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# The contemporary music conundrum

**Ars Musica celebrates a minimalist movement desperate to avoid cultural industrialisation**



Georgio Valentino  
More articles by Georgio \ flanderstoday.eu

What is "contemporary music" anyway? Ars Musica's director joins one of the pioneers of the genre in Flanders in defining one of music's most elusive terms on the eve of a festival that features its best and brightest

**B**elgium is known as much for its music festivals as its beer and chocolate. This relatively small country famously hosts some of Europe's biggest festivals. There's Rock Werchter, Pukkelpop and Lokerse Feesten. Graspop, Tomorrowland and Couleur Café. Then there's Ars Musica: another kind of festival entirely. Spread out over a fortnight and across the city of Brussels, Ars Musica doesn't showcase pop, rock or jazz but rather contemporary music.

As organisers and performers prepare for the 26th edition of Ars Musica, which encompasses some 50 concerts at 18 Brussels venues, *Flanders Today* talks contemporary music with festival director Bruno Letort and composer/pianist Walter Hus, a member of the seminal Flemish group Maximalist!

Along with bandmates Thierry De Mey and Peter Vermeersch, Hus (pictured) helped articulate the Belgian answer to minimalism in the 1980s. The group is celebrated in this special Mini-Maxi edition of Ars Musica.

“

I hate the term. It is probably the worst chosen label ever

Contemporary music is a notoriously difficult genre to define, but Letort paints it with a broad brush. "It is the music of our times," he says, "music that explores new languages and new instrumental practices – that takes risks."

If you find the abstract generality of the term "contemporary music" unsatisfying, you're not alone. "I hate the term. It is probably the worst



# Belgium takes home 32 medals from Brussels Beer Challenge

English beer named best overall from 725 entries at international event



Alan Hope

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**B**elgian beers won 32 medals at the Brussels Beer Challenge, held over the weekend in Leuven, home to the world's biggest brewer, AB InBev. But for the first time, the US won more medals than Belgium. The result was a surprise to a country with ambitions to be the world centre of beer. The US entered 177 beers and walked away with 13 gold medals, 17 silver and 18 bronze, as well as five special mentions. Belgium, with 200 beers from 79 breweries, picked up 11 gold, 12 silver and nine bronze, as well as 11 honourable mentions. In third place was Italy, with five

gold, four silver and three bronze, and one special mention from a total of 110 beers.

Sixty beer experts from across the world spent two days tasting 725 beers entered for the challenge, arranged into eight main and 50 sub-categories, including Abbey/Trappist-style blond and bitter, brut, lambic and gueuze. The judging took place at the former Stella Artois brewery, now the events venue De Hoorn.

The judges, too, are a varied and international group, including journalists and beer writers, the honorary president of the Belgian Brewers Federation, authors,

world hop expert Denis De Keukeleire of the University of Ghent, sommeliers, suppliers and beer sellers.

The best beer in the competition, chosen unanimously, was the golden ale Triple C from Thwaites in Blackburn, England. The best Belgian beer title went to Liefmans Goudenband in the category of Flemish red/brown ales.

The Brussels Beer Challenge is now in its third edition. In the first edition, 498 beers from 12 countries took part; now the number of countries has doubled to 25 and the number of beers has gone up to 730.



© Bart Van der Perre  
Judge Christophe Gillart checks beer colour and transparency as part of the Brussels Beer Challenge

## World leaders attend war ceremonies in Ypres and Nieuwpoort

\ HTTP://IMR.INFLANDERSFIELDS.BE/SEARCH.HTML

Representatives of 83 countries, including German chancellor Angela Merkel and former Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, gathered in Nieuwpoort last week to commemorate the fallen of the First World War.

King Filip laid a wreath at the monument to his great-grandfather King Albert I, which now also houses the Westfront war memorial centre. Chancellor Merkel made a speech in which she compared the destruction brought by Germany when it invaded in 1914 with the situation now, when it was possible for her to be invited to such a ceremony. The female choir Scala performed a version of the Pete Seeger song "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"

Later in the day the dignitaries gathered in Ypres for a special Last Post ceremony, held as all the other daily ceremonies under the Menin Gate, inscribed with the names of tens of thousands of Commonwealth troops who fell in battle but whose remains were never identified.

Prime minister Charles Michel gave a speech in four languages in which he thanked the representatives for their presence, the king placed another wreath, and the ceremony closed under a rain of poppies, which have become symbolic of First World War remembrance, to the tune of the hymn "O Valiant Hearts".

"It is difficult for us today to image the struggle, the despair, the trust and the courage felt time after time by those soldiers," Michel said. "The world of today is completely different in every way from that of 1914. And yet we see some



© Kanselarij van de Premier/Benoit Doppagne/BELGA

things returning, one of them being the tendency of peoples to revert to misunderstanding and all too often to conflict." "We must find a way to bring an end to conflict, in the interests of our children, and of all those who fought and died for their country," said Canada's governor-general, David Johnston, who had travelled from Ottawa for the ceremony. Elsewhere in Ypres, Irish culture minister Heather Humphries visited the In Flanders Fields Museum to reveal the results of a collaboration that succeeded in correcting the records of the 500,000 or so Irish volunteers who fought in the war. The records had hitherto been incomplete or incorrect, with many of the dead reported to have fallen in France when in fact they were fighting on the Western Front in Flanders. To help sort out remaining anomalies, the Irish government has announced short-term grants for students to work with the museum and Google, which is placing the records online in a searchable database. \ AH

## Pack of Arctic wolves stop over in Limburg

The nature aid centre in Opglabbeek in Limburg is playing temporary host to a pack of Arctic wolves after they had to abandon their journey from the Czech Republic to China.

The eight wolves were en route to China when a routine check at Schiphol in Amsterdam discovered one of them had chewed her drinking bowl to pieces and injured her paw on the shards. The animal was tranquillised and treated by a local vet.

"A wounded and tranquillised animal can't carry on travelling, so temporary accommodation had to be found," said a spokesperson for the Opglabbeek centre, which has been taking care of wild animals in need since 1976. Space had to be found not only for the wounded animal but also for the rest of the pack. "It's important that all the animals of a pack remain together, so as not to disturb the hierarchy of the group, and in this case to make sure the injured animal could recover at ease."

The Opglabbeek centre takes in sick and injured wild animals native to Belgium but also has experience with more exotic species, such as those being smuggled and intercepted by customs, and unusual pets abandoned by their owners. The centre also arranges permanent homes, either in the wild in the case of domestic species or with zoos and animal parks in the case of exotic creatures. The centre is open to visits by groups.

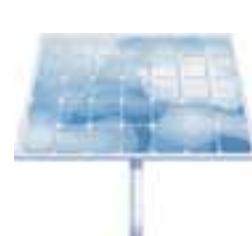
According to the centre, the pack was on its way to an animal park in China. When the wounded animal is recovered, probably this week, the pack will be able to continue the journey. \ AH



€550,000



34%



568



72%



19

subsidy from the Flemish government for the new reception pavilion of the renovated Africa Museum in Tervuren. The museum is currently closed for renovation and will reopen in 2017

of men in Flanders never read books, compared to 16% of women, according to a poll by iVox. The average Fleming reads one book a month, and three-quarters of readers prefer paper to digital

solar panels are to be installed on five municipal buildings in Jette – two schools, a crèche, an administrative centre and a technical centre

less beer sold in Belgium in the third quarter of this year compared to the same period last year by AB InBev, the Leuven-based largest brewer in the world. Total sales were €9.73 billion

top athletes, mainly cyclists, suspected of doping after an investigation by the Leuven prosecutor's office of the practice of a doctor from Rotselaar in Flemish Brabant

## WEEK IN BRIEF

Emergency operators should be able to respond in four languages – Dutch, French, German and English – according to interior minister Jan Jambon interviewed in a party magazine. Problems persist of people being unable to make themselves understood to the emergency operator, mainly for Dutch-speakers in Brussels but also for both language groups across the language border. The department of civil safety has already made moves in the direction of multilingual response.

**The most dangerous motorways** in Belgium in terms of fatalities are the Antwerp Ring and the A11 express road heading west from Antwerp, according to a study by the Belgian Institute for Road Safety. Between 2009 and 2013, there were a record 582 fatalities on the country's motorways. The main causes are not wearing a seatbelt and excessive speed. Nearly 46% of the drivers who died in motorway accidents were not belted in at the time.

The priest Tom Flamez has decided to withdraw his appointment to three parishes in Middelkerke, West Flanders, after the municipal council wrote to the bishop of Bruges asking for a different priest to be assigned to the city. Flamez, who was due to take up his position on 1 November, was given a suspended sentence five years ago for molesting a minor. Bishop Jozef De Kesel commented that he was disappointed by the outcome because he thought the man deserved a second chance.

Two men who last year stole a safe containing €1 million, which they then threw out of the getaway car during a police pursuit, were sentenced to 40 and 37 months by a court in Bruges. The safe broke open in the street in Zedelgem, West Flanders, and most of it was famously scooped up by local resi-

dents. One of the two accused was never arrested and was sentenced to 40 months *in absentia*.

The **carillon on Kunstberg** in central Brussels has sounded again, one year after being shut down for repairs after being damaged by vandals. The music will now play every hour on the hour, alternating between Dutch and French tunes. The repairs are not complete: The mechanism operating the figures that take turns coming out of their niche as the hour hand sweeps the clock face is still broken.

One of the four major banks operating in Belgium has to go, according to National Bank governor Luc Coene, speaking on business channel Kanaal Z. The banks are suffering from high costs, the price of expensive information systems, a lack of overseas business and tough competition for lending and mortgages, Coene said. "Banks would do better to merge or to be bought up by foreign partners," he said.

The Flemish training and employment agency VDAB has introduced a new video chat tool to bring together employers and prospective employees. According to Teleportal, which developed the system, it is a world first. The system allows the two sides to take part in a sort of speed-date lasting up to six minutes, which can then be followed by a conventional interview if desired by both parties. "Youth unemployment is terribly high these days, and we realised that many jobseekers never get the chance to present themselves to an employer," said Fons Leroy, managing director of VDAB.

Elysway, a West Flemish start-up, has launched what it calls "Facebook for the deceased," which will allow visitors to graveyards

to look up the life story of those buried there. The system works by fitting each gravestone with a QR code, which, when scanned with a smartphone, gives access to whatever sort of memorial the bereaved have prepared, including messages from friends or photos of the deceased. The service is free. "We're going along with the spirit of the times," founder Filip Troch said.

\ [www.elysway.com](http://www.elysway.com)

The paper tickets still in use on the Brussels public transport network MIVB will be phased out by next spring. The network is switching to the rechargeable Mobib card, which costs less per journey but which critics point out is able to track a user's movements. MIVB introduced an anonymous Mobib card, but the indications are that it will also eventually be phased out.

