Integration courses obligatory for newcomers

The draft integration decree stipulates that newcomers are entitled to follow a course consisting of language classes, social guidance and orientation in the job market. The VLD is in favour of the obligation coming into effect on 1 January 2004. The following of a settling-in course is to become obligatory for all newcomers, not just for those with characteristics placing them at a disadvantage. Poor newcomers may follow the course free of charge, whereas others have to pay for it. The majority parliamentary groups also decided that it should be the Department of Education that organises the classes, and not the reception agencies, which are now only given a director’s role and will be responsible for the follow-up of the newcomers. This means that the Department of Education must organise its range of language courses in a different and more efficient manner, and will have to look for additional funds in order to be able to offer Dutch lessons to all newcomers (who totalled 12,000 this year). The majority also wants to tackle the social guidance section. ‘The Government of Flanders must define final attainment levels for this, so that every newcomer is told the same thing,’ said VLD MP André Denys. There is still no agreement on the subject of sanctions. Through Chokri Mahassine, the SPA argues that the decree should first be subject to evaluation, and that sanctions should only be determined thereafter. The VLD and Spirit are in favour of administrative fines. In a reaction, the Education Minister Vanderpoorten (VLD) said that she wanted to take on the commitment of offering language classes to all newcomers within a reasonable time scale.

ILSE DE VOOGHT • DE FINANCIEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 6 DECEMBER

There was not much comforting economic news to be gleaned from the Flemish press over the week. Figures from the Graydon information bureau show that there have never been recorded so many bankruptcies in Flanders since 1997 (Gazet Van Antwerpen/Het Nieuwsblad, 3 December). To be precise, 6,605 companies have gone under in the space of 11 months. For the time being there is also no about-turn in sight in the rising trend in unemployment. The number of job-seekers has risen on an annual basis by 10.1%, and is rising especially swiftly among young people. The unemployment rate has worsened in the space of one year from 6.68% to 7.27%. Confidence in the economy is none too high either, judging by the dwindling car sales. However, the Liberal ministers, in particular, do not appear to be losing their optimism. Minister for Economic Affairs Gabriëls and Minister-President Dewael are still finding figures that are promising, or at least indicate that Flanders is not doing anywhere near as badly as other parts of Europe. Gabriëls cites the UNCTAD figures in order to show that Flanders ranks first in the field of attracting foreign investment, and points to the EUR 2.5 billion in investments in the Flemish car assembly sector. Dewael feels that the rising trend in the provision of work by temporary employment agencies augurs well. But on 3 December the two ministers from Limburg, together with their colleague and fellow Limburger Steve Stevaert (SPA), were forced to take a massive blow. In their province’s capital, of all places, the multinational Philips is closing an entire plant and a thousand people are to lose their jobs. And Philips Hasselt is not just any company. It was a high-technology showpiece - a centre of know-how in the field of multimedia that created first-rate technology. Together with the brand new Hasselt Research Campus, the Philips plant was the backbone of a growing high-tech sector of small enterprises that was taking shape in the Hasselt area. Trade unions and local politicians are now pinning all their hopes on the existing Campus infrastructure and the presence of highly-skilled staff to attract potential investors that will have to fill the void left by Philips. In the wake of the redundancies at Alcatel Bell and Philips, we have had our eyes opened, says De Standaard (4 December). For a long time in Flanders we assumed that our leading-edge technology could keep us standing and the presence of highly-skilled staff to attract potential investors that will have to fill the void left by Philips. In the wake of the redundancies at Alcatel Bell and Philips, we have had our eyes opened, says De Standaard (4 December). For a long time in Flanders we assumed that our leading-edge technology could keep us standing and
Rail strike called off, but huge financial problems remain at the NMBS/SNCB

Vinck is using his unions’ clout to pressure the government into stumping up more money

