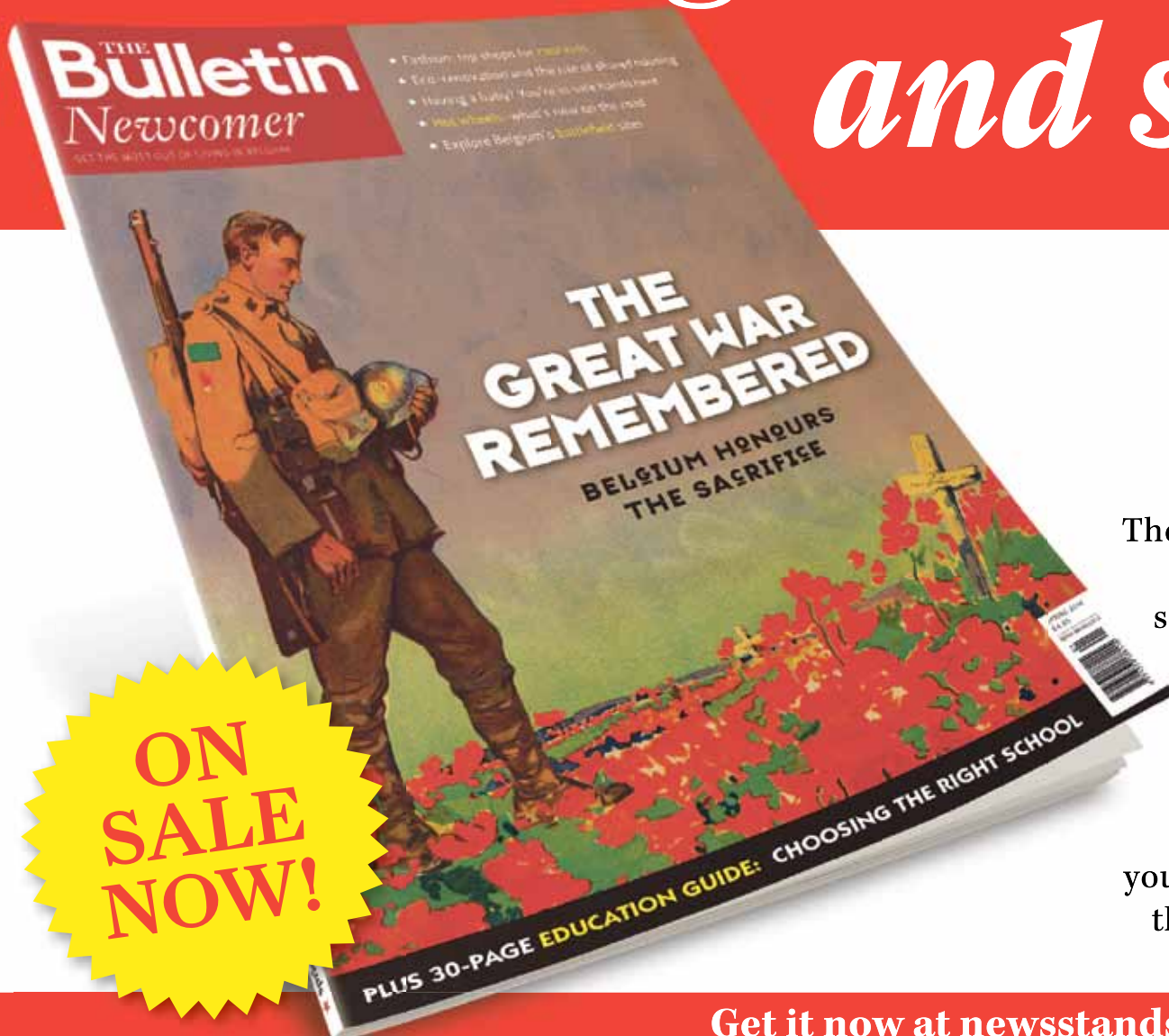
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A tale of two cities

Musician-turned-novelist Ivo Victoria’s third book takes us to the point of no return