A 66-year-old woman from Oudenaarde, East Flanders, faces a one-year prison sentence after being accused of tormenting her neighbours by playing music by Flemish singers day and night at top volume. The court heard how the woman had become attached to the genre known as *schlager* after the death of her husband. The judge also heard how the woman's stereo system had been confiscated on more than one occasion after complaints. "But then she just went out and bought a new one," her neighbour said. A judgement is expected later this month.

**Triomflaan**, which runs through the Brussels districts of Elsene and Oudergem, will be closed until at least 13 November, after subsidence caused the appearance of a hole about 6.5 metres wide near the Chirec Hospital currently under construction. The closure affects the portion of the road between Fraiteur bridge and Delta metro on the carriageway direction Delta.

\ [WWW.TEST-AANKOOPBE](http://WWW.TEST-AANKOOPBE)

Ivo Michiels. "If the leftovers are stored properly, you can perfectly well eat them. In America it's the most normal thing to ask for, but not here. We're looking for a new name for the doggy bag to try to take away the sense of shame or anxiety people have."

The six names on the ballot are: *kliekjesdoos* (leftovers box), *nagenieten* (enjoy later), *overdoos* (doos = box, a play on overdose), *overschoteltje* (a play on *ovenschoteltje*, a dish baked in the oven), *restoestje* (resto + rest) and *verspil-me-nietje* (waste-me-not). As *Flanders Today* went to press, *restoestje* was narrowly ahead of *nagenieten*. The final result will be announced next month. \ AH

## OFFSIDE You can take it with you

Consumer organisation Test-Aankoop has invited members of the public to take part in a poll to find a new name in Dutch for what is known in English as a doggy-bag – the concept of taking leftover food from your plate home with you to be consumed later. The goal of the campaign is to encourage people to reduce food waste, of which restaurants are a leading source.

According to estimates, people in Belgium throw away between 15 and 23 kilograms of edible food every year (or have the restaurant throw it away on their behalf). For the average family of 2.4 people, that comes to as much as 55kg a year, for a monetary loss of €300.



When you add in the waste from supermarkets getting rid of edible food because a bit of the bloom has gone off the rose or the sell-by date is approaching, the mountain of wasted food becomes Olympian. "Some people do dare to ask for a doggy bag when they haven't managed to finish their meal," explained Test-Aankoop director

## FACE OF FLANDERS



© Courtesy Faculty Club

### Tine Verhelst

Another crack appeared last week in the glass ceiling, with the announcement that the new director-general of the Davidsfonds culture network will be Tine Verhelst, the first woman to lead the organisation in its 139-year history.

Verhelst has been general manager of the Faculty Club in Leuven for 15 years. The club, a venue for meetings and conferences, is built on the site of the hospital of the Grote Begijnhof, which dates to the 13th century. Verhelst was born in Ghent and studied economics at the University of Leuven before working in marketing and PR for the Catholic University of Brussels. From there, she moved on

to the Faculty Club, where she was the driving force behind the renovation of the meeting spaces and the club's partnership with the city's famed Arenberg restaurant.

Davidsfonds, founded in 1875 and named after university lecturer Canon Jan Baptist David, was intended to be a Catholic counterpart to the secular Willemsfonds. The organisation now has four

main sections: publishing, with an accent on history, arts and language; events, up to 10,000 a year organised by 500 local branches across Flanders and Brussels; academic activities, including courses for members held in more than 70 centres in Flanders and given by noted professors and experts; and cultural travel, organising more than 100 trips every year in Europe and abroad.

Verhelst takes up the Davidsfonds post on 1 January. "We see in her a team player who goes for results with vision, decisiveness and a great deal of authenticity," commented the organisation's national chair Peter Peene.

"I've been a member for about 10 years, and I've seen Davidsfonds evolve and grow," Verhelst said in a statement. "The line running through my career has been values-driven policy, and I want to continue that line in Davidsfonds, with respect for history but with a mind open to the future, to innovate further and to allow the largest cultural network in Flanders to grow even more." \ Alan Hope

## FLANDERSTODAY

 Flanders  
State of the Art

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## 5TH COLUMN

## Fall from grace

It is not our fault; blame the socialists. That has become a bit of a mantra for both the federal and the Flemish governments lately when they have unpleasant announcements to make. The socialists, in opposition both federally and in Flanders, have clearly fallen from grace.

Last week was a perfect illustration, as Flemish energy minister Annemie Turtelboom (Open VLD) called a rise in electricity rates unavoidable. The reason, according to Turtelboom? The socialist policy of subsidising solar panels.

There is some truth in that: The solar panel subsidies were created by socialist minister Steve Stevaert in 2002. In the previous Flemish government, the energy minister was also a socialist, Freya Van den Bossche. By then, the costs were piling up for the grid management companies, which were unable to recuperate them as federal economy minister Johan Vande Lanotte – a socialist – had capped electricity rates.

There is, however, another side to this. Yes, the subsidy system exploded, but it did so under Van den Bossche's Christian-democrat predecessors Hilde Crevits and Kris Peeters. Eventually, it was Van den Bossche who got rid of the subsidies. Also, the socialists were always part of coalition governments. This means that the parties now blaming them agreed with their policies. And, as Vande Lanotte points out, surely there is another way to compensate than by charging families extra?

All of this is lost on the general public, though. What they remember is: It is the socialists' fault. The current strikes, while they may mobilise tens of thousands, only reinforce this image. So far SPA has not been successful in responding convincingly to the many accusations.

That should come as no surprise. For a party that has fallen from grace – all of them have been there at some point – it is very hard to change perceptions. Sitting out is often the only option. In fact, opposition parties seldom succeed in changing the political mood. Mostly, sitting coalitions are responsible for their own downfall, as voters become disappointed or simply fed up. So far, the centre-right coalitions have little to worry about in that respect. But one day, they, too, will fall from grace. Socialists may hope for those days to come sooner rather than later, but in the meantime there is little they can do to escape being scapegoated for all that has gone wrong in recent years. \ Anja Otte

# Plans for improved social security for chronically ill

## Welfare minister proposes an extension of non-medical care



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The government of Flanders intends to extend the provision of non-medical care for the long-term sick and the elderly, welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen has told the Flemish Parliament. Vandeurzen (*pictured*) was presenting his department's policy paper for the coming five years. "We want to add a Flemish layer to social security," he said. Currently, the chronically ill or disabled can claim up to €130 a month to pay for non-medical costs associated with their conditions, including cleaning and home help or child-minding. Now that responsibility for long-term care has passed from the federal government to the regions, Vandeurzen wants to integrate that benefit into the little-known public insurance scheme set up in 2012.

The handover of care responsibilities to the

regions is an occasion, Vandeurzen said, to reorganise a number of programmes and group them together under public insurance. In future, he said, the aim is for anyone who has need of long-term care of any sort to be able to turn to the public insurance system to provide it. Also in his policy document, Vandeurzen gave members an assurance that rumours of a cut in subsidies for entertainment in rest homes were unfounded. The rumour arose earlier this year that entertainment in rest homes, such as visiting musicians, would be the victim of spending cuts, removing an essential part of life in a rest home. Vandeurzen said the subsidies would actually increase slightly year on year, although some homes where residents required less care might see their subsidy reduced slightly.



© Courtesy Wouter Appeltans/Wikimedia

## Flemish liberal party Open VLD has most members

The Flemish liberal party Open VLD has the highest number of paid party members, according to the latest survey by the Centre for Political Science at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven). Any citizen can become an official member of a political party by paying a low annual fee. Membership usually offers a party newsletter and entrance to party events, including congresses. It also comes with the right to vote for the party president. While the Flemish nationalists NV-A received by far the most votes in last spring's elections, the party comes fourth in terms of paid members. The

Christian democrats CD&V once led the pack in membership numbers but are now in second place behind the liberals. Open VLD, led by Gwendolyn Rutten, currently has 63,239 members, while CD&V has 56,746. The Flemish socialists SPA come in third place, with 49,703. N-VA counts 41,176 members. "The Christian democrats have been steadily losing members," explained KU Leuven political scientist Mark Hooghe in an interview with VRT. "CD&V has a lot of older members, and they are gradually disappearing. That's just a fact of life."

The socialists have also been losing members at an unprecedented rate, he said. "The age when large people's parties ruled the roost has ended. The same trend can be seen in other countries." Among the smaller parties, environmental party Groen has 7,800 members, while the far-right Vlaams Belang has 17,255. Hooghe commented that membership numbers are important because they represent votes for the party. But he admitted that he would have expected NV-A to have had more members, given its huge success at the polls. \ Derek Blyth

## Brussels won't cut public transport budget, says Smet

Brussels has no plans to cut investment in its public transport network, MIVB, the region's transport minister, Pascal Smet, said. Smet was responding to reports in the financial daily *De Tijd* that MIVB would lose €5 million from its 2014 budget and €37 million from next year's budget. "The figures quoted are incomplete, and the conclusions drawn from them are wrong," said Smet. "The region will continue to invest in public transport, the network and services. The amount of money given to MIVB has increased by €36 million to €619 million, so it is not the case that cuts are being made."

Meanwhile, the board of the public transport authority has announced fare increases that will push up the price of an annual pass from €499 to €520, while the price of a monthly pass will increase from €49 to €50. The price rise represents a 2.3% increase, which is above the rate of inflation. Single tickets and 10-journey tickets will cost the same.

The price increases, which still have to be approved, are expected to come into effect on 1 January. \ DB

## One in 10 civil servants to come from immigrant backgrounds

Flanders' integration minister, Liesbeth Homans, wants 10% of Flemish civil servants to come from immigrant backgrounds by 2020. At present, the government of Flanders employs 1,344 people from immigrant backgrounds, or 3.1% of the total payroll. Homans wants to introduce screening of applicants to ensure they are not excluded on the basis of their backgrounds. "A government that wants to convince others to close the ethnic gap is far more convincing when it adopts a wide-reaching diversity policy of its own," she said.

Johan Wets, migration specialist at the Higher Institute for Labour Studies at the University of Leuven, called the target noble, but told *De Morgen* that it would be difficult to reach the target because many immigrants are poorly qualified.

In related news, Homans has also announced changes to the Flemish government's integration courses, which mean migrants moving to Flanders from outside the EU will have to pass two tests to receive an integration proficiency certificate. They will have to pass a Dutch as a second language course as well as a social orientation course. \ DB

## Governments nominate Zoniënwoud as World Natural Heritage Site

Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia have agreed to submit a joint application to Unesco to have the primeval beech forest Zoniënwoud listed as a World Natural Heritage Site.

Unesco already recognises several ancient beech forests as world natural heritage, including the beech forests of the Carpathians and five forests in Germany. It wants to preserve the last remaining beech forests in Europe and has drawn up a list of 37 across Europe, including the Zoniënwoud, that are potential candidates for listing. The beech forest on the edge of Brussels falls under the control of the country's three regions. They have agreed to put together an application based on the cultural and ecological value of the 4,500-hectare forest. The joint agreement was signed by the regional ministers for the environment and for heritage. The final application has to be submitted in 2016.