The advantageous scheme under which train drivers and guards can take early retirement at 55 is being extended until 2005 after all. On 29 November the inner cabinet of the Federal Government announced that it would only be extending this scheme by one year. The rail unions immediately reacted by announcing a 24-hour strike for 4 and 5 December. They feared that the pension scheme would bite the dust after the elections next year. The managing director of the Belgian Railways (NMBS/SNCB), Karel Vinck, also showed himself to be dissatisfied with the government’s decision. After a meeting between transport minister Durant (Ecolo), Vinck and the rail unions, the government withdrew the measure and the railway company promptly called off the strike. Meanwhile the financing of the railways hangs like a shadow over the negotiations for the formation of a coalition after the elections. Even if the government assumes all those NMBS/SNCB debts that it can take on (it has already decided in principle to take over part of the debts), the railway company is not yet in a position to cover its financial charges with its own income, according to a report in De Financieel-Economische Tijd (5 December) (FF).

GUIDO MEEUSSEN • DE FINANCIËL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 5 DECEMBER

A debt takeover by the government is not enough to safeguard the future of the Belgian Railways, according to the new financial chief executive of the NMBS/SNCB, Luc Lallemand: ‘A preliminary estimate shows us that the Government can take over a maximum of EUR 7 billion of the Railways’ debts’. The European legislation allows Member States to assume the historic debts of their national railway companies, but not those debts that stem from commercial activities, such as ABX or B-Cargo. By 2006 the NMBS/SNCB’s liabilities will have run to EUR 10 billion. On top of that there will be an HST debt of EUR 2 billion. ‘That means that in the best-case scenario we will still be saddled with a debt of EUR 5 billion in 2006’, Lallemand concludes. This is chiefly because the NMBS/SNCB’s operational margin is currently not big enough to pay the interest on that amount. All the more reason to doctor the operational expenses (chiefly wage costs), but also the company’s own income. But that is not possible with the government’s current pricing policy. All price increases must gain the government’s approval and moreover largely follow inflation.

Opinion

BART STURTEWAGEN

DE STANDAARD • 5 DECEMBER

Given that completing the legislative period (until June 2003, ed.) is a matter of honour for Prime Minister Verhofstadt, his government had to bow to the power of the trade unions. It is now clear that the only remaining objective is to keep the matter of the Belgian Railways off the cabinet table. The financing of the railways is now already casting a shadow over the next coalition talks. The illusion that Schouppe’s replacement by Vinck was the magic touch has not lasted long. Just like his predecessor, Vinck is using his unions’ clout to pressure the government into stumping up more money. What is more, he has the luxury of being in a position his dismissal would make the coalition’s loss of face complete, and of this knowledge he is also making use.

The partnership agreement between the eight Flemish Chambers of Commerce and the Flemish Employers’ Association (Vlaams Economisch Verbond - VEV) has been concluded. A good ten months after the eight Flemish Chambers of Commerce and the VEV had announced their wish to integrate their functions, an agreement has now been reached. The employers’ organisations have not chosen a merger, but are opting to ensure that maximum autonomy of the various associations is maintained. The agreement still has to be translated into law and submitted to the grassroots (FF).

EVELYNE HENS • DE FINANCIËL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 4 DECEMBER

The alliance consists of a central entity and eight local entities. The central entity will be taking over the VEV’s activities (concerning the protection of interests, research and the definition of positions). It will have its own president and administrative bodies, as will the local entities. The local entities will be responsible for local services and network activities. A co-ordination committee will have the task of optimising co-operation between the levels. Certain services currently organised at local level will be transferred to the central level. Philippe Muyters, managing director of the VEV, will almost certainly be made chief executive officer of the partnership. Jef Roos, chairman of the VEV, yesterday confirmed that there would be a joint name and logo. Roos stressed that the alliance was not the end of the line in the process of streamlining of the employers’ bodies. Co-operation with the Flemish sector representations is to be strengthened. ‘We shall be entering into talks with them regarding representation in our administrative bodies’. The new Flemish employers’ organisation, which will start up on 1 January 2004, represents 22,000 companies.