Rebecca Benoot

Former musician Ivo Victoria left Antwerp in 2002 for Amsterdam. Since then, he has written three novels; *Dieven van vuur* (Thieves of Fire) is his latest. The previous two were both nominated for multiple awards, making his new book a highly anticipated event. In the 1990s-set novel, three friends who have turned the south of Antwerp into their playground stumble on an abandoned building that was destroyed by fire; just one apartment was left unharmed. During the course of three nights, they break in and take thousands of jazz records, a stuffed balloon fish and several harrowing letters written by a lonely widow during the 1980s to a DJ at Radio Annick. Years later, the narrator returns to the scene of the crime, haunted by the past and trying to put the pieces together.

“Antwerp was the place to be to express yourself and mingle with like-minded individuals

“The story is based on actual events,” Victoria (*pictured*) explains. “There was a fire and letters, so the basics of the book offered a lot of possibilities. Then I started doing some research about radio, talked with people about the neighbourhood, consulted guides and consulted my own memories.”

Containing many autobiographical elements, *Dieven van vuur* can best be described as an urban novel, letting the city of Antwerp play a vital role. “I found the story of that abandoned building in the north of Antwerp very evocative,” Victoria adds, “and wanted to contrast it with a story that was based in the south of the city, which had a totally different atmosphere.” The result is southern whimsy vs northern hardship. The south of Antwerp was blossoming, creatively speaking, in the 1990s. Antwerp was the European Capital of Culture in 1993, the Antwerp Six had made their breakthrough at London’s Fashion Week a few years previously, and the band dEUS had conquered not only Belgium but Europe. “A lot of writers, actors and musicians lived there, so it was the place to be to express yourself creatively and mingle with like-minded individuals,” Victoria says. “Across town in Borgerhout, things were taking a darker turn as Vlaams Blok was being established, giving Antwerp an interesting dynamic.” Just like life, the novel was a process of becoming. It was in constant flux until Victoria gradually decided which way to go: something that can also be said about the characters and Antwerp itself, which are both continually evolving. One of the city guides Victoria talked to told him that it took about 100 years before a borough came full circle. Take Zurenborg, in the south-east of the city, for instance. Victoria: “That started off as a rich area, which can be seen by the stately houses on the Cogels Osylei. It evolved into a middle-class neighbourhood, but ultimately people started moving away, and the area started to become dilapidated. “Enter the young families who



wanted to renovate the houses to their former glory, and now it’s a trendy neighbourhood again. The same happened to the south: When I lived there, it was mainly populated by musicians and artists who moved there for the low rent, but now it’s a very exclusive area.” *Dieven van vuur* deals with those magical fleeting moments that some spend their lives chasing but which will never return. It’s a melancholy novel filled with longing that tries to answer a universal question: How did I end up here? There are certain moments in a person’s life that attain iconic status when we look back at them, even though they might not have been that spectacular at the time. “It’s hard to remember the decisions that sculpted our lives,” Victoria says. “It’s easier to remember the mistakes.” Just like the characters who are carried to unexpected destinations by life’s eternal flow, Victoria’s transition into writing was an unforeseen turn of events. “I used to be a musician,” he says, “and wasn’t particularly interested in books. But when I moved to Amsterdam, a whole new world opened up for me. I stopped making music and started writing in 2005. If I had stayed in Antwerp, the chances were slim that I would have written anything. It just started out as a hobby, with no intention to publish, but then one thing led to another.” *Dieven van vuur* is a book about the origins of stories, how they are intertwined with locations and how fiction emerges from facts. Eloquent, playful and heartbreaking, Victoria’s novel looks back with a whiff of nostalgia at those elusive moments that make us who we are, moments that we can’t seem to grasp; as fickle as a jazz jam session, they are lost forever.