"The government of Flanders is supporting this application for recognition of the Zoniënwoud as a natural world heritage site on the basis of its unique blend of culture, ecology and the exceptional experience it offers to a large number of people," said Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois. "The forest is also important as a green lung serving Brussels and the Flemish periphery." Flanders' environment minister, Joke Schauvliege, added: "This is the first time the three regions have submitted a joint application to Unesco. The forest is an exceptional environmental asset and an important recreational area for people who like to walk, cycle, ride or take part in Nordic walking." \ DB

# The contemporary music conundrum

In its maturity, contemporary music focuses squarely on its most substantive aspect

continued from page 1

chosen label ever," proclaims Hus. "Contemporary music" just sounds like 'music of today'. Of course classical-music insiders understand something altogether different, something like 'music from the last 30 or 40 years written in the alignment and artistic tradition of classical music'. And for people who are not specialised in the matter, it's simply pretentious classical music that doesn't sound quite right."

"Contemporary music" is unquestionably a loaded descriptor, invested with the charge of its long and controversial history. The form was born in the last century when young, unestablished composers pioneered so many alternatives to the hegemony of classical beauty. It was the ancient Greeks who had laid down the law: only that which is harmonious is beautiful, and only that which is beautiful is good. In urban life, however, these modern composers found a new inspiration in the form of disorder and disharmony. They duly expanded their palette to include alien textures, harmonic tension, unconventional sound sources and brute, industrial cacophony. There was something palpably revolutionary about it all. It could be atonal (as advocated by Luigi Russolo's pioneering polemic *The Art of Noises*) or altogether anti-tonal (like John Cage's epically silent 4'33"), but this modern music, if it was to assert itself, had to be sensational novel.

Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* famously incited a riot at its premiere, while Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* is still regularly referenced as the worst pop album ever recorded.

But in the 21st century, "contemporary" music is neither chronologically new nor particularly unconventional. The shock of the new has faded. The early movement's signature publicity stunts appear to have been co-opted by commercial culture.

Relieved of the obligation to be controversial, contemporary music has become more modest. Finally, in its maturity, it focuses squarely on its most substantive aspect: its

meditation on the structures of music, the ways in which we experience it and its relation to other artistic media.

Enter the Belgians. By the 1980s, young local composers like De Mey and Jean-Paul Dessy had digested the sonic experiments undertaken decades earlier by American artists such as La Monte Young and Steve Reich; and they were ready to give it a go themselves.

The impulse was particularly strong in Flanders, where the contemporary style came to define a variety of disciplines from film to theatre to design. Nowhere, however, did this new wave of Flemish talent assert itself as spectacularly as in the world of dance – and this largely thanks to the influence of musical minimalism.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's 1982 breakthrough *Fase*, for example, was choreographed around a suite of Reich compositions that she discovered on a sojourn to New York. For the follow-up, *Rosas Danst Rosas*, De Keersmaeker would invite De Mey and his clarinet-playing counterpart Vermeersch to get minimal live on stage with her dancers.



© Jay Blakesberg  
One of contemporary music's greats, Kronos Quartet, play AB during Ars Musica

Europe together and play these loud, amplified concerts with wild after-parties," Hus says with a smile. "But after some years, I realised belonging to a group wasn't really what I wanted. I was the first to quit the group to pursue my own career."

financially – necessarily excludes much of the marginal but innovative experiments taking place underground. It's a necessary evil, Letort admits.

"Contemporary music was never entirely anti-institutional," he says. "Even early contemporary composers benefitted from ties to certain broadcast networks and academies. One has to recognise the necessity of such 'institutional' arrangements and yet negotiate them as creatively as possible. This must not become a culture industry as such."

Within the constraints of the festival format, then, Ars Musica is striving to remain fluid, to keep evolving.

Hence its recent metamorphosis from an annual rite of spring to an autumn biennale. "This new format allows us to take the time to organise the best possible programme and present it at the height of the cultural season," Letort explains.

The celebratory focus on Maximalist!, long dead and buried, might also be read as a regressive lapse, this time into nostalgia. Hus puts the tribute into perspective. "I've been surprised by comments from young people who seem to consider what we did as great," he explains. "And every once in a while someone gets the idea to bring it up again, but I'm not very interested in nostalgia. I don't like to look back. I want to advance. I still feel like an absolute beginner."

As ever, the contemporary composer looks forward to the future, to the new works yet to be created, the new sounds yet to be produced. So Hus presents not one but two world premieres during Ars Musica's opening-night extravaganza.

In collaboration with the Brussels

Philharmonic, the former Maximalist! unveils his latest concerto *Temesta Blues* and *Universal Nation*, a tribute to the Belgian rave scene of the 1990s.

He's also set to team up with fellow pianist Frederic Rzewski at Kaaitheater for an intense round of duelling pianos. Still more Hus compositions will be performed by other artists, including Spectra Ensemble. The Flemish group will interpret Hus' 2012 multimedia concept piece *Lint*, which was inspired by the work of American graphic novelist Chris Ware and marries contemporary music with pop-art visual elements.

There's much, much more besides on the programme of Ars Musica. One of the highlights: Ars Musica and Ancienne Belgique (AB) partnered up this year to score one of the biggest coups in the festival's storied history. In the relatively small pond of contemporary music, Kronos Quartet are among the bigger fish. The San Francisco-based group are recognised around the world, thanks in large part to a handful of Hollywood film soundtracks to which they've contributed, among them *Heat* and *Requiem for a Dream*.

Indeed, even if you've never heard the name Kronos Quartet, chances are you've heard their music. On 16 November, they perform works by Terry Riley, Philip Glass and Laurie Anderson at AB.

Ars Musica's pedagogic programme includes a master class led by Kronos Quartet as well as a range of conferences, workshops and a free all-star colloquium moderated by local composer Todor Todoroff and focused on musical innovation in theory and practice.



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A contemporary music festival in Belgium wouldn't be complete without the Ghent-based Spectra Ensemble

14-30 November

Ars Musica  
Across Brussels

## WEEK IN BUSINESS

## Air \ VLM

The management of VLM Airlines, based in Antwerp, has announced a buyout of the company from Romscope, owned by Intro Aviation. VLM started in 1993 flying to London City airport and will continue to offer charter flights, while promising scheduled flights "in the near future" according to CEO Arthur White.

## Hotels \ Meridien

The troubled Hotel Meridien opposite Brussels Central Station will re-open next month under the new name Hilton Brussels Grand Place. It closed in June, after a dispute over rent between the owner of the building and the hotel operator.

## IT \ Cronos Group

The venture capital company based in Kontich, Antwerp province, and specialised in IT investments saw its earnings last year grow by 7.6% to €310 million, while profits dropped by 22% to €5 million. The group has equity in 165 IT businesses representing 1,612 jobs, most of them in Belgium, in fields like data security, business intelligence and software training.

## Lighting \ Delta Light

Delta Light of Wevelgem, West Flanders, a specialist in architectural lighting, has opened a showroom and distribution centre in Bogota, the capital of Colombia. The centre, which was officially opened on the recent trade mission to Colombia led by Princess Astrid, will service the South American market.

## Post \ bpost

The majority state-owned postal service is divesting itself of 56 post offices across the country that no longer meet its operating criteria. The premises vary from a simple front office to a fully equipped multi-window building. bpost hopes to sell the offices for between €50,000 and €2 million, while signing a business agreement with the new owners to maintain a bpost presence in the local area.

Publishing \ De Bezige Bij

De Bezige Bij will not close and will not see its business swallowed by the Dutch division of owner WPG, CEO Koen Clement told VRT radio, countering rumours that the Antwerp publisher was to cease operating. The team working out of Antwerp could, however, be reduced, he admitted.

# Electrabel sells off Eandis

## Energy producer sells grid management company for €911 million



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

Electricity producer Electrabel has sold its 21% stake in Eandis, the grid management company also owned by Flemish municipalities. The sale follows a decision by the government of Flanders obliging Electrabel, which is owned by the French industrial group GDF Suez, to step out of its participation in Eandis by 2019.

The deal brought a price of €911 million, according to a calculation by financial daily *De Tijd*, including a dividend for 2014 to which Electrabel is entitled.

Eandis is now wholly in the hands of the Flemish intercommunales – structures run by



groups of municipalities, which together look after the running of the electricity grid in the

region, under the scrutiny of the Flemish regulator, Vreg, and its federal counterpart, CREG. Eandis' main responsibilities are the strategic interests of the grid, the promotion of rational energy consumption and the social responsibilities laid down as a public service by the Flemish government, in matters such as cutting off service for non-payers.

Eandis maintains more than 82,000km of electrical connections, 40,000 social clients who receive a preferential tariff, 29,000 budget meters for those who have trouble with bills, 42,750 electricity cabins and 769,360 lamps in public places.

## Employers must pay staff during brownouts

Employees who are unable to work during electricity brownouts this winter will still have to be paid, according to the human resources consultancy SD Worx. The company advised employers to prepare in advance by arranging alternative work or flexible working hours.

Should a power cut strike, many employees will fall under the rule of the "incomplete working day": They have worked a certain number of hours but are unable to complete the working day. If the employer has no alternative but to send them home, it still has to pay them for a full day's work.

The government has established a plan for brownouts – planned power outages if a blackout threatens – should electricity supplies come under pressure this winter as a result of the loss of generating capacity caused by repairs at three of the country's nuclear power plants.



Brownouts are scheduled to take place between 17.00 and 20.00, for a maximum of three hours in any given area. Residents will be given 24 hours' notice if possible. The brownout plan cannot guarantee, however, there will be no unscheduled power cuts. The costs of paying employees comes on top of employers' loss of production, according to Dirk Van Basteleire of SD Worx. "But there are alternatives," he said. "For example, employees could arrange to take a vacation day on the day of a brownout. Alternatively, working hours could be re-arranged to make the best possible use of the time when power supplies are sufficient." \ AH

## Brussels Afterwork Shopping initiative abandoned

Atrium, the Brussels Capital-Region's commercial agency, is canceling its Afterwork Shopping campaign, which saw many shops open until 20.00 on Thursdays. The number of customers decreased, the agency said, which led many shops to drop out of the programme. That, in turn, caused an even bigger drop in customers.

Atrium is charged with stimulating consumer trade in the capital. Other projects include design students dressing up shop windows in Sint-Joost, the pop-up store Artisans in Sint-Gillis and Jette and a campaign to freshen up more than 100 shop fronts in the city. Evening shopping on Thursdays is a long tradition in the Netherlands and was introduced by Atrium in 2010 in the Dansaert, Grote Markt, Vismarkt and Nieuwstraat areas of central Brussels.

Although Atrium "promote Afterwork Shopping vigorously," said the agency's Erik Baptist, customers don't seem to be "familiar with the concept. It takes quite a change in mentality. It was difficult to convince shopkeepers. And once there's a drop in what's on offer, you enter into a vicious spiral."