www.vev.be
Philips Hasselt closes for good

Research and development is now moving to the head office in Eindhoven, and Optical Storage moves to Taiwan

The Christmas period in 2002 will have a nasty aftertaste for 1,400 employees of Philips Hasselt. After 48 years, the management of the Philips concern in Amsterdam is switching off the lights at Philips Hasselt, in the CD and DVD production division, the PCB department, the production department for television sets and the research centre. And yet it was only a few years ago that Hasselt was being proclaimed Philips’ worldwide know-how and skills centre for digital storage technology. New activities were carried at the beginning of the production cycle in Hasselt. When the margins fell and the pressure on prices increased, production disappeared to low-wage countries and a restart was made on a new product in Hasselt. According to Julien Michiels, Philips’ spokesman, this approach no longer works. The enormous pressure on prices and the collapse of the computer market meant that losses in optical storage for CD and DVD players and disc drives were mounting. Research and development is now moving to the head office in Eindhoven, and Optical Storage moves to Taiwan. In addition to the 957 outright redundancies, 458 employees in the PCB division are moving to the American contractor Jabil Circuit, which is acquiring the Philips Hasselt printed-circuit-board plant. Of those, a further 220 risk losing their job at the end of 2003. It now transpires, according to Het Belang van Limburg, that the bigwigs in Amsterdam sent the new General Manager Jan Konijnenberg to Hasselt at the beginning of this year with one single mission: terminal care (FF).

GUY THUWIS • HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG • 4 DECEMBER

‘It is very annoying to have to conclude that we have not managed to keep activities at Hasselt going. But I sincerely think that it was an inevitable decision,’ said Konijnenberg. Philips Optical Storage (CD and DVD applications) has to close, according to Konijnenberg, because the division has been loss-making for years. In the third quarter of 2002 POS posted a loss of EUR 40 mil-
Criticism of ministers’ tough stance
THE IMPRESSION WAS CREATED THAT PRESSURE WAS PUT ON THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES TO ELIMINATE A POLITICAL ADVERSARY

Abou Jahjah, the leader of the Arab-European League, which is being held responsible for the disturbances that raged for two days in the Antwerp borough of Borgerhout, was sitting in jail at the time the funeral ceremony was taking place. The Antwerp police had arrested him on Thursday evening and on Friday the examining magistrate placed him under a detention warrant. Jahjah is accused of being an accessory before the fact in the riots. The judicial authorities speak of ‘rebellion in a group with display of weapons’. Such charges are usually used against football hooligans. It has not yet been possible to substantiate speculation about suspected flows of funds to the AEL from a Lebanese firm in which Jahjah’s brother is an employee. Abou Jahjah’s lawyers speak of meagre evidence and continued to assert that Jahjah was at the scene of the riots in order to express his grief. The evidence consists of film images, and the testimony of someone who allegedly heard Jahjah utter exhortations to violence in Arabic (FF).

JOHN DE WIT • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 30 NOVEMBER

In the House Verhofstadt said that ‘the AEL’s objective is to close off neighbourhoods from the police so that criminal activities can be continued in those districts’. He explicitly called the AEL ‘a criminal organisation’. Duquesne then said that ‘Abou Jahjah incited people to violence in as many as three times’. He felt that the offence of ‘instigation of violence’ had thus already been proven. But there is not even a lawsuit yet! Both pronouncements violate the presumption of innocence. And that is not something taken lightly by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, certainly not when the utterances come from the mouths of a prime minister or a minister of the interior. [...] On top of that comes the fact that the right to a fair trial has probably also been infringed on account of Verhofstadt’s and Duquesne’s overblown declarations. Verhofstadt’s security advisor already implicitly announced the arrest a day before. Verhofstadt announced the actions within a few hours. That undeniably creates the impression that pressure was put on the judicial authorities to eliminate a political adversary.