FRESH FICTION

De spiegelingen (Reflections)

Erwin Mortier • De Bezige Bij Multiple award-winning author Erwin Mortier returns to one of his favourite subjects, the First World War. In 2008 the Flemish author wrote *Godenslaap* about a woman, Helena, who marries her brother’s former lover, a British soldier, during the Great War. *De spiegelingen* sheds more light on the life of Helena’s brother, Edgard, who, despite being ravaged by the war both physically and mentally, clings to the idea that he, too, will find The One. Written by someone else, this could have turned into melodramatic fodder, but in the hands of Mortier, *De spiegelingen* is a beautifully written, harrowing and poetic account of one man’s anguish. ★★☆☆



Het Belgisch huwelijk (The Belgian Marriage)

Marc Reugebrink • De Bezige Bij Dutch author Marc Reugebrink moved to Ghent, just like the main character of his fifth novel. Max, a charming art critic tired of his wife’s endless affairs, decides to make a fresh start south of the border. Their motivations for moving might have been different, but soon Reugebrink’s own experiences and considerations take over Max, resulting in an interesting take on immigration, the differences between Dutch and Flemish and what it actually means to be a Fleming. ★★☆☆

De kunst van het vallen (The Art of Falling)

Gaea Schoeters • De Bezige Bij Journalist, author and screenwriter Gaea Schoeters’ second novel tells the tale of a destructive romance between a concert pianist who finds love repressive and ultimately falls victim to his fragmented heart – and the wife of the conductor – during a stint in Prague. Schoeters uses cold, clandestine Communist Eastern Europe as a metaphor for an affair gone bad, which is quite original, but makes the novel feel slightly constructed, drawing our attention away from the wonderfully devastating story. ★★☆☆

(Pijn)³ ((Pain)³)

Pieter Aspe • Manteau It wouldn’t be spring without a new novel from Flanders’ leading crime writer. Detectives Van In and Versavel receive a video message at the police station in Bruges, in which a victim says he’ll be dead by the end of the week if they don’t find him. The victim’s name is Jan Van In: no relation. But things start to heat up with a second message. This time, the victim’s name is Versavel. With the press on his side, Aspe’s latest psychopath hits close to home in this mildly entertaining page-turner. ★★☆☆

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTURE

Hertmans wins Golden Owl's readers jury

Flemish author and poet Stefan Hertmans has won the Golden Book Owl's Prize of the Readers Jury. The readers jury is made up of 100 members of the public who read the nominations for the prestigious award, which is given annually to an author of Dutch-language literature. Hertmans won the €2,500 purse for his book *Oorlog en terpentijn* (War and Turpentine). Earlier this year, Hertmans also won the Flemish Culture Prize for Literature. The jury prize for the Golden Book Owl, meanwhile, went to Dutch author Joost de Vries for his novel *De republiek* (The Republic), an honour that comes with a €25,000 prize.

► www.goudenboekenuil.be

Guy Mortier wins Flemish Culture Prize

Journalist and TV figure Guy Mortier has won the Flemish Culture Prize for Overall Cultural Service last week. Flanders' culture minister Joke Schauvliege handed Mortier the prize as the closing event of the Culture Forum 2020 (see p4). Mortier started out as a journalist at *Humo* in the 1960s, specialising in rock music reviews and profiles, and became the magazine's editor in chief in 1969, staying in the position for 34 years. He was instrumental in launching the now hugely influential *Humo's Rock Rally*. Mortier has since been active as a radio and TV commentator in music and other areas of the arts. Mortier "knew no limits," said Schauvliege. "Using language and a sharp wit, he moulded generations of young critics, offering golden opportunities to an army of talent-rich journalists, writers, photographers, artists and illustrators."

Artists talk to politicians in online series

Brussels cultural centre deBuren and the Flemish Theater Institute are collaborating on Onder 4 Ogen (Between Us), an online series that pairs artists – from painters to choreographers – with Flemish politicians for four-minute conversations. Fifteen politicians took part from all levels of government, including Groen fraction leader Meyrem Almaci, federal finance minister Koen Geens (CD&V) and Flemish housing and energy minister Freya Van den Bossche (S.P.A.). Videos are being released from now until the 25 May elections on the websites of the organisations as well as through their social media accounts.

► www.deburen.eu

Where others fear to tread

One of Europe's best arts festivals, Kunstenfestivaldesarts is back in Brussels

Jacqueline Fletcher

In a few weeks Belgians will be electing new federal and regional governments and casting their votes for the MPs who will represent them in that most inscrutable of institutions – the European Parliament. Difficult decisions will have to be made about our social, economic and ecological impasses, decisions that will affect our future well beyond the lawmakers' five-year term of office.