Some shops in the neighbourhoods said they will continue to remain open later on Thursday evenings. \ AH

## Electricity bills could go up by 30% next year

Electricity bills in Flanders could go up by as much as 30% in the coming years, as the government attempts to make up for a deficit of €1.7 billion caused by green energy subsidies paid by the previous administration. The subsidies were approved by the Flemish government but paid out by the grid management companies Eandis and Infrax. They were unable to recoup the cost from customers because the tariffs were frozen for two years by federal consumer minister Johan Vande Lanotte.

Paying off the accumulated debt between 2016 and 2019 would involve raising prices by 30% from the baseline of 2013, according to calculations by the Social-Economic Council of Flanders. The freeze on tariffs ends at the end of this year.

The Flemish energy regulator Vreg, responsible for setting tariffs, said it would not reply to speculation on the extent of the increase. "I only want to talk about things I'm 100% sure of," said director-general André Pictoel. "The distribution tariffs will be published in the second half of November." According to Vande Lanotte, who is no longer in the office, a rise in electricity prices could be avoided. He called for the return of the fee charged to the owners of solar panels and other alternative sources of energy for connection to the grid. That would see the debt paid off in the same time frame, he said, while ensuring the bill was paid by those who benefited from the subsidies in the first place.

"We knew a price rise was on the way, but this is a shock for everyone," said Ivo Michiels, head of the consumer organisation Test-Aankoop. "It means more families will suffer energy shortages." \ AH

## Bank sector trains 200 long-term unemployed youth

Febelfin, the federation for the financial sector, partnered with social organisations earlier this year with the launch of a programme to train 200 long-term unemployed people with a maximum age of 26 to work at bank counters. Of the 38 who completed the programme, nearly one-third have already found a job, according to Jobat.

"The youngsters followed a two-month training at the Febelfin Academy," Werner Abelshauser, director of social affairs and training at Febelfin, told Jobat. "After that, they were placed in two-month internships at local banks." The training covered both technical and customer service skills. "We teach them to deal with clients, with colleagues, how to manage their time, the attitude that is expected on the work floor and how to work with software," said Ann Vanlommel, managing



director of the Febelfin Academy. Students also followed a language course, she added.

The programme, scheduled to run until the end of next year and train a total of 200 youths, is subsidised by the federal work ministry. The first 38 to complete the programme this year came from a total of 45 at the start of the training. A new crop of 50 students is now being trained. Not all participants will get a job at a bank, Abelshauser noted. "But they will gain more confidence and increase their chances of getting a job in other sectors," he said.

\ Andy Furniere

# Survival of the fittest

## Round goby invasion of Flemish rivers raises public health concerns

 Daan Bauwens  
More articles by Daan \ flanderstoday.eu

Flemish anglers are facing their worst nightmare. Round gobies – also known as “aquatic hitchhikers” – have invaded many local canals and rivers. First sighted in 2010, the round goby has spread so rapidly that anglers easily catch up to 50 or 100 an hour, and they often don’t catch anything else. While the round goby doesn’t pose a direct threat to the local economy, experts are saying that their increased numbers do raise concerns about public health and natural ecosystems.

The current invasion of the round goby brings to mind scenes from the 2004 documentary *Darwin’s Nightmare*. That film relates how 1960s scientists introduced the Nile perch into Lake Victoria in East Africa. Little did they know that the fish was a voracious predator that would soon extinguish nearly the entire stock of native species. Albeit on a much smaller scale, Flanders is now facing a comparable turn of events. The round goby is a small, bottom-dwelling fish endemic to the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. It thrives in rivers and canals with artificial shores – which are abundant in Flanders. While similar research has yet to be carried out here, Dutch studies have shown that round gobies tend to outcompete native species.

“There’s more competition for food and space, and native species end up in suboptimal conditions where they cannot feed or breed as much as needed,” says Hugo Verreycken of the Research Institute for Nature and Forest, the Flemish centre for sustainable environmental management.

“In the Dutch Maas and Waal rivers, since the entry of the round goby, the population of native bullheads



Round gobies are invading local rivers and streams, including the Scheldt

has been shown to have decimated,” he continues. “The Netherlands is now considering constructing natural shores along its canals instead of using large rubble stones.”

The round goby was introduced in this region by way of ballast water transfers in cargo ships coming from the Black Sea. “After unloading their cargo, ships need to fill up with sea or river water to be stable when travelling onward,” explains Verreycken. “At the next port, the water – and the organisms travelling with it – is poured out. Every day, tens of thousands of plants and fish species are transported across the globe. Only a small percentage of species settles down in the new waters. And an even smaller percentage turns out to be an invasive species, like the round goby.”

Still, a one-way trip on a cargo ship

doesn’t represent the only means of transportation for the round goby. It could have just as easily swum all the way over here. “In 1993, a canal was opened between the Danube river basin and the Rhine basin,” Verreycken explains. “In the years that followed, different species of gobies migrated over here from the Black Sea, via the Danube and Rhine rivers.”

Based on comparisons between genetic prints of round gobies in the Black Sea and those found in the Albert Canal and the Scheldt, cargo ship transportation is now regarded as a scientific certainty – hence the fish’s nickname the “aquatic hitchhiker”.

In 1990, round gobies were first sighted in North America’s Lake St Claire. Five years later, there were sightings of the species in

all the region’s Great Lakes. Being an extremely aggressive and voracious species, quicker in taking bait from hooks than most other fish, its massive spread effectively put several fishing companies – especially those fishing for predatory species – out of business.

In many ways, the example of the Great Lakes should serve as a warning, says Verreycken. “North America’s lakes are heavily polluted,” he says. “With the introduction of the zebra mussel – another invasive species from the Black Sea – the water in the Lakes was purified, filtered and made transparent in the 1990s. But there was a downside: polluting substances, like cadmium, lead, mercury and PCBs, piled up inside of the zebra mussels. Round gobies eat zebra mussels – up to 85 a day. Large predator fish eat the round gobies. Fishermen catch and eat large predator fish, including the polluting substances.”

The link with Flanders is obvious, says Verreycken: “There is a considerable amount of historical pollution in our river and canal bottoms. We also have zebra mussels, which are then eaten by round gobies. We know that zanders feed on round gobies. And these zanders are a popular dish in restaurants. Research is needed to verify how much pollution is massed together in our zebra mussel population.” Luckily, commercial fishing for predatory fish is not an economic sector in Flanders. But as more and more anglers become demotivated, catching only round gobies instead of their usual roach or breams, the recreational fishing sector may suffer some losses. Because when the bait’s worth more than the fish, it’s time to stop fishing.

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

### Flemish pupil is European Digital Girl of the Year

Manon Van Hoorebeke, a pupil in the Bornem district of Antwerp, has been selected as European Digital Girl of the Year in Rome for her efforts in encouraging girls’ interest in technology. Manon won in the category of girls aged 11 and up. “I am happy to receive the award and be a role model for other girls,” she told *DataNews*. As part of the competition, 11-year-old Manon took part in a CoderDojo programming activity with Neelie Kroes, the former European Commissioner for the digital agenda. She also visited the former Flemish education minister Pascal Smet and took part in a contest with Lego Mindstorms. Manon is active on Twitter, and she blogs in English.

### Exploded rocket carried Flemish experiments

Nasa’s unmanned Antares rocket, which exploded last week during its launch towards the International Space Station, was carrying experiments developed by QinetiQ Space from Kruibeke in East Flanders. One experiment was examining how astronauts adapt to the absence of gravity and the other was meant to analyse characteristics of fluids in space. The team at QinetiQ had worked on the projects for two years and the company is involved in discussions with the European Space Agency as to whether part or all of the experiments can still be carried out.

### ITG to carry out Ebola diagnoses

The Institute for Tropical Medicine (ITG) in Antwerp has received permission from both the Flemish and federal governments to carry out Ebola diagnoses in its own laboratories. Because the samples no longer have to be sent abroad, results can now be available in about four hours. “By diagnosing in Antwerp, we can confirm or exclude an Ebola infection more quickly,” Professor Kevin Ariën, head of the institute’s virology department, told *De Morgen*. “In the case of a false alarm, we can more rapidly reassure the patient, family, caregivers and the public.” Diagnoses for Belgian cases of Ebola have so far been carried out by a specialised lab in the German city of Hamburg.

\ AF

## Q&A

**Frans Lauwers** is the head of the cabinet of Rob Van de Velde, Antwerp’s urban planning alderman. The department is working hard to get wind farms constructed in the port of Antwerp

### What exactly is the problem with wind farms in the port area?

Although several permits for wind farms in the port area have been approved, the procedures are too often complicated by complaints from the municipalities where the wind farms would be built and from environmental organisations. Alderman Van de Velde wants to get all the stakeholders around the table to discuss all the possible difficulties, so that the procedures can be completed more quickly in the future. There are plans for many more wind farms in the port area.

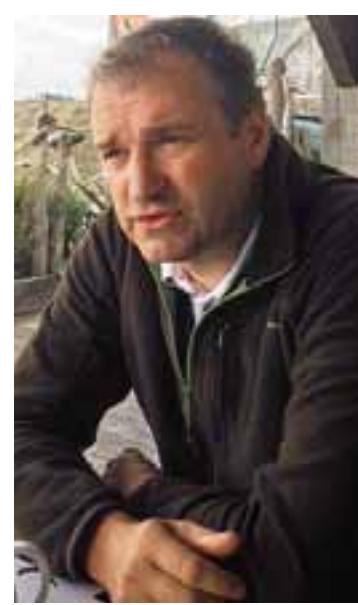
### Why has this become a priority now?

This is an issue that has been on

the agenda for some time now, but it has become more urgent because of the plans of the federal government to selectively turn off the electricity supplies to certain areas this winter – the so-called brownouts. Wind energy can be important in resolving electricity supply problems, and the City of Antwerp definitely wants to facilitate its implementation.

### What are the concerns of towns and environmental organisations?

Municipalities are mostly concerned about the projected shadows, blocked views and the noise of wind farm construction. The closer the wind farms are situ-



ated to the centre of a town, the fiercer the protest of the local community. However, when wind

farms are constructed in more rural areas, environmental organisations often point out that the turbines disrupt the migration routes of birds. As policymakers, it is our duty to work out compromises.

### Has a good location already been found for the first wind farm?

Alderman Van de Velde recently paid a visit to Woensdrecht, a rural area in the Netherlands, just across the border from Antwerp, where wind farms were erected without much difficulty. The nearby Antwerp districts of Zandvliet and Berendrecht, in the northern port area, are therefore now seen as promising areas for wind farms, but this has to be investigated further.

\ Interview by Andy Furniere

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# School daze

## Thirty percent of school staff call their job emotionally demanding



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

According to new statistics, stress among education staff is increasing significantly. Stress specialist Luc Swinnen feels schools should have larger budgets for psychosocial care for staff, which would prevent many emotional problems and reduce the number of staff suffering from burnout.

A survey by the Social Economic Council of Flanders (SERV) does not paint a positive picture of the evolution of working conditions in the Flemish education sector. The survey measures issues such as staff motivation and the risk of severe stress.