RUUD GOOSSENS • DE MORGEN 30 NOVEMBER

At a press briefing after the council of ministers on Friday 29 November, Verhofstadt said of Jahjah’s arrest: ‘I learnt of the timing of the arrest from the media. But I was able to be that affirmative in parliament because Justice Minister Marc Verwilghen [VLD] had informed me beforehand. He told me that he had submitted a request for action to the public prosecutor’s office. And yes, that is completely normal. The Judicial Code gives him a right of positive injunction.’ By means of that right of injunction, the justice minister can give the public prosecutor’s department the order to investigate a case, but not to go ahead with an arrest as well. At Verwilghen’s department, it was stressed that the minimal interpretation was the only correct one: ‘He asked the public prosecutor’s department to open an investigation one week ago.’

However, Van Parys neglects to add that in the parliamentary debate in question, his party colleague and Antwerp alderman Marc Van Peel called on the AEL to be outlawed and for Jahjah to be detained, according to Het Laatste Nieuws [3 December].

Also on 3 December, an open letter from some 200 academics from various universities, and addressed to the responsible politicians, was published in De Morgen. ‘The warlike language used by Prime Minister Verhofstadt and the proposals made by Minister Duquesne and MP Marc Van Peel for the AEL to be outlawed by means of legislative adaptations cause serious questions to be raised about the democratic content of the approach. The muscular and demagogic discourse, which moreover finds an alarming echo in a large segment of the media, fosters anything but reason and reflection, but on the contrary creates a climate of growing anxiety and polarisation among the population [...]’. The disturbances should first and foremost be seen as a symptom of many years of accumulated frustrations on account of missed opportunities and exclusion [...]’. As long as no structural solutions are worked out for social problems such as lack of opportunities and discrimination, the outbreaks will continue to be repeated.'
Abou Jahjah free again, but Verhofstadt continues attack on AEL

Patrols vis-à-vis the police, irrespective of whether these are organised by immigrants or native Belgians, cannot be accepted by any self-respecting government.

A bou Jahjah was released on the evening of Tuesday 4 December. The Antwerp Council of the Penal Court (magistrates at the level of the Penal Court who decide upon the release of a person under remand or the extension of the warrant for his arrest) saw no reason justifying further detention and released him on demand. The public prosecutor’s office did not oppose the decision. The fact that a police inspector who speaks Arabic thought he had heard Jahjah inciting people to violence in Arabic has no probative value. After all, no report was made of his conclusion. Jahjah himself is in a more combative mood than ever, announcing that he would be taking Prime Minister Verhofstadt to court (FF).

The council of the Penal Court broadly followed the arguments of the defence. President Corazza felt that the case did indeed raise substantial doubts as to the ‘indications of serious guilt’ inculpating Jahjah, and that the latter’s detention was therefore not warranted. Two conditions were attached to the release, however. Abou Jahjah must thus place himself at the disposal of the judicial authorities, and is banned from taking part in demonstrations on the public streets for three months. The magistrates did not want to go so far as to bar him from public speaking. Jahjah’s lawyer Alexandre Sachem: ‘According to the council, our client should not be politically gagged, given his plans to take part in the elections. Therefore he may continue to express his opinion and may address people indoors’. At a press conference Jahjah confirmed that he would submit to the judicial agreement. ‘I am allowed to be involved in politics and I shall be involved in politics,’ he said. The politicians who accused him in parliament, and especially Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, were put through the hoops. The Premier can expect a lawsuit. ‘Even if it costs me ten years of my life, I am suing the Prime Minister for his accusations,’ threatened the AEL leader. The media that had contributed to his demonisation also got a licking.

THE ARREST OF ABOU JAHJAH

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BART EECKHOUT/CASPAR NABER
DE MORGEN • 4 DECEMBER

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MARK DEWEERDT • DE FINANCIËL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 5 DECEMBER

The AEL wants to set people against each other and is adopting positions that are contrary to the values of our society. Patrols vis-à-vis the police, irrespective of whether these are organised by immigrants or native Belgians, cannot be accepted by any self-respecting government,’ went a statement issued by Verhofstadt’s office. For that matter, Verhofstadt need not lose any sleep over possible legal action brought by Jahjah. The Prime Minister is protected by the constitutional principle of ministerial unaccountability, which means that a complaint lodged by the AEL against Verhofstadt cannot lead to legal proceedings. Prosecution is possible, however, in the case of opinions expressed outside the exercising of the mandate or office, although here parliamentary or ministerial immunity comes into play. As far as a minister is concerned, the immunity means that he can only be tried by the court of appeal, and that Parliament’s consent is required for a direct writ of summons to appear before the court of appeal.