The general mood remains grim; scepticism and disillusionment are rife. What we need is something to enliven the imagination. Fortunately, May is also the month during which one of Europe's most inspiring performing arts festivals takes place.

From 2 to 24 May (the eve of the elections), the Kunstenfestivaldesarts (KFDA) will fan out across Brussels with a vast array of alternative perspectives for those of us flummoxed by the campaign-trail spectacle.

Juxtaposing an arts festival to the political arena might sound flippant, but KFDA, now in its 19th year, has built a solid international reputation for its ability to assemble a community of artists and audiences willing to collaborate over the space of three weeks to rethink and reinvent the essence of 21st-century life.

Politicians and mass media generally relegate culture to the realm of entertainment, as KFDA's artistic director, Christophe Slagmuylder, points out. Still, artists across the globe have been reanimating our contemporary discourses in imaginative new ways, while turnout for the ballot box has steadily dwindled.

The most beautiful thing about the KFDA, and the artists who come to Brussels each year, is that it offers the gift of stimulating the audience's own imagination through innovative, interdisciplinary art forms; we are empowered to engage in the debates and reflections they provoke. KFDA can go where politicians fear to tread.

The city itself features strongly in KFDA. The derelict interior of the once glamorous Cinema Marivaux, now a car park, will be this year's central venue, evoking both a bygone age and the contemporary priorities rapidly transforming our own time. The festival also takes its public out into the street, into private homes, puts them on stages, seats them around tables and entices them on to the dance floor.

KFDA offers experiences rather than spectatorship. The boundaries between fiction



Pindorama, Lia Rodrigues' dance company from the Brazilian favelas

and reality are blurred as the public become participants; private bodies reclaim public spaces, confronting personal stories with shared histories and confounding the distinctions between seeming interiors and exteriors. Consider Sarah Vanhee's *Untitled (Brussels)*, for instance, which allows the public to visit private homes. Or Tim Etchell's *And for the Rest*, which creates a poster campaign around the city, while Benjamin Verdonck – the colourful chameleon of the Flemish arts' scene – surprises the public with *Notallwhowanderarelost*, a "mini-theatre" that can emerge and disappear at random in any location. Meanwhile, in *The Rabbit and the Teasel & Other Works*, urban artist Els

Dietvorst explores migration and our altered living conditions, saying farewell to Brussels for a new life in rural Ireland.

The festival opens with the latest piece of documentary theatre by the German artist collective Rimini Protokoll, *100% Brussels*. One Hundred inhabitants embody the city's demographics and reveal an astonishingly complex picture of cultural diversity, shifting opinions and personal histories. The Antwerp-based collective Berlin also bring us the latest instalment of their cities project, *Perhaps All the Dragons*.

As usual, the festival will be host to performance artists, choreographers, theatre groups and filmmakers from across the globe. A highlight this year is *The Monk from Tang Dynasty*, a new piece by internationally acclaimed film and theatre director Tsai Ming-liang from Taiwan, shown in tandem with a retrospective of his award-winning films.

Meanwhile, Brett Bailey's South African company Third World Bunfight presents a very original take on Verdi's *Macbeth*. And *Pindorama*, Lia Rodrigues' magnificent dance company from the Rio de Janeiro favelas, is really not to be missed.

KFDA explores our political, social and economic realities, urbanisation, migration and populism, disillusionment and hope, impotence and action, commodification and creation, through a dazzling array of aesthetic forms. In KFDA, artists take risks without compromising quality, mirroring new movements that unfold wherever there is resistance to staid ideas and enfeebled democratic systems.

Brazilian choreographer Marcelo Evelin has created a parade, *Batucada*, derived from the rhythms of the samba, waiting to erupt on to the streets of Brussels from Cinema Marivaux, showing us that a festive carnival procession shares a lot in common with a protest march. As the programme brochure puts it, *Batucada* is "an urban parade, an anti-Olympic procession, a pagan festival, a masked protest, an outbreak of an inner revolution."