While in 2007, just under 60% of education staff said they had a "workable" job, this dropped to 55% in 2013. According to SERV, this negative trend is caused by the increasing prevalence of job-related stress. In 2013, 35.4% of education staff complained of work stress, which is considerably more than the 31.4% of 2007.

About three in 10 of the nearly 1,700 teaching staff surveyed declared they have an "emotionally demanding job", while the Flemish worker average is around two in 10. Between 2010 and 2013, the percentage of education staff with motivation problems also increased significantly from 6.7% to 10.5%.

These statistics are worrying, but they shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone following the news related to the education sector. Previous research has established that psychosocial disorders like stress, burnout and depression are the main reasons that education staff take sick leave.

At the beginning of the year, Klasse, the Flemish education department's multimedia platform, published a series of articles on the subject, including the testimony of Flemish teacher Kathleen Hofmans. Hofmans spoke about the three times she had to take sick



© Beau Lark/CORBIS  
A stress specialist has called for schools to have a larger budget to care for their staff's psychosocial needs and prevent burnout

leave due to burnout.

She had her first burnout 14 years ago. "I not only took care of practical things, but I was also very close to my students, some of whom were in a difficult situation at home," Hofmans told Klasse. "As a teacher, you are never completely finished with work."

**It's still a taboo in the education sector to admit that you can't take it anymore**

Because she couldn't let go of work and students' problems, Hofmans started to suffer from exhaustion and anxiety attacks. She was finally diagnosed with burnout and had to stay home for five months. Although she underwent therapy and tried to change her patterns, she suffered two relapses. "Unfortunately, burnout will always remain a sensitive issue for me," she said.

Hofmans only recently opened up about her difficult periods to her colleagues and directors, who were very understanding. "Unfortunately, it's still a taboo in the education sector to admit that you can't take it anymore," said Hofmans. "But it's undeniable: The work stress is increasing." She concluded that the "excessive organisation" in particular is making the job extra hard. Stress management consultant Luc Swinnen knows the problems of education staff – teachers, directors and assisting staff – all too well, as they make up a considerable number of his clients. His experience tells him that teachers are struggling to deal with the increasing amount of paperwork, digitisation and assertiveness of both students and fellow teachers. "It also seems that teachers increasingly have to help students in vulnerable financial or emotional situations," says Swinnen. "As teachers are insufficiently trained to deal with such problems, they take the issues home and become emotionally exhausted." He feels directors also have an increasingly difficult job, as a lack of money forces them to become a jack-of-all-trades who have to

handle all kinds of practical problems instead of focusing on school policy. "Education staff often also have to work in outdated and maladjusted infrastructure, and that's an environment that affects their motivation and mood," he explains.

What especially bothers Swinnen is his feeling that staff are rarely referred to professional help. "In the business world, management tends to be much more active in sending employees with stress-related issues to professionals who can assist them in overcoming their problems," he says. "But it seems there is almost no budget for psychosocial care for staff in the education sector."

He also doesn't believe that the new federal law on welfare at work, which emphasises the importance of prevention of burnout, will have much impact. "The law is mostly about awareness, but it is very unclear whether it will have an effect on conditions on the work floor," he says.

He advises schools to send at least two teachers on a stress management course. "They can then serve as ambassadors, helping colleagues to understand the problems and thus reduce the taboo surrounding the issue," he explains.

Flanders' new education minister, Hilde Crevits, doesn't explicitly mention psychosocial problems among education staff in her policy note, but she has acknowledged the challenging situation. "Teachers and directors are confronted with social problems that exceed their tasks," she writes. According to the note, Crevits will give special attention to "workability during their careers, so teachers can stay at work long enough and with sufficient motivation". Crevits also promises to reduce the amount of regulation, to give staff more "breathing space" and to modernise school infrastructure.

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### Pop-up classroom in shopping centre

Karel de Grote University College in Antwerp has rented a space in a shopping centre to house a classroom for marketing students. This "pop-up classroom" in the Grand Bazar shopping centre, next to Groenplaats, is in a space where there used to be a shop selling gifts and cards. The college will rent the space from 10 November until 19 December. "The lessons will be organised with 'open doors,'" Kathleen Rommers, shopping centre manager of Grand Bazar Antwerpen, told *Gazet Van Antwerpen*. The advantage of the location should be that students can immediately implement the theory they have learned in real-life conditions. "There will be a salon set up in the front of the space, where students will follow classes," said Rommers.

### Language tests to become harder

Education minister Hilde Crevits is making language education in secondary schools more difficult, to ensure pupils know more when they leave school. According to *Het Nieuwsblad*, Crevits writes in her policy note that the *eindtermen* – the final requirements for school-leavers – for French, English and German need to be more ambitious. Crevits is reacting to research showing that the language skills of Flemish youngsters have gradually been decreasing. At the same time, Crevits will encourage schools to fine-tune their teaching methods. "Inspections show that not all schools have an active language policy to strengthen the knowledge of Dutch and foreign languages among their students," the policy note says.

### Entrance exam for would-be teachers

Secondary school pupils who want to start teacher training in higher education will in future have to take an obligatory but non-binding entrance exam. According to *De Morgen*, that is one of the measures included in Flemish education minister Hilde Crevits' policy note, which will be presented to members of the Flemish Parliament this week. The policy note addresses concerns among education professionals about the level of teacher training in Flemish schools, with many calling for an entrance exam to assess the abilities of first-year students. It is also thought that an entrance exam will give more weight to the profession among students. \ AF

## Campaign warns students about risks of posting online

Flemish education minister Hilde Crevits has launched a new campaign on online privacy that targets students and teachers from secondary education. With the tagline "think before you post something online", the campaign is meant to help children and teenagers acquire the proper skills to surf the internet safely and responsibly.

The minister noted statistics that stress the necessity of the campaign. Research shows, she said, that almost nine out of 10 youngsters between the ages of 12 and 18 in Flanders have a Facebook profile. For children aged nine to 12, the figure is 35%. About 18.5% of pupils in the younger category state that they are friends with people they have never met in real life. In the older category, that figure is 27%.

Surveys demonstrate that more than one out of 10 pupils has received a message of a sexual nature. Ten percent stated that they had a meeting with someone they met via the internet, while 7% had been the victim of cyberbullying.

The book *Mediawijs online* (Media Wise Online) will be distributed as part of the campaign, and teachers will receive educational kits to integrate the topic into their lessons. Classes can also participate in the game Master Find, developed by Child Focus, or the Privacy Laboratory, developed by Belgium's Privacy Commission. "The presence of social media in the lives of young people cannot be underestimated," stated Crevits. "They form an important source of communication at home and in school and



contribute to their media literacy. It is therefore essential to handle social media responsibly and safely. The campaign on online privacy wants to point out the risks to youngsters and teachers and provide tips on how to deal with them." \ AF

## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Armistice Day in Ypres

The anniversary of the end of WWI will be commemorated with three days of special events in Ypres including a memorial walk, poppy planting, a Lego model of the Menin Gate and a special Last Post ceremony. 10-12 November, Grote Markt, Ypres

\ <http://tinyurl.com/ypres-Armistice-Day>

### “Our Congo” Family Festival

A weekend of guided tours, children's workshops and concerts held in conjunction with the exhibition *Our Congo: Belgian Colonial Propaganda Unveiled* at the BELvue Museum. Activities free with museum admission; reservations required. 8-10 November, Paleizenplein 7, Brussels; €6

\ [www.belvue.be](http://www.belvue.be)

### Fantastic Circus of Freaks

A festival for young and old alike that harks back to travelling carnivals and circuses of the 1920s. Besides the main improvisational theatre show, there are continuous carnival acts: fortune teller, mad professor, bird women and snake man, plus moustache contest and pie-baking competition. 8-9 November, Rabot Park, Opgeëistenlaan 455, Ghent; €6-€8 for show, festival free.

\ [www.jamaisvuvzw.com](http://www.jamaisvuvzw.com)

### Saint Martin's Parade

The feast of Saint Martin of Tours is celebrated in Genk with a light parade and fire show. Streetlights are dimmed, children dressed as shoemakers, bakers and Roman soldiers carry torches, and fire performers add to the spectacle. 8 November, 18.00. Genk city centre; free

\ [www.uitingenk.be](http://www.uitingenk.be)

### Celtic Weekend

A festival of Celtic music, dancing and food, including haggis, hosted by the Flemish Caledonian Pipes & Drums band. Market with products from England, Scotland and Ireland. Guinness and whiskey tasting. 7-9 November, community hall, Kloosterstraat, Merelbeke (East Flanders); €10

\ [www.fcpd.be](http://www.fcpd.be)

### Belgian Beer Weekend

The focus at this annual festival is on new beers that have debuted in the past year. Among the 100+ brews are several premieres and exclusives. 6-8 November, CC Hasselt, Kunstlaan 5; free

\ [www.limburgse-biervrienden.be](http://www.limburgse-biervrienden.be)

# Beer with a Japanese twist

## Brussels chemist creates beers full of the flavours of his homeland



Ian Mundell

More articles by Ian \ flanderstoday.eu

\ [WWW.OWABEER.COM](http://WWW.OWABEER.COM)

If you eat in a Japanese restaurant in Brussels or Antwerp, you may see an unfamiliar bottle nestling alongside the usual Japanese beers. Owa may have Japanese script on the label, but it is made in Brussels and, rather than the light lager of a Kirin or Asahi, it tastes like a proper Belgian beer.

The man behind Owa is Leo Imai, a Japanese brewer who has set up shop in the Ukkel district of the capital. His aim has been to explore how Japanese flavours and Belgian beer can meet and mingle.

Imai first became interested in beer as a student, not so much for its intoxicating effect as for its power as a social catalyst. “The point is not that I like beer, but that people like beer,” he says. “It brings people together.”

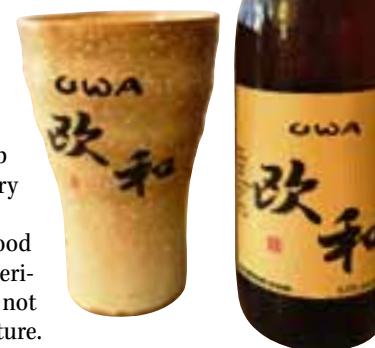
His first step into the business was with Kirin in Japan, where he worked in the brewery's restaurant. This appealed to his ideas about beer and people, but did not work well as a career move. “It's a huge company. I never even met a brewer, and I wanted to brew beer myself.”

With a degree in chemistry, he decided to specialise, moving to Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh for a Master's

degree in brewing and distilling.

After that, he found a job with a brewery in Bavaria.

This was a good learning experience, but did not offer Imai a future.



“For 100 or 200 years there has been the same recipe, the same taste and the same customers – their children and grandchildren. That's a good thing, but I wanted to try something new.”

His next stop was Belgium, where he found another job with a brewery. After a year, in 2006, there was a period when the brewery's vats were standing idle. At last Imai had a chance to make his first beer.

“I imagined many kinds of beer, of course, but this is Belgium and being Japanese is a difference. I thought it would be best to use this advantage, so I devised a good beer to combine with Japanese food,” he says.