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Dewael not in favour of a pact with immigrants

On Friday Prime Minister Verhofs-tadt (VLD) realised that the separation of the powers had to be restored as quickly as possible, and called on the judicial authorities to be left to do their work in complete serenity, and within the framework of the existing legislative arsenal. At the weekend attention shifted from the approach used to deal with the AEL to the approach adopted for the integration policy, to the great satisfaction of a number of press commentators and the immigrants’ associations. But there is no great unanimity among politicians regarding the integration policy either. The Greens came up with a Marshall Plan for Borgerhout and Spirit is advocating a large-scale integration policy either. The Greens came up with a Marshall Plan for Borgerhout and Spirit is advocating a large-scale integration policy being concluded with the immigrant community in this country. However, the VLD and the CD&V do not see the point of such a pact. According to Flemish Minister-President, Patrick Dewael (VLD), integration does not need a new ‘high mass’, but calls rather for far-reaching in-depth work (FF).

MARK ECKHAUT/GUY FRANSEN DE STANDAARD • 2 DECEMBER

Mieke Vogels (Agalev), Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities, is aiming for a debate between the Government of Flanders and the entire community of immigrants. That debate should result in a pact, ‘like the Vilvoorde Pact’, which had earlier been signed with the social partners. In her view, this pact should deal with improved support for immigrants’ associations and stimulation of the employment of foreigners. Spirit also wants a pact for intercultural co-operation, prepared jointly by autochthonous Belgians and immigrants. The police, the judiciary, the social partners and the media should also be involved in this, in the view of Els Van Weert, chairperson of Spirit. ‘Both sides need to make a great effort,’ she says. That this greater effort is required precisely from the immigrant community is a view underlined in VLD quarters by Bart Somers, the mayor of Mechelen, and by Flemish Minister-President Patrick Dewael. The Minister-President does not see an immigrants’ pact working. The Vilvoorde Pact is barely a year old, and it also already contains a good number of objectives that can be of interest to immigrants. He wants to invite representatives of the immigrant community for talks on a regular basis.

www.flanders.be

Antwerp city council does not follow the Vlaams Blok

Majority does not want to hear anything of a police ordinance prohibiting participation in the AEL’s civilian patrols

The fact that their leader was in jail did not deter four girls belonging to the AEL from distributing pamphlets warning of racist police action, around the railway station in Antwerp. The Antwerp police left the female ‘civilian patrol’ alone. Although Antwerp’s city council has announced a zero-tolerance approach, the girls were not picked up. That same evening, a meeting of the city council convened by the Vlaams Blok was held in Antwerp’s city hall. (Since the extreme-right party holds a third of the votes in Antwerp, it can do this whenever it sees fit.) This time the Blok asked the council meeting to support a motion tabled by the Blok against Jahjah’s Arab-European League (FF).