2-24 May

Across Brussels

► www.kfda.be

BERLIN: TALKING TO STRANGERS

Every new project of the Antwerp-based collective Berlin starts with Yves Degryse and Bart Bael's arrival in a city or a region. With curiosity, cameras, interviewing techniques and patience galore, they subsequently attempt to film a portrait of the place by allowing selected residents to speak for themselves.

The result is typically a colourful and original perspective, created with a critical eye, subtlety and finesse. *Perhaps All the Dragons* [in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage], the third part of their *Horror Vacui* (fear of emptiness) series, premieres at KFDA.

"It's a great festival," says Degryse. "Being there before with our productions *Bonanza* and *Moscow* changed our company to some extent. It introduced us to new audiences and opened doors for international touring. But our work has always had an international dimension; we choose to work in cities across the globe."

Their interdisciplinary style places audiences in different configurations with multiple screens. "Spectators often tell us they spend a long time

reflecting on the experience afterwards," Degryse says. "They also ask if we use actors or real people. It's impossible to tell. We allow interviewees time to express themselves, starting with a list of 40 annoying questions from Max Frisch's diaries – things like 'Do you have a sense of humour when you're alone?' Then the real stories slowly start to emerge."

“Visitors ask us if we use actors or real people. It's impossible to tell

Perhaps All the Dragons places the audience around a table, the screens situated directly opposite each chair. "The format for the audience is usually a reflection of the city, its story," Degryse says, adding that the art collective likes to blur the boundaries between fiction and



Antwerp-based collective Berlin present the remarkable true stories of strangers in *Perhaps All the Dragons* at KFDA

reality. "Dragons has 30 stories we went back and collected from people and situations that interested us. Some of them are re-enacted, but 29 of them are true. Which one is the lie?"

Degryse says that collaborations are critical in Berlin's work because the collective can spend as much as 18 months on a project and also have to find interviewees. "It's good to be back at the Kunstenfestival," he says. "They provide mental as well as financial support and are always interested in future projects. That's important."

Classic, with a twist

Festival Kortrijk

8-25 May | Across Kortrijk
► www.festivalkortrijk.be

Since Kortrijk restyled its annual festival of classical and new music four years ago – Festival of Flanders Kortrijk became Festival Kortrijk – more visitors have headed to the spring music event. This year's edition mixes traditional classical and contemporary orchestras with sound artists and choreography. Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and her company Rosas open the festival on 8 May with the 1987 masterpiece *Bartók / Mikrokosmos*, a performance in three parts with dancers reacting to the music of Béla Bartók and György Ligeti. It's played here by Jean-Luc Fafchamps and Jean-Luc Plouvier from Brussels' Ictus ensemble and Britain's Duke Quartet, creating a real dialogue between disciplines. Achieving the perfect balance between big orchestral pieces and music from the 20th century was always one of the main concerns

of Michel Tabachnik, the musical director of the Brussels Philharmonic. As a result, the Academy Award-winning orchestra is one of the fixed values of Festival Kortrijk, playing there every year. Conducted by Tabachnik this edition, they perform symphonic works by Charles Ives, Richard Strauss and Modest Moassorgski. Probably the boldest crossover between old and new music is brought to you by the Brussels-based Bl!ndman. Last year the musical collective (*pictured*) celebrated their 25th anniversary with a sequel to their successful Bach on Sax project. On the album *32 FOOT / The Organ of Bach*, taking on the composer's monumental organ pieces with four saxophones, Bl!ndman have introduced extra electronics and a tubax. This instrument, something between a tuba and a sax, produces the lowest of tones. As an addition to the festival, the exhibition *Klinkende Stad* (Sounding City) highlights the twilight zone between visual art, sound and music. *SPACESOUNDBODYSPACE* is 75-year old Austrian sound architect Bernhard Leitner's



© Guy Kokken

first solo exhibition in Belgium. It explores – can you guess? – the relationship between sound, the body and space. Leitner's contemporary, 72-year-old Japanese sound art pioneer Akio Suzuki, has composed an intriguing sound walk called "Oto-date".