For Owa he used a grilled malt, producing an amber beer with a caramel taste that complements sushi with soy sauce and yaki- tori, Japanese grilled meats. Kuro Owa, meanwhile, is a stout with a stronger malt taste designed to work well with miso and Japanese curries.

The beers were a success, allowing Imai to set up his own company. Next he turned to lambic, a sour beer made in Brussels and Flemish Brabant that forms the basis for many fruit beers. Imai's idea was to make lambics with Japanese flavours.

First he tried ume, or Japanese plum, a familiar flavour from



Leo Imai in his brewery, where he creates lambics with ingredients from Japan

plum wine. Then came yuzu, a lemon more often used in cooking. Flavouring the lambic with peel, he says, produces a fresh, fruity beer. More recently, as an experiment, he made a lambic with sakura, cherry leaves that are steeped in salt for several months. In Japan these are sweets. “I didn't know if Europeans

“I didn't know if Europeans would like this. It's a very Japanese taste

would like this or not. It's a very Japanese taste,” he says, expressing surprise that it has been so popular. All of these lambics are made with genuine ingredients imported from Japan, rather than quicker

or cheaper substitutes. “Lambic is very special,” Imai explains. “It's a very traditional beer, so I don't like to add juice or artificial aromas. It's not right.”

Initially he expected to sell half his beer in Belgium and export half back to Japan. But demand here has proved so great that most of his lambic is spoken for before it is brewed. Only about 10% of his production goes east.

Imai currently rents space at two breweries in Flanders, the Van den Bossche brewery in Sint-Lievens-Esse, East Flanders, for the regular beers and the De Troch brewery in Wambeek, Flemish Brabant, for the lambics. As well as supervising the brewing in both places, he also handles sales, marketing and deliveries himself.

For the future he may try other lambic flavours, or perhaps a *witbier*. But his main ambition is to open a restaurant that will match his beers with Japanese food. “Now I'm a brewer, but I'd like to sell directly to people.”

### BITE

## Pralines from Keerbergen

Many Flemish cities have their own signature chocolates, such as Antwerp and its *handjes* (little hands), Kontich with its cheeky *kontjes* (little bums) and Beerne's chocolate bears. Now Keerbergen in Flemish Brabant joins them, thanks to the tenacity of a 19-year-old chocolatier named David Reheul.

To represent his home town, Reheul created De Zandjan – a smooth and creamy dark chocolate praline with a crispy walnut base and a filling made with local honey. The praline is stamped with the image of a man hauling a wheelbarrow, a reference to the hard-working *zandleurders* from Keerbergen's past.

This typical trade in the region around the turn of the 20th century involved hauling white

sand to living rooms as far away as Mechelen or Leuven, where it was used to keep dust at bay and give an overall tidier impression.

De Zandjan is just one of the 27 creations produced in Reheul's new shop, Hchocolate. The shop recently opened inside his parents' gourmet restaurant, Hof Van Craynbergh, where Reheul works as a sommelier. “During my six years of training at Spermalie hotel and cooking school in Bruges, I did an intern-



ship in one of the better Dutch restaurants,” Reheul explained in *Het Laatste Nieuws*. “They often served really good homemade pralines with the coffee, and that caught my attention.”

After a failed attempt to make his own chocolates at home by following a recipe, Reheul realised he would have to go to school to learn the secrets of the trade. And that's how he ended up following a specialisation course in Antwerp for a year, to gain the knowledge – and the offi-

cial title – of chocolatier.

“I discovered that I really enjoy getting creative with chocolate,” he told the newspaper. “Also, being the chocolate addict that I am, that played a big part in my decision to start a chocolate factory.”

Reheul's 27 recipes include simple pralines and more sophisticated varieties, such as those flavoured with herbs and spices and even one filled with gin. There's everything from lavender ganache and apple and blackberry to crunchy caramel with sea salt and hazelnut.

Reheul won't stop there. He hopes to play into the end-of-year celebrations with a unique collection of flavoured marshmallows. He's also working on the design of luxury gift boxes to hold his pralines. \ Robyn Boyle

# Where ballet and Parkinson's meet

People with neurodegenerative disorders get moving at Antwerp's Come2Dance

 Daniel Shamaun  
More articles by Daniel \ flanderstoday.eu

Undeterred by administrative setbacks, two friends with Parkinson's recently founded a dance class for people with neurological diseases and disabilities in Antwerp. The two were inspired by a Dutch TV programme about a similar initiative and say the classes are today filling a real need in Antwerp.

A few weeks ago, Come2Dance, the first dance class in Antwerp for people with neurodegenerative illnesses like Parkinson's disease, opened at a local dance studio. Dirk Beckers and Sandy Kools, two friends who have both had Parkinson's for 10 years, are behind the initiative. They organised the classes, they say, to help themselves and others cope with the disorder.

The Come2Dance classes are specifically designed to have a relaxed pace, and they're more focused on getting the mind to work with the body and creating a positive environment than on demanding dance moves. They are also accompanied by a separate dance course aimed specifically at wheelchair users.

"It's really something people need," says Beckers. "It's not always easy for us to go out, and sometimes you have to go with someone, but we need each other."

Kools, 40, and Beckers, 56, got the idea to start a dance class for Parkinson's sufferers after seeing a television programme about Dutch ballet dancer Marc Vlemmix. He opened a dance school for Parkinson's patients after he was diagnosed with the disease himself. "We wanted to start something for more than Parkinson's patients, something for all people who have Parkinson's, MS and other such diseases," Beckers says.

Beckers and Kools had a long and arduous journey in setting up Come2Dance and had to start from scratch since neither of them had a dance background. They did have a great love for music in common. Beckers claims he owns 10,000 CDs and has been to 1,000 concerts, and Kools was once in a jazz ballet. They searched and found a dance teacher, Andreas Braaten. At the time, he worked as a physiotherapist at the practice where Beckers received his physiotherapy and hydrotherapy. Beckers and Kools' subsequent requests for



© Photos by Nick Hennes  
Andreas Braaten teaches Come2Dance members posture, balance, strength and co-ordination

funding support were rejected because the future of the project could not be guaranteed due to their health. They say there were also troubles with politically separated local municipalities that would not come together on the issue.

At one point, Beckers composed a poetic letter to the authorities in which he asked for help, and defended dreamers by quoting John Lennon. His plea went unheard, marking a turning point for the two friends. "That was the moment that we thought it was over," Beckers says, "but then we thought of looking for a place where we could start with a group that already exists."

He and Kools searched for a school, and

eventually settled on the Easy Moving dance school in Antwerp's Deurne district. Easy Moving was working on the launch of a modern wheelchair dancing class at the same time, and immediately agreed to host Come2Dance.

**“**  
By the end of the  
class, everyone  
was moving to  
Aretha Franklin

"We made the decision to work with Beckers and Kools because we felt that it was so unfortunate that they did not have a place to do this, or the possibility to start," says Majika Beffie, who was a classical ballerina before opening Easy Moving. The school in Deurne has been running for 23 years, so with them the insurance and paperwork for the class was largely already in place, and they were able to get their G Sport badge for handicapped activities.

Parkinson's is one of the world's most destructive neurodegenerative diseases. Worldwide, there are some six million people with the condition, with an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 known cases in Belgium.

Dealing with the condition can at times be tough, but for Beckers and Kools, incorporating positive elements into your life as much as possible is important, even though it is a

daily challenge. "One bad day doesn't make a bad year," says Beckers.

Dance helps tremendously because it tackles many of the movement-related issues that come with Parkinson's. "Professional dancers have been trained all their lives to work on posture, balance, strength, flexibility and co-ordination, and to use that for dancing and creating. And it is exactly these issues that face people with Parkinson's," said Vlemmix in a TEDx talk in Breda, the Netherlands, in 2013.

The Antwerp initiative is open to all people with disabilities, including wheelchair users, whether they be inherited at birth, post-traumatic or related to illness. The classes, which are both priced at €50 for one season, are split into two groups. Come2Dance I is a class specifically for wheelchair users, and Come2Dance II is for those that fall into the other groups.

The Come2Dance classes start off lightly with some exercises on chairs, before moving up to the bar, and finally arriving at standing exercises done to the rhythm of a selection of music. Beckers says Braaten, a physiotherapist and dancer from Norway, is perfect to teach the class since he is used to working with Parkinson's patients and understands the disease well.

Beffie of Easy Moving remembers her surprise after the first class. "It's amazing what Andreas is doing; he made them happy. You can see them thinking: 'It's normal to do this.' By the end of that class, everyone was moving to Aretha Franklin's 'Respect'."

"We do it for all the people that come – not for ourselves. We have nothing in it other than meeting new friends and new people," says Beckers.



Co-founder Dirk Beckers (second from right) says that Come2Dance focuses on getting the mind to work with the body

# Your new guide to life in Belgium



ON SALE  
NOW

The Autumn issue of the Bulletin Newcomer is your guide to enjoying life and settling in Belgium. It mixes essential practical information with lifestyle features on finding a job, top cultural events, dating, keeping pets, sampling Belgian wine and spirits and joining a local theatre group. If you want to make the most of life in Belgium, this is the essential read.

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# One step at a time

Fourteen years in the life of sculptor Berlinda De Bruyckere on show at SMAK

 Christophe Verbiest  
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.SMAK.BE

Berlinda De Bruyckere turned 50 this year, but she's clear. That's not the reason for the exhibition *Sculptures & Drawings 2000-2014* at SMAK, Ghent's museum for contemporary art, nor for the beautifully edited monograph *Berlinda De Bruyckere*. "Both ideas germinated three years ago," she tells me in her large studio, a former school, on the outskirts of her home town of Ghent. "The former gained momentum when I was selected for the Venice Biennale last year. The selected artist is supposed to have an exhibition in a Belgian museum the following year. So, here we are."

The latter, she continues, "ideally would have been finished at the time of the Biennale, but it wasn't possible to work intensively on both the book and a new sculpture".

Of course, one could assume that the monograph would be an ideal occasion to present a retrospective of De Bruyckere's work. But that doesn't interest her. "That would mean a sampling of what I've done over the past 25 years. If someone wants to organise such a retrospective, that's fine with me. But to me, it's much more exciting to unite works that dialogue with each other."

The SMAK show is her first major exhibition in Flanders in a dozen years. "Most people here don't know my work from the recent past," she says. "I think this is more interesting for them than showing works they expect."

The central piece in *Sculptures & Drawings* is "Kreupelhout - Cripplewood", the huge wax sculpture she made for the Biennale, inspired by an uprooted elm she found in the French countryside. It's a wounded tree, sheets and pillows wrapped around its injuries.

In Venice, it was presented in a semi-darkened room, whereas in SMAK, it lies in full light. Still, it is as overwhelming a presence now as



"Kreupelhout - Cripplewood" is on show for the first time after debuting last year at the Venice Biennale

it was then.

Its central place is no coincidence; the work is the culmination of two decades of De Bruyckere art. "It's a tree, but you can also see a human being in it. It's made of materials that I have used before, like wax and blankets. Certain elements are supported or swaddled in a way I did with other sculptures."