RUUD GOOSSENS • DE MORGEN 3 DECEMBER

SPA, VLD, Agalev and CD&V did not want to hear anything of a police ordinance prohibiting participation in the AEL’s civilian patrols. However, the majority of the city council did once again range itself behind the policy of zero tolerance. ‘And that zero tolerance will also be applied to the AEL’s civilian patrols,’ Mayor Leona Detiège said at the start of the meeting. There will follow an evaluation in December, at the request chiefly of the Greens. The alderman responsible for security Grootjans [VLD] was more forthright and said that ‘the civil patrols will no longer be allowed’. Grootjans also exercised his veto against ‘pamphlets in which the integrity of the police is called into question’. Detiège was more circumspect on this, too. ‘We shall draw up reports. Then it will be up to the courts’. Detiège also announced that she did not agree with the idea of an action for damages being instituted by the city council against the AEL. ‘Reports have been made by the police for every action in which the AEL has been involved in recent weeks,’ was her message. ‘The public prosecutor’s office is undertaking an investigation and the court will have to deliver a judgement in the end. And if it is indeed necessary, it will be up to the college of aldermen to take steps - not the city council’. In a joint motion, the majority parties also emphasise that the actions against street crime in Borgerhout, which were the cause of the civilian patrols, are being continued undiminished. At the same time the SPA, VLD, Agalev and CD&V factions in the college of aldermen asked for a phased plan to improve the co-existence of the communities in Antwerp.

www.antwerp.be
**Politics and Culture**

**Book**

**Geert Bourgeois (N-VA) pulls down the purple-green coalition**

After Karel De Gucht (VLD), Guy Verhofstadt (VLD), Patrick Dewael (VLD), Patrick Janssens (SPA) and Bert Anciaux (Spirit), it was the turn of N-VA chairman Geert Bourgeois to unveil a book, which he presented last Monday. 'The ruins of Purple/Green' refers in his title to 'The Ruins of Purple' of the murdered Dutch populist Pim Fortuyn. The book is first and foremost a sample card of the excellent but at times one-sided way in which the N-VA has opposed the government in recent years, in the view of De Standaard. Geert Bourgeois vehemently puts the governments of Guy Verhofstadt and Patrick Dewael to the sword. The contrast with Bert Anciaux's book could hardly be greater, according to the daily (FF).

**Bart Brinckman • De Standaard 2 December**

Anciaux's book was at times a somewhat embarrassing and irrational song of praise to the Liberal/Socialist/Green coalition - a 'project' in which the Spirit activist continues to believe. Bourgeois's aversion to Verhofstadt's and Dewael's performances scales equally lofty heights. Anyone unaware of their particular case history would scarcely believe that these two were once fellow activists in the same party. Do not expect any esoteric policy proposals with limited feasibility in Bourgeois's book. In the first place, he aims to expose the rickety performances of the Purple/Green coalition. The N-VA chairman gets visibly wound up when it comes to perception and reality. He is convinced that there is a kind of alliance between the policy-makers and a certain class of media makers, which results in the Purple/Green coalition invariably being molly-coddled. He mercilessly shoots down in flames the policy being pursued. Bourgeois dreams of an independent Flanders in a new Europe. In just about every policy matter, he sees the pernicious role of the Walloon parties, which are obstructing a decisive policy. But he saves equally energetic criticism for the casual approach adopted by Prime Minister Verhofstadt, who, akin to a fireman, tackles the fire quite enthusiastically, but then fails to actually bring it under control.

**Orchestras**

**Beethoven Academy and the VRO merge**

If the go-ahead is given, the new project will start up in September 2003

In the spring something of a fuss was created surrounding the Flemish Radio Orchestra (Vlaams Radio Orkest - VRO), formerly the Philharmonic Orchestra of the BRT. The then Culture Minister Bert Anciaux (Spirit) froze the subsidies for the orchestra, just when it had requested a substantial increase of its budget in order to be able to pay the index-adjusted salaries of its musicians, but also to be able to expand its orchestra. Reports of a merger with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Flanders (now Defilharmonie) surfaced at regular intervals. But the loss of such an operation incurred on account of the high costs of the social liabilities and lawsuits was always sizeable. This negative experience had been acquired when one of the two opera orchestras was abolished. Therefore the merger with Defilharmonie did not go ahead. However, to the great surprise of everyone, the VRO is now merging with the Beethoven Academy, a chamber orchestra based at De Singel in Antwerp. The Beethoven Academy is also in difficulties. Normally it plays with a 42-strong complement of musicians and receives a quarter of its income from sponsorship. But when the sponsorship market collapsed after 11 September, conductor Jan Caeyers found himself forced to start working part time with the Beethoven Academy and to lay off 11 of the 25 contractual musicians. It was then that Caeyers and Dries Cel, director of the VRO and the Flemish Radio Choir, put their heads together. After an analysis of the real needs, they came up with a solution. If the go-ahead is given, the new project will start up in September 2003 (FF).