Tom Peeters

FESTIVAL

Balkan Trafik
1-4 May | Bozar, Brussels | ► www.balkantrafik.com

The Balkan Trafik festival was inaugurated in 2007 as a means of opening a dialogue between Brussels and the Balkans. Organisers sought above all to challenge the perennial stereotype of Southeast Europe as a "powder keg". So for the past seven years Balkan Trafik has shown us the cream of the region's cultural crop, with a focus on music and film. The offerings are traditional,

contemporary and everything in-between. Although the bulk of the festival is hosted at Bozar, this eighth edition kicks off with a free, open-air shindig on the Grote Markt. Another marquee performance: the legendary Greek musician George Dalaras plays *rebetiko*, a form of urban folk music developed in the streets of Athens during the trying times of the 20th century. **Georgio Valentino**



FOOD&DRINK

Wijnronde
1 May | Across Heuvelland | ► www.wijnronde.be

Flanders brews so much great beer that one hardly hears about all the fine wine produced here. For one day, at least, the organisers of the Wijnronde, or Wine Tour, give you the chance to celebrate the lesser-known regional beverage. The day-long event features a 70km rally through Flanders Fields as well as a wine market and a dinner party that pairs regional dishes with local wine. It's set in West Flanders, but more than a dozen producers from across Belgium are here to show their wares. One of them, Karel Henckens of Winery Aldeneyck, grows his grapes in distant Limburg, on the banks of the Maas. **GV**



VISUAL ARTS

The Graphic Works of Luc Tuymans
Until 11 May | Kloosterstraat 13, Antwerp
► www.tuymans-prints.com

Luc Tuymans is best known as a painter – one of Belgium's most famous, to be precise – but the Antwerp native also moonlights as a printmaker. A selection of lithographs and other experimental prints are currently on show on the west coast of the US. You don't have to travel quite so far to see them, though; a group of dedicated Tuymans print collectors have organised a pop-up exhibition of these pieces and more in the artist's own hometown. *The Graphic Work of Luc Tuymans* boasts more than 60 works and a continuous multimedia presentation containing film footage, recorded interviews and background information. **GV**



EVENT

Ffact
6 May, 20.30 | Theatre de la Toison d'Or, Brussels | ► www.ffact.be

Tuesday nights will never be the same. The monthly Ffact has been enlivening the week's duller day since the beginning of the year. Geared towards expats, Ffact puts on theatre, comedy and music – anything interesting and English – and accompanies it with a delicious meal, prepared by host theatre TTO's in-house kitchen resTTO.

Featured entertainment is often imported from the source, like this month's special guests. Styling themselves "the thinking woman's cabaret", London burlesque troupe Bluestockings deliver striptease and satire in equal measure. This isn't your grandfather's burlesque show (although, to be honest, the old litch would probably enjoy it anyway). **GV**



© SinBokurHD

CONCERT

Brussels

Tedeschi Trucks Band: Gritty blues-rock by the Florida band featuring slide guitarist Derek Trucks and soul musician Susan Tedeschi
30 APR 19.00 at AB, Anspachlaan 110
► www.abconcerts.be

FESTIVAL

Hasselt

Mei-avond celebrations: Traditional spring-welcoming festivities that date back to 1538 and include the annual planting of the May Tree, the mayor's speech, activities for kids, concerts and DJ sets, a bonfire and local treats such as jenever, pâté and *speculaas*
30 APR 18.30-23.45 at Grote Markt
► www.feestcomitehasselt.be

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bruges

Red Rock Rally: 20th edition of the free rock festival featuring concerts by Vive La Fête, A tRRRibuteband, Kenji Minogue, The Fuculeles and Flatcat and more, plus music workshops and entertainment for kids
1 MAY 11.00-00.00 at Koningin Astrid Park, Park 8
► www.redrockrally.be

Brussels

Living Room Music Festival: Annual festival featuring intimate, acoustic world music concerts in 10 private dwellings
4 MAY 13.00-18.00 across Elsene
► www.muziekpublieque.be