And how does she continue after attaining such a culmination? Certainly not by radically changing what she's doing. "I don't see it as the closing of a chapter. For the whole of my career, I've taken one step at a time. And that won't change."

Which doesn't mean she's not working new grounds. She's responsible for the scenography of *Penthesilea*, an opera by Pascal Dusapin that will premiere next year at De Munt in Brussels. With this collaboration, she's leaving her comfort zone – and she's looking forward to it.

"I have to place myself in the service of something much bigger, an opera: a combination of music, voices, libretto, lighting and scenery. I'm used to being fully responsible for the end result. This opera will be a new adventure, though I won't do anything that's foreign to me. I have already explained to director Pierre Audi that I won't work illustratively – then I would just be making decor – but associatively."

At first glance, most of De Bruyckere's sculptures are shocking, some-

times gruesome and always affecting: be it the headless naked bodies of the *Into-One Another* series (dedicated to director Pier Paolo Pasolini), or the lumps of seemingly indistinct meat, made of wax, of *The Wound* series, or her renowned sculptures of horses, of which there is only one at SMAK. But if you lend them enough time, you discover their comforting qualities.

"That's the goal," she explains. "It's still a mystery to me how they succeed in doing so, though I suppose it's linked to the materials they're made of: Wax, horse skin and blankets are soft. White marble, for instance, would emphasize their coldness."

As the title suggests, the exhibition also focuses on De Bruyckere's drawings, a lesser-known but equally fascinating trait of her practice. Often made in series, they are regularly related to sculptures but don't call them preliminary sketches.

"Drawing is a way of tapping into new themes," she explains. "Some of the drawings evolved into sculptures, others didn't. Regardless of what happens afterwards, the drawings are independent art works. Each of them! I might draw them in series, but they have to be able to stand on their own."

SMAK artistic director Philippe Van Cauteren recently stated in the art magazine *HART* that his "predecessors at the museum never showed



Berlinda De Bruyckere's striking wax sculptures are world famous

interest in the work of De Bruyckere, who is now considered one of the 10 most important sculptors in the world." It sounds like an implicit criticism of the museum's late, famous director Jan Hoet.

De Bruyckere: "It's true that he never gave me a solo show at SMAK, though he did include me in some group exhibitions at other

locations. But I never saw that as a personal refusal; my work just didn't appeal to him. I understand and respect that. You shouldn't show artists because they are well-known but because you connect to their work."

Berlinda De Bruyckere is published by Mercatorfonds

SMAK  
Citadelpark, Ghent

Until 15 February

## MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS MONTH

### Dzogchen

Vincent Delbrouck

Every year, Antwerp's photography museum puts a young Belgian photographer in focus. This year, it has chosen Brussels-born Vincent Delbrouck and his *Dzogchen* project, for which he travelled regularly to the Himalayas. Delbrouck immersed himself in Tibetan Buddhism, and he considers the whole process, from travelling there to preparing the exhibition (pictured), as an inner journey. 28 November to 1 February, FotoMuseum, Antwerp

\ WWW.FOTOMUSEUM.BE



### Works on Paper

Walter Swennen

The well-deserved rehabilitation of the work of 68-year-old Walter Swennen continues after his exciting show last year at Wiels. After presenting new paintings at the Xavier Hufkens gallery last spring, Swennen is back there with a whopping 130 works on paper he has made in the last two decades. Seemingly naive on the surface, there lies great beauty and wisdom in them. 20 November to 17 January, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

\ WWW.XAVIERHUFKENS.COM

### Broken Stories

Robert Devriendt

You'll have to travel to London to see the first exhibition in two years by painter Robert Devriendt. Until the end of November, he's on show at the Marlborough Fine Art Gallery. Luckily, 400 of his miniature paintings – often not bigger than a postcard but always very detailed – from the past 15 years are collected in a new book, *Broken Stories*. They're like fragments of a bigger story that's never fully spelt out. As well as some essays on his art, the book surprisingly contains three literary texts by the author, too. *Broken Stories* is published by Ludion

\ WWW.ROBERTDEVRIENDT.BE

## WEEK IN ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Schoenaerts bio pulled from shops

Stan Lauryssens, whose book about the late Flemish actor Julien Schoenaerts incited a court action by Julien's son, Matthias Schoenaerts, has withdrawn the book from sale rather than comply with an interim judgement handed down last week. The judgement required a quote that appears on the cover of the book to be covered up with a sticker containing the message that the book contains inaccuracies. Lauryssens said that he and the publisher, Manteau, would rather see the book pulled from shops "than say that it contains inaccuracies that I consciously included. I did not do that".

The biography *Schoenaerts* focuses on the period between 1970 and 1974 when Julien, a legend of the Flemish and Dutch stage, cinema and television, suffered a mental breakdown. Matthias, also a famous actor, and his mother took Lauryssens to court for damages and with the request that the sticker be placed on the cover. The judge ruled in their favour on the sticker; the damages case is on-going.

## Brussels gets first cat cafe

Cat lovers who for one or the other reason cannot keep a furry feline friend at home now have a solution: the first cat cafe in the country is set to open next week in the Brussels district of Sint-Gillis. The cafe, named Le Chat Touille (a play on the French word *chatouiller* = to tickle), is a concept imported from Japan, where pets are often forbidden in apartment rentals. The cats at Le Chat come from a shelter where the cafe owner, Monika Jurczykowska, was a volunteer.

## Nick Cave speaks out about culture cuts

Australian musician Nick Cave has stepped into the debate over spending cuts of up to 20% for major federally funded cultural institutions like Bozar and De Munt. In a video message of support, Cave, whose first opera, *Shell Shock*, recently finished its premiere run at De Munt, described the venue as "an opera house renowned for innovative productions and work with new composers. The proposed cultural cuts would be devastating and seriously restrict their ability to create works of this level again." \ Alan Hope

# War through a child's eyes

## Comic Wouter Deprez uses past traumas to talk about today's society



Tom Peeters

More articles by Tom \ flanderstoday.eu

WWW.WOUTERDEPREZ.BE

Comedian Wouter Deprez heads in a dramatic new direction, using elements from his family's past in the battle grounds of West Flanders to inspire a captivating monologue accompanied by a double bass

**I**n *Slijk* (Mud) Wouter Deprez shows the wounds of war that are not yet healed, the psychological issues that have not yet been processed.

From an outsider's perspective, the step to a more drama-orientated play may seem unexpected from a man who's basically known as a stand-up comedian. But Deprez has always integrated social topics in his stories. In the future, he wants to do this even more, he tells me after a successful tryout on the eve of another sold-out tour through Flanders.

"In my former comedy shows, the main characters were mostly annoyed," says Deprez. "They were complaining about all sorts of things, as an outlet for their self-complacency and anger." In his new play there is only limited time for self-pity.

And, by seeing the world through the eyes of a child, there's less space for lamentation – a typically adult pastime.

The child in the play is the child his grandfather was during the First World War, and the child he himself was when his grandfather told him about his experiences back then, things he tried to forget most of his adult life. "My grandfather, a structured and smart man, never spoke about the war, and my grandmother, a very convivial and stout woman, had already died when I was born, but I can imagine how they lived."



© Jonas Lampens

Wouter Deprez blends music and words into one voice in his new show

Deprez starts his captivating monologue, at times reinforced by the double bass of Kristof Rosseeuw, by making clear what it is not about. As explained, it's not a bombastic hero-celebrating remembrance. "Nor is it a correct historical account," Deprez says. "It may be relevant for a historian or a war hobbyist which soldier held which weapon in which battle, and which general conquered which piece of land, but not for me. I wanted to step

At the same time, the task he got from Gone West, the organiser of cultural events concerning the First World War, was to tell a new generation about what happened 100 years ago. "It's a generation without grandparents able to tell stories about the war, a generation with only a landscape or a museum as a witness to the cruelty. Even in my village, Geluwe, except for the monument, there are no obvious signs that remind you of the war." A school speech Deprez had to prepare about the war as a seven-year old served as a guideline for the play, which has – more than former comedy shows – a real plot. And though Deprez succeeds in brightening the heavy content with familiar anecdotes and wittiness, he has something to say, not just about the past.

"Most of my recent plays deal with the fact we don't know *how* to live anymore. That's maybe the biggest contrast to 100 years ago, where there was only one path and the biggest sin was to deviate from it. Now we have plenty of possibilities to deviate, but we have forgotten how to participate in the community."

When he spent six months in South Africa, he noticed that not only was there more social discussion, the level of the debate was

also much higher. "We just swear if we have to help out on election day," says Deprez, who often takes a roundabout route to deliver some inconvenient truths to his audiences, such as: Why do we remember this war if we keep on producing weapons for new fields of war in our back garden? "Isn't that terribly shocking? It's so easy to regret things happening 100 years ago, and then not act on it." Compared to this, the introverted reaction of the people who kept quiet about their terrible war experiences was so much braver. "Talking about the past is like a shell: It can explode in your face, or it cleans the ground in front of you," Deprez says.

"Afraid of the explosion, most people didn't deal with it at the time, but I find it very comforting to see elderly people processing their traumas when society accepted that it was OK to talk about it. In fact, my play is more about this acceptance than about the war."

Making *Slijk*, Deprez realised that it's hard to mix comedy with emotion "because you have to constantly defy expectations." At least the double bass of Rosseeuw (of Flat Earth Society fame) helps him find the right balance. "I really feel supported by him. The music not only helps me to tell my story, but also to set contrasts and evoke emotions. The one thing you have to make sure is that the music does not detract from the talking, and vice versa. I had to blend it into one voice."

Being with two people on a stage is so rewarding that after the current tour and a 2015 Dutch leg of his comedy show *Hier is wat ik denk* (Here's What I Think), Deprez wants to focus on having (more) colleagues.

"Being a comedian is the nicest job on earth, but you are often alone. I'm thinking of making a new radio show or even a television series, with an editorial board I can discuss relevant social topics with."

Here he's just taking his observation that it's not enough to complain or criticise to another level. "I want to do something good and throw it on the other good stuff around, and communicate about it without being afraid to step on someone's toe, maybe even shape it at a political level."

"All my life I've been showing my audiences how difficult it is to understand each other and how fantastic it is if it works out. It's time to take it from the stage to the real world."

“

Living in a German-occupied village near the front was hard and severe

In *Slijk*, both serve as archetypes for the average West Flemish farmer's family marked by the memory of war. "Compared to the soldiers who survived Langemark and Passchendaele, they didn't have to see the most cruel scenes. But still, living in a German-occupied village near the front was hard and severe, especially when you look at it from our comfortable age."

Deprez didn't want to share a story that's too big to tell, like the one of the battlefields; he wanted to keep it small and realistic. "In a way, it's like me telling the story of a soccer team in fifth place in the second division, and showing how moving this is."

away from this very male take on history."