**Lukas Huybrechts • Knack 4 December**

The VRO needs large stages. Flanders has five such venues: The Koningin Elisabeth Hall and De Singel in Antwerp, De Bijloke in Ghent, the Concert Hall (Concertgebouw) in Bruges and the Palace of Fine Arts (PSK) in Brussels. It always has to present its programme at these venues. The solution to the problems appears to be of a mathematical nature. In an orchestra, the wind section, flutists, oboe players, bassoonists, etc., can sit together in twos, threes, or fours. The larger the wind section, the greater the volume of strings arranged opposite them. In concrete terms, this means that for Mozart, musicians are set in twos, for Brahms in threes, and for Mahler in fours. Over time orchestras constantly grew. However, that development stopped in 1920. People therefore long to arrange a modern orchestra according to this latter format, so as to be able to perform the most demanding pieces with ease. The only thing was that policy never obeyed this wish. An orchestra of this size has never existed in Flanders. By amalgamating the Beethoven Academy with the VRO, Jan Caeyers has been able to take back his laid-off musicians. What is more, he can now engage their services on a 60% basis. The Beethoven Academy can perform 60 concerts with these people. They retain their own profile and their own conductors, they still have their home base at De Singel in Antwerp, and they also work on the Beethoven project in Mechelen. The chamber orchestra continues to specialise in music from the late 18th, early 19th and late 20th centuries. However, a surplus of services still remains at the Beethoven Academy. These people will be deployed in the large orchestra. Which orchestra? Dries Sel dreams of a large philharmonic orchestra to play the great repertoire of the twentieth century (Mahler, Richard Strauss, Shostakovich) a few times a year. Mu-
Focus on Flanders provides a weekly overview of articles from the Flemish press and appears in English, French, and German. This newsletter is published by Uitgeverij Lannoo nv, Kasteelstraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.

Focus on Flanders

DIARY

MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• 11 and 12 December: Thomas Hauter/Cie Zoo, Do you believe in Gravity? Do you trust the pilot? dance, kaaitheater, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be

• 11 December: Inge Snitree/Jan Michiels (piano), compositions by Van Beethoven and Schubert, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

• 11, 12 and 14 December: Jan Fabre with Parrots and Guinea Pigs, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be


• 12 December: Choir and orchestra of Collegium musicum conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, compositions by Bach, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

• 13 December: Twaaraes, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be

• 14 December: Ard, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be

• 15 December: Richard Ackworth, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be

• 12 December: Frederyk Rzewski and John Tilbury with work by Cardew and Skempton, De Bijloke, Ghent, info: 09/233.68.78 www.debijloke.be

• 15 and 18 December: Arno, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: 09/00/00600 www.abconcerts.be

• Until 22 December: Cosi fan tutte by W.A. Mozart, Flanders Opera, Antwerp, conductor: Jos Van Immerseel; director: Guy Joosten, info: 03/233.68.85 www.vlaamseopera.be

• Until 13 January: La Bohème by Puccini, directed by Christophe Loy, conductors: Antonio Papano/Daniele Carinelli, info: www.demunt.be

• 18, 19 and 20 December: Portraits/Mapping, Sarah Chase, dance, kaaitheaterstudio’s, Brussels, info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be


• 19 December: Christmas Concert with Anette Van Otter (mezzo), De Munt, Brussels, info: www.desingel.be

• 19 December: Christmas Concert: Missa Magna, Diabolus in Musica/Antoine Grueter, De Bijloke, Ghent, info: 09/233.68.78 www.debijloke.be

• 19 December: Pieter Wispelwey, one man, one cello with Bach, Ligeti, Kodaly, De Handselsbeuws, Ghent, www.handebeuris.be