FAMILY

Ghent

Start DOK 2014: One of Ghent's hippest terraces for young families kicks off its new season with a day of newspapers, cake and coffee, DJs and concerts by two Flemish bands: jazzy rock by MannGold and instrumental surf rock by Condor Gruppe
1 MAY 11.00-22.00 at DOK, Koopvaardijlaan 13
► www.dokgent.be

SPECIAL EVENT

Tongeren

Ciao Tongeren: The historic Limburg city turns Italian for a day, with more than 50 stalls selling Mediterranean delicacies, luxury items and even Italian cars and Vespas, plus concerts
4 MAY 13.00-18.00 at Grote Markt
► www.tongeren.be

Talking Dutch


Ghently does it

Derek Blyth

You may remember we touched on the issue of *GAS-boetes* – municipal fines for petty offences – in a previous Talking Dutch. Some were complaining that the authorities who issue these fines were losing touch with reality. But that just added to the problem, according to an article in *De Morgen*. *GAS-boete voor protest tegen... GAS-boetes* – GAS fine issued for protest against... GAS fines. *Villanella, een Antwerps kunsthuis voor kinderen en jongeren* – Villa Nella, the article begins, an art centre in Antwerp for children and youth – *is met haar ludieke strijd tegen GAS-boetes stilaan het slachtoffer aan het worden van haar eigen acties* – is gradually becoming the victim of its own actions after it launched a light-hearted campaign against GAS fines. *De organisatie werd al een eerste keer beboet in 2012 omwille van een promoactie met fietslabelhangers die op de openbare weg belandden* – the organisation was fined the first time in 2012 because of a stunt involving advertising on bicycles that fell on to public roadways. *Daarop volgden boetes voor het kleven van verkeerde stickers op vuilnisbakken* – then came fines for sticking the wrong stickers on rubbish bins. *Om de absurditeit en willekeur aan te klagen van de GAS-boetes lanceerde het kunsthuis deze zomer een nieuwe fietshanger met de slogan: “Wij zijn de manne die de GAS doen branne”* – the youth theatre launched a campaign last summer to highlight the absurdity and arbitrary nature of GAS fines, with another ad dangling from bicycle handles. It read: “We are the ones who will set GAS fines on fire.” (Except in Dutch, it cleverly rhymes.) You can probably guess the next part of the story. *Boetes 6 en 7 volgden wegens “het verkeerdelijk uitdelen van pamfletten” en “sluikstorten”* – fines six and seven followed for “illegally distributing pamphlets” and “illegal dumping”. Now it seems as if Antwerp has finally come to its senses. *Antwerpen schreef vorig jaar minder GAS-boetes uit dan*



in 2012, read a recent headline in *De Standaard* – Antwerp issued fewer GAS fines last year than in 2012. Mayor Bart De Wever confirmed that the city was changing its policy. “*Er komen geen absurde GAS-pv’s meer*” – there won’t be any more absurd GAS penalties. In the meantime, the city of Ghent has come up with a unique approach to dealing with the growing problem of litter on the beautiful Graslei along the canal in the city centre. They put up large posters that look like restaurant bills. But instead of food and drink, the bills list the things you can enjoy along the Graslei for free. *1 mooi uitzicht* – one beautiful view; *1 zon* – one sun; *4 vrienden* – four friends; *4 relaxen* – four relaxing moments; *1 lief opdoen* – one flirtation; *1 historisch Gent* – one historic city of Ghent; *9 begroetingen* – nine people saying hello; *1 unieke sfeer* – one unique setting; *1 schoon volk* – one stylish people; *1 poëzie* – one poem; *1 aangename bries* – one pleasant breeze; *1 amusement* – one entertainment. At the bottom, it gives the sub-total as €0. But then on the next line it adds *1 boete zwerfafval* – one fine for litter – €120. Making the final bill €120. *Reken af met zwerfafval* – Put paid to rubbish, it says at the bottom. So the city of Ghent has warned you about the cost of dropping litter, but in the nicest possible way.