Still, at first Deprez wanted to tell too much, only seeing the light when he heard the Dalai Lama speak about the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. "He said Putin was always talking about himself, and that he should learn to see things from other perspectives. This simple analysis about a world leader could have come from a child and was a real eye-opener to me, so I started thinking: If I take the perspective of this child, maybe it will be easier to dig up emotions of indignation and disbelief and spread around some naivety that's worth conserving?"

Until 18 December

Across Flanders

From Turkey, with love

# Istanbul Ekspress

7-16 November

De Centrale & De Handelsbeurs, Ghent  
\ WWW.DECENTRALE.BE

**S**ince the start of this year, Flanders' museums, theatres and concert halls have been celebrating 50 years of Turkish and Moroccan immigration to Belgium. With only two months left, Ghent – home to one of the region's largest Turkish communities – is now preparing for the grand apotheosis.

Ten days long and starting this Friday, the Istanbul Ekspress festival is treating the city to some of the best the Turkish music scene has to offer, with a special focus on bands and singers with mixed cultural origins. "After all, in Istanbul multiculturalism has a much longer history than here," says

programmer Attila Bakiroglu. "We want to show Ghent what's exactly going on in Istanbul."

Cem Adrian (*pictured*), for example, is an avant-garde rock, jazz and pop singer-songwriter with mixed Bosnian and Turkish ancestry. "But what is even more important is that he has one of the most special voices in the world, singing from bass to soprano," says Bakiroglu. The same night, rock pioneers Bulutsuzluk Özlemi, popular in Turkey since the 1980s because of their socially committed and critical lyrics, will take the stage.

At the other end of the music spectrum, Balkan pop star Gökçe and

2003 Eurovision winner Sertab Erener are both coming to Ghent. "But this festival isn't just about bringing Turkish music to Ghent," explains Bakiroglu. "We also send Ghent to Istanbul: six musicians travelled to Istanbul and formed three bands with local musicians. The three teams then made the journey back via the historic migration routes of 50 years ago." This project – called Yolda, the Turkish word for "en route" – includes an internet blog and a series of films shot by a professional crew during the journey. The films will be screened before and after the festival's concerts.

\ Daan Bauwens



## CONCERT

### Muntagna Nera

6 November, 20.00

Bozar, Brussels  
\ WWW.BOZAR.BE

Italian folk culture is alive and well and living in Limburg. In their 20th-century heyday, the province's mines attracted an army of Italian workers whose families remain long after the mines have been exhausted. Muntagna Nera is one cultural by-product of this migration. Between 1978 and 1983, the musical collective performed

rustic torch songs from the south of Italy, notably the traditional *tammurriata* from Campania. The transposition from country to town, not to mention the infusion of the native Flemish culture, made for a kind of coalmine blues. The group reunites for a special performance in Brussels.

Georgio Valentino



## FAMILY

### Export/Import Festival

7-9 November

Bronks, Brussels  
\ WWW.BRONKS.BE

The third edition of this performance festival features theatre, dance and installations for all ages and all languages. Indeed, most of the offerings are in the universal languages of mime and dance. The theme is every bit as harmonious as the name suggests. This festival is all about exchange and openness. Choreographer Erik Kiel's *No Man Is an Island* (*pictured*) shows the advantages of co-operation through acrobatics. Bronks original production *Toink* dramatises the importance of understanding and community. The installation *Infomatic* serves as an interactive encyclopaedia. \ GV



## VISUAL ARTS

### Hans Op de Beeck: The Drawing Room

6 November to 4 January

Botanique, Brussels  
\ WWW.BOTANIQUE.BE

Flemish artist Hans Op de Beeck has earned a reputation for mixing media as diverse as painting, literature and performance art to create unique, often ephemeral, performances. So this exhibition seems at first an exercise in minimalism. And it is, in a way. Op de Beeck limits himself here to drawings and watercolours, all in black and grey. But there's more to the experience than the contents of this or that canvas. *The Drawing Room* is more an immersion than an exhibition. The artist designed the exhibition space himself to intensify the dream-like atmosphere of his works. \ GV



## CONCERT

### Peter Gabriel

12 November, 20.00

GET TICKETS NOW

Paleis 12, Brussels  
\ WWW.PALEIS12.BE

Peter Gabriel revisits his landmark 1986 album *So* in the current live show *Back to Front*. His was an overnight success some 20 years in the making. In his arty youth, the British rock singer had fronted Genesis with a flute and a closet full of bizarre stage costumes. But when the band seemed set for a breakthrough, its main man split to



## FILM

Brussels

**Pink Screens Film Festival:** Annual festival with a focus on queer identity and gender issues, featuring 80 short films, features, documentaries and experimental work. The theme this year is life in contemporary Italy. 6-15 November, Cinema Nova, Arenbergstraat 3, and Aventure, Centrumgalerij  
\ www.pinkscreens.org

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bruges

**Bruges Festival:** Flanders' oldest indoor world music festival, featuring Ghent singer-songwriter Lieven Tavernier, Irish folk group The Gloaming, Finnish pop artist Jonna, Ghent singer Sarah D'hondt and more. 7-8 November, Stadsschouwburg, Vlamingstraat 29  
\ www.brugesfestival.be

## CONCERT

Bruges

**The Afghan Whigs:** The American alt-rock band presents their new album *To the Beast*, the first release since the group's reunion and subsequent comeback in 2011, a savage blend of hard rock, soul and plenty of signature angst and obsession from frontman Greg Dulli. 6 February 20.00, Cactus Club, Magdalenastraat 27  
\ www.cactusmusic.be

## EVENT

Antwerp

**Visit Africa Day:** 40 travel experts specialised in tourism to Southern and Eastern Africa answer questions and provide inspiration. 9 November 11.00-16.30, Antwerp Zoo, Koningin Astridplein 26  
\ www.visit southernafrica.be

## DEBATE

Brussels

**Photography in 2050:** Debate on the future of photography, led by Spanish photographer Joan Fontcuberta and philosophy professor Sue (pen name: Johnny) Golding (in English). 5 November 19.00, Sint-Lukas, Paleizenstraat 70  
\ www.luca-arts.be

## FAIR

Antwerp

**Boekenbeurs 2014:** Books, bookworms and authors come together for Antwerp's 78th annual book fair, featuring thousands of novels, biographies, non-fiction books, comic strips and more. Until 11 November, Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijkstraat 191  
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# Talking Dutch

## Look, no hands



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

I was a bit surprised when I read the headline in *De Standaard* – *Vlaming is niet klaar voor zelfrijdende auto* – the Flemish aren't ready for the self-driving car. What is wrong with the Flemish, I wondered.

The statement was made by Maarten Matienko of the motorists' organisation VAB in response to a new initiative in the Netherlands to test out driverless cars. So the Dutch can handle it. Why not the Flemish?

*Voorlopig is het volgens VAB vooral het psychologisch aspect van de autobestuurder dat maakt dat die nog niet klaar is om de controle over zijn voertuig af te staan* – at the moment, according to VAB, the main reason drivers aren't ready to surrender control of their vehicles is psychological.

What on earth do they mean by that?

*De consument zal zo'n zelfrijdend systeem vandaag snel uitschakelen* – the consumer of today would just disconnect such a self-driving system. *Het grijpt te fel in op de keuzevrijheid van de gebruiker* – it impinges too much on user's freedom of choice.

Aha. So it's all about freedom. But the Flemish MP Joris Vandenbroucke was quick to reject this argument. *Als regio met het grootste mobiliteitsprobleem van Europa moet Vlaanderen mee op de kar springen in de ontwikkeling van de veelbelovende technologie van de zelfrijdende auto* – as the region with the worst mobility in Europe, Flanders has to jump on the bandwagon in developing this promising new technology, he told parliament. *We profielen ons als speerpuntregio voor onderzoek en ontwikkeling en we hebben een gigantisch mobiliteitsprobleem* – we promote ourselves as a state-of-the-art region for research and development and yet we have a massive mobility problem, Vandenbroucke continued.



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*We mogen nu niet op de rem gaan staan* – We mustn't now put our foot on the brake.

The Flemish have also come to realise that they will be stuck in the slow lane as the Dutch and Germans overtake them with the new technology. *In de ons omringende landen wordt volop ingezet op proefritten met zelfrijdende auto's* – they are working flat out in neighbouring countries on pilot projects involving self-driving cars.

*België dreigt achterop te raken doordat testritten hier niet toegelaten zijn op de openbare weg* – Belgium is in danger of being left behind because test drives are not permitted here on the public roads.

Flanders' transport minister agrees that Belgium needs to shift up a gear. *Minister van Mobiliteit Ben Weyts wil ook in Vlaanderen werk maken van een proefproject met zelfrijdende auto's* – mobility minister Ben Weyts also wants Flanders to begin a pilot project using self-driving cars.

It looks like Flemish drivers might in future be asked to give up a little control in order not to be left on the side of the road.

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



*In response to: Round gobies are invading Flemish rivers and canals*

**Bruno Vitorino** @ohvitorino

@flanderstoday it is indeed a quite geeky article :) but I'm the one truly thanking you for the nice work you guys are doing everyday. Kudos



**Cemil B** @CemilBelek

*In response to: Flanders not ready for self-driving car*  
@JonathanVanAcke @flanderstoday @fansofflanders True. But sometimes I like to kick back, relax my legs and enjoy the scenery ;-)



**Liam P. Gaffney** @lpgaff

Here at @KU\_Leuven to listen to a talk by Nobel prize winner, Prof. Englert. Probably talking about bosons and things



*In response to: Antwerp's ITG allowed to carry out Ebola diagnoses*

**Pedro Anselmo**

And how about controls at Belgium airports no?



*In response to: Electricity bills could go up by 30% next year*

**Helen Malevich**

This is happening not only in Belgium but in most countries in Europe. It's not only the governments but the energy lobbies, the greedy big companies.



**Hexham Abbey**

The Abbey Choir standing on the roof of @MASAntwerpen. Now to @zooantwerpen! #AbbeyChoirOnTour <http://t.co/XicQAsSwH4>

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# Poll

Should the government of Flanders launch a programme to pay for sports club memberships for unemployed youth?

**a. Indeed. The unemployed need something to occupy them, and sport is great for discipline. It's an innovative concept**

75%

**b. Absolutely not. How will that help anyone get a job? Spend the money on economic recovery programmes instead**

25%

Sport and work minister Philippe Muyters plans to launch a pilot programme that would see the government paying the fees involved with sports club membership for unemployed youth. Some young people do not have the work ethic required to enter the work-

force, he said, and would benefit from the discipline of doing a sport. Three-quarters of you agree with the minister, a pretty remarkable result considering budget cuts being made by a cash-strapped government. It appears that most

of us still cling to the old Chariots of Fire idea that sport builds confidence and is good for the character. And maybe it is. Wouldn't you rather see your neighbourhood's youth on a football field than hanging about on the street?

## \ Next week's question:

Motoring organisation VAB says Flanders isn't ready to accept driverless cars (see "Talking Dutch", above). What do you think?

Log on to the Flanders Today website at [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu) and click on VOTE!