• 20 December: Michel Portal Quintet (Fr), De Handselsbeuws, Ghent, www.handebeuris.be

• 20 December: Magdalen College Choir, OLVrouw over de Dijlekerk, Mechelen, info: 015/29.76.55

• 15, 21 and 22 December: Flanders Symphony Orchestra; Lemminkäinen Suite by Sibelius and Parnoconoerto nr. 1 by Brahms, conductor: David Angus, De Bijloke, Ghent, Conservatory Brussels and De Singel, Antwerp, info: 050/84.05.87

• 13 and 20 December: The Beethoven Acade- mie, violin concerto and symphony by van Beethoven, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be

EXPO

• Until 22 December: Pontiac Fitted in Flan- dens, strip cartoon exhibition, CC De Luchthal, Antwerp, info: 03/543.90.33

• Until 12 January: Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings, The Artists of the Pharaoh, exhibition, Juba, Gephyraion, Gent, info: 02/741.73.11

• Until 5 January: 7000 years of Persian art, exhibition, Sint-Pietersabdij, Ghent, info: 09/243.97.30

• Until 18 January: Luc Tuymans with exhibition ‘Niks’n’t)ography’ Gallery Zeno X, Antwerp, info: 03/216.16.26 www.zeno-x.com

• 21 September to 16 February: Selection 1/Backstage, Fashion exhibition, Antwerp Modemuseum (MoMu), Antwerp, info: 03/470.27.71 www.momu.be

• Until 5 January: 5 portraits of the artist, exhibition, Dextra Gallery, Brussels, info: 02/222.57.37

• Until 14 December: Symptomania, Finnish contemporary art in Kunsthalh Lophem, Loppem-Zedelgem, info: 0477/832.370

• Until 2 February: Gaude suckare vita, exhibition: drawings and films by Jan Fabre, SMAK, Ghent, info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be

• Until 8 December: Drawings from the Bansei-Cycle, the first period, exhibition by Jan Van Oost, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, info: 09/282.51.23 www.museumdd.be

• Until 5 January: Europalia, Guest country: Bulgaria, The Gold of the Thracians, exhibition, PSK, Brussels, info: www.europalia.be 02/507.85.94

• Until 30 March: Twiest, the fascination by sci- entists, artists and the public exhibition, Museum Dr. Guslain, Ghent; info: www.museumdr-guslain.be

• Until 12 January: Danish Symbolism, exhibition, Museum of Elsene, info: 02/515.64.22

• Until 16 February: The gardens of the Alham- bra, exhibition: 40 years of Gipsy from Seville to Girona (Danish EU-chairmanship), City Hall, Brussels, info: 02/279.64.45


• Until 16 March: Roman Jews, Provincial Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren, info: 012/67.03.55

• Until 31 August: The big Sexperiment, scientific exhibition, Technopolis, Mechelen, info: 015/34.20.00

• Until 22 December: Exhibition TupperwarmT, centre for young art, Kasteel Claeys Bouart, Mariakerke, info: 09/236.68.90, www.cjk.be

• Until 22 December: Logogrammen, exhibition by Christian Dotremont, Samuel Vanhoegaer- den Gallery, Knokke


• Until 22 December: Tour de Trance 2002, Kamagurka paints, De Zwarte Panter, Antwerp, info: 03/243.13.45

• Until 12 January: Portraits of Flemish Biotope, exhibition: architecture and environ- ment, De Singel, Antwerp, info: 03/248.28.28 www.debijloke.be

• Until 29 June: Music Planet, one century of pop music in an exhibition, Brewery Belle Vue, Molvenoek, info: www.euraculture.be 02/513/29/84

• Until 9 March: Who’s sweet, gets sweet, exhibition KMSK and City Library, Antwerp, info: 03/519.81.81

• Until 5 January: 80 years of Rosas Dance Company, PSK, Brussels, info: 02/507.84.66 www.rosas.be