 CONNECT WITH US

Tweet us your thoughts @FlandersToday

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

- **Vincenzo DM** @DM_Vincenzo
La Monnaie in #Brussels, #Belgium is hailed as one of the most beautiful opera houses in the world @LaMonnaieDeMunt pic. twitter.com/n5DCjFU1Pt
- **Nicola Furbisher** @NicolaFurbisher
I know I'm not in #Brussels anymore. But I'm so pleased their falcons are back... <http://www.falconsforeveryone.be/live2.jsp?lang=en> ...
- **Alle Braglia** @AlleBraglia
Royal Greenhouses in Laeken, are now open! If you are around Brussels, go visit them! Simply wonderful! <http://bit.ly/1rAnB76>
- **NORTH SEA CHALLENGE** @NSChallenge
Proud to present @Clijsterskim as ambassador of the @NSChallenge! Walk, run, bike, mtb along the Belgian coastline and fight plastic waste!
- **Sergei Klimov** @sergeiklimov
This week's lunch from a nice place in Ghent (Belgium). Love how the phrase “workers day” is followed by “oysters”.
- **Dries Buytaert** @Dries
Hi mom, I'm on TV! (Grey t-shirt, walking to the bakery for croissants and the Antwerp Marathon lead runner came by.) pic.twitter.com/41YTNERqSf
- **Nabil Aniss** @NabilAniss
They're ready to act - Brussels Short Film Festival. #bsff #shortfilms #festival #cinema #bozar... <http://instagram.com/p/nI4yTxoRWR/>
- *In response to: Students to become roommates with the elderly in Ghent*
Ronald Schmidt: I think this is an amazing thing to do for both sides!

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Poll

The alternative taxi service Uber has been ordered by the court to stop operating in Brussels. What do you think?

- a. Brussels' taxi cartel is nothing to be proud of. We should encourage any and all alternatives. Lift the ban!**

33%
- b. Competition is a good thing, but Uber should be made to conform to Brussels' strict taxi regulations**

44%
- c. Uber's drivers are not trained and not licensed, and they undercut professional taxi drivers. The ban should remain**

22%

Taxi service Uber, ordered up via smartphone app, has been a thorn in the side of Brigitte Grouwels, the transport minister of the Brussels-Capital Region. While trying to protect the city's heavily regulated taxi service, she's been taken to task for being old-fashioned and lacking innovation by those who'd like to see a little competition in the mix.

The minister got Uber banned from operating in the capital, but the San Francisco-based company refuses to go away, flouting the ban at the risk of being fined. Do you live in Brussels and long for a faster, more efficient and cheaper taxi service? We can't yet tell if Uber is the first two of those, although it does seem to be cheaper. Is that enough

to justify the ban? Not according to our readers, only one in five of whom thought the ban imposed by the commercial tribunal should remain. The rest of you came down in favour of letting competition bloom, although you also thought Uber should be held to some strict standards, such as the training and licensing they currently lack.

Next week's question:
The government of Flanders has made €60 million in subsidies available to companies forced to pay fees due to a high level of emissions. What do you think?
Go to the Flanders Today homepage to vote! www.flanderstoday.eu

THE LAST WORD

- Net gains**
“The boys have no need of anything but their laptops. The first question they ask when they arrive at a hotel is: ‘Is the wifi good?’ That’s more important than the quality of the food or the beds.”
A spokesperson for the Football Union, gearing up for the Red Devils’ trip to Brazil
- Food for thought**
“One sweet by itself is not dangerous, but the poison lies in the amount. We’re moving towards a snack society like in the US. There they have no fixed mealtimes anymore; people eat the whole day long.”
VUB professor Patrick Mullie on news that Belgium spent €2.1 billion last year on sweets and snacks
- Show business**
“Sometimes things moved so fast I would jump under the shower with Gaga. Then I had to undress her right there under the shower. That’s quite normal, you know.”
West Fleming Tom Eerebout is a stylist in London for stars such as Lady Gaga and Kylie Minogue
- Relief at last**
“There is still work to be done for the future. For example, it’s time café owners allowed their own customers to go to the toilet for free during the Gentse Feesten.”
Baharak Bashar, whose decade-long campaign for free toilets for women during Ghent’s annual festivities has finally been taken up